**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayikra 5773**

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**A Slice of Life**

**Bim the Nepalese Boy**

**From Beit Chabad**

**By Baila Olidort**



**Bim is the boy on the left**

He's the good looking, buoyant 12 year old Nepalese boy who greets visitors to Katmandu's Chabad House with a huge smile: "Hi I'm Bim, the boy from Beit Chabad," he offers. He's also quick to provide unsolicited bits of useful information, like candle-lighting time on Friday, or that Shabbat is not out until three stars are spotted in the sky.

**An Almost Naked Exploited**

**Child of the Streets of Kathmandu**

Bim arrived at the Chabad House last year, naked but for a plastic bag that he used for some cover. One of hundreds of children exploited for profit on Kathmandu's dangerous streets, he fixed his eyes on a Chabad rabbinical student, and asked for help. He wouldn't leave go until the student brought him back to the Chabad House.



Chezki and Chani Lifshitz, Chabad representatives here have become beloved figures in Kathmandu, especially to thousands of Israeli backpackers who flock to the Himalayas after completing their service in the IDF. (The Lifshitzs were the inspiration for Kathmandu, a popular Israeli TV series based on their day-to-day lives as Chabad Shluchim (emissaries) in this Third-World backwater.)

After 13 years of living here, the Lifshitzs have not become hardened to the poverty and the human suffering that are everywhere in this slum city. "My grandmother is a Holocaust survivor," Chani says. "I learned from her not to ignore the pleading eyes of a child in need. Bim was not going to survive-that much was obvious," she says.

The boy screamed in pain as Chani and Chezki gently washed his lacerated, severely malnourished body. Scars and bruises - from beatings by his traffickers disappointed in his take home after a day on the streets - were raw. They brought a doctor in to administer first aid. They cut his long, matted hair and uncovered a beautiful face. They fed him, clothed him and made him comfortable.

**How Did Bim Know**

**About the Chabad House?**

What made Bim know to ask for the Chabad House?

"He had heard of the Chabad House, the Jewish place where people find help," Chani explained in a phone conversation.

Bim had no normal socialization. "He was not raised as normal children are, and he had to learn basic behaviors." He also needed psychological therapy and professional help to wean him from a substance dependency (inhaling glue) that many of the street children cultivate in Kathmandu. Then his traffickers, unwilling to give Bim up as a source of income, began to harass and intimidate the Lifshitzs.

With five of their own young children, Chani and Chezki's days were already filled anticipating and answering the needs of an endless stream of visitors to their Chabad House. The go-to people for every exigency arising among young and restless Israelis traveling dangerously, and for their families abroad who depend on the Lifshitzs to help in emergencies, were Chezki and Chani getting in deeper than they meant to?

**What Would the Rebbe**

**Had Advised Them to Do?**

It was a question that surely crossed their minds during those first days with Bim. Adopting a Nepalese child is not exactly what they expected to be doing as Chabad Shluchim. "But we asked ourselves what the Rebbe would advise us to do," Chani says. "There's no question he'd tell us to do whatever we can to save his life."

Chezki and Chani paid Bim's handlers for his release, and gave him a new life in the bosom of their family. The Lifshitz children surrounded him with warmth and acceptance, and he integrated quickly. "My children have been amazing, full of love and appreciation for Bim. They've learned so much from him-gratitude for the things in life they never had to think about before . . . like having parents."

"Ima Chani" and "Abba Chezki" as Bim likes to call his adoptive parents, enrolled Bim in a private school where he is proving to be a fast learner and a high achiever. "Last year he did not know how to read or write. Now he's reading and writing in three languages. He's skipped two grades since he started formal schooling," says Chani, kvelling like any good Jewish mother. "He's incredibly bright."

**Conversion is Not on the Agenda**

Bim is not Jewish, but that's not relevant, Chani says, and converting him is not on the agenda. "We did not adopt him to make him Jewish. We adopted him to save his life, to give him the opportunity to grow intelligently, with happiness and love."

