**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Kedoshim 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #700**

**The Cold Compress Cure**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

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 When Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the chief Rabbi of Jerusalem for many years, was a young man of draft age in Europe, he traveled to his Rebbe, the Ksav Sofer, for advice on how to avoid the army. The Ksav Sofer thought for a few days and then recommended that he and two others travel to the famous scholar, the Divrei Chaim, for help.



Rabbi Y.C. Sonnefeld The Ksav Sofer

 Yosef Chaim and his friends were surprised at the recommendation to travel to a chasidic rebbe, but they of course listened to their great Rosh Yeshiva and made the trip, arriving in Sanz late in the morning. They found the Divrei Chaim saying the Asher Yatzar blessing in preparation for the Morning Prayer, which that day had been unusually delayed.

 Yosef Chaim and his companions were extremely impressed with the intention and focus that the Sanzer Rav invested in this blessing. However, those same companions were equally dismayed by what they perceived to be a disregard for the official time-limits for the Morning Prayer, so they turned around and left Sanz without speaking to the Rebbe. Yosef

 Chaim, however, decided to see what the Divrei Chaim could do for him, trusting that the Ksav Sofer had steered him correctly. Young Yosef Chaim presented his problem to the Divrei Chaim, who said, ''You will be a soldier and even a general for Jewish children in the Holy Land. Yosef Chaim did not understand a word of this. Besides, it was not practical advice.

 So he asked again what he should do about his obligation to enlist. Reb Chaim replied, ''Travel home through such-and-such a town and enlist there. [One could enlist in any town one chose.] And when you get home," he continued, ''put a cold compress on your leg."

 Yosef Chaim did not understand this either, but he decided to follow the advice nonetheless, to see what good it might bring him, and to return to the Ksav Sofer with a report of the wondrous ways of the Sanzer Rav.

 Yosef Chaim reached the specified town toward evening. That night he was kept awake by an itch on his leg that kept him scratching most of the night. By morning, when he appeared at the draft office, the leg had swollen frighteningly. The army doctors took one look at it and opined, ''You ought to travel to Vienna. If they amputate your leg quickly enough, your life might be spared.'' They handed him an exemption from the army. Yosef Chaim was frightened, but as he returned to his lodgings, he remembered the second half of the Sanzer Rav's advice. He put a cold compress on his leg, and shortly thereafter the swelling subsided and his leg returned to normal.

 Years later, after he had moved to Eretz Yisrael and become a leader in the battle against its secularization, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld remembered the Divrei Chaim's initial words about his future role and marveled at their prescience.

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a post by Yitz on heichalhanegina.blogspot.com, taken from an article written by Yisroel Mendelson in HaModia in honor of the Divrei Chaim’s 130th yahrzeit.

 Connection: 135th yahrzeit of the Divrei Chaim. Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz [1793 - 25 Nissan 1876] was the first Rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty. He is famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of tzedaka and also as a renowned Torah scholar; his voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title Divrei Chaim.

 Rabbi Avraham Benyamin Schreiber (1815-1875), known as the Ksav Sofer after the title of his halachic responsa , was the son of the illustrious Torah giant, the Chassam Sofer, Rabbi Moshe Shreiber (1762-1839), and his successor as the head of the Pressburg Yeshiva, the most prestigious in the Austrian-Hungarian empire and the largest in all of Europe.

 Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld [1848 - 19 Adar A 1932] studied under the Katav Sofer at the renowned Pressburg Yeshiva in Austria-Hungary. He was a Torah leader of the Ashkenazi community in the Old City of Jerusalem for nearly sixty years, and became its official head after the death of Rabbi Shmuel Salant in 1909.

*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/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000QjG0:001Di0iB00002fPy&count=1303909652&randid=994478574&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=994478574##)

**The Wonders of Creation**

**The Giant Squid**

 On the identification card of the giant squid it is listed that its height is about that of a three-story building and that it moves with amazing flexibility. It is equipped with a tongue littered with sharp teeth, fangs than can tear apart even a whale, and frightening clasping arms. Around seventy years ago, a Norwegian tanker weighing 15 thousand tons was attacked by giant arms that grabbed hold of it.

