**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Beha’alosecha**

**& Chag Shavuos 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #706**

**In the Merit of the**

**Fourth Commandment**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

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In the year 1860, a vast army of soldiers camped in and around the city of Horodna, and established a large military camp. Among the soldiers were many Jews who were forced to work on Shabbat and the Jewish holidays.

When the tzadik Rabbi Nachum of Horodna heard about the plight of these Jewish soldiers, he was greatly saddened. He decided to ask his friend, Rabbi Alexander Moshe Lapidus, who was then serving as the chief rabbi of a nearby town, to join him in seeking an audience with the company commander. They would request the commander to let the Jewish soldiers desist from all work on Shabbat and the holidays.

Rabbi Alexander Moshe agreed to accompany Rabbi Nachum and together, the two went to see the military leader. He agreed to receive them and Rabbi Lapidus began. As he spoke, he pointed to Rabbi Nachum. "Sir, you see beside me a holy and righteous man. He has come to ask a favor of you: Allow the Jews among your troops to rest on the Shabbat and our holy days."

Upon hearing Rabbi Alexander Moshe's words, the commander grew visibly excited. "How fortunate you have brought a holy man here! Perhaps he can find a way to cure my only daughter, who has lain sick for many days now. The doctors can not heal her. If you are successful, I will do as you ask. You have my word!"

QRabbi Lapidus reacted instantly. "This we cannot do!" he burst out. "Are we to take G-d's place?" But much to his astonishment, Rabbi Nachum whispered in his ear, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He) can do it!" And before the commander could react to Rabbi Lapidus' outburst, Rabbi Nachum asked to see the sick girl.

The commander led them to her room. His daughter lay in bed, very ill indeed. Rabbi Nachum gazed at her for a moment, and then went to stand in a corner of the room. Lifting his eyes heavenward, he prayed, "Master of the Universe! In the merit of Your holy Shabbat and Your holy festivals, heal this girl, so that all the nations may know that You are the L-rd of all the world -- and that life and death are in Your hands!"

The two righteous men then turned to the commander. "We have done what we can. G-d, in His mercy, will send a complete cure to your daughter."

That same day, the girl opened her eyes and asked for something to eat. A few days later, she had recovered completely from her long illness.

A week had passed when an elegant coach pulled up outside Rabbi Alexander Moshe's home. A messenger descended from the coach, entered the house, and asked the Rabbi to return with him to see the company commander. The Rabbi sent for Rabbi Nachum, and they travelled together to the army base.

The commander greeted them with joy and honor. He led them into his daughter's room. The little girl was playing with her toys as though she had never had a day's illness in her life.

"Welcome, Rabbis of Israel!" the commander cried. "As you can see, your

prayers have been answered, and my daughter is fully recovered. Every doctor who treated her despaired of finding a cure, yet you did it. You have given life to the person dearest to me in the world!

"And now," he continued, "I will keep my end of the bargain. I will do as you have asked. From this day on, the Jewish soldiers will be exempt from all duties on the Shabbat and the Jewish holidays!"

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Stories my Grandfather Told Me" (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald.

Biographical note: Rabbi Nachum (ben Uziel Kaplan)Grodner (1812 “ 8 Cheshvan, 1879) was a great Talmudist, yet he preferred to hold the humble position of "shamash" in a synagogue in Grodno. He spent a great part of his time going from house to house, collecting for the poor. He was also an eloquent and forceful preacher. Today he is best known as the teacher of the Chafetz Chaim.

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**A Miracle in Brussels**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“Against the enemy who oppress you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets.” (Bemidbar 10:9)

Our perashah speaks about the misvah of the trumpets. The trumpets were blown for a number of occasions. They were blown to gather the people, to announce that the nation will travel onward in the desert, and as an alarm for war. The Rambam (Laws of Ta’anit 1:1) says that the Torah is not limiting the occasions to the ones mentioned, but it is a general rule that a call must be sent out on any trouble that occurs. We must cry out to Hashem when a calamity happens because all bad events are a result of our deeds and we need to repent. Therefore we always cry out to Hashem. We must never attribute events to nature.

A true story was told about a year ago about Yossi Stein (name changed). Yossi was 18 years old, lives in Israel and learns in Yeshivah. One day Yossi started feeling strange. At first the symptoms were intermittent and he tried to ignore them and go on with his daily routine. But as they increased in frequency and severity, he realized he’d have to tell his parents and see a doctor.

