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**My Shiva Visit With the Ferencz Sisters in Jersey City**

**By** [**Elissa Felder**](https://www.aish.com/authors/403779056.html)



Moshe Hersh Deutsch, Hy”d and Mrs. Leah Mindel Ferencz, Hy”d – the two Kadoshim (martyrs) of the attack on the JC Kosher Supermarket in Jersey City, NJ.

 A few hours of driving and many states later, my husband and I arrived at a small town-house in [Jersey City](https://www.aish.com/jw/s/Nu-Jersey-City.html). The sign on the open door directed us to the top floor. A long flight of stairs led to the home of the Ferencz family who were mourning their beloved Mindy. Mindy Ferencz was one of victims of the antisemitic attack last week in their grocery shop.

 We walked in intending to pay a short [shiva](https://www.aish.com/jl/l/dam/48956706.html) visit. We would just sit in the back, pay our respects and leave quietly.

**Found a Group of Women**

**Gathered on One Side of the Room**

 We entered the room and found a group of women gathered on one side and the men gathered on the other. My husband and I split up to join our respective groups. I am not Hassidic, so I was dressed very differently from everyone else and obviously stood out.

 A friendly Hassidic woman asked me who I was and I uttered, "I am a member of *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people)." I am a member of the Jewish family and I am here because the tragedy of the Ferencz family touches all of us. We are all the Ferencz family; we may dress differently and relate to our Jewishness differently but we are all one people, one family.

 As I was escorted in I saw eight sisters lined up on low chairs looking exhausted and grief-stricken. I sat in the back thinking I would leave after a few minutes. I wanted to touch this overwhelming grief, express to them that I cared and show them by my presence, that the whole of our nation mourns along with them. I felt it important to be part of the visceral collective grief of our people and that I could only do so by sitting in the epicenter of it.

**With Broken Hearts We Are**

**Able to Connect in Deeper Ways**

 When our hearts are broken we are able to connect in deeper ways with others.

 Despite being in a state of mourning and shock, many of the sisters started inquiring about me. "Where are you coming from?" I told them that I live in Rhode Island. They could not believe it and were so grateful that my husband and I had come all this way to share in their grief.

 Our presence seemed to give them a sense of how their tragedy was affecting others. They told me about other visits they had received from people coming from all over. Their warm embrace and their interest in me in the midst of their grief was so unexpected and so inspiring. I felt enveloped in their love. I realized that we all want to feel unified, we all crave love and we all want our pain to be acknowledged and shared. When our hearts are broken we are able to connect in deeper ways with others.

 One sister told me, "I am marrying off my daughter tomorrow," and that her Rabbi had told her she could participate fully in the wedding, in the middle of the shiva period. She told me that she would be wearing her ripped clothing (a sign of mourning) under her wedding finery. She would then immediately return to sitting shiva after the celebration.

**G-d Has a Plan…and**

**Everything G-d Does is Good**

 We spoke about the extraordinary strength it will take to be experiencing gut wrenching grief at the same time as joyously celebrating her daughter's wedding. "It's hard but it's what I have to do," she said matter-of-factly. "G-d has a plan, G-d is in charge and everything G-d does is good."

 Another sister chimed in with the mystical teaching that Mindy's soul will visit her niece's wedding tomorrow. Yet another sister added that Mindy's soul is very high up in the heavens because she was killed for being Jewish. We marveled at the tenacity of the human condition and at the resiliency of the Jewish people.

 We continued talking about how kind their sister was – "Just like our mother." They shared with me how Mindy loved to cook, how she generously provided for so many people and was beloved by everyone.

 I stood up, said the traditional refrain of comfort one says when leaving a mourner and turned to leave. As I was exiting I was presented with two trays of food for my husband and me to take with us for our long journey home. I couldn't refuse. As much as I came to be the comforter I was also being comforted and taken care of.

**An Attack on Any One of**

**Us is an Attack on All of Us.**

 In that short visit we weren't strangers any more. I came with a desire to connect with the Ferencz family and their pain. Mindy Ferencz was a mother, a sister, a wife, a daughter, a part of a big extended family and a loving member of the Jewish people. An attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us.

