**Shabbos Stories for Parshas Behar - Bechukosai 5773**

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**Shipwrecked on an Island Strewn with Diamonds**

**By Rabbi Y. Appel**

A famous parable describes how a poor man, desperate to find the means to support his family, sets sail to foreign shores. Tragically, his ship is sunk in the stormy sea, but he somehow makes it to a tropical island. Much to his amazement, when he steps ashore he sees that the island is literally covered with diamonds. There are diamonds on the beach, diamonds on the side of the road, diamonds everywhere.

Determined to return home, he finds a shipbuilder on the island and offers to pay him in diamonds to build a boat. The shipbuilder laughs and then says, "But what am I going to do with worthless diamonds?!"

The hapless stranger soon learns that the currency of value on the island is meat gristle. Working very hard over a number of years, he earns enough meat gristle not only to pay for the building of a boat, but also to have plenty to bring back with him. When his boat is finished, the hapless traveler loads it up with meat gristle and heads home.

When he arrives home, his family is overjoyed to see him. Proudly, he announces, "We are now rich!" He opens the hatch of the boat and shows them... meat gristle! A ghastly silence hangs in the air. The poor man realizes his tragic mistake, and begins to cry.

Each of us is, to some extent, the poor man in this story. Brought into this world to accomplish certain tasks and uphold certain values, we often lose our way in the frantic pace of modern life. Too often, whether it be choosing career over family, or the tradeoff between expediency and values, we find ourselves trading diamonds for meat gristle. Tragically, we can never regain that lost time.

How do we combat this confusion?

One of the most powerful tools Judaism offers is Shabbos. On Shabbos, a Jew frees himself from the frantic, all-absorbing activities of the week - in order to step back and focus on the truly important elements in life. On Shabbos, we spend more time at home with our family, and in synagogue with Hashem. We take walks, review the accomplishments of the week, and contemplate the direction of our life.

Judaism says there are two other particularly powerful times to work on evaluating one's actions: the High Holidays, and the period between Passover and Shavuot. This latter period, described in this week's Torah portion, Emor, is known as the time of "Counting the Omer." Beginning on the second day of Passover, the Torah commands us to count 49 days leading up to Shavuot, the celebration of our receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

According to many commentaries, the purpose of this count is to bridge the holiday of Passover to the holiday of Shavuot. While it is true that the Jewish people received their physical freedom on Passover, that freedom was essentially without purpose until they were given the Torah on Mount Sinai on Shavuot. Thus Shavuot is the ultimate purpose of the Passover saga. Our counting the days as we move towards Shavuot reminds us to focus on meaningful goals, as symbolized by the Torah and Mount Sinai.

Other sources (Nachmanides and the Abarbanel) note the association between the counting of the Omer and the harvest seasons. The word *"Omer"* itself denotes a dry measurement and refers to the amount of barley flour that was brought as an offering to the Temple on the second day of Passover. This offering came at the time of the barley harvest and was an expression of thanks to God. At the end of the 49 days of counting, at the time of the wheat harvest, an offering of wheat flour was also brought.

According to the Abarbanel, with all their involvement in farming activities, the agrarian population of Israel could become too absorbed in their work and forget the significance of the period. The counting of the Omer served to act as a brake on such self-absorption, and refocus them on the values represented by the Shavuot holiday.

During these weeks, when Jews around the world are counting of the Omer, it has become another modern-day reminder to focus on the diamonds in our lives... and not the gristle.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting.*

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

**Why Not Party?**

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

The world is made for enjoyment, so why shouldn't you go all the way and let go?

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

|  |
| --- |
| party_image |

Let's say it's good to eat a good piece of *challah*. So if a piece of *challah* is good, so let’s eat two or three *challah's* at a time? The answer is, he will commit suicide if he eats three *challah's* at a time. Also if a person lets go, he becomes a slave, he loses free will. To become a slave to your desires, that's not life anymore.

**One’s Purpose in Life is to Choose**

**Between Good and Not Good**

Life is for the purpose of being a free man to choose between good and not good, but once you become enslaved by habit then you're a slave and you lost out. That's why you should enjoy, but not become an *eved* to your *taavos*.

It's a very important principle,(Succah 52b) *Mefanek mnoar avdo*, if a person fondles his slave, he has a young slave and he treats him like a son, he doesn't let him do any work, he gives his young slave all the privileges, *achariso yiyheh manon*, the end will be, the slave will be his master. Who is that slave? Our desires.

