**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Korach 5771**

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**Story #708**

**Only One Did Not Faint**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

One of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu's early predecessors as *Rishon L'Zion*, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, was Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, who had a special appreciation and admiration for the *CHIDA* (Rabbi Chaim-Yosef-David Azulai - see below). One of Rabbi Nissim's friends was Dr. Shlomo Umberto Nachon, a native of Livorno (Leghorn), where the Chida lived the end of his life and was buried.

*Illustration of the Chida, zt”l.*

In the late 1950's, Dr. Nachon learned that the Italian authorities wished to build a highway through the Jewish cemetery of Livorno. He quickly informed Chief Rabbi Nissim and, understanding the urgency of the situation, they decided it was time to move the *Chida* to Eretz Yisrael.

Dr. Nachon made the arrangements with the authorities in Livorno, and in 1960 Rav Nissim, after much coaxing, commissioned the then 31-year-old Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, who was known to be intimately familiar with the *Chida*'s writings, to head a team of esteemed Sephardic rabbis (which included Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira, the *Baba Sali*, and his brother the *Baba Haki*, Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhatzeira, chief rabbi in the city of Ramle, who was an expert in Jewish burials in his native Morocco) for the reinterring of the bones of the *Chida* in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Eliyahu related that when he arrived at Lod Airport with the other rabbis, he met with the agency representative who had brought the bones of the *Chida* in a small wooden coffin. When the Rav saw it, he was appalled "What is this?" he asked. "The bones of the *Chida* are rolling around in a miniature coffin? How can such a thing be?"

He asked that a larger coffin be brought, so that the bones could be transferred to it for an honorable burial. Then he requested that the *Baba Haki*'s driver go with his driver, and that they immerse in a *mikva* [ritual bath], and afterwards buy a Phillips screwdriver to open the coffin.

When they returned, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu made a large hole in the bottom of the new large coffin so that there would be no barrier between the bones and the soil upon burial, but temporarily closed the hole with a stopper. Then he opened the small coffin, and put his hand in to arrange the bones. But after a few moments he trembled and closed his eyes, and said he had no power to do it and asked pleadingly from the *Chida* that he himself should put his own bones in order.

Immediately a powerful, almost explosive sound was heard, the coffin began to shake, and a rattling sound -- made by the Chida 's remains striking the coffin's walls -- was heard. All of the other rabbis fainted on the spot. Rav Mordechai did not faint, explaining afterwards that this occurred because he was absorbed in the *mitzva*.

It was incredible! The bones managed to re-arrange themselves bone by bone, until the entire body was in order -- real resurrection! -- in the merit of the holy master, the *Chida*!

*"G-d will grant you special Providence, and bring my remains out of this place."* [Gen. 50:25]

*"He said to me, 'Can these bones live?'…As I prophesied, there was a roaring sound, and the bones came together and joined one another…. 'I am going to open your graves; I will take you out of your graves, My People, and bring you to the Land of Israel.'"* [Ezek. 37:3, 7, 12]

Thousands accompanied the funeral procession from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Sanhedria to the cemetery at Har HaMenuchos. At the burial, Rav Eliyahu described the events that had taken place as "*Nisei nissim*--absolute miracles."

At a later date Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu announced that whoever needs personal salvation can go to pray [to G-d] at the grave of the *Chida* (just like at other great holy sites -editor.).

It is no wonder that when Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu passed on to his heavenly great reward fifty years later that he was buried near the *Chida* on Har HaMenuchos!

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from //heichalhanegina.blogspot.com/2010/06/rav-mordechai-eliyahu-ztvkl-and chida.html . There Yitz explains that his main source is the version of RME himself, with supplementary details supplied from other versions. He also considerately supplies links to other sources.

Connection: First yahrzeit of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu on 25 Sivan (Monday June 27).

Biographical Notes: Rabbi Mordechai-Tzemach (ben Suliman) Eliyahu (1929-25 Sivan 2010), the former Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel, was born in Iraq. A noted sage in all areas of Torah study, as well as a significant kabbalist, he was considered to be one of the leading authorities on Jewish law in Israel. His son, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, is currently the Chief Rabbi of Tsfat.

Rabbi Chaim-Yosef-David Azulai (circa 5484-5566; 1724-1806), better known as the *"Chida,"* which are the initials of his name, is a highly respected Halachist, Kabbalist, historian and bibliographer. Born in Jerusalem, his teachers included Rav Shalom Sharabi [the Rashash], and Rav Chaim ben-Atar (the Ohr HaChaim).

Eventually he wrote and published 71 works! His Shem HaGedolim is one of the most important source books of Jewish literature and history. Several times he traveled abroad for periods of over five years each, usually as an emissary of the communities of the Holy Land, and once to serve as the Rav of Cairo. He lived the last third of his life in Livorno (Leghorn), Italy, where he wrote most of his major works and where he passed away at age 82 and was buried.

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**The Squire’s Due Recompense**

**By Rabbi Yossy Gordon**

In the small Russian township of Batchaikov lived a kindly old squire. The squire owned many villages and forests, inhabited mostly by the employees of his holdings. The squire was exceptionally generous. He would exempt people from their obligations to him if they were poor, and offered special discounts for the local rabbi, ritual slaughterer, schoolteachers and cantors. Most Jews in and around Batchaikov made their livelihood off the squire’s estate.

Being old and frail and in poor health, the squire often visited a renowned medical specialist of the time, Dr. Berthenson. Also, he gradually entrusted the administration of his estate to his anti-Semitic chief manager, who quickly began implementing his prejudices. Gone were the exemptions for the poor and the communal employees. In less than two years, the Jewish community was impoverished.

Many of the members of the Jewish community of Batchaikov were followers of Rabbi Shmuel, the “Rebbe Maharash,” the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe (1834–1882). Mostly simple folk, they would visit their rebbe for a Shabbat or holiday, hear a chassidic discourse, be received for a private audience, and head home, confident that G‑d would surely bless them materially and spiritually. No one ever thought to trouble the rebbe with the details of the painful situation brewing in their hometown.

After admonishing Reb Shmuel for not informing him of the situation earlier, the rebbe gave Reb Shmuel explicit instructions. “Your squire’s life is in danger. Travel home. Tell him in my name that I know he is critically ill and the doctors have just about despaired of his life. Let him help the Jewish families who live on his properties; for every Jewish family he helps, I promise him one month of life and health.”

After returning home, Reb Shmuel tried to visit the squire, but was refused admittance. Since it was a pleasant summer day, the doctor requested that the squire be taken outside for a ride. As Reb Shmuel stood from a distance and watched the old, broken gentleman get into the carriage, his heart was pained. The moment the squire saw Reb Shmuel on the road, he invited him into his carriage.

Reb Shmuel climbed aboard the coach and immediately passed on the rebbe’s message. The squire asked Reb Shmuel to draw up a complete list of every Jewish family in Batchaikov and the neighboring areas who could earn a living from his estate. In total, Reb Shmuel compiled a list of over 160 families.

So it was that over 160 families, plus a few dozen more from the surrounding area, were once again able to make a living. And the squire recovered.

About fourteen years later, Reb Shmuel was once again visiting Lubavitch, though the Rebbe Maharash had passed away some eleven years earlier.

Reb Shmuel related this story to his fellow chassidim, and then revealed the reason behind his visit: though the squire was exceedingly old, for the past fourteen years he had felt robust. Recently, however, he began feeling ill. He asked Reb Shmuel to visit the resting place of the rebbe to inform him that according to the squire’s tally, he was owed another fourteen months of life. Reb Shmuel visited the rebbe’s grave and relayed the message. Needless to say, the rebbe’s promise was kept.

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

**Half-Hearted Hospitality**

When Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi invited Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair for a meal, he was happily surprised when this great Sage accepted, for it was his custom to always refuse hospitality.

Noticing the excited look on the face of his host, Rabbi Pinchas declared:

“Do you think that I have taken a vow not to benefit from any Jew? Jews are a holy people and my refusal is based on my understanding that there are among them who genuinely wish to give to me but lack the means to do so, while others have the means but lack the will.

Regarding the latter, King Shlomo wrote: ‘Do not eat the bread of one who has an evil eye… for he invites you to eat and drink, but his heart is not with you.’ (Mishlei 23:6-7)”

“You,” concluded Rabbi Pinchas, “have the means and the will to grant hospitality but I must nevertheless turn down your invitation because I am in a hurry to fulfill the mitzvah of ransoming captives.”

Rabbi Pinchas seemed to be critical of half-hearted hosts and yet includes them in his praise of all Jews being holy people. Tosefot explains that the very fact that a miserly Jew extends an invitation to a guest, even though he is motivated by shame rather than generosity, qualifies him to be considered holy.

It was the extreme righteousness of Rabbi Pinchas that compelled him to refuse an invitation from a host who did not extend it wholeheartedly.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (*[*www.ohr.edu*](http://www.ohr.edu)*)*

**Graduate's Unconventional Valedictorian Speech**

**By Levi Stein**



Vacaville High School valedictorian **Carolyn Fine** gave her speech via a recorded message due to the ceremony taking place on Shavuos.

Like the rest of her graduating class at Vacaville High School, valedictorian **Carolyn Fine** is preparing for the big day this week. But because commencement exercise falls out during the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, the 18-year-old is getting ready a bit differently.

In observance of the holiday – which commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai – Fine will not deliver the traditional valedictorian’s speech through a microphone. She won’t even travel to the ceremony in a car, and will instead walk.

“I was nervous about what to do,” Fine told the Contra Costa Times. “The more I learn about the Jewish religion, the more connected I feel.”

School officials worked with Fine to make alternate arrangements.

“It’s great to see that, on her own, she’s standing by her faith,” commented Rabbi **Chaim Zaklos**, director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Solano County, who has been helping the young scholar.

*Reprinted from the June 10, 2011 website of Chabad.org*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Tombstone’s Tale**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

Among the thousands of tombstones in the cemetery in the Israeli city of Holon, there is one that stands out in its beauty. It was placed there by a monument maker who did it not for profit but for a special reason. Following is the story behind this stone.

A monument maker who was running a successful business was approached by some drug dealers. They offered him a lot of money if he would consent to have a substantial quantity of the illegal substance smuggled into the country in a shipment of his marble material. Unable to resist the temptation to make some easy money he succumbed.

