**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Nitzavim -Vayeilech 5771**

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**Story #721**

**The Rebbe Stronger**

**Than a Cossack**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000v6k0:001EU7Dm000017nj&count=1316529488&randid=1090790608&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1090790608##)

 R' Mordechai Dov of Hornsteipel fell ill with a violent cough. He went to consult doctors in the city of Kiev, and was told that it would be necessary to sear one spot on his body with a burning-hot lance. The doctors told him in advance that the treatment was extremely painful; so painful, in fact, that the patient had to be tied to a chair in order not to move during the process.

 "There will be no need to tie me," the Rebbe answered quietly. "I will not

move."

**The Doctor Begins His Treatment**

 The doctor began the treatment and the Rebbe, true to his word, did not move a muscle. He did not emit as much as a groan as his skin was scorched with a searing-hot metal stick.

 Amazed at this incredible willpower, the doctor remarked to the Rebbe's son, who was standing nearby, that just the day before he had performed the identical treatment on a Russian Cossack. The moment the hot lance had touched the Cossack's skin, he had jumped out of his seat -- ripping open the restraint that bound him -- and escaped through the window.

 The Rebbe, who overheard, surprised them all with his response: "Believe me, when a Jew comes to me and pours out the troubles that weigh down his heart, when he so desperately needs help and there is no way to help him, that pain burns more fiercely within me than even a burning-hot lance."

 [Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Stories my Grandfather told me" (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald]

 Connection: Seasonal 107th yahrzeit of the Hornsteipeler.

 Editor’s Note: You can also consider this story a continuation of #717, from four weeks ago.

 Biographic Note: Rabbi Mordechai Dov Twerski of Hornsteipel [1840-1904] was named after his two maternal great-grandfathers, Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl and Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch. He was also a direct descendant of Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli and the son-in-law of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz. A highly respected Talmudic scholar, he composed a popular book of Chasidic guidance, Pele Yoetz.

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

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**The Netziv and Living**

**Up to Our Potential**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 When we think of teshubah, repentance, we usually think of sins that we did or misvot that we neglected. Indeed that is the basic level of repentance, to wipe out all sins from our records. However, there is another concept that we should focus on, especially during these days.

 There was a great Rabbi, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the Netziv, who once invited his family and friends to a festive meal. He explained that he had just finished composing a very complex book, and that called for a celebration. He then told his family that when he was a young boy he was a playful child, not interested in studying.

**Overheard His Father’s Remark**

 One day, he heard his father tell his mother, "Maybe our little son would be more successful as a tradesman rather than a scholar." The young boy burst into his parents' room and cried out, "Give me one more chance and I'll apply myself to my studies," and the rest was history.

 The Rabbi then concluded by saying, "Imagine if I had become a tailor, a pious Jew who learns every day for a while, and after 120 years went to the Heavenly court. I would think that my judgment would be based on what I did as a tailor, but the Heavenly court would show me this book that I have just finished, and would ask me, 'Where is this work that you could have done?' That is why I am celebrating today - because I will be able to say that I did what was my potential."

**What We Should Ask Ourselves**

 We see from here that it's not enough to just consider what we do or don't do. We should ask ourselves, "Are we living up to our potential?" We have so much talent and capabilities. We have to exert ourselves a little more in the service of Hashem. In these days of teshubah let us re-examine our lives, our accomplishments and our goals, and let us see where we can make a difference.

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

**Kosher Lifestyle No Longer Impossible in Berlin, as City’s Jewish Community Thrives**

**By Associated Press**

BERLIN — When Rabbi Yitshak Ehrenberg moved to Berlin some 15 years ago, he found it almost impossible to keep a kosher lifestyle.

 There were barely any grocery stores offering food prepared in accordance to Jewish dietary law, no hotels catering to the needs of devout customers on Shabat and no kosher catering services capable of hosting big community celebrations.

 When Ehrenberg was invited to a Bar Mitzvah, the Jewish coming of age ceremony, he would often bring his own food just to make sure he wasn’t eating any non-kosher dishes.

**Revival of Jewish Community 70 Years After it Was Obliterated**

 But today kosher food is more and more widely available — even in non-Jewish stores — in another sign that Berlin’s Jewish community is thriving some 70 years after it was obliterated by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

 “Now everyone can live a glatt kosher life in Berlin,” the Orthodox rabbi said proudly. “And it is affordable too.”

 That, to no small degree, is to Ehrenberg’s own credit. He oversees the preparation of much of the kosher food in the German capital and beyond, gives out “Kashrut” certificates that mark food as safely kosher and encourages big and small food businesses to apply for the coveted stamp.

 “The Jewishness has become very strong again in Berlin,” Ehrenberg, who is originally from Jerusalem, told The Associated Press. “A lot of young people are finding their way back to religion and the city is still one of the fastest growing Jewish communities in the world.”

**10,000 Officially Registered**

**Jewish Members in Berlin**

 While the Berlin Jewish community has some 10,000 officially registered members, experts estimate that around 50,000 Jews call the city their home. That’s still a far cry from the 120,000 Jews who lived in Berlin before the Nazis came to power in 1933 or today’s flourishing diaspora communities of New York, Toronto or London.

 The increasing availability of kosher food is part of an overall resurgence of Jewish life due largely to the influx of some 200,000 ex-Soviet Jews who were let into the country after the German government relaxed immigration laws for Jews following reunification in 1990.

 Berlin has also become a magnet of sorts for many young Israelis, with unofficial estimates suggesting that 10,000 to 15,000 have moved here in the last few years.

**Jewish Schools Have**

**Sprung Up Across Berlin**

 Jewish kindergartens, elementary schools and religious schools — a yeshiva for boys and a midrasha for girls — have sprung up across Berlin as well as Hebrew language schools, and Israeli or Russian food businesses that cater to the growing and diverse demands of the Jewish community.

 Just last month, the upscale grocery store “Nah und Gut” — “Close and Good” — in Berlin’s Wilmersdorf neighborhood opened a kosher section with some 300 products including fresh beef from Poland, dairy products from France, two kinds of canned gefilte fish, soup powder, instant coffee and halva-filled cookies from Israel. Two big signs above the entrance advertise both fresh-baked suckling pig and fresh original bagels, appealing to both Jews and non-Jews.

 “The whole point is to have normalcy again, normal prices, normal opening hours — a neighborhood store where you can get a lot of good things,” Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal of the Chabad Lubavitch community, who supervises the kosher section of the supermarket, said in an interview earlier this week.

 Beyond the basics, there are now also kosher bakeries — offering Challah, the braided bread for Shabat — cafes, several catering services and a few restaurants — including one that even prepares kosher sushi. There’s also a hotel, the Crowne Plaza, which offers rooms that can be used in accordance with strict rules observed by Orthodox and some Conservative Jews on Shabat, the Jewish day of rest, and which will soon open a full kosher hotel kitchen.

**Enticing Non-Jews to**

**Buy Kosher Products**

 The next step, according to Rabbi Ehrenberg, is to also entice non-Jews to buy kosher products.

 “In America, a lot of health-conscious people buy kosher because they know it undergoes strict controls, not just in a religious but also in a hygienic way,” Ehrenberg said.

 “It is my dream that at some point even popular German brands like Ritter Sport or Storck chocolate will print the kosher stamp they received from me well-visibly on the packages — not just for export to Israel, but also when they sell it in Germany.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs) Newsletter. The Associated Press article was originally published in the September 15, 2011 issue of The Washington Post.*

**Lubavitcher Rabbi Stops Cremation in Florida**

 It's always sad when a member of the community passes on. However the news was even sadder when Rabbi Mendy Greenberg, Director of Chabad of Bonita Springs & Estero, Florida discovered that the family of a man who passed on Shabbos were planning on cremating him r"l.

 Unfortunately in times like this, when people are hurting terribly financially, the price for a cremation entices someone who would normally never think of doing such a thing.

 Rabbi Greenberg went into high gear and thanks the Hishtadlus of Rabbi Aron Lieberman and Yeruchem Koppelman many of the regular costs associated with a Kosher levaya were lowered. However, Greenberg was still short over $2000.

 Time against him, Greenberg reached out via e-mail to his fellow Florida Shluchim. Within minutes, Shluchim from up and down the state emailed that they would chip in. Within a day the required sum was raised.

 "Greenberg told SHMAIS.com, "This was an amazing show of Achdus and support. The family could not believe we can make it happen, but we have an amazing network of people who believe in what they do."

 The Levaya took place this past Tuesday. May the neshama have an Aliya.

*Reprinted from the Shmais.com website*

**Not-So-Observant’s**

**Orthodox Shabbat**

**Written By Amy Landsman**

**Photographed By David Stuck**



**Shlomo places a tray of fresh vegetables on the Shabbat dinner table, as sister**

 It’s a warm Friday afternoon and I’m standing in front of my closet. I peel off my shorts and T-shirt and wiggle into dark pantyhose. I reach for a long skirt, a long-sleeve shirt and closed-toed shoes.

 This is not my usual getting-ready-for-a-summer weekend routine, which generally consists of … well … shorts, a T-shirt and a nice glass of chardonnay.

