**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayeira 5782**

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**Weekly Chasidic Story #1236**

**Calculating Change**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**Editor of KabbalaOnline.org**



**The Tzemach Tzedek, zt”l**

An unfortunate widow from Lithuania was in a desperate predicament. Because her husband had died without children, she was obligated to undergo the *chalitzah* ceremony before remarrying. The brother-in-law who was required to perform this rite, however, was a feebleminded fellow and appeared halachically unfit to fulfill this *mitzvah* according to Jewish Law.

The woman consulted many Rabbis, yet despite their extensive study of the matter, they could not find a solution which would allow her to remarry. Finally, the Rabbis in Vilna sent her to a learned scholar who, after lengthy consideration, suggested that she seek the ***Tzemach Tzedek***'s advice.

"He is a true genius," said the Rabbi. "I would approve of his decision should he find a halachic ruling allowing the *chalitzah*. Besides, he is a great *tzadik* and perhaps he will be able to cure your brother-in-law."

The Rabbi generously provided her with traveling expenses to White Russia. Then he added, "I have but one request of you. Please ask the Tzemach Tzedek for his answer in writing, and on your way back from Lubavitch, stop here and show it to me."

The woman arrived in Lubavitch at a very busy time. Many guests had come and it was impossible for her to gain access to the Rebbe. To pay for her stay, she offered to help out in the kitchen. The kindhearted Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka accepted the offer and saw to her welfare.

Days went by with the poor widow still waiting for an opportunity to see the Rebbe. The Rebbetzin herself decided to act. She approached her husband and told him of the woman's desperate situation.

**Asks that Her Brother-in-Law be Brought to Him**

The Tzemach Tzedek immediately addressed himself to the problem. "Send for the brother-in-law," he instructed.

When the man arrived the Rebbe asked him: "Will you follow my instruction?"

"Surely," answered the man.

"Look here, I am giving you ten kopeks. Go to the store and purchase a pen for one kopek, another kopek's worth of paper, three kopeks' worth of ink and a pencil for two kopeks. Do you know how much change you will have to bring me?"

"Of course. It amounts to seven kopeks and I'll have three kopeks change."

"Then go ahead."

"Yes sir!"

**The Man Jumped Out the Window**

In keeping with his strange behavior, the man jumped out the window and went on his errand. In a short time, he returned through the window with his purchases.

"Please review the bill for me," requested the Rebbe.

Obediently, the man stated each item and presented the correct change, whereupon the Tzemach Tzedek instructed the local Rav (rabbinical authority) to arrange for the *chalitzah* ceremony. The next day it was carried out thus freeing the woman to remarry.

**An Explicit Statement from the Jerusalem Talmud**

Before she left, the grateful woman presented the request of the Rabbi who had recommended her to approach him. The Tzemach Tzedek took a piece of paper and wrote this answer: "The Jerusalem Talmud[1] explicitly states that a feebleminded person who is capable of making a purchase and calculating change is not disqualified because of his disability."

When the Rabbi saw this response he was amazed at the simplicity of the Tzemach Tzedek's ruling. "How great is true Torah study!" he exclaimed. "All the Rabbis that you consulted surely know of that ruling in the Talmud Yerushalmi, yet no one else recalled it in their attempts to find a solution to this difficulty."

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Footnote: [1]An earlier version than the Babylonian Talmud, and rarely studied except by advanced scholars

***Source*:** Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from*"From my Father's Shabbos Table,"* Rabbi Eliyahu Touger's excellent selection and translation from the first two volumes of Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik's 4-volume series, *Reshimat Devorim*.

***Connection*:** the weekly Torah reading discusses the necessity and laws for *chalitzah* (Deut. 25:5-10).

Biographical note: **Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Schneersohn** [29 Elul 5549 - 13 Nissan 5626 (Sept. 1789 - April 1866)], the third Rebbe of Chabad, was known as the ***Tzemach Tzedek***, after his books of Jewish Law responsa and Talmudic commentary. He was renowned not only as a Rebbe of tens of thousands, but also as a leading scholar in his generation in both the revealed and secret aspects of Torah.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Teitzei 5781 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

**The Importance of**

**Depending on Hashem**

A chassid told Reb Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov zt’l, "Rebbe, I will soon be rich. The priest owns a large forest, and he is too old to take care of it. He will be selling it to me at a very low price. All my friends and financial advisors tell me that it's a deal of a lifetime.”