If you let the slave go and do whatever he wants, after a while the slave becomes the master over you.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller.*

**Holier than Thou**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

One of the most disheartening episodes that occurred during the 40-year desert sojourn is recorded in this week's parsha. A man quarreled with a fellow Jew and left the dispute in a rage. He reacted by blaspheming Hashem. This abhorrent behavior was so aberrant that no one even knew what the punishment was!

So Hashem reviewed the grievous penalty for the deplorable act. As in any society, the ultimate act of treason was met with a capitol sentence. The Torah declared a death penalty. But curiously enough, Hashem does not leave it at that. When the Torah reveals the penalty for the heinous act of blasphemy, it continues:

"And one who blasphemes the name of Hashem shall be put to death…And if a man inflicts a mortal wound in his fellow man, he shall be put to death. If he inflicts damage then restitution shall be paid. The value of an eye for the loss of an eye, the value of a break for a break the value of a tooth for the loss of a tooth. And one who wounds an animal must be made to pay. (Leviticus 24:15-21)

Shouldn't blasphemy be in a league of it own? Surely the act of affronting G-d Almighty can not be equated with attacking human beings. And surely it has no place next to the laws of injurious action towards animals! Why, then is t

Rabbi Y'honasan Eibeschutz one of Jewry's most influential leaders during the early 1700s, was away from his home for one Yom Kippur and was forced to spend that holy day in a small town. Without revealing his identity as Chief Rabbi of Prague, Hamburg, and Altoona, he entered a synagogue that evening and surveyed the room, looking for a suitable place to sit and pray.

Toward the center of the synagogue, his eyes fell upon a man who was swaying fervently, tears swelling in his eyes. "How encouraging," thought the Rabbi, "I will sit next to him. His prayers will surely inspire me."

It was to be. The man cried softly as he prayed, tears flowed down his face. "I am but dust in my life, Oh Lord," wept the man. "Surely in death!" The sincerity was indisputable. Reb Y'honasan finished the prayers that evening, inspired. The next morning he took his seat next to the man, who, once again, poured out his heart to G-d, declaring his insignificance and vacuity of merit.

During the congregation's reading of the Torah, something amazing happened. A man from the front of the synagogue was called for the third aliyah, one of the most honorable aliyos for an Israelite, and suddenly Rabbi Eibeschutz's neighbor charged the podium!

"Him!" shouted the man. "You give him shlishi?!" The shul went silent. Reb Y'honasan stared in disbelief. "Why I know how to learn three times as much as he! I give more charity than he and I have a more illustrious family! Why on earth would you give him an aliyah over me?"

With that the man stormed back from the bimah toward his seat.

Rabbi Eibeschutz could not believe what he saw and was forced to approach the man. "I don't understand," he began. "Minutes ago you were crying about how insignificant and unworthy you are and now you are clamoring to get the honor of that man's aliyah?"

Disgusted the man snapped back. "What are you talking about? Compared to Hashem I am truly a nothing." Then he pointed to the bimah and sneered, "But not compared to him!"

Perhaps the Torah reiterates the laws of damaging mortal and animals in direct conjunction with His directives toward blasphemy. Often people are very wary of the honor they afford their spiritual guides, mentors and institutions. More so are they indignant about the reverence and esteem afforded their Creator. Mortal feelings, property and posessions are often trampled upon even harmed even by those who seem to have utmost respect for the immortal.

This week the Torah, in the portion that declares the enormity of blasphemy, does not forget to mention the iniquity of striking someone less than Omnipotent. It links the anthropomorphic blaspheming of G-d to the crime of physical damage toward those created in His image. It puts them one next to each other. Because all of Hashem's creations deserve respect.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting*

**The Importance of Choosing The Right Rocks in Our Lives**

**By David Bibi**

IF ITS IN PRINT, IN MUST BE TRUE: You may have seen an article this week where former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin called for the invasion of the Czech Republic in response to the recent terrorist attacks in Boston.

The article goes on to write, "We don't know everything about these suspects yet," said Palin, according to the Daily Currant article. "But we know they were Muslims from the Czech Republic. …I betcha I speak for a lot of Americans when I say I want to go over there right now and start teaching those folks a lesson. And let's not stop at the Czech Republic, let's go after all Arab countries”.

Although it's obvious satire, I guess it sounded real enough to some people that a Polish newsweekly mistook it as true and reposted the article. According to one translation, its headline reads: "Let’s burn Prague: Sarah Palin calls for the invasion of the Czech Republic."

