**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tazria/Metzora 5772**

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**Dressed for the Occasion**

 Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates the story of an eleven-year-old boy in Europe. In the beginning of the twentieth century, most Jews did not have large bank accounts. In fact, most had no bank accounts. Indeed, those who could provide three meals a day were considered quite fortunate.

**New Garments Were Usually**

**Only Purchased for Yom Tov**

 Clothing was a different story altogether. One purchased new garments only after the old garments could no longer be adequately mended. Yom Tov was usually the time to purchase a new garment. Purchasing a dress, for instance, was no walk in the park. It meant picking out the fabric, going to the seamstress a number of times for fittings, and then waiting until she completed the garment.

 Yitzchak, which was the young boy's name, was very excited that his mother was finally getting a new dress. It was supposed to be finished sometime before Pesah, and the whole family could not wait. Their mother was so devoted to them. Now, she was finally doing something for herself. Since this purchase was such a major event, she would not wear the new dress until Pesah. The children were disappointed, but anxiously, and with great anticipation, they counted the days until Pesah.

**Casually Mentioning He**

**Had Completed a Masechet**

 Yitzchak was really getting into his learning. He had recently been elevated into an accelerated class and had completed Masechet Baba Kamma, a significant feat for a young boy. He mentioned this to his mother as an aside, not wanting to bring attention to himself. His mother beamed with pride. This is what mattered most in her life.

 The next evening, when Yitzchak returned from cheder, he was met with an incredible sight. The table was bedecked with their finest linen tablecloth; the dishes which were usually set aside for special occasions were set, candles were lit, and his mother was wearing her new dress!

The young boy was shocked. He asked, "What is happening? Why is the table set with fancy dishes and candles? And, why are you wearing your new dress? I thought you were waiting for Yom Tov?"

**Your Making a Siyum**

**Is for Me a Yom Tov**

 His mother smiled. "Yes, I was saving the dress for Yom Tov, but yesterday you told me that you completed Masechet Baba Kamma. What bigger Yom Tov is there than that? It is what I live for. Nothing is more important to me than my child's Torah study. And if you are making a siyum, then it is a Yom Tov."



**Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, zt”l**

 The young boy remembered these words all of his life. Even when he became the distinguished Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *z”l*, he kept dear to him those special words that his mother expressed to him that day. (Penenim on the Torah)

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

**The Rewards of Guarding One’s Mouth**

The following is excerpted from the outstanding English translation of the Sefer *Aleinu L’Shabei’ach* on *Sefer Vayikra* (Artscroll p.113-114)*,* by Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, Shlita:

 “R’ Moshe Vaye related that a great talmid chacham who learned in the Chofetz Chaim’s yeshivah in Radin told him this story: “I used to visit the Chofetz Chaim often. Once, when I was in his house, the Chofetz Chaim was feeling quite weak, but was in very good spirits nonetheless. He was 83 years old at the time.

 “The Chofetz Chaim was lying in bed, and he suddenly motioned to me to come closer to him. When I came over to his bed, he asked that I open his mouth. I was taken aback, even frightened, for I did not understand what the Chofetz Chaim’s intention was, and I did not dare to go ahead and open his mouth. How could I open the mouth of the holy Chofetz Chaim? Who dares to enter the lion’s den?

 “The Chofetz Chaim then repeated his instruction. Having no choice, I obeyed. Looking into the Chofetz Chaim’s mouth, I saw two snow-white rows of teeth, each tooth perfectly healthy and in the correct place. It was as though I were looking into the mouth of a young child whose teeth were still sparkling and pristine.

**“I Thought I Was Going to Faint”**

 “Count the number of teeth I have in my mouth,” the Chofetz Chaim then instructed me. I thought I was going to faint. In order to count the Chofetz Chaim’s teeth, I would have to peer deep inside his mouth. But the Chofetz Chaim urged me to count his teeth.

 “Hesitatingly, I counted 32 teeth. The Chofetz Chaim was still in possession of a full, perfect set of teeth. Not one tooth was missing or decayed; everyone was strong, healthy, and as good as new. How many people have a full set of healthy teeth at age 83, I marveled. After I counted the Chofetz Chaim’s teeth, he took my hand, and said, with a smile that I will never forget, ‘I guarded the mouth that Hashem gave me, so Hashem took care of my mouth.’”

 Hakhel Note: Let us strive to make our teeth as white as we can!

*Reprinted from the April 23, 2012 edition of the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin.*

**Story #752**

**Three Times No**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?count=1335196470&folder=Inbox&msgNum=0001AY00:001F_Kgt00001Uo3&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1335195162&randid=1670478790&content=central&session_continue=1##)

 The fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel (the Rebbe Maharash), had a certain chasid who was a successful businessman. Before undertaking any significant deal, he always consulted the Rebbe and followed his instructions.

 One time, the chasid was offered a fabulous opportunity. If successful -- and most certainly it would be -- he would make millions. The deal, however, required that he invest almost his entire fortune. As he never would consider making such a major move without the Rebbe’s advice and blessing, he set off to the hamlet of Lubavitch to speak to the Maharash.

 The Rebbe listened carefully to the details of the proposition, but then told him that he should not go through with the deal.