 Stepping into that [shiva](https://www.aish.com/jl/l/dam/48970361.html) home was a little intimidating. I encourage anyone who ever thinks twice about paying a shiva call to do just do it. We expand our hearts when we open ourselves up to sit with others in pain.

 My goal was to help carry their load just a little, to connect to their pain and that of the Jewish people. It gave me a first-hand experience of the love and kindness that our people have for each other. And the opportunity to connect to these wonderful, grateful, caring loving family members.

*Reprinted from the December 16, 2019 website of Aish.com*

**Joseph’s Eternal Lesson**

**To the Jewish Nation**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 In this week's portion, Mikeitz, the Torah describes how Joseph carefully amassed a great quantity of grain during Egypt's seven years of plenty, later sustaining the entire nation during its seven years of famine.

 This grain was stored in a very special way to make sure it did not spoil: "The food of the field, which was round about every city, he laid up within it," the Torah relates.

 Rashi, the great Torah commentator, explains that Joseph took some earth from each place the grain was cultivated and mixed it in together with that grain, preserving it and preventing it from rotting.

**The Deeds of the Forefathers**

**Are a Sign for Their Children**

 "The deeds of the Forefathers are a sign for their children."

 Joseph's actions comprise an eternal lesson for us, his grandchildren, to apply in our lives. For like our illustrious ancestor, every Jew must accumulate "sustenance" in order to satiate the spiritual "hunger" of his surroundings. How? With the very same admixture of earth that Joseph utilized.

 The true sustenance of every Jew is the Torah; it constitutes our very lives. The Torah is called sustenance because, like food, it penetrates one's entire being and becomes an actual part of it. The duty of the Jew is to "accumulate" this vital substance by learning as much Torah as he possibly can.

 To continue the analogy, we must be careful that the Torah knowledge we accumulate does not "spoil" and decay. Our Sages have said that Torah study, if not done in the proper manner, can lead to negative consequences. In order to prevent this, a Jew needs to add some "earth" to his Torah learning.

**“Earth” is Symbolic of humility**

**And Nullification before G-d**

 "Earth" is symbolic of humility and nullification before G-d, as it states, "May my soul be like dust to all." A truly humble person is assured that the Torah he learns will last forever.

 `Furthermore, as we learn from Joseph, this "earth" must be from the very "dust of that place" -- the Jew's humility must come from the Torah learning itself. Not all humility is positive and productive. A Jew must never feel humbled in the face of the outside world, which scoffs at his beliefs and his Torah lifestyle. The Jew must take pride in his Judaism and hold his head high, never "apologizing" to those he fears might be offended by the Torah's principles and teachings.

 Authentic humility, attained when the Jew studies Torah with the realization that he is partaking of G-d's eternal wisdom, is the key to preserving what he has learned. Just as G-d is infinite and eternal, so too is His Torah.

 The greatest scholar's knowledge is but a drop in the vast ocean of G-d's immeasurable and endless wisdom. Pondering this truth will lead the Jew to true humility, yet instill an enduring pride that enables him to effectively spread Torah and Judaism to those who hunger for spiritual sustenance.

*Reprinted from the Issue #345 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Mikeitz 5755/1994)*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parashas Miketz**

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 Yosef’s dramatic ascent to power in Egypt is recorded for us in this week’s parsha. What is noteworthy is that Yosef does not appear to be at all surprised or amazed by the sudden turn of events in his fortunes. A person who lives by dreams is never surprised when the dreams turns into reality.

 Yosef always expected his dreams to come true in this world. So did his father Yaakov. And in truth so did the brothers, and that is why Yosef discomfited them so deeply. Had they felt the dreams of Yosef to be utter nonsense they would not have reacted as strongly when Yosef related what he had dreamt.

 They were threatened not because the dreams were nothing, but, rather, because they were something. Their apparent blindness and the stubbornness they displayed by not recognizing Yosef standing before them, stemmed from their necessity to deny the validity of his dreams. When Yosef will eventually reveal himself to his brothers, they will instinctively believe that he is Yosef, because of the stock they subconsciously placed in his dreams all along.