 The giant squid breaks several records in the natural world. First and foremost, it is the largest non-vertebrate creature, and the largest creature of prey. It also boasts the largest eye among all animals, as its eye's diameter measures between 25 and 45 centimeters.

 The biggest rival of the giant squid is the sperm whale. Among the various testimonies of the combats between squids and whales we read of an incident that occurred approximately thirty years ago. Russian whale hunters witnessed a battle between a sperm whale and a giant squid which ended with the death of both of them. The whale died with the squid's arms grabbing hold of it, and the squid's head was found in its stomach.

 A war between a giant squid and a whale is scary indeed, and the results are brutally harsh. But one cannot overlook the fact that this battle does not begin by choice, but rather by instinct, the instinct that the Almighty placed within animals to defend themselves or, alternatively, to attack a potential victim in order to live, simply put.

 Every battle of this sort results from a natural drive towards self preservation or a desire to win food; it certainly does not involve personal spite or animosity. How distressing it is that the human being, the crown jewel of creation, is often engaged in fights and battles that he chooses willingly and unnecessarily.

 So much pain, anguish and loss are caused as a result of fights such as these, battles and conflicts that could have been avoided. The Jew, too, is familiar with the drive to be victorious in battle, but he also knows where to fight - among the pages of Gemara, cracking difficult problems, battling one's study partner by citing proofs; there the battle brings positive and constructive results, and this type of fight is accepted loving by the Almighty.

*Reprinted from the Pesach Chol Hamoed 5771 issue of the Aram Soba Newsletter, published by the Bnai Yosef Congregation in Brooklyn, NY.*

**A Village with the Numbers, Not the Image, of the**

**Poorest Place in America**

**By Sam Roberts**

 The poorest place in the United States is not a dusty Texas border town, a hollow in Appalachia, a remote Indian reservation or a blighted urban neighborhood. It has no slums or homeless people. No one who lives there is shabbily dressed or has to go hungry. Crime is virtually nonexistent.

 And, yet, officially, at least, none of the nation’s 3,700 villages, towns or cities with more than 10,000 people has a higher proportion of its population living in poverty than Kiryas Joel, N.Y., a community of mostly garden apartments and town houses 50 miles northwest of New York City in suburban Orange County.

 About 70 percent of the village’s 21,000 residents live in households whose income falls below the federal poverty threshold, according to the [Census Bureau](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/c/census_bureau/index.html?inline=nyt-org). Median family income ($17,929) and per capita income ($4,494) rank lower than any other comparable place in the country. Nearly half of the village’s households reported less than $15,000 in annual income.

 About half of the residents receive food stamps, and one-third receive [Medicaid](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/health/diseasesconditionsandhealthtopics/medicaid/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) benefits and rely on federal vouchers to help pay their housing costs.

 Kiryas Joel’s unlikely ranking results largely from religious and cultural factors. Ultra-Orthodox Satmar Hasidic Jews predominate in the village; many of them moved there from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, beginning in the 1970s to accommodate a population that was growing geometrically.



**Kiryas Joel, N.Y., a predominantly Ultra-Orthodox Jewish village, is atop a national poverty list.** **The median age is under 12. CreditRichard Perry/The New York Times**

 Women marry young, remain in the village to raise their families and, according to religious strictures, do not use birth control. As a result, the median age (under 12) is the lowest in the country and the household size (nearly six) is the highest. Mothers rarely work outside the home while their children are young.

 Most residents, raised as Yiddish speakers, do not speak much English. And most men devote themselves to Torah and Talmud studies rather than academic training — only 39 percent of the residents are high school graduates, and less than 5 percent have a bachelor’s degree. Several hundred adults study full time at religious institutions.

 The concentration of poverty in Kiryas Joel, (pronounced KIR-yas Jo-EL) is not a deliberate strategy by the leaders of the Satmar sect, said Joel Oberlander, 30, a title examiner who lives in Williamsburg. “It puts a great strain on their resources,” he said. “They would love to see the better earners of the community relocate as well to balance the situation, but why would they?”

 Still, the Census Bureau’s latest poverty estimates, based on the 2005-9 American Community Survey released last year, do not take into account the community’s tradition of philanthropy and no-interest loans. Moreover, some families may be eligible for public benefits because they earn low salaries from the religious congregations and other nonprofit groups that run businesses and religious schools. Nearly half of the village’s residents with jobs work for the public or parochial schools.