Before the shipment arrived, however, there was a feud among the gangsters and one of them reported the smuggling plan to the police. A sentence of 10 years in prison was the result of the monument maker’s foolish mistake.

During his prison term his mother passed away and he appeared one day in a local synagogue on leave from jail to say kaddish for her. Although he had hardly been observant before entering prison, his fall into such tragic circumstances moved him to become more serious about his faith. His lack of familiarity with observance was, however, still evident to the worshippers who saw him clumsily turning pages in his prayer book.

One Jew, the unofficial spiritual leader of the congregation, came over to him and patiently guided him in what he had to say and do. He even told him that he would arrange, at his own expense, a memorial gathering in the synagogue when the thirty-day mourning period ended and he wanted him to join it and say kaddish.

The convict’s happy surprise at such consideration was surpassed only by the good news he received a few weeks later from the prison warden that, in deference to the request of a very respected Jew, he was being granted a leave to attend that memorial gathering. Upon his arrival there he profusely thanked his benefactor and promised to become his devoted disciple when he would be released.

Not only did he keep his promise but went on to become a lecturer on the subject of returning to religion and gained fame as the “drug dealer who repented”. When the man who got him started on this new path in life passed away he showed his appreciation in a manner recalling his old trade.

He arranged that the grave of his benefactor and mentor be honored with a most beautiful tombstone.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (*[*www.ohr.edu*](http://www.ohr.edu)*)*

**Solving the Mystery of Washington’s Famous Letter:**

**How Did It End Up in a Suburban Warehouse?**

**By Paul Berger**

It started as a mystery.

During a lecture in England last December, Jonathan Sarna, America’s foremost scholar of American Jewish history, said he did not know the whereabouts of one of American Jewry’s most important documents: George Washington’s letter to the Hebrew Congregation, in Newport, R.I.

Upon this yellowed piece of 18th-century rag paper is a short but powerful statement from the first president of the United States reassuring one of the original colonial congregations that his nascent government guaranteed religious liberty for all.

“For, happily,” Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport in 1790, “the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.”

More than a vital piece of American Jewish history, the letter is one of the primary documents guaranteeing religious tolerance in America, its famous words still quoted by community leaders and politicians whenever they want to underline America’s commitment to religious liberty.



**Steve Brosnahan, © George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom**

**Hand-Off: Moses Seixes presenting the letter from the Hebrew Congregation of Newport to President George Washington. August 18, 1790, in the Colony House, Newport.**

But where is the letter?

After months of searching, the Forward has found the elusive letter in an art storage facility in a squat, nondescript building in an industrial park in Maryland, a stone’s throw from the home of the Washington Redskins, at FedEx Field. The letter is owned by the Morris Morgenstern Foundation and has been on loan to the B’nai B’rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum for more than 50 years.

The letter has not always been hidden from sight — it was originally displayed in the exhibition hall of B’nai B’rith International’s headquarters, on Rhode Island Avenue, in Washington. But when B’nai B’rith sold that building and moved to smaller offices in 2002, there was no longer space for the entire collection, and so a significant portion of it was put into storage.



**Courtesy of Howard Rubenstein**

**Morris Morgenstern (center) presents a copy of Washington’s letter to President John F. Kennedy as PR guru Howard Rubenstein (right) looks on.**

Over the years, the Library of Congress asked for permission to exhibit the letter, as did the new National Museum of American Jewish History. All requests were denied. During the Forward’s investigation, it became clear that many scholars did not even know where it was, who owned it and why it was not on public view.

B’nai B’rith would not give permission to publish a photograph of the original letter in the Forward.

Washington’s correspondence to Newport’s Hebrew Congregation is not the only letter he wrote to the Jewish community at that time. Washington wrote two more letters: one to the community in Savannah, Ga; the other, a combined letter to the communities in New York; Philadelphia; Charleston, S.C., and Richmond, Va.

Newport was singled out, Sarna explained, as part of a public relations campaign Washington waged on behalf of the new U.S. Constitution. Though the Constitution needed to be ratified by only nine of the original 13 states, Washington wanted a unanimous vote. “Rhode Island was the great holdout,” Sarna said, “because it thought that it would be bullied into signing.”

**George Washington Made a Deal**

So Washington made a deal: If Rhode Island approved the Constitution, Washington and his entourage would personally make a state visit there.

After Rhode Island ratified the Constitution, Washington and Thomas Jefferson toured the state in August 1790, stopping in Providence and Newport.

In Newport, Moses Seixas, president of the local congregation, presented a communication on behalf of the Jewish community, praising Washington’s victory and giving thanks for the establishment of a government that guaranteed “civil and religious liberty.”

Indeed, were it not for Seixas’s eloquence — his letter expressed gratitude for the establishment of “a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance” — then perhaps Washington’s response, which copies Seixas’s phrasing almost word for word, would not be nearly as powerful as it is today.

**The Newport Letter is Special Because**

**Of the Ringing Tones of the Declaration**

Steve Frank, chief interpretative officer of the National Constitution Center, said that Washington replied to many religious groups and communities in those days. But the Newport letter is special precisely because of the language. “The ringing tones of the declaration really set it apart,” Frank said.

But when Frank was asked where he thought the letter was, he, like Sarna, was unsure.

Other scholars were puzzled, too. Susan Malbin, director of library and archives at the American Jewish Historical Society, said she did not know where to find the letter. Sharon Mintz, curator of Jewish art at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, did not know where to find it either. Neither did Tony Michels, professor of history and Jewish studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, nor Zachary Baker, curator of the Judaica and Hebraica collections at Stanford University.

Finally, Sharon Bender, B’nai B’rith’s spokeswoman, said that a private organization, the Morris Morgenstern Foundation, owned the letter and had loaned it to B’nai B’rith about 50 years ago. “Our current offices do not have space for a museum,” she wrote in an e-mail. “Therefore, the letter is now stored in a climate-controlled fine arts storage facility and is not readily accessible.”

If you want to see the Declaration of Independence, you can go to the National Archives. If you want to see Washington’s letter to the Jews of New York, Philadelphia, Charleston and Richmond, you can go to the new Jewish history museum in Philadelphia.

**Currently Stored in a Suburban Maryland Art Storage Facility**

But if you want to see Washington’s letter to the Jews of Newport, you have to drive about 25 minutes from downtown Washington, to an art storage facility in suburban Maryland. And you’re not allowed to ask any questions.

Such were the conditions laid down by B’nai B’rith for the Forward’s June 10 visit to Artex Fine Art Services. There, in a warehouse, atop a palette covered by a blue drop cloth and flanked by two Artex employees and Cheryl Kempler, the museum’s sole remaining employee, is Washington’s letter.

The letter is extremely sensitive to light, heat and humidity. Even during the Klutznick Museum’s heyday, when it attracted about 40,000 visitors a year, the document was on display only a couple of months of the year.

**Temperature in Warehouse is Carefully Controlled**

The Artex employees ensured that the temperature in the warehouse was carefully controlled. Dwarfed by towering shelves and enormous, canvas-shaped cardboard boxes, the 220-year-old letter looked fragile. There are no distinguishing features — no letterhead, stamp or seal — just row upon row of very straight, handwritten lines.

Ahead of this visit, James Hutson, chief of the manuscript division at the Library of Congress, had advised that the most important factor to note was the condition of the paper. To the untrained eye, the letter looked fine. It was resting on what seemed to be a piece of cardboard and had been covered by what looked like acid-free paper.

“The lines are very straight,” Bender said.

Anyone who has tried to chase down the whereabouts of Washington’s letter has ended the search at the Morgenstern foundation.

Morgenstern’s life — he died in 1969 — has a Horatio Alger ring to it that is common to Jews of a certain era. He grew up on Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the late 19th century, and made his first living selling newspapers and shining shoes.

Somehow, he parlayed such humble beginnings into a career as a wealthy financier and philanthropist who, according to The New York Times, often claimed to have “the most diversified philanthropic portfolio in the United States.”

“He was an exuberant person,” said Howard Rubenstein, a New York PR guru whose clients include the New York Yankees and Rupert Murdoch. “He was short — maybe 5’ 2” — but he was very tall in spirit.”

**Howard Rubenstein’s First Big Client**

Fifty years ago, Morgenstern was Rubenstein’s first big client. And Washington’s letter was the fulcrum around which their relationship revolved.

“He cherished the letter,” Rubenstein said. “There were many times when he slept with it under his bed.”

Because Rubenstein knew how much Morgenstern loved the letter, he suggested that a special award be created in its name. Following that advice, Morgenstern had a copy of the letter framed and would present it to prominent people, along with a donation to a charity of their choice.

**Presentations to Past and Future Presidents**

Over the years that followed, Rubenstein said he arranged audiences with former presidents Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman and with future presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. The photograph from at least one of those meetings has pride of place on the wall in Rubenstein’s Midtown offices. “Everywhere we went,” Rubenstein said, “if I said we have the letter, the doors opened; and Morris loved the glory of promoting that language.”

After Morgenstern died, Rubenstein lost touch with his family. But he did say that he knew the sole director of the foundation, Morgenstern’s son Frank.

“Frank was always very reluctant to take center stage in terms of publicity,” Rubenstein said. “He was very modest.”

**A Very Private Man and Family**

Frank Morgenstern is, indeed, a private man. Paul Goodnough, an accountant who answered the phone registered to the Morris Morgenstern Foundation, said Morgenstern did not want to speak to a reporter. “They’re very private people,” he said of the family.

It’s unclear exactly when Morgenstern bought the letter or for how much. An article in the New York Amsterdam News in 1951 claimed that Morgenstern acquired the letter in 1949. The most recent public filings for the foundation list among its assets “historical documents” that, it says, were purchased for $15,000 and currently have a “market value” of $300,000.

But the actual value of the letter is likely much higher.

Seth Kaller, a dealer in rare coins and documents, said the most recent sale of a George Washington letter, at Christie’s in 2009, fetched $3.2 million. David Redden, a Sotheby’s vice chairman, estimated that the Newport document would likely fetch between $5 million and $10 million today. “It’s an astonishing letter,” he said.

For now, anyone willing to see copies and reproductions of Washington’s letter has very few options.

The foundation recently gave permission for the owners of the newly built Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr. Visitors Center, in Newport, to re-photograph the letter. The center, close to the historic Touro Synagogue, used the high-resolution photographs for its multimedia exhibit, which is run by the George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom.