Too often many of us assume that if it’s in print, it must be true. If people can mistake satire for truth then how much more must we fear propaganda in its various sorts being confused for the truth? We are familiar with propaganda and what it can do after studying Goebbels’ work during the Holocaust era. This same propaganda has been working its way through the Arab world for the last 50 years.

Some think we are immune and protected from it in America, but we’re not.

Everything we read in the paper, everything we see on TV is skewed. FOX, CNBC and CNN show us the same story from different perspectives, and sometimes we wouldn’t know they are the same story. We see a documentary quoting specific people and often fail to realize that what those people really wanted to say was left on a cutting floor. Piecing sentences together with images very often allows a director to make someone who said white, appear to say black.

Almost daily I get emails from people I know forwarding emails spewing utter nonsense. By accepting what we read without checking it and then forwarding it to our lists, we become part of the problem.

So let’s try to remember that if it’s in print, if it’s in the news, or if it’s on TV, then it still may not be true.

**Ropes and Rocks**

In our modern world, we’ve become very used to being connected. We can reach each other almost anywhere and anytime. We panic when our phones read, “no service”. We are barraged with ads debating which carrier will provide us with better service; concerned with how many bars are visible and how fast and clear the connection is. In connecting though, we are often interrupted. We answer the immediate rather than the most important. Our ability to prioritize is often impeded.

This week’s portion of Emor is about being connected. It details the duties of being connected as they relate to the kohanim – the priests. It discusses the responsibilities of being connected as they relate to the establishment of festivals and celebrating them, And the portion concludes with the consequences of becoming disconnected when we are told the story of the blasphemer.

At my nephew Alfred Sutton’s Bar Mitzvah this past week, I was discussing the concept of points of connection as they relate to the commandments. We are connected by 613 strands which bind us from below to above as we do the misvot and from above to below as those strands transfer spiritual energy back to us.

accepted.

A few years ago, we began a minyan, a quorum, in our office. During the winter months, we time the service to complete the afternoon and evening prayers together, and during the summer, we can only say the afternoon service, Mincha.

Possibly the shortest prayer service of the day, especially when my son Jonah leads the prayers, Mincha takes 10-to-15-minutes, but for much of the Jewish world, it has become almost a forgotten prayer. I believe this is due to the fact that it inconveniently falls in the middle of a busy work day. What do you mean, stop at 2 or 3 or 4 o clock and run out to a prayer service? Impossible!

My teacher, Rabbi Abittan z’sl would say that because of this fact alone, Mincha can be considered the most important prayer of the day.

Rabbi Abittan would teach that we learn the prayer of Mincha from the story of when Rebecca, having left her father’s home in Syria comes to the land of Canaan with Eliezer and the first time she sees her future husband Isaac, he is going out LaSuach BaSadeh, to converse in the field. To converse with whom, we ask? With G-d!

Of all the prayers, it is Mincha that is connected with conversation with G-d and with being in the field. The Rabbi would explain that we can say the morning prayer before we so to say, begin our day and the evening prayer, after we complete our day, but to pray Mincha, we need to stop in the middle of the field, in the middle of our day, in the middle of our activity, in the middle of our work and in the middle of our tasks.

The Rabbis understood that carving out time is difficult. My friend Sam Cohen who along with his son’s Michael, Hymie and Joseph form the core of our minyan sent me an article asking why Mincha has neither the long introductory and closing parts of the other prayers.

Rabbi Chaim Goldberger answers, “Because imporvished as this service appears …, it is the one which asks us to disconnect ourselves from our mundane and worldly mindset and retreat into a sudden and total encounter with the Divine”.

We need to stop, step out and then step in. It is an opportunity to reconnect. It is a small block of time, carved out of a day with no spare blocks, to face and focus on what is really important and to establish priorities as “facts on the ground”. In doing so, we reveal to Heaven that we know what comes first, but more so, we reveal it to ourselves.

Rabbi Abittan and I often discussed popular theories of time management, diet, exercise and life management as espoused by the best selling books in your local Barnes and Noble. He often pointed out that many of these ideas were rooted in Torah, Mishnah and the works of Rambam and later scholars.

Numerous theories could be traced back to Pirkey Avot, the Tractate we translate as Ethics of our Fathers which we study each week between Pesach and Shavuot and then into the summer. And as that Tractate begins, all of our wisdom traces back to Moshe at Sinai.

One thing we talked about many times was what we called “Filling the Time Jar”. To illustrate, here is its story.