But Bim has something more in mind. Precocious and very proud of his adoptive Jewish family, he tells visitors that he'll be having a bar mitzvah next year just like his "older brother" did. He insists that his Jewish name is Binyamin. And he's learning Hebrew.

The Passover Seder in Kathmandu - with about 2,000 guests - is one of the largest and most popular worldwide. Chezki and Chani invest weeks of preparation. Speaking from Israel where she is adding Passover provisions to a shipping container that will arrive in Kathmandu for Passover, Chani is clearly the skilled multi-tasker. Back home, her husband is taking care of logistics at the Chabad House. Reservations for the legendary Seder are quickly filling up, and Bim and his siblings are pitching in as well.

**Never Sought to Publicize Bim’s Story**

The Lifshitzs never sought to publicize Bim's story. "Bim's been with us for a year and a half now," says Chani, and we never thought about bringing this to anyone's attention." But with so many visitors making their way to the Chabad House, the story about the Nepalese boy who seems to know more about Judaism than many of the Israeli travelers who come there, finally made Israeli news.

The story then garnered attention in Nepal as well. "We've had representatives of various agencies and organizations, most recently from the UN who come to our Chabad House wanting to learn more."

"I hope this will raise awareness of the plight of Nepal's street children," Chani says. "Imagine if more children like Bim would be saved."

*Reprinted from last week’s issue of L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. The story originally appeared in from Lubavitch.com. Baila Olidort is editor-in-chief of lubavitch.com/Lubavitch News Service.*

**Op-Ed Columnist (The New York Times)**

**The Orthodox Surge**

**By David Brooks**

The snack section is impressive. There’s a long aisle bursting with little bags of chips and pretzels, suitable for putting into school lunch boxes. That’s important because Orthodox Jews spend a lot of time packing school lunches.

Nationwide, only 21 percent of non-Orthodox Jews between the ages of 18 and 29 are married. But an astounding 71 percent of Orthodox Jews are married at that age. And they are having four and five kids per couple. In the New York City area, for example, the Orthodox make up 32 percent of Jews over all. But the Orthodox make up 61 percent of Jewish children. Because the Orthodox are so fertile, in a few years, they will be the dominant group in New York Jewry.

**Based on a Countercultural Understanding**

**Of How Life Should Work**

Another really impressive thing about the store is not found in one section but is pervasive throughout. That’s the specialty products designed around this or that aspect of Jewish law. There are the dairy-free cheese puffs in case you want to have some cheese puffs with a meat dish. There are the precut disposable tablecloths so you don’t have to use scissors on the Sabbath. There are the specially designed sponges, which don’t retain water, so you don’t have to do the work of squeezing out water on Shabbat.

Pomegranate looks like any island of upscale consumerism, but deep down it is based on a countercultural understanding of how life should work.

**A Rejection of the Secular**

**Attitude Towards Life**

Those of us in secular America live in a culture that takes the supremacy of individual autonomy as a given. Life is a journey. You choose your own path. You can live in the city or the suburbs, be a Wiccan or a biker.

For the people who shop at Pomegranate, the collective covenant with G-d is the primary reality and obedience to the laws is the primary obligation. They go shopping like the rest of us, but their shopping is minutely governed by an external moral order.

The laws, in this view, make for a decent society. They give structure to everyday life. They infuse everyday acts with spiritual significance. They build community. They regulate desires. They moderate religious zeal, making religion an everyday practical reality.

**Laws that Are Gradually Internalized**

The laws are gradually internalized through a system of lifelong study, argument and practice. The external laws may seem, at first, like an imposition, but then they become welcome and finally seem like a person’s natural way of being.

Meir Soloveichik, my tour guide during this trip through Brooklyn, borrows a musical metaphor from the Catholic theologian George Weigel. At first piano practice seems like drudgery, like self-limitation, but mastering the technique gives you the freedom to play well and create new songs. Life is less a journey than it is mastering a discipline or craft.