**Foundation Maintains Tight Grip on the Rights to the Letter**

But such acts of beneficence by the foundation are rare. It has maintained a tight grip on the rights to the letter.

That is why there is no photograph of Washington’s letter accompanying this article.

In response to a request for an image, the museum said, “B’nai B’rith International does not grant permission for that photo to be published by the Forward.”

Even the new NMAJH was refused permission to display a photograph of the letter. “We do display a reproduction of the letter,” said Michael Rosenzweig, president and CEO. “It’s a facsimile of a reproduction of the letter, written by Washington’s secretary.”

**Facsimile of the Copy of Washington’s**

**Letter is Owned by the Library of Congress**

Indeed, this facsimile of the copy of Washington’s letter, which was noted in Washington’s secretary’s letter book and is owned by the Library of Congress, is often used in place of the original letter.

Rosenzweig said he would prefer to have the original letter, or even a facsimile of the original letter. He said that B’nai B’rith had even asked the foundation, on the museum’s behalf, for permission to display Washington’s letter.

Bender, B’nai B’rith’s spokeswoman, said that the museum “would be a wonderful venue for this important letter.” She could not say why the request had been denied. “You’d have to ask the Morgenstern Foundation,” she wrote in an e-mail.

“We are the only museum anywhere dedicated exclusively to telling the story of American Jewish history, and as the National Museum of American Jewish History, we would love to be able to display that letter here,” Rosenzweig said.

Steve Frank at the Constitution Center said that, in one sense, the foundation and the museum were doing everything right.

From the perspective of preservation, keeping the letter out of sight and in climate-controlled conditions would safeguard its future for centuries to come.

“But from the public’s perspective,” Frank added, “the opportunity to see that letter and to be connected to that history would just be enormously powerful.”

*Reprinted from the June 24, 2011 edition of the Forward newspaper.*

**It Once Happened**

**Preparing for Reb Shmuel Brin’s Major Legal Trial**

Reb Shmuel Brin sat in a waiting room packed with chasidim who had traveled from far and near to seek the advice of the Rebbe Maharash--the Fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe. A tense atmosphere prevailed and showed itself in the serious and worried faces of all. Reb Shmuel was well known, the owner of a distillery which produced vodka, and an ardent follower of the Rebbe Maharash. He had been waiting to see the Rebbe for days, and now his turn had come, and he sat reciting Psalms with a broken spirit.

He entered the Rebbe's study, and was overcome with emotion--what had he done to bring this terrible calamity upon himself? He began to explain the situation to the Rebbe: "As the Rebbe knows, I earn my livelihood from my distillery. A certain tax is paid to the government for the amount of liquor produced, and a special meter attached to the fermenting vat measures each quart. From time to time an inspector comes to assess the taxes due.

"Until now there has never been any trouble, but it seems that one of my employees has found a way, through making a small hole in the vat, of siphoning off some of the vodka, and thereby bypassing the meter. The vodka he managed to steal he sold to his friends, and so he cheated both me and the government. I have no idea how long this has been going on, but this is how it came to my attention:

"A second worker caught the first thief red-handed, and demanded a share in the take. The first thief agreed, but later they had an argument and the second "partner" went to the police. Upon investigation, the police discovered the swindle and arrested the thief. When questioned, he admitted the theft, but he claimed that it was done on my orders.

"I don't know why, but then the police freed the thief and arrested me instead. My family barely managed to bail me out and I came here right here away to seek your advice. The penalty for cheating the government is very severe--there is even the possibility of life imprisonment or slave-labor in Siberia."

With that, Reb Shmuel broke into uncontrollable sobs, crying "Rebbe! Help me! me'ayin yavo ezri--From where will come my help?"

The Rebbe was thoughful for a while, and then responded: "Yes, your help will come from me'ayin, from the Unknown, from G-d. Return to your home, and when you will meet a Jew in trouble who will say: 'Me'ayin yavo ezri' help him; then G-d will also help you."

Reb Shmuel left very much encouraged. Not long after, Reb Shmuel heard about a terrible misfortune that had befallen his old friend Reb Chaim. He had become destitute in a devastating fire which destroyed his entire inn. With a house full of children, Reb Chaim was desperate.

Reb Shmuel went seaching for his friend, and found him sitting near some scorched wooden logs where his inn had previously stood.

The two friends greeted each other warmly. Reb Shmuel eagerly offered his friend a loan, but he shook his head. "Where would you get the money? You have troubles enough of your own," he replied. "As we say in Psalms: 'From where will come my help? My help will come from G-d.'"

As soon as he heard the words of his Rebbe echoed by Reb Chaim, he was even more anxious to extend his help. He didn't let Reb Chaim go until he finally accepted the proffered money.

Weeks passed and finally the day of the trial arrived. Many members of the community appeared to testify on behalf of Reb Shmuel, but things didn't go well for him. The two accusers swore that they acted under orders of their boss, and the prosecutor made a fiery speech denouncing Brin as a swindler of the worst type. Brin could only repeat over and over again that he was innocent of the charges.

After the lawyers had concluded their arguments, the judge proceeded to summarize the case and instruct the jury. He concluded his speech saying, "I want to recount the following episode which has a bearing on the case: Once, the young son of a nobleman was traveling by train. He left his luggage on the platform to get some refreshment. On his return it was missing, and along with it, all of his money and ticket. For a couple of days he hung around the station hungry and miserable, noticed by no one.

"Then a man descended from an incoming train, and with one look at the boy, invited him to partake of a meal at his expense. The boy accepted gratefully and told the stranger about his predicament. The man reached into his pocket and gave him money for a ticket. When the boy requested his name, so that he could repay him, he refused, saying that one day the boy would pass on the favor to another, and that would be his reward.

"Members of the jury," concluded the judge, "this man that you see before you is the very man who helped me so many long years ago! Such a man could not be liar and a thief! A man who could so graciously help a complete stranger with no thought of recompense could never commit this crime! I leave it up to you to decide!"

In a few minutes the verdict was returned. "Not guilty!" Reb Shmuel Brin did not immediately hear the verdict. His mind was on the words of his saintly Rebbe: "Fill the void of another in distress, and G-d will fill yours."

*Reprinted from the issue #222 of “L’Chaim”, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, in Brooklyn, New York that came out for Parshas Korach 5752, 1992.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Right Place at**

**The Right Time**

A man once complained to Reb Simcha Bunim of Parshischo, saying “The Talmud (Eruvin 13a) states that when a person runs away from honor, honor will run after him. I run away from honor, but honor does not pursue me.”

“The reason,” explained the Reb Simcha Bunim, “is because you keep looking back, and therefore it hides from you.” (Gateway To Happiness, Reb Zelig Pliskin, p.283, citing Simchas Yisroel , p.57.

We read about honor seeking in this week’s Torah portion Korach. Korach “had it all,” but it was not enough. As Moshe said to Korach, “Is it not enough for you that the G-d of Yisroel has segregated you from the assembly of Yisroel to draw you near to Him [Hashem], to perform [as a Levi] the service of the Mishkan of Hashem, and to stand before the assembly to minister to them? And He drew you near, and all your brethren, the offspring of Levi, with you-- yet you seek priesthood (to be a Kohen) as well?!?”(Bamidbar 16:9-10)

When Korach failed to receive the honor he felt he deserved, Korach attempted to stage a revolt against Moshe. We see how Korach’s search for honor eventually caused his own death and the death of many others who supported him.  If honor seeking is the source of evil, then surely shunning honor is a source of blessing. The following story, which is a continuation from last week, illustrates this point.

Last week, we read the story about two Bar Mitzvah boys whose bar mitzvahs came out on the same Shabbos, Parshas Yisro. The Gabbai (attendant) in the shul, had forgotten that both boys had bar mitzvahs on the same shabbos. Thus, when both boys and their fathers approached the bima to read from the Torah, nobody knew what to do! One of the boys Shlomo, was new to the neighborhood and he had had a hard time integrating into the local yeshiva and making friends, etc.

The other boy Binyamin recognized Shlomo's difficulties. Binyamin overcame his desire to read the Torah that Shabbos, and instead he let Shlomo read the parsha. Four years later, Binyamin's knowledge of his bar mitzvah parsha came to good use.

One Erev Shabbos, Mrs. Neuman - Binyamin's mother was experiencing heart trouble, and she was rushed to the Hospital. Mrs. Neuman was taken straight to the Cardiology Department. A whole set of tests were immediately ordered. Mrs. Newman would have to stay in the hospital until the results were ready - after Shabbos.

Binyamin's father told Binyamin to stay with his mother in the hospital, and he went back home to be with the other children for Shabbos.

That evening Friday night, a doctor came into Mrs. Newman's room. "We've found the cause of the problem, Mrs. Newman. We can treat it with a new medicine, or we can operate. But you must decide by tomorrow, because if you want to take the medication we must start right away - and if you prefer surgery, we have to prepare you with other medicines."



**Rabbi Yoseif Shalom Elyashiv**

Binyamin and his mother didn't know what to do. Mrs. Newman didn't trust herself to decide, and Binyamin was only 17. It was already Shabbos, so they could not call Binyamin's father and ask him what to do. Binyamin suddenly noticed how noisy it was in the hallway outside his mother's room. He went out to look.

"What happened?" he asked someone standing nearby. "Oh, didn't you hear? Rabbi Yoseif Shalom Elyashiv was admitted to the hospital just before Shabbos."

Rav Elyashiv is one of the greatest Torah leaders of our time, an elderly sage who lives in Yerushalayim. People from all over the world come to him for advice and guidance and with all kinds of questions, including medical ones. He had not been feeling well that Friday and was taken to the hospital. Although they did not find anything seriously wrong, the doctors thought that he should remain there until after Shabbos, just to be sure that everything was okay.

"Baruch Hashem," thought Binyamin, "I'll ask Rav Elyashiv what to do. Abba always goes to him for advice."

But as Binyamin watched, a crowd of people filled the end of the hallway near Rav Elyashiv's room. How would he ever get to see the Rabbi? Then he had an ideal

"This Shabbos is Parshas Yisro, my Bar Mitzvah parsha," he thought. "I remember exactly how to read it. I will offer to read the Torah for the Rabbi's small minyan tomorrow, and then afterwards, perhaps I'll have a chance to speak to him."

Later that evening, Binyamin knocked quietly at the door of the Rabbi's room. "May I ask for the privilege of reading the Torah for the Rabbi tomorrow? It is my Bar Mitzvah parsha and I know it very well..."