One day, an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students. To drive home a point, he used an illustration those students will never forget. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered over-achievers he said: "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide mouthed Mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked: "Is the jar full?" Everyone in the class said: "Yes." Then he said: "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the big rocks. Then he asked the group once more: "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was on to him: "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied.

He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question: "Is the jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said: "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked: "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager student raised his hand and said: "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in!" "No," the speaker replied, "That's not the point.

The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.

It’s up to us to decide what the big rocks are.

The Rabbi would quote Rambam from the Mishneh Torah, “make your work provisional and your Torah study permanent. Do not say: "When I have free time, I will study," for perhaps you will never have free time.”

The fist rocks need to be, Torah, Family, Misvot, Maasim Tovim and taking care of your health. The Rabbi would remind me that this is one of our biggest tests and where we can show Bitachon and seeing a miraculous payoff from Bitachon. If we fill the jar with those rocks of Torah, Family, Misvot, Maasim Tovim and taking care of your health, first, then Hashem will handle the gravel, sand and water.

If I stop to pray, I might miss that call. I might miss that client. I might miss that question. I worry I might be losing money at the most opportune time of the day. But that’s the test.

If we have Bitachon to commit to our side of the bargain, The Creator of the Universe will make sure that everything else is covered. We’ll still need to work at it. We’ll still need to make the effort, but the return will be beyond any odds or predictions.

If we sweat the little stuff (the gravel, the sand) then we'll fill our lives with little things to worry about. We’ll dream about getting to the big rocks, but we’ll find the excuses of “no time now”, “later” and “eventually”.

And the sad fact of life is that “eventually” often never comes before the sand of times runs out.

So, this coming week, recommit yourself to Mincha every day, bind that rope from below to above and G-d will bind you from above to below. Recommit to starting with the rocks! And with G-d’s help, the rest will be easy.

Find a local minyan, start one or simply find a quiet spot where you can commune with Heaven for a few minutes. If you’re in the neighborhood. join us at 4PM every day, Artistic, 979 Third Avenue, 17th floor, between 58th and 59th [in Manhattan] … see you there!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Flying Back to Israel from**

**A Vacation in Amsterdam**

**By Tuvia Bolton**

I once spent three days vacation in Amsterdam with my wife who wanted to see the art museums there. We also visited some friends, I spoke at an Israeli Synagogue and we returned.

All the Israelis I met there told me the same thing "There are thirty thousand Israelis here in Amsterdam."

I don’t know if this is true but they all said it with the same monotone, empty look in their eyes and half smirk on their lips as though to say, "It's disgusting, but I'm here to stay with the other 29,999!!"

It was not a happy place and I was glad to leave. The flight back was in the daytime so I decided to use the opportunity to put ‘Tefillin’ on the Jews who happened to be flying with me. (Tefillin or Phylacteries, is a commandment that according to the Lubavitcher Rebbe every male Jew wants to do. But not many do it because they are not asked. It consists of wearing two leather boxes that contain certain scriptures.)

I took out my Tefillin and stood up, a bit apprehensive about figuring out who was Jewish, only to discover that my worries were for naught.

I discovered that people from Holland do not move. I don't know if it was because of the plane flight or if they are always like that, but except for occasionally rattling their newspapers or saying a few words to the person next to them, they just sat in semi-suspended animation. Even their faces were sort of frozen.

The Jews on the other hand, especially the Israelis, could not sit still for a moment. They were constantly talking, making endless facial and hand gestures, getting up or just squirming around. So just approached anyone that moved.

At first several refused, then one agreed, then a few more, then one said that he had already put on and so on. I proceeded down the aisle until I came to three young fellows, obviously Israelis, sitting next to each other. They looked like they had gotten a lot out of Amsterdam; their brows, nostrils and lobes were well pierced with rings and studs, small tattoos decorated their arms and all had hair dyed unnatural colors.

"Nu? What do you say Yhudim (Jews)?" I approached them "Want to do something really wild? Here, put on Tefillin! It takes one minute on the clock and doesn't cost money! What do you say?"

From experience I know that you can never know what is going to happen. Several times people hugged and kissed me and once I actually had to protect myself, so I was ready for anything.

The one sitting nearest the aisle contorted his face as though I was offering him a dead cat and shrugged his shoulders as high as possible which is Israeli for "drop dead".

I got the message and, not disheartened, turned my attention to his neighbor who wasn't looking at me, "What about you, my friend?" I asked.

Immediately he closed his eyes, tilted his head to a side and let out a snore, feigning deep sleep.

