**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tazria 5774**

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**This Day in Jewish History**

**The Mishkan or Tabernacle is Assembled for the First Time**



**Mishkan assembled; 7 "days of training" (1312 BCE)**

The Children of Israel began building the "[Mishkan](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=1232)" (also called the "Tabernacle"--a portable sanctuary to house the Divine presence in their midst as they journeyed through the desert) on the 11th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE) -- six months after their [Exodus](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=299) from Egypt, four months after the [revelation at Sinai](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=1197), and 80 days after their worship of the [Golden Calf](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=1329).

**The Construction Lasted 74 Days**

The construction of the Mishkan, which followed a detailed set of instructions issued to Moses on Mount Sinai, lasted 74 days, and was completed on the [25th of Kislev](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=150152); but the Divine command to erect the edifice came only three months later, on the 23rd of Adar, when Moses was instructed to begin a 7-day "[training](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=42809) period."

During the week of Adar 23-29, the Mishkan was erected each morning and dismantled each evening; Moses served as the High Priest and initiated [Aaron](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=1323) and his four sons into the priesthood. Then, on the "[eighth day](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=2868)" -- the [1st of Nissan](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=39694) -- the Mishkan was "[permanently](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=1530)" assembled (that is, put up to stand until the Divine command would come to [journey on](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=45545)), Aaron and his sons assumed the priesthood, and the divine presence came to [dwell](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=1310) in the Mishkan.

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

**Honest Rabbi Returned $98K — And Inspired Us**

**By** [**Anne Cohen**](http://blogs.forward.com/authors/anne-cohen/)



 When Rabbi Noach Muroff needed a desk, he looked to Craigslist for a good deal. He got way more than he bargained for.

 The desk, purchased for $150 dollars, turned out to be hiding $98,000 stuffed in a ShopRite plastic bag that had fallen behind the file cabinet.

 And Muroff gave it all back.

Muroff bought the desk last September, right before Rosh Hashanah. When it wouldn’t fit through the door, he and his wife had to disassemble it. That’s when they spotted a shopping bag full of a cash inheritance that the previous owner assumed had been lost somewhere in her home.

 The ninth grade teacher at the Yeshiva New Haven Shul looked at his wife and, despite the fact that it was nearly midnight, dialed the original owner’s number. The money was returned the next day. According to Muroff, he didn’t sleep that night knowing that sum was in the house.

 “Our jaws kind of just hit the floor. We were in total shock and disbelief. This kind of thing only happens in the movies,” Muroff said, laughing when telling me the story.

**Story Went Viral in November**

 When Muroff’s story went viral in November, I immediately made a note of it for our Most Inspiring Rabbis in America section. Someone has to nominate this guy, I thought. But no one did.

 So, on behalf of all those who expressed their awe and admiration for Muroff’s honesty, I am nominating him as the rabbi who most inspires me.

In the months since Muroff’s story made the headlines, the rabbi has received emails and phone calls from strangers telling him how much his story meant to them.

 A father told him about his son who bought a camera on Amazon and received one worth three times what he had paid. He wrote the company a letter saying he was Jewish and was raised to be honest and would send back the camera. The son cited Muroff as his inspiration.

 A man from Idaho wrote to him saying he had had this perception of Jews as greedy people and that Muroff’s integrity had made him reconsider.

**Less than a Minute to Decide**

 Without fail, Muroff is asked what went through his head when he decided to give up almost $100,000. According to him, it was a decision that took less than a minute to make.

 “Both my wife and I were raised as Orthodox Jews,” he told me. “We feel strongly that honesty is always the way to go, we’re commanded to do so in the Torah; and in addition to that, the idea of putting yourself in the other person’s shoes: How would you feel if you were the one losing the money?

 “My father in a million years would never have touched the money.”

 Muroff received a gift of $3,500 from the original owner (plus the $150 he paid for the desk). But the words that came with it sum up his real value:

 “Dear Noah, I cannot thank you enough for your honesty and integrity. I do not think there are too many people in this world that would have done what you did by calling me. I do like to believe that there are still good people left in this crazy world we live in. You certainly are one of them.”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. The article originally appeared in the March 13, 2014 edition of The Forward.*

**The Rebbe and the**

**Jewish Renegade**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 In the year 1912 in Russia Rebbe Shalom Ber Schneersohn was the leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim and his son Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (who would become the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe after the passing of his father in 1920) was on a train from Paris to Petersburg.



**Rabbi Shalom Ber Schneersohn**

 Times in Russia were not easy for the Jews, they never really were, and often he was sent by his father to take long journeys to help Jews or even save Russian Jewry.

**Noticed a Finely-Dressed**

**Clean-Shaven Businessman**

 After several hours of travel he left his cabin and went to the dining car for a cup of tea. As he sat down and looked around him he noticed a finely-dressed clean-shaven businessman sitting at a table in the corner eating a fine meal of rabbit meat and drinking French wine with great savor.

 The man was obviously an assimilated Jew and the Rebbe winced with each bite the man took. He couldn't bear seeing a Jew act that way. So he turned to his cup of tea and tried to ignore him. Suddenly he heard the man push back his chair, stand up and approach him.

 "Excuse me Rabbi" He said. "Excuse me, but are you the son or grandson of Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch?" (fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe)

 "Yes", the Rebbe turned to face him and answered, "In fact I am his grandson."

**His Eyes Filled with Tears**

 The businessman just stood there speechless. His eyes filled with tears and he made no effort to wipe them away. He trembled slightly as though in shock, ran his hand over his eyes then turned abruptly back to his table, paid the waiter and left the room without finishing his meal.

 That evening, hours after this strange episode, the train made a short stop in Frankfort. The Rebbe stepped briefly outside for a breath of fresh air when that same businessman again approached him. But before he could begin to speak he again began to weep uncontrollably until the train whistle forced him to return to his place.

 Both episodes perplexed the Rebbe. On one hand the man looked like a nobleman; a large trimmed mustache, elegantly dressed in fine silk clothes. But on the other hand he acted as though he was insane.

**The Rebbe Had Just**

**Finished Praying**

 The next morning the Rebbe had just finished praying in his cabin when there was a knock on the door. It was one of the porters and he said that a certain passenger would like to know if he could see the Rabbi.

 The Rebbe agreed and in a few minutes the same man appeared. He entered, closed the door behind him and said, "Please excuse me my emotional outbursts but….." and suddenly began to again weep uncontrollably. He put his hands over his face and his entire body was shaking with sobs.