**The Rebbe’s Doesn’t Recommend the Investment**

He promised the Rebbe that he will give him a large share of the maasar. And then he spoke with the Rebbe about other matters. At the end of the conversation the Rebbe said, "About the forest, I don’t recommend that you buy it."

The man left the Rebbe’s room confused. Everyone told him he could make millions on the forest. How could he throw it away? He decided he'd disregard the Rebbe's warning and go ahead with his plans. The day after the deal closed, he discovered he made a grave mistake. He sent lumberjacks to begin cutting down trees, and they returned to tell him that all the trees they felled were infested with termites.

**Embarrassed to Face His Rebbe**

“I lost all my money in this unwise investment,” he grieved. “I should have listened to my Rebbe.” He was too embarrassed to face his Rebbe because he didn't listen to his counsel. Two years passed, and he still couldn't bring himself to face the Rebbe. Finally, he thought, “I lost my money, should I lose my Rebbe, too?” He came to Tchortkov and said, “Rebbe! I should have listened to your ruach hakadosh.”

The Rebbe replied, “It wasn’t ruach hakodesh. It is just that when you spoke to me about that investment, you didn’t say ‘be’ezras Hashem.’ You were certain you would make a lot of money, and you didn’t think you need Hashem to help you. But it's impossible to succeed without Hashem. When I saw you took Hashem out of the picture, I knew it wasn't a good investment for you. Because how could you earn money, without Hashem’s help?”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5781 emil of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman*

**"Queen Esther" of Vilna**

**By**[**Hillel Baron**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/24128/jewish/Baron-Hillel.htm)



**Art by Yitzchok Schmukler**

*In 1648, Bogdan Khmelnitsky led Cossack pogroms against the Jews of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, leaving entire communities brutally murdered in their wake.*

*The following story has been told many ways, each version adding color and detail that sometimes complement and sometimes contradict the other tellings.*

As word came that the murderous hordes were approaching Vilna, the city’s Jews attempted to flee. Those who could not, barricaded themselves indoors and prayed for a miracle. Rabbi Shabtai HaKohen Katz,[1](javascript:doFootnote('1a5213530');) known as “the Shach” after his monumental work on the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), fled into the forest with his young daughter, Esther.

The little girl was ill, and as they made their way deeper and deeper into the forest and the cold, she grew weaker by the hour.

Eventually, the Shach came to the sad conclusion that his beloved daughter, whom he had carried so tenderly, had passed on. But before he had a chance to bury her, he heard the sounds of riders. Thinking that it was the sound of the Cossacks, he left her on the ground and made a hasty escape.

In fact, it was actually the sound of a monarch

on a hunting expedition. Soon, the hounds taking part in the sport began barking and following the smell of flesh. When the entourage came across the half-frozen girl, the king instructed his doctor to spare no effort in reviving her.

He was successful and the king adopted the girl. Soon, she became the dearest and closest friend of the king’s daughter. All throughout, [Esther](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4297202/jewish/Who-Was-Queen-Esther.htm) remembered that she was Jewish and refused to eat non-kosher food or convert to Christianity.

One night, a fire broke out in the girls’ living quarters. The princess was immediately evacuated, but before they could reach Esther, fire had already consumed her room. The castle staff searched for her remains, but did not find any. The princess was devastated.

**Esther Had Jumped Out of the Window**

What had happened, in fact, was that Esther had jumped out of the window and fled into the forest. There, she was kidnapped by a group of bandits who eventually brought her back to Vilna and offered her to the Jewish community for ransom. By that time, the Shach was no longer living there, having wandered on to Poland, Bohemia and Austria.