**The nursery at the maternal care center in Kiryas Joel, a facility for women’s postpartum recovery. The center was built with $10 million in federal and state grants. CreditRichard Perry/The New York Times**

 “If people want to work in a religious setting and make less than they would earn at B & H, that’s a choice people make,” said Gedalye Szegedin, the village administrator, referring to the giant photo and video retail store in Manhattan whose owner and many of whose employees are members of the Satmar sect.

 “I don’t want to be judgmental,” Mr. Szegedin added. “I wouldn’t call it a poor community. I would say some are deprived. I would call it a community with a lot of income-related challenges.”

 Because the community typically votes as a bloc, it wields disproportionate political influence, which enables it to meet those challenges creatively. A luxurious 60-bed postnatal maternal care center was built with $10 million in state and federal grants. Mothers can recuperate there for two weeks away from their large families. Rates, which begin at $120 a day, are not covered by Medicaid, although, Mr. Szegedin said, poorer women are typically subsidized by wealthier ones.

 One lawmaker, Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun, a Republican who represents an adjacent district in Orange County, has demanded an investigation by state officials into why Kiryas Joel received grants for the center. “They may be truly poor on paper,” Ms. Calhoun said. “They are not truly poor in reality.”



Workers at a synagogue-owned matzo bakery, one of the economic opportunities the Orange County village has developed. CreditRichard Perry/The New York Times

 The village does aggressively pursue economic opportunities. A kosher poultry slaughterhouse, which processes 40,000 chickens a day, is community owned and considered a nonprofit organization. A bakery that produces 800 pounds of matzo daily is owned by one of the village’s synagogues.



New housing on the rise in Kiryas Joel. Public assistance is common: about half of the residents receive food stamps, and one-third receive Medicaid benefits and federal housing vouchers. CreditRichard Perry/The New York Times

 Most children attend religious schools, but transportation and textbooks are publicly financed. Several hundred handicapped students are educated by the village’s own public school district, which, because virtually all the students are poor and disabled, is eligible for sizable state and federal government grants.

 Statistically, no place comes close to Kiryas Joel. In Athens, Ohio, which ranks second in poverty, 56 percent of the residents are classified as poor.

 Still, poverty is largely invisible in the village. Parking lots are full, but strollers and tricycles seem to outnumber cars. A jeweler shares a storefront with a check-cashing office. To avoid stigmatizing poorer young couples or instilling guilt in parents, the chief rabbi recently decreed that diamond rings were not acceptable as engagement gifts and that one-man bands would suffice at weddings. Many residents who were approached by a reporter said they did not want to talk about their finances.

 “I cannot say as a group that they are cheating the system,” said William B. Helmreich, a sociology professor who specializes in Judaic studies at City College of the [City University of New York](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/c/city_university_of_new_york/index.html?inline=nyt-org), “but I do think that they have, no pun intended, unorthodox methods of getting financial support.”

 All of which prompts a fundamental question: Are as many as 7 in 10 Kiryas Joel residents really poor?

 “It is, in a sense, a statistical anomaly,” Professor Helmreich said. “They are clearly not wealthy, and they do have a lot of children. They spend whatever discretionary income they have on clothing, food and baby carriages. They don’t belong to country clubs or go to movies or go on trips to Aruba.

 “They’re not scrounging around, though. They’re not presenting a picture of poverty as if you would go to a Mexican neighborhood in Corona. They do have organizations that lend money interest-free. They’re also supported by members of the community who are wealthier — it’s not declarable income if somebody buys them a baby carriage.”

 David Jolly, the social services commissioner for Orange County, also said that while the number of people receiving benefits seemed disproportionately high, the number of caseloads — a family considered as a unit — was much less aberrant. A family of eight who reports as much as $48,156 in income is still eligible for food stamps, although the threshold for cash assistance ($37,010), which relatively few village residents receive, is lower.

 Joel Steinberg, who lives in the village with his family and works as a comptroller for a real estate firm, said that before [Passover](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/passover/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), “the No. 1 project in the community was raising funds for food.”