 The Rebbe didn't know whether to stop him or not but after several minutes the man dried his eyes, looked at the Rebbe furtively and asked him if could borrow his Tefillin.

 When the Rebbe answered yes, he again began to weep like a small child saying "Oy!! When was the last time I put on Tefillin!! OY!!"

 The man took the Tefillin, removed them from their pouches, kissed them tenderly, put them on as one who was familiar with the commandment and began to pray.

**The Rebbe Left The Man Alone**

 The Rebbe left the man alone to pour out his soul before his Creator. After an hour he came out of the cabin, thanked the Rebbe, asked him if he could borrow a book of Psalms and left to his own cabin without saying another word.

 That afternoon, several hours later, the man returned to the Rebbe's room. His face was pale and he looked as though he was undergoing drastic internal changes. He spoke in a weak voice.

 "I would like to speak to you if possible. May I?" The Rebbe invited him to sit down; he closed the door and began.

 "First, thank you for your Tefillin and book of psalms. And I'm sorry if I was of any inconvenience. My name is Y… I was born into a family of Chabad Chassidim by the name of Monison, although I know I don't look it.

 "My childhood was very happy; our house was always filled with guests, Torah and joy. But when I was fifteen I somehow got drawn into a bad crowd of young people and I began to enjoy them.

 "My father saw what was happening to me and decided to take me to Lubavitch for the High Holidays and it worked. The first moment I saw the Rebbe it had a deep effect on me. My father even took me in for a private audience. The Rebbe spoke to my father for a few seconds, then turned to me and said

**“The World Can Be Very Dangerous”**

 "'The world can be very dangerous, never forget that you are a Jew.'"

 "The experience completely changed me. I had absolutely no desire to even see my 'friends'. But gradually the effect wore off. Little by little I became cool to Judaism and warm to what I thought was freedom. I stopped praying, stopped doing the commandments and after a year or so I left my parent's house and moved in with my new 'friends'.

 "Several times my father tried to make contact with me but that only aroused my anger. I had made up my mind; I would not live my life according to some book. Six years later I finished university, married an assimilated girl like myself and broke completely with my past. I was free!

 "At that time I joined a secret political movement whose goal was to help the needy. There had been several Pogroms (government instigated riots against Jews) at that time, and most of our efforts were directed to helping Jews.

**Heard of the Visit to Petersburg**

 "After several years of this work, we heard that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was to be visiting Petersburg in order to stop the Pogroms at the government level. We decided to let him know of several impending Pogroms that we had heard about.

 "We arrived at the hotel where the Rebbe was staying and were met by a large group of Chassidim some of whom remembered me and greeted me warmly. Suddenly the Rebbe opened his door to come out to pray the afternoon prayer. He glanced at me and I immediately knew that he recognized me despite the fact that we had met for just moments over eight years ago. I was speechless

 "Later one of the Rebbe's secretaries told us that the Rebbe would like to speak with us and we entered his room.

 "His knowledge of the situation in Russia was nothing short of miraculous and the next few months we devoted ourselves totally to helping him in every way. We saw much fruit from our labors and saw how the Rebbe literally prevented tens of pogroms.

**A Question About Tefillin**

 "Then one day as we were leaving his room and I was the last one out, the Rebbe called to me and said, "Tell me, when was the last time you put on Tefillin? Please don't lie to me; I know exactly what you have been doing."

 "I can't explain it, but I was so stunned I couldn't even open my mouth. I just made some strange gestures and left. Those few words made such an impression on me that that day I looked for a pair of Tefillin and put them on for the first time in years and I even stopped eating non-kosher food.

 "After the Rebbe left Petersburg I returned home, told my wife that I decided to return to a Jewish life to which she agreed and I eventually even renewed ties with my father. But I still was working with my friends in our organization and at the end of that year it became known to us that there were to be a series of massive Pogroms in the south of Russia.

**Travels to Lubavitch**

 "I was chosen to travel to Lubavitch to tell the Rebbe and when I entered his office I could tell he was happy to see me. We spoke for some time but he said that he had to go to the country for his health and we would deal with the problem when he returned in a few days.

 "When we met again he told me that he had been at his father's (the third Rebbe the 'Tzemach Tzedik' who is buried in Lubavitch) gravesite and his father told him that there was no real danger but nevertheless we must take steps. The Rebbe then gave me some letters and told me what to do. He was in a good mood as he paused for a moment, smiled and said.

 "'It says that Moses, because he helped the Jews, G-d gave him the chips of sapphire from the Tablets that he carved out. You are helping Jews so you too deserve a reward.'

 "The Rebbe looked me deeply in the eyes as he continued speaking.

 "'When I told you that my father spoke to me at his grave I noticed that you smirked. The reason for this is that you are so involved in the physical that you have no appreciation for spiritual things.'

 "The Rebbe then sat with me for over an hour explaining, with many examples and stories, what 'spiritual' means and he concluded with these words:

 "'How long can a person live a life of physicality? Fifty years? Fifty five years? Remember who you are and where you come from. You are a son of a Chassid! May G-d protect you and give you true happiness.'

**“I Saw Some Open Miracles”**

 "I didn't really understand what he was getting at because I had already returned to Judaism for almost a year. But I thanked him warmly, took the papers he gave me, set out for Petersburg to give them to officials. On that trip I saw some open miracles.

 "First, police stopped the train ordered everyone out and began searching each person for any political papers. I considered throwing the Rebbe's letters away before they got to me but the Rebbe's words made me think differently. And miraculously, when they came to me they just told me to get back on the train. I was the only one they didn't check!

 "Then afterwards in Petersburg I got in to see the officials and hand them the papers with no trouble. And to top it all off the Rebbe, or rather his departed father, was right! The situation was not as severe as we thought.

**No Appreciation of the Spiritual**

 "But despite all this, just like the Rebbe said, I had no appreciation of the spiritual. A few months later the Rebbe became ill and passed away at the age of forty nine and gradually I gravitated to my old friends again.

 "Little by little I left HaShem and His Torah and became a very successful businessman. That was thirty years ago. Believe me for the last thirty years I never once even thought about G-d. Now I am retuning from my birthday party, I was fifty five years old yesterday, and my friends made me a gala party in Monte Carlo.

 "Then suddenly, like a flash of lightning, when I saw you I remembered the words of your holy grandfather and it touched me to the essence of my soul."