Only one was left. Sitting near the window reading a magazine enveloped in the drone of the plane he was unaware of what had just happened, I raised my voice in his direction, "Would you like to put on Tefillin?" He looked up at me suddenly and said "What!? What did you say?"

The first fellow, the one that refused, was following the whole thing with relish awaiting my total defeat, the one in the middle was still "asleep", but I could see he was peeking. I repeated the question as I held up the Tefillin. "Want to put on Tefillin?"

"Tefillin?" He said incredulously, "You want ME to put on Tefillin?! He stood, bent over a bit because of the overhead bin, rolled up his sleeve and exclaimed with a smile, "Of course I'll put on Tefillin!!"

The first fellow was shocked! His best friend! Was one of.....them! The "sleeper" in the middle even opened one eye to see if he had heard correctly. Meanwhile my customer joyously let me help him put on the Tefillin, then sat down and began reading in a loud voice the "Shma Yisroel" from the card I gave him.

But I didn't notice that we were being watched. A well dressed non-Jew, perhaps in his fifties sitting in the row before us had turned around and was watching the entire thing.

As soon as I noticed him I said hello and asked him if he had any idea what we were doing. He was a distinguished looking fellow traveling with what I assumed to be his wife and some friend, who just kept reading their papers and didn't even look up, and he shook his head "no".

He waited and watched intently as the Israeli finished and I removed his Tefillin, and then I began to explain.

"These", I told him holding up the Tefillin, "are made of leather and are a commandment of G-d to the Jews. G-d wants every male Jew to put them on like that man did, once a day every weekday." Then I explained to him that because most Jews are not observant, the Lubavitcher Rebbe told his followers to go out and remind and help them, and I'm one of his followers.

I saw that he was obviously impressed. He looked at the Israeli then back at me and said with astonishment, "You mean that that young man is not religious, and he put on those boxes just because you asked him?! If I didn't see it with my own eyes I would not believe it!"

His excitement was contagious. "I asked him his name, he told me it was Peter and I continued. "Do you know what is inside of these leather boxes? Parchments containing the four paragraphs from the Bible that mention this commandment. And the most important of them says Shma Yisroel, Listen Jews G-d is ONE."

He was listening intently above the noise of the plane as I continued. "It means that G-d alone creates everything constantly! Do you know what that means, Peter?" His eyes were wide with amazement his traveling partners even looked up to see what was going on, but I wasn't finished.

"It means G-d, who can do anything, creates YOU every second brand-new! And He does it for free! So if G-d creates you for free, then do something for Him for free!" And I told him briefly about the Seven Noahide commandments.

We shook hands and I figured that that was the end of it, but it wasn't.

Suddenly he unfastened his safety belt, stood up, straightened his jacket and tie, pointed at me and yelled at the top of his lungs. "This Rabbi is correct!!" Then he majestically pointed up and announced: "And I want to apologize. To publicly apologize to him for what we have done to his people! We have taken a man and made him god, and we have denied THE HOLY COMMANDMENTS!!"

The last three words he really belted out so that several rows around us were staring. Then he very warmly and officially shook my hand again, sat back down and returned to the book he was reading.

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

**Samsung Vice President Visits**

**Yeshiva to Help Koreans**

**Learn Talmud**

**By Aryeh Savir**

**Tazpit News Agency**

Charlie Park, Vice President of Samsung Korea, visited an Israeli Yeshiva at Shalavim last week, accompanied by a South Korean camera crew, and met with the program directors and with students to document how students study Gemara at the Yeshiva.

The South Koreans have developed a fascination with the study of Talmud. The country’s ambassador to Israel, Ma Young-Sam, has told the “Culture Today” TV show that Talmud study is now a mandatory part of the country’s school curriculum.

In addition, it is said, almost every home in South Korea boasts a Korean version of the Talmud, and mothers commonly teach it to their children, who call it the “Light of Knowledge.”

Young-Sam explained, “We were very curious about the high academic achievements of the Jews, who have a high percentage of Nobel laureates in all fields - literature, science and economics.

“This is a remarkable achievement. We tried to understand: What is the secret of the Jewish people? How are they, more than other people, able to reach those impressive accomplishments? Why are Jews so intelligent?



**Korean book on the Talmud**

“The conclusion we arrived at is that one of your secrets is that you study the Talmud… We believe that if we teach our children Talmud, they will also become geniuses. This is what stands behind the rationale of introducing Talmud study to our school curriculum. I, for example, have two sets of the Talmud.”

