**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ki Teitze 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #719**

**Translating the Translator**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000g800:001E7OND00001mFF&count=1310563663&randid=1086093054&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1086093054##)



**Robin Dixon, L.A. Times**

 "Yes," insisted Robin Dixon of the Los Angeles Times, "I want to go to the town of Lubavitch. And no, the seven-hour drive from Moscow is not a deterrent."

 Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz was impressed by Ms. Dixon's determination. As executive director of the local Federation of Jewish Communities, and shaliach of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Moscow, with his wife Leah, he was the right person for this journalist to have contacted. She had called saying that her paper, whose stories are often syndicated, was interested in doing a feature piece on the revival of Jewish life in Russia.

**The Small Town of Lubavitch**

 "My preliminary research led me to Chabad," she had said. "It seems that yours is the most dominant group in Jewish life in Russia today. Its dedication and success intrigued me, and after I discovered that all of it began in the small town of

Lubavitch, on the border of Belarus, hundred of years ago, I decided that a visit to the town could provide the backdrop for my story."



For almost 500 Chabad rabbis from throughout Europe who gathered at a conference in Russia, it was not just a time to discuss the many challenges facing their Jewish communities, but to celebrate, pray and reflect at many of the sites of the movement's founding [the town of Lubavitch] that were closed to religious activity during the Soviet era. (Photo: Yehezkel Itkin)

 Rabbi Berkowitz didn't want to dampen her interest, but he had his doubts. What was there to see in that tiny, backward village, whose roads aren't even paved? The only Jewish presence in the town these days are people who come to pray at the gravesites of the Lubavitch Rebbes buried there. What could he show this journalist, other than the small museum adjacent to the graves?

 As he pondered the matter, Rabbi Berkowitz had an idea. It was the summer of 2001. In the spring of that year, some of the hundreds of Lubavitch yeshiva students who come to Russia to arrange Pesach Seders had made contact with Jewish children in the area. The students were stationed in Smolensk, close to Lubavitch, and in the summer they set up camp in a Lubavitch public school. That camp would be an ideal place for Ms. Dixon to witness the rejuvenation of Jewish life.

 The trip was planned. When the car came to pick up Rabbi Berkowitz, he joined the photographer and a local Russian who worked for the Los Angeles Times as a translator and researcher. Rabbi Berkowitz inquired, in the course of the conversation, about their religious ties; both said they were gentile. The translator introduced himself as Yasha Ryzhak, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.

**Used the Long Drive to**

**Explain the Story of Chabad**

 Aware of the story's potentially wide audience and of the long drive ahead, Rabbi Berkowitz began explaining the history, philosophy and activity of Chabad. He expounded on the origin of the movement in the town of Lubavitch, whose very name means "the city of brotherly love." As he spoke, Ms. Dixon took notes and Yasha asked many questions. Something about his inquiries seemed to be beyond normal curiosity.

 At one point, Yasha suddenly declared, "I really should call my grandmother. We'll soon be approaching Smolensk; my family originates there. I've never traveled to this region before, and I'd like to see the place."

**An Expression of Wonder**

**Mixed with Confusion**

 After spending fifteen minutes on the phone with his grandmother, he turned to Rabbi Berkowitz with an expression of wonder mixed with confusion.

 "Rabbi," he said slowly, "my grandmother just told me something I had never known. When she heard I was traveling to Lubavitch, she became very excited and told me that, during the war, her family members had forged their identity papers and changed their names. They were of Chassidic origin; the men had studied at the yeshiva in Lubavitch. Her great-grandfather's name was Zalman Rivkin, after the rabbi who founded the movement."

**The Rabbi Was Amazed**

 Rabbi Berkowitz was amazed.

 "Is this your maternal or paternal grandmother?" he asked deliberately.

 "She's my mother's mother."

"Then, Yasha, according to Jewish law, you are a Jew." Rabbi Berkowitz declared. This information caught Yasha totally unprepared. An extended conversation ensued over the remainder of the drive. Yasha listened intently but found it difficult to relate to his newly found identity.

 Later, the visitors encountered the camp children and were moved by the ease with which these youngsters, who had no previous Jewish education, absorbed the concepts they were learning, and by the pride they took in their religion.

 In the small museum, Rabbi Berkowitz pointed to a striking wall hanging depicting the chassidim who had studied in the town, one of whom was wearing tefilin.

 "This is probably what your grandfather looked like, Yasha. Every day, he put on his own pair of tefilin, just as you see portrayed here."

 "I hear what you are saying," Yasha responded, "but I am not Jewish."

 "According to Jewish law, you are," Rabbi Berkowitz reminded him. "Would you like to put on tefilin, if only to honor the memory of your grandfather?"

**Yasha Feels a Strange Sensation**

 Yasha became thoughtful for a moment and then he agreed.

 "How strange," he murmured as he unwound the straps, "Suddenly, I feel I am a Jew!"

 Inspired by the visit and by the extensive interviews she had conducted, Ms. Dixon wrote an impressive feature story, which was set to run on September 12, 2001. The terrible events of September 11, however, pushed aside all other news for weeks thereafter. Ms. Dixon regretfully informed Rabbi Berkowitz that, since it was a time-sensitive story, with the summer camp as one of its highlights, the paper had filed it for a later appropriate date. She apologized for having taken so much of his time for an article that would remain temporarily unpublished.

**A Higher Authority had**

**Ordained the Long Trip**

 But Rabbi Berkowitz wasn't disappointed. As far as he was concerned, it was a higher authority that had ordained the long trip to Lubavitch, and its effects were becoming clear even without the publicity of the influential newspaper. Yasha (now Yaakov) Ryzhak delved into his newly-discovered Judaism with zeal and today is a proud member of the Chabad community of Moscow.

 [Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Excuse me, are you Jewish?" (Emet Publications) by Malka Touger].

Connection: Seasonal â€“ 9/11

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**Keeping Track of**

**The Scorecard**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*You shall not abhor an Edomite, he is your brother; you shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land*.”

 Many of us have a scorecard-like approach to our interpersonal relationships. We consider how much we have done for the other fellow versus how much he has done for us. Then we factor in how much aggravation, if any, he has caused us, and after doing the math we decide on the sort of relationship we will have. Any favors we have received are often wiped out by the far greater acts of generosity on our part. Also, a negative experience can erase a long ago act of kindness. When it comes to family we are even more calculating.

**The Exact Opposite Approach**

 This week’s perashah teaches us to adopt the exact opposite approach. Every year we delve at length into the horrific way the Egyptians treated the nation of Israel. Yet the Torah says we should accept them as converts after three generations. “Do not abhor the Egyptians,” our verse says, because they served as our hosts during the time of hunger and distress. Ya’akob Abinu and his sons were permitted to settle there.

 Using a human “scorecard,” one would say that any favors we received from the Egyptians have long been erased by the many years of abuse and torture.

 But, it is clear from the Torah that gratitude is not something that one calculates, but rather it is an obligation independent of any other aspects of a relationship. No matter how badly the Egyptians treated us, we are obligated to be grateful to them for the favor they did.

**Don’t Abhor the Edomite – Your Brother**

 The Torah tells us not to abhor the Edomite (Esav) “for he is your brother.” Neither Esav not his descendants ever exhibited brotherly conduct towards us. On the contrary, at every opportunity they tried to kill us! But Esav is still “your brother!” The Rambam states that this comes to teach us that no matter how much harm a relative inflicts on us, we still have an obligation to treat him as a relative.

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

**Marranos Gather in Southern Italy to Explore Their Roots**

**By Chana Ya’ar**

 Dozens of Marranos (known in Hebrew as Bnei Anousim) in southern Italy and Sicily have gathered for a seminar to return to their roots.

 They and other people of Jewish descent from across the region gathered Tuesday and Wednesday in the city of Syracuse to explore their Jewish heritage.

 The seminar, the first of its kind, was organized by the Jerusalem-based Shavei Israel organization together with the Union of Italian Jewish Committees (UCEI), the Jewish community of Naples and the Sicilian Sephardic Center.

 Entitled “The New Frontier of Italian Judaism,” the gathering included lectures and classes on a range of Jewish cultural and religious subjects.