 The businessman became a different person. He moved his entire business to a different country and became one of the pillars of the Jewish community there.

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

**Chasidic Story #852**

**The Pre-empted**

**Circumciser**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

 One of the young chasidim of Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch was always berated mercilessly by his father-in-law, who was an outstanding scholar - but an incorrigible *misnaged*. "You are just too lazy to study," he would taunt, "that is why you have chosen to be a chasid!"

 Now one day a son was born to the young man so, being a loyal chasid, he hastened to honor his rebbe, Reb Mordechai, an expert *mohel*, with the coveted *mitzvah* of circumcising the newborn infant.

**The Eight Day Arrived**

 The eighth day arrived, and the father rose early, as was his custom, to pray the morning service in the synagogue of his rebbe. This was the very opportunity that his *misnagdisher* father-in-law had been waiting for. Once and for all he would put them in their place, both of them, this young Chasidic son-in-law of his with his favorite Chasidic rebbe. He lost no time, hired another *mohel*, mustered ten men for a *minyan*, and while his son-in-law and Reb Mordechai were still at their devotions, the circumcision was over and done with.

**Some Things Once Done Can’t Be Undone**

 Radiant with innocent expectation the father and his rebbe returned from *shul*, accompanied by a retinue of joyful Chasidim, all ready for the great *mitzvah*. But what a surprise awaited them! The young man was understandably distressed, firstly, because he had not been present at the circumcision of his own son, and secondly, because of the calculated insult to his revered rebbe. But there are things in this world which, once done, cannot be undone. There was nothing to do but to quietly go to the rebbe's home for the *seudas mitzvah*, the traditional festive meal that follows a joyful *mitzvah*.

 There, to the wonderment of all the crestfallen Chasidim, the rebbe was clearly happier than on all the other occasions when he had in fact carried out the *mitzvah* of circumcision.

**His Explanation was Simple**

 His explanation was simple: "The *mitzvah* of circumcising a baby is, of course, a singularly great one - but it is almost always tainted by the shadow of a hankering after honor, or pride. Now our Sages teach us that 'if an emergency prevented a person from doing a *mitzvah*, Scripture accords him credit for his good intention, as if he had actually performed the *mitzvah*.' Obviously, a *mitzvah* of this kind has no ulterior motive, and is reckoned by the Almighty as having been executed in the most perfect way possible. And this is why I have cause to rejoice more than usual: for how often do I get a chance to do a *mitzvah* that is absolutely untainted?"

 So eager was Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitch to perform the *mitzvah* of circumcision that he never once declined an invitation to act as *mohel*. One short midwinter's day, on the Sabbath eve of Chanukah, he was honored with the performance of two circumcisions in villages far apart from each other, one to the north of this town, one to the south. When his Chasidim heard that he had accepted both invitations, they asked him whether he thought he could mange so much in such a short day.

**Avraham’s Alacrity**

 He answered; "Regarding a certain passage in the Torah, the Talmud tells us that 'it comes to teach us of Avraham's alacrity,' which I understand to mean that the Torah teaches us Avraham's alacrity; nay, the Torah implants it in us."

 And, indeed, Reb Mordechai rose at the crack of dawn, hastened to set out and circumcise the infants in both villages, and sped home - weary, but in time to prepare for Shabbos

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in *A Treasury of Chasidic Tales* (Artscroll), as translated by the esteemed Uri Kaploun from *Sipurei Chasidim* by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin.

 Connection: Weekly Reading (beginning) -- Circumcision on the eighth day.

 Biographical note: Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch (? - 15 Tishrei 1810), disciple of R. Shlomo of Karlin; known for the fervor of his prayers, and for being exceedingly charitable, particularly toward the poor of Eretz Yisrael.

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[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentsafed.com*

**Henny's Secret**

***There is No Limit to How Much Love and Compassion Can Emanate from One Human Heart.***

**By** [**Sara Yoheved Rigler**](http://www.aish.com/authors/48865432.html)



 Henny Machlis's kitchen is an apt metaphor for her heart. A glimpse into the kitchen, less than half the size of a normal American kitchen, leaves one wondering how 200 Shabbat meals a week can issue from such a room. Similarly, one wonders how so much love and compassion for literally thousands of *individuals* can issue from one human heart.

**Not an Amorphous Type of Love for All Humanity**

 Not the amorphous love the rest of us feel for all humanity as long as we don't have to put up with them eating in our living room, sleeping on our couch, showering in our bathroom. No, Henny's love is concrete and specific.

 It encompasses the lonely widows who have nowhere else to go on Shabbat, the homeless who sleep on the Machlises' couch and shower in their bathroom for weeks at a stretch, the lost souls who spend hours sipping coffee and pouring out their hearts at Henny's dining room table (the kitchen has no room for a table), and the unkempt, incoherent, often reeking paupers who come to the Machlis house for both food and love.

**Doesn’t Look Like a Busy Mother of 13 Children**

 The 44-year-old Henny looks a decade younger. Although she wears no make-up, her lineless complexion appears like the face of a woman of leisure, rather than the busy mother of 13 children.

 How can she cook for, serve, and clean up from 200 guests every Shabbat, 51 weeks a year, without burning out?

 I have come to Henny's modest apartment in Jerusalem's Maalot Dafna neighborhood to solve the mysteries that intrigue me about this open, ingenuous woman: How can the mother of so many children always appear relaxed and cheerful? How can she shop for, cook for, serve, and clean up from 60-100 guests every Shabbat night and every Shabbat afternoon, 51 weeks a year, without burning out?

 How, contrary to all the childrearing literature, can she devote so much time and attention to helping strangers and still raise children who turn out to be sweet, modest, kind, and – why not just say it? – angelic?

**How Does She Maintain**

**Such a High Level of Joy**

 What supernatural ingredient does she put into her food so that scores of people, upon eating one of her Shabbat meals, are forever changed? And – this is the question I really want to answer – how can a woman who never goes out to dinner maintain such a high level of joy?

 A friend added another question to my list: With so many strangers passing through the Machlis apartment constantly, don't they have a problem with theft? As soon as I enter their living room, I perceive the answer. There is nothing to steal. The family owns no computer, no television, no objets-d'art, just lots and lots of holy books, which line every available wall. Hardly a temptation to thieves.