 Mr. Steinberg recalled encountering a neighbor soliciting help door-to-door last fall: “He had received two shut-off notices from his utility company, he’s behind with tuition and that his food stamps gets used up before the end of the month. He’s paying too much for transportation to his job, and he had had an unexpected expense that forced him into debt.”

 William E. Rapfogel, chief executive of the [Metropolitan Jewish Council on Poverty](http://www.metcouncil.org/site/PageServer), said, “Sure, there are probably people taking advantage and people in the underground economy getting benefits they’re not entitled to, but there are also a lot of poor people.”

 Mr. Szegedin, the village administrator, said critics tended to forget that state taxpayers were generally spared because thousands of village children are enrolled in religious schools. Nearby, the Monroe-Woodbury school district, with roughly the same school-age population, spends about $150 million annually, about one-third of which comes from the state. (Albany provides about $5 million of Kiryas Joel’s $16 million public school budget.)

 “You also have no drug-treatment programs, no juvenile delinquency program, we’re not clogging the court system with criminal cases, you’re not running programs for AIDS or teen pregnancy,” he said. “I haven’t run the numbers, but I think it’s a wash.”

*Reprinted from the April 21, 2011 edition of The New York Times.*

**Truth Stands the Test of Time**

**By Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein**

 From the perspective of thousands of years of experience and a time-tested Divine system of living, we can, in a great chain of endurance, survey the fleeting trends and fads of competing ideologies

 I recently came across an amazing story, published on a number of websites. On 1 January 2000 the New York Times, considered by many as the most prestigious newspaper in the world, ran a special millennium edition with a fictional page dated 1 January 2100, and trying to depict what the newspaper would look like in 2100 and the events it would be reporting then.

 And so there were articles welcoming Cuba as the 51st State of the USA, an article on a debate as to whether robots should be allowed to vote. At the foot of the front page was an unexpected statement : "Jewish women : Sabbath candle lighting time this Friday is …" — unexpected because throughout the newspaper's history of exceeding 150 years, the Sabbath candle lighting times had only appeared for about five years, when a Jewish philanthropist sponsored their publication.

 The production manager of the New York Times, an Irish Catholic, asked why he chose to include candle lighting times on the millennium front page, said : "We do not know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain. In the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting *Shabbos* candles."

 Judaism has stood the test of time. Ideologies and philosophies have come and gone. Fashions and fads have come and gone. Lifestyles and opinions have come and gone. But what has remained constant for thousands of years are the values and principles of Judaism.

 We are the same Jews. The light of the Sabbath candles represents the light of the values of Judaism, which gives us the clarity and purpose of the Torah that G-d revealed to us at Mount Sinai 3322 years ago. As the verse states : "*For the lamp is a* mitzvah. *For the* mitzvah *is a lamp. And the Torah is light*".

 Every week when you look at your Sabbath candles you see within them the symbolism of the sanctity and eternity of true authentic Torah values, of the Judaism which is so much part of whom we are and which defines our very identity as Jews. The Friday night candles burn with the stability and tranquility of our timeless Judaism, casting their golden glow into our lives each week. They bring light and joy to Sabbath, which brings light and joy to our lives.

*The following article was excerpted from the April 1, 2011 issue of JewishWorldReview.com The author is the Chief Rabbi of South Africa and author of “Defending the Human Spirit: Jewish Law’s Vision for a Moral Society.”*

**Wheat the Food**

**Of Knowledge**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 In the debate among the Talmudic Sages (*Sanhedrin* 70b) as to what exactly was the food of the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam ate, it is the position of Rabbi Yehuda that it was wheat. This is a sharp departure from the positions of his colleagues who identify that tree as one which bore grapes or figs.

 The basis of Rabbi Yehuda’s compulsion to identify this sinful food as wheat, despite the obvious difficulty of connecting wheat with a tree, is the fact that this tree is described by the Torah as one whose food imparts knowledge.

 A baby, he points out, does not have the understanding to say the words “father” and “mother” until it eats wheat. It is logical, therefore, to assume that only food which imparts such understanding in a child could be considered the food which gave man the knowledge to distinguish good from evil.