**Walking Tour of Jewish Historical Sites**

 Also included was a walking tour of Jewish historical sites in the Giudecca (old Jewish quarter) of Syracuse. One of the sites featured was the ancient Mikveh (ritual pool), said to be the oldest ever discovered in Europe.

 Among those leading the seminar was Rabbi Roberto Della Rocca, director of the Education and Culture Department for the UCEI; Rabbi Eliyahu Birnbaum, Chief Rabbi of Turin and rabbi of Shavei Israel; Rabbi Shalom Bahbout, Chief Rabbi of Naples; Dr. Gadi Piperno, UCEI project manager; and Michael Freund, founder and chairman of Shavei Israel.

**Participants Came from South Regions of Italy**

 Participants came from across Sicily, as well as the southern Italian regions of Puglia and Calabria.

 Freund noted that this year marks the 500th anniversary of the first Auto-de-Fe in Sicily, when the Inquisition executed nine Marranos in Palermo in June 1511 for secretly practicing Judaism.

 “Five centuries later, we have come here to declare that the Inquisition did not succeed in its efforts to eradicate Judaism,” Freund said.

*Reprinted from the Arutz Sheva email of September 7, 2011.*

**Waiting for an Apology**

**Answered By Sara Esther Crispe**

 **Dear Rachel,**

A few months ago I had a falling-out with someone with whom I have been close friends for many years. Since this incident, we have not spoken even once. I know I am biased, but I really feel that I was not at fault. The whole experience has hurt me very deeply. I had assumed all along that she would call to apologize, and until recently, I wasn’t even sure I was ready to forgive her.

 Now I am, but she hasn’t contacted me, and I am starting to think that she won’t. I am finally ready to forgive her, and I don’t even have that opportunity. How do I put this behind me and move on?

**Hurt, LA**

 **Dear Hurt**,

 While granting forgiveness to one who has hurt you is an extremely hard thing to do, asking for forgiveness is even harder. For starters, you have taken a very big step in dealing with this situation by putting yourself in a place where you are willing to forgive your friend. But now you actually have an even bigger challenge. If you are willing to forgive her only if she asks for that forgiveness, which in essence means admitting that she has hurt you and was at fault, then your forgiveness is not really completely sincere either.

**You Cannot Forgive on a Condition**

 You cannot forgive on a condition. Forgiveness means that you have reached a point where you will forgive her, whether or not she asks, and whether or not she feels she is wrong.

 Furthermore, there is another step you can and should take—and this may be the hardest of all: you approaching her. Considering that often, when there is a fight, both people end up feeling hurt, and it is rarely one hundred percent one person’s fault, perhaps you too need to ask for forgiveness. But even if this is a situation where you truly did nothing wrong and therefore have nothing to ask forgiveness for, you can still approach her and open that door. When you make the first move, you show her that you forgive her without needing to directly say it. And more importantly, without making her ask. By approaching her, you show her that you understand and know that asking forgiveness is hard,and save her from that uncomfortableness.

**Elul is the Month of Rachamim**

 The month where we go to great lengths to make these attempts at asking for and granting forgiveness is the month of Elul. One of the names of Elul is “the month of *rachamim*.”

 *Rachamim* can loosely be translated as “compassion” or “mercy.” The root of *rachamim* is *rechem*, which means “womb.” Why is there this connection between a womb and asking for forgiveness?

 The concept of a womb is that of being able to make a space inside ourselves for another. Completely removing our ego, our opinion, our thoughts, ourselves—to give room, space and a place for another to enter and feel comfortable and connected. When we do so, the other becomes so much a part of ourselves that we are then truly able to understand the directive to treat another as you yourself want to be treated. If the other person is a part of us, if we can give them that space, then we don’t see them as a separate entity, as someone who can be against us.

**Think About How**

**She Views the Situation**

 While it is certainly hard, try to view the situation from her eyes: not just how she views you, but how she views herself, from within herself. Meaning, if she doesn’t feel that she is wrong, and you believe that she feels she is innocent, then she may also be wondering why you haven’t approached her, or she may be thinking that she has nothing to ask forgiveness for. If she does feel responsible, if she knows she has wronged you, then when you think about how she must be feeling, she must be so embarrassed and she may not even know how to face you.

 If your goal is to make her grovel and feel terrible and undergo the difficulty of approaching you, just to teach her a lesson and make her suffer, that would be one thing. But you say you are ready to forgive her. So forgive her. Do so without making her ask. And then approach her. Give her a call. Send her an e-mail. Let her know that you welcome her back into your life—or, if you are not ready for that, just a note to wish her a *shanah tovah*, a good and sweet new year. That in itself will let her know that you no longer bear that grudge.

 Granted, your friend has a responsibility during this time to approach you and ask for forgiveness if she wronged you. But it is not your job to make sure she does what she needs to do. It is, however, your job to make sure you do what you can do to help another and make another feel better. In this case, it seems to be taking that first step for her.

 I wish you much luck in this uncomfortable situation, and may your willingness to forgive her be something that you are granted as well from others. Wish wishes and blessings for a healthy, sweet and successful new year! *Shanah tovah u’metukah*.

**Rachel**

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

**A Rabbi Who Wrestled**

**With More than Theology**

**By Steve Lipman**

 Some three decades ago, while working as editor of The Buffalo Jewish Review, I happened across a reference to a story I knew I would pursue the next time I went to Israel: a professional wrestling champion turned Orthodox rabbi-scholar.

 In those days, before e-mail or Facebook or easy international phone calls, I did not make any arrangements until I got to Israel, calling Rabbi Raphael Halperin as soon as I checked into my Jerusalem hotel. Although he had a busy schedule as a lecturer and author, although he had frequent interview requests, although he had just concluded an exhausting campaign for a Knesset seat, he graciously allowed me to come to his Tel Aviv house, a few blocks from the Mediterranean.



**Rabbi Raphael Halperin**

**Discussing Rocca The Wrestler**

**And Rashi the Commentator**

 It was a memorable interview. How many people can discuss with equal ease both Rocca (Antonio, a top pro wrestler of the 1960s and one of Rabbi Halperin’s contemporaries) and Rashi (the ultimate commentator on Torah and Talmud)?

 Rabbi Halperin, died of cancer on Aug. 20 at age 87. When I met him, he was 50, still in the prime of his post-wrestling health, 20 years removed from his glory days as “The Wrestling Rabbi.” A former boxer, karate competitor, weightlifter and bodybuilder, he had remade himself into a wrestler who reportedly — competitive records in the world of pro wrestling are, at best, nebulous — had won 159 consecutive matches and refused, as a matter of principle, to throw a match as part of a promoter’s script.

**Could Do Hagbah with a Single Hand**

 Rabbi Halperin still maintained an enviable physical fitness regimen, working out regularly with the weights he kept on his back patio, with biceps that could intimidate any chavruta (study partner). He could, I would tell people, do hagbah, lift a Torah scroll during worship services, with a single hand.

 A onetime “137-pound weakling” who was “not at all” athletic in his youth, he developed his impressive physique and memorable record of sporting accomplishments through dint of hard work. He wrestled as “Mr. Israel,” resting on Shabbat and delivering sermons in synagogues near his hotel, to “bring honor to the Jewish people,” he said.

**Able to Cross the Religious-Secular Boundaries**

 But it wasn’t his athletic prowess alone that drew attention in Israel, though it certainly added to a notoriety that crossed religious-secular boundaries. After leaving the ring and returning to his childhood intellectual path — raised religious in Vienna, he moved to British Mandate Palestine with his family in 1933, attended yeshiva, strayed from the religious path, then returned — he established his reputation first as author of a series of historical-genealogical books about Torah sages and an encyclopedia geared for traditional families. Later he founded the discount Optika Halperin eyewear chain, which expanded to the United States three years ago.

 In Israel, he was one of those rare figures who established his bona fides in the Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities.

**Turning His Back on “Makle-Believe Success”**

 After making “lots of money” in sports, he said, he turned his back on his “make-believe success,” devoting his time to study of Torah and Talmud. “All my mind was on learning.”