The doctor examined him and became very concerned and ordered many tests to be done immediately. Yoss’s mother became frantic but the doctor held back and wouldn’t say what it was until the results were in. The tests and doctors’ opinions came back much worse than anything they had imagined. Yossi would need a liver transplant.

They were advised to apply for a liver in a country in Europe. Their only option was Brussels, the world center for liver transplants, but they usually gave priority to European citizens. However, Yossi’s situation was so desperate that they decided to book the flight anyway. “It’s not up to the doctors, in any event,” Mrs. Stein kept repeating to herself. “It’s up to Hashem. If He wills it, somehow we will get what Yossi needs. We can only try.” The cry was sounded as the prayers began.

They arrived in Brussels and entered the hospital, and he was placed on a waiting list. They were warned that more than twenty five patients were in line ahead of him. They settled down to wait. In the meantime, up above, a decree had been issued.

A volcano in Iceland erupted, emitting tons of ash and clouds of smoke and gas into the air. Thousands of people were now stranded in airports all over Northern Europe because of these clouds. Jets were grounded, business transactions were interrupted and much of European life ground to a halt. And all the while in Belgium, a young man prayed to Hashem to save his life, joined by the entire family and many friends.

In the midst of all this, an organ became available in Brussels. The hospital immediately notified the first person on the list, but he was stranded in another European country and could not get there in time. The hospital went down the list and got the same story until they got to Yossi! This type of transplant could not wait much longer, so Yossi got the precious organ. After the surgery, the doctors told the Steins that Yossi’s liver had deteriorated so badly that had the events not turned out the way they did, he might not have lived out the week.

When Hashem wills it, he has many ways to answer our prayers. Perhaps that volcanic cloud was meant to help one ill young man recover.

Shabbat Shalom.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin (jrishty@kewnet.com)*

**The Ruin in the Forest**

**By Yitzchak Buxbaum**

In 1759, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov sent one of his young disciples, Rabbi Moshe Meshel, with a letter to his former opponent and now disciple, the great scholar Rabbi Chaim Rapaport, rabbi of the city of Lvov.

The letter instructed Rabbi Chaim that on a certain Wednesday in the summer month of Tammuz, he should travel to a designated place in the forest outside the city and study there, in depth, the first four chapters of the laws of blessings in Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*. He should briefly record his Torah insights, so as not to forget them, and then pray the afternoon *minchah* prayer, and return home. Rabbi Chaim did not know the purpose of this mission, but he implicitly followed his master’s instructions.

Although the place the Baal Shem Tov had designated was only eight miles from the city, Rabbi Chaim and Rabbi Moshe Meshel traveled for many hours, because there were problems with the coach every step of the way. First the reins broke; then the harness straps snapped; a wheel fell off; the shaft connecting the horses cracked; and so on. It took time to deal with every mishap and to repair everything that needed to be fixed. They had set out early in the morning but, because of the many difficulties and delays, arrived at the place the Baal Shem Tov had indicated only at two o’clock in the afternoon.

Following the Baal Shem Tov’s directives, Rabbi Chaim walked into the woods on the side of the road and led Rabbi Moshe Meshel and the coach driver to an opening among the trees, a flat area that seemed to be a ruin of some sort, with the remnants of a number of buildings. He sat there studying for four hours and, because of the hot summer day, became very thirsty. While he continued studying, his companions went to search for some water. In the midst of the thick forest undergrowth they discovered a fountain, and brought back fresh water for Rabbi Chaim to drink. He also washed his hands with that water before he prayed *minchah*; then they returned to Lvov.

At the beginning of the month of Elul, Rabbi Chaim went to the Baal Shem Tov in Medzibuz and told him that ever since he had been sent on the mission to the ruin in the forest that day, his eyes were opened in Torah study and his heart had opened in the service of G‑d. He had made more spiritual progress in that brief period than ever before in his life. He thanked G‑d and he thanked the Baal Shem Tov for sending him there, because he undoubtedly merited to benefit from the radiance of a holy soul buried nearby.

At the Shabbat meal, the Baal Shem Tov told Rabbi Chaim that the purpose of his trip was to help a Jew who had passed away one hundred and seventeen years earlier. This man, named Moshe the son of Shmuel Tzadok, had been a great Torah scholar, but was also an atheist who led a dissolute life. Yet, in his advanced old age, he had fully repented.