 Wheat was the principal ingredient of the flour offerings in the *Beit Hamikdash*. It, and its subspecies spelt, are mentioned (*Pesachim* 35a) as ingredients which qualify for use in the matza we eat on Pesach to fulfill our mitzvah.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushyalayim (ohr.edu)*

**It Once Happened**

**The Story of Yaakov**

**Ben Baruch**

 Once the ruler of a village decreed that the Jews of his village be expelled. The Jews came to the Baal Shem Tov and begged him to pray on their behalf so that the decree would be rescinded, and they would not be forced to leave their homes and belongings, to wander in exile. The Baal Shem Tov advised them to find a certain old man by the name of Yaakov ben Baruch. He would present their situation in Petersburg, and the decree would be abolished.

 The Jews did as they were told and found Yaakov ben Baruch. He was exceedingly old and reluctant to travel. But when he understood that the fate of all the Jews of the village was dependent on him, he disregarded his old age and the bother it would cause him, and traveled to Petersburg.

 As soon as he arrived in Petersburg, he wrote a letter to the great minister in charge of all the villages, in which he complained about the ruler and asked that the decree of expulsion be revoked. He signed the letter, Yaakov ben Baruch.

 In the normal course of events, under the prevailing conditions of the times, the chances were great that his letter would be thrown into the pile of papers before anyone would even look at the petition of some unfortunate Jew who dared to complain about the ruler of the village. But, in an unusual turn of events, when the minister received the letter, he invited the old man to personally meet with him!

 With his heart trembling in fear, Yaakov went to meet the minister. He wondered and was quite apprehensive about how the minister would treat him. He knew that one word from the minister would be enough to send him to the gallows, Heaven forbid, without any trial at all, and with no one to protest.

 When he entered the office, the minister gazed upon Yaakov for some time, without saying a word. Yaakov was wondering what was happening, when suddenly some brawny men entered and took him away. They locked him up in the dungeon.

 Utterly frightened and unaware of what his "crime" could be, Yaakov sat in his cell and said viduy (confession of one's sins) and prepared nervously for what awaited him. Suddenly the door opened and a priest stood in the doorway. In one hand he held a cross and in the other, a spoon. He said, "You have a choice to either bow to the cross, or die when I pour the boiling lead in this spoon down your throat!"

 "I am a Jew, and I will die a Jew," Yaakov said resolutely. He closed his eyes, said Shema with complete faith, and prepared to die al kiddush Hashem [to sanctify the name of G-d]. He opened his mouth and anticipated a quick journey to the next world.

 The priest immediately emptied the contents of the spoon into his mouth, but to Yaakov's shock, he discovered that it wasn't boiling lead at all, but honey! Thoroughly confused, Yaakov was brought back to the minister's office. He was received graciously, and asked to sit down. The minister asked his pardon for scaring him nearly to death and explained his actions thus:

 "When I was growing up, I lived in the home of a wealthy squire. From time to time, this squire would get drunk and then he would strike anybody who crossed his path. I ran away from the squire's house to the home of a Jew. A teacher sat there teaching his students. When the teacher saw me, he pitied me and treated me well. He gave me food and drink, and allowed me to warm up and rest. He took care of all my needs. I heard him explain to the children the greatness of giving up one's life for G-d, to be martyred for one's belief in G-d. He said there was no one greater or more fortunate than the one who merits this fate.

 "I was always grateful to that teacher," continued the minister, "and I waited for the opportunity when I could repay him, though I never thought I'd meet him again. The name Yaakov ben Baruch was signed on the letter. It reminded me of that incident, which I recall as though it had just happened. That is why I invited you here.

 "When I saw you today, I recognized you as that teacher from many years ago. I decided the time had come to repay you. Since I heard from you then how precious the mitzva (commandment) of self-sacrifice is, I wanted to give you the merit of that mitzva. I could think of no other way of doing it than the way I did. Now I ask for forgiveness, for I only did it for your benefit. And I will certainly fulfill your request and make sure that the decree of expulsion is rescinded immediately."

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

**The Challenge of**

**“Brotherly Love”**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 Three of the fifty one commandments found in this week's Torah section are found in one sentence:

 They are: "Don't take revenge, don't bear a grudge against your people and love your friend like yourself, I am G-d." (19:17)

 The prohibitions against revenge and bearing a grudge and the commandment of loving others are three separate commandments and not easy ones.