**Spending Shabbat in Pikesville**

 I’m spending this *Shabbat* in Pikesville, eight miles and a world away from my Lutherville home. Fellow BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES freelancer Maayan Jaffe has invited me to share Shabbat with her, her husband Yitzchak and their three children, 7-year-old Shlomo, 3-year-old Netanya and little Devarya, 14-months.

 “*Shabbos* is the best day,” Maayan Jaffe told me. I was struck by her enthusiasm, because it seemed so different from my experience.

 Sure, I usually light candles and occasionally go to synagogue, but I can’t say that the day seems particularly special to me. It’s just something else on my ‘to do’ list. And I’ll be honest with you, when services end, I can’t get to my car fast enough. So what am I missing?

**A Flurry of Activity in**

**Getting Ready for Shabbat**



**The dining room table is festively set for Shabbat dinner.**

 Friday afternoon at the Jaffe’s house is probably typical of anyone’s home on Friday after a long week. There’s a flurry of activity as Maayan and Yitzchak Jaffe get everything organized for Shabbat while the kids bounce around and go through the typical late afternoon grouchiness anyone with kids knows all about. The family washes up and changes into good clothes. Maayan Jaffe removes the *tichel* (cloth head covering) that she wears while cleaning and finishing last minute cooking and puts on her wig.

 Although I often interview members of the observant community (usually by phone), I really don’t know much about their lives. So while what I learned may be old news to anyone familiar with an observant Shabbat, it was all new to me.

**Preparing for Shabbat**

**As Early as Tuesday**

 Maayan Jaffe starts preparing for Shabbat as early as Tuesday, when she goes shopping and plans her menus. On Wednesday, she starts prepping vegetables and other food that will hold for a couple of days in the ’fridge.

 When I get there, the table is festive with a white tablecloth and pretty paper plates: Maayan Jaffe generally uses her good Shabbat dishes, but when she is expecting many guests, she opts for fancy paper so that there’s less clean-up and she can enjoy the day more.



**Dinner for Ten**

 We’ll have ten for dinner this evening. All the food is already prepared. Paper towels, toilet paper and aluminum foil have been pre-ripped in preparation for the day of rest, as it is one of the 39 prohibitions of Shabbat to tear. The Jaffes have turned on various lights and covered some of the light-switches so the children won’t accidentally touch them.  Phones and the computer are turned off. Stray pens are collected so the kids don’t scribble or draw on Shabbat.

 The Jaffes don’t need to turn off the TV. They don’t have one.

 “Sunday is nice too, but we’re all running around. On Shabbat we actually get time to be with each other and there are no distractions. I can’t look at my Blackberry. My kids appreciate that!” she tells me.

 It’s summer, so there’s plenty of time to prepare. In winter the time crunch can be a lot more stressful.

 Shabbat candles must be lit no later than 18 minutes before the sun begins to set. (Shabbat starts an hour before actual sunset.) Some families light a little earlier, some a little later. Shlomo and I put coins in the *tzedakah* box and Maayan Jaffe lights candles. In addition to the two traditional candles, she lights a candle for each of her children.

**A Neighbor’s Last Minute Glitch**

 A neighbor has a last minute glitch. They’ve started Shabbat, but the oven was accidentally left on. He drops by to ask if Maayan Jaffe can help. She can’t, but a neighbor is quickly located who can swing by to turn it off. Later in the evening, a neighbor’s kid stops in to ask if the Jaffes have a non-battery operated thermometer. Someone at their house is sick and they want to take his temperature.

 We’re joined at dinner by the Jaffes’ next door neighbors, the Hexter family. The Hexters have 10 children, though most are grown and only their young adult son and daughter join us for dinner. After Yitzchak Jaffe makes the blessings and we wash our hands, Maayan Jaffe provides an amazing meal.

**A Half Dozen Salads**

 Our first course consists of some half-dozen different salads and salmon. From there we dine on a second course of chicken soup. Then comes the main course: chicken, kugels and vegetables, then cake and fruit for dessert.

 Yitzchak Jaffe leads a brief discussion of the week’s *parshat*, the weekly Torah portion, then he leads some lively singing around the table. We say the *birkat ha-mazon*, the grace after meals, after dinner. We do that at each meal I share with the Jaffes and their neighbors. I know so little about the observant lifestyle, I wonder if families even did dishes or took out the trash on Shabbat. The Jaffes wash the dishes they needed and also those that fill the sink too much, so they can use it during Shabbat. Trash is taken out.

 The next morning, because she has her hands full with the children, Maayan Jaffe asks her neighbor, Shoshanna Fishkind, to walk with me to Darchei Tzedek, their shul. Shoshanna has six children, and we talk about Orthodox life.

 I tell her I’ve heard non-observant women pity the *frum* (pious) women with their dark, heavy clothing in the heat and humidity of a Baltimore summer. “Hot is hot,” Fishkind says. “You’re just as hot in skimpy clothing as you are in modest clothing, so why not be modest?” (I’ve paraphrased some comments, as I couldn’t take notes during Shabbat.)

**A Lot of Diversity and Personal**

**Style in Women’s Dress**

 In fact, there is a lot of diversity and personal style in the women’s dress. The clothing should cover the elbows and knees and have a modest neckline. While some women wear long skirts, others wear skirts just below the knees. Many of the women and girls wear white, long-sleeved shells under their sleeveless summer tops. I see women in greens, blues and patterns. All the little girls in the neighborhood wear pretty summer dresses. At about age five, girls start wearing long sleeves.

 At shul, I sit with the women behind the *mechitza*, the partition which separates the sexes and prevents the men and women from seeing each other during services. Twenty years ago, this would have driven me nuts. Now I’m OK with it, because I can see how it’s the right choice in the context of the observant community. I am wearing dark pantyhose, a long skirt and long-sleeved sweater, but didn’t fool a soul, of course. Several women come up to me after services to welcome me and offer a friendly “Good Shabbos.”

**It’s Like Thanksgiving Every Week**

 After shul, Maayan Jaffe serves our main Shabbat meal. This time, in addition to the abundant salads, she serves the brisket that had been cooking in her Crock-Pot since before Shabbat. “It’s like Thanksgiving every week,” Maayan jokes. Again, another family joins us, the Soskil family and their six kids.

 Then it is Shabbat afternoon. We are actually pleasantly busy. Yitzchak Jaffe manages a brief nap and then leaves to study with a friend. The children play in the house and outside on the swings. We walk a few blocks to pick up a friend of Shlomo so they can play with Shlomo’s impressive collection of Legos. All along our walk, we see families on their front porches or lawns, relaxing, kids playing.

 A neighbor and her daughter stop by to visit. The little girl starts playing with Netanya’s Disney princess dolls. She dresses one princess in both a blouse and a ball gown. “She gave the princess *tznius* (modesty)!” laughs her mother.

 Steering their children away from unhealthy influences is truly a genuine concern of the mothers with whom I speak. They don’t want to be completely cut off from the modern world. “We don’t live in the 19th century!” Fishkind tells me. At the same time, they want their children to have a wholesome, healthy upbringing. Prudish isn’t the right word.  It’s more that they want their children to focus on the more meaningful aspects of life.

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**Yitzchak, along with many other men from the neighborhood, walk to their synagogue for Friday evening Shabbat services**

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**Do the Children Ever Have**

**Questions About Others?**

 Do the children ever question why everyone else wears jeans and they don’t? The mothers say the children don’t seem to dwell on it, though they will notice if someone has purple hair or some other particularly outrageous look (which my kids also did when they were younger).

 There are different levels of observance within the Orthodox community. One mother tells me she lets her sports-obsessed teen play Madden games, but makes certain the electronics are put away when more observant friends come to play.

 I tell Maayan Jaffe and some other women I chat with that I hear a lot of criticism of the Orthodox: that they are insular and unfriendly. I know women who avoid some stores popular with the frum because they feel they aren’t welcome.

**Members Perceive a Warm**

**And Welcoming Community**

 The women seem genuinely puzzled by this, saying in their experience the community is warm and welcoming to everyone. One suggests that perhaps the observant seem unfriendly because they have large families and a long shopping list, and are too busy trying to keep everything together to be very outgoing. Another thinks it was the non-observant who might feel a little self-conscious when in the company of many observant families and may imagine that as hostility.

 In other words, they are judging themselves and misplacing the judgment.

 For our third Shabbat meal, the *Shalosh Seudos*, we cross the street to the Fishkinds’ house for yet another abundant feast, this one dairy.

 The day is winding down. Maayan Jaffe puts Netanya and Devarya to sleep. Yitzchak Jaffe goes to Ma’ariv, the closing Shabbat service. When he returns, he lights the Havdalah candle. We pass around the spice box.

 Yitzchak Jaffe unplugs the Crock-Pot, which had simply been left on throughout Shabbat, and removes the cover from the kitchen light-switch. Shabbat is over. I get in my car and swing onto Smith Avenue, where I find the busy traffic momentarily jarring. I shrug off the sweater. I couldn’t wait to get home and ditch the pantyhose.

**Shabbat is Defined**

**By What You Can Do**

OK, so clearly I’m not ready to adopt a fully observant lifestyle. I did, however, take away a far greater appreciation of the spirit of Shabbat than I’ve ever had before. I realized that Shabbat isn’t defined by what you can’t do, but by what you can. I had a lovely time.