“The time had come for the Torah that Moshe had studied in impurity to be raised up,” said the Baal Shem Tov. “And I chose you, Rabbi Chaim, for the task. That clearing in the forest is the place where Reb Moshe’s estate stood, and where he was buried. With G‑d’s help, your pure study and prayer elevated what had remained below, trapped by the *kelipot* (‘shells,’ the negative elements of creation). By succeeding in this holy work, you merited to be renewed spiritually.

“You also accomplished another great task there,” said the Baal Shem Tov. “It is written in the holy Zohar that the lower waters weep, crying, ‘We want to appear before the Holy King!’ From the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, separated between the lower waters and the upper waters on the second day of creation, the lower waters have been weeping and begging to appear before the Holy King, that they be used for holy purposes: handwashing before prayer; immersion in a *mikvah* for a mitzvah, or for purification before prayer and Torah study; handwashing before eating with a blessing mentioning G‑d’s name; or water for drinking with a blessing before and after.

“The weeping and pleading of these or those lower waters, that they be used for mitzvot and acts of holiness and purity, may continue for hundreds and thousands of years, until a Jew passes by and washes his hands for prayer or drinks some water to satisfy his thirst, making appropriate blessings.

“Near the former property and grave of Reb Moshe was a fountain that had been weeping for five thousand five hundred and nineteen years, since the creation of the world: Why should it be less than all the other fountains in the world? Why should its waters be denied their elevation? Since the Holy One, blessed be He, had created it, no one had ever made a blessing over its waters; they had never been used for holy purposes.

“That day,” said the Baal Shem Tov to Rabbi Chaim, “when you drank its water and used it to wash your hands for prayer, you elevated that fountain. This was all the working of Divine providence. Every creature and creation has a time for its elevation, and it is foreordained when it will occur and by whom. And that is true for each and every soul; it too has its time for elevation.”

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

**Good Yom Tov Everyone.**

**The House that Ruth Built**

On Shavuos we read the inspiring story of Rus (Ruth) the convert to Judaism.  Ruth was a convert to Judaism, willingly entering a covenant with Hashem through the acceptance of His Torah. On Shavuos, the Jewish people en masse entered this covenant with Hashem by willingly accepting His Torah.

The connection between Shavuos and conversion is not just homiletic; the conversion steps taken by Ruth, as well as by prospective converts until this very day, are akin, and derived from, the steps the Jewish people took at Sinai in the process of receiving the Torah.  The following is a modern day "Ruth" story, as told by Michèle Sankar.

"On any journey, it is just as important to know where we have come from as it is knowing where we are going. So let me tell you a bit about my beginnings. My name is Michèle Sankar, and I was born into a religious family… a religious Roman Catholic family. My mother is of Irish-Canadian background, and was raised with a love of the church, Catholic education, and a strong sense of morality.

My father was born in Hungary, and although he left with his family when he was a young teen during the revolution of 1956, he, too, attended Catholic schools all his life. The usual Catholic milestones filled my childhood – baptism as an infant in a Hungarian church in Toronto, First Communion, Saturday morning religion classes, weekly Mass, and so on. Catholicism was a source of pride for me, and I was a devoted and happy Roman Catholic!

When I was two, my family moved to a small village about an hour-and-a-half from Toronto. At that time, the population was 1,200 people – with at least 5 different churches in the village. Not a Catholic one, mind you. You see, the community was very Protestant, so our little, old Catholic church was out on the country side roads, and that's where I went to church, along with a few Italian, Polish, Dutch and Irish families. Despite being in the minority – and the fact that, as Catholics, we were occasionally subjected to some negative comments – I was incredibly proud of my Catholicism.

As a nine-year-old, I marched confidently into to my classroom with a cross of ashes on my forehead after having been to pre-Easter services at church that morning. I loved it all! I even "knew" that I would only marry a Catholic, and would bemoan the fact that there were only two or three boys in my class who would be eligible husbands. As I grew up in a very Christian community, I knew virtually nothing about Jews.