 For instance; a few months ago my wife was at a friend's home when two of her children argued over some small toy. Finally the four year old snatched it away from his three year old brother and ran away. The three year old, left with nothing, yelled bitterly after him: "You just wait!! I'll get you back! YOU'LL PAY!!"

 At this point his mother stopped him and gently, but firmly reprimanded him that it was forbidden to say such things. "Forbidden?" her son asked incredulously. "Where does it say it's forbidden?" "Here in the Torah" she replied showing him the sentence just quoted.

 The boy thought for a minute or so, and finally turned to his mother and said "You know, the Torah is really very difficult."

 But on closer scrutiny these three commandments seem to be a bit redundant. Wouldn't it have been enough to just write 'Love your brother like yourself'?

 Certainly if everyone had brotherly love there would be no place for grudges or revenge. Why does the Torah list all three? And why in the same sentence? Do they have a connection to one another?

 To answer this here is a story from the Talmud (Taanit 20a) explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

 One of the most outstanding personalities in the Talmud was the son of the famous Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochi, author of 'the Zohar' (whose grave in the city of Meron, Israel is visited by a half a million Jews on the date of his passing – Lag B'Omer) Rabbi Elazar Ben Shimon.

 Rabbi Elazar's holiness and erudition were almost unmatched and many incredibly amazing stories are told about him. For instance, how after he died his wife, not wanting anyone to know of his passing, put his body in their attic. and for the next twenty years (not knowing that he was officially DEAD) people yelled their Torah problems and questions up the stairs and he actually yelled down the answers just as when he was alive! (Baba Metzia 84b)

 But here is, in my eyes, an even more amazing story about him (Taanit 20a).

 Once, Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon was riding his donkey back home from a very long and successful learning session. He was in a very good mood until a strange looking man crossed his path and greeted him with 'hello'.

 The Talmud tells us that this stranger was very ugly and Rabbi Elazar, rather than replying to the greeting or just ignoring it and continued on his way, was so disgusted with this man that he could not hold himself back and exclaimed.

 "Ugh! You empty fool, how ugly can a person be! Is everyone from your area as ugly as you are?"

 The man was insulted and shocked to his very essence! It took him a few seconds to recover but when he did he replied straight to the point, "I don't know. But if you have complaints about my looks then perhaps go to the craftsman that created me (i.e. G-d) and say 'how ugly is the vessel you made!"

 At this point Rabbi Elazar, apparently realizing that he had gone too far, got off his donkey and asked the fellow to forgive him. But to no avail; the man flatly refused, turned his back and continued walking in a huff. So Rabbi Elazar followed him and asked again.

 But the ugly fellow just kept walking and repeating the same answer over and over (with the Rabbi close behind), "I won't forgive you till you go to the craftsman that made me and say 'how ugly are the vessels you made'.

 In fact this continued for quite a while; him walking and refusing with Rabbi Elazar at his heels begging and pleading until the fellow reached the gates of his home town.

 When the populace of the town heard that the famous Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon was at their gates they rushed in masses to meet him only to be greeted by a strange sight; the great Rabbi Elazar was bizarrely groveling before a 'nobody' and begging his forgiveness. After hearing the entire story they took the fellow aside and finally prevailed upon him to forgive the Rabbi. The end.

 The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Lekuti Sichot vol.15 pg. 125) points out, that if taken at face value this story apparently makes no sense at all. For several reasons:

First of all, what is so bad about being ugly? Why did the great Rabbi Elazar have to comment; why didn't he just reply hello and continue on his way?? Secondly, how could Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon stoop so low as to say such derogatory things to a complete stranger? Finally, why is this story in the Talmud; what is it trying to teach us?

 The Rebbe answers, that in fact this story is really very deep and teaches us an essential lesson in and the secret of, brotherly love.

 This stranger in the story was not just physically ugly; his external appearance was not what bothered Rabbi Elazar. Rather he was spiritually ugly. He was a person that had done many heinous sins against both G-d and man and he was ready to do more - his SOUL was ugly.

 But Rabbi Elazar realized that G-d set up this 'chance' meeting in order to get this fellow to clean up his life and reveal his true core…. and that he was the only one who could get him to do it. But it demanded that he see through this veneer of evil and ugliness and reveal the man's core of good which called for 'Shock treatment'.