While touring the bais medrash, the study hall, he said he now felt he understood “the growing grounds” of the Jewish genius.

Park was at the yeshiva to get a first-hand account of this wonder, but his trip also involved business. He was in Israel to review possible acquisitions of Israeli startup companies.

*Reprinted from the April 24, 2013 website of Matzav.com*

**The Human Side of Story**

**Generation Gap as**

**Wide as the Lake**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

Do you recall how you were taught in elementary school to remember the names of the five Great Lakes of North America?

If you are from the generation that had no Jewish Day Schools and received your geography education in public school, you probably would answer HOMES (for the non-American reader this acronym stands for Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior).

But when Binyomin Albin, a student of Yeshivat Telshe of Chicago, was asked how he remembers the Great Lakes, he had a surprising answer.

Binyomin was visiting Eretz Yisrael together with his father, Rabbi Yehuda Albin of Chicago, and the question was put to him by the rabbi who hosted them for a Shabbat meal.

His answer was MOSHE!

The host proudly concluded that this was an expression of the gap between generations. (But he thought to himself that it was perhaps also an expression of local patriotism to use an acronym that placed Chicago’s Lake Michigan first!)

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

**A Slice of Life**

**From Turzysk, Poland**

**To Cincinnati, Ohio**

Sam Boymel, a Holocaust survivor who has been living in Cincinnati for over 60 years, paid a random visit to the local Yeshivas Lubavitch Boys High School this year.

The businessman and philanthropist "shepped nachas" from what he saw, and he returned to the Yeshiva on a weekly basis to see the students study and pray.

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**Sam Boymel**

The memory of the yeshivas of Europe from his youth had remained indelibly in Mr. Boymel's mind, despite the passage of time. Born in 1925 in the Polish town of Turzysk, he grew up there with his parents Rachel and Zelig, and three sisters, Chasia, Reisel and Malka.

**A Gentile Farmer Named**

**Petro from Nearby Rostov**

"The Germans came in June 1941 and put us in the Ghetto," writes Mr. Boymel, in a memoir submitted to Yad Vashem. "They took us to work on the railroad tracks, and with the assistance of the Ukrainians and Poles, killed many of the Jews in the Ghetto. I used to run out of the Ghetto to get food. One of the farmers who helped me was Petr Tokarsky (known as Petro) from nearby Rostov. He would give me bread and potatoes to take back."

In September 1942 only a few hundred Jews were still alive in the Ghetto. One morning the Gestapo, with the Poles and Ukrainians aiding them, surrounded the Ghetto and ordered everyone out to walk to Kovel.

**Commanded by His**

**Mother to Run Away**

Some Poles told them that mass graves had been dug for them. Recalls Mr. Boymel, "As we were getting near the graves my mother told me to run away. She tore my yellow star off, and I started running. I looked back and saw my mother and sisters shoved into the graves, still alive. I ran into the fields and hid until dark. I saw the Ghetto burning. I ran to Petro's house in Rostov. Petro saw me and hugged me, and I started crying. He said, 'My child, how did you get here?' He told me that everyone was killed, there were no survivors. Soon after I saw my Uncle Leibel there. Petro took us both to his barn. We hid in a space under the floor - it was about 4 feet deep. The cows and pigs were above us.

"At night Petro would remove the cover and give us food. After two months Ukrainian policemen came to the barn. Leibel saw them. He said, 'I know them, I went to school with them.' I urged him not to go out. He went out and tried talking but they shot him on the spot. I ran away. The Ukrainians burned the barn down thinking I was there. Later I found out that they had threatened Petro."

**Even the Children Were Looking for Jews**

Mr. Boymel hid in the forest that night. The Germans had told the Poles and Ukrainians that for every Jew they turned in they would receive either 5 pounds of sugar or a bicycle. Everybody was looking for Jews - even children.

In the morning, a Ukrainian farmer found Mr. Boymel and called his neighbors. "As they were discussing what to do with me I ran away back to Petro's house. I was barefoot and cold, and asked him again for advice. He told me that I couldn't stay in his farm, as it was too dangerous for me. We walked several miles and he dug a deep hole and filled it with straw and leaves. I went into the hole and he covered me up.

"I stayed in that hole all winter. Once a week, I would walk to the farm and Petro would give me food, and I would stay with him for a few days. Than I would go back to hide in the hole. Petro would come every once in a while and give me food.