Reb Munish, a childless and wealthy Jew, paid the astronomical ransom requested by the bandits, and adopted her as his daughter. Slowly, she accepted many responsibilities around the home, and was admired for her capability and kindness.

Years passed, and the kind man’s wife passed away. It was suggested that he marry the young woman who ran his household. He knew he could find no better match, and they were soon husband and wife. She became known around the city as a gracious hostess, always looking out for others.

Sometime later, the governor of Vilna passed a decree against the Jews of the area. The Jewish community gathered to pray and beseech G‑d for his mercy.

Esther became aware that the wife of this ruler was none other than the princess with whom she had become so close during her childhood. Recognizing that the key to her people’s salvation was in her hands, she sought an audience with her erstwhile friend.

**The Princess was Delighted to See Esther**

The princess was delighted to see her long-lost companion, and they spent hours catching up on each other’s lives. Eventually, Esther broached the harsh decree, and the princess assured her that she would do her utmost to sway her husband. She was successful, and from then on, Esther was welcome in the castle, and succeeded in turning the heart of the ruler toward her people. She became known as “Queen Esther,” after her namesake, who delivered the Jewish people from destruction during the Purim story.

One day, an esteemed rabbi arrived in town, and all the Jewish inhabitants gathered in the synagogue to hear him speak. As he spoke, Esther began experiencing flashbacks. She recognized his voice and his tone. And then it hit her—the sweet sound of her father studying while she played on the side as a child. She was sure of it.

She went right up to him, and father and daughter were tearfully but joyfully reunited.[2](javascript:doFootnote('2a5213530');)

*Do we recognize that whatever happens to us is by*[*G‑d*](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm)*’s hand and Divine providence? Do we have faith that there is a good purpose in everything that happens to us?*

(Source: Sefer Hama’asiyot, pg. 286)

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5213530/jewish/Queen-Esther-of-Vilna.htm" \l "footnoteRef1a5213530) Circa 1621-1662.

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5213530/jewish/Queen-Esther-of-Vilna.htm" \l "footnoteRef2a5213530) In 1663, after the Shach’s passing, his monumental work, Siftei Kohen (“Shach” for short), was printed in Amsterdam by Reb Munish, his affluent and G‑d-fearing son-in-law.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Teitzei 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**A Request for Coffee and Cake**

One week, after immersing in the mikvah on Friday afternoon, Rebbe Aharon of Belz zy'a asked his gabai Reb Shalom Fogel z'l to bring him cake and coffee. Reb Shalom Fogel z'l was surprised at this unusual request.

Reb Shalom brought the coffee and cake to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe said, "Bring them to So-and-So who is in the beis medresh. When I was in the mikvah, I heard him say, 'After a hot mikvah like this one, all that's missing is a cup of hot coffee with a piece of cake,' and I want to grant him his wishes."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5781 emil of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman*

**Call Upon Him**

**When He is Near!’**

**By U. S.**

“This is just depression, nothing to treat her with! Maybe a vitamin deficiency.” This is what the doctor said emphatically and with certainty about my wife who stopped functioning due to headaches and dizziness and other difficult symptoms. What can I say when the doctor is so sure of himself and his diagnosis?! We went through a hard time and painkillers did not help.

With Shabbos coming, we farmed out the kids to relatives as my wife simply could not take care of them. I had compassion for her, I davened, and I tried to help any way possible until that Friday after we sent out the children, and I tried to cook something for Shabbos and then this happened, she simply fainted…

I called an ambulance, took Shabbos clothes and my Tallis and rushed to the hospital. I thanked Hashem that we were able to send out the children. Imagine if they were all home? What do you do in a case like this? In the hospital, they did a thorough examination but did not find anything. It remained a mystery. The headaches turned into migraines.



A doctor said she needed an MRI but there was a months-long wait. On Sunday I asked the doctor to schedule an appointment, but she laughed and said it would be months. My heart was broken within me to see my wife suffering like this, without a cure. It was already near sunset. I went to the cafeteria behind the vending machines to daven Mincha.