 Practical people are afraid of dreamers, not because of the dreamer’s ridiculousness, but, rather, because the dreamer may turn out to be right after all. This has been proven time and again in Jewish history.

 The holiday of Chanukah that we are currently celebrating proves that the dreams of the Maccabees overcame the practicalities of the Hellenist Jews, who were willing to survive by becoming more Greek than Jewish. Jews over the ages could have reasonably quit and given up the struggle to survive as Jews countless times. It was always the dreamers that persevered, and they have always been proven to be right.

 The Torah attributes the success of Yosef to the fact that he remembered his dreams. It is one thing to remember dreams of grandeur when one is poor and imprisoned. Those dreams provide hope and provide the necessary resilience to somehow continue. Yosef’s greatness lies in his ability to remember and believe those dreams after he has risen to power. He could easily have ignored his brothers and could have put his past behind him.

 He was now a great success. So why continue to pursue his dreams which, by so doing, ultimately could sorely endanger his position and achievements? Nevertheless, Yosef doggedly pursues the full realization of his dreams.

 Many times in life we are frightened of advancing because we think we might risk what we already have. Judaism preaches caution when formulating the tactics necessary to achieve certain goals, both spiritually and physically. But it never advocates compromising the great Jewish dreams as outlined in our Torah and tradition.

 We are bidden to be prudent about life’s decisions, but the goal of ascending the ladder of Yaakov is never erased from our consciousness. When seeing his brothers before him, Yosef has the choice to leave them and let everything be as it is.

 But he chooses to pursue his dreams to their fateful end. That has become a lesson for all later generations of Jews as well. Only the full realization of Yosef’s dream becomes the catalyst for reuniting all of Israel as a nation.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.co*

**The Wine Bearer**

**And the Baker**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



 Parashat Miketz begins with Pharaoh’s unusual dreams, and his desperate attempt to find out what they meant. After he was dissatisfied with the interpretations given by his advisors, the Sar Ha’mashkim – the wine-bearer who had been in prison with Yosef – tells Pharaoh about Yosef, who had successfully interpreted his and his fellow inmate’s dreams.

 As we read in last week’s Parasha, the Sar Ha’mashkim and the Sar Ha’ofim – the baker – both dreamt dreams on the same night. The Sar Ha’mashkim dreamt that he was serving Pharaoh a cup of wine, and the Sar Ha’ofim dreamt that birds were eating bread from a basket on his head.

 Yosef interpreted these dreams to mean that the Sar Ha’mashkim would soon be released from prison and reinstated, whereas the Sar Ha’ofim would be executed. Sure enough, this is what happened. The Sar Ha’mashkim thus advised Pharaoh to consult with Yosef to find out what his dreams meant.

 The question arises as to why Pharaoh was so impressed by Yosef’s interpretations. Was it not obvious that these dreams foretold the wine-bearer’s reinstatement and the baker’s execution? After all, the wine-bearer dreamt about serving Pharaoh wine, and the baker dreamt about birds eating food from his head, a clear reference to his imminent death. Were Yosef’s correct interpretations really that impressive?

 The Malbim (Rav Meir Lebush Weiser, 1809-1879) offers a fascinating explanation to this entire episode, one which sheds an entirely new light on Yosef’s interpretation of these dreams. The Torah introduces the story by stating that the “Mashkeh” and “Ofeh” – the one who prepared the king’s drinks, and the baker – committed crimes against Pharaoh.

 Throughout the rest of this section, however, the Torah speaks of the Sar Ha’mashkim – the officer in charge of the drinks – and the Sar Ha’ofim – the officer in charge of the baked goods. The Malbim asserts that these terms are not interchangeable, and thus they refer to four different people.

 The Mashkeh and Ofeh were the ones who worked in the kitchen preparing, respectively, Pharaoh’s beverages and food. But understandably, these were not the ones who served the drinks and food to Pharaoh.  It would not be respectful for the chef wearing a soiled apron to come before the king to serve.