 The chasid was stunned. He tried to convince the Rebbe that this was a sound proposal; he described all of the great profits to be made, but to no avail. The Rebbe's answer was final: NO!

**His Business Partners**

**Laughed at Him**

 A few days later, the would-be business partners came to the chasid. When they heard that he was not interested, based upon the Maharash's answer, they laughed at him. "Certainly you didn't understand the Rebbe's words," they chided.

 "Or maybe there were some important details you left out that would solicit a different answer. After all," they said, "isn't there a saying that 'according to how you ask, that is how you're answered?' Go back to the Rebbe and make sure to tell him all the details. You'll see, the answer will be different this time."

 Back to Lubavitch the chasid went. "Rebbe," he pleaded, "obviously I did not explain myself well enough last time. We're talking about tremendous sums of money. I can become rich overnight and give much tzedaka as well."

**A Simple and Direct Negative Answer**

 The Rebbe listened patiently once again. At the end of the "presentation" his answer was simple and direct: "No. It's not worthwhile."

 The chasid made his way home, thinking about all the money he could have made, if only the Rebbe would have agreed. "The Rebbe doesn't even explain his reasons," thought the chasid.

 But his friends and family wouldn't let up. "It's forbidden to lose such an opportunity," they cried. "Go back to the Rebbe again and certainly the answer will be different."



**A handwritten manuscript of Rabbi Shmuel (the Rebbe Maharash)**

**(courtesy of Agudas Chassidei Chabad Lubavitch Library/Kehot)**

 In his third attempt, the chasid tried everything, even begging the Rebbe to let him make the deal, but the Rebbe answered once again, "No."

 When the chasid came home, he couldn't stand up to the pressure of family and friends, and contrary to the Rebbe's advice, he signed the deal. He quieted his conscience by telling himself that he would now give really a lot of charity. Unfortunately, things did not go well. In a short while, the chasid lost all his money.

 The chasid realized how wrong it was to not have followed the Rebbe's instruction. Full of regret, he made his way back a fourth time to see the Rebbe. The chasid spent a long time in private with the Rebbe. When he came out, he revealed only one thing the Maharash had told him.

**Why Do People Seek**

**The Advice of a Rebbe**

 "There are people," said the Rebbe, "big businessmen among them, who come to ask my advice concerning important matters. Sometimes the issues are quite complex; matters which I have never engaged in, nor did my ancestors. So then why do they ask me my advice, and follow my instructions and counsel?

 "There are three possible answers, each one matching a different type of Jew who comes to me.

 "One person thinks, 'It's very simple. The Rebbe has ruach hakodesh - Divine Inspiration! He is a G-dly man, a prophet. It is G-d's words coming from his mouth and therefore we must follow him, no questions asked!'

 "Another type," continued the Rebbe, "is a person who operates on a different level, somewhat more down to earth. 'The Rebbe studies Torah all the time and serves G-d with his entire being. His intellect is totally nullified to G-d's Will. Therefore, everything he says stems from Torah and certainly his words will be fulfilled.'

**From All Walks of Life**

 "The third type," explained the Rebbe, "says, 'The Rebbe meets so many people, from all over the world and from all walks of life. He has acquired an incredibly broad knowledge of worldly matters. With this knowledge and his ability to see things from many different angles, the Rebbe sees what others cannot. Therefore, we must listen to him.'

 "Whichever group you might belong to," the Rebbe Maharash concluded, "you should never have gone through with the deal after hearing from me not once, not twice, but three times clearly 'no!'"

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the excellent rendition on //lchaimweekly.org (#966), with permission.

 Connection: Seasonal -- the 178th anniversary of the birth of the Rebbe Maharash.

 Biographic note: Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (2 Iyar 1834 -13 Tishrei 1882), the fourth Lubavitch Rebbe, known as "the Rebbe Maharash," was the seventh and youngest son of his predecessor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, "the Tsemach Tsedek..

*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://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?count=1335196470&folder=Inbox&msgNum=0001AY00:001F_Kgt00001Uo3&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1335195162&randid=1670478790&content=central&session_continue=1##)

**It Once Happened**

**Shalom the Shamash**

 Everyone in the holy city of Jerusalem knew Shalom the shamash, the young sexton who tidied up and maintained order in the famous "Beit Kel" yeshiva. Quiet by nature, he would fetch books for the Torah scholars and in general, make himself useful. But all in all, there was nothing extraordinary about Shalom that would raise any eyebrows.

**A Young Jew from Yemen**

**Arrives in the Holy Land**

 Only recently had the young Jew arrived in the Holy Land, after a long and arduous journey from Yemen. Indeed, it was the fulfillment of his life's dream when he was finally able to kiss the holy soil and devote himself to the service of G-d in Jerusalem.

**Born in the City of Sharab**

 Shalom the shamash had been born in the city of Sharab, where his superior intellectual gifts were evident at an early age. Unfortunately, the premature death of his father prevented him from remaining in yeshiva, as the young orphan was now the sole support of his family.

 Shalom became a traveling merchant and plied his wares from door to door. This left him with only his evenings free to pursue his one true love: the study of Torah. He would often remain in the study hall till the wee hours of the morning before going home to catch a few hours of sleep.