Much of the delight in life comes from arguing about the law and different interpretations of G-d’s command. Soloveichik laughingly describes his debates over which blessing to say over Crispix cereal, which is part corn, but also part rice. Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth who is on a tour through New York, notes that Jews are constitutional lawyers: “The Torah is an anthology of argument with a shared vocabulary of common restraint.”

**Obligations that Precede Choice**

But there are still obligations that precede choice. For example, a young person in mainstream America can choose to marry or not. In Orthodox society, young adults have an obligation to marry and perpetuate the covenant and it is a source of deep sadness when they cannot.

“Marriage is about love, but it is not first and foremost about love,” Soloveichik says. “First and foremost, marriage is about continuity and transmission.”

The modern Orthodox are rooted in that deeper sense of collective purpose. They are like the grocery store Pomegranate, superficially a comfortable part of mainstream American culture, but built upon a moral code that is deeply countercultural.

This sort of life involves a fascinating series of judgment calls about what aspects of secularism can safely be included in a covenantal life. For example, Soloveichik’s wife, Layaliza, was admitted into Harvard, but she went to a religious college, Yeshiva, instead. Then she went to a secular professional school, Yale Law, and now works as an assistant U.S. attorney.

All of us navigate certain tensions, between community and mobility, autonomy and moral order. Mainstream Americans have gravitated toward one set of solutions. The families stuffing their groceries into their Honda Odyssey minivans in the Pomegranate parking lot represent a challenging counterculture. Mostly, I notice how incredibly self-confident they are. Once dismissed as relics, they now feel that they are the future.

*Reprinted in the March 8, 2013 edition of The New York Times.*

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

**Must a Jewish Woman Attempt to**

**Be Attractive to Her Husband**

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| **QUESTION:** |

Why should a Jewish woman attempt to look beautiful for her husband?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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Now the question is, why did he marry her? Because she's proficient in Chovos Halvavos? Or she knows Choshen Mishpot? He marries her because she's a woman, and never forget that fact!

Of course he wants a frum woman, with good character. He wants a woman who will be a mother to his children. He wants many things. Suppose she decides she stops being a woman. She'll take an operation that will make her something, but not a woman. Good bye! He shows her the door. Marriage is based on the fact that he is a man and she is a woman.

**A Woman Must Encourage Her**

**Husband to Like Her as a Woman**

Therefore it is of the utmost importance always for a woman to make it her business to encourage her husband to **like** her as a woman. Therefore the gemara says, that in the midbar when the monn used to fall every day, cosmetics fell with the monn. It's a remarkable statement. Never heard that before? Cosmetics? The answer is, cosmetics are **vital**. Forty years in the midbar, the women won't have an opportunity to find favor in the eyes of their husband? It's a midrash.

Ezra Hasofer made great takanos. Now Ezra when he made takanos he didn't deal with small picayune things, he dealt with very **great** subjects. He was bringing people back to Eretz Yisroel, he was rebuilding a nation. Among his takanos is one recorded, a takana that in every town peddlers of cosmetics for women should **visit** every town once a week. Ezra had no other business than that?

No! This is also important. So we learn how necessary it is for a woman always to keep in mind until her **last** day, as long as she has a husband, she has to make it her business to be presentable to her husband. I cannot over emphasize this subject.

**An Obligation to Make a Good**

**Impression on One’s Husband**

I know there are righteous women who think that with their tzidkus alone they deserve to be respected; and they are right. And **still** they must realize that one of their good deeds is to be gomel chesed and make a good impression on their husbands. That's why I always say, if you like mopping the floor, some women love to get on their knees and mop the floor. Don't do it when your husband is home.