*All photos were taken before Shabbat.*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs) Newsletter. The article originally appeared in the Baltimore Jewish News.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Layover in Bangkok**

 Rav Sholom Schechter, a prominent elderly rabbi, was on a TWA flight to Eretz Yisrael, with a stopover in Athens where he would board a connecting flight. It was two days before Rosh Hashanah, and the last few days in New York had been exhausting. Expending his energy in raising funds, selling sefarim, packing, and preparing for his trip had all taken their toll on this seventy-year-old man. Extremely tired, he fell into a deep sleep as the plane crossed the Atlantic.

 He asked to be awakened when the plane landed in Athens, but someone forgot to do so. On board were many people of many nationalities, heading towards many different destinations, so it didn't seem unusual that the rabbi with the long beard remained asleep even as the plane landed in Athens and people disembarked. He remained asleep throughout the stopover and awoke only as the plane roared down the runway, taking off to its next destination.

 The captain greeted everyone and then detailed the flight plan. The next stop was Beirut, Lebanon!

**Blinking His Eyes in Disbelief**

 Rabbi Schechter blinked his eyes a few times in disbelief. Lebanon? Were they being hijacked? What had happened to Athens? He soon realized that he had slept through his changing point and unlike a bus, he couldn't just get out and walk back to his correct stop. His baggage was probably on its way to Eretz Yisrael, but he most certainly was not.

 This obviously Jewish-looking man would certainly be in danger in Lebanon, a land full of fanatics. He mentioned his predicament to the flight attendant who discussed the situation with the captain and then came to Rabbi Schechter with their advice.

**Crew Tries to Protect Him**

 They suggested that since all the passengers were either American or European tourists who would in all probability not report the Jewish passengers to the Lebanese authorities, the crew might be able to protect him from being seen by any Arabs who might assist the disembarking passengers, or by Arabs who might come on board to check and clean the plane. He should pretend to be sleeping and blankets would be heaped all around him, covering him almost completely.

 As the trip continued, Rabbi Schechter busied himself studying the sefarim he had taken along. When the plane eventually came to a halt in Lebanon, his heart was in his throat. For this landing he was wide awake. He sat trembling with fear, covered in darkness by the two blankets that the stewards provided for him.

**Next Stop is India**

 No one gave the "sleeping" traveler more than a passing glance and then once again the plane took off, the next stop being India. Rabbi Schechter knew that there were Jewish communities in Bombay and Calcutta, but en-route the captain informed the passengers that due to civil disturbances in India, only those people holding Indian passports would be permitted to disembark.

 Rosh Hashanah was only a day off. Checking plane flights and schedules, Rabbi Schechter realized that he had no chance of getting back to Eretz Yisrael on time for Yom Tov. He couldn't help but wonder where in the world this incredible journey might take him. He was confused and emotionally drained. Why was this happening to him? Was this wandering a punishment for something? Or was he destined to accomplish something special at some unknown destination? He would have to get off at the first stop after India, regardless of where it might be. He soon found out - Bangkok, Thailand.

 By the time the plane taxied to a stop at Don Muang airport and Rabbi Schechter was cleared through customs, it was only a few hours before Rosh Hashanah. After some desperate inquiries he was told that there was indeed a synagogue in the center of town. He made his way there, hoping that someone would be kind enough to invite him home. The people turned out to be more than kind.

**Congregants Speak English**

 He had no trouble conversing with the congregants, for most of the men who attended the synagogue were in Thailand on business, and they spoke English. He was invited by the president of the synagogue, a Mr. Atlas, to be a guest in his home, and it was there that Rabbi Schechter stayed for the next few days.

 At Mr. Atlas' table, Rabbi Schechter ate only some cake, fruit and vegetables, that his daughter had packed for his trip, and matzah, which his host provided. He was introduced to Mr. Atlas' children, two of whom were brilliant young scholars studying at Oxford University in England.

**A Trip that Get More Interest with Every Step**

 Among many things they discussed was the fact that in the synagogue tomorrow, aside from the regular Rosh Hashanah services, there was going to be a bar mitzvah. "This trip gets more interesting every step of the way," Rabbi Schechter thought to himself.

 When he came to the synagogue the next morning, he had another surprise waiting for him. Not only was there no mechitzah separating the men from the women, but the congregants were all sitting together. As an Orthodox Jew, Rabbi Schechter prayed alone in an anteroom to the side of the main sanctuary. After Shacharis (morning prayer), he asked the rabbi if he could address the people, to explain why he had not joined them for the prayers. He was granted permission

**(To be continued)**

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

**A Story of Jewish Unity**

**By Rabbi Eli Gewirtz**

 Not long ago, we commemorated the fast of Tisha B'Av and reflected on a period in our history in which unwarranted hatred between Jew and fellow Jew was rampant. The consequence was the destruction of the Holy Temple and a partial loss of our Homeland.

 Has that situation changed? Do Jews get along with one another? Are we focused more on what divides us or on what we have in common?

**The Privilege of Praying at the Kotel**

 On a recent trip to Israel, I had the privilege of praying at the Kotel, the Western Wall, for morning services. It was Rosh Chodesh Elul, the beginning of the month in which we aim to prepare ourselves for the High Holidays. The minyan, which was led by an imposing Chasidic gentleman, was larger than I was used to for that time of day and filled with Jews of virtually every stripe.

 As is the custom in Israel, the congregation was blessed by the Kohanim (pl. of Kohen, or priest). It was a penetrating and melodious symphony of Sephardic, Chasidic, and Modern Israeli voices. Young and old blended together to form what had to be music to G-d's ears. "Ahhh," I thought, "the disunity which once defined the Jewish people no longer exists. We're ready for the rebuilding of the Third Temple!"

**The Time for the Torah Reading**

 Then it was time for the Torah reading. The Chasidic gentleman who led the services doubled as the Torah-reader and tripled as the de-facto gabbai of this ad-hoc minyan. When it came time to distribute the honors during the Torah reading, he called out for a Kohen. A Chasidic gentleman stepped forward and was chosen. It was obvious to all where this was going. Non-Chasidim were welcome but would remain on the periphery. The Third Temple would have to wait.

 Then it was time for the Levite. There were several, and the gabbai chose the one with the most prominent knitted yarmulke, emblematic of the National Zionist movement. For the third honor, the Chasidic master of ceremonies chose an older Sephardic gentleman whose expression made it clear that he thought he'd be the last person on Earth chosen for this honor.

 For the fourth honor, a long-haired, obvious foreigner was approached and asked for his Hebrew name. He looked behind him to see whom the gentleman was addressing, only to discover that there was nobody there. I only wish I had a camera to capture the gigantic smile on his face - one that was certainly mirrored on G-d's. I prayed that G-d freeze that frame of Jewish harmony and erase any remnant of disunity we may still have in our midst.

**Protecting Israel from**

**Its Enemies Near and Far**

 What does this have to do with Rosh Hashanah? The pre-Rosh Hashanah maneuvers in the United Nations and the ominous events sparked by the so-called Arab Spring serve as stark reminders to Jews everywhere of just how small and precarious Israel's position in the world seems. As our hearts and our prayers are with our Israeli brethren, we wonder what we who live in the Diaspora can do. How can we somehow share in the responsibility of protecting Israel from its enemies near and far?

 I think I know the answer. It's the lesson our Chasidic minyan-leader was teaching. G-d doesn't need the US or the UN to come to Israel's aid. He wants Israel - all of Israel - to care about and genuinely respect one another. If disunity among Jews was the cause for us being driven from our Homeland, unity among Jews will bring about real peace and permanently restore our previous grandeur. As our enemies try to distract us, let us redouble our efforts to foster greater harmony among all Jews, and view each and every Jew for what they are - our brothers and sisters.

**Working 365 Days a Year for Jewish Unity**

 At Partners in Torah, we strive to keep this message in mind, as well as to promote this message 24/7, 365 days a year. And it's working. Within a short period of time, we'll be reaching a new landmark - our 40,000th participant! That's 40,000 Jews from virtually ALL walks of life learning from one another and sharing the beauty of our awesome heritage.

 Whether you are a participant, supporter, or just a friend, we thank you for your past support and for the confidence you've placed in us. Your support and involvement makes this all possible. If you are in a position to assist us financially, please visit http://www.partnersintorah.org/donate. Your help is genuinely appreciated.

 Warmest wishes to you and your family for a year filled with meaning, fulfillment, and even greater personal accomplishments. May all your prayers be answered and may we all be inscribed for life. Shana Tova!

*Reprinted from a recent email from Rabbi Eli Gewirtz, director of Partners in Learning, an organization that pairs learning partners in learning (men with men and women with women) Torah, with mentors in the Orthodox community with Jews from more secular backgrounds. For more information on becoming a Partner in Learning, please click* [*www.partnersintorah.org*](http://www.partnersintorah.org) *or call (800) STUDY-4-2. Those interested in becoming students, should click Extension 3 and those who can be mentors should click Extension 4.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parsha Nitazvim-Vayelech 5770**

**Story #666 (21 Elul 5770)**

**Jacob Israel and Peter**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 It was Erev Rosh Hashanah in Berdichev. The spirit of holiness hovered in the air. Each heart was throbbing with the thought of the imminent Day of Judgment; each mind was occupied with thoughts of repentance. The balance sheet of good deeds and misdeeds in the passing year did not quite tally -- every one found himself in the red.