 But Shalom's thirst for Torah knowledge was insatiable. Despite his achievements, he still felt as if something were missing. It was then that he discovered the esoteric realm of Torah - the Kabala and its mysteries - as developed by the sages of Yemen. Enthusiastically he plunged into the study of the higher worlds and the Torah's secrets, and distinguished himself in this realm as well. But the young Rabbi Shalom insisted on working for a living, and continued to peddle his notions as before.

 One time on a business expedition Shalom found himself in a very dangerous situation, and vowed that if G-d saved him, he would move to the Holy Land. Indeed, G-d came to his aid, and he left his friends and family and embarked on the long journey through the Middle East.

**He Longed to Learn the**

**Inner Aspects of the Torah**

 Shalom's joy knew no bounds when he finally arrived at the Beit Kel yeshiva in Jerusalem, headed by the famous Kabalist Rabbi Gedalia Chiyun. His soul longed to join the other students of the inner aspects of Torah, but he had no wish to reveal his already extensive knowledge. Instead, he presented himself as a simple Jew and found employment as the sexton of the study hall.

 It was a wonderful opportunity to learn without being observed. As a regular presence in the yeshiva, no one paid any attention to Shalom, who kept his eyes and ears open to every word. Thus he gradually increased his knowledge until he far surpassed everyone else. But his greatness remained a secret known only to him.

 One day a question came up in the yeshiva that no one could answer. For days the Kabalists consulted their heavy tomes, but could not come up with a satisfactory explanation. Rabbi Gedalia became almost obsessed with the problem, and was very perturbed by his inability to solve it.

**A Dark Cloud Hovered**

**Over the Study Hall**

 The shamash had been listening to their deliberations and knew the answer. But not wishing to reveal himself, he remained silent. As the days progressed, it was as if a dark cloud hovered over the study hall.

 One day Shalom came upon Rabbi Gedalia weeping over an open volume, begging and imploring G-d to illuminate his mind. It was impossible to ignore such a pitiful sight. Later that night, when the study hall was empty, Shalom wrote the answer on a small piece of paper and left it between the pages of Rabbi Gedalia's book.

 The next morning the study hall was in an uproar. The problem that had appeared so difficult and complex had been solved in a clear and logical manner. Everyone was curious where the wonderful explanation had come from, but it remained a great mystery.

 The strange phenomenon repeated itself several times. Whenever a difficult question was raised in the evening, its answer was found in Rabbi Gedalia's book the next morning. A thorough investigation was conducted, but the head of the yeshiva could not determine where the answers were coming from.

**The Riddle is Solved**

 The riddle was solved in a totally unexpected manner, when Rabbi Gedalia's young daughter happened to mention that she had noticed the Yemenite sexton flipping through the pages of one of her father's books. In fact, she had noticed him doing so on several occasions.



**Sar Shalom Sharabi's tomb on the** [**Mount of Olives**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_of_Olives)

 The next time an unresolved question was raised in the study hall the Rabbi made believe he was going home for the evening but hid in a closet. Indeed, to his utter shock, he observed the sexton consulting the holy tomes and secreting a piece of paper between the pages of his prayer book.

**Becomes the Right Hand**

**Of the Rosh Yeshiva**

 The next morning the head of the yeshiva insisted on seating Rabbi Shalom Sharabi at his right hand side, and revealed to all the great mystery. In fact, he later appointed him his heir and successor, despite his tender age of only 27.

 Rabbi Shalom Sharabi's greatness was thus revealed to everyone in Jerusalem, and many stories are told about his wisdom. For 30 years he served as head of the Beit Kel yeshiva, until passing away in the year 5537 (1777).

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

**The Angel in Shiny Shoes**

**By Danny Verbov**

 Abraham Naymark was 10 years old when his family escaped from Germany in 1934.

 Germany to Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakia to Hungary and finally Hungary to Yugoslavia…

 In Zagreb there was no shortage of children trying to help their families make ends meet. Every restaurant, movie house and train station was rife with rag-dressed waifs fighting for a spot to beg for pennies.



Abe in between his parents

 But young Abe was already too proud to beg. He wanted to be a real businessman.

 With this goal in mind, he took the small valise his mother had used to carry the family's toiletries across Europe and scavenged around the neighborhood searching for any items of potential worth. He found a fine winter collection of used brushes, soaps, small containers, shoelaces, picture frames and various other bits and pieces, cleaned them as best he could and put them all into the valise.

**Going Out to Sell Door to Door**

 He told his parents he was going out to sell door to door so he could help ease his father's financial burden. While they were touched by his intentions, they couldn't hide their skepticism. They decided to indulge him and gave him their blessing.

 Every morning he would polish his inventory, pack the case and make himself as presentable as possible. His clothes were too small and his shoes worn through. But with his hair carefully combed, face washed and valise in hand, he marched out the door each day full of enthusiasm.

**Confident in His Abilities to Succeed**

 He had no doubt at all he would succeed in selling his goods and give his father a lot of satisfaction.

 Winter in Zagreb, 1934. The streets were frozen and no one was particularly keen to open their doors and let in the cold – or a cocky little 10-year-old.