One part of our Sunday church service referred to "our brothers and sisters, the Jews." I asked my Irish mother about Jews at one time, and she smiled and told me that the Jews were very special people with a special connection to G‑d. That stayed with me, and at the age of eight, a Jewish seed was planted. Not once did I hear anything anti-Semitic from my parents, or from any of the churches or Catholic institutions I attended. So the Jewish spark was kindled, but I was Catholic… I was going to marry a Catholic. I had even picked out good Catholic names like Anthony and Maria for my future children.

But somehow, something was pulling me towards Judaism. I have always been an avid reader so I started looking for Jewish-themed books. While our little library wasn't great, it did have some children's books and novels with connections to the Holocaust. I read them all. My parents became friends with a Jewish couple that lived out in the country with their two children. This was my first time to meet "real" Jews!

We visited them once when the lady's older father was also visiting. He reached for something, which caused his shirtsleeve to pull up slightly. And there on his forearm, I saw them. Numbers written in bluish-green ink on his arm. It took a moment for me to realize what they were. This was my first real connection with the Holocaust – a man who looked like a regular grandfather, but had clearly lived through a horrific period.

When I was about nine or ten years old, our family was invited to a Passover seder by that same Jewish couple. There were no Jews for 60 miles, so they decided that the next best thing would be to invite their nice Catholic friends. Ours was a family who would understand and appreciate a seder! For many of you, each time you sit at the seder, you're reminded of previous years. You know what the bitter herbs and matzah taste like… you are familiar with the sights, the smells, the story, the songs.

And yet, there was little Catholic Michèle sitting for the first time at a seder table, and it was like déjà-vu for me. I knew and "remembered" those tastes – the crunchy, the bitter, the salty. How could something be so surreal and yet so natural and familiar? I was home. So my Catholic plan for life took a little twist. Catholicism was still good, but I needed Jewish stuff. It was part of me now, and I couldn't dismiss it. Every time I watched TV or a movie, I scanned all the names in the credits, trying to identify which ones were Jewish.

I expanded my reading from Holocaust books to Jewish-kid-growing-up-in-Brooklyn books, including Chaim Potok's novels such as The Chosen. I learned that keeping kosher meant more than not eating pork. When I was eleven, I had the wonderful opportunity to fly to Hungary for the summer, and spent two months in a town with my grandfather's sister. She was a devout Catholic and we went to church every day.

Nusi had never married and had no children or grandchildren of her own, but she loved and indulged me the way a grandmother would. Money was scarce in Communist Hungary at the time, but she gave me a gift of a pad of paper and some colored pencil crayons. I can still remember her shock when she looked through my art pad, expecting to see pictures of kittens and flowers, and found instead a series of concentration camp scenes. The figures I drew were all faceless, but in Hungary I felt compelled to create these pieces nonetheless.

We took trips to various cities, yet I just wanted to pass synagogues, to see them from the outside. It was around this time that I started having Holocaust nightmares where I frequently awoke in a cold sweat, having dreamed of running through alleys and forests, hiding when I could.

Naturally, I attributed this to reading so many books about this tragic period in history. I was about twelve, and my parents knew that I was strong in my faith and they were happy with my reading and learning. My dad then told me about another family whose wife was Jewish.

Wow! I knew of two Jews near our community! Imagine my delight when The Jewish Wife lent me a book called The Jewish Catalogue, a comprehensive guide to all things Jewish. Very happily, I began reading about Shabbat, the holidays, koshering meat, and other concepts that were new to me.

As I was nearing the end of grade 8, it was time to face a new chapter in my life. Until this time, I had been in public school, the only option in our town. My parents had both attended Catholic boarding schools, and so this option was presented to me. I was thrilled! There was also a part of me that was interested in becoming a nun, although that meant not marrying my yet-to-be-discovered Catholic husband or having my already-named Catholic children.

And so I spent my four years of high school in a convent boarding school in London, Ontario. They were wonderful years. I went to Catholic Mass twice a week and was part of the religious committee, studying, singing and taking an active role in the community.

And yet, I continued to entertain Jewish thoughts. In every textbook, I would scan the index for Jews, Judaism, or Israel, and try to soak up what I could. The only troubling aspect was the occasional nightmare of running through old alleyways, between stone buildings, down secret passageways, until I got to a forest where I kept running. Looking back now, perhaps I wasn't running away, but beginning to run towards something…

At 17, I started my studies at the University of Toronto, which is where I started moving more purposefully toward Judaism. For the first time, I met Jews my age. My dreams of meeting a nice Catholic boy were starting to be replaced by dreams of meeting a nice Jewish boy. I went to church less often. I registered for a Biblical Hebrew course at the university, where we learned the Hebrew alphabet and began reading Genesis in Hebrew.