 Rushing to make my appointment with Henny, I have forgotten my tape recorder. Henny offers me the use of theirs, and asks her four-year-old son Eliyahu to go downstairs to one of the basement bedrooms and bring it up. Henny and I sit on one of the two slip-covered red couches – the only furniture in the living room except for two dining tables.

**Gently Admonishes Her Son**

 Minutes later Eliyahu stumbles into the living room and throws the tape recorder onto the rug. I emit a gasp, and manage – after all, he's not my child – to suppress a storm of expletives: "What are you doing! You'll break it!" Henny, unruffled as if she had a supply of new tape recorders in the back room or the money to buy them (she has neither), says softly to her son: "You have to treat machines more gently. Otherwise, they can break."

 *Sara Rigler: I would have blasted my kid for doing that!*

 *Henny Machlis:* Of course, we all lose it sometimes, and we all have our struggles. In our home, we try not to yell or hit. Rabbi Hirsh wrote that if you have a choice between being rigid and educating your children in all the values and behaviors that you cherish, or being loving and educating them without anger and not getting everything you want, it's preferable to educate without anger. I always had a dream that I would have a peaceful home. Then it was just a matter of attaining it, with G-d's help and *tefilla* [prayer].

 *SR: And a lot of effort and self-control, I imagine. How do you have time to raise your children well when you're devoting so much attention to other people?*

 HM: The success that we have in bringing up our children is up to G-d. It has to do with Divine providence and lots of prayer. We definitely have to put in our maximum --psychologically, physically, emotionally – but our success depends on Divine blessing.

**Plenty of Opportunity for Private**

**Quality Time for the Family**

 Although we devote most of our Shabbat to guests, there is plenty of opportunity for private, quality time between Saturday night and Friday afternoon. Every day during the week we try to have either lunch or dinner with the children. Also, we schedule the Friday night meal late, to give people time to walk in from different parts of Jerusalem. So immediately after evening prayers, we have a dinner alone with the children, before the guests arrive. Then the children have a chance to give their *divrei Torah* [words of Torah] and sing their songs.

 I have been a full-time mother since the birth of my sixth child. When a mother is around and available to her children on a constant basis, then she's there for crucial educational lessons to be given over and many, many heart-to-heart talks about things that are troubling her children. The Satmar Rebbe commented on the verse: "All day he gives and lends, and his children will be blessed." [Psalm 37:26] He said that you would think that someone who is busy helping other people won't have enough time for his children, but there's a special Divine blessing that protects them.

**When a Child Learns To Care for Others**

 When a child learns to care, think, love, and give to the other, he matures quicker and builds his character to be a more responsible and effective human being.

 One can also postulate that much of a child's inability to deal with himself and the world comes from egocentricity. When a child learns to care, think, love, and give to the other, he or she actually matures quicker and builds his or her character to be a more efficient, responsible, and effective human being in society.

 This is also an argument for having more children, because the more siblings there are, the more types of personalities children learn to deal with, and the more social skills they develop in terms of tolerance, patience, sensitivity, and love.

 *SR: By letting homeless, mentally ill, and drunken people stay in your house, aren't you endangering your children's safety?*

**Every Dedicated Parent**

**Must Use Discretion**

 HM: Unquestionably, our children's welfare is our primary concern. Every dedicated parent must use discretion. In the more than two decades we have been doing this, we have not, thank G-d, had a single bad incident. Of course, if there is someone who is emotionally or psychologically disturbed to the point that it could threaten the children, we relegate them to sleeping in our van, or deal with them in some other way.

 *SR: Can you tell us about your background?*

 HM: I was born and raised in Brooklyn. My parents were also American-born. My father, Murray Lustig, of blessed memory, was ordained as a rabbi at Yeshiva University. I studied pre-med at Brooklyn College. My dream was to get married and have 20 children and teach the whole world about Judaism, and to learn about genetics on the side! When I realized that I couldn't do everything, I switched my major to dietetics. I got a B.S. in education plus a Hebrew teaching degree from Yeshiva University.

 *SR: When you were growing up, who wa*

*s the greatest influence on your life?*

**My Parents Were Very Hospitable**

 HM: My parents were very hospitable, very warm, good, and loving. I always viewed my mother's *chesed* [deeds of kindness] and compassion – the way she treated the cleaning lady, the fix-it man, the carpenter, with such kindness and respect. I was one of five children. My mother (Edith Lustig) never sat at the table; she was always up serving us. As you get older, you realize how much of what you are is from your parents.

 My father was so generous and kind. One time, the daughter of my parents' friends got hurt. She was 16 years old, and was riding her bike, and somehow hit a tree. She went into a coma. As soon as my father heard about it, he rushed to the hospital. He went over to his friend, handed him a blank, signed check, and said, "Don't spare any medical expense to help your daughter." We heard about this story only years later, after my father passed away, when his friend told us.

 Two of my rabbis in school, Rabbi Teichtel and Rabbi Reuven Fink, also had a major impact on my worldview.

 *SR: How long does it take you to shop for and cook these massive Shabbat meals you serve?*

 HM: I spend one morning a week ordering food by telephone. Then I start cooking either on Thursday night or early Friday morning. With three of my daughters helping me, it takes us about eight hours to cook. This past week, six or seven of our children were helping. Everyone was peeling vegetables and was actively involved in the excitement of Shabbat preparations.

 *SR: That doesn't seem like very much time to prepare gefilte fish, chicken soup, chicken, four kinds of kugel, several different salads, and four kinds of cake enough for 200 people.*

**We Work Very High Speed**

 HM: I've become much more organized over the years. Now we have a system. But it's very intense. We work very high speed. Kind-hearted young women sometimes join us in the cooking.

 *SR: How many hours does it take you to clean up?*

 HM: It used to take till Tuesday, but three years ago my husband hired a worker who washes up all the pots, pans, serving utensils, and trays, and puts away the chairs and tables. Now it's all done by late Saturday night.

 *SR: How often a year do you take a break?*

 HM: We used to take off a few weeks a year, and we would inform the people in advance. A couple of years ago, my married daughter had a baby boy on a Shabbat, so the bris was the following Shabbat, in a different city. Whoever called during the week, we told them not to come, but there was no way to announce it to our "regulars." Just in case, we arranged for a rabbi to be here to conduct the meal and I cooked a little, and we left challah, salads, drinks, and provisions. I thought maybe 20 people would come. Well, 80 people showed up that Shabbat night, and 65 people the next day for lunch.