When you know he’s coming home, put on a ***sheitel***, and give a dab on each cheek, and try to look nice. It's a mitzva, and you get olam habah for it, besides all the other benefits in this world.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**A Nice Tie**

Chaim used to take the subway with four of his [fellow Lubavitcher] friends to the sky-scrapers in the heart of Manhattan and go visiting offices one after the other looking for Jews that perhaps wanted to put on Tefillin.

Generally they got positive responses and a few Jews even put Tefillin on for themselves. But one law firm was like an impenetrable iceberg.

The non-Jewish lawyers at that particular firm were friendly and good humored but the Jewish ones had no time. And those that might have been interested were quickly discouraged by the head of the firm.

He was a no-nonsense every-moment-is-precious hard as nails attorney that was worth several hundred dollars per hour. When he was anywhere in the office, even in his room, there was no chance that our heroes could even pass the front desk. And if the boss chanced to come out of his office he would have them evicted; he'd mumble something to the receptionist on the way to his room and in a few minutes she would politely ask them to leave.

This went on for about a half a year, the yeshiva bochurim made zero headway but they didn't give up. In any case it was only one of the offices on their route and some Jews have to be asked a thousand times before they agree. At least they would get in the first few hundred.

One Friday they arrived just as their subway was pulling out and were waiting for the next to come when one of the vendors there, a Mexican fellow who set up a table and sold pens and other small items, approached them, pointed to Chaim, held up a black tie and said, "You need a tie."

"No thanks." Chaim said politely. "But thanks anyway." "No, NO!" The Mexican insisted "You NEED a tie. You are an important person with a white shirt. Such a person need a tie. Here I sell you the tie for less. I give you a reduction. Five dollars instead of seven. Good? Take it!"

"Nope! Sorry. I don't want a tie!" Chaim protested calmly. "But thanks anyway. Okay? But sorry. I don't want it!!"

But the fellow wouldn't take no for an answer. For the next five minutes he kept it up. "This tie is just for you! If you wear it you will look good! I know what I am saying. You need it." etc etc.

Chaim tried to protest more assertively, "Hey! I don't have money for a tie, okay? But to no avail. The Mexican was not giving up.

Finally Chaim's friends decided the only way to get rid of him was to simply buy the tie. Each put in a dollar, gave the man the five dollars and Chaim took the tie happy to finally have a little peace and quiet. "Okay?" one of the bochurim said to the salesman: "Now are you happy we bought the tie. Okay?"

"No, NO!!" The salesman said. "I'm not happy! You must WEAR the tie! What, you think I sold for me the tie? No! it's for you! You MUST wear it. It will make you look good. See?" As he grabbed for the tie.

"Look," Said Chaim exasperatedly, "It's my tie now and I'll do what I want with it. If I want I don't have to wear it. Okay! Plus I am not good in making a tie."

"Oh! No problem!" he answered "I show you how to tie it. Here, look. Give me the tie, bend over a bit ... I put you collar up like this. Seel'

And before Chaim knew it the fellow had done it! Chaim was wearing a tie! (thinking to himself that as soon as he gets on the train he'll take it off.)

But the salesman knew his business. "Ahh! It is beautiful!!" he stepped back and said admiring his own work. "Now you must promise me that you won't take it off."

"What? You mean I can't have to wear it the rest of my life?!" They all laughed including the salesman. Chaim was wondering why the Subway was taking so long.

"No no!" he answered. "Just promise me you will wear it today. So you give it a chance. Good? Promise? You see it looks so beautiful! You must promise!"

"Listen" Chaim said "Who are you anyway? Did my mother send you or something?" But for some reason he suddenly blurted out "Okay! Okay! I'll leave it on today."

At that moment the subway came roaring in, they all got on and twenty minutes later they were in Manhattan involved in putting Tefillin on Jews and forgot the Mexican and the episode with the tie.

Finally came the turn of the 'ice berg' law firm. They got out of the elevator on the fifteenth floor, entered the large marble-floored reception room and smiled at the receptionist.