 Too much time was wasted which could have been spent in the study of the Torah; perhaps more help should have been given to the poor -- and how much of it was given from the pureness of the heart? And what about all that loose, and sometimes even mischievous, gossip? G-d only knows how many misdeeds, large and small, have accumulated during the year. It's high time to get wise.

**The Special Selichot Prayers Before Rosh Hashana**

 Well, thank G-d for the special selichot prayers of the final week of the year. Here is a chance to pour out one's heart to G-d, the last opportunity to turn to G-d with real supplication, before the year is over. And the All-Merciful One will surely understand and forgive, and the new year will most definitely be a better one.

 Such were the thoughts uppermost in everybody's mind, as the Jews of Berdichev hastily rose while it was still dark from their warm beds to go to shul for the extra long selichot prayer before the Day of Judgment. It was still very dark outside, for sunrise was hours away. They did not wait for the shamash [synagogue attendant] to wake them up on this last day of the year.

**Townspeople Hastening to the Synagogue**

 As they hastened to the synagogue, the fresh autumn air drove the last vestiges of sleepiness from their eyes. They now met the shamash, going on his beat, knocking with his long staff at the dark shutters of the stragglers who had overslept, and calling out, Holy flock, arise to the service of G-d! And soon enough the cracks in the shutters revealed kindled lights inside, for no one -- but no one -- was going to stay in bed on this solemn morning.

 The narrow streets were soon filled with old and young men, and boys of all ages. Many went to the mikvah for immersion, and came out feeling purified and inspired. There were many visitors in Berdichev, who had come to spend the Solemn Days in the nearness of the saintly Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev . They now made their way to the Rabbi's house, in order to accompany him to the synagogue.

**Rabbi Carrying a Basket of**

**Tantalizing Food and Vodka**

 As they approached the Rabbi's home, they saw him at the door, on his way out. They were amazed to see that he was holding a basket, from which the slim neck of a vodka bottle was sticking out invitingly. The tantalizing smell of newly baked kichlech [cookies] and fresh herring could not be ignored. What on earth is the Rabbi going to do with the refreshments at this hour? they wondered, as they followed him in silence at a respectful distance.

 They approached the synagogue. The windows blazed with light, and one could see through the windows that the synagogue was already crowded with worshippers from wall to wall, waiting for the Rabbi.

**Walking Past the Synagogue**

 But the Rabbi went past the synagogue! The wonder of his followers grew with every step. Where is the Rabbi going? Can he possibly be so engrossed in meditation that he did not notice the synagogue?

 On and on the Rabbi strode, until almost to the outskirts of the town. The Rabbi was heading for the large inn, and his followers were close on his heels. Now he entered the inn and his followers with him. The large hall of the inn was filled with the smell of stale tobacco, and empty vodka bottles were strewn all over the place. On the floor of the dimly lit hall lay sleeping men, crowded like sardines -- farmers, traders, wayfarers and beggars -- many snoring in a medley of sonorous tones and whistles.

**Bending Over a Pale Lean Jew**

 The Rabbi bent over a sleeping man, whose tzitzit strings were showing from under his jacket, with his skullcap hinging precariously on his head. He was a lean man, a bundle of bones held together by a pale skin which seemed ready to break at several points.

 Gently, the Rabbi woke him, whispering: “Reb Yid - Mr. Jew, your throat is dry; you must have been napping too long. Wake up and take a gulp at this schnapps! I have a chaser too: fresh herring and kichlech, a treat!” The Jew opened his eyes wide with amazement, threw a glance at the refreshments, but recoiled in horror.

 “I don't know you, my friend, but have you no G-d in your heart? Would I drink any liquid before I've washed my hands, never mind hard liquor? Would I eat before I have said my morning prayers? You must be joking!”

 The Rabbi moved on to the next sleeping Jew. Gently he shook him by his shoulders and repeated his offer in a most enticing way, but the reply was the same. The Rabbi fared no better with the third and fourth. Then the Rabbi bent over a sleeping, corpulent, country yokel.

**Offering Schnapps to Ivan**

 “Ivan, do you want a schnapps and some refreshments?”

 Ivan rose quickly. The word schnapps acted like magic. “Give it here!” he said, and he gulped down the glass of vodka in one shot. Eagerly he swallowed the piece of herring, and a kichel, which he ate with relish and licked his lips. Thanks, pal, he murmured, and when no more was coming, he turned over on his other side and was soon snoring merrily again.

 The Rabbi moved on to the next sleeping farmer. Stephan, do you want a drink? The story repeated itself with Peter and Vladimir and so on, until the basket was empty.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak quickly stepped outside. All was quiet, as the Berdichever Rebbe

lifted his eyes to heaven and said:

**Declaring the Virtues of the Jews to G-d**

 “Master of the Universe! Look at your children! Jacob gets up in the morning, and his first thought is of you! He would not let anything pass his lips until he has sung your praises! But Esau's first thought is of food and drink!”

 His mission accomplished, his face beaming with satisfaction, the Rabbi turned to his followers. “And now, holy flock, let's go to the house of G-d. Now we can face our Maker with confidence, and pray for a good, sweet new year!”

 [Source: Lightly edited by Yerachmiel Tilles from berdichev.org.]

 Connection: Seasonal Saturday night starts the Selichot prayers before Rosh Hashana (for Ashkenazic Jews; the Sephardim have been saying for three weeks already, since 2 Elul)

 Biographic note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Deberamdiger of Berdichev (1740 - 25 Tishrei 1810) is one of the most popular rebbes in chassidic history. One of the closest disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, he is best known for his love for every Jew and his active efforts to intercede for them against (seemingly) adverse heavenly decrees. Many of his teachings are contained in the posthumously published, Kedushat Levi.

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

[www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) [ascent@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1283355787)

**It Once Happened**

**What G-d Wants**

**From a Jewish Innkeeper**

 The Chasid stood in his inn serving his customers. Today Ivan and Grisha had gotten into a fist fight once again, and he had thrown them out the door, telling them to take their business elsewhere. Stasha had refused to pay up his bill which had mounted to a whopping five rubles.

 The noise, the swearing and constant drunken arguments were more than the Chasid could stand. Some days he could hardly force himself to open the tavern door to patrons. "Malka," he would tell his wife, "I just have to find some other livelihood, I can't stand it any longer." But, in truth, what else could he, a man with six growing children, find to do in the village?

**The Heartbreaking Plight**

**Of the Tavern Keeper**

 "Every day and every night," the tavern keeper thought, "my whole week is spent in the company of these coarse peasants, whose hours are spent guzzling vodka, then sinking into drunken stupors or engaging in senseless, vulgar brawls. How can I help but decline in my service to G-d when I spend all my days in such a place?" Then he would once again weigh his options and fall into despair.

 Finally, he decided that he would pay a visit to Rabbi Aryeh Leib, the Shpoler Zeide. The tzadik would certainly have some words of advice for him and help him to extricate himself from his terrible situation. Arriving at the home of the tzadik, he was admitted into his study and soon launched into an explanation of his problem.

**Describing to the Rebbe His Dilemma**

 The Chasid explained that he stood in a tavern all day, dispensing drinks to all manner of low folks, and he was concerned that he might fall into their ways, simply by virtue of the constant contact. On the other hand, he had a family, many obligations to his children, his wife, his elderly parents; he felt trapped. There must be a way out for him...

 The rabbi listened quietly to his complaints, allowing the poor, distraught man to vent his feelings. Then the tzadik said with an understanding smile, "From what you have told me, I understand you'd prefer to fulfill your obligations to your Creator in a different way. Perhaps, by being awarded a bag full of gold coins, living in an elaborate palace, filled with holy books, being clothed in the finest silken garb, with a fur hat atop your head it would be easier to be a good Jew! Were all of those conditions to be met, you'd surely be able to learn Torah and perform mitzvot with a clear mind, with a complete heart, without being burdened with every care in the world.

 "Well, my dear friend, you have it completely wrong. That's not the Divine plan. G-d wants that you, burdened with all the problems that stalk you through your days- lack of money to meet your bills at the end of the month, children to marry off, vulgar peasants yelling at you to hurry up with their drink - with all of that, He wants you to be a good Jew.

**Your Service Can Give**

**Hashem His Greatest Joy**

 "My friend, it is His will that you take all of these distractions and put them aside in order to perform His will, even when you feel that you will shatter into pieces. When you cleave to Him, in the face of all these hardships and long for the rare moments of solitude when you might fulfill the desire of your heart to say a few precious words of prayer to Him, then G-d gets the greatest joy from your service. If all He desired was effortless praise, He would be satisfied with His myriad troops of angels who utter, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" without stop. No, He desires your heart, which you give Him in the face of your daily hardships - that is true service.

 "I advise you, instead of complaining how difficult it is to make a living in your rough tavern atmosphere, give thanks to Him, for He has provided you with an opportunity to elevate yourself to a place of such sanctity that no other test would have afforded you. Indeed, G-d has given you a great gift, and you should cherish it."