**Cooking Food Fifty-One Weeks a Year**

 So now, if we want to go away for Shabbat, we inform people that Rabbi Machlis won't be here to give divrei Torah, but that there will be someone else to run the meal. And I cook the food anyway. Fifty-one weeks a year.

 Only on Pesach we don't have guests, and we go away, because of the special Biblical mitzvah to teach your children on Seder night. So we concentrate exclusively on the children and attempt to celebrate the holiday in a private family setting.

 *SR: Do you ever feel a need for a break more often than that?*

 HM: Not really. This is our raison d'etre. This is holiness. This is happiness. In my former years, maybe I would have wanted more time off, but as time goes on, and I get into a system, and I get more dedicated to the idea, I think G-d has withdrawn some of the pitfalls, and it runs more smoothly.

 They say that in Jerusalem of old, when people would eat, they would hang a tablecloth outside their door. If anyone would see the tablecloth, they would know they could come in and eat. So I'm hoping for the day when everyone will hang out a tablecloth so that people can just come in. If all people would just open their doors, it would really be a brilliantly shining Jerusalem.

 *SR: Do you ever feel like having some time alone without your husband and children?*

 HM: In recent years, I have felt that way. I go to the Kotel [the Western Wall], or I'm alone with G-d in my room and read, or say *tehillim* [psalms].

 I think one of the most important things in life is to pray for success. We have no independent success. It's all G-d's blessing. I enjoy brisk walks, and try to use the time for creative introspection and meditation.

 *SR: What makes you so happy?*

**Many Reasons to Be Happy**

 HM: To be living in the holy city of Jerusalem, the holiest place in the world. It makes me happy to be married to a wonderful person, who is wise and learned. It makes me happy to have my beautiful children, and to see them growing up to be holy, healthy, happy, giving, loving, sensitive human beings. It makes me happy to be very connected to G-d and to be able to share that connection with all humanity. Shabbat makes me very happy. I love Shabbat. And I love to share the joy and the thrill of the holiness of Shabbat.

 *SR: I have to say that I think something metaphysical is going on here. Many Jews who are committed secularists or who are even practicing a different religion have been turned on to traditional Judaism after just one Shabbat meal in your house. What's your secret?*

 HM: I read a long time ago that the wife of Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, before she cooked, would pray that the people who eat her food would imbibe *yirat shemayim* [awe of G-d] and do *teshuva* [repentance]. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov says that when you cook, the energy that you cook with goes into the food. So if you cook with a lot of anger, you can give people food poisoning. But if you cook with joy, you can give them good health.

**Praying While We Cook**

 So, we pray before and while we cook: "May the food have the taste of Gan Eden [paradise]." We say *tehillim* while we're cooking. And we pray that the people who eat this food should love Shabbat and love G-d, love Torah and be in touch with themselves and that the food should be for the honor of God and for the honor of the holy Shabbat.

 *SR: What would you say to women who hate to cook and do domestic work?*

 HM: All giving is a little bit of imitating G-d. Giving builds one's character, and makes one more G-d-like. I think one should view domestic responsibilities as a means to grow as an individual, to become more giving and loving and sharing, to get out of oneself and into the other, and to become more G-d-like. Of course, there's nothing wrong with hiring help for domestic duties, as long as one knows that it's important to overcome a certain level of this discomfort in order to be as giving as can be.

 *SR: What would you say to women who are conflicted between career and staying home with their children?*

**Everyone Should Be an Emissary of G-d**

 HM: I used to go out to teach Jewish subjects to adults. Even now I sometimes go out to lecture. For a few years, I ran a series of lectures in the neighborhood, where I taught Jewish philosophy to women. I really think that everyone should be an emissary of G-d and teach whatever they know. Every woman is blessed with her particular qualities and interests. Everyone should be encouraged to maximize her singular form of expression. But it's very important that every woman should know that there is no one else in the whole world who can be a mother to her children except for her, nor a wife to her husband except for her. Women's priority should always be first and foremost to give to their families.

 This is their most unique and important contribution to the world, that no one else can do. No one else can give over my particular psychological, emotional, spiritual self to my children, except for me. I encourage women to use all their potentials and talents and education to give to society as much as they possibly can, but always remember that their first priority is their home, to build a Jewish home. Let's not forget that all spirituality in the world comes from the Jewish woman. It is her strength and her values that will build her children and the world around her, and will pave the way for the ultimate redemption.

 Visit the Machlis website at <http://www.machlis.org>

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

**Refugee Who Rescued Husband from Dachau, Dies at 111**

**By the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency)**



Gisela Dollinger with her great-great-great-grandnieces.

Photo Credit: (Courtesy Carole Vogel)

 Soon after Kristallnacht, when she was 36, Gisela Kohn Dollinger persuaded the Gestapo to release her husband from the Dachau concentration camp, and the two of them fled Austria for Shanghai, where she almost died of typhoid.

**Death Seemed to Have**

**Forgotten All About Her**

 After that, death seemed to forget all about her — until last week, when Dollinger passed away peacefully at Manhattan’s Beth Israel Hospital. She was 111 years old.

 Dollinger’s passing came just weeks after Alice Herz-Sommer, a pianist and the subject of an Oscar-winning documentary who was believed to be the world’s oldest Holocaust survivor, died at the comparatively young age of 110.

 Known by her friends and family as “Gisa,” Dollinger was the youngest of 15 children. She was born in Baden-be-Wien, a Vienna suburb, on Aug. 30, 1902, according to her relatives.

 Widowed in 1993 after more than 60 years of marriage, Dollinger never had children but leaves behind scores of nieces, nephews and their offspring in numerous countries, including the United States, Israel and England.

**She Was Always Aunt Gisa or Tante Gisa**

 “To everyone in the family she was always Aunt Gisa or Tante Gisa,” recalled Dr. Mark Horowitz, a grand-nephew who lives in Manhattan.

 Dollinger retained her full mental faculties and was able to remain in her New York apartment until the end, although in her final years her vision and hearing deteriorated — a source of frustration since reading, conversation and listening to music were her favorite activities.

 Horowitz described his great-aunt as “well educated and well cultured,” a frequent theater and opera-goer who spoke several languages.

 Carole Vogel, a great-great-niece who is the unofficial family historian, told how in 2005, at the age of 103, Dollinger returned to Austria for the first time since she and her husband, Bernard, had fled in December 1938.