 After retiring from the athletic life, Rabbi Halperin used his athletic accomplishments to reach and influence the wider public, teaching on army bases and kibbutzim, he told me in our interview. “I saw society without any goals. I felt I could do something to help.” His success in sports and his army service (active duty in 1948, reserves in 1973) earned the respect of Israelis little interested in his theological expertise. “I opened the eyes of thousands of people.”

 “Some people call me ‘rabbi,’” he said. “Some people call me ‘Raphael.’ Some people call me ‘champ.’”

 He was clean-shaven in 1980, although in later years he grew a beard that at the end was snow white.

 He entered, with varying degrees of success, several business enterprises over the years.

**Both a Standard Scholar**

**And an Iconoclastic Activist**

 He remained both a standard scholar and an iconoclastic activist, opening Israel’s first (closed on Shabbat) professional gym, campaigning for the creation of a Sabbath-observant credit card, writing a weight-loss guide, running for the Knesset. His small Otzma party, which advocated immigrant-style benefits for discharged soldiers, lost badly.

 When the results of the election were clear, Rabbi Halperin said, his life as a candidate was over. “I went to sleep [on election night] at 10 o’clock,” he said. “At five o’clock the next morning I was in my yeshiva.”

 I never spoke with Rabbi Halperin again, but I followed his many exploits.
The rabbi re-entered my world when I went to Israel last year. I needed new frames for the spare set of jogging glasses that I keep at a friend’s apartment in Jerusalem, and the optical shop at a nearby mall turned out to be to be part of the Optika Halperin chain.

**I Noticed Yeshiva Students**

**Getting Free Books**

 As I waited for my new pair of glasses to be fitted, I noticed a series of young Orthodox men, apparently yeshiva students, walking up to the checkout desk, introducing themselves and being handed a hardcover brown book from a shelf underneath the cash register.

 What gives?

 Rabbi Halperin, an employee of the store informed me, had written an extensive commentary on the Torah, in Hebrew, and anyone who identified himself as a yeshiva student got a copy for free.

 I was intrigued and asked to look at one of the books. With my rudimentary Hebrew skills, I could recognize that “Diyukim B’Torah” was solid lomdus, high-level commentary. I paid for a copy.

 The book — so far I have only Genesis — is now part of my Torah library at home.

 Now, when I wrestle with Torah, I get some posthumous help from “The Wrestling Rabbi.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) Newsletter. The article originally appeared in the New York Jewish Week’s August 31, 2011 edition.*

**Love of the Land**

**Aviah, Son of Yeravam:**

**One in a Family**

**By Rabbi Mendal Weinbach**

 The only one of the family of Yeravam who had a normal burial was his son Aviah who passed away as a young man. This family was one that established the Kingdom of Yisrael. The violent deaths that Heaven visited upon this household were punishment for subverting the people to idol worship.

 Aviah too had been appointed by his father to serve as a sentry to prevent Jews from his kingdom from making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Three Festivals. But he defied his father’s orders, abandoned his post, and joined the crowds going to the Beit Hamikdash.

 The Zohar adds that because G-d saw that Aviah did such a good thing, he removed him from the world before he could become corrupted in order that he

would inherit the World-to-Come.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Bank Shares the Wealth**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 In the highly competitive business of banking it is common to see these financial institutions spending large sums of money on advertising to attract new clients. But it certainly came as a surprise to the radio audience in Israel to hear a commercial from Bank Discount appealing for people to bring to its branches throughout the country old winter coats, sweaters, heaters, blankets and any other items which the bank would distribute to needy families “so that everyone would enjoy a warmer winter”.

 The bank did a great job of collecting the requested items as Jews once again demonstrated their generosity and their inability to simply discard an item no longer in use. But when it came to distributing the items, the bank official in charge of the project realized that the best channel was a “Gemach” used-clothing center catering to the financially strapped large families in the religious sector.

 The director of the “Beged Yad Leyad” network of used-clothing centers was pleasantly surprised to hear a man from the bank call her to ask if he could deliver a large shipment to her central branch.

 She couldn’t help but laugh when she recalled that upon hearing the commercial appeal she had wondered how a bank was going to handle distribution. Now that she got her answer she gladly welcomed the opportunity to help the bank share its new kind of wealth with the needy.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet.*

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

**Praying for a Niftar,**

**One Who Has Died**

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| **QUESTION:** |

Tefilah for a Niftar, what does it accomplish?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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It states, I think it's a Sifri, he says, that Mikan Shyeish Kaparah L'meisim, he learns it from a Posuk, there's Kaparah L'meisim. Even if somebody is dead it's possible to add Kaparah (atonement) to him. Therefore, anything good that you do for the Zechus (merit) of the Niftar will help him in his matzav (place) in the world to come, even years and years after he passed away. Even long after his Din (judgment) was Up'gepaskened Ba'Shomayim (decided in Heaven), you can still add to him.

 Therefore it's a wonderful Minhag (custom) if you'll drop a nickel in the Tzdoko Pushka (charity box) and say it's a Zechus for this and this personUlov Hashalom. A very great favor, he'll love you. From Gan Eden he would like to send a message to you. You can't appreciate how much he is grateful to you, there's a Kaparah forMeisim (atonement for the dead), yes!

**Every Mitzvah Helps a Departed Parent**

 Kapeir L'amacha Yisroel, Eiluy Hachaim, Asher Pudisa Hashem, Eiluy Hamiesim, so you see from this lesson, there's Kaparah forMeisim. Now we have to know, Tefilos for Meisim help, Tzdokofor Meisim help, another thing, children of Meisim, Broh Mezakeh Abba. If you put on your Tefillin, you're helping your dead parents, if you learn Torah you're helping your dead parents, anything you do even if you're not Mechavain; you're Mechavain, even better.

**Good Children Are One’s Best Investment**

 So if a person has good children, it's the best investment for him, because in the Next World he's going to sit and receive parcels of Zechus,  hat are being mailed to him everyday by his children. All the Mitzvahs that your children do are going to be mailed to you. This is a package from your son, from your daughter, from your grandson, your great grandson, great great grandson, forever and ever you're going to get parcels. It's a tremendous Zechus, Broh Mezakeh Abba.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l,” based on a transcription of Rav Miller’s answer to a question from a member of the audience to his classic Thursday night hashkafah lecture in his Flatbush shul during the years 1970s until his petirah in 2001.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Revealed**

 The Torah tells us this week, "For Hashem, your G-d walks in the midst of your camp to rescue you and to deliver your enemies before you; therefore, your camp should be holy, in that He (Hashem) should not see an immodest thing among you [causing Him] to turn away from you." From this verse we see that the success of the Jewish people is largely based on their modesty.

 What is modesty?  The Jewish concept of modesty can be defined as:  dressing and acting in a way to cover that which should not be displayed to others.  The last 80 or so years has seen a steady decline of modesty in America.  Revealing modes of dress, public displays of affection and foul language which until recent history were the sign of a person with low moral character, are now flaunted both in the media and on the streets of America.  There seems to be a contest in society to see who low America can go.

**Contrary to Jewish Ideals**

 We must understand that this behavior is contrary to Jewish ideals.  Any Jew wishing to protect his spirituality and the spirituality of his family, must distant himself from these modern trends of immodesty.  The following amazing true story illustrates one young Jewish girl's struggles to remain modest during one of the most trying times in our recent history.

 In October 1938, the hatred that the German populace had for Jews boiled like a hot cauldron on a raging fire.  The German SS indiscriminately dragged Jews off the streets or from their homes, humiliated them and carted many off to slave labor camps, where torture and cruel death often awaited them.

**Living in the Jewish District of Berlin**

 R' Dovid Tzvi Cohen and his wife Sorah Zisel lived with their four children on Linien Strasse in the Jewish district of Berlin. Shops and stores owned by Jews lined the streets of the district, and dozens of shuls — many of them architecturally beautiful — were spread throughout the area.

 The Cohens, who lived on the second floor of an apartment building, had friendly relations with their German gentile neighbors, particularly the Reinmann family, who lived on the third floor.