Finally, in my third year, I realized I needed to make a decision. I had no anger toward the church, and it hadn't disappointed me; my experiences had all been positive. But as great as it was, I felt G‑d was tugging me toward Judaism. There had been signs and clues in my growing years, and I needed to listen. It was time to make my first call. I telephoned a synagogue in Toronto, and asked to speak to the rabbi. This was the first time I spoke these words aloud: "I want to be a Jew." Silence on the other end of the phone. Then the rabbi's voice: "Are you engaged to a Jew?" "No." "Dating a Jew?" "No." "Well, that's usually why people want to convert."

"But I want to convert because I want to be a Jew." He asked about my age and background, and then started to dissuade me. It's really too hard…There's a lot involved…….. Being Catholic is good too, and so on. But I persisted. To discourage me further, he listed many books that I should buy. I bought them, I read them, I called him back.

The rabbi agreed to meet and learn with me. It was clear that I had to tell my family. It was one of the most awkward and difficult conversations I have ever had. Oh, there was no screaming or crying… nothing like that. But how do you explain to your parents that you no longer believe in the divinity of the one they think is divine? How do you tell them that you can't eat food the way they prepare it? How do you let them know that December 25 and Easter are meaningless holidays to you, ones which you will no longer be celebrating? And how do you convey to them that this Jewish religion, with its rules and stringencies, is the faith you love and feel so much a part of?

My mother did what any Irish Catholic mother would do in this situation. She went to her parish priest. While she was pouring out this story, he said to her, "Don't worry about Michèle. So many young people drop away altogether from religion. Your daughter went on a faith journey that brought her to Judaism. She still believes in G-d, and He takes care of the Jews. You don't need to worry about Michèle." Imagine that, coming from a priest. And I have to credit my mother, the most religious Catholic I know, for also being the most understanding and supportive.

Well, word got out. And do you know what was interesting? My non-practicing family and friends, the ones who didn't do much church-going, were generally the most judgmental and critical of my decision. My own father, whom I dearly love, could not understand how someone would choose to join such a "restrictive religion." His mother, my Hungarian grandmother, was very upset. She was grateful that her husband did not live to see this day. I couldn't understand why it bothered her – or my dad – so much, when neither of them had been heavy church-goers anyway.

During this time, I met in university – a nice Jewish boy, David – and he joined the learning train with me. I gave up pork, and did not eat dairy and meat together. But shellfish stayed on my menu.

One evening, my mother made delicately breaded scallops – very unkosher. After sitting down to dinner, I put a scallop in my mouth and began to chew. Ugh! Dreadfully bitter. I immediately spat it out, thinking it was a bad scallop. I tried another… same story. Could it have been the oil that was rancid? My mum and step-dad said that theirs were fine. I insisted on trying half of one from my mother's plate. Her half was delicious, she said, yet mine was acrid. At this point, my lips and tongue were starting to feel numb, as if there were a thick coating of Vaseline jelly inside my mouth. That, of course, is one sign of a serious food allergy.

For years I could eat the stuff, and now that I had committed to Judaism, G-d gave me a way to make sure I would never touch shellfish again. Eventually, I bought my own little meat pan and a dairy pot, plus simple plates and cutlery to use in my parents' home.

By this time, David and I were enrolled in weekly conversion classes which were to last almost 18 months. Soon I was buying kosher meat for myself, and I quickly came to love the island in time that is Shabbat. Was it difficult? In some ways, yes. But by moving along at a reasonable pace, I was able to make each observance my own, and I saw how it made my life increasingly better.

A few months before the end of the conversion course, David asked me to marry him. I was going to be a bride! Eventually the day for me to go before the Beth Din – to convert – arrived. I answered the rabbi's questions, and finally went for my immersion in the mikvah waters. I tell you, the experience was unsurpassable in its beauty and meaning. The Hebrew date was the 5th of Iyar, and the parshah that week was Tazria/Metzora, which deals with the laws of mikvah. How appropriate! (To be continued on next week.)