 And it worked!

 Rabbi Elazar's caustic comment caused the man to start talking about his CREATOR. Suddenly the fellow, for the first time in his life, realized he was G-d's creation! And not just an ordinary creation but the work of a CRAFTSMAN; carefully designed with a purpose and a goal!

 And, even more, Rabbi Elazar caused him to repeat it over and over until finally it permeated his personality and changed him completely.

 All because of brotherly love.

 This explains our questions: Sometimes people are 'ugly' because their false egos prevent them from accepting the Creator's blessings.

 But when their 'shell' of selfishness is broken and the true inside identity or 'soul' can be revealed then their entire personality can change.

 Today we cannot do this in such a caustic way as Rabbi Elazar did; our times require much more understanding and revealed love. But this is the message of that Talmudic portion and of our Torah Portion.

 When we meet up with difficult people, irritating people, even evil people, we should treat all this as their outside 'shell'. But their inside - their true soul - is pure good, and by Love it can be brought out.

 This is the ONLY way that one can fulfill the commandment 'Love your fellow man as yourself."

 That is why it is preceded by 'Don't take revenge or bear a grudge':

 Because, revenge and grudges come from reacting to the external 'ugly shell' of others. That will get us caught up in a negative world where love is impossible.

 Our job is to see through and 'break' this shell (not by yelling or making the people cry which only great masters can do properly, but rather) to treat it as a transparent covering that must be ignored in order to see ONLY the good that is underneath.

 That is why Brotherly Love is called "The main principle of the Torah" (see Rashi here and Tanya chapt. 32) because the Torah gives the power to be connected to the essence and purpose of creation; the will of the Creator hidden within each and every person.

 And this is the job of Moshiach; to strengthen the Torah, the Jewish people and Judaism by uniting them all in love and the true ONEness of the Creator. We just have to do all we can; one more good deed, word or even thought can tilt the scales of existence and bring...Moshiach NOW!!

*Reprinted from this week’s parsha email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**You Never Know…**

 The two American Yeshiva students Dovid and Chaim were on their way back from the airport near Tel Aviv.  They had escorted a fellow student to the airport.  As they sat on the "Sherut" (group taxi), on their way back to the Yeshiva in Jerusalem, each passenger descended at his destination until there were only three passengers left in the taxi.

 "Can you drop us off at the Zichron Moshe shul?" Dovid called to the driver. "We didn't daven maariv yet." "No problem," the driver called back. "And maybe you know somewhere for this young man to stay the night?" Said the driver.

 Dovid looked at the last remaining passenger. He had not really noticed him before. The young man appeared to be his own age. His features did not make him look particularly Jewish, but he was dressed like a Jew.

 "Where were you planning on staying?" Dovid asked the young man. "I was going to go to the youth hostel, but they're very strict there. No one's allowed in after midnight. My plane came in hours ago," he explained, "and the curfew shouldn't have been a problem. But they thought I was some kind of terrorist—they interrogated me for over three hours at customs."

 Dovid stuck out his hand. "Dovid Dwick. This is my friend, Avrohom Moshe. What's your name?" The young man returned the handshake. "Jeffrey Weinberg.  I'm from California."

 "So what brings you to Israel?" Dovid asked. "Oh, that's a story in itself! A few years ago, I had an early morning doctor's appointment at the hospital. Fortunately, I slept right through my alarm, and I was only awakened later by an earthquake.

 “I found out later that the hospital building had collapsed, and there were a lot of casualties. Thank G-d I was safe! I pledged to myself right then that I would take a trip to Israel and find out more about G-d. "Recently, someone offered me a free ticket to Israel. I remembered my resolution, and I decided to take him up on the offer. So here I am."

 The three young men continued talking as the driver made his way through the winding roads of Yerushalayim to Zichron Moshe. Jeff, they learned, had a brother learning at Yeshivah Kol Yaakov, a baal teshuua yeshivah in Monsey, NY. Dovid relaxed a bit—at least the young man was Jewish! Jeff seemed like such a refined fellow. So, after a silent conference with Avrohom Moshe, Dovid invited Jeff to spend the night in their rented apartment. That night, the two young men invested their remaining energy to inspire Jeff with stories of life as a Torah-true Jew.