**Invited to Speak at the**

**Rededication of the Synagogue**

 She had been invited to speak at the rededication of the synagogue her father had helped found in the 1880s and decided to use the trip as an excuse for a family reunion. At least 22 family members came along.

 “I don’t know how many 103-year-olds go on trans-Atlantic flights, but she did,” recalled Vogel, who attended the reunion.

 During the trip, the centenarian guided family members around Baden-be-Wien, pointing out where family members and other Jews lived.

 “She also pointed out the homes of the Nazis and their names,” Vogel said. “She’d say, ‘I went to school with her, and she married a Nazi.’ She had a phenomenal memory up until the end.”

 Shortly after Kristallnacht, when her family-owned dry-goods store was destroyed and Bernard was deported to Dachau, Dollinger went to the Gestapo in Vienna — putting herself at risk — and asked for her husband’s release, arguing successfully that since he was not an Austrian citizen (he was Polish), he should not have been included in the roundup.

 Some family members have speculated that her persuasion included a bribe, but Dollinger never mentioned that when recounting the story, Vogel said.

 “She credited the release of her husband to the fact that someone had advised her to speak to a certain Gestapo officer who was known to be more open to reason and that she showed him a valid Polish passport belonging to Bernard,” Vogel explained, adding that “open to reason” might have meant bribes, because “with Gisa everything could be in the nuance.”

 Upon his release, Bernard was told that if he did not leave Austria within two weeks he would be returned to the concentration camp. Thanks to a last-minute cancellation, the couple managed to obtain two first-class tickets on a boat to Japanese-occupied China, one of the few places where Jews could easily obtain visas at the time.

**The Voyage to Shanghai**

**Was a Surreal Vacation**

 “She described [the voyage to Shanghai] as a surreal vacation being on first class, especially after being treated so shabbily in Austria,” Vogel said.

 In Shanghai, the Dollingers lived in the crowded and impoverished ghetto to which stateless refugees were restricted, and Gisela worked for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which was distributing clothing and other aid there.

 In December 1948, exactly 10 years after leaving Austria, the Dollingers departed China for the nascent State of Israel.

 After the hardships of the Shanghai ghetto and the typhoid bout, Dollinger and her husband were leery of life in a new and embattled country, even though most of Dollinger’s relatives were there, Vogel said. Since Bernard had sisters in the United States who urged them to come, the couple moved to New York in 1950.

**Frequently Hosted Bridge Games**

 They soon settled in a rent-controlled one-bedroom apartment in the East Village, where she would live more than 60 years. He painted houses, and she worked at an envelope factory. The couple frequently hosted friends for bridge games. When they received reparations money from Germany for a relative who had been killed in the Holocaust, they put the entire sum into a scholarship fund at an Israeli university. (Vogel was not sure which one.)

 Despite their relatively modest circumstances, Dollinger, whose father had sold men’s and women’s clothing in Austria, was a sharp dresser, Vogel said.

 “By touch she could tell a fabric and its quality,” she said. “She was a size 6 all her life except near the end, and all her clothes were absolutely, completely fitted.

**A Very Elegant Lady**

 “She was a very elegant lady, very concerned about the appearance she gave. She wasn’t vain, but she had just been taught that when you go out, or even when you’re at home, you get dressed and present your best foot forward.”

 What was the secret to her extremely long life?

 Vogel said Dollinger participated in an academic study on longevity among Ashkenazi Jews, and that aside from being blessed with good genes, her great-great aunt thought “maybe her purpose was to bring together the far-flung relatives.”

 “She served as the uniter of the family — she had nieces and nephews in Argentina, Switzerland, England, Israel and Austria,” Vogel said. “She became the place where people connected and the purveyor of information. When she was too old to get out much, her currency became the stories people told her.”

**Too Late to Have Children**

 Dollinger and her husband had postponed having their own children for various reasons — the war economy in Austria, the Nazis, the difficult life in wartime Shanghai — and by the time they reached the United States, where raising a child was possible, Dollinger was already in her late 40s.

 “She had up until the end the most phenomenal memory — she knew if someone’s baby was due, if someone was up for a new job, if someone was on vacation — she always had this list of things in her head,” Vogel said. “Everyone who called, she knew what was going on in their life. She really cared.”

 Dollinger kept up not just with her family’s news but with current events, making a point of voting in every election, Vogel said.

 In his 2008 victory speech, President-elect Obama referenced a 106-year-old voter who had been profiled on *CNN.* Upon reading about it in *The New York Times,* Dollinger, who was the same age, apparently said, “They should’ve written about me, but I’m not a publicity hound.”

 Although she died at Beth Israel on March 10, having checked in a few days before her death, Dollinger managed to remain in her home, with the help of caregivers, until the end.

 In her final 10 years, relatives suggested Dollinger consider moving to an assisted living facility. Vogel said “she was absolutely against it.”

 “She didn’t want to be around old people,” she said.

*Reprinted from the March 19, 2014 email of The Jewish Press from a dispatch of the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency).*

**The Two Atonements**

 “Upon the completion of the days of her purity for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a sheep within its first year for an Elevation-offering, and a young dove or a turtledove for a Sin-offering.” (*Vayikra* 12:6)

 Upon completing her period of purification, the *yoledet*, a woman who gave birth, brings two *korbanot*, offerings, because she seeks atonement for two types of sin. The *Korban Olah*, Elevation-offering, atones for any resentful thoughts she may have had against her husband or Hashem during the painful moments of childbirth.

The Sin-offering atones for the possibility that, in her dire pain, she might have sworn never to have physical relations with her husband. The requisite of two atonements for one activity is rare. The following anecdote reinforces this idea, lending us insight into the character of one of this past century's most inspiring *gedolim*, Torah giants.

**A Master in So Many Areas**

 Rav Meir Shapiro, zal, was a master in so many areas. A prolific *talmid hacham*, Torah scholar, a brilliant speaker, and intellectual, he was the founder of not only the *Daf Yomi*, but also the great *Yeshivah* of Lublin. Unlike any other *yeshivah*, it catered to the best of the best, providing its students with excellent physical amenities, such as a beautiful *bet midrash*, dormitory, and real food. All of this cost money, which kept its *Rosh Yeshivah* quite busy, traveling the world to raise money for his beloved *yeshivah*.