The Rabbi graciously accepted Binyamin's offer. And so, the next day, Binyamin finally read his Bar Mitzvah parsha-four years late, but just in time now!

After davening, Rav Elyashiv called Binyamin over to thank him. Binyamin then told the Rabbi of his problem. "I have to give the doctors an answer right away," he said. Rav Elyashiv is a beloved, very well-known and deeply respected person, so Israel's best cardiologist (heart doctor) had been sent to take care of him.

"Don't worry, Binyamin," said Rav Elyashiv. "I will ask my own doctor, Professor Shammai Tzivoni, to see your mother. With the help of Hashem, she will recover completely.

That night, right after Shabbos, Professor Tzivoni examined Mrs. Newman and then spoke to Rav Elyashiv. He recommended that an operation be performed as soon as possible. The professor decided that he himself would do it, first thing the next morning.

Soon after the operation, Mrs. Newman returned to he family in full health, Boruch Hashem!" "Rav Elyashiv really did not need to be in the hospital at all," said Binyamin. "Hashem sent him to save my mother's life!" Hashem notices everything, no good deed goes un-rewarded.

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

**For the Sake of Peace**

**By Rabbi Y. Appel**

[](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=SsSYfPEM&id=D8A6A0C8EEFC09D747EAF25AF435A65A4C844DB2&thid=OIP.SsSYfPEMk8RyADTZrkcv-AC-Es&q=photos+of+rabbi+isser+zalman+meltzer&simid=608022767652440411&selectedIndex=1)

**Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer**

Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer was a great sage in Jerusalem 100 years ago. Once, during one of Rabbi Meltzer's Talmudic lectures, a young man who did not usually contribute to the discussions, spoke up - arguing that Rabbi Meltzer's interpretation contradicted the great Talmudic commentator, the Sfas Emes. Rabbi Meltzer, a noted Talmud scholar himself, apologized for his mistake, but asked permission to continue.

After the class, one of Rabbi Meltzer's top students approached him and said: "Rabbi, I don't understand. First of all, your interpretation was not at odds with the Sfas Emes. And secondly, even if it was, there was nothing wrong in offering a differing interpretation."

Rabbi Meltzer explained: "I noticed that there was an older man in attendance who does not usually come to my lectures. Also, the student who asked me the question usually does not participate in the discussions. I thought these two unusual circumstances may be related. Perhaps the older man was looking at the student as a prospective son-in-law. If that were the case, I did not want to put the young man in a negative light."

One week later, Rabbi Meltzer's supposition was proved correct: The student who had posed the challenge in class became engaged to the older man's daughter.

True humility entails a willingness to put oneself in a bad light if it will help others.A prime example can be found in this week's Torah portion, Korach.

Korach, a cousin of Moses and Aaron, launches a rebellion against them. He claims that they have unfairly seized leadership roles and have ignored the prophetic powers of the rest of the nation. Korach says that Moses and Aaron are no holier than anyone else - and he ridicules their teachings. Datan, Aviram, and 250 others join Korach's cause.

Were the rebels' claims justified? No - they were patently absurd! Who would accuse Moses of snatching power, when in fact Moses had to be persuaded by the God to take a leadership role in the first place!? Moreover, the Torah describes Moses as "the most humble of all men." Wielding power was the last thing on his mind!

Moses tells the rebels, though, that if they have any doubts about his designation of Aaron as High Priest, he is willing to conduct the following test: Each person who lays claim to Aaron's position should bring an incense offering to God, and whoever the Almighty chooses will become the High Priest. Moses is willing to put his position on the line in order to mollify the rebels.

Then, in a stunning example of humility, Moses asks to meet with Datan and Aviram. Though they have been provocateurs, and Moses risks humiliation by meeting with them, he still tries to make peace.

Characteristically, Datan and Aviram rebuff Moses' offer and insult him. With this last ditch effort being met with failure, the die is cast and the unfortunate episode ends with the ground opening up and swallowing the rebels.

We can derive a dramatic lesson from this story. Though he was totally in the right, and though he exposed himself to insult and humiliation, Moses did all he could to stop a tragedy. In acting this way, Moses provided subsequent generations with an exemplary model of what constitutes true humility, and showed how far one must go to put ego aside for the sake of peace.

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

**The Belzer’s Rebbe Special Gift to a Wayward Jew**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

This week we read a story that should not have been told. It is about an evil man called Korach, who turned the entire Jewish nation against Moses and Aaron and almost succeeded in ending Jewish history (G-d forbid).

The Torah is not ashamed to tell us that Korach was an earnest G-d fearing Jew of impeccable credentials who had reached the peak of spiritual achievement. He was beloved by all, had genuine prophetic powers and unmatched charisma.

How and why did he turn everyone against, of all people, Moses?! What did Moses do wrong? And what did he do right?

**An Argument About Tzitzis and Tchailes**

Rashi (16:1) tells us that one of the arguments Korach used was about the commandment of 'Tzitzis' and 'Tchailes' (before wearing any four cornered garment, adult male Jews are commanded to tie on each of its corners, four specially made strings (Tzitzis) one of which must be dyed a bluish color called 'Tchailes' (today, according to most opinions, this color does not exist).

So Korach publicly challenged Moses and asked; "Does a garment (Talit) that is totally 'Tchailes' legally require an additional blue string?" When Moses answered yes Korach and followers scoffed, "Aha! How can one string of 'Tchailes be required for a garment that is totally Tchailes?"

After this, the people were his!

At first glance this is totally not understood. What was his point? And why was this argument about the Tzitzis so convincing

To understand this here is a story I just read (HaYidion HaKfar #613)

This story takes place some 150 years ago in Poland as Reb Eliahu, a wealthy salesman in Krakow, discovered that he had lost his 18 year old son Itzik.

At first the boy seemed to be a wholesome, enthusiastic observant Jew like all the others but then something happened.

**Snared by the “Enlightenment” Movement**

Itzik had been drawn into the snare of the 'enlightenment' movement that was spreading like wildfire throughout Europe and Eastern Russia.

Especially appealing to the youth, groups of 'enlightened' young men preached that faith and trust in G-d were ideas of the past while today intellect and culture were supreme. Philosophy and science, they claimed, proved beyond any reasonable doubt that man was created to have pleasure and there was no such thing as a Creator to limit our deeds or to believe in or pray to.

Itzik ate it up. He was free! Finally he could be 'himself'. He returned home late one day in unusual garments and announced before his mother and father with a far-away look in his eye that the Torah and Judaism are not for him. He found new, truly open-minded friends and was beginning a new life.

**Are All the Genius Rabbis Wrong?**

After a few seconds his mother began to weep and his father stood stunned and tried meekly to argue with him but to no avail. "Why didn’t you talk this over with us?" his father tried to think of something to say. "Do you really think that all these genius rabbis - Moses, Isaiah, Rabbi Akiva - have been wrong all these years??"

But nothing he said helped. Itzik had tasted 'freedom' and nothing would convince him to leave it.

Hoping and praying that he would change his mind his parents said nothing and waited. But, a few months later when Itzik announced that he had proposed marriage to the local druggist’s daughter it was the final straw. "The druggist’s daughter?! But the druggist isn’t Jewish?" both his parents shouted in unison.

His father totally lost his temper and told him to leave the house while his mother began crying even more intensely than the first time. But Itzik was not in the least moved. He just shrugged his shoulders, smiled and said "I knew you wouldn’t understand." Itzik went to his room, packed a bag and left.

But his parents didn’t give up. They asked around until someone gave them advice to go to the holy Rebbe Yhoshua of Belz and ask for a blessing.

They took the advice; traveled to Belz, got an audience with the Rebbe, told their pathetic story, the Rebbe asked a few questions, then became silent for a minute or so and finally answered. "Give him love! You must invite him back home. Ask him not to transgress anything in front of you and … just trust in G-d. Don’t worry, everything will be alright. But try please to bring him here; I want to give him a present."

**Not Having an Easy Time**

Meanwhile, all this time Itzik didn’t have an easy time. At first he lived with friends for a week or two but he felt he was intruding so he rented a room. But after a week his money ran out and, ashamed to ask his bride to be for money, he found himself on the streets sleeping on park benches. So when his parents located him and invited him to return home he jumped at the invitation.

It worked just as the Rebbe said; Itzik kept his gentile 'friends' but was so grateful to have a warm bed to sleep on that a few weeks later when his father suggested that he accompany him on his next trip to Belz he actually agreed.

A few days later Itzik found himself entering the Rebbe’s room together with his father. His father had been so friendly that he almost forgot the differences between them… but as soon as he stood before the Rebbe he remembered. "Oh oh!" he thought to himself. "For sure this old man is going to threaten me with fire and brimstone if I go through with the wedding!"

**Rebbe Blesses Itzik and Gives Him a Gift for Protection**

But it wasn't so. In fact the Rebbe received him very cordially, blessed him with good news and ended by saying, "I understand that you are about to make a big move and are heavily involved in the world. Well I’d like to give you something to wear that will protect you." And he handed him a small package.

After Itzik and his father left the Rebbe’s room they opened the package to reveal a 'Tallit Katan'; a four cornered garment with tzitzis on each of the corners designed to be worn under one’s shirt or jacket.

Itzik put the garment in his pocket and was grateful that the Rebbe didn't mention anything about his upcoming wedding.

A few weeks later Itzik's big day arrived. He thought about it for a few seconds and finally decided to take the Rebbe's advice. He wore the 'Talit Katan' under his shirt, dressed up in his tuxedo, put on his high hat and headed for the wedding hall.

His parents were broken, the only thing that comforted them was that the Belzer Rebbe did not seem worried, but they did not sleep that night.

Then, at three in the morning, their door burst open and Itzik staggered in like a wounded deer. His garments were dirty and torn, his face was swollen and bloody and he was obviously drunk.

He went to the sink, rinsed his face repeatedly with cold water, sat down heavily on a chair and began to explain what happened while pressing a towel to his bleeding face.

**Things Became Wild After the Drinking and Dancing**

"After the ceremony we started drinking and dancing, things were pretty wild and suddenly some of them started saying things against the Jews. I thought these people didn’t care but I was wrong. I began thinking that it would just die down but it didn’t. The women were laughing and well I just kept quiet and pretended to be one of them.