 The next morning, Dovid and Jeff embarked on a tour of the Holy City. The Mirrer Yeshivah was the first stop. Jeff attended a university with a student body of over twenty thousand, but the sight and sound of thousands of young men delving into Torah study dwarfed anything Jeff had ever seen.

 "Next stop—the Western Wall!" Dovid announced. "It's the last remainder of the Holy Temple, where G-d's presence is the strongest." Jeff was moved by the elevated atmosphere at the Kosel. He eagerly agreed when Dovid offered to put tefillin on him. As Dovid wound the leather straps, he offered up a silent prayer that Jeff would find his way to Torah and mitzvos.

 Following up on his thoughts with positive action, Dovid led Jeff up the steps to Aish HaTorah - the famous yeshiva for Jews with little background in Torah learning. Upon inquiry, Jeff and Dovid were directed to the heritage office, where Jeff was whisked away while Dovid was ushered in to meet with the rabbi in charge.

 "So where did you find this guy?" the rabbi asked.  Dovid told him about their providential meeting in the taxi on the way home from the airport. "He seems like such a refined person." The rabbi agreed. "From the little I saw, he appears to have a lot of potential. But is he Jewish?"

 "I assume so. He told us his brother is a baal teshuva. He learns in Kol Yaakov in Monsey."  Said Dovid.

 "Okay, so we'll put him in our youth hostel. Their primary goal is to place him in a yeshivah that's appropriate for him." Two weeks later, a call from the youth hostel director took Dovid by surprise. "The guy you sent us is not Jewish." Dovid was confused. "But how about his brother, the baal teshuva?"

 "We checked him out," the director answered, "and it turns out that his brother is a convert. We discussed the issue with Jeff. You and your friends impressed him so much, he wants to stay in yeshivah."

 Dovid had a long discussion with Jeff, and Jeff said that he wanted to live the life of a Jew, and nothing was going to deter him. Jeff did stay on in the yeshivah, and after intensive study, converted to Judaism. He reached great heights in his learning, dedicating many hours of the day and night to Torah study. And he achieved another one of his dreams—to join the thousands of Jews immersed in Torah in the Mirrer Yeshivah.

 Dovid has kept in touch with Jeff, now known as Ovadyah, throughout his journey to Torah. So when Ovadyah became engaged to a baalas teshuva, Dovid was one of the first to hear the news. "Wish me mazel tov!" Ovadyah announced joyously over the phone. "I'm a chosson! (engaged)

 "Mazel tov, mazel tov, that's wonderful news! If there's anything I can do to help you out, please let me know." Said Dovid.  Though Ovadyah didn't say anything, Dovid realized that Ovadyah really could use his help. After all, he needed to make a wedding and set up a new home. Dovid decided to help him get the funds together, to start Ovadyah off on the right foot. Dovid wasn't the only one to help Ovadyah. R' Chananya Beck was a rebbe in a cheder, who was not particularly wealthy himself.

 Unfortunately, R' Chananya had been married for a number of years without any children, and he was always on the lookout to help others, in hope that Hashem would help him. When he heard about Ovadyah and his upcoming wedding, he jumped at the opportunity. R' Chananya scrimped and saved, denying himself the slightest luxury in his eagerness to supply Ovadyah with everything he needed. When the big day finally arrived, R' Chananya walked Ovadyah down to the chupah with tremendous joy.

 Today, Ovadyah has a family and has dedicated his heart and soul to Hashem and His Torah. He works actively to help others find the path to Torah and mitzvos. Within a year of Ovadyah's marriage, R' Chananya Beck became a father. And as if that wasn't payment enough, R' Chananya also won a lottery valued at ten million shekels! ( Reb Yosef Weiss, Visions of Greatness #7 p.49)

 We see from this story how the Jewish nation is guided by Divine Providence.  We find support for this concept in our weekly portion.  Hashem tells us, *"You shall be holy for Me, for I Hashem am holy; and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine."*  (Vayikra 20:26)  Hashem cares about the Jewish nation, because, as the above verse states, we belong to Hashem.  Hashem, as it were, has invested in us and therefore we can say Hashem wants us to succeed.  In order to help us achieve our spiritual mission in life of performing the mitzvahs, Hashem guides us along the way.

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