I will never forget that Tefillah! I prayed from the depth of a broken heart, tearfully asking for mercy for my wife and children, who were all suffering. I was so emotional I was cut off from this world and I begged Hashem to heal her, and what was it to Him to give her an MRI, He is King of the World. I finished the Tefillah and went back to her room.

The doctor told me that she was going to have the MRI in 40 minutes. Within 40 minutes she was in the MRI, and it revealed a tumor which was the cause of her difficult illness, and not depression or migraines. Baruch Hashem today she is healthy.

The point is that the experts did not believe that I got her the MRI, and within 40 minutes, which they said would take months. This is to teach you that one who turns directly to the Creator of the World and knows He can do anything, will see wonders and miracles!!! Come let us turn to Him as He is near, and you will see salvations.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5781 email of Tiv Hakehila.*

**Reciting the Asher Yatzar Blessing is No Joke**

Dr. Kenneth Prager is a Professor of Clinical Medicine and Director of Clinical and Medical Ethics at Columbia University Medical Center. A proud Orthodox Jew, Dr. Prager held clandestine medical clinics in the Soviet Union during a visit to Jewish Refuseniks in 1986, and later set up the first U.S. - Soviet medical student exchange program between Columbia P&S and the First Moscow Medical Academy.

As a pulmonologist for over 35 years, he is heavily involved in teaching pulmonology and medical ethics to medical students, house officers and nurses. His writings on medicine and medical ethics have appeared in medical journals and textbooks as well as on the Op-Ed pages of The NY Times and Wall Street Journal.

Dr. Prager is a regular guest lecturer in Israel on International Health and Medicine and has received honors for his teaching, clinical expertise, contributions to organ donation, and medical humanism. When Dr. Prager was an elementary

school student in yeshivah, he and his classmates used to find amusing a sign that was posted just outside the bathroom.



**Dr. Kenneth Prager**

It was an ancient Jewish blessing, commonly referred to as “Asher Yatzar” which was supposed to be recited after one relieved oneself. For children, there could be nothing more strange than to link the act of going to the restroom with holy words mentioning Hashem’s Name. Blessings were reserved for prayers, he thought, for holy days, or thanking Hashem for food or an act of deliverance, but surely not for a bodily function evoking smirks and giggles.

It was not until his second year of medical school that he began to understand the appropriateness of this short prayer. Pathophysiology brought home the terrible consequences of even minor aberrations in the structure and function of the human body.

**No Longer Taking a Trip**

**To the Bathroom for Granted**

He no longer took for granted the normalcy of trips to the bathroom. Instead, he started to realize how many things had to operate just right for these minor interruptions of his daily routine to run smoothly.

After seeing patients whose lives revolved around dialysis machines, and others with colostomies and catheters, he realized how important this prayer was. He began to say Asher Yatzar religiously. It became an opportunity for him to offer thanks for his overall good health. The text, after all, refers to catastrophic consequences of the rupture or obstruction of any bodily structure, not only those of the urinary or gastrointestinal tract.

**Could Abayei Have Foreseen the Consequences of Such a Blockage?**

Could Abayei, the prayer’s author, have foreseen that “blockage” of the “cavity,” or lumen, of the coronary artery would lead to the commonest cause of death in industrialized countries some 16 centuries later?

In his own words, Dr. Prager recalls one unforgettable patient whose story reinforced the truth and beauty of the Asher Yatzar prayer for him forever. “Josh was a 20-year-old student who sustained an unstable fracture of his third and fourth cervical vertebrae in a motor vehicle crash. He nearly died from his injury and required emergency intubation and ventilatory support.

**Initially He was**

**Totally Quadriplegic**

He was initially totally quadriplegic but for a weak flexion of his right biceps. A long and difficult period of stabilization and rehabilitation followed. There were promising signs of neurological recovery over the first few months that came suddenly and unexpectedly: movement of a finger here, flexion of a toe there, return of sensation here, adduction of a muscle group there. With incredible courage, hard work, and an excellent physical therapist, Josh improved day by day.