 On Thursday morning, November 10, 1938, Frau (Mrs.) Reinmann came downstairs and said to the Cohens with urgency, "I hear there is going to be a pogrom and it may even be today. You would be safer if you left this neighborhood for now." The Cohens had also heard rumors to that effect, but who could know which threat was real and which was not?

**A Telegram from the Gestapo Chief**

 Frau Reinmann assured them that she had her information from reliable sources. Unbeknownst to the Cohens and most Jews, the night before at 11:55 p.m., Gestapo Chief Heinrich Mueller had sent a telegram to all police units ordering them not to interfere with actions that would be taking place against all Jews, especially their synagogues. Fire companies were instructed not to protect the synagogues but to make sure that the flames did not spread to Aryan property. Believing that Frau Reinmann may be correct, the Cohens decided to act at once and flee with their children to the other side of town, to the home of Mrs. Cohen's parents, Dovid Shaye and Braindel Shankal on Elsasser Strasse where few Jewish families resided. Surely it would be safer there to weather a possible storm of violence.

 The Cohen's 12-year-old daughter Esther asked her parents if she could come to her grandparents an hour later. She wanted to finish her homework and she had all her books at home. Esther was a feisty child and her parents trusted her instincts. She knew the route to her grandparents' home and assured her parents she would be there as soon as possible.

**Esther Hears Wild Screaming and Rioting**

 The Cohens left with their three other children as Esther remained home alone. Within an hour, Esther heard wild screaming and rioting. She ran to a window facing the street and saw a mob of what seemed like a thousand people rampaging down Linien Strasse, roaring in piercing maniacal voices at the top of their lungs, "Get the Jews! Kill the Jews!"

 She watched in terror as pandemonium reigned. The mob smashed windows, looted stores, threw rocks, hurled insults, and threatened the lives of Jews anywhere and everywhere throughout the Reich. Frau Reinmann was right. This was a pogrom of the worst order.

 Esther knew she could not remain in the building for if she were found her life would be in danger. She was trapped. Trembling and isolated, she tried to devise a plan to save herself.

**Desperately Thinking of a Plan of Escape**

 Esther began reciting any Tehillim she knew by heart, all the while thinking desperately of a plan of escape. She was often told that she didn't look Jewish because of her fair skin and blonde hair. Perhaps now she could use that to her advantage. She tousled her hair and combed it the way the German girls in the Hitler Youth Association did. She looked into a mirror and was revolted at what she saw.

 She was afraid, though, that it still wasn't enough of a decoy. She adjusted her jacket and clothes in a provocative way, so that no one could imagine she was an Orthodox Jewish girl. She hated dressing that way. She felt cheapened and degraded, but there was no choice. Her life hung in the balance.

 She decided she would go outside and walk nonchalantly, hoping no one would suspect she was Jewish, for logically no Jewish girl in her right mind would brazenly walk among such an anti-Semitic mob. With the words of Tehillim on her lips, she reached up to kiss the mezuzah as she left her apartment. "Ribono Shel Olam, please save me," she whispered softly.

 As she walked down the stairs in the hallway she suddenly remembered an expression she often heard from her mother, "Ahfilu fahr dee feer vent, darf mehn zich shemmen." ("Even for the four walls [in a home] one should feel shame.") Her mother meant to convey the message that tznius (modesty) was a code of behavior that was required even in the privacy of one's home. She was startled that those words would come to her just now. She rationalized that she had to look like "them" to spare her life. Surely her mother would understand and even encourage her behavior.

**Having Doubts in the Hallway**

 But now, in the empty darkened hallway she was having doubts. Perhaps this was a message from Above. Esther decided that come what may, she would not go out the way she was dressed. She re-buttoned her blouse to her neck, tucked it into her skirt and straightened the collar of her jacket, but kept her hair tousled.

 As she walked out into the street the noise burst at her with a crescendo. She mumbled more words of Tehillim, making sure, however, that no one realized she was praying. The yelling and screaming of the mob was deafening. She walked hesitantly, checking to see if the horde had reached her grandmother's fabric store on the first floor of their apartment building. (They had not reached it yet, but later the shop was looted and ransacked.)

**Tried to Stay Away from the Flying Glass**

 She walked as quickly as she could, avoiding eye contact with anyone. She tried to keep to the middle of the street, away from the flying glass and swinging clubs that smashed into every Jewish window in sight.  She tried not to panic as her mouth went dry from fear.

 In 10 minutes, that seemed like ten days, she was past the mob. As soon as she was sure she wasn't being observed, she began to run as fast as she could.

 When she came to her grandparents' home, she knocked on the door rapidly. Her heart was beating wildly as she waited for a response. Did her parents make it? Had the Nazis come here earlier? Was anyone home?

**Tells of Her Frightful Experience**

 The door opened and she ran right past her sister into her mother's arms and wept uncontrollably. The emotion and tension of the last hour burst forth in a torrent of tears. At first she could not speak, but kept looking back at the door, hoping she had not been followed. Then slowly, between sighs and sobs, she told her anxious parents and grandparents about her frightful experience.

 When she finished, Mrs. Cohen took Esther's face in her hands and said softly, "Don't you realize my child, you saved your own life?" Esther was bewildered. "Esther," her mother said again, "look, you are wearing your gold necklace with a Mogen Dovid on it. Had you left your buttons open, the Mogen Dovid would have identified you as a Jew. Your mitzvah protected you without your even knowing it." Reflections of the Maggid, Reb Paysach Krohn, p. 32)

**The Special Biller Revenge Against the Germans**

 Although the Germans murdered her parents and most of her family in the Holocaust, Esther Cohen, now Mrs. Esther Biller survived the war, later moving to Monsey, New York, where she lives today with her husband Reb Kalman Yakov Biller, he should live and be well.  Mrs. Biller and her husband, who also lost his family in the war, have taken revenge on the Germans in the best way possible; namely, by being the grandparents and great-grandparents to probably over 25 minyanim (25 x 10 bli eyn horah) of G-d-fearing Torah observant Jews, including the author [Rabbi Paysach Krohn] of this weekly's story.

 Let us remember this story and remember that our holiness and success as a Nation depend on hiding that which must be hidden.

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parsha ki tetze 5770**

**Rabbi Mandel’s Special Milk**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**



“*A perfect and honest weight shall you have. For an abomination of Hashem, your G-d, are all who do this, all who act corruptly*.” (Debarim 25:15-16)

 Our perashah speaks about the importance of honesty and integrity. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch writes: A Jew becomes “an abomination of G-d, his G-d,” if he calls himself a Jew and does not keep what is right and fair in his dealings with his fellow man. If Hashem despises those who act corruptly it follows that Hashem loves those who act honestly.

 A true story is told by an administrator in a Brooklyn yeshivah. The city provided busing for the students. One year the city sent a bus driver named Richie. Richie was tall and strong and quickly became the leader of all the drivers. The administrator relates that he kept Richie happy by giving him a cup of coffee every afternoon before he drove the children home.

**What is a Holy Rabbi?**

 One day Richie tells the Rabbi that he isn’t a holy Rabbi. The Rabbi was surprised, so he asked Richie how he defined a holy Rabbi. He explained that he used to drive for Rabbi Menachem Manis Mandel of the Yeshivah of Brooklyn on Ocean Parkway. Rabbi Mandel used to give him coffee, but the Rabbi used to drink from a different milk.

 Richie thought that the Rabbi’s milk was kosher milk, so he told the Rabbi he wanted kosher milk also. The Rabbi laughed and replied, “Richie, your coffee is just as kosher as mine. You see, the milk we have in school is provided by the government. It’s for students, teachers, and bus drivers like you. But it’s not for administration people like me. That’s why I bring milk from home for my coffee.”

 “Yes,” reflected Richie, Rabbi Mandel is a holy Rabbi.”

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

**It Once Happened**

**The Third Brother**

 Two brothers, Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech, were great tzadikim and amongst the most prized disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezritch. With the passing of time and difficulty of communication, Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech lost contact with a third brother, who was not a chasid.