 The serving was done by the Sar Ha’mashkim and Sar Ha’ofim, higher-ranking officials. And these officials, the Malbim explains, were the ones who were imprisoned and charged with crimes. They were held responsible for the mistakes that occurred – a fly in Pharaoh’s cup, and a pebble in Pharaoh’s bread.

 The Malbim proceeds to explain that a trial was held, and the Sar Ha’mashkim was found guilty, whereas the Sar Ha’ofim was cleared of charges. After all, the one who brought Pharaoh’s cup bore the responsibility to ensure that nothing fell into it along the way, while the one who served the bread could not be expected to know that there was a pebble inside. These judicial rulings enjoyed broad support among the Egyptian population, and were hailed as sound, rational decisions.

 This is what made Yosef’s interpretation so courageous and impressive. Yosef had the courage to state that the precise opposite would occur – the Sar Ha’mashkim would be reinstated, while the Sar Ha’ofim would be killed. Yosef’s interpretation of the dreams ran against popular sentiment and defied reason.

 In the end, of course, he was correct. We do not know what changed, why Pharaoh reversed the ruling and decided to have the Sar Ha’ofim executed and the Sar Ha’mashkim reinstated, but this is what happened – precisely as Yosef had predicted. And thus, indeed, Yosef’s interpretations impressed Pharaoh who immediately summoned Yosef so he could interpret his dreams, as well.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmond J Safra Synagogue of Brooklyn website.*

**The Shmuz onShabbos Chanukah**

# **The Bais HaMikdash -**

# **Power Source of Spirituality**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**

 The *Bach* commenting on *Tur Shulchan Aruch* explains that the decrees of the *Yivanim* against the Jewish people occurred because the Jewish people became “*lax in their service.*”

 Earlier in history, the *Bais HaMikdash* had been the center of life, the pride of every Jew. Going up to Yerushalayim three times a year was looked at with excitement and great anticipation, and the effect of the service was appreciated by all. However, at the time of the Chanukah events, that appreciation was long gone. While the *Kohanim* still brought the *Korbonos*, the service in the Bais HaMikdash had lost its luster and glory.

 The *Bach* seems to be saying that all that was to befall the Jewish people was because we no longer approached the *Avodah* with the appropriate sense of purpose, and therefore it was taken from us. This, however, becomes difficult to understand when we take into perspective what was actually happening in those days.

 The state of the union

 At the time of Chanukah, there was much wrong with the spiritual state of the Jewish people. Ignorance had become profound, and entire generations were no longer brought up in the ways of Torah. The Greek/Syrian philosophy had taken hold, and many, many Jews considered themselves more Greek than the Greeks. In their homes they spoke the language of *Yavan*. They schooled their children in the ways of *Yavan*, and all that they aspired for was acceptance in Greek society.

 According to the *Megillas Chasmonaim*, the Jews of Yerushalayim asked Antiochus to rename their city Antioch in his honor. They even sent a contingency asking him to erect a gymnasium in Yerushalayim. A gymnasium was not merely a hall for the practice of Greek sports; it was a center of idol worship. It represented a house of Greek culture for the specific function of propagating the Greek ideology and all that it stood for.

 Initially, Antiochus refused. Finally the Jews of Yerushalayim gathered together 360 talents of silver – a king’s ransom – to bribe Antiochus to erect such a building. He agreed, and the Megillas Chasmonaim opens up with the statement: “*They erected a gymnasium in Yerushalayim.”*

 The Ramban on Chumash says, “*If not for the Chasmonaim, Torah would have been forgotten from the Jewish people.*” If so, why did the *Bach* say that *the* reason for the decrees was the Jews being lax in the *Avodah*? There seem to be many other things going wrong.

**Spiritual fuel source**

 The answer seems to be that in spiritual manners, there is no stagnation. A person is either going up or going down. The concept of remaining static doesn’t exist. If a person has the spiritual fuel that he requires, he ascends level after level. If not, he declines. That is the reality. That is the way Hashem created the world. The *Bais HaMikdash* was the nuclear reactor that fueled the spiritual needs of the world.