 Abe was not deterred.

 For two months his efforts met with moderate success. Some people were amused by this young entrepreneur and bought what they could afford. Others simply laughed at him, ruffled his hair and wished him luck in his “business.”

 He persevered, never doubting it was just a matter of time before he would hit the jackpot.

**Searching for Businesses**

**With Jewish Names**

 He could barely speak or understand Serbo-Croat but as he walked down yet another residential street, it occurred to him to search for large shops and businesses with Jewish names. He suspected a Jew might have more sympathy for a fellow Jewish immigrant and would more likely to purchase his wares.

 He strode down the main street in Zagreb and an enormous department store towered high above him. Shivering uncontrollably under his threadbare winter coat, he stretched his neck to look up at the bright multicolored sign on the front of the store. It was definitely a Jewish name. And there was also a mezuzah on the door.

**Shuddering from**

**The Cold and Fear**

 This was it. He shuddered from cold and fear.

 Would the owner of such a huge store even consider taking a moment from his busy day to see a scruffy 10-year-old? Or would he be thrown out of the store for having the audacity to request a meeting with such an important man?

 Young Abe Naymark shook off the doubts, took a deep breath, walked purposefully through the front door, and discovered the most elegant and attractive department store he had ever seen in his life. He had no idea places like this even existed.

 He stood amazed at the extravagance, the décor, the luxuriousness. Then he looked at his valise…

 Racks of men's suits running along one entire wall. A range of elegant women's clothing across another wall. Tables and shelves upon shelves of household goods decoratively displayed in the middle of the store.

 He stood amazed at the extravagance, the décor, the luxuriousness.

**Looking at His Valise**

 He looked at his valise…

 His comical appearance distinguished him from the rest of the clientele and immediately attracted the attention of one of the store assistants.

 “What are you doing here, young man?” he asked, making no effort to hide his disdain.

 Abe did his best to stand up straighter and appear more confident.

 "I…I…want…want…to see the owner of this store please," he sputtered.

 His fear was growing by the minute but he was determined to do what he had to do. He was going to show his goods to the owner of this glittering palace.

**The Owner is Too Busy**

**To Meet Little Children**

 “The owner is a very busy man. He does not have time to meet with little children. Let me walk you to the door. Perhaps another time.”

Abe's heart sank but he didn't move.

 “Come along young man, I've got a lot of work to do. I can't stand here chatting with you all morning.”

 Abe couldn't think of anything to say that might persuade the man and he reluctantly began to shuffle towards the exit.

 Suddenly, from nearly halfway across the store, he heard a man's deep voice.

 “Just a moment there, my friend.”

Abe stopped dead in his tracks.

 A very tall, thin man with a dark beard and small wire-rimmed glasses walked towards him.

 Abe stopped dead in his tracks. “I am the owner of this store. What do you have in that case over there?”

 The man was dressed in a navy pinstriped suit and a light blue tie. His shoes were brightly polished. Years later, Abe would relive this moment many times, seeing his reflection in the sparkling shine of the man's shoes.

**Inquires About What’s in the Case**

 “I am the owner of this store. What do you have in that case over there? I might be interested to see what you're carrying. That is, if the items are for sale of course,” he added, with a twinkle in his eye.

 With a defeated huff, the employee who had been trying to escort Abe out walked away.

 Scared this friendly man might change his mind, Abe quickly opened his valise. The man held each item in his hand as if to examine it before asking its price and returning it to its place.

 When he had finished checking Abe's entire stock, he looked him in the eye and said, “Wait right here young man.”

**Returns with a Check**

 Moments later he returned with a check. “Please tell me how much you want for all your goods,” he said in very businesslike fashion.

 Abe was stunned. He was rather unfamiliar with the Yugoslavian currency but came up with some outrageous amount.

 He was almost embarrassed to say it aloud but the man wrote out a check for the full amount! The owner of this commercial empire had bought his entire business.

 Thanking him profusely and trembling with excitement, he turned to the exit with check in hand. He couldn't wait to show his father what a great salesman he was.

**The Deep Voice Called Out Again**

 But as he reached the door, Abe heard the deep voice calling him again.

 “Young man! Wait! You forgot something.”

 He turned around to see the man coming to him carrying his valise with all the merchandise still inside.

 “I believe this is yours,” he said gently.

 Abe didn't understand.

 “But it's yours now, Sir. You paid for it all,” he replied, refusing to take it.

 The man changed the subject. “Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

 “I'm the youngest of eight,” Abe answered, hoping that was what he wanted to hear.

 The man in the shiny shoes smiled broadly.

 “Listen carefully my boy. Take your goods back home. All I want is that you tell your father to come here first thing tomorrow morning. Do you understand? This is very important. Now hurry home. I will be waiting for your father when I open the store at nine tomorrow.”

**Going to His Family in Shock**

 Still shocked and not really understanding what interest this man could have in his father, Abe left for home with his valise in one hand and a check in the other.

 He raced through the icy streets tightly holding the folded check in his hand. The feel of the paper was the only thing that stopped him thinking he had imagined the morning's events.

 The cold and the wind could not chill the warm feeling now burning through his bones.