 The story goes that, on one of his trips, Rav Meir had occasion to visit a city in Eastern Europe, which was home to a very wealthy Jewish industrialist. There was one problem: This man wrote the book on tightfistedness. He lived well, but he refused to share his wealth with anyone. The Lubliner Rav visited him. The man not only refused to give him anything, he even kept him waiting before he would see him. This was tremendous *zilzul b'kavod ha'rav*, humiliation of the honor becoming such a distinguished Torah personage.

**Refusing to Ignore the Man’s Snub**

 Rav Meir refused to ignore the man's snub. He said, "I am not a *yoledet*; I did not recently give birth that I require two *kaparot*." He turned his face to the door and was about to leave, when the man who he was soliciting blocked his exit. "You may not leave until you explain to me the meaning of your statement," the man said.

 Rav Meir replied, "My intentions were simple. There are times when I visit a wealthy man and, while I do not receive my desired sum or sometimes anything at all, at least I am treated royally and given the respect that a man of my position demands. When this occurs, I say 'A *kaparah*, the money! The money is an atonement.' At least I received a little honor. I was not mistreated. In other instances, I meet a philanthropist who gives me a nice check, but does not assuage my ego. I then say 'A *kaparah* the *kavod*. At least I received a nice check.'

**Only a Woman Who Recently**

**Gave Birth Brings Two Kaparot**

 "In your case, however, I was mistreated, allowed to cool my heels for one hour in the hall, and - to add insult to injury - I received no check for all my troubles. That is why I declared that I was no *yoledet*, because only a woman who recently gave birth brings two *kaparot*."

 When the man heard this explanation, he realized that he was speaking to no ordinary person. He immediately wrote out a nice check to *Chachmei Lublin*, and he continued to do so every year for quite some time. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

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

**A Jester Saved the Jews**

**By** [**Rabbi Sholom Klass**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbisholomklass/)

*Chazal* thought very highly of a jester, a person who makes people laugh. They say that a special high place is waiting for him in *Gan Eden*.

The Talmud (*Ta’anis* 22a) relates that Eliyahu *HaNavi* was once speaking with Rabi Beroka Hozah, when two men passed by. Eliyahu remarked, “These two men have a share in the World to Come.”

Rabi Beroka approached them and asked, “What is your occupation?”

 “We are jesters,” they replied, “When we see men depressed we cheer them up and when we see two people quarrelling, we strive to make peace between them.”

**Nachumka the Clown**

Ask the previous inhabitants of the town of Shklob, formerly situated in Russia, near the border of Lithuania, the meaning of this passage in the Talmud and they will point with reverence to Nachumka the clown, who through his jesting saved all the Jews of that city.

The story goes back over 150 years to the days of Catherine the Great, who ruled all of Russia with a firm but fair hand. In the beginning, the city of Shklob was part of Lithuania and Poland, but through treaties and intrigue it passed into Russian hands. A great many Jews who plied many trades and were very wealthy inhabited the town.

But not everyone is destined to taste of the fruit of this world and to enjoy its vintage. Among the inhabitants of this town lived a poor man, Nachumka.

**Ridiculed by His Wife**

Nachumka had a wife and six children. He was the son of the prominent *gaon*, Rabi Shaul Wohl, and was himself a Torah scholar and pious person. But his wife called him *a schlemiel*, for it seemed that good fortune would always evade him. As she was wont to joke, “If he became an undertaker, people would stop dying.”

But Nachumka never lost his good cheer. Wherever he went he would act the buffoon, and the gathering would suddenly become lively. Even the babies of the city began to smile when he arrived.

When Catherine annexed the city of Shklob, she appointed a general to govern as a reward for the many heroic campaigns he fought on her behalf. But he was a cruel and vicious governor. He hated the Jews and did everything to harass and hurt them. He imposed vicious taxes, and when they couldn’t pay he had them jailed. At the slightest provocation, he would have the leaders flogged in public. He also imposed restrictions upon their businesses and trading practices.

**A Visit by the Prime Minister**

One day the city was notified that the prime minister was to visit the town to view the general’s progress. An announcement was posted inviting everyone to present his or her requests to the minister, who would try to act upon them. However, the general let it be known that he would not allow any Jews to appear before the minister.

The Jewish leaders of the city were worried. They were sure if they were allowed to present a petition to the minister, describing the evils of the general, he would report it back to the queen, who was known to be fair and treated everyone well. But how to accomplish it was the question.

They all gathered in the main synagogue to formulate a plan of action. At the height of the discussion, someone suggested using Nachumka. “If anyone could get through closed doors, it would be he,” he said. The others thought it was a good idea, and they sent for the jester.

**“Time is Short and Our**

**Lives are in Great Danger”**

 “Nachumka,” they told him when he arrived, “time is short and our lives are in great danger. Every day it grows worse for us, and at this rate we may expect a pogrom. We have prepared a petition to present to the queen’s minister, but we have no way of getting it to him. Therefore, we rely on your cunning and guile to do so.”

For once in his life Nachumka was serious. He thought for a moment and then said, “I am flattered that you chose me to act as your emissary. I also realize the grave danger involved. But I will not shirk my responsibility. I pray that G-d, in His mercy, will guide me and show me the right path to follow. If I fail, G-d forbid, then I request that you take care of my wife and children.”

 “That we will do,” they promised him. “We will not ask how you intend to accomplish your mission, for we rely on your cunning to devise a way. May G-d be with you.”

**The Minister Arrives**

A few days later, the minister arrived. The general arranged a huge parade for him and at its conclusion there was a banquet. Officials from all over the city came to meet the prime minister and present him with petitions for the queen.

When the time came to present the petitions, a large line formed and as each person was presented to the minister, he gave him a letter or said a few words which were marked down as a record for Her Royal Highness.

At the end of the line appeared a farmer, dressed in the clothes of his trade. He, too, presented himself before the minister.

 “What is your request?” asked the minister, while the general and other officials crowded around him.

The farmer trembled momentarily, moved back and bowed low to the minister. “I have a letter to give to Your Honor,” he replied.

With that, he gave the minister a sealed envelope. The minister opened the envelope and looked at it with amazement.

“Why, this is only a blank piece of paper!” he exclaimed. “It contains no writing whatsoever.”

The farmer took the paper, looked at it and cried aloud, “Woe is me! This letter wanted privacy, and now the letter flew away. If Your Honor will have patience I will look for the words and put them back onto the sheet.”

With that, he fell on his knees and began to search the floor. Everyone crowded around him watching the spectacle. After a while, he rose and began to cry, “Your Honor,” he wailed, “what can I now tell the people who sent me? All is lost. Apparently the words were too shy when they saw such a crowd and they disappeared.”