Then someone saw the tzitzis or that present the Rebbe gave me and just came over, called me a dirty Jew and gave me a punch in the face. Then another did the same. Someone knocked me to the ground another called me another name. It was a miracle but somehow I found myself outside the hall. I hid from them for a while and, well, thank G-d, I escaped. Wow! Did I make a mistake! I mean, if the Rebbe hadn't given me that garment I might have become one of them!"

**The Answer to Our Question**

This answers our question.

The purpose of the Tzitzis, especially the blue string, is to show that G-d cares about details.

The Jews were 'chosen' to tell the world about G-d, first, how G-d is 'above' and totally encompasses and ‘negates’ all being. And second; that He also is very close and cares for and provides for every detail of creation.

The first, 'encompassing' aspect is symbolized by the 'Tallit' garment while the second, 'caring' aspect is symbolized by the 'Tzitzis' strands.

**Korach’s False Argument**

Therefore Korach scoffed at the idea of putting one string on a garment that is totally 'tchailes; he wanted to stress the first aspect: that everyone is equal and Moses has no right to reign supreme.

But he was wrong. The fact is that G-d is involved in and cares for all the details of the world as well and He WANTS Moses (and the Moses of each generation) to be 'above' and guide the Jewish people.

This is especially relevant to us today; we are (as the Lubavitcher Rebbe said many times) the generation of Moshiach. True all men are equal but Moshiach (who will be a great guide like Moses) will bring out the differences in each of us as well.

Moshiach will be the opposite of Korach: he will show how each human is unique and possesses some special quality that is essential to the world.

Then, when we see that each person is precious and necessary for the welfare of all mankind, there will be true appreciation and love between each and all members of the human race. The opposite of the strife and contention caused by Korach (see Avot 5:17).

But it all depends on us! We must do even one more good deed, say one more positive word or even think one more positive thought.

Even this is enough to tile the scales to bring...**Moshiach NOW!**

*Reprinted from this week’s email from Yeshiva Torah T’mimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas korach 5770**

**Story #654**

**Tar Boy**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

Many years ago in a small village a Jewish boy was orphaned. A fellow villager took pity on him and took him into his own home. The child attended the local yeshiva but try as he might, he just couldn't grasp even the most rudimentary subjects.

Finally, the boy's guardian decided to apprentice him to a tar-maker. No sooner did his master teach him some element of the work than he could perform it faultlessly. After half a year his master said, You don't need me any longer. You are competent enough to go into business for yourself.

**Opened a Successful Business in a Neighboring Village**

The boy, now a young man, opened his own business in a neighboring village. He quickly established himself amongst the villagers, for both Jews and non-Jews alike were drawn to his cheerful manner and absolute honesty. His business thrived and he married the daughter of a local tradesman. He was soon able to support not only his family, but to give charity generously to the local yeshivas and other needy causes in the town. He even had built a special guest house to feed and maintained travelers at his expense.

His only regret in life was his ignorance of Torah. His father-in-law tried to soothe him, assuring him that the charity he provided to Torah scholars was counted to him as if he himself had studied, but to no avail.

**Notices a Certain Guest Suffering from Body Sores**

One day in his guest house he noticed a certain visitor who was suffering from sores all over his body. How did this happen to you? he inquired. I was proficient in learning Torah, the man replied, but the study of the commentaries was very hard for me. I decided to torment my body in order that G-d would help to open my mind to my learning. With G-d's help, I succeeded and reached my goal. With His help these sores will also heal.

The young man had never heard of such practices, but he was overjoyed to learn that he still had a chance. And so every day he would go into the woods, sit in a spot where there were biting gnats and flies, and there he would expose his skin to the creatures until it bled and itched unbearably.

One day, as he sat on a tree stump with flies buzzing all about him, a stranger approached and asked, Why are you doing this? The young man explained about his great desire to learn Torah. It is totally unnecessary for you to do this. I will make a deal with you. If you will give me all of your worldly possessions, I promise you to teach you Torah.

**Must Discuss the Proposal with His Wife**

Of course, I am willing, but I must discuss it with my wife, for it affects her as well. I will meet you tomorrow, and I will tell you our final decision. The man returned home and related the incident to his wife. This is what you have always wanted. Of course, you should do it without delay, was her reply. But the man was still wary. After all, he had always been a responsible person. He went to his father-in-law and asked his opinion.

What! To sign away all your possessions to an utter stranger in return for some foggy promise that you will learn Torah! Your charity is equivalent to the learning of a great scholar!The young man left in confusion. But his wife told him: It seems to me that you aren't sure of what you want. You always professed the strongest desire to learn Torah, but now when you have the chance, you balk!

**None Other than the Baal Shem Tov**

The following day the stranger, who was none other than the Baal Shem Tov, came to the same spot in the forest, and the two men proceeded together to the young man's home. When they entered a tantalizing aroma greeted them, and they were astounded to see the table

set for a lavish banquet.

What is this? asked the Baal Shem Tov.

The wife explained, This is the last time we will be able to fulfill the holy mitzva of entertaining guests, and I wanted to perform the mitzva as beautifully as possible. In addition, we have reason to celebrate, for now my husband will be able to achieve his life's ambition. But I had one other consideration: There are many ways in which G-d is

able to take away a person's fortune. We have the privilege of giving away all in order to 'buy' Torah learning. This is also a great cause for celebration.

After they had eaten, the Baal Shem Tov asked the young man, What have you decided? The young man seemed unsure but a look in the direction of his wife, gave the young man the courage to make the decision. He took a quill and signed all of his worldly goods over to the Baal Shem Tov.

In accordance with their agreement, the couple was permitted use of the house and its garden as well as flour to bake bread. And in return, the would-be scholar traveled with the Baal Shem Tov to a place of Torah, where his eyes were illuminated.

True to his promise, the young man eventually became a great scholar and a tzadik. Years later, the Baal Shem Tov was heard to say about the young man's wife who sacrificed everything for Torah, that which was uttered about Rabbi Akiva's wife, Rachel, Everything he has achieved belongs to her.

**Reprinted from L’Chaim Weekly**

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on lchaimweekly.org (#972), with permission.]

Connection: Weekly Reading - See the Midrashim about the opposite influences of the wives of Korach and On ben Pelet. (Also, we missed having a Besht story for Shavuos, as is traditional.)

Biographic note: Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (18 Elul 1698-6 Sivan 1760), the Baal Shem Tov [master of the Good Name], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of Tzava'at Harivash, published by Kehos.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a projectof Ascent of Safed* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1276002813)

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**The Danger of**

**Self-Justification**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*There is much to you, sons of Levi*.” (Bemidbar 16:7)

The rebellion of Korah against Moshe stands out as the most incredible episode in the Torah. I use this description because there is an aspect of this story that almost defies our logic. In this story the rebels accuse Moshe of inventing on his own the fact that his brother Aharon is the Kohen Gadol.

Moshe insisted that this decision was not his own but Hashem’s. So Moshe proposed a test. “Take for yourselves fire-pans – Korah and his entire assembly – and put fire in them and place incense upon them before Hashem tomorrow. Then the man whom Hashem will choose, he is the holy one. There is much to you, sons of Levi.”

**A Great Serious Matter**

Rashi explains what Moshe meant when he said, “There is much to you.” He meant, I have told you a great serious matter. Moshe could have chosen a test like Kayin and Hebel, where Hashem would accept one offering and reject the others. In such a scenario the rebels wouldn’t have much to lose. If they lost they would only lose their claim to greatness.

But Moshe didn’t choose this test; he went for broke. He said that only the one that Hashem chooses would survive. They stood to lose their lives. Rashi continues, “Were they fools? For Moshe warned them in this manner, yet they still undertook to offer the incense. But they sinned against their souls. They were responsible for their own deaths because of their sin.”

**An Almost Frightening Lesson**

Rabbi Tzvi Feldman (of the Mirrer Yeshivah in America) learns from this an almost frightening lesson. A person can be so convinced he is right that his arguments can even convince Hashem! Korah and his men were so sure they were right that they came to the conclusion that there is no danger to take this challenge from Moshe. That even Hashem, Who normally prohibits the offering of the ketoret (incense offering) with the death penalty, would agree with them and they would survive. But, in actuality they all died and bottom line they are considered as if they took their own lives. Their sin was that they allowed the justification of their arguments to get the best of them, because of their great desire to get closer to Hashem, to such an extent that they were convinced that they were righteous and were ready to prove it by offering the ketoret.

This character trait, that a man justifies himself, is embedded in every man, due to his flawed character, his sins and shortcomings. It takes a lot of learning of musar (discipline) to free oneself from this entrapment of self-justification. This is why the episode of Korah is the most incredible, because it contains this lesson.

**Avoiding the Dangers**

**Of “New Religions”**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"Speak to the nation saying: Get yourselves up from about the Mishkan of Korah." (Bemidbar 16:24)

The episode of the rebellion of Korah and his men is shocking, but at the same time full of lessons for our own day and age. Korah rebelled against Moshe and Aharon which led to a most dramatic end. The ground opened up and swallowed all of them alive! Why the drama? Why the harsh end? The answer could be found in the pasuk quoted above.

Hashem tells Moshe to tell the people to separate from the "mishkan" of Korah. Of course, the word mishkan can be interpreted to mean the dwelling place of Korah. However, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter says that it has a very profound implication which perhaps tells the whole story.

**A New Movement and Religion**

A mishkan is a temple. The ideas that Korah had were not just something he spoke about in the privacy of his home. He spoke about the necessity to rebel and negate the authority of Moshe to everyone. His tent became the "Temple of Korah," the source of a new movement, and a new religion.

This aspect of Korah's ideas was most dangerous and struck at the heart of our people and their devotion to Hashem. This had to end in a way that all would agree that Hashem Himself intervened to establish the truth of the mission of Moshe.

Today we are not likely to see the ground open up. However, there are movements just as dangerous and destructive to our people as the "Temple of Korah." The temples of Reform and Conservative Judaism are the modern day Temples of Korah. The greatest rabbis of this and the previous generation forbid us to conduct any interaction with their rabbis, which gives a clear message that what they are offering is not Judaism. May Hashem shine a great light of wisdom on all of our people to return to the true Torah way of life, Amen.

[**Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, Zt”l**](http://matzav.com/rav-mordechai-eliyahu-ztl)

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt”l, former Sefardic Chief Rabbi of Israel this past Monday, June 7th. Rav Eliyahu had been in critical condition at Shaarei Tzedek Medical Center in Yerushalayim where he had been hospitalized for nearly a year and where he was niftar this afternoon. He was 81.