 When he reached their apartment, Abe burst through the front door shouting, “Father! Father! Where are you? You won't believe what happened to me today!”

**Excitingly Relating His Adventures**

 Wolf Naymark had to force him to calm down as he excitedly related his adventures.

 “But why do you think he wants to meet with me? Did you tell him anything about me?”

 “No Father. He just asked how many siblings I have.”

 The Naymarks spent the rest of the evening guessing what this mysterious department store owner might want with their father.

 “Perhaps he wants to give you a job, Wolf,” suggested his mother. "This stranger must have realized that if a 10-year-old boy is trying to earn money for his family, his father must be in dire need of employment."

 They spent a restless night tossing and turning in their beds. The next day, Wolf and Abe both awoke with the sun. Wolf, dressed in his finest – which wasn't really fine by any standard – followed his son's directions to the store while Abe and his mother stayed home, trying to pass the time. It felt like an eternity.

 Two hours later the door opened...

 “Don't keep us in suspense! Tell us what happened!” Abe's mother pleaded, with all the children echoing her impatience.

 Wolf Naymark smiled mysteriously. It was a smile they had never seen before. The smile of a man who had just been told his life's dream was about to come true.

**Only a Few Jews Allowed into Palestine**

 Hundreds of thousands were seeking refuge but no more than 15,000 Jews were allowed to enter the country.

 The owner of the department store was an officer of the Jewish Federation. The Jewish Federation was the single agency responsible for issuing Palestine immigration certificates to a limited amount of Jewish families. Each certificate was allocated to one family and no more than 15,000 Jews were allowed to enter the country at that time. Since hundreds of thousands – if not more – were seeking refuge, these certificates were nearly impossible to come by.

 When the department store owner asked Abe how many siblings he had, he had been delighted to hear he was the youngest of eight with the five youngest still living with their parents.

**The Family is the Perfect Candidate**

 As far as the Jewish Federation was concerned, the Naymark family was the perfect candidate for the certificate. They could not have agreed more.

 The man knew – as they did – that once their Yugoslavian visas expired they would be sent back to Germany. They would have been doomed, sent to Jewish labor camps… or worse.

 Two days later, a messenger knocked at the door carrying a large manila envelope. The Naymark family gathered round their father as he opened the treasure. The coveted emigration certificate, six freight train tickets to Salonika and six tickets for a passenger boat from Salonika to Palestine.

**The Chesed of the**

**Shiny-Shoed Angel**

 Not only had the shiny-shoed angel secured the certificate and all the necessary papers, he had paid for their train and boat fare as well. This was no small expense.

 Abe smiled as he saw tears of gratitude running down his parents' cheeks. Even at his young age, he understood the magnitude of this stranger's generosity and made himself a vow.

 When he grew up he would do whatever it took to be in a position to offer help to someone in need.

 Now 88 and a full time philanthropist, Abe Naymark has certainly kept his vow.

**The Greatest Pleasure – To Help Others**

 Despite a life full of excitement, adventure and remarkable achievement in his professional career, his greatest pleasure and satisfaction is helping other people, whether through donations to hospitals, universities, synagogues or other worthy causes.

 As he says, "I can proudly say that helping others in a meaningful way has been the most important thing I have ever done."

 And the angel smiles.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com Adapted from "From Travail to Triumph: The Remarkable Life of Abraham Naymark", soon to be published by Ventures Press. To reserve your copy of "From Travail to Triumph" please send an email to* *dverbov@014.net.il**)*

*Note: If anyone knows the name of the store in Zagreb and/or the name of the owner, please contact the author at* *dverbov@014.net.il**.*

**Reflecting on the Power**

**Of Great Jewish Speeches**

**By Daniel Keren**



 Jews have always been recognized by the gentiles around us as the “People of the Book.” Go into a religious home and you invariably see large numbers of printed volumes. The Book of books, of course is the Bible or *Tanach*. Many of the books that you find in a Jewish home are commentaries of the *Tanach*.

 A significant segment of the *Tanach* is comprised of the inspiring Books of the *Naviim* (Prophets) whose thundering moral declarations spoken to our forefathers some two millennium ago continue to resonate with relevance to the social mores of our society today.

**An Echo of the**

**Biblical Prophets**

 Although most Jews are still in exile today and even those Jews who merit to live in the holy Land of Israel today are governed by secular Jews who appear to have severe *golus* mentalities, there is still a remnant of that awesome and inspiring holy *ruach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration) that echoed in the voices of such great Jewish prophets of the past such as Yerimiahu (Jeremiah), Yeshayahu (Isaiah) and Yehezkel (Ezekiel).

 *Chazal*, our Sages of blessed memory teach us that we can find in today’s synagogues and study halls an echo of the holiness of the *Beis Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple) that was once the center of the Jewish nation in *Yerushalayim* before its tragic destruction – first by the Babylonians and then by the ancient Romans. Similarly, we can find in the weekly sermons or special *shiurim* (lectures) delivered by our rabbis and *roshei yeshivas* a reflection of the once powerful prophetic messages delivered during the Biblical era of our national history.