 The nation as a whole took a downturn because the source of all *Ruchnius* was no longer potent. It had lost its luster in the people’s eyes, and so it was no longer providing the life-giving nourishment that HASHEM created it to give. The Jewish people are one unit, inextricably tied together in fate and spiritual level. The core of our spiritual energy in those days was the *Bais HaMikdash*.

 The *Avodah* was the lifeline and fuel source for the nation. Since it was no longer practiced properly, it couldn’t maintain the spiritual needs of our people. The reason the Jews of Yerushalayim became enamored with Greek culture was because the furnace providing the level of spiritual power was no longer functioning at capacity. The *Avodah* no longer accomplished its desired effect, and the Jewish Nation itself was in grave danger.

 The only cure was for the Jewish people to reach a new understanding of the primacy of the *Avodah* and to rededicate themselves to the service in the Bais HaMikdash. When led by the *Chasmonaim*, Kohanim who did the *Avodah* and who were willing to sacrifice their lives for it, the nation was rededicating themselves to the centrality of the Avodah. Then the *Bais HaMikdash* could be reestablished and pump out the spiritual nourishment needed to keep the *Klal Yisrael* whole.

**Kiruv - The mitzvah of our generation**

## Why is being lax in the Avodah a reason to put an end to all of Judaism?

 This concept is especially relevant in our times when as much as 90% of our nation is made up of non-practicing Jews. While the numbers may seem daunting, nevertheless, we live in amazing times. There is a powerful receptivity amongst our people –religious and not yet religious – for growth.

 People hunger for truth and meaning in their lives, and the Torah is only pure source that fills that need. Clearly, the mitzvah of our generation is *Kiruv*. And as such, it is an obligation upon each of us to do all that we can to help our brothers who were brought up bereft of their heritage. From that aspect, the work is clear. We must go out and do whatever is in our power to help – whether teaching classes or inviting non-religious co-workers to our homes, whether joining Partners in Torah or contributing to Kiruv programs. The work is endless, but the potential is stellar.

 At the same time, we can’t lose sight of the reality that these attempts succeed only because of the spiritual state of our nation. We no longer have a *Bais HaMikdash*. Now, our Yeshivas and Kollels are the nuclear furnaces that provide the spiritual fuel for the world. If our own Torah study is on a high level, and we are pumping out the vital spiritual fuel needed, then with HASHEM’s help, all of these efforts will succeed. However, if we allow the spiritual reactors of our people to decline, then all of the best efforts in the world will not meet with success. The underlying energy source of it all will be lacking.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**After Fighting Hasidic Housing, a Small**

**Town Faces a Backlash**

**By** [**Sharon Otterman**](https://www.nytimes.com/by/sharon-otterman)



**Livy Schwartz, left, and Joseph Landau, right, have accused local officials of illegally blocking their proposed development in Chester, N.Y. Photo Credit - Stephanie Keith for The New York Times**

 ***“We are not anti-Semites,” said the former supervisor of Chester, N.Y., responding to a suit filed by New York’s attorney general.***

 For the past two years, the residents of a small town 60 miles north of New York City have [openly fretted](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/14/nyregion/jews-discrimination-lawsuit.html) about a proposed housing development that they fear will be filled with Hasidic Jews.

 Officials in Chester, N.Y., according to a lawsuit filed against it, have passed ordinances, denied building permits and imposed costly requirements on the

developer in a concerted effort to slow or even stop the project.

 “We’re doing what we can to alleviate 432 Hasidic houses in the town of Chester,” Alexander Jamieson, who was then the town supervisor, said at a heated public meeting in 2018 that was posted on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRySBTqQndA&feature=youtu.be&t=5430). “There’s nobody on the board, nobody who wants the development to go through.”

 Now the town of Chester has something else to worry about: A [proposed lawsuit](https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2019/attorney-general-james-takes-action-fight-discrimination-against-jewish-community) and investigation by Letitia James, the state attorney general.