“In time, and after what seemed like a miracle, he was able to walk slowly with a leg brace and a cane. But Josh continued to require intermittent catheterization. I know only too well the problems and perils this young man would face for the rest of his life because of a neurogenic bladder.

The urologists were very pessimistic about his chances for not requiring catheterization. They had not seen this occur after a spinal cord injury of this severity. I reminded Josh of the Asher Yatzar prayer. Pointing out that I could not imagine a more meaningful scenario for its recitation, I suggested to Josh, who was also a yeshivah graduate, that he carefully say the prayer. He did and he memorized the words and would recite them frequently.

“Then the impossible happened. I was there the day Josh no longer required a urinary catheter. It was a milestone of huge proportions. As he recited the ancient beracha of Asher Yatzar, tears welled in my eyes. You see, Josh is my son.”



**Joshua Prager – 20 Years After the Accident during a TED Talk – “In Search of the Man Who Broke My Neck.”**

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**The Wedding Challenge**

**By** [**T. Gestetner**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/t-gestetner/)

Finances in a Jewish home can sometimes get puzzling. Does more money go out than comes in? It is safe to argue that even your average family that manages to keep up with the day-to-day expenses faces a challenge when it comes to weddings. There, many people get very lost.

After all, this beautiful milestone comes along with loads of excitement. And a hefty price tag. For many, this means that a wedding poses a worrisome challenge: how can all the expenses be covered?

This phenomenon is widespread across the globe, but perhaps it is extra challenging for Jews in Israel.

**The Million Dollar Question**

It was during the summer vacation when a prominent *rosh yeshiva* was away on a retreat with his yeshiva. One of the boys who was just about ready to begin dating, and had his eye on the future, asked the million-dollar question: “How am I supposed to handle the finances? How will I be able to cover my monthly cost of living? What should I do to ensure I’ll have enough for long term expenses?”

The *rosh yeshiva* calmly replied, “Every person has his own story, every person has his own miracles.”

Indeed, who can’t write a book?

But the boy would not be persuaded by these wise, faith-laden words.

“Tell me,” the boy pressed, “Perhaps the *rosh yeshiva* is on a stipend from the yeshiva that may cover the monthly expenses. But how did the *rosh yeshiva* manage to marry off a child?!”

He earnestly wanted to hear how finances were to be handled. And his last question was a great trigger that drew a powerful story out of the *rosh yeshiva*’s mouth.

**The Rabbi Told His Special Story**

With a sparkle in his eye, the rabbi began to tell his story.

“At the time when my oldest daughter was born, I was giving a weekly *shiur* in Tel Aviv. My audience was a growing group of people who were not yet entirely committed to Judaism. But they seemed to enjoy my talks and they came often.

“One day, a woman who never had any children approached me and said there was something she wanted to ask me. I was sure she had some philosophical question in *emunah*. I immediately said a *perek* of *Tehillim*, silently begging *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to put the right words in my mouth as I answered her question.

“I was still very young at the time, and I took my role very seriously. But nothing could have prepared me for the surprise that was to come.

**The Crying Woman Had a Special Request**

“The woman was crying and between the sobs, she told me, ‘I don’t have any children. I would love to perpetuate my memory in some way. Can I ask you if you would mind naming your daughter after me?’ And she promised that if I agreed, she would begin to keep Shabbos.

“I was in utter shock. This was an unusual request! I presented the idea to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlit”a*, who advised me to go ahead with the deal. We made a *kiddush* and gave that woman’s name to our new pink bundle.

“In time, I took on the position of *rosh yeshiva* and I stopped giving those classes in Tel Aviv. True, it was difficult at times. My job didn’t provide much, financially speaking. And with the years, my daughter reached the age of *shidduchim*…I had no idea how I would marry her off. When I say I had no money for her wedding expenses, I really mean it: I had none.

**A Phone Call from the Lawyer**

“One day, I received a phone call from a lawyer who told me to come down to his office right away. I had no idea what claim was being made against me. What had I done wrong?