**An Impressive Coffee Table Book**

 Capturing the flavor and excitement of this important aspect of Jewish life is a newly published collection of significant Jewish speeches delivered for various occasions (mostly) during the past five centuries. Compiled by Rabbi Moshe Bamberger and published in an impressive coffee table version by ArtScroll Publications, this beautifully illustrated 316 pages book is titled “Great Jewish Speeches: A Collection of Classic and Inspirational Messages from Torah Personalities.”

 In his introduction to this important collection of Jewish oratory, Rabbi Bamberger, a noted scholar and *Mashgiach Ruchani* at Beis Medrash L’Talmus (Lander College for Men) writes: “Public addresses by our leaders have long played a crucial role in our nation’s heritage. Our forefather Abraham ventured out to the idolatrous masses to preach faith in the true and only G-d, and the world was changed forever.

**A Legacy of Moses**

 “While our people were in the shackles of Egyptian bondage, Moses was sent by G-d to speak to them, and prepare them for liberation and nationhood. After the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, our Sages tell us, Moses would deliver Torah lectures to his people, casting the mold for future Jewish leaders to address their flocks with words of instruction and guidance.

 “Likewise, the prophets were charged with a mission of G-d, as well to provide soothing words of comfort and solace. After the destruction of the Holy Temple, the great rabbinic leaders of the *Mishnaic* and *Talmudic* periods would deliver sermons – generally on the Sabbath and Festivals – as throngs of Jews thirstily drank from their vast reservoirs of Torah.”

**93 Selected Speeches**

 Rabbi Bamberger has seen fit to divide the 93 selected Jewish speeches into 11 distinct categories – Faith, Crisis, Transition, Before Kings, *Yeshiva* and *Chinuch*, Prayer, Days of Awe, *Siyum*, *Mussar*, Eulogy and Jewish Women.

 While most of the speeches selected for inclusion in this volume are from prominent rabbis of the past 500 years, others go back a few centuries earlier to that glorious era of the *Rishonim* and echo the lofty words of such classic commentators as the Ran, the Ramban, the Ra’avad, the Rif and the Semag.

**Recent Great Orators**

 Other speeches of more recent *rabbanim* touch on basic questions of suffering and explanations of why certain historical events occurred. Included in Rabbi Bamberger’s selections for the “*Great Jewish Speeches*” volume are transcripts of immortal words uttered by the Ger Tzeddek of Vilna; Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, *hy”d*; Rabbi Shimon Schwab; the Chasam Sofer; the Chofetz Chaim; Rabbi Aharon Kotler; Rabbi Meir Shapiro; Rabbi Avrohom Pam; Rabbi Akiva Eiger; Rabbi Eliezer Silver; Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky; Rabbi Moshe Feinstein; Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner; the Steipler Rav; the Dubner Maggid; Rabbi Shimon Schwab; Rabbi Mordechai Gifter; Rabbi Elazar Shach; the Ben Ish Hai and the Satmer Rebbe.

**Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum**

 An example of such illuminating Jewish oratory are the following remarks by Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, the late Mirrer Rosh Hayeshiva in response to the devastating September 11, 2001 attack on America by Muslim suicide terrorists.

 “The purpose of suffering in this world is not to punish man for his sins, but rather to compel him to account for his behavior and to repent. This is how we should perceive the cataclysmic events that have occurred in the United States in recent weeks.

 “Of course, this is easier said than done. When a person is numbed by the chilling aftershock of personal tragedy, he is in no state to focus on the ultimate meaning of life. To do so would require him to rise above his natural limitations. Yet this is precisely what is expected of a Jew…



**Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, zt”l**

**Signals from Heaven**

 “The September 11 attacks and the ongoing terrorist activities are signals from Heaven that we should do *teshuvah*, and learn from our mistakes. Becoming depressed is not the proper response to such situations. We have to be resilient, just as our ancestors were…and rise to the occasion.

 “…It’s time for us to sit up and take notice, to learn from our mistakes. Hashem is telling us something.

 “How else can we understand these events? Consider the facts: a single individual, without the aid of tanks, warplanes or cruise missles, manages to strike at the symbols of America’s military and economic might: the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

**Casting America into a**

**Panic and Recession**

 “He and a band of wild-eyed followers cast the most powerful nation on earth into a state of panic and an economic recession. World markets grind to a halt. Both houses of Congress are closed down. The Supreme Court building is evacuated. A nation goes to war. All these events were due to a fanatic hiding in a cave somewhere.

 “Why did this happen in America, of all countries? In two thousand years of *Galus*, Jews have never enjoyed as much freedom and security as they do today in the United States. The American people have helped the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael* more than any other nation on earth.

**Awakening Us from**

**Our Spiritual Slumber**

 “Wouldn’t it have made more sense for the attacks to have been perpetuated against a nation that has a long history of persecuting Jews such as Germany, Poland or Spain? Why was the United States victimized? Obviously, Hashem is trying to send us a message. He is trying to shock us into a state of mental alertness, to awaken us from our slumber. He is trying to stimulate us to so some spiritual reckoning and correct our misdeeds…

 “Before September 11, we thought that America was different. While we were aware that we were in *Galus*, it was a pleasant sort of *Galus*. It was the kind you hardly felt, and everyone felt secure. Jews and non-Jews alike would go to work without fear. The thought that we might not return home never crossed our minds. In our innocence, the most frightening experience that we could imagine was being mugged.