**The Preacher and Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik**

 There was a preacher who used to travel from town to town delivering fire and brimstone sermons to stir the hearts of his listeners to repentance. Unfortunately, this preacher himself left much to be desired in his own ways, swerving from the path of Torah whenever it suited his purposes.

 The preacher became very well-known and his fame brought him invitations to address congregations near and far. Once he was invited to speak in Brisk. His private indiscretions, however, came to the attention of Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik, who was the rabbi in Brisk, and Rav Chaim forbade the man to speak.

**A Plea That All His Words are Kosher**

 When the preacher realized what had happened, he came to the rabbi to plead his cause. "Come just once and listen to my sermons. You will see that I say nothing objectionable. In fact, every word I utter is a hundred percent kosher. I quote the original sources and the stories I use to illustrate my points are well chosen and especially suited to my listeners. You couldn't have the slightest problem with my sermons!"

 Rabbi Soloveichik replied, "In spite of all your protestations that your words are proper and your sources kosher, you will not succeed in making me change my mind. The Jews of Brisk are upright people, good and holy Jews who must be guarded against any improper influences that harm them. Even the most kosher meat, which has been slaughtered by an expert, soaked and salted with great care, becomes non-kosher if it is cooked in a pot which is not kosher."

 The preacher understood the Rav's implications and was not seen again in Brisk.

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

**Kaifeng (Chinese) Jews**

**Study in Israeli Yeshiva**

**By Rebecca Bitton**

**On road to full Orthodox conversion, seven dedicated Chinese Jews plan to exchange their visitor permits for aliyah visas to make their trip to Israel a permanent one**

 Just a year ago, seven Jews from Kaifeng, China were living near the Yellow River. Now, these seven individuals, clad in Orthodox Jewish kippahs and tzitzit, are studying at a yeshiva in [Israel](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-3284752%2C00.html%20), and earning their place in history as the first group of Chinese Jewish men from Kaifeng to do so.

 On the road to full Orthodox conversion, these dedicated Jews will be exchanging their visitor visas for aliyah visas to make their trip to Israel a permanent one.

**Origins of Chinese Jewish Community**

**Date Back Almost 1,000 Years Ago**

 A Jewish community has lived in Kaifeng from at least the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127 of the Common Era) until the late nineteenth century, Kaifeng being Northern Song's capital. The seven Chinese Jewish men are descendants of this ancient Jewish community.

 An inscription found in Kaifeng, dating back to the year 1489, states that the Jews may have originally come to China from India as early as the Han Dynasty period (2nd century BCE-2nd century CE).

 By the mid-19th century, however, after the death of their last rabbi, the community dispersed and the Kaifeng Jews became a lost Diasporic group.

 Now trying to reclaim their Jewish roots, the seven students have spent their first six months in Israel on a religious kibbutz. The students also took morning Hebrew classes and spent a month in an apartment in Jerusalem studying at the Machon Meir Yeshiva.

 With the help of an organization called Shavei Israel (Returners to Israel), a non-profit initiative, programs have been designed to help Jews like those from Kaifeng to strengthen their connection to their Jewish roots, and allow them to return to the Jewish state. One of these programs is held at Hamivtar Yeshiva in Efrat, led by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin.

1,000 Kaifeng People Aware of Jewish Descent

 Though many strict rabbis would question the Jewish authenticity of the Kaifeng Jews, Riskin, as well as other rabbinates, have chosen to accept the ancient community.

 The seven Chinese yeshiva students are among the last of the Kaifeng Jews to be aware of their Jewish background. According to Jewish Daily Forward, there are about 1,000 people in Kaifeng aware of their Jewish descent. Thirty-five out of that thousand have for the past five years been hosting meals and prayers for Shabbat.

**Families Maintained Various Jewish Traditions**

 Some of the students told the Jewish Forward that they found out about their roots in their teens. Others grew up in families that always avoided pork, while others maintained other Jewish traditions.

 Regardless, these students are creating history in their dedication to their roots through the study of the Jewish faith, and well on their way to becoming a recognized part of Israel’s diverse Jewish community.

*Reprinted from Ynet.com (August 24th) which reprinted the story with permission from* [***Shalom Life***](http://www.shalomlife.com/eng/)

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Preparing For Yom Hadeen (Rosh Hashana)**

 The main avoda, spiritual service of the Judgement Day is focusing on "Hashem Melech", The King. That Hashem created the universe and that He runs it all. He is the only one that has any power and only He can do anything for us.

 EMUNAH is what we are working on gaining clarity for Rosh Hashana.

 Rambam: "I am Hashem your G-d"(10 Commandments"), this is the mitzvah to gain awareness and belief in Hashem.

 This is most fundamental and supersedes even admitting our sins (which we don’t do today) in front of the Heavenly court.

 The great purpose in life, to constantly improve, is something that Hashem is urging us and weighing.

**Imparting Wisdom to the Wise Person**

 "Hashem imparts wisdom to the wise person" (not the jester) because He sees that this wise person will make the best use of this gift. So, we want to put ourselves in this position for the Great Day of Judgment, Yom Hadeen.

 "Asher Bara Elokim Laasot", "...That Hashem created to do".

 The words 'to do' seem superfluous since it was already stated that "Hashem rested from all of the work that He did".

**The Great Purpose in Life of Being a Doer**

 Rabbi Miller explains that the words "to do" come to teach us the great purpose of life, to be a doer, to make something out of ourselves through constant improvement.

 Hashem, our Father, Avinu Malkenu, is waiting on Rosh Hashana to hear our commitment to improve.

 We can say, "Hashem, we are going to utilize the coming year to love and fear Hashem. To do everything to serve Hashem. I am going to make something out of myself".

 When Hashem hears our commitment for the New Year, He says: "My child, I see that you are committing to improvement, I commit to giving you another year of life and blessing”.

 "Hashem imparts wisdom to the wise".

 Step 1 to Teshuvah: Realizing how much Hashem has done for you.

 Step 2 Thanking Him

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

The Golden Column

**The Gaon Rabbi Amram Azoulai, Zs"l**

 The Gaon Rabbi Amram Azoulai zs"l, the father-in-law of the glory our generation, the Rishon Lessiyon [Hacham Rav Ovadia Yosef, shlita], was the glory of the diligent. Not only was he diligent about his learning, without a break during the hours of learning in the Yeshivah, but even at the times between the scheduled hours, he did not leave his place, and his righteous wife would bring his food to him in the bet midrash.

 The Torah was his whole life. During the meal, between courses, he peered into a book. When he drank a cup of coffee, he would hold the cup in one hand and the book from which he was learning in the second. Both before and after prayer, he used every moment for learning.

**Listening Intently to the Claims of the Litigants**

 When he sat down to judge, he listened intently to the claims of the litigants, and when the verdict was clear to him, he would return to his learning, while the other judges were still arguing and discussing the case. Even during the holidays, in which everyone is busy with the commandments of the day, he would fulfill them quickly and return to his learning.

 On each of the days of Rosh Hashanah, he would complete the book of Tehillim. On the eve of Yom Kipur, he would learn throughout the final meal. So too on the night of Yom Kipur, after the prayers and the selihot. On Yom Kipur itself, he completed the book of Tehillim between the prayers, and after the fast, he would return to learning as usual!

**Dancing with Great Joy on Simhat Torah**

 On Simhat Torah, he would dance with great joy, so energetically that his clothes would be dripping with sweat, and yet he would still find hours to learn Torah. Also on Purim, and after the searching for hamess and its burning. Even on Tisha Beav, he would not pause from learning the topics that one is permitted to learn in a house of mourning.

 Because of his tremendous diligence, his Torah was as if stored in a box in his head: Tanach, Mishnah and Gemara, rishonim and books of halachah, and even kabalah, which he learned in private. Even during family celebrations he would look into a book, and while travelling he would review his learning by heart.

 When he was hospitalized with an illness, and they came to prepare him for an operation, they did not find him in his bed. When they searched for him, they found him in the hospital's synagogue, deep into his learning. When he left the hospital, he requested that he be brought to the bet midrash, and he sent notice to his house that he had returned.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Sobah Newsletter, a publication of Congregation Bnai Yosef in Brooklyn.*

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

**Learning From the Fish**

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

What should we think when we see the fish during Tashlich?