 The two brothers, throughout their many travels, would ask about their brother and try to ascertain his whereabouts. They were intrigued to know what type of lifestyle he was living. Was he religious like themselves, or had he, G-d forbid, abandoned the teachings of the Torah? And even if he was religious, was he exacting in his practice, concerned only for the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law?

**Always Asking About Their Brother**

 And so, in each town and village they visited, as they spread the teaching of their master, the Magid, they asked if anyone knew the whereabouts of their brother. Try as they might, they could not find out any information. Yet, they still persisted on their self-imposed mission.

 When finally they did hear some information concerning where their brother lived, Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech rejoiced. And yet, there was a certain amount of hesitation in their rejoicing for, after over a dozen years of separation, they had no idea what their reunion would bring.

**A Certain Amount of Hesitation**

 And so, with slight trepidation, the two brothers made their way to a small village where their brother was an innkeeper. Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech entered the inn and observed their brother at work. He was busy the entire day greeting guests, preparing rooms, and cooking food. He ran from person to person, task to task, with a cheerful countenance and dealt with each guest, rich or poor, graciously. With his long beard, tzitzit, and long black coat, Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech were assured that their brother had indeed remained true to the Torah even in this isolated village.

**A Question Remained Unanswered**

 But still, a question remained unanswered for Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelch. These two chasidic masters were known for their humility. But, of course, humility doesn't preclude the fact that they understood that there was something special about themselves. They might have considered themselves undeserving of the remarkable qualities which G-d gave them, but to outright deny their uniqueness would be like denying a precious gift. And so, they wondered, was there something exceptional about their brother, too, and the way he served his Creator?

 Evening came at their brother's inn. Most of the guests had already arrived and the furious activity of the daytime hours had slowed. Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech observed as their brother entrusted his wife with the inn's duties and entered his study. In the study, he prayed the evening service and then poured over his holy books until it was quite late.

**Reassured But Not Awed**

 The brothers were reassured by this sight, but not awed; it was not uncommon for a Jew to put in a full day's work and then spend his "leisure" hours in prayer and Torah study. However, their brother's next activity was indeed unusual. Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech watched as their brother began to say the Shema before bedtime. In the middle of the prayers before retiring, their brother took out a worn ledger and opened it toward the end of the book.

 For long moments he sat motionless, pouring over a page of his ledger. "How much could be written on one page that it takes him so long to read it?" they wondered. They continued to watch, transfixed. As the minutes ticked away, they saw their brother begin to shake. Tears rolled down his cheeks and onto the page of the ledger in front of him. In a quiet, trembling voice they heard him read from the ledger, "I didn't serve this guest today with as much honor as is befitting a fellow-Jew. ...I was too quick to answer this person when they asked me a question..." On and on went the list of their brother's "sins" which he had written into the tear-stained ledger.

**The Knowledge of Sincere**

**Repentance Accepted**

 Reb Zusia and Reb Elimelech watched as their brother continued crying and reading from the ledger until the words on the page literally disappeared. Whether it was his tears or a miracle that washed away his "sins," the brother knew that when his sins were no longer on the page, his sincere repentance had been accepted.

 The brothers thought of their parents, and wondered at what great deeds they had done to merit raising such remarkable children.

Reprinted from the Ki Teitze edition (Issue #432) of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn dated 8 Elul 5756 – August 23, 1996.

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

**The Golden Column**

**The Gaon Rabbi**

**Shelomoh Musayof, zs"l**

 The Gaon Rabbi Shelomoh Musayof, zs"l, was blessed with great abilities from his youth and his father, Rabbi Yaakov zs"l, decided to dedicate him to Torah. He enabled him to learn in peace, without worry, in the yeshivah of the Gaon Rabbi Pinhas Mula Niaz zs"l. Afterwards, he dedicated a wing in his house to a yeshivah, headed by the Gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Shushan zs"l, a messenger from Jerusalem, who ignited in the hearts of his students a love for the Holy Land.

**Returning Home Only for the Shabbat**

 Rabbi Shelomoh married the daughter of the Gaon Rabbi Avraham Hayim Gaon zs"l, and continued to dedicate himself to learning. They would learn straight from Mossaei Shabbat until Erev Shabbat, and would only return to their homes for Shabbat.

 Rabbi Shelmoh rose in levels of Torah and fear of Heaven and was one of the greatest of the congregation. But at the age of thirty-eight, he moved to the Holy Land, to dwell in its dust. He was gripped with love of the land, and decided to return and bring his father, Rabbi Yaakov, with him.

**Preparing a Most Special Siddur**

 When he returned to Bucharah, he blessed "hagomel", as those who travel across the deserts are required, but he was not satisfied with that. When the Temple was standing, those who crossed the desert would bring a thanksgiving offering. Now that there was no possibility to bring an offering, he decided to bring merit to the masses with a beautiful siddur, the first siddur in which the four- letter name of G-d and the name of "adnut" were printed together.

**According to the Custom**

**Of the Ari and Rashash**

 Its text was according to the custom of the Ari and the Rashash, and the siddurim were distributed free of charge. Word of this siddur reached far off Baghdad, it was praised by our Rabbi, the Ben Ish Hai (in his book "Od Yosef Hai," Shemot 7).

 Rabbi Shelomoh returned to Israel with his father and was one of the founders of the Bucharian neighborhood in Jerusalem, where he established the Musayof synagogue, a mountain of Torah and prayer.

 His home was also a meeting place for scholars who were assisted by his huge library, filled with rare manuscripts. Every day he would turn from his worldly dealings for the sake of the community and set aside four hours of time for studying the revealed and secret parts of the Torah. He was truly a perfect example of a community leader, working for the sake of Heaven, great in Torah and deeds of kindness!

Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter, published by Congregation Bnei Yosef in Brooklyn.

**Story #664**

**From Lubavitch To Warsaw**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 Once, a very distraught woman showed up in the town of Lubavitch. Religious women usually did not wander about all alone one hundred years ago, but this poor woman had made an arduous one-week journey because someone told her that the Lubavitcher Rebbe could help her.

 “Is this where Rebbe Shalom DovBer [Shneersohn] is? I must see him. She pleaded to one of the Rebbes secretaries. I’ve come from so far away, and your Rebbe is my only hope. Please, I must see him! Only he can help me.”

**The Rebbe Wasn’t Receiving Visitors**

 But her cries were to no avail; the Rebbe wasn’t receiving anyone at that time.

 “If you write your request on a paper I promise that I will give it to the Rebbe and the Rebbe will see it, but I can’t promise more than that. I’m sorry,” he said apologetically.

 With no other choice the poor woman found a quiet place to sit and wrote her request. She was an aguna an unofficial widow. Her husband strayed from Judaism about two years ago and then upped and left her. She had no source of income, three hungry children to feed and she could not remarry without receiving an official document of divorce (called a get) from her husband. But it was impossible to track him down, and no one even knew where to begin.

 The woman was at wits' end; she had no money, no husband, no experience and now her last hope; the Rebbe, was vanishing before her eyes. The Rebbe probably won’t even pay attention to my letter. She said to herself. But she handed it in and hoped for the best.

 To her surprise, the answer was fast in coming. Less than an hour later the Rebbe’s secretary stood facing her with good news.

 The Rebbe says that you should travel to Warsaw.

 She was overjoyed! But her smile faded as she realized that there was no more to the message. “But where in Warsaw? What should I do there?”

 “That is all the Rebbe answered,” shrugged the secretary. “I’m sorry, there was no more.”

**No Further Details Are Forthcoming**

 She wrote in another letter asking for some details, but received no answer.

 When the Chassidim heard the story they took up a collection and bought her a round-trip train ticket with enough money to live for a month. A few days later after a two-day journey, there she was; standing bewildered in the Warsaw train station with her old suitcase and no idea where to go or what to do next.

 People were rushing by her, occasionally someone would almost knock her over, but she just stood there. She had the address of a hotel on a crumpled piece of paper in her hand. She took it out of her pocket but she didn’t want to walk anymore. She was tired and she just wanted to give up.

**Someone Ask If She Needs Help**

 At least the children are in good hands, she tried to comfort herself. She was alone and confused and she wanted to cry. Maybe Ill just go back home -- the thought was still in the corner of her mind when she heard someone say, “Excuse me.”