 “But those days are over.

**The Punishment of**

**Abandoning Hashem**

 “The Torah gives us the reason in the following verse: “They will thus abandon Me and violate the covenant that I have made with them” (Deuteronomy 31:16.) The verse does not say that the Jews sinned, only that they abandoned Hashem. In other words, they placed their faith in other entities and relied on them, instead of on G-d for protection.

 “We wrongfully placed our faith in America and the symbols that it represents: financial stability – the World Trade Center; military might – the Pentagon; freedom - to get on a plane to go wherever you want without having your bags checked and your body frisked.

**A Single Sharp Blow**

 “With a single sharp blow, Hashem demonstrated to the world just how secure America really is. “If you think that you don’t require My protection any longer,” He warned us, ‘if you think that you have found a new home in America, then I will leave you to your own devices. Good luck!’

 “Then America collapsed…”

 “Great Jewish Speeches: A Collection of Classic and Inspirational Messages from Torah Personalities” by Rabbi Moshe Bamberger and published by ArtScroll Mesorah Publications is available in Jewish bookstores or by contacting the publisher by calling (718) 921-9000 or clicking www.artscroll.com)

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**To Drink or Not to Drink**

 In last week's portion (Parshas Shemini) we read about the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons. One of the reasons given for Nadav and Avihu's deaths at the hands of Hashem, was that they went in the Mishakan (Holy Tabernacle) and performed unauthorized sacrifices while being drunk.

 Performing the service of Hashem while drunk was seen as a horrible profanation of Hashem's name. Thus, the two were taken from this world. From here we see the Jewish outlook on drinking excessively.

**Judaism’s View on Excessive Drinking**

 Let us now explore briefly the issue of Judaism's view on this issue of excessive drinking, by bringing sources from the Talmud, and retelling a story from Me'am Loez. With limited exceptions, (Purim for example, according to some opinions, and the four cups of wine at the Pesach sedar) Judaism frowns on drinking to the point of inebriation.

 The Talmud tells us that excessive drinking has caused problems from the very beginning of time. The Tree‚ from which Adam ate was a grapevine, for there is nothing that brings calamity on a person more than wine. (Sanhedrin 70a-b)

**Too Much Alcohol Can Lead to Bloodshed and Poverty**

 Noach and Lot, also got into a lot of trouble through drunkenness. Rava said that the result of alcohol consumption is bloodshed and Rav Kahana added that improper consumption [of wine] impoverishes. Rava adds that it [drinking] destroys a person (Sanhedrin 70a).

 If a person becomes drunk, he is no longer in his right mind. Even such great people as Nadav and Avihu, who were in many ways as great as Moshe and Aaron, had these terrible things happen to them merely because they were drunk.

 When a person is drunk, he does not have the clarity of mind to serve Hashem. He wakes up late and does not say his prayers or recite the Sh'ma at the proper time. The Talmud teaches us for example, that a drunk person should not pray; and if he does pray, his prayer is an abomination. (Sandhedrin 64a) A drinker can also become involved in so many other sins that they cannot be counted.

**Losing Status in the Eyes of Others**

 A person who becomes drunk also loses all his status in the eyes of his fellow man. They laugh at him as they would at a monkey, which causes anguish to his relatives. The Midrash tells about a certain Tzadik (righteous person) whose father was a drunkard.

 Every day the man would go to the bar and get so drunk that he would fall in the street. Children would come and make fun of him, teasing and bothering him to no end. They would yell after him, "See, there goes the drunk."

 When the Tzadik saw his father being humiliated, his heart cringed inside and he wanted to die. He said to his father, "Don't go to the bars. Have some respect. Sit at home. I'll bring you all the wine you want until it is coming out of your mouth. You can live in peace at home. This is causing tremendous humiliation, both to me and to you." (editor: admittedly, this is not the current conventional wisdom regarding helping relatives who have drinking problems.)

 The son would urge his father every day, until the father agreed not to go to the tavern. Each day the son would go to the trouble of bringing him all the food and drink he wanted. Then the son would lay him down in bed to sleep.

**Seeing Another Drunk Being Humiliated by Children**

 One day the Tzadik went out in the street and saw a drunk lying in the middle of an open sewer. The water was all over him and children were busy at their childish pranks of teasing the drunk.

 The Tzadik said to himself, "Now is the time to bring my father to see this drunk. Let him see with his own eyes how denigrated one is when he becomes drunk. Maybe this will change him, and he will not waste all his days at the taverns."

 The Tzadik went and brought his father to the drunk in the street. They passed by the drunk lying in the open sewer, and they saw all that the children were doing to him.

**Unable to Learn the Lesson**

 When the old man saw the drunk, he went up to him and asked him, "In what tavern did you get such good wine? I would also like to get some." His son said to him, "Father, I brought you here so you should see a drunk and learn a lesson! I wanted you to see with your own eyes his great humiliation, and to avoid taverns."

 His father then said, "My son, by my life, in all the world I have no greater joy than to be in such a situation."