A few of the gentile lawyers passed them by and said hello as they rushed from room to room. Then appeared .... the boss! "Who are they?" he said to the receptionist. Then, not waiting for an answer turned to them and said sternly, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"We're from the Lubavitcher Rebbe and we came to see if there are Jews here that want to put on Tefillin," one of them answered, preparing to get evicted as usual. He looked at them silently for a second or two like a wolf about to pounce on his prey, pointed at Chaim and said: "YOU! I want you to follow me!"

It didn't look good. After all, this guy knew all the laws. He was the head of the firm! It could be that somehow they were trespassing. Maybe he would call the police.

But Chaim, without thinking too much, followed him down a wide, highly polished corridor into his plush office. The lawyer closed the door behind them, turned to Chaim and said. "I want to put on Tefillin."

After a few years of outreach nothing really surprised Chaim anymore and after five minutes he had finished putting on tefillin with the Attorney.

"You probably want to know why I put on Tefillin, right?" The attorney asked. "Well, I'll tell you." "I might look like a successful man but the fact is I'm having several big crisis in life. Our firm is losing several very big cases and suffering other financial setbacks. Not only that but I'm having some personal problems as well.

“I'm not used to being on the helpless side but I needed help. I didn't know to whom to turn, I mean, someone who really cared. As lawyers, we live a pretty cold life sometimes.

"Then, yesterday I happened to see one of the cards you fellows left here with the Lubavitcher Rebbe's picture on it and it struck a note. I began to wonder if perhaps he could do something. After all, I did put on Tefillin after my Bar Mitzvah for a while.

"Anyway, maybe you won't believe this but last night I had a dream. "I dreamt that I saw the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He smiled and I asked him if he could help me. He answered, 'But I send you a group of young men every Friday with Tefillin!' To which I replied. 'What, those ragamuffins? They look terrible, like a bunch of bums! Why none of them even wears a tie!!'

"Then the Rebbe looked at me and said 'You want a tie? Okay, I'll send someone with a tie!' And I woke up." "So when I saw you with a tie I knew that it wasn't only a dream."

The attorney began putting on Tefillin regularly and a close friendship developed between him and the fellows. He gained great solace from his daily "ritual" of putting on Tefillin and davening to his Creator. As far as anyone knows his problems were alleviated!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone*

**Mordechi the General**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

Last week’s section is very strange because it is an almost total repetition of sections, ‘Truma and T'tzave’ that we read a few weeks ago detailing the complicated Commandment of making the Tabernacle in all its details.)

The only difference is that here is that the word ‘VaYaas’ (lit. ‘It was done’) is added to each detail, meaning that what was commanded earlier was now ACTUALLY done.

But, this could have been accomplished in one sentence like “All that G-d commanded in the construction of the Tabernacle was done.”

Why did G-d add two entire chapters repeating thousands of words when He could have said it with just ten? The Torah is a book of instructions for every moment of life; what is the message here?

To explain this, here is a story that happened some 300 years ago in Russia.

Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem a.k.a. “The Baal Shem Tov” or “BeSH’T” for short, was the founder and leader of the Chassidic movement in Judaism. He was a holy, inspired, genius as were his pupils but it is known that the greater a person is, often his evil impulse also can be correspondingly greater and one of his pupils, who we will call Mordechi, despite his greatness (or perhaps because of it) had a powerful desire to become, of all things, a sorcerer.

He knew that the Torah clearly forbids such activities (Ex. 22:17), but fight it as he did for months and years, he finally gave in. He couldn’t take his mind off it, the urge was too great. He made up his mind that this Shabbat would be his last with the Master, and early Sunday morning he would head out for a new life. He already had made contacts, and everything was set.