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

|  |
| --- |
| **TASHLICH** |

*You know what I think? When you pass a fish store and see the fish in the window, there's a good time to stop and look, don't wait for* Tashlich*. The fish in the window come from the ocean. That fish comes together without* Shadchonim*, they're* Porim V'rovim Bayom*, they get married in the ocean and they produce offspring, and it's for one purpose, to give us more fish to eat. It's a* Nes*, how fish meet each other in the depths of the ocean and they're able to copulate, and produce some more fish, it's a* Niflaos Haborei*, you have to marvel at it.*

**The Miracle of How Fish Breathe**

 *The fish doesn't have any air and still it breathes with its lungs. It's able to take out from the water the dissolved oxygen, fish must have oxygen. They are so built that they can use oxygen dissolved in the water and it lives without lungs, except the* [*lungfish*](http://www.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=51050d25b69193df91b43c6e8&id=16e23062d8&e=a81de1a04f)*. And so when you look at a fish, it's a special* Briah*,* Chesed Hashem*.*

 *Fish of course is a* Taanug*, that's why all Jews eat fish on* Shabbos*, it's part of the happiness of* Shabbos *in order to learn the* Chesed Hashem*.*

 *And so I say, you don't have to wait for* Tashlich*, when you pass a fish store and see big juicy fish lying there, a big carp, a big salmon, a big trout, take a half second and take a look. AAH; what a wonder it is that it happened in the middle of the ocean, they came together and produced such tasty tidbits for the people to enjoy and to appreciate the* Chesed Hashem*.*

 *Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week;s “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” email that is based on a transcription of a question and answer from Rabbi Miller’s classic Thursday night hashkafa lecture in his Flatbush shul. To listen to the audio of the particular question and answer, please dial (732) 534-8868.*

**Our Father, Our King**

**Avinu Malkeinu**

**By Tzvi Freeman**

 Rosh Hashana, the Baal Shem Tov taught, is a game of hide and seek. G-d hides, we seek.

 But where can G-d hide? Wherever you go, there He is. As the Zohar says, "There is no place void of Him."

 So perhaps what the Baal Shem Tov meant is more like peek-a-booâ€”in which a parent hides behind his or her own fingers. So too, G-d hides Himself within the guise of an awesome, indifferent king, judging His subjects strictly by the book until the most sublime angels shiver in dread.

 And we seek. We seek the father behind the stern voice. We are the small child who climbs into the king's arms, tears off the mask and exclaims, "Daddy!"

 Which is just what He was waiting for.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Freeman Files at Chabad.org*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Chinese Take-out**

 This Shabbos is the last Shabbos of the year as Rosh Hashana is next week.  The new year Rosh Hashana is a time of renewal, of new beginnings.  In preparation for Rosh Hashana, we will begin on Motzei Shabbos to say Slichos - prayers aimed at opening our hearts to teshuva - repentance. The Sages tell us that one who repents has a fresh start on life.  The following amazing true story will inspire us to make the necessary changes in life to ensure that we will have a good sweet year, with Hashem's help.

**One of Life’s Most**

**Challenging Disappointments**

 Hellen and Paul Nach (not their real names) underwent the most challenging of life's circumstances. Yet, through it all, they searched for meaning and the Divine hand guiding their lives.  You see, Hellen and Paul were having trouble having a a baby.  They had been married for several years and they desperately wanted children. Yet, in spite of all their attempts, all of their most fervent prayers, they were unable to conceive.

 Ever since they married and moved to their cozy home in the suburbs, Paul dreamed of being father. As he made kiddush Friday nights, he envisioned a table crowded with noisy children who would sing songs, share words of Torah, and talk about their week. So, he wondered, why weren't they able to have their own child?

**What Did Hashem Want of Them**

 Perhaps Hashem wanted something else from them. But what? Weary of disappointment, they tried just about any treatment. The first treatment was unsuccessful. But the couple kept their faith, insisting that, "The next one will be the one." Six months later, they tried again. But that, too, did not work.

 One night, as they prepared dinner together, Paul wondered aloud if they should pursue a different path. "Maybe Hashem doesn't want us to have children this way," he said gently, as his wife's eyes filled with tears. "Maybe we should adopt."

 Helen was hesitant, she didn't want to give up hope. But she didn't want to let her husband down either. Maybe adopting was the answer, she agreed. She tried to warm up to the idea, and began researching the possibility.

 One night, as Paul and Hellen were reading in the den, Hellen remarked that in China, thousands of baby girls are abandoned as couples attempt to have a boy. Paul's ears perked up. "That's terrible," he exclaimed. "More people ought to go to China and try to adopt them!"

 Hellen agreed it would be a mitzvah to adopt one of the girls and have her converted to Judaism. The next day, they filed paperwork to begin adoption proceedings. But even as they sent in the papers to the adoption agency, a part of her couldn't give up on the idea of having her own child so she continued the  treatments.

 After the third treatment, they received shocking news. They were expecting twins. Their joy knew no bounds, and soon most of their friends and family knew of the good tidings. Hellen skimmed baby magazines; Paul began researching Jewish baby names. Despite her happiness, some uncomfortable questions began gnawing at Hellen. She asked herself, could she handle newborn twins and an adopted baby at the same time?

**Nervous About the Birth of Her Twins**

 Although she was excited, she was also nervous about the birth of her twins. She wanted to be the best mother she could be. But she kept thinking about the girl in China who was surely waiting for loving parents to rescue her. She told Paul about her doubts, and he agreed that three kids at once would be too difficult. With a heavy heart, she called the agency to discontinue the adoption process. And so they put the idea of an adoption to rest.

 For a few months, Hellen reveled in her pregnancy.  But then, four months into her pregnancy, tragedy struck. Hellen lost one of the babies. The couple was devastated. For Paul and Hellen, the celebration was marred by sadness. But thankfully, that March, they had a healthy baby girl, whom they named Miriam. Dozens of well-wishers from the community descended on their home with gifts and good wishes. Miriam was an easy baby who Paul and Hellen instantly adored. Paul never wanted to put her down, although Hellen teased him that he was spoiling her. Everyone was happy for them. But for Paul and Hellen, the celebration was marred by sadness because of the baby they had lost.

**Thinking Again About Adoption**

 After a few months, Paul began thinking again about adoption. He wondered about the baby girls in China waiting for families. Hellen, too, was already contemplating another baby, and like Paul, she couldn't stop thinking about the Chinese girls China in need of a family.

 One morning, as Paul was leaving for work, she turned to him and said, "Maybe we lost the baby so that we know we should have two children, but one of them is a girl from China." Paul was stunned. What a coincidence, he told her. It was precisely what he had been thinking.

 They called back the adoption agency to commence the adoption process they had halted when they became pregnant. Most of the paperwork was already complete. They had spent many hours acquiring the necessary letters of recommendation, background checks and fingerprints.

 According to the adoption agency, all they needed to do was visit a doctor to prove they were physically fit to be parents. Hellen's doctor appointment was routine. The doctor proclaimed her to be in excellent health and signed the papers, which were sent to the agency. Hellen breathed a sigh of relief.

 Paul went for his physical a few days later. After some routine tests, the doctor signed off on the adoption papers and sent them in. "I noticed something on the x-rays that bothered me," he said.  But then the doctor requested a battery of additional tests. Although most doctors never bother with such detailed tests, he explained to Paul, he is old-fashioned and detail oriented, and always requires them. Paul sighed and tried not to get impatient. The papers had already been sent in. Why should he bother with more tests?

**Doctor Noticed Something**

**On Paul’s Chest X-Rays**

 But after his chest x-ray, the doctor called him back to discuss the results. "I noticed something on the films that bothered me," he said. "It's probably a clogged artery. You should have it looked at." He sent Paul for a CAT scan. The results shook him to the core: He had a rare form of cancer. The tumor was just large enough to be visible but in an early-enough stage to cure, the doctor told him.

 "It's a complete miracle that you came now," the doctor told Paul. "Had you visited any earlier we never would have detected it, and a few months from now, it would have been too large to do anything."

 Paul's head spun when he realized what he was hearing. He was 38 years old and a first-time father. He was about to adopt a child. And now he had a tumor? But the fact that he had arrived at the doctor's office at that precise time made recovery possible. Could it be that their decision to adopt had saved his life?

**Everything Suddenly Becomes Clear**

 When Paul told Hellen, tears welled up in her eyes. Suddenly, everything was clear to her. "This is why we went through what we did," she said in a chocked voice. "It's because Hashem wanted you to see the doctor at the right time. Maybe that's why it took so long to get pregnant, why we lost a child, why we decided to adopt when we did – it was all to save your life."

 Paul underwent chemotherapy and had the tumor removed. As he recovered, the adoption papers were processed. A photo arrived in the mail of a baby girl with giant chocolate brown eyes and black hair. Hellen and Boruch Hashem a cancer-free Paul stood in a nursery in a small city in China.

 Paul stared at the photo and began pondering Hebrew names aloud. Hellen's heart thumped wildly as she peered at the baby's face. Somehow, even thousands of miles away, she felt connected to the child. She knew she was meant to be her mother.

 And then, several weeks later, Hellen stood in a nursery in a small city in China and beamed as they cradled their new baby girl. They brought in the Jewish New Year with Chabad of Guangzhou. It was there that Paul and Hellen ushered in another beginning with their second child, whom they decided to name Anya, meaning "Hashem answered me." Paul and Hellen had saved Anya, giving her a second chance by taking her into their lives and raising her as a Jew. And she, in turn, saved her father's life and answered her parents' most fervent prayers.

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

**Shemen Tov**

**By Gavriel Horan**

 After a long, busy day at the office, going to the auto mechanic wasn't exactly what Zev Jacobowitz had in mind. Nonetheless, he had been putting off getting an oil change for weeks, and now was as good a time as any. The best place to get an oil change was just off the Jackie Robinson Parkway in East New York-one of the roughest sections of town and not exactly what you would call a Jewish neighborhood. Nonetheless, since it was basically on the way home and they gave you a free car wash while you waited, it was well worth it.