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Good (Shabbos) Yom Tov Everyone.*

**The Joy of Being a Jew**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

This week's Torah portion contains the sentence that we say in the Synagogue every time we take out the Torah to read it publicly (which has been going on four times a week since it was given over 3,300 years ago).

"Raise up, G-d, and your enemies will scatter and those who hate you will flee before you" (10:35)

This is in tune with the upcoming holiday of Shavuot, commemorating the receiving the Torah and what it says in the Talmud (Shabbat 89b) that it was given on Mount Sinai because there 'SINA' (hatred) began toward the Jews.

At first glance this is totally not understood. First, why did the gentiles begin hating us just because we got the Torah? Second, if they all hate us, so we are outnumbered several thousand to one - how can we possibly survive? And how have we survived up to now? Finally, if the Torah brings hatred then why not just stop learning it (G-d forbid)?

To understand this here is a story I just heard.

Rabbi Moshe Feller is the head Chabad emissary (Shliach) in the state of Minnesota. Recently he spoke to a group of honorable Rabbis and told them the following story. Two or three years ago a young man and woman, perhaps in their early twenties, appeared one Shabbat day at his Chabad house and at the end of the festive Shabbat meal asked for a few moments with him alone.

They told him that they were both almost totally ignorant of Judaism and wanted to learn. Or more exactly, wanted the girl to learn.

He was born Jewish and she was not, which officially makes her not Jewish. This did not bother them at all however and they were considering on getting married until to their genuine surprise the boy's parents, who were as non-observant as he, objected. They could do what they wanted… alone. But in no way would they support their son marrying 'out'.

They insisted that the girl convert and that is why they came to the Chabad house. They had considered the much easier 'reform' route but the girl heard that it wasn't one hundred percent accepted and decided to do it 'all the way'.

Rabbi Feller explained to them that conversion wasn't just like learning to drive a car or play the flute, rather it demanded a new orientation in life and would take at least a year of serious learning, But all this did not deter the young lady at all. She wanted nothing but the best, or perhaps she was just genuinely curious, and the young man wanted to remove all obstacles from the wedding day. So when Rabbi Feller suggested that she should convert via the Chicago Rabbinical Council (C.R.C.) they both readily agreed.

But then things got complicated. After a few weeks of learning she reported to her 'fiancée' that the classes were more serious than she thought. According to what they said one of the Ten Commandments is that Jews are supposed to keep the Shabbat! And they also taught her that Jews should put on Tefillin and eat only kosher food. So why didn't he do these things?

The young man replied simply that these were not things that actually had to be done, rather ideas to be learned; she was there to get converted so they could get married but certainly no more than that. The Ten Commandments were history, religion maybe even philosophy....but not reality!

But she disagreed. In fact she couldn't understand what he was talking about and after a few weeks of this eventually the inevitable happened. She told him that if he didn't want to take Judaism seriously then she didn't take him seriously and she broke off the engagement.

A year later she finished the course, took the tests and finally came the actual day of the 'conversion.'

The way it's done is that the one being converted is taken to a mikva (a body of water made exactly according to Torah standards, in a closed room) immerses totally in the water, facing away from the door. Three Rabbis then open to door for a second to see that the convert is totally immersed and that ends the 'ritual'.

So it was in this case. Rabbi Feller was one of the Rabbis. They all glanced in, witnessed the immersion and then closed the door and waited for the young lady to leave the water and get dressed.

Suddenly from the mikva room they heard screaming!

Rabbi Feller was shocked! Could it be that something went wrong? Why was the girl screaming...almost hysterically!

In the next moment he had the answer. She screamed,

"I'm a JEW!!! I'm a JEW!!!"

She was overjoyed by the fact that she had become Jewish!

At this point Rabbi Feller finished his story, and said to his audience, "My dear colleagues, that girl was screaming and shouting in joy because she was a Jew for only a minute! But we have been Jews for tens of years!! Why aren't we happy like that? Why aren't we as happy?! The reason is because we forget the gift we have.

This answers our questions.

Joy is the result of doing or being involved in something 'meaningful' and the more meaningful; the more joy we have.

Conversely; deeds which have only physical 'payoffs' may bring fleeting satisfaction but not lasting joy.

Therefore there have been people in concentration camps or in other difficulties who can find meaning and even joy in life while only too often do we see the rich and the famous personally depressed and joyless.