 This story tells the evils that can come from alcoholism. Besides the fact that drunkenness can lead a person to all sorts of sins, it can even bring one to shed the blood of his relatives. Family members are miserable when they see one so close to them suffering and in such a humiliating position. One is certain to be judged for this in the next world, and he will be severely punished for excessive drinking.

**Having Pity on One’s Own Soul**

 Therefore, anyone who has pity on his soul will not drink too much and will not become so drunk that he is no longer aware of what he is doing.
The opinion that Nadav's and Avihu's sin was drunkenness has support in the narrative itself.

 After the Torah tells us that Nadav and Avihu died, it states that Hashem told Aaron and his surviving sons, "Do not drink wine or intoxicants, you and your sons with you, when you come to the Communion Tent, and you will not die. This shall be an everlasting decree for your generations" (10:8).

 This teaches that they were not to drink wine when they came to perform the Divine service, and that they were not even to enter the Tabernacle if they were drunk. This is evidence that the sin of Nadav and Avihu was that they had gone in to perform the service while drunk." And their punishment is well known.

**The Challenge of a Jew**

 The Sages tell us that the challenge of Jew in this life to sanctify himself through those things which are permissible to him. (Yevomos 20a) Meaning, that a Jew must control his desires for physical pleasures and he should use physical pleasures as a vehicle to serve Hashem.

 This does not mean that a Jew should deny himself physical pleasures; rather, it means that a Jew should use physicality, such as eating and drinking, to serve Hashem. For example, it is ok to have a lavish meal with good wine, but have that meal on Shabbos or Yom Tov in honor of those special days, and even then, don't eat and drink excessively! By working on ourselves and helping others overcome their eating and drinking addictions, we can all sanctify ourselves to be able to serve Hashem properly.

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

**The Woman’s Uncontrollable**

**Urge to Smoke on Shabbat**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on Shabbat day*.“ (Shemot 35:3)

 A true story is told (quoted from the book Alenu Leshabeah) about an Israeli couple who lived many years on a secular kibbutz in Israel. As years went by they felt a certain emptiness in their lives. They realized that the lack of religion was the cause of this feeling.

 Slowly they returned to the Torah true way of life. They also decided to move to Meah Shearim in Jerusalem. This amazing couple continued to grow until the husband became a completely committed Jew. The wife also became very religious. There was only one thing that held her back from complete observance.

 She had a strong smoking habit. This habit was so strong that when Shabbat came around she couldn’t stop. She actually smoked on Shabbat. As a matter of fact, the most unusual part of this habit was that it was only on Shabbat that she couldn’t stop; she had no trouble the rest of the week. Everyone tried to get her to stop to no avail. When Shabbat began she had an uncontrollable need to smoke.

**Discussing the Problem with Rabbi Elyashiv**

 Eventually the people that were trying to help her went to Rabbi Elyashiv (may Hashem grant him refuah shelemah) to ask his advice. He told them to check out her mother and grandmother and even before them to make sure that they were all Jewish.

 After a short time it was revealed that her grandmother was not Jewish! This translates to mean that our smoker was not Jewish. They immediately went to the Rabbi to tell him the news. His reaction was amazing.

**The Incredible Mercy of Hashem!**

 He said, “Look and see how much mercy Hashem has! We are talking about a woman who wants to do the will of Hashem. However, Hashem knows that she isn’t Jewish (apparently the woman herself didn’t know). A non-Jew is forbidden to observe the Shabbat and is punished with death. “But, since she wanted so much to come close to the Jewish people, in Heaven they had to prevent her from committing the sin of observing the Shabbat. So Hashem gave her an uncontrollable urge to smoke, which prevented her from observing Shabbat. Plus, this led to us finding out that she wasn’t Jewish and needed to be converted! So I recommend to do the conversion and you will see that the urge will end.”

 And so it was!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5772 email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**Counting Sefirah and**

**Enjoying Lag B'Omer**

**By Savta Kops**

Farewell snows, freezing temperatures and welcome Spring

Hashem, with His kindness and His control, does His thing.

Adorning the lifeless trees and grounds with greenery

Awakening us to His world of breathtaking scenery.

When Klal Yisroel received the Torah at the Mount

We were commanded, in the spring that we count.

Seven weeks to bring the offering: Pesach barley, Shavuoth wheat

The 50th day, in the evening, to be considered complete.

These days are called Sefirah, the offering of the Omer

On the 33rd day of Sefirah, we have the festival of Lag B'Omer.

A day that we may celebrate with music of your choice

To be jovial, enjoy outings with your children and rejoice.

In Israel, the day is very special and enjoys much respect

Many lights are kindled in the synagogues which reflect.

The great and joyful illumination of innumerable lights

Which, at nightfall, remains one of the many unique sights.

In the village of Meron, they carry out special festivities

From all parts of the land, Jews stream in to partake in activities.

At Meron, they visit caves where Psalms are recited

There is indescribable emotion and many candles are lighted.

In the morning after prayers, the children are brought to cut their hair

The command to retain the "corners" over the temples, become aware.

May Hashem's Spring weather merit us with good health and love

Anxiously counting the moments of our redemption from Above.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of the Jewish Connection.*