 The attorney general on Thursday jumped into the dispute, accusing local officials in Chester and Orange County of violating fair housing laws and discriminating against the Hasidic community, and petitioning a judge to join a lawsuit filed earlier this year by the Greens at Chester, the developer.

 [The filing](https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/36-1_exhibit_a_-_nyag_proposed_complaint_in_intervention.pdf) is Ms. James’s first major effort to intervene in the heated housing disputes that have roiled suburban counties north of New York City, as Hasidic Jews seek to build new developments to accommodate their expanding numbers. The growth of the Hasidic population has sparked fears among non-Hasidic residents that the newcomers will change the character of existing towns.

 The motion is a prelude to Ms. James’s office filing a separate lawsuit against the town and Orange County if officials do not settle with the developer and allow the project to proceed, she said.

 In an interview, Ms. James said she decided to intervene because the discriminatory actions and statements of town officials struck her as particularly egregious.

 “It is critically important that I send a strong message to communities that would engage in discrimination on its face that it will not be tolerated either in Chester, or on Long Island, or in any community in the State of New York,” she said.

 Mr. Jamieson, the former town supervisor who is named in the lawsuit, denied that anti-Semitism and discrimination were at the root of the town’s opposition to the development. He said the concern is about housing size and density.

 The proposed project encompasses over 430 homes on 117 acres, potentially adding thousands of new residents to the town of 12,000. This could stretch public resources, and shift the town’s political balance: In the town’s elections this November, for example, town supervisor Robert Valentine, who is also named in the lawsuit, [won re-election by just 12 votes.](http://www.chroniclenewspaper.com/news/local-news/bob-valentine-wins-by-12-votes-in-tight-supervisor-s-race-GN681866)

 “We are not full of bigots, we are not anti-Semites,” Mr. Jamieson said of the town’s residents. “This is just about the size of the houses. The other stuff is just smoke and mirrors. It’s just a distraction.”

 Mr. Valentine did not respond to a request for comment, but in an interview earlier this year [defended his handling of the project.](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/14/nyregion/jews-discrimination-lawsuit.html)

 The attorney general’s motion also names Orange County and the county executive, Steven M. Neuhaus, as among those violating fair housing laws by seeking to block the project. It quotes Mr. Neuhaus, who is a Chester resident, suggesting ways to stop the housing development at a 2018 town meeting.

 “We can pressure the developer,” Mr. Neuhaus had [said at the meeting](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqGzrTBKoFw&feature=youtu.be&t=9390), according to the complaint. “I don’t know when the water was tested … There’s a lot of stuff to revisit.”



**The lawsuit was filed against current and former town and county officials, including Robert Valentine, the town supervisor of Chester. Photo Credit - Stephanie Keith - for The New York Times.**

 “We are going to work together to do what’s right for this town,” he said.

At another meeting, Mr. Neuhaus “defiantly stated that he would not authorize sewer permits at the Greens,” according to the attorney general’s motion. Subsequently, the county asked the state Department of Health to redo its water testing at the site.

 The county said the attorney general’s motion was without merit.

 “The attorney general has not identified a single permit being withheld by the county,” Langdon Chapman, the Orange County attorney, said in a statement on Thursday. “Asking the state to do its job and review constituent concerns about water quality is perfectly reasonable.”

 The saga over the development is a lengthy one. The town has fought proposed development at the site since 1985, when Wilbur Fried, a non-Hasidic developer, first sought to build houses there. Mr. Fried eventually sued in federal court, and in 2010, the town settled, granting him the right to build the homes on its hilly acres.

 In 2017, Mr. Fried sold the still undeveloped lot to the Greens at Chester, which is owned, at least in part, by Hasidic Jews from Kiryas Joel, a nearby community made up mostly of ultra-Orthodox Satmar Hasidic Jews. Once the town got wind of the new owners, it created roadblock after roadblock to try to stop construction, according to the complaint.

 In January 2018, the town introduced a Floor-to-Area Ratio law that would force the developer to build extremely small and unmarketable units, the complaint says. It also proposed levying an extra tax on the property, and mandated that the sewer line be rerouted.