That Shabbat night he acted as usual, prayed, sat at the Shabbat Dinner table, sang the songs, ate the meal, and listened to the Torah ideas of the Baal Shem with all the other Chassidim, but his mind was far away. He vaguely noticed that it was unusually warm in the room and, not giving it much thought, he removed his Shtrimel (large fur hat worn by Chassidim). But it didn’t help. He still was unusually hot. So he unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and removed his over-coat. He’d never remembered it being so hot here before. Through the small window opposite him he saw the icy winter wind whipping through the trees and deep snow covering the forest ground, but here inside the large room of the Besh’t synagogue he was sweating and felt as though he was about to faint.

“Please, may I step outside for a moment?” he asked the Besh’t “I need some fresh air.”

“Just for a minute, no longer” he answered “Just make sure that you return immediately, it’s dangerously cold out there.”

It was already getting hard for Mordechi to breathe as he opened the door and stepped outside into the freezing fresh air. “Wow, one more minute and I would have passed out,” he thought to himself as he pulled the door shut behind him, but suddenly he felt hot again.

Without hesitating he opened his shirt and began rubbing his face and chest with snow which gave him a few seconds of respite until the fever returned. He began running. Ahhh… The cool wind against his body felt good, he stumbled and fell several times, but he didn’t care. He staggered to his feet and again began running… running like a madman through the woods. He was burning with fire. The trees and the sky racing, spinning by him, he was out of breath, the cold wind, the stars, and then everything went black.

He woke up in a strange warm room, in a freshly made bed. An old farmer and his wife were standing over him.

“We thought you were dead when we saw you laying there in the snow” The farmer said, “You’ve been sleeping for over a week. Are you all right? Do you want some warm soup? Where are you from?”

Our young hero was in a daze. He didn’t remember anything, but he took up the offer on the soup and his new parents called him Vladimir. In a few days he was able to get out of bed and walk around and in a month he began learning how to work behind the plow.

The farm was small and run down but as he became more active and interested the farm gradually began to change and he even bought the farming land of one of the neighbors. New workers were hired, new fields were purchased and cultivated, and five years later the simple farm had become a massive estate.

One day, the old farmer returned from a trip into town and showed the young man an advertisement he had taken from the post office. “They are looking for new officers in the army” he said with a big smile on his face, “Just read this. I think you should apply; it’s your chance to be someone really important. Just look at the miracles you have done here. You are someone special; don’t waste your life on this farm. You’ve been here long enough. Go and give it a try.”

Mordechi (still under total amnesia) took to the army like a fish to water. He passed all the entrance requirements with flying colors, and after two years of officer’s training a war broke out between his country and Poland and he found himself a captain in the Royal cavalry.

Several chapters would be necessary to describe the many fierce battles and brave accomplishments of our hero, his innumerable brushes with death, his brazen spirit, split-second decisions, and impressive victories against impossible odds.

In one fierce battle when all the officers above him fell he was thrust into command and managed a victory that impressed even the Czar himself. Five years after the war began Mordechi found himself promoted to the rank of Major-General, seated on a fine horse, reviewing ten thousand mounted lancers at his command.

Then, from nowhere it all came back to him!! He remembered… that night twelve years ago when he left the Baal Shem’s Shabbat table!

He paused for several minutes, deep in thought remembering every rich vivid detail, and every emotion that passed through his mind back then. Suddenly he came to himself and announced to his troops, “Dismount! Return to your tents, and prepare for journey. In one hour we are beginning a three day march!”

It was late at night three days later, when the huge army reached the forest that surrounded the small synagogue of the Besh’t. It was a cold, snowy winter night, almost exactly as it was twelve years ago. Vladimir turned to his huge army of mounted soldiers and yelled: “Light torches!”

Suddenly the entire forest was illuminated with an eerie flickering yellow light. “Draw Swords!!” the ringing the glistening blades was everywhere like thunder. And then, except for the occasional snorting of a horse, silence.

The General dismounted, approached the large old hut, drew his sword and began pounding with its hilt on the closed door.

“Open in the name of the King! See what happens to a Chassid who leaves the Holy Master!!”