Rav Eliyahu served as Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1983 to 1993 and was one of the leaders of the religious Zionist community in Eretz Yisroel.

Rav Eliyahu was born in 1929 in the Old City of Yerushalayim to his parents, Rav Salman and Mazal Eliyahu. His mother was a granddaughter of the famed Ben Ish Chai and a sister of Rav Yehudah Tzadka. His father, a rov and mekubal who had immigrated to Eretz Yisroel from Baghdad, was niftar when Rav Eliyahu was just a child.

**Learned From Notable Gedolei Torah**

Rav Eliyahu proceeded to learn under a number of notable gedolei Torah, including the Chazon Ish, the Baba Sali, and Rav Ezra Atia, rosh yeshiva of  Yeshivat Porat Yosef, and was recognized for his diligence and deep understanding of Torah.

In 1960, Rav Eliyahu became the youngest person ever elected as a dayan in Israel. He served as the Chief Rabbi of Beer Sheva for four years, and was then elected to the Rabbanut Hareishit (Supreme Rabbinical Court) in Yerushalayim, a position he continued to hold during his term as Chief Rabbi of Israel.

Rav Eliyahu worked throughout his life for the preservation of the Iraqi mesorah of his father and published a siddur, Kol Eliyahu, with his minhagim.

**Reaching Out to Secular Jews**

During Rav Eliyahu’s term as Chief Rabbi, one of his focuses was on attempting to reach out to secular Israeli Jews, giving them a better understanding of Jewish customs and their importance. He traveled extensively throughout Israel and the world, emphasizing the importance of Jewish education, shemiras Shabbos, taharas hamishpacha and fighting assimilation. Rav Eliyahu used to go to secular environments in order to connect with other Jews, occasionally lecturing in secular moshavim and kibbutzim.

Rav Eliyahu headed Keren Moreshet, a network of Torah institutions across the country. He also headed the Darchei Horaah L’Rabbonim, training avreichim for rabbonum and dayanus.

Thousands around the globe had been davening for Rav Eliyahu’s recovery over the past year as he battled continued illness.

Rav Eliyahu is survived by four children, including Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, Chief Rabbi of Tzefas, and Rav Yosef Eliyahu, rosh kollel of Darchei Horaah L’Rabbonim in Yerushalayim.

The levaya took place at Rav Eliyahu’s bais medrash, Heichal Yaakov, in the Kiryat Moshe section of Yerushalayim, at 10 o’clock tonight. Kevurah will take place on Har Hamenuchos, near the kever of the Chidah, whose remains Rav Eliyahu labored to bring to Eretz Yisroel.

Yehi zichro boruch.

**A Story of Helping an Agunah**

Rabbi Shmuel Zaafrani, the longtime assistant to Rav Eliyahu then told the story of an amazing “rescue” performed by Rav Eliyahu – which the latter attributed to the power of prayer, both his own and that of others. This is the story:

When Rabbi Eliyahu first became a dayan in Be’er Sheva, in 1957, his was the only rabbinical court in the entire south, between Eilat and Be’er Sheva. On his first day on the job, he saw a woman standing outside, praying from a small Book of Psalms. She remained outside all day. The next day, the rabbi saw the same thing, and the next day again, and so on.

Finally, he asked the court secretary to ask her to come in. He asked her why she stood outside and prayed all day, and she related in all innocence: ‘I came on Aliyah [immigration to Israel] from Morocco by myself, and they sent me to Be’er Sheva. I asked where the closest rabbinical court was, I was told it was here, and so here I am.’

**Tragedy at the End of Sheva Brochot**

He asked her, “What are you praying for?” and the woman said, “My husband in Morocco was a taxi driver, and a week after we were married, at the end of the Sheva Brachot [the seven days of wedding festivities], he crashed - and his body was never found...

After a while, I went to the rabbis to be declared a widow so that I could remarry, but they said that without a body, they could not be certain that he was dead – and so I remained a ‘chained woman’ [aguna, unable to marry]. But when I came to Israel, I had faith that what the rabbinical courts in Morocco could not accomplish [in permitting me to remarry], the courts in Israel would be able to do.”

**Why Didn’t You Come to the Dayanim?**

Rabbi Eliyahu asked, “So why did you remain outside the court? Why didn’t you come in to the dayanim?”

The woman said, “Who are you? I pray to G-d, not to you!”

Rabbi Eliyahu immediately took up her case. He took all her papers and went to the Baba Sali, who told him of his brother, the Baba Haki, a leading rabbi in the Israeli city of Ramle who was familiar with all those engaged in Jewish burials in Morocco. Rabbi Eliyahu traveled to Ramle, where the Baba Haki told him, “There were only two Jewish kavranim [people engaged in burials] in Morocco, and both have since come to Israel. One lives in Dimona and one lives in Kiryat Ata [near Haifa].”

Rabbi Eliyahu said, “I live in the south, so I might as well try Dimona.” He went to the exact address supplied to him by the Baba Haki – only to find that the man’s family was sitting shiva for him; he had died just a few days earlier.

**The Solution is Discovered**

Quite disappointed, Rabbi Eliyahu went in anyway, shared some words of Torah and solace with the mourning family and friends, and explained why he was there. Immediately, a man jumped up and said, “I am the other kavran, and I know that story! I was the one who buried the taxi driver!”

Rabbi Eliyahu asked him to accompany come him to other rabbis, who questioned him and determined that his testimony was acceptable. Rabbi Eliyahu convened the rabbinical court, and the woman was declared “unchained” and permitted to remarry.

“This is the power of prayer,” Rabbi Eliyahu later said, “both hers and mine.”

*May the memory of a Tzaddik be for a blessing*

*Reprinted from the news email of Arutz Sheva*

**The Golden Column**

**Rabbi Yaakov Hagiz, Zs"l**

Around four hundred years ago, the radiant light of the sacred Rabbi Yaakov Hagiz zs"l, author of "Halachot Ketanot," shone in Yerushalayim. Later his light shone in Istanbul, and it is there where he is buried.

It was not enough for him to be a Talmudic genius, the leading authority of halachah for his generation, the leader of a yeshivah that produced famous students such as Maharam Ben Haviv zs"l and other Torah luminaries, but he did even more.

He paid personal attention to the students in his yeshivah, determining each one's curriculum based on his own capabilities. He tested them and awarded them valuable prizes for their success. From some students he demanded that they memorize the entire Talmud, others he had study the halachot of Rav Alfas, others he tested on the Shulhan Aruch, whereas some were tested on the works of the Rambam.

His father-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Galanti zs"l, testified to his unique ability to determine the students' abilities (Mishnat Hachamim, 370). He describes there how many students came before Rabbi Yaakov for testing who had practically the entire Talmud committed to memory, as if they were reading the shema, as well as many sections of the Shulhan Aruch. They had expertise in all the details of these halachot, something that could not be believed if it weren't seen. He was able to discern the particular talents of each student, to assess his memory and decide how far he can grow. Some were cut out for mishnah, but not Gemara, others for Gemara but not for details of halachah. He would assign each student as he saw fit, and was very successful in implementing this approach. Moreover, he solicited funds from the wealthy members of the community to support the poor students. He would provide their needs every week, and once a year he would purchase them an entire new set of clothing.

It is indeed appropriate to describe him by citing the words of the Yerushalmi (Sotah 7:4): "If one studied, taught, observed and performed, and he had the ability to support, and he supported Torah, about him the pasuk says, 'Blessed is the one who lifts the words of this Torah – to perform them'!"

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Drop the Suggestion!**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

In his new book about his grandfather, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, Rabbi Asher Bergman tells the story of a question which was put before this great Torah leader by one of his devoted followers:

"I have received a suggestion of a *shidduch* for my daughter," he said. "My investigations have convinced me that he is a serious, G-d fearing young man of good character. My only concern is that he has made three conditions for considering the match, all of them demanding a rather extreme level of religious observance which may be too much for my daughter."

"Drop the suggestion!" was the categorical response of the sage who went on to thus explain his objection:

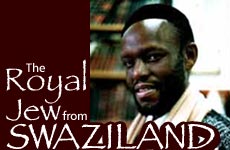
"The conditions the young man made for a higher standard of religious life are quite praiseworthy. But if you are looking for an intelligent yeshiva student for your daughter, this one is not very smart at all. The things he would like to see in his marriage can only be achieved through considerate discussion with his soul-mate. Marriage is not a business transaction which requires making such conditions!"

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Yerushalayim – Ohr.edu*

**An Accidental Encounter with Hebrew Alters the Destiny**

**Of an African Prince.**

**By Yisrael Rutman**



*The story of every convert to Judaism is a gripping tale of spiritual discovery. In the case of Natan Gamedze, that journey began 40 years ago in Swaziland, where he was born into a royal family.*

Gamedze casts an imposing royal figure, but it is his intellectual capacity that makes the biggest impression. Graduated with honors from Oxford, he received a master's in translation from South Africa's Wits University, and served as translator in the Supreme Court of South Africa.

**A Gift for Languages**

Gamedze's gift for language -- he is fluent in 13 languages -- played a central role in his discovery of Judaism. After many years of study, Gamedze is now a rabbi and teaches Jewish studies in the northern Israeli city of Tzfat where he lives with his wife and son .

Aish.com: Let's begin by verifying facts. Is it true about your being an African prince?

Gamedze: I am indeed. I grew up in Swaziland until the age of 8. It's a small, land-locked kingdom that borders on South Africa and Mozambique -- about the size of Israel, with just over a million people.

**Grandson of a Swazi King**

Aish.com: Were you in line for the throne yourself?

Gamedze: My grandfather was king. But the British, who had colonized southern Africa, created the states of Swaziland, Bosutoland and Bechuanaland. They drew artificial borders, very often failing to take into consideration the ethnic distribution. So in many places, different ethnic groups were lumped together in the same state. That is what happened to us. And the British chose to recognize a rival royal family as the ruling group.

In order to win our cooperation, they made certain concessions to our family -- such as granting ministerial posts -- and we have a semi-autonomous region within Swaziland. My father served as minister of education and ambassador to the EEC countries. Today, it's more like a paramount chief than a king, but they do wield power.

Aish.com: Which languages do you speak?