 To this day, no building permits for houses have been granted, although roads and other infrastructure have been completed. “Defendants have succeeded in effectively halting development of the Greens,” the attorney general’s complaint states.

 In its own lawsuit, filed in July, the Greens at Chester asked for $100 million in damages for breach of contract and purported violations of fair housing and other anti-discrimination laws, as well as permits for the project to proceed.

 “Every step of the way, we felt like this development was being used as a vessel to advance bias and discrimination,” said Livy Schwartz, one of the developers. “So in the end it became less about a housing development, and more about the existence of the Jewish people in this part of the state.”

 Last week, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo [vetoed a bill](https://www.recordonline.com/news/20191126/advocates-committed-to-chester-land-preservation) that would have allowed Chester to collect a real-estate transfer tax and use those funds to purchase land or development rights within the town. The governor cited the litigation involving the development as the reason.

 For her part, Ms. James said she wants a judge to immediately declare that the town has violated the Fair Housing Act, which would stop it from enforcing local laws that are intended to discriminate against the Hasidic community. Her motion also suggests that a judge take additional actions, such as assigning a court-ordered monitor and requiring training to make sure that no further such discrimination occurs.

 “This campaign to deny housing to members of the Jewish community is not only a clear violation of our laws, but is antithetical to our basic values and blatantly anti-Semitic,” she said in a statement.

 Sharon Otterman has been a reporter at The Times since 2008, primarily Scovering education and religion for Metro. She won a Polk Award for Justice Reporting in 2013 for her role in exposing a pattern of wrongful convictions in Brooklyn. [@sharonNYT](https://twitter.com/sharonNYT)

*Reprinted from the December 6, 2019 website of The New York Times. A version of this article appears in print on Dec. 6, 2019, Section A, Page 27 of the New York edition with the headline: A Town in Hot Water As State Accuses It Of Blocking Jews.*

**Rabbi Zev Smith Highlights The Precious and Challenging Mitzvah of Kibbud Av V’eim**

**By Daniel Keren**



 Rabbi Zev Smith, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur spoke at the recent Thanksgiving Day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event in Flatbush and addressed the topic of “Kibbud Av v’eim: A Precious and Challenging Mitzvah for All.”

 Rabbi Smith began by declaring that the mitzvah of kibbud av v’eim (honoring one’s parents) is truly an eternal mitzvah. If a person has a small store and runs it by himself without any other workers, if he gets a phone call from his mother asking him to come help her and this would require him to close his store, is he required to lose money from lost sales in order to help her?

 Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai declares that the mitzvah of kibbud av v’eim takes precedence over giving kavod (honor) to Hashem.

**Why We Jews Have Been So**

**Long-Suffering from Bnei Eisav**

 Why have we, Rabbi Smith asked, been so long-suffering from Bnei Eisav (the descendants of Esau) from the Ancient Romans to the Germans (yemach shemo) and inbetween?

 It is because Eisav was mesiras nefesh (risking his physical life) to honor his father Yitzchak (Isaac the Patriarch) Avinu. Whenever Eisav would go out hunting for game to feed his father, this would be very dangerous as he might be attacked by powerful predators like lions.

 Yosef HaTzaddik also risked his life to fulfill his father Yaakov’s request to check up on the welfare of his brothers even though Yosef knew that his siblings hated him and wanted to seriously harm him.

 Rabbi Smith referred back to Eisav to point out that we learn from this very wicked man that despite his terrible pain on learning that his brother has stolen the brocha (blessing) promised to him by his father Yitzchak and which generated an overpowering hatred of Yaakov. Eisav, because he didn’t want to cause his father any distress decided to hold off killing his brother Yaakov until his father had died with peace of mind.

 How have many Jews today fallen from such admirable levels of honoring one’s parents. Rabbi Smith admitted that he was stunned and shocked to learn that today there are support groups for parents who children have heartlessly cut off any ties with their parents. How did this happen?