The general looked at the man and began to laugh. “Must be some lunatic,” he mused to himself.

**Seeks Privacy**

But the minister caught the farmer’s eye and then announced in an authoritative voice: “Come with me to my private chamber!”

Leaving everyone standing in the main hall, the minister led the farmer to a private room. “I see through your act,” the minister said. “I realize you wanted privacy. What it is all about?”

 “May you be blessed,” answered the farmer. “You are as brilliant as they say. I am a Jew, and the Jewish community of this town has sent me. The general, who is an enemy of the Jews, would not permit us to come see you.” Then he gave him another letter, which listed all the evils that the general had done to them.

 “I was wondering why no Jews appeared to welcome me at this reception,” said the minister. “When I questioned the general about this, he told me that the Jews were too busy cheating and stealing money to bother to come here.”

The farmer, who was Nachumka, then told the minister how the Jews were being used by the general to fill his own coffers. How he imposed taxes, which were never turned over to the queen’s treasury, presenting the minister with documented evidence.

The minister took all the letters and evidence and said, “You are a wise person to see me privately, for the general would have surely killed you if he saw what you are giving me. Be assured that this will receive speedy action.”

**The General Gets His Just Reward**

The following morning the minister departed. A few days later the general was summoned to the Royal Palace, exiled and placed in charge of a small village in Siberia.

The Jews of that city celebrated the event and blessed G-d for saving them from the evil clutches of another Haman. Every Jew in Russia revered the name of Nachumka the Jester and, if asked, could explain why a jester has a high place in *Gan Eden*.

*Reprinted from the March 7, 2014 edition of The Jewish Press.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Friend of the Rema**

Rabbi Moshe Leib Isserles (the Rema) and Rabbi Chaim, the brother of the Maharal of Prague were dear friends all their lives. When Rabbi Isserles assumed the office of Chief Rabbi of the Rabbinical Court of Cracow, Rabbi Chaim accompanied him and served as an adjunct in his rabbinical duties.

After the tragic death of Rabbi Chaim's wife and the year of mourning, it would have been customary to begin the search for a suitable match. When Rabbi Chaim made no attempt to remarry, it was assumed that he was waiting for Rabbi Moshe's intervention, but Rabbi Chaim had his own plan. He contacted a matchmaker and stated his requirements: He wanted a G-d-fearing and modest woman, with the means to support a Torah scholar and a private place where he could study undisturbed. He also required that neither his wife nor her family would reveal Rabbi Chaim's true identity.

**The Couple Was Betrothed in Utter Secrecy**

Not long after, the matchmaker came up with the perfect match. The good woman was the daughter of a baker, and both she and her father agreed to all of Rabbi Chaim's conditions. A special room was filled with many holy books, and the couple was betrothed in utter secrecy.

A few weeks later, Rabbi Chaim came to his friend and said, "I want you to know that I have decided to travel to my home town to visit my elder brother."

Rabbi Moshe was shocked and deeply saddened by the news. He tried to dissuade Rabbi Chaim, but he refused to discuss his decision. When Rabbi Moshe saw that his words had no effect, he said, "If there is nothing I can do to change your mind, I will at least send you off with great honor."

Rabbi Chaim kept his own counsel and quietly implemented his plan. Rabbi Moshe prepared a great celebration to mark his friend's departure. When it drew to a close, Rabbi Moshe tearfully accompanied his friend several miles on the way before they parted.

**A Simple Wedding Was Performed**

Now came the next phase of his plan. Rabbi Chaim assumed a disguise so effective, he was virtually unrecognizable. He returned to his father-in-law's house in Cracow by a circuitous route, and there a simple wedding was performed. Although the townsfolk thought it odd that the baker made no wedding feast, they soon forgot it in the crush of everyday concerns. Rabbi Chaim and his wife lived harmoniously, and from that day forth, he remained in his home studying Torah and never venturing out.

A few years later a terrible plague broke out in Cracow. The townsfolk went to Rabbi Moshe to ask if this could be a punishment for some unknown sin. After some investigation, his attendants brought the rabbi a shocking report. The baker's daughter was suspected of living with a man without having had a proper marriage. Rabbi Moshe ordered the man brought to him at once.

Although when Rabbi Chaim arrived at the rabbinical court, he tried to keep his face averted, his friend recognized him at once. Rabbi Moshe led Rabbi Chaim into his private chambers and fell weeping with joy into his arms. But when he looked up, his friend was laughing.

Rabbi Moshe stared at Rabbi Chaim and said: "I will ask you just three things: Where were you before you came to the baker's house? What is the truth about the sin they are speaking of? Why did you laugh?"

**No Time to Study the Torah**

**As Intensively as I Wished**

"Let me reply. When I served the community's needs, I suffered, for I had no time to study the Torah as intensively as I wished. Now I can follow the dictates of my heart. As for sin, there is none. I have been happily married for two years. My only problem was the gnawing thought that perhaps I was sinfully proud of my accomplishments. I prayed to G-d for a humble heart, but I had not anticipated the correction would come through such humiliation! I laughed because I saw you weep, and then I knew that my punishment was fulfilled."

Rabbi Moshe called his servants: "This man is no sinner, he may leave in peace."

That night Rabbi Moshe couldn't stop thinking about the day's events. Rabbi Chaim had removed himself from all worldly matters and spent his days and nights sitting in a barren room studying Torah. He had to go see this for himself. Late the following night, he stood outside Rabbi Chaim's room. Listening closely, he could hear his friend's voice, but there was another voice as well. Finally, he knocked on the door and announced himself.

"Enter," he was told. There was Rabbi Chaim, sitting alone at a table. "Who else was here with you?" Rabbi Moshe inquired, but he received no reply.

"I order you to reply!"

**The Voice of the Prophet Elijah**

"If you command me as the rabbi, I must obey. The other voice you heard was that of the Prophet Elijah, who comes here to teach me."

When he heard this, Rabbi Moshe became faint. "Ask him what sin I have committed that I don't merit to learn from him."

"Tell Rabbi Moshe Isserles," the prophet replied, "that he has committed no sin. But the spiritual and the grandiose cannot mix. Rabbi Moshe occupies himself with his holy rabbinical service to the community and he must conduct himself in a manner befitting the honor of his position. I can come only to those whose good deeds are hidden from the public eye."

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