Gamedze: I speak 13 languages: French, German, Italian, English, Hebrew, Afrikaans, Zulu, and other African languages. Everyone in my family speaks at least two European languages; my mom speaks about 7 or 8.

Aish.com: It is unusual, to say the least, for someone of your background to find his way to Judaism.

**What’s the Reason for Life?**

Gamedze: I was never interested in religion, per se. I was interested in what was going on in the world. What is our reason for being here? Okay, so you get up in the morning, you eat, go to work, have a shower, watch TV, go to bed, get up and start all over again... Hey, I did that yesterday!

I felt that life was like being on a conveyer belt, and eventually you get off. So what was the point?

I felt that life was like being on a conveyer belt, and eventually you get off. So what was the point? I couldn't accept that.

Aish.com: An existential question.

Gamedze: Yes. In other words, I wasn't searching for a way to give my life meaning. Rather, I was trying to find out what was going on, like a detective. I felt there's something going on in this world, something behind the scenes. And I wanted to know what it is.

**Attracted by the Hebrew Alphabet**

Aish.com: If you weren't looking for religion, how did you find it?

Gamedze: I was sitting in a boring Italian literature class one day. I think we were studying D'Annuncio. And as people do when they are bored, they look around, and I noticed some guy was writing backwards in funny letters. So after class I asked him what he was doing. He said he was doing his Hebrew homework. I thought: That's really interesting. Imagine if I could write like that! And then I forgot about it. But later on, I needed a credit to complete my degree. I wanted to take Russian, but I had a scheduling conflict. Then I remembered about Hebrew. It fit my schedule, and so I began studying it.

Aish.com: So what was the moment of awakening?

Gamedze: The first text we got was the biblical passage of the Binding of Isaac. Coming as I did from a moderately Christian home, I was familiar with the text, but I was surprised at how Hebrew appeared to convey much more than could be conveyed in any other language. I couldn't figure it out.

But what was so compelling was that I thought it was telling me something about myself. It was like opening an inner dimension that perhaps many people don't even know exists. It wasn't like an archeologist trying to find out about, say, ancient Incans, an interest which has really nothing to do with him. Here, I felt it was telling me something about myself. I thought it had to do with the language itself. I didn't know at the time it was the religious dimension.

Aish.com: And from there?

**Discovering the Beauty of Judaism**

Gamedze: I began to discover the beauty of Judaism. I got interested in Maimonides' Mishneh Torah. I would carry it around and read it and tell my Jewish friends about it, who later became observant. It was a bit strange that the very person who was bringing them closer to Judaism wasn't Jewish.

I figured the best thing would be to get away from all this Jewish business. So I went to Rome.

But it was frustrating. I couldn't understand why I had such a thirst and love for Judaism, and not be Jewish. And yet there were Jewish people who couldn't care less, it appeared. Not only that, but when they did decide to get interested, it was easy for them. The opportunity was right there. I asked myself: Why am I out of the picture? I couldn't understand why G-d would play such a trick on me.

At that point, I figured the best thing would be to get away from all this Jewish business. So I went to Rome to study. I visited St. Peter's and saw the artwork. I'm a great fan of Italian literature and art. But while in Rome all I could think about was the suffering of Jews at the hands of Christians. So it wasn't so enjoyable...

Aish.com: Sort of a ruined Roman vacation…

**Reflecting on the “Shema Yisrael”**

Gamedze: Yes. I had gone to Rome to get away from the whole thing -- Rome is probably the “least Jewish” place in the world. And there I was in my hotel room, and thinking about -- what else? -- the Jews. I particularly thought about how a Jew says “Shema Yisrael” before giving up his life for the faith.

At this stage, I had not yet taken on any Jewish observance. But I decided to say “Shema Yisrael” there in my hotel room by St. Peter's. When I did so, I felt an enormous surge of energy. As I was saying it, I felt that all those people who had given up their lives for Judaism were saying it with me. I felt as if I were a channel through which they were saying Shema. To this day, I can't explain what happened there. It was a frightening and very powerful experience.

I remember once, I went down to have breakfast. I sat down to eat, and I couldn't eat. And I was hungry, mind you. What's going on? Now by that time I had attended some lectures on Judaism while I had been I in Israel, and so I remembered that there was one day in the year, Yom Kippur, when Jews don't eat. So I went to check the calendar, and of course, that day was Yom Kippur! I was shocked.

I had told my Jewish friends that the only time I'd consider converting to Judaism is if I couldn't sleep at night. Well, it had come to that. I decided to convert.

Aish.com: Was that decision the hard part or the easy part?

Gamedze: I knew the road was going to be extremely difficult. Wherever I'd go in the Jewish community I'd stick out like a sore thumb, the only black guy in the room. I'm not the kind of person who likes to be in the limelight, and from now on every time I walk into a synagogue it's going to be, "Is he really an African prince?" How terrible. But I had a talk with G-d, and I said to Him, "Well, if that's what You want -- that's it."

**Sticking Out Like a Sore Thumb**

Wherever I'd go in the Jewish community I'd stick out like a sore thumb, the only black guy in the room.

Sometimes a person has ups and downs in life, and he's not sure he's doing the right thing. And he often doesn't do the right thing. So at least this one thing, I was confident I'd got it right. It's a big mainstay.

Aish.com: Did you ever figure out why G-d played this "trick" on you -- why your journey would have to be so difficult?

Gamedze: I only discovered the answer to that a few months ago. I was teaching a class on the biblical Jethro, trying to convey what kind of special person he was. And I remember what I had heard many years ago from Rabbi Moshe Carlebach, who said that the first time the phrase Baruch Hashem (“Blessed is G-d”) appears in the Bible is when Jethro -- a convert -- praises G-d for saving the Jews from the Egyptians.

**Bring Additional Glory to G-d**

The whole idea of a convert is that of Baruch Hashem, of bringing additional glory to G-d. That's why Jethro's Hebrew name is derived from the word yeter, which means “adding on.” Because, as someone coming from outside the Jewish people, who is Jewish by choice, he gives additional glory to G-d. Not that G-d lacks anything, but in our eyes, we see it more.

As I was saying this in class, I heard a voice in my head saying, Nu? Now you know why you have to go through all this -- for the additional glory. My story is not about how comfortable it is for me. It's about glorifying G-d. That's why I have to be so different, because only the outsider, whose Jewishness comes with great difficulty, can make this unique contribution. The big question that had been baffling and hurting me for so many years was answered.

Aish.com: But it's still hard?

Gamedze: It is, but I don't view it the same way now. It's G-d's world, after all, and we are His creatures. With all the fancy scenery and background, it's almost like a movie. G-d says to Himself: "How do you get people interested in Judaism?" So he arranges for an African prince to come around, to make people take notice and think about things. Yes, it's hard for me. But it's all about what G-d wants, not what I want.

Reprinted from this week’s “Kiruv Weekly,” an email publication of Kiruv.com, a Project Inspire Initiative.

north america

**Community Pledges to Rebuild After Fire Claims Queens Synagogue**

**By Dovid Margolin**

Confronted with a devastating fire that ruined a little girl’s birthday party and left much of her family’s home and Jewish center unusable, congregants of Chabad-Lubavitch of Long Island City in New York have turned the experience into a positive one.

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| --- |
| Jewish residents watch firefighters douse a blaze that claimed their Long Island City, N.Y., home and synagogue. |
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The ordeal began on Friday, June 4 when Rabbi Zev and Rivka Wineberg, directors of the storefront home-based synagogue, thought they smelled smoke while preparing for their daughter’s fifth birthday party. When the odor got stronger, they checked the oven and found nothing. Then, someone outside yelled that smoke was coming from a next-door building.

“We started evacuating the house, but I didn’t think that the fire was really a big deal,” explained Zev Wineberg. “It was only after I ran in to grab the Torah scroll that I realized that this fire wasn’t so simple, and there were actual flames going on.”

Ultimately, the electrical fire – which began within a wall shared by the Chabad House and the neighboring building – damaged much of the Winebergs’ home and two nearby businesses. No one was hurt in the blaze.

**Volunteers Showed Up to Help**

Within hours of the fire, volunteers from throughout the community showed up to load prayer books, clothes and toys into bags and out of the boarded-up building.

“It’s amazing,” said Wineberg. “People have really come through. Someone volunteered their apartment for the synagogue, another person is storing bags of our things in their basement, and a friend is letting us stay in their condo for awhile. This has really rallied the community.”

Dan Allen, who has been attending services at the center for two years, explained that although the fire came as much of a shock, the disaster had a bright side.

“We’ve been needing a new building for quite a while now,” said Allen, “and now we have no choice.”

**Until Relocation is Complete – “A Traveling Shul”**

Plans for a new, permanent home for the center have quickly been drawn up as a result of the fire, said Ron Mandel, who along with his wife Mia will be hosting Shabbat services at their apartment this week. Until the relocation is complete, “it’ll be a travelling shul.”

Wineberg said that the center was even expecting a larger crowd for services. Allen, for one, said that he wouldn’t miss it.

“We’re definitely going to rise from the ashes,” he said.

*Reprinted from the current Chabad.org website*

**The Jewish Actor**

Moishe, a Jewish actor, is so down and out he's ready to take any acting gig that he can find. Finally he gets a lead, a classified ad that says:

"Actor needed to play an ape."

"I could do that," says Moishe. To his surprise, the employer turns out to be the Central Park Zoo.

Owing to mismanagement, the zoo has spent so much money renovating the grounds and improving the habitat, that they can no longer afford to import the ape they needed to replace their recently deceased one.

So until they can, they'll put an actor in an ape suit.

Out of desperation, Moishe takes the offer.

At first, his conscience keeps nagging him, that he is being dishonest by fooling the zoo-goers. And Moishe feels undignified in the ape-suit, stared at by crowds who watch his every move.

But after a few days on the job, he begins to enjoy all the attention, and starts to put on a show for the zoo-goers: hanging upside-down from the branches by his legs, swinging about on the vines, climbing up the cage walls, and roaring with all his might whilst beating his chest.

Soon, he's drawing a sizable crowd.

One day, when Moishe is swinging on the vines to show off to a group of school kids, his hand slips, and he goes flying over the fence into the neighboring cage, the lion's den.

Terrified, Moishe backs up as far from the approaching lion as he can, covers his eyes with his paws, and prays at the top of his lungs, "Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!"

The lion opens its powerful jaws and roars the response, "Baruch Shem K'vod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed!"