No one answered, but he heard someone speaking from within the house and he got angry. He furiously stuck his sword in the ground and began pounding on the door with both fists and screaming “Open! Open for a General in the King’s army! Open for Ten Thousand Calvary troops.”

Slowly the door opened, the Baal Shem Tov stuck his head out and said “Mordechai, are you still here? You have been outside for almost five minutes! Do you want to become ill? Come in immediately!”

“Five minutes?!” the General screamed “Look at all my troops and tell me about five minutes!” He turned around and…. there was no one there. Even his horse had disappeared! The wind was howling through the trees and deep snow covered the silent forest. Even his uniform and sword were gone! He was in the same garments as he was twelve years ago, it had all been an illusion!

Suddenly he realized that the Besh’t knew magic better than he ever possibly could and he humbly reentered the house, back to the real world.

The point of the story is this: What if our hero hadn’t remembered the Baal Shem Tov? What if he died thinking he was a General? Would that have been better?

The same for us; What if it were possible to live a ‘virtual’ life; to be hypnotized or be attached to electrodes so we can experience whatever life we wanted. Everyone could be movie stars, Generals, multi-billionaires or even kings. All mankind could live 120 imaginary years of pleasure with no disappointments or pain. No wars or hatred.

Would it be worth it?

Last week’s section tells us, NO! An imaginary life, a life that is not devoted to actually doing the Creator’s will is a false life, and no one wants to be fooled.

And that is why it is worth repeating all the details of building the Tabernacle adding only the word “And it was done” … to stress the infinite importance of actual deed in this physical world.

This is the reality that the Tabernacle (and later the Holy Temple “Bait HaMikdosh”) reveals.

This brings us to the topic of Moshiach. According to Judaism one of the main accomplishments of Moshiach will be to build a Third Temple. Moshiach will not suffice with big miracles and spiritual revelations (as some religions mistakenly teach) because only thorough actual deeds (commandments) done in this physical world can G-d will be revealed here (as He was on Mount Sinai): the Commandments are not only higher than the highest heavens but they actually make heaven on earth.

Indeed this is the secret of THE ENLIVENING OF THE DEAD (last of the 13 principles of Jewish Faith). That Moshiach will cause even the highest souls such as Moses and Avraham to leave the highest heavens to be clothed in bodies in this physical world of ACTION. Because only here can G-d’s true essence be revealed.

(Today we are forbidden to do any commandments or learn Torah in a Jewish Graveyard. Because the dead are aware of what goes on around them and they are pained by the reminder that there is a real world where one can ACTUALLY serve the Creator but in the future they will ‘Awaken and rejoice’).

But it all depends on us. One more good deed, word or even thought can tilt the scales, make a perfect NEW world. This renewal is up to us and reveal…**Moshiach NOW!!!**

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**In Search of a Knife**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

“A Holocaust survivor with a sense of mission.” This is the capsule description of the late Moshe Dovid Reisner who settled in Bnei Brak after World War Two.

Many stories have been told of his heroic behavior in a Nazi concentration camp. No sooner was he released than he began performing circumcisions as the only *mohel* in the Bohemian region of Czechoslovakia.

Once, upon arriving in one of the area cities to perform a *brit*, he discovered that he had left his knife at home. Hours passed during a fruitless search for a knife, since life had not yet returned to that liberated community and all the shops were closed.

Reisner then came up with a bold idea. He went to the local police station and asked the non-Jewish officers to break open one of the shops where a suitable knife might be found. To everyone’s surprise the police agreed to do so, a proper knife was indeed located and the *brit* performed.

Needless to say, the shop owner was subsequently informed and compensated.

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

**Goering and My Grandmother**

**By Rabbi Leiby Burnham**

My grandmother is one of the most fascinating people I know. Me'me, as we called her, fought in the French resistance, ran a DP camp in post-war Europe, was a professor in Columbia University and has traveled the world extensively.