**A Most Remarkable Question**

 On the other side of this coin, Rabbi Smith recalled a question he received from someone whose father was no longer lucid and now required the services of a female care taker. The son wanted to know guidelines so that he would not be transgressing rabbinical laws of yichud that prohibit a man or woman from being in a room with someone of the other gender.

 Rabbi Smith asked the man how far from his house did his father live. He said his father’s house was almost a half hour drive away and that he usually spent an hour a day with him. Startled, Rabbi Smith asked incredibly, how can you find the time to spend almost two hours every day travelling and attending to a parent when he isn’t even lucid? In shock, the son replied, “but he is my father!” And that is certainly, Rabbi Smith a most admirable fulfillment of the mitzvah of kibbud av v’eim.

 Rabbi Smith pointed out that the halacha (Jewish law) requires that if one’s parents have no money, the obligation falls on the adult child to support his father and mother. And if he doesn’t have the funds to provide for them properly, the child is obligated to go door-to-door in order to collect tzedakah in order to be able to properly maintain his parents.

**The Dilemma of Mamidim Students**

**Who Get Requests from Parents**

 He also stated that he is aware of yeshiva bochurim (students) who are truly masmidim (dedicated to their Torah study) and they absolutely do not want to tear themselves away from the beis medrash (study hall). Yet their father or mother requires some help from their child which would force their child to painfully sacrifice precious time from learning the Torah of Hashem.

 The answer, Rabbi Smith explained, is that this is not a spiritual loss for the masmid child, but rather a precious opportunity or zechus (merit) to do a valuable chesed for a parent who for many years before sacrificed so much to raise the child and whom that child can never come close to repaying.

**Honoring Parents Should**

**Become a Part of Our Schedule**

 Kibbud av v’eim should become a part of our schedule. We shouldn’t consider it an intrusion. The Chazon Ish would visit his mother every day for approximately a half hour. And you can be sure, Rabbi Smith said, that the Chazon Ish wasn’t discussing deep inyonim (topics) from the Mishna with his mother.

 Rabbi Smith declared that kibbud av v’eim is an eternal mitzvah that doesn’t cease after the petirah (death) of a parent. The Pele Yoetz writes that after the death of a parent, a child should have an image of his father or mother begging him to help them in shomayim by performing mitzvahs in this world as a zechus for them in the next world.

 When you were a child, your parents prepared and gave you pekalach (packages of sweets) to enjoy in school. Now you can repay by preparing spiritual pekalach that will help your parents enjoy shomayim (heaven) by doing mitzvahs in Olam Hazeh (this world.)

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**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Carrying a Handgun**



 **QUESTION:** When a person works in a dangerous neighborhood, is it advisable to apply for a license for a gun?

 **ANSWER:** Now that’s a question that’s not so easy to answer because many times you can get by with a substitute for a gun. Like what you say in *Elokai Netzor*:  '"And my soul should be like dust to everybody.”

 If somebody, a goy, is fresh and insults you, become an *anav (a master of humility)*.  It pays to be an *anav* - you’ll live longer if you’re an *anav*.

 But when you have a gun in your pocket, you might forget yourself and answer back something rash.  And then, it’s not so certain that he doesn’t have a gun. And he might know how to use it better than you.

 I was once walking in the street and I visited a friend of mine and he saw that I carried a stick, a heavy stick, on me. It was many years ago, about thirty years ago and it was a dangerous neighborhood so I was holding a stick.And this friend told me, “Don’t do that! It’s dangerous to carry a stick.”

 It’s dangerous to carry a stick, because first of all they could take the stick away and hit you with it. That’s number one.  Secondly, with a stick, you become reckless. Without a stick, you’ll stay home. You’re safer off. And it’s better always to avoid trouble.

 I told you this many times.  The Chinese say, “Who is a hero?  The one who knows how to run away”  that’s a hero – if you know how to run away you’re the hero.

 So therefore, I won't answer the question. It’s always better to avoid any possibility of danger, but carrying a gun sometimes makes you reckless and you go into places where ordinarily you wouldn’t go. Tape # 714

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