 She snapped out of her reverie and saw standing before her a neatly dressed Jew with a reddish beard. “Excuse me,” he said in Yiddish, I notice that you are standing for a long time. Are you feeling all right? Perhaps I can be of some help? Are you waiting for someone?”

 “I’m here because the Lubavitcher Rebbe said” and she mechanically repeated her entire story.

**What Was Your Husband’s Name?**

 “Tell me, said the man when she had finished, what was your husband’s name and how did he look?”

 “Ehh, well” she mumbled, still in a semi-daze; “his name was Feivel but I’m sure he changed it. And he was heavyset. He walked with a sort of a limp, and he had a thick black beard, but Im sure he’s shaved the beard off, and I think he has a sort of mark on his forehead. Its been two years, who knows how he looks now.”

 She almost began to weep again when he interrupted.

 “I think I know where he is. Please follow me. It’s not far from here.” He escorted her out of the station down the street to a large busy intersection and gave her directions how to go from there to a certain tavern. “I think that your husband is sitting in the back of that bar playing cards and gambling.”

 After everything shed been through she asked no questions. She just nodded to the stranger and began walking according to his directions. And after an hour she found it! She took a deep breath and entered the dimly lit tavern, dragging her suitcase and feeling terribly out of place. She made her way through the smoke and noise to the back of the room and stared blankly at the figures sitting there, waiting for her eyes to

adjust to the dark.

**Let’s Out a Cry of Horror**

 Suddenly one of the gamblers turned, looked at her and let out a cry of horror. “Yow! Sarah! How did you know I was here? And how did you get here!”

 She could see clearly now, and the man who was speaking looked something like her husband. He was thinner with no beard, but, but, it was him! When she explained how the Rebbe had sent her and how some Jew gave her directions from the station he began pacing back and forth like a madman, running his fingers through his hair, waiving his arms and repeating to himself, “I don’t know any Jews, I don’t know any Rebbe! How could anyone know? How? How!”

 He was so affected by the miracle that he began weeping, and then fell to his knees begging her forgiveness. One thing led to another and one month later, he shamefacedly returned home with her and repented completely of his evil ways.

**Comes to Thank the Rebbe**

 The next year she traveled again to Lubavitch, but this time to thank the Rebbe. The Rebbe’s secretary arranged that she would stand outside the Rebbe’s door and when the Rebbe would come out, she could thank him personally and give him a letter of gratitude.

 She took her place and stood there, holding her letter and waiting nervously, as this was the first time she would actually see the Rebbe. Then the big moment arrived, the door opened and the Rebbe emerged. She took one look at him went into a swoon, and fainted unconscious to the floor!

**A Doctor Comes to Her Assistance**

 When she came to, the doctor was kneeling over her. “You were so excited that you passed out. He explained, as she began to sit up.”

 “Was that the Rebbe?” she asked, “Was that him?”

 “Why certainly,” the doctor answered, “Why do you ask? Didn’t you know that that was the Rebbe?”

 “Because.” she looked the doctor in the eyes, “that was the man whom I saw. He was the one who helped me in the Warsaw train station!”

 Later the Rebbe’s secretary made some calculations and figured out that the day she was speaking of was the same day that he had entered the Rebbe’s room and found him sitting motionless for a long time, oblivious to his surroundings as though he was somewhere else.

**Adapted from Story Rendition**

**Of Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 [Source: adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of his friend Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, the popular teacher, musician, recording artist and storyteller, in his weekly email for the yeshiva which he heads, Ohr Tmimim (ohrtmimim.org/torah )].

 Connection: Weekly Torah Reading which discusses the get, a document of divorce.

 Biographical note: Rabbi Sholom-Dovber Schneersohn (Cheshvan 20, 1860 - Nissan 2, 1920), known as the Rebbe Reshab, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org is a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’L**

**Why Theft is Such**

**An Abomination**

 “For *it is an abomination to Hashem your G-d all that do these*.” (Debarim 25:16)

 Deceit in money matters, even if done by error such as by incorrect measuring vessels, is impossible of restitution because the sinner does not know how many persons he has wronged.

 “The punishment for (wrong) measures is worse than the punishment for incest” (Baba Batra 88b). Not because incest is less serious. Although very severe penalties result from incest, yet with heavy penance and suffering it can be atoned.

 But thievery can never be fully atoned unless full restitution is made to each victim, even if cheated for a penny. This is therefore an abomination.

**Extremely Displeasing to Hashem**

 Aside from the impossibility of full restitution, this verse states that “anyone that does injustice” to a fellow man is an abomination. To wrong your brother in money matters is thus extremely displeasing to Hashem. But, to wrong him with hurtful words is even worse (Baba Metzia 58B).

 We see how very important is repentance. teshuba is not possible for a sin against a fellow man (whether deceit in money or hurtful words), unless he forgives you.

 However, an extremely heinous crime of ervah/immorality requires only that Hashem should forgive. Therefore it is less fearsome than sins against our fellow man whose forgiveness is not always available.

**Quoted from “Fortunate Nation” by R’ Miller**

**Thought from R' Miller ZT"L**

 Why is Shiluach Hakan/chasing the mother bird limited to birds?

 If you chase away the mother deer, cow, duck, chicken...there is no mitzvah from Hashem.

 Since birds bring joy to humanity through their singing (which is spiritual and touches the soul), even only through instinct and not free choice, Hashem still give the birds reward by designating them for this mitzvah in the Torah, whereby we get long life. (what a reward!)

 Hakarat Hatob/appreciation is shown by Hashem to birds, even though He programmed them to sing. How much more will Hashem give us when we bring happiness to people with our free will!!

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l”*

**“RESCUED!!”**

**From the Palestine Authority to South America**

**And from Islam to Judaism - in 24 Hours**

 Yad L'Achim had a closing window of opportunity in which to get a mother and her four children out of an Arab village, in front of a Rabbinical Court and on a plane out of Israel

 On Rosh Chodesh Elul, a man walked into the Yad L'Achim offices in Bnei Brak and asked to speak to Rabbi Sholom Dov Lifschitz, the organization's chairman.

 There was something about his appearance that reflected both despair and hope, but above all a sense of urgency, and a meeting was immediately arranged.

**A Tragically Familiar Story**

 The man told a tragically familiar story. His sister, a mother of four, had been trapped in an Arab village under Palestinian control for eight years. However, she had just received permission to leave her village the next day to make an urgent purchase. She would be allowed to leave with three of her children, while the fourth was to be left in the care of a local Arab woman.

 It wasn't coincidence that she wasn't permitted to leave with all four children. It was an "insurance policy" aimed at ensuring that she wouldn't run away.

 The man's heart-breaking request was simple: Rescue my sister and her four children. "I've heard a lot about you," he said. "You're the only ones who can do this."

 With the clock ticking, Rabbi Lifschitz called in the heads of Yad L'Achim's counter-assimilation department and briefed them. He instructed them to put everything else on hold and begin gathering intelligence information that would allow for the rescue of all five Jewish souls.

**The Custom to Recite Tehillim During**

**The Moments of the Rescue Operation**

 Less than 12 hours later, after a series of events that can only be described as open miracles, the woman and all four children were out of danger. During the actual moments of the rescue, as is his custom, Rabbi Lifschitz recited Tehillim and instructed all the heads of the organization to follow suit.

 A short while later, the mother and her children were at the security checkpoint leading into Israel proper. The rescue had been made possible by close cooperation between local sources and Yad L'Achim.

 On the Israeli side of the checkpoint, Yad L'Achim waited to welcome the family and bring them to a "safe" house in the center of the country. There, brother and sister met for the first time in eight years in an emotional reunion.

**Woman and Her Children**

**Had to Leave Israel**

 Due to special circumstances in the case, Yad L'Achim decided that the woman and her children couldn't be protected adequately in Israel and that she should be flown to a religious community in South America. The fact that the mother and children already had foreign citizenship made it unnecessary to obtain visas and helped overcome other bureaucratic hurdles.