“When I arrived at his office, the lawyer said, ‘Listen, I have the will of Mrs. So-and-so who just passed away,’ and the lawyer named this woman, my daughter’s namesake. ‘She left her apartment in your name.’ Yes! An entire apartment in an upscale area of Tel Aviv was now mine!

“And that’s how I married off my eldest daughter,” the *rosh yeshiva* concluded.

*Reprinted from the August 15, 2021 website of The Jewish Press from Lessons in Emunah: True Stories with an Emphasis on Faith edited by Naomi Mauer.*

**Rejoicing Over the**

**Unusual Mitzvah**

Traveling from place to place in the olden days was a demanding proposition. The horse drawn wagons would constantly get stuck and movement was constantly impeded. On one occasion, R’ Nosson Adler zt”l was traveling with his disciple, R’ Moshe Sofer zt”l (Chasam Sofer) on a cold wintery day in a wagon being pulled by two horses.

**One of the Horses Fell Dead in the Snow**

Suddenly, one of the horses began to shake and wobble, and soon after, it tumbled over and fell dead in the snow. Since only one horse remained, the wagon driver decided to walk on foot to the nearest town to procure another horse, as one alone didn’t have enough strength to pull the entire wagon.

While his passengers waited in the cold, the wagon driver left them for a few hours. He later came back with a donkey and began hitching it to the wagon. Upon seeing this, R’ Nosson Adler hastily descended from the passenger side and broke out in a joyful dance, right there in the snow.

When his student asked him why he was so happy, he replied that since the driver brought a donkey instead of another horse, he could now fulfill the mitzvah of the prohibition of plowing with an ox and a donkey together.

**Never Dreamed to Have a**

**Chance to Fulfill this Mitzvah**

R’ Nosson beamed with joy as he told his younger talmid, “Sitting in my home in Frankfurt, I would have never dreamed that I would be so fortunate to fulfill this mitzvah!”

When a Yid is zoche to perform a mitzvah, he should be overjoyed that Hashem has given him the opportunity. Some mitzvos cannot be done by some people (i.e. mitzvos pertaining to Kohanim only) and thus, when a hard-to-come by mitzvah presents itself, one must seize it. Some people do mitzvos perfunctorily, while others do them with joy and simcha. We must strive to do them like the latter.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**Advance Authorization**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**

The daughter of R’ Yaakov Yosef Herman related that a special sefer Torah had been sent to her father when Eretz Yisrael was under British rule. When her father went to claim the package in the Customs Office, he was informed that since it was a sacred object (tashmish kedusha) he would not have to pay any customs tax.

**Asked if His Sefer Torah was Really Tax Exempt**

When Rabbi Herman inquired whether the sefer Torah was in fact totally tax exempt by law, the official conceded that according to the strict letter of the law he would still be obligated to pay the customs tax. Rabbi Herman then insisted on paying the full tax for the sefer Torah.

Many years later, R’ Herman’s son, R’ Nachum Dovid, went to make a large withdrawal from his bank account. He arrived only a few minutes before closing time, and did not have proper identification with him, so the bank officer denied his request. R’ Nachum Dovid needed the money immediately for an urgent cause and asked to speak to the president of the bank.

When R’ Nachum Dovid gave the president his name in response to his query, the president asked, “Do you have any connection to R’ Yaakov Yosef Herman?”

“Yes,” said R’ Nachum, “he is my father.”

**For the Sake of the Honest Father**

The president then cordially invited him into his office and revealed that he had headed the Customs Office when the older Rabbi Herman had come to pick up the sefer Torah. “Individuals like your father and members of his family can withdraw money from the bank without any identification. The name Herman speaks for itself, and you don’t need a passport here. Even though your father could easily have been exempted from paying the exorbitant tax, he wouldn’t consider circumventing one of the laws of our land. He was one of the most honest people I have ever met in my life.”

With that said, the president signed the form releasing the monies that R’ Nachum Dovid had requested.

*Reprinted from the August 15, 2021 website of The Jewish Press*