From a nearby cage, a panda yells, "Be quiet, you fools. You'll get us all fired!!!"

*Reprinted from an email currently circulating in cyberspace;*

**Demonstrate Your Concern for Kashrus By Asking to Speak to the Mashgiach**

I work as a Rav Hamachshir for a local kashrus organization. I would like to offer my opinion, and ask for the public's assistance regarding an issue that I believe is very important.

“I have been involved in the kashrus industry for more than 13 years. I have worked many "hotel jobs" in which kosher caterers come into treif hotels and kasher the

kitchens, utensils, etc., in order to make a kosher wedding or dinner. Baruch Hashem, we have successfully and consistently provided a level of kashrus which B'nei Torah can comfortably rely on. Many of us have enjoyed the cuisine at these simchas.

**A Disturbing Absence of Inquiries**

“The issue which I would like to address is as follows. I find it disturbing to note the complete absence of inquiries received by Mashgichim regarding the kashrus protocols in place at these events. There really is so much to ask! Several fair and logical questions to be asked of a Mashgiach may include:

How many Mashgichim are working at this event?

What are the standards employed for fruit and vegetable checking at this event? Are you confident that all of the hotel's treif equipment (the ones not being kashered for use) is locked away and will not be used accidentally?

How are you handling this process?

**Is the Mashgiach Willing to Eat the Food?**

Will you personally be partaking of the food this evening? If not, ask for an explanation. Aside from obvious taste differences, the Mashgiach should be comfortable with the kashrus standards in use at his own event that he would be willing to taste everything on the menu!

“Always remember, the Mashgichim are there for your benefit. We want to hear from you, so please ask away! (In New York you may want to ask how the water-filtering is being handled.) And many other event-specific questions would very much be expected. Unfortunately, very seldom are we asked any of these (or other) questions by guests.

“You may ask why it is important that people ask these questions. The truth is, that both on a catering level (as discussed) and even on a restaurant level, the kashrus industry as a whole is viewed with much skepticism. Hotel and establishment owners don't always understand the need for kashrus in general, and more specifically they don't see the need to "bother" with many kashrus items.

**Guest/Customer Feedback is Essential**

The only way for them to realize the demand is from guest/customer feedback. If even 10% of guests would request to speak with a Mashgiach at a wedding (that would be 25-50 people on average) they would thereby show the caterer and the kitchen staff that kashrus is really important to their businesses.

All of us in the kashrus industry are constantly telling our catering companies (and hotel staff) that we are "only doing what the public demands". But they never actually see the public demanding it! Imagine the impact we can make if 50 people at a single wedding asked kashrus-related questions. The caterers would have a newfound, and much deeper respect for the Mashgichim, the kashrus organizations, and the kosher concept as a whole. The same thought holds true for restaurants.

`“So go ahead and ask the Mashgiach as many questions as you'd like! That's why we are here! Any reputable and reliable kashrus organization would be happy to address your questions and concerns.”

*Reprinted from the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin of 28 Sivan 5770, June 10, 2010*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**An Interview with**

**Yosef Robinson**

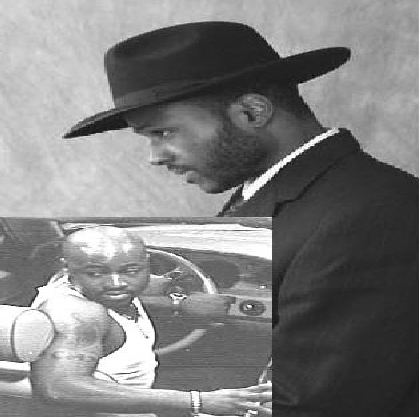
The Mishna teaches us:  "Jealously, desires and honor-seeking remove a man from this world."  (Avos 4:28) The Torah this week tells us about Korach, an individual whose honor seeking removed him from the world.

Rashi explains this week that Korach was upset that Moshe appointed Korach's younger cousin Elitzafan ben Uziel as the leader of the family of Kehas, instead of Korach. The commentary Orchos Tzaddikim explains that Korach wanted for himself honor and greatness which had not been conferred upon him by Hashem.(P.33, The Gate of Pride, Edit., Reb G. Zaloshinsky, Transl., Reb S. Silverstein)

When Korach failed to receive the honor he felt he deserved, Korach attempted to stage a revolt against Moshe. We see how Korach's search for honor eventually caused his own death and the death of others who supported him.  The following true story and interview demonstrates how one person chose a life of meaning instead of seeking honor.

Yoseph Robinson, who was born in Jamaica, came to Brooklyn when he was twelve, and dropped out of school shortly thereafter. As a teenager, he moved to Philadelphia and became involved in a life of illicit street activities. In his early twenties and after a close brush with death, during which he was targeted by a rival Jamaican gang, Yoseph relocated to Los Angeles and set his sights on the Hollywood music scene.

He became a Hip-Hop promoter and producer, and signed a lucrative album contract with Universal/Bungalow Records. At the height of his musical success and while indulging in all the material abundance Hollywood had to offer, Yoseph chanced upon a Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch edition of the Chumash.



*Yoseph Robinson then (as a Jamaican rapper) and now (as an Orthodox Jew)*

Yoseph’s life was transformed. He decided to reject the emptiness and egotism of the Hollywood lifestyle and embrace Yiddishkeit. Yoseph converted to Judaism and now lives in Brooklyn as an Orthodox Jew. The following are excerpts from a recent interview with Yoseph.

Question: What was your first experience with Judaism?

Robinson: Interestingly, my first “experience” with Judaism or with Jewish people did not resonate with me at all. When my parents came to the United States my mother worked for a lovely Jewish family called the Schwimmers. My mother even kept a picture of the Schwimmer family on the mantelpiece in our home. I saw that picture almost every day of my childhood. In fact, my siblings and I were able to come to the U.S. only because the Schwimmers generously agreed to sponsor my family. The funny thing is, though, the Schwimmers being “Jewish” was simply descriptive, like saying the Schwimmers were Asian, or Puerto Rican. Jewishness or Judaism had no intrinsic or latent meaning for me.

**A Delivery boy for a Kosher Grocery Store**

My second contact with Judaism occurred when I was thirteen years old, a few months after I arrived in the U.S. I worked as a delivery boy for a kosher grocery store in Brooklyn. Since growing up in Jamaica was a unique cultural experience untainted with racial or religious prejudice, I had formed no previous conceptions about Jews. As a result, the kosher grocery experience left no impression on me one way or the other.

It was only when I randomly walked into a bookstore asking for a bible and received a [Hirsch English edition of the Chumash](http://www.judaicaplus.com/index.cfm/product/5655/hirsch-chumash-new-edition-bamidbar.cfm) instead that I began my fundamental connection to Yiddishkeit.

Question:  Who performed your conversion, and what were the requirements? Robinson: The Los Angeles beis din, under the leadership of Rabbi Tzvi Block and Rabbi Aharon Tendler, converted me. My geirus (conversion) studies program took about two and a half years to complete, and centered on the weekly parshah, the halachos of Shabbos and kashrus, and the taryag (613) mitzvos.

**How Did Your Family and Friends React?**

Question: How did friends and family members react?

Robinson: When I decided to convert, my friends thought I went off the deep end, and my family tended to agree with them. After realizing that my decision was a serious, lifelong commitment, however, I did garner the respect of those closest to me.

Question: What is your current study schedule like?

Robinson: I have a chavrusah with whom I learn Mishnah Berurah, I learn parshah and mussar almost daily, and I have begun venturing into the mighty sea of Talmud.

Question: How would you characterize your treatment and degree of acceptance by the frum community in Brooklyn?

Robinson: For the most part, I must say, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive. Many people have opened their homes and their hearts to me, and have treated me like members of their own family. These new lifelong friends are a true credit to Yiddishkeit, and beautifully fulfill the mitzvah of v’ahavtem es ha’ger. (you shall love the convert) As in every community, however, there are biases that persist. I do get stares and occasionally hear some thoughtless comments, but I choose to focus on the positive.

Question: Are you in touch with other black geirim (converts)?

Robinson: Interestingly, as time goes on, I have been privileged to meet many fascinating geirim (converts) of both genders and of many nationalities and ethnicities.

Question: Has their experience with Orthodox Judaism been similar to your own?

Robinson: By and large, their experience has been heartwarming and enriching. But they do voice some concerns of bias and unequal treatment. I certainly feel that some change or improvement needs to be made in this arena.

**What Kind of Change and How Will it Occur?**

Question: What kind of change are you referring to, and how do you expect this change to occur?

Robinson: I feel that changes are necessary to allow a Yid such as myself, who happens to be dark-skinned, to feel secure and equally represented under the banner of Klal Yisrael. This kind of change can only come about when a community joins the effort. Without meaning to sound didactic, I feel that social change or justice will not come about through legislative bodies. It will come from ordinary people like you and me. It all starts with honest and open dialogue.

Question: What is your message to potential geirim (converts) of any color or background?

Robinson: My message to geirim (converts) is that if one is seeking spirituality, Judaism, practiced correctly, is the ideal vehicle for achieving that aim. I personally find it meaningful and fulfilling but, once you come aboard, keep in mind that while the Torah is flawless, people are not.

**Hopes book will Entertain, Enlighten and Inspire Readers**

Question: What do you hope to accomplish with the publication of your book?

Robinson: I hope my book will appeal to people on multiple levels. In the U.S. there exists a fascination and mystique that surrounds all things Jamaican. In addition, my memoir provides an insider’s look into the dark side of drug running, which will ignite the imagination of a widespread American demographic. My first-hand accounts of the Hollywood music scene and celebrity lifestyles will leave readers thirsting for more tantalizing details.

Finally, my decision to convert to Judaism leaves people simultaneously baffled and intrigued. I have infused my spiritual journey with a humor, intelligence, and wit that will also capture the curiosity of the sophisticated, high-end reader. In short, I hope to entertain, enlighten – and inspire as well.

Question: What’s next for you while you’re working to get your book published? Robinson: Well, hopefully I’ll be able to talk with the President "brother to brother," asking him to let my people be. In all seriousness, though, I’m just striving to grow spiritually and, im Yirtzeh Hashem, hope to be discussing the success of the book with you in the near future!

We can be inspired by Yoseph's example to seek knowledge and personal growth instead of fame and fortune.  Good Shabbos Everyone

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