 Chaim Tirer, of the Tasim L'Chaim travel agency in Bnei Brak, was called at 1 a.m. and asked to immediately arrange the tickets. "On the line was a Yad L'Achim man who apologized for disturbing me at so late an hour, but he explained that it was a matter of pikuach nefesh. I was excited about taking part in this rescue and finding them seats on a plane that would get them to safety. This wasn't the first time I was called at such unconventional hours by Yad L'Achim. This time, too, I felt like I was taking part in the mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim.

 "With G-d's help, I managed to find five seats on a flight leaving the next day, Thursday afternoon. I was so happy and quickly notified Yad L'Achim, which paid for the tickets and covered all the travel expenses."

 On Thursday morning, 2 Elul, in a special session of the Tel Aviv Rabbinical Court headed by Harav Tzvi Yehuda Ben Yaakov, the Judaism of the mother and her four children was officially recognized.

 "The beis din verifies the return of the woman to Judaism and wishes that she merit to go in the ways of Torah and mitzvos and to raise and educate her children in the ways of Torah and mitzvos. The woman and her children are Jews in every way, and the Interior Ministry should change her status accordingly."

**Avoiding Serious Future Difficulties**

 "Until that point," relates a Yad L'Achim official, "the woman and her children had official documents from the sharia courts attesting to their being Muslims, R"l. In addition to the halachic ramifications regarding her status, had we not arranged for this session in the Rabbinical Court, she would have faced serious difficulties in future legal battles over custody of the children."

 Yad L'Achim took the mother and children from the Rabbinical Court directly to the Kosel. There, the mother burst into tears of gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles she had experienced in the past 24 hours.

**Flying to a Safe Have to Start Life Anew**

 On Thursday evening, accompanied by Yad L'achim and her brother, the woman and her four children boarded the plane that took them to a safe haven where they can start life anew.

 Seconds after the plane lifted off, the brother turned to a Yad L'achim official and said with tears in his eyes: "I dreamed of this moment for the past eight years. I can't believe that it's happened in less than 24 hours. You made the impossible happen. I don't know how to thank you."

**A Very Warm and Emotional Greeting**

 In South America, mother and children were met by a representative of Yad L'Achim, who phoned Israel Friday to report that they were off to a good start. "There was a very warm, emotional greeting, and I'm sure that the entire community will stand at their side and do everything to help them progress in a new life."

 Rabbi Lifschitz reflected that the entire rescue had been accompanied by siyatta diShamya and open miracles. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent His angels to save this woman and her four Jewish children from captivity.

 "We mustn't forget all the other Jewish women who are still trapped in Arab villages. We must take every legitimate step to rescue them from darkness and bring them to light."

 *Reprinted from an email sent this week by Yad L’Achim’s American office at 579 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1420, New York, NY. For more information on the activities of this famed anti-missionary group, please visit their website:* [www.yadlachim.org](http://www.yadlachim.org) *or email* info@yadlachim.org *or phone (866) 923-5224.*

**Why Is Israel Unpopular?**

**By Tzvi Freeman**



**Tzvi Freeman**

**Question:** (from a citizen of India):

 There is an anti-Israel feeling growing around the world. Especially after the First Gulf War and 9/11. Almost all means of media are contributing to this anti-Israel feeling. There are different lobbies working behind this. I am wondering why Israel is not doing enough to stop or control this. It is truly a total failure. This is high time to do

something. War is not an option. Think about it.

**Response:**

 Thank you for taking the time to provide these comments.

 You write that Israel's popularity has suffered since the First Gulf War in 1991. This is surprising to hear. As far as I can recall, I do not remember any time that Israel was popular, from the time she was granted autonomy to the present day. In fact, I cannot recall a single act that Israel ever did on the international stage that gained her acclaim and admiration.

 Does it have something to do with our occupation of a strip of land on the Mediterranean? Or perhaps because we are not nice to our neighbors?

**Not Too Popular in Europe**

 I doubt it. We were not too popular in Europe, where most of us lived beforehand. But that may have had to do with our involvement in science and the arts. After all, what business did Mendelsohn, Heine, Mahler, Freud, Einstein, Chagal et al have mixing their noses into European culture?

 But that doesn't work either, because when we lived in the ghettos and minded our business, our popularity was also somewhat under par.

 I wish I could say it was just a European thing, but my history lessons tell me that we never quite won an award for popularity from the Arabic-speaking world. Neither were we too popular under the Byzantines, the Persians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Babylonians or the Pharaohs of Egypt.

**Not for Lack of Trying**

**Hard to Please Others**

 It's not as though we didn't try. We offered them many new ideas, and they accepted most of them -- our alphabet, architecture, crafts such as glassmaking and metalwork, monotheism and Divine Providence, our prophets and what they call "the book of books," most of our ethics, the idea of the equality of all human beings before G-d. They happily took it all, even claimed it for their own. But for whatever reason, we

remained even less popular than those who contributed somewhat less.

 So today things have not changed much. Whether Israel defends herself or grants concessions, assassinates terrorists or frees them, speaks out or shuts up, she receives the same degree of criticism and outrage. Even when, only a few months ago, Israel provided the most advanced medical aid of any country in the world to the suffering people of Haiti, her motives were questioned and not a thing changed.

 You will say, "So what did you people do to deserve this bad rap?"

**The World Doesn’t Regard Highly**

**Those Who are Peaceful and Virtuous**

 And I will ask you in return: What did the peace-loving Ahmadiyya of Pakistan, whose motto is "Love for all, hatred for none" do to deserve a massacre of 86 of their following in a mosque last June? What did the peace-loving monks of Tibet do to deserve the torture and persecution of the Chinese conqueror while the world remains quiet? What did Gabriel Holtzberg and the tourists in Bombay do to deserve the bloodthirsty cruelty of terrorists? Since when were the peaceful and virtuous touted as heroes among humankind, rather than simply trampled beneath the horses' hooves, the chariot's thunder and the grinding battalions of war?

 In truth, there was one time that Israel gained a small window of popularity. When Israel's young men fought back Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi and Iraqi troops directed and armed by Soviet aid to victory in six days, then there was a short outburst of admiration. Even our enemies were truly impressed. Why? Because they don't admire wimps who try to live in harmony. They admire tough men and winners of war.

**Are Jews Similar to the**

**Woman of the Nations?**

 Perhaps Jews are the woman of the nations. Our forefathers are praised for many traits, but prowess at war is not one of them. Look in the Talmud and you'll be hard put to find the sages extolling the virtues of their people as warriors and the mighty heroes. Rather, they describe "three virtues of this people: they are compassionate, they bear a sense of shame and they do acts of kindness” – all very feminine virtues. Perhaps as macho men beat their wives, so the nations of the world are obsessed with beating down the Jews.

 Or perhaps, as Paul Johnson writes in his History of the Jews, Jews represent G-d to the world. G-d is what provides people with guilt and shame. They don't like guilt and shame.

 So they don't like Jews.

 Or perhaps we should go to the greatest anti-Semite of all time and ask him. Adolph Hitler, may his name and memory be forever erased, wrote that, "The Jews have provided the world with two blemishes; one on their bodies and one on their psyches. On their bodies, they have provided circumcision, and on their psyches, they have provided a conscience."

 It's simple: You're told that Hitler gassed the Jews while the world looked on, that those nations who had a chance to save Jews deliberately failed to do so, and those lands to which Jews fled refused to let them into their borders. How do you rid yourself of this horrible guilt? By pointing to Israel, reinterpreting the facts and saying, "See, they're just as bad as the rest of us!"

**The Conscience of the World**

 Perhaps that's it. Perhaps if we stop being the conscience of the world, then they will let us come to the prom and even dance with us.

 Perhaps. But if we do, we will no longer be who we are.

 So I have a better idea. Maybe we'll just stop apologizing for everything we do, lift our heads high and be who we are without regard for the world's opinion.

 One day soon, all the world will turn upside down and those who loved peace and compassion will rise to the top while the emperors and conquerors will fall to the bottom. I'm quite sure that at that time we will gain some popularity. Until then, we can wait.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of The Freeman Files.*

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

**A Question About Teshuva**



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| **QUESTION:** |

How does one repent for certain sins, that he knows he will repeat?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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| Teshuva Image |

That's a question that is being always asked. And the answer is as follows. If a man smokes forty cigarettes every Shabbos, and he decides he’s going to smoke only thirty nine, that's a fortunate man. That's called a Miktzas Teshuva.