**Things Don’t Go Zev’s Way**

 Unfortunately, things weren't going Zev's way that day. After a half hour of waiting for them to finish, the head mechanic turned to Zev with the bad news that they had accidentally caused minor damage to his engine in the process of changing the oil and it would take them another hour to repair it. Zev was not at all happy to have to waste another hour of his precious time.

 He figured he should at least try to get a free oil change for the inconvenience. While five mechanics set to work on the "minor" problem, Zev set out to find the manager. The cashier pointed him in the direction of a very large, unfriendly looking guy with a shaved head, goatee and sunglasses, sitting in the back office.

**“Don’t Count on Getting**

**Anywhere with Him”**

 "He's the manager," she said in a skeptical voice, "but don't count on getting anywhere with him."

 "Is he nice?" Zev asked incredulously.

 "Noooooo sir," she replied. "You gotta be crazy to go in there but it's your life. Good luck!"

 For some bazaar reason that Zev could not understand, he asked her if the boss happened to be Jewish-mind you that there was nothing Jewish looking about him. Lo and behold, after asking around to a few of the other workers, it turned out to be a surprising yes--the manager was Jewish! Emboldened by the new information, Zev decided to try his luck,.

 "What do you want," the manager barked when Zev knocked on the door of his office.

**A Nervous Request for Compensation**

 "I'm sorry to bother you sir," Zev stammered, "I was just wondering if I could have some compensation for the time I've had to spend waiting here."

 "Compensation?" he bellowed with a look that could freeze Miami. "You're lucky that I'm even fixing it! Do know how much work I'm losing because of your stupid car-I have five guys working on it! I ain't givin' you a thing!"

 Zev stood there for a moment regaining his composure. "You're Jewish, right."

 "Of course I'm Jewish, but I ain't *Shomer Shabbos*!" the manager yelled.

 "What's your name?" Zev asked bravely.

 "My name's Ty," he shouted again, as if it was a name to be feared.

 "No, what's your Hebrew name?"

 "My Hebrew name's Tuvia-but I'm not *Shomer Shabbos*!"

**Ty or Tuvia Once Went to Yeshiva as a Kid**

 "It's a pleasure to meet you Tuvia. I didn't ask you if you were *Shomer Shabbos*."

"Don't patronize me buddy. I know all about Judaism. I went to Yeshiva when I was a kid, I'm married to a Jew and I'm raising two Jewish children-but I'm not *Shomer Shabbos!*"

 Seeing that Ty-or Tuvia clearly had an ax to grind, Zev decided to try to settle the score. He leaned close to him, away from the listening ears of his workers, and spoke softly into his ear: "Listen Tuvia. Seventy years ago, when Hitler rounded up our relatives, he didn't ask them if they were *Shomer Shabbos* or not."

**“We Jews Really Have to Stick Together”**

 Suddenly, Ty melted and a soft look came upon his face for the first time.

"You know, you're right," he said. "We Jews really have to stick together, regardless of if we're observant or not. We're all brothers, aren't we?"

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 That Friday, Zev bought an extra *challah* at the *hamish* bakery on the way home from work and decided to drop it off for Ty at the garage. He deliberately brought one *challah* instead of two, lest Ty think he was pushing him to become "*Shomer Shabbos*." When he arrived at the garage, the mechanics all groaned. "Oh no, is it broken again?" they asked.

 "No, thank G-d everything is working great. I'm here to see the boss."

 "The boss? You must really be crazy!"

 When he walked into Ty's office, Zev found him with his usual grimace.

 "What are you doing back here?" he barked. "Don't tell me it's broken again! I spent enough time on your car!"

 "No, take it easy Tuvia. I actually came to wish you a *Good* *Shabbos*," Zev said while handing him the *challah*.

 Tuvia sat there staring at the *challah* for a moment in silence. Then, with tears in his eyes, he looked up and said, "this is one of the nicest things anyone's ever done for me. My wife and I are really gonna enjoy this after she lights the candles tonight…"

 There's no shell that a kind word or nice deed can't break.

Underneath every hard exterior, is a beautiful Jewish *neshama* just yearning to come out.

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

**TorahOhr Tmimim Parashat Hashavua**

**Anyone Can Be a**

**Partner with Hashem**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week, the last week of the Jewish year 5770 (next week on Wednesday we celebrate New Year's Day marking exactly 5771 years from day man was created) we read the double Torah portions of "Standing (Nitzavim) and Walking (Vayelech)".

 They begin as Moses almost 3,300 years ago told the 'People of Israel' entering the Land of Israel for the first time, that they were 'standing' before G-d and entering a second 'covenant' (Bris) in addition to the one they entered at Mt. Sinai.

**G-d’s Promise to the Jewish Nation**

 But this is a very relevant to us now as well. The Torah is assuring us that although the judgment of New Year's day is approaching and G-d will decide the fate of the coming year, nevertheless He promises that we will remain 'standing' and will not be cast down.

 But this leaves a lot of questions.

 First; what is important about the day man was created? Second, why doesn't anyone else celebrate it? Third, what exactly is this covenant that Moses made and why did he need a second one? And finally, what has this got to do with us now?

 The answer to this might be found in the following story that occurred to me a few years ago.

 I teach young Jewish men Torah in a Yeshiva (Torah Academy) in the village of Kfar Chabad.  I always try to start my classes on time because, besides the importance of order in our school, every moment of Torah learning is vital for the welfare of the entire world.

 But occasionally there are 'challenges'.

 For instance one hot summer day three years ago I was called to give testimony in a court case in the nearby city of Ramla.

**The Case Was Supposed to Take No More than Fifteen Minutes**

 The case was supposed to begin at 9am and take no more than fifteen minutes and seeing that Kfar Chabad is only a 15 ride from there, even if I had to wait a half hour for the shuttle service I would still have no problem being back in time for the 11:30 class.

 But I was in for an aggravating disappointment. The defendant did not show up for the trial on time (in the end he didn't show up at all) and the Judge took the other cases that were after us and waited for him, leaving me with no alternative but to wait until they finished.

 Some of the cases were actually very interesting but I couldn't take my mind off the fact that the minutes were ticking away!I wanted to just stand up, excuse myself and leave but the thought that maybe he would show up and we'd finish the trial 'Chick Chak' (Israeli for 'in no time') kept me there.

**Pushing Off the Class**

**For Another Half Hour**

 At 10:30 I called up and pushed off the class a half hour till 12. Then at 11:00 I delayed it another half hour until it began looking like I would have to cancel it totally.

 Finally, at 12;30 the Judge hit the table with her gavel and announced that court is dismissed. I rushed out of the court building into the hot summer air, wiped my brow and looked around for a taxi but there were none in sight. So I called the pupils and told them I would try to be back in a half hour. I figured that it would take 15 minutes to get the entrance of Kfar Chabad then another five or ten to get to the Yeshiva.  If I didn't get a ride in the next ten minutes I would have to cancel the class.

**The Large Yellow Shuttle Bus**

 Just as I was entertaining these unhappy thoughts a large yellow shuttle bus that had been parked opposite the courtroom honked its horn, the driver rolled down his window and he yelled out "ONE MORE PLACE!"

 This was it!! I thanked G-d, ran across the street and entered.

 It took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust but when they did I sort of wished they hadn't.

 In the bus sat fourteen very scantily-dressed young women and with the fifteenth seat (my place) located in the back in the middle of four of them.

 True, it was a hot day outside so their dress, or rather lack of it, did not necessarily indicate immorality…. but as a religious Jew I try to avoid any vague suggestion of such a thing… and, as my eyes adjusted to the absence of sunlight (without going into details) I realized the suggestion here was not at all vague. So I decided to leave. So the class would be cancelled. No big deal!

**Offered a Seat on the Bus**

 But as I took one step back to leave, one of the females got up from her single seat near the window, leaving it free for me, and sat among her friends on the back bench.

 "Nu! Are you getting in or out!" said the driver anxious to go. So without thinking too much I went to the seat, sat down, looked out the window and tried to concentrate on the passing scenery and other positive things; after all it was only a 15 minute ride! No big deal!

 But as we drove I heard the young women talking and got the impression they were very young. Now it just so happened that I was carrying with me some small brochures from Chabad about the approaching holidays, Rosh HaShanna, Yom Kippur and Succot. And suddenly the thought entered my mind, 'Just a minute, Bolton. Are you a Chabad Chassid or not!? Your job is to spread Judaism….. not to look out the window!"

**Gave a Pamphlet to the**

**Girl Sitting Behind Him**

 So I turned to the girl sitting behind me and gave her one of my pamphlets. What could happen? Either she would say no or throw it on the floor or take it and keep quiet. So I figured I'd just do this thing and that's it. No big deal!

 But as soon as I gave it to her and she saw the picture of the Lubavitcher Rebbe she exclaimed "Oh! Thank you! This is very kind! Oh! It's about Rosh HaShanna! Thank you!"

 Of course this got some of the other girls interested and I gave them pamphlets as well which made the girls sitting in the front also interested. I handed each one a card, and each read it briefly, carefully folded it and put it in their purse, back pack or wallet…whatever they were carrying.