**Joins the Partisans in Fighting the Germans**

"In the winter of 1943 the Ukrainians were out in the forest cutting pine trees for Christmas. One of them fell into the hole. I was startled and frightened, but so were they. They ran away. I went back again to Petro. He told me that the Russian Partisans were around 40 miles away and suggested I seek refuge with them. Even though it was dangerous, it was better than the way I had lived so far. Petro offered to take me and we walked all night until we met a few partisans. I stayed with the Partisans from early 1944 and fought against the Germans."

Mr. Boymel was liberated by the Russians in 1945. He lived in a DP camp in Ferenwald, Ukraine, where he met and married his wife Rachel. Eventually the Boymels, with their baby, received visas to come to the U.S.

When the Boymels arrived, Mr. Boymel had only $7 in his pocket, the gift of American soldiers whom he had met. They were sent to Cincinnati. "I had never heard of Cincinnati," he recalls. He knew no English, and started out working in a butcher shop at $18 a week. Eventually he bought his own butcher shop, and then a "rest home" with eight beds that he and his wife cleaned out and renovated. Mr. Boymel went on to build an elder care and nursing home network.

**Supporting Initiatives to**

**Ensure Jewish Continuity**

The Boymels have made a career out of supporting youth and education-related initiatives in Cincinnati and Israel that ensure Jewish continuity. These projects symbolically compensate for their childhood and youth taken from them by the Holocaust. Rather than wallow in self-pity or misery, they have used their experiences as a powerful force for goodness and positivity.

This past year, Mr. Boymel fulfilled a 60-year-old dream. "It has always been my dream to see a Yeshiva Boys High School in Cincinnati," says Mr. Boymel. "I can still see the Yeshivos of Europe before my eyes."

"I was driving down Section Road," explains Mr. Boymel, "and I could not believe my eyes. In front of me were 25 yeshiva students playing in a lot adjacent to the Yeshiva building. I stopped the car and went inside the building. What I saw almost made me cry. There were 50 or more students sitting in a beautiful Study Hall learning in the old familiar tunes that I had heard when I was younger. The pure innocent faces of today's young Yeshiva students learning Torah and Talmud bring back the wonderful memories of my youth and warm my heart.

**Vowed to Rebuild What**

**Was Lost in Europe**

"The Nazis (may their names be obliterated) destroyed all the Yeshivos in Eastern Europe. My mother made me promise - from her grave - never to forget where I came from. When I came to America, I vowed to rebuild what was lost in Europe.

"When I saw the Yeshiva boys, I realized that G-d has given me the opportunity to make my 60-year-old dream a reality. I am so impressed with the quality of learning and dedication of the staff of the yeshiva," says Mr. Boymel. "I see students here in the Yeshiva from all over the United States and the entire world. I feel now that Cincinnati has reached a new status with the Yeshiva here in town."

Seeing the students' sincerity and commitment to learning, Mr. Boymel began to support the Yeshiva. When a facility became available, he helped the Yeshiva purchase the building and property for the upcoming school year.

In December, Mr. Boymel made a special visit to the Yeshiva. He spoke to the students from the depths of his heart, telling his life-story and encouraging them to always be proud of their Judaism. The students were very inspired. His attitude that there is nothing beneath honest and hard work is a tremendous lesson and inspiration for today's youth. He is a role-model for the boys.

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

Who's Who

**Elazar ben Shimon**

Elazar ben Shimon was the son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. He spent 13 years of his life in a cave together with his illustrious father who was hiding from the Romans. During that time he helped his father author the Zohar.

Rabbi Elazar is mentioned by name in the Mishna three times and a number of anonymous teachings are also ascribed to him. He passed away on 25 Elul. After his passing, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi wanted to marry his widow but she refused saying that her husband was superior to him in good deeds and perhaps also in Torah knowledge.

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

**Chassidic Story #805**

**A Rebbe’s Debt**

**To a Hitchhiker**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=ABC&msgNum=0000vS00:001HVeWy00000Mh1&count=1367279481&randid=27996846&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=27996846)

As he approached Chernobyl, the chasid was in a happy mood. And why not? Silently he counted his blessings: a loving wife and children, a flourishing business, and soon he would be in the presence of his holy Rebbe, the famous **Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl**.

With these thoughts in mind he was enjoying the scenery, when suddenly he spotted a poor Jew trudging along with a bundle on his shoulders. Stopping the carriage he offered the traveler a lift, which was gratefully accepted.

For the first few miles both men were silent. But after a few minutes the poor Jew turned to the Chasid and asked him where he was headed. "To Chernobyl," the man replied, "to my holy Rebbe."