 A little bit of Teshuva, which is the easiest thing to do, is the biggest obligation. To stop all forty, not so easy for him, but to stop the fortieth, YES. And therefore, if you can stop even a little bit of your sin, then you must do it, and it’s the biggest obligation, that's the easiest thing to do.

**He is a Lucky Man**

 And so any sinner, even though he's a confirmed Chotai, if he’s able to make a resolve, at least one little bit of that sin he won't do anymore. Let’s say, he does a sin ten times a week, now he’ll do it nine times a week; he makes up his mind no more then nine times, he is a LUCKY man. If he neglects that opportunity, he’s in great sakona; Hashem is very angry at him. The tenth time was easy to avoid. And so everybody can do a Miktzas Teshuva.

 That's why we say Hashivainu Avinu Lesorasecho, Hashem bring us back to your Torah, that's Teshuva we are asking for, Teshuva, for repentance. Then we say, V'Hachzirainu B'sehuva Shelaima, then we’re asking for a perfect repentance. First we are asking for a little bit of repentance, any kind of repentance, a little bit at least. Then once you ask for a finger, you ask for the whole hand, too! Then we say give us a full repentance.

 *Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” which offers a transcription from one of the questions posed to Rabb Miller by members of the audience to his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 732-534-8868.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**The Sweet Revenge**

**Of a Survivor**

 At the end of this week's parsha Ki-Seitze, the Torah gives us the commandment to "wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven -- you shall not forget!" (Devorim 25:19)  Amalek had attacked the tired and weary Bnai-Yisroel when they left Egypt.  Amalek's attack was a "cheap shot."  Thus, it is a mitzvah to erase the memory of Amalek and to always remember their treachery in order to inspire hatred of the descendants of Amalek.

 Historically, Germany has been associated with Amalek.  Even if the only basis for such an association is "mashal", we can still learn from it.  Just as we are commanded to wipe out the memory of Amalek which perpetrated a cowardly attack on the Bnai Yisroel, so too are we commanded to do to the Germans, who acted in a similar way during the holocaust.

 How then do we blot out the memory of those who attacked us so cowardly?  The answer is possibly the following:  We can never undo what the Germans did; however, we can deny them their victory by perpetuating that which they sought to destroy.  By raising big families who are dedicated to Torah observance, we will blot out the memory of the evil forces who destroyed us.  The following inspiring true story illustrates one Jewish family's struggle to survive the cowardly German attack and to rebuild their lives.

**A Glorious Link to the Torah**

**Legacy of Pre-War Lithuania**

 R' Yisroel Zev Gustman, who passed away in Jerusalem in 5749 (1989), was a link to the glorious days of Torah greatness of pre-War Lithuania. At age twenty-two, he began serving on the Vilna rabbinate headed by the generation's leader, R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky.

 R' Chaim Ozer held the young rav in great esteem and forwarded halachic questions to him which were posed by the some of the greatest poskim of the day. When R' Gustman arrived in Eretz Yisrael several years after the War, he called on the world-renowned Tchebiner Rav, who was considerably older than him.

 The Rav recognized the name "Gustman" from a correspondence which he had once received when he had sent a question to R' Chaim Ozer many years previous. "Perhaps," the Tchebiner Rav asked him, "you are the son of HaRav Gustman from Vilna?" When the Rav realized that he was speaking to HaRav Gustman himself, he put on his hat and coat and recited the blessing one says when seeing an exceptionally great Torah personality.

 

**Rabbi Yisroel Zev Gustman and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky**

**Frequently Accompanied the**

**Legandary Rav Chaim Ozer**

 Especially in his last years, R' Chaim Ozer's health was frail. On most afternoons, he was taken for a wagon ride in the forests on the outskirts of the city so that his lungs could inhale the fresh country air. Very often, he asked young R Yisroel Zev Gustman to accompany him, and the two would spend their time together discussing Torah topics.

 One afternoon, for reasons which he did not explain, R Chaim Ozer broke with his usual practice of speaking words of Torah on their rides and instead used the wagon ride to give his escort a "guided tour" of the forest. "Over there," he pointed out, "is a cave…That plant over there is poisonous…The one over here, on the other hand, is not poisonous, and can in fact provide some sustenance ..." R' Gustman listened and nodded in understanding, but did not understand the purpose of all this information.

 September 1, 1939 arrived. The Second World War erupted as Poland was invaded by Germany from one side and Russia from the other. Vilna, which was officially the capital of Lithuania, had been under Polish control since 1919.

 Now, in what proved to be one of the great hidden miracles of the Second World War, Russia announced that it would be returning Vilna to Lithuania, and allowed that country to maintain its independence for the time being. Until the transfer officially took place, the border between Poland and Vilna would remain open. R' Chaim Ozer recognized this as an opportunity for rescue, and sent messages to the yeshivos in Poland to flee to Vilna even on Shabbos, in the hope that they could escape Russian tyranny and possibly depart from Lithuania for the free world.

**Thousands of Yeshiva Students Streamed into Vilna**

 The roshei yeshivah heeded R' Chaim Ozer's call and, along with thousands of yeshivah students, streamed into Vilna. R' Chaim Ozer, ill and often confined to bed, directed the massive organization and relocation of these yeshivos.

 By fleeing to Vilna before the border between Poland and Lithuania was sealed shut, many roshei yeshivah and students were able to flee Eastern Europe, be saved from the horrors of the Holocaust, and play a major role in the revival of Torah study after the war.

 Less than a year after the war's outbreak, in the summer of 1940, R' Chaim Ozer lay deathly ill. By that time, Russian troops had entered Lithuania and the situation had deteriorated. It would become considerably worse when the Germans declared war on Russia and invaded Lithuania.

**“You Will Overcome Them –**

**Both the East and the West”**

 As Jewry entered the month of Av, when we mourn the Destruction of both Temples, as well as other national tragedies of this long and difficult exile, it appeared that R' Chaim Ozer's time to leave this world had come. The rabbonim of Vilna were permitted to enter R' Chaim Ozer's room and take leave of him individually. When R' Gustman's turn came, R' Chaim Ozer grasped his hand and said, "You will overcome them — both the East and the West." To no one else did R' Chaim Ozer say these words.

 Soon after the Nazis entered Vilna, they declared a certain day "Rabbis' Day," when they made a special effort to track down and eliminate every rav in the city, for they understood that the teachers of Torah infuse their people with faith and spirit. R' Gustman was seized by a Nazi soldier but miraculously escaped. He, his wife and their little daughter fled to the forests of Vilna.

**Recalling Reb Chaim Ozer’s Forest Facts**

 It was then that R' Gustman recalled the day when R' Chaim Ozer had pointed out certain facts about the forest and its vegetation and where to hide in caves, and he now put that knowledge to use in trying to keep his family alive and well!

 For almost five years they hid, and on numerous occasions were a hairsbreadth away from death. More than one hundred times during the war, R' Gustman recited Vidui (the confessional prayer said before death), certain that his final moments had arrived.

 In more than one incident, bullets scraped his scalp, barely missing his head. In several instances, Nazi soldiers looked straight at him but apparently did not "see" him. R' Gustman later said, "it was more than a miracle; it was a decree from Heaven. The Ribono shel Olam (Master of the Universe) Who decrees who shall die also decrees who shall live."

**Warned by a Jewish Communist**

 He and his family were among the very few to return to Vilna when the war ended. One night, a Jewish Communist knocked on R' Gustman's door to warn him that the Soviet regime which had regained control of Lithuania was planning to deport him the next day. That night, R' Gustman fled with his family, and eventually arrived safely in America and later to Eretz Yisroel. As R' Chaim Ozer had foretold, he had overcome the "East"  — and the "West" — the  Russians of Eastern Europe and the Germans of Western Europe.

 The ultimate revenge against the Nazis is living a Torah observant life! Good Shabbos Everyone.

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