When G-d gave the Torah to the Jews He gave them true, absolute, infinite meaning. That is what the convert in our story was screaming in joy about and that is what the Rabbis forgot; ultimate meaning and with it, ultimate joy.

That is why the Torah brought hatred; because we Jews have this meaning and joy but we keep it hidden… often from even ourselves!!! (Like the Rabbis in our story)

True, there are gentiles that hate us because the Torah limits their ego: 'absolute' meaning from an absolute G-d, means that they can't do, say and even think what they want and people don't like that (especially the Jews themselves).

But most, if not all, of them will drop this hatred when they see our joy and realize that it can be theirs as well through observing the Noahide Commandments.

This explains the sentence in our Torah portion, "Raise up, G-d, and your enemies will scatter and those who hate you will flee before you"

Namely, when our enemies (who really hate G-d and therefore are called "YOUR enemies etc") see our Joy and realize that we are attached to the King of the Universe who has miraculously protected us from them for these thousands of years, then all their hatred and opposition will evaporate.

But this depends on us learning the Torah and feeling the meaning and joy in the commandments.

As the Chassidim bless each other on Shavuot; "May you receive the Torah with Joy and meaning (simcha v'penimious).

Then, together with this joy, even one more good deed, word or even thought can tilt the scales and bring….**Moshiach NOW!**

***Reprinted from this week’s email from*** *Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in   
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*far Chabad, Israel.*

**It Once Happened**

**In Defense of King**

**David’s Psalms**

Reb Moshe Zvi of Savran was once on visit to Berditchev where he stayed at the house of his father-in-law, a chasid by the name of Reb Moshe Yosef Chodorov. The craftsmen of the town at the time were busy deciding on the regulations that would govern their newly-found Chevrah Tehillim, a comradely fraternity whose chief aim was to bring together groups of artisans to chant the Psalms in unison.

Once agreed upon, their regulations were entered for posterity in the pinkas, the community register. Most of the members of the fraternity were unlearned, though honest and G-d-fearing. And in case in any future communal situation they should require the services of someone more learned than themselves, they asked two of the respected young married scholars of the town to add their names to the list of members, and these two young scholars obliged.

When the founders of the Chevrah Tehillim heard that Reb Moshe Zvi of Savran was in town they decided to send him the pinkas with the request that he append his signature to their newly-inscribed regulations; And if he wanted to add or change anything they had written, they indicated that their agreement was assured in advance.

One of their two young scholarly members was chosen to be honored with this mission. When he arrived at the lodgings of the visiting Rebbe, he found that there was already an erudite caller sitting importantly there: a local heavyweight pedant, a veritable genius.

When this pillar of learning heard that the new arrival had joined the commoners as a member of their Chevrah Tehillim, he turned to him in amazement and exclaimed: "What on earth are you doing in a Chevrah Tehillim? Leave Psalms for the artisan and the simple folk who can do no better. You should be reserving your talents for the Talmud and the legal codes, not spending your time on Psalms!"

"And since when should a Torah scholar not read the Psalms?" challenged the young man. "You recall what the Midrash says on the verse from Psalms: "May the words of my mouth find acceptance." On this verse the Midrash elaborates that King David prayed that whoever read the Psalms should be accounted in the sight of heaven as of equal worth with him who engaged in the study of the intricate laws of purity and impurity."

Replied the pedant: "And I once heard from the mouth of a prominent scholar that this Midrash says that King David made a request; it does not say that his request was accepted. In support of this view, allow me to cite another case in which we see that King David made a request that was not granted. For we find in the Talmud - Tractate Bava Batra - that 'There were seven people whose bodies were not overcome in the grave by worms.' And the Talmud goes on to say: 'There are those who say that the same applies to King David, as it is written, 'My flesh too dwells secure.' Another view holds that David prayed for this." From this we see that this was only a request of his but that it was not granted."

Reb Moshe Zvi of Savran had been listening quietly to this dialogue, but these last words of the pedant were more than he could bear in silence.

"Who is it you say whose prayer was not granted?" he exclaimed excitedly. "Are you talking about David, King of Israel?! Woe is me, that I should hear such words. And besides, your prominent scholar friend has misunderstood the meaning of that passage from the Talmud. The Sages had listed the seven people who were granted this privilege without having requested it, while 'David prayed for this.' Because it came to him as the result of his request, his name does not appear among the seven. This passage, therefore, proves the very opposite of your thesis. The prayer of David was accepted!"