 One even said, "THIS is a real graduation present!"

 I couldn't contain my curiosity and asked, "Tell me, when did you graduate?" They answered "Today! This morning!"

 "What did you graduate from?" They all answered 'Seventh grade!'

 I made a quick calculation that these girls were only 12-13 years old! They dressed this way because that's how they were taught! This was the norm for young Israeli girls. They simply didn't know any better!

 Suddenly my entire attitude changed. I asked the girl sitting behind me, the one I gave the first brochure to, what she and her friends were planning to do on doing in their two month vacation. She answered, "Nothing. I mean, what is there to do? We'll go to the beach, and just do things, I donno."

 So I suggested, "Why don't you do something in your neighborhoods like visit old people, read stories to children, even just to talk to lonely people, a little thing like that can change a person's life. I'm sure you know there are a lot of children in broken homes or that never get any attention and a lot of old people that have no one to talk to. You could make them feel happy."

**“What Can We Do?”**

 But she shook her head no and said. "What… me? Us? What can we do? No! That is something for the department of education to do and they are on vacation. In fact… that's why we're on vacation!"

 Suddenly I got inspired and answered. "Exactly the opposite! You girls are the ONLY one's that can do something. First of all you see that no one else is doing it. And second you are still young… the world hasn't disappointed you yet. When people see the simplicity in your eyes it will make them happy! The Rebbe of Lubavitch says that even one person, even a child, can change the entire world!"

 Meanwhile the other girls noticed this conversation and one of them yelled out over the noise of the minibus. "Hey, what are you talking about? What is he saying?"

 The girl I was talking to yelled back, "He's saying we should do something in our neighborhoods with children or old people who need some help."One of the others said. "Hey, that's a good idea! Better than doing nothing every day!"

**Recalling Wonderful Memories of Visit**

 The girl speaking to me asked me where I was from and I told her Kfar Chabad (in another minute we would be there). When she heard that she said. "Kfar Chabad! Wow, I was there five years ago! It was great! I remember everything; how we made Matzot and saw a play about Pesach. You should know that all of us are sort of observant! I mean, we all keep Shabbat and eat Kosher and some of us do a few other things! Right?" And all of them shook their heads yes.

**Think of How You Can Help**

**And Make Happy Other People**

 "You see," I said, "You were in Kfar Chabad for an hour five years ago and you'll remember it as a happy experience for all your life. Think of how the people you help in the vacation will be happy if you help them every day!"

 She replied. "Thank you! We're really glad we met you! You gave us a really good idea!"

 We reached Kfar Chabad and after I got off and as we wished each other Shalom u'bracha (blessings) and a happy new year I realized that those girls were exactly the opposite of what I thought!

 As the minibus pulled away leaving me at the bus stop I just stood there alone for a few seconds, then actually raised my hands to heaven and said, "G-d, look at your people! Is there any nation like Israel! Even those girls who appeared to be totally void of Judaism believe in You and your commandments!"

 (Incidentally, I made it back in time for the class).

 This answers our questions.

**G-d Wants Man to Be**

**His Partner in Creation**

 The day man was created is really now; every day and every instant G-d is creating the entire universe, and man in it, anew for the same REASON He did it the first time 5771 years ago. Namely that He wants man to be His partners in creation. Or more simply… He put the whole world in our hands.

 But the day we really feel this is Rosh HaShanna.That's why it's a Jewish holiday… because the Jews have been 'chosen' by G-d for this job.

 Adam was supposed to be the first Jew (that's why he's buried together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Hevron). But after he sinned the world had to wait some 2,000 years until Abraham got the 'covenant' with G-d; namely G-d promised to never leave the Jews (Abraham's offspring through Issac and Jacob) NO MATTER WHAT.

 Then, some 400 years later at Mt. Sinai G-d made another covenant; He promised He would never change the Torah and we Jews promised we would never abandon it.

**G-d’s Third Covenant**

**With the Jewish People**

 But before the Jews entered Israel G-d made yet another covenant; not just on Judaism or on the Torah as in the first two but about changing the world; G-d promised to always give us POWER to correct the world and we promised we would never let the world overpower us, no matter what.

 As we saw with those girls on the bus; despite their young age and all the negative education and influences there had been in their lives they still held by these three covenants: they felt Jewish, observed the Torah and agreed to try to change the world.

 This Rosh HaShanna G-d will renew and remind us of these covenants anew; He will never leave us, we will never leave Him or His Torah and He will always give us the power and ability to improve the world around us.

 It's in our power to do it. One more positive deed, word or even thought can bring total redemption and Moshiach NOW!

 Wishing all our readers a happy, successful, blessed, sweet New year with.... Moshiach NOW!

*Reprinted from this week’s email from Torah Ohr Tmimim.*

**Series of Miracles Saves**

**Terror Attack Target**

**By Hillel Fendel**



 Rabbi Moshe Moreno, who was shot Wednesday night (September 1st) in the second Palestinian terrorist roadside attack in as many nights, says he is only now realizing the magnitude of the miracles that befell him.

 From his hospital bed in Hadassah Hospital where the bullet wound to his leg is being treated, he spoke with Arutz-7’s Uzi Baruch on Thursday morning and said, “I’m not sure if I’m 37 years old – or one day old, after what happened to me last night. So I figure I’m somewhere in between, a youth of about 18 and a half… Only now that I am out of it, I can recount about ten miracles that happened to us in the space of about five minutes, with praise and thanks to G-d.”

**Teaches at Pre-Military Yeshiva in Maaleh Ephraim**

 Rabbi Moreno teaches at the pre-military yeshiva academy in Maaleh Ephraim, on the western edge of the Jordan Valley. He is the younger brother of one of the most famous casualties of the Second Lebanon War of 2006, Lt.-Col. Emanuel Moreno, who was known for his leadership skills, bravery, all-around soldiering, spirituality, and meticulous adherence to religious values.

 “My wife and I were traveling back from Jerusalem to Maaleh Ephraim," Rabbi Moreno recounted. "We passed by the trempiada [where Yesha residents wait for rides] at French Hill, where we often pick people up and drop them off at Kokhav HaShachar [about two miles out of the way – ed.]. Luckily, as it turned out, there was no one there, nor at the next “stop,” at Hizme.

**Didn’t Suspect the Car Behind Him**

 After the turnoff to Rimonim, a car 'settled' in back of me with his brights on; I tried to signal him in various ways to lower them, or to pass me, but he kept on playing with me, until I finally just gave up. But I didn’t suspect anything."

 “Suddenly, around the curve between Rimonim and Kokhav HaShachar, he overtook me and began firing at me, from point-blank range essentially. It was an unbelievable miracle that he did not hit us, except for one bullet in my leg; my wife was not hit at all. The police told me later that there were nine bullet holes in my door, and only one hit me. What are the chances that a man standing next to you as he passes by you in a car and firing a Kalachnikov rifle in automatic will not hit you – one in a billion? One in two billion?  … An amazing miracle. But there has to be some accounting as to who gave them these guns [towards the beginning of the Oslo process].

 “I veered the car towards the right, and G-d enabled me to regain control: I opened the door, got my wife and myself out of our seat belts and out of the car and we rolled ourselves down and away from the road.

 Another miracle is that my wife just ‘happened’ to be holding her cell phone in her hand, and also that it was a Pelephone and not Orange [cellular companies in Israel]; just 2-3 months ago we switched it, as there is no reception for Orange in that area.

**Panicked for a Moment and Started to Yell**

 We found ourselves behind a big boulder, and I phoned a friend of mine in the area to call the army… I panicked for a moment and started to yell, but another miracle was that the terrorists or other Arabs were not there to hear me… This was a series of miracles that only now am I beginning to grasp.”

 Rabbi Moreno made his own personal accounting as well: “I am not sure in what merit G-d chose to save my life. I have a few ideas: It could be some form of merits of my forefathers, or perhaps because at that very minute, my mother was reciting Psalms for two hours straight… Or it could be because of a special kindness that I did for someone in our town just the day before… I’m not sure, but the bottom line is that I have received my life anew, as a gift.”

*Reprinted from the email of Arutz Sheva of September 2, 2010.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Keeping a Promise**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

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**Rabbi Aryeh Levin**

 When he was handed an invitation to the wedding of a young man, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the famed *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, did not recognize the prospective *chatan*. He nevertheless conversed with him about his wedding plans. In the course of their conversation he discovered that the *kallah*'s parents were boycotting the wedding because of some differences between them and the *chatan*'s parents. This caused Rabbi Levin to have reservations about participating in such a wedding, so he said that "he would attend if he could."

 "But you once promised to be at my wedding," the inviter protested.

 He then went on to remind the rabbi, who was famous for his visits to Jews imprisoned by the British Mandate forces, of the time he visited him when he was in the prison "death row" because of anti-British activity. He encouraged him by telling him that he would not be executed, leaving him with the promise that he would even someday dance at his wedding.

 Rabbi Levin thereupon said he would keep his promise but asked that the wedding be postponed in order to give him time to make peace between the young man's parents and those of his *kallah*. The happy ending was that the wedding eventually took place with both sets of parents there along with the holy man who kept his promise.

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