"Aha!" the traveler said with a smile. "So you're going to Mottele."

The Chasid was immediately offended. How dare this shabby-looking fellow refer to his holy Rebbe in such a familiar manner, as if they were intimates! On second thought, he decided to remain quiet.

"Are you indeed one of Mottele's chasidim?" the stranger persisted. "Yes," the man replied curtly in an attempt to end the conversation. "What chutzpa!" the Chasid thought to himself. Under other circumstances he would have put this impudent clod in his place, but he had no wish to ruin the journey further.

But the stranger was clearly in the mood to talk. "How do I know that you're really a chasid?" he inquired. The chasid was very surprised by the question and said nothing.

"A man is measured by his deeds, and especially by his pocket," the stranger continued.

"I'll tell you what - if you will pay me the 20 gold coins your Rebbe owes me, I will believe that you are his chasid."

The chasid was shocked. What kind of nonsense was this? "If you can prove to me that my Rebbe owes you the money I will gladly pay his debt," he blurted out. The stranger smiled and fished around in his knapsack until he found a piece of paper: a promissory note for 20 gold coins, signed by the *tzadik* of Chernobyl.

The chasid examined it carefully. Yes, it really did appear to be the Rebbe's signature, and try as he might he couldn't find any evidence of forgery. Nodding his head, he folded the note several times and placed it in his snuffbox. He then took out his moneybag, counted out exactly 20 gold coins and pressed them into the stranger's hand.

The rest of the journey was conducted in silence. On the outskirts of Chernobyl they reached a crossroads and the stranger asked to be let off. Before he climbed down from the carriage, he thanked the chasid for his kindness and blessed him with success.

The chasid watched the stranger walk off into the distance. Within minutes the man and his bundle were no bigger than a tiny dot that eventually disappeared over the horizon.

The chasid took out the promissory note and inspected it even more closely, but again could find no fault with it. By that time, however, he realized that he had arrived in Chernobyl. With more important things to attend to, he slipped the note back into his snuffbox and promptly forgot about it.

It was a busy Friday when he arrived, and Chernobyl was filled with hundreds of other Jews who had come to bask in the Rebbe's presence. Shabbat was spent in a state of spiritual elevation. To the chasid, the opportunity to pray with the Rebbe and hear his words of Torah was nothing less than a foretaste of Paradise.

When Shabbat was over the chasid requested a private audience with the Rebbe. Oddly, the first thing the Rebbe asked him was whether he had any snuff with him. "Certainly," the chasid replied, immediately proffering his snuffbox. As he opened it he saw the note he had forgotten about, and after a moment's hesitation handed it over to the Rebbe, who had noticed him pause.

"How did this come into your hands?" the Rebbe asked him. The chasid related the whole unlikely story of the stranger who had claimed that the Rebbe owed him money, and was shocked when the Rebbe verified it as true.

"As Divine Providence has led you two to meet, I can reveal to you that that stranger is one of the 36 hidden *tzadikim* in every generation in whose merit the world exists," he explained, adding that he had taken it upon himself to uphold him financially.

An involuntary shiver passed through the Chasid's body. A hidden *tzadik* had traveled in his carriage - and he hadn't known! He had even mistaken him for an impudent clod....

Noting his distress, the Rebbe eased his mind. "Don't worry, you've done nothing wrong," he reassured him. "If you were chosen to share in the *mitzva* of supporting a hidden *tzadik*, there is no doubt that it is a good sign." From that day on, each year during his annual visit the Chasid gave the Rebbe 20 gold coins for the hidden *tzadikim*. And for the rest of his life he hoped to meet stranger again. But it never happened.

Source: Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on //lchaimweekly.org (#668), with permission.

Connection: Seasonal - 176th yahrzeit of the 2nd Chernobyler Rebbe.

Biographic note: Rabbi Mordechai ("Mottel") of Chernobyl [1770 - 20 Iyar 1837], successor to his father, Rabbi Nachum, was the son-in-law of Rabbi Aharon the Great of Karlin and subsequently of Rabbi David Seirkes, an important disciple of the Baal Shem Tov.

His eight sons all became major Chasidic leaders. One of them, Yaakov Yisrael Twerski of Cherkassy, the first Hornsteipel Rebbe, married Devora Leah, one of the six daughters of Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch, son of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (match arranged by the two grandfather-Rebbes), in order to maximize the possibilities for fulfillment of the prediction, the Moshiach will be born of the elder disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch or the youngest.

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