With that Reb Moshe Zvi of Savran took the pinkas in hand, opened up at the page on which the artless worshippers had entered the statutes of their Chevrah Tehillim, and signed there with gusto.

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**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Prayer Pact**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

“Years have passed since we were married and we still have not been blessed with a child.” This was the tearful lament that the head of a yeshiva in Jerusalem heard from a former student of his now living in the north of Israel.

“I have a suggestion for you, “the Rosh Hayeshiva replied.

“I heard a story about someone in your same predicament who went to consult a rabbi in his community. The rabbi told him that he has a son with the same problem, and suggested that he make an arrangement with his son that each of them pray for the other to be blessed with children.

This fellow understood that this suggestion was based on the Talmudic dictum that one who prays for another and is in need of the very same Heavenly response is answered even before the one he prays for is answered. He therefore rushed to the home of the rabbi’s son and came out of it in a short time with an agreement of mutual prayer. A year later both of them were blessed with children.”

“There is another childless former student of our yeshiva in your town,” continued the Rosh Hayeshiva, “and I suggest that you make such an arrangement with him.”

Sure enough, hardly a year went by and both couples celebrated the long-awaited birth of a child.

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**Inmate Sues Over Prisons' Decision to Stop**

**Serving Kosher Food**

**By Carri Geer**

An Orthodox Jewish prisoner filed a class action lawsuit Wednesday that alleges officials with the Nevada Department of Corrections are violating the First Amendment with their decision to end kosher food options for inmates.

"This is a matter that's been well-litigated," attorney Jacob Hafter said. "Nevada is clearly on the wrong side of the issue. And so we had to file suit because they won't work with us."

Hafter represents Howard Ackerman, an inmate at the Northern Nevada Correctional Center in Carson City. Ackerman's lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas. He alleges the Department of Corrections is violating his First Amendment right to free exercise of religion.

"I can't respond because we are in litigation," department spokesman Kevin Ingram said.

Hafter said the department announced its decision to end kosher food options for prisoners in December. He said the decision does not only affect Orthodox Jews. Other prisoners, such as observant Muslims, also rely on a kosher diet to meet the requirements of their religions, the lawyer said.

In 2002, death row inmate Travers Greene filed a similar lawsuit against the state. The case was resolved when the Department of Corrections agreed to provide Greene kosher food.

Last month, the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling that requires the Indiana Department of Corrections to provide kosher food to observant Jewish inmates, Hafter said.

After the Greene case was resolved, according to Ackerman's lawsuit, kosher diets were provided to Jewish prisoners who requested them. Those prisoners received prepackaged kosher meals when they went through the meal line.

"All kosher diets have been or are about to be terminated within the DOC," according to the lawsuit.

Hafter said prison officials have told him their new policy "will not affect Mr. Greene," an Orthodox Jewish prisoner who is being housed at Ely State Prison.

Greene, 34, received a death sentence for killing two people near Sunrise Mountain in September 1994.

He shot Christopher Payton and Deborah Farris, both 18, in what was described by prosecutors as a "thrill killing." The couple were camping in the area.

Ackerman, 50, was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole in a kidnapping case.

According to his lawsuit, keeping kosher is "a central and essential tenet of Orthodox Judaism."

Those who adhere to a kosher diet do not eat pork, shellfish or certain birds. Also, meat and dairy products may not be eaten together. Although fruits and vegetables are kosher, they may not come into contact with non-kosher food, utensils or dishes.

Ackerman "is being forced to go without food or to modify his behavior, eat non-kosher foods, and violate his beliefs," his lawsuit alleges.

Hafter said he understands the views of those who say people should not commit crimes if they do not want to lose their rights.

But, he responded, "Isn't part of the purpose of being institutionalized to reform somebody?"

The lawyer said some people find religion in prison. He also said some people land in prison by unintentionally hurting someone or by being falsely accused.

"The real reason that I took this case is because what happens if, God forbid, I would wind up in prison or jail," said Hafter, an Orthodox Jew.

"The fact of the matter is I would hope that I could practice my religious beliefs to the fullest extent that the Constitution allows."

Hafter said Orthodox Jews believe that observance of the kosher dietary laws is "a divine commandment."

"Judaism is a way of life," he said. "We have laws that govern all of our actions ... and no law is supposed to be more important than the other."

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