My Me'me was living in Paris while it was under Nazi occupation. She was working with the French underground smuggling Jews out of the occupied zone of France into the free zone. She had been an emerging actress in pre-war Paris, and came from a family of well-heeled diplomats. A very attractive young lady, my grandmother was comfortable among the more glamorous echelons of society.

She was "well appointed with the finest of accoutrements." Suspicion would be aroused if she were to suddenly start leading a more understated life, so she continued to shop at the finest boutiques in Paris while leading the secret life of a Jewish resistance fighter.

One day my grandmother excitedly set out to Hermes' flagship store in Paris to pick up a pair of gloves she had ordered. Much to her consternation, the entire street was blocked off by German military vehicles. My Me'me is not one to get thrown off a mission easily. She was not going to let half a platoon of Nazis stop her from getting her Hermes gloves.

She also happened to know Paris like an accountant knows a calculator, so she simply went through a few back alleys and arrived at the back exit of Hermes, where the employees (in Hermes they are called personal shopping executives) would come in.

She let herself into the store, and immediately discovered why the street was blocked off: Hermann Goering, the second most powerful Nazi and commander of the Luftwaffe, was shopping in Hermes. The whole store was filled with Nazi officers and bodyguards!

Cold fear coursed through her, as well as the repulsion of being in such close proximity to someone so intimately involved in the butchery of her people. But she quickly calculated that her best move would be to pretend like everything was normal and go about her business with no hint of fright or hatred. She walked up to the counter and asked for her gloves. The Hermes employees assumed she was an accompanying celebrity or official and assisted her expediently.

As she was exiting, she came to a narrow point in the store where only one person could walk through at a time. Right then, Goering was headed in the same direction. Who would go first? (They couldn't even possibly squeeze through together, because, as my Me'me told me, "Goering was a very fat man.") Goering, ever the effusive and charming gentleman, motioned for my grandmother to go first with a sweet, "Ladies First." She went through and left the store, and continued smuggling Jews out of the danger zone, now with a new pair of Hermes gloves.

"Never confuse culture with morality," my grandmother told me. "Did Goering have culture? Sure! He was of aristocratic heritage. He was a patron of the arts and attended opera, and he probably cried while listening to Wagner's beautiful compositions! And he most certainly always let the lady go first. But did he have morals? Not a shred! He was the highest official in the Nazi hierarchy to authorize on paper the Final Solution. Morality and culture have nothing to do with each other. Decency and morality come from a divine source, and no amount of culture can substitute for that."

We can see the same lesson in the first of the Ten Commandments, "I am the Lord, your G-d, who took you out of Egypt, the house of slavery." It sounds redundant; we know that Egypt is the house of slavery! Perhaps G-d is telling us, look at the Egyptians, the pinnacle of culture in the world. They have papyri, pyramids, incredible embalming technique, astrology, art, hieroglyphics, brain surgery, and achievements in every field imaginable. Yet they are still the house of slavery, the place in which your male children were thrown into the Nile, your babies stuck in the wall as bricks if the parents didn't make enough bricks themselves. G-d is telling us that if we want to simply follow the prevailing dominant culture, then we may end up being the most cultured barbarians in the world.

Behind many great civilizations you will find incredible barbarism. The Greeks and Romans clubbed their children to death if they were born with any deformity or, sometimes, just for being born female. They would cheer gleefully as they watched thousands of people kill each other in "games" at the coliseums.

The Germans were the most cultured people in the world with their composers, scientists, poets, and scholars leading the world in achievements, yet we saw what they were capable of in the Holocaust.

On Passover we celebrate the Jewish people's redemption from a place of mere culture to a world of morality. They left behind the pyramids, hieroglyphics, advanced agriculture, and music of the dominant culture, and went out to the desert to learn the ethical precepts of genuine humanity and civilization, from the only true source, the Creator of humanity.

On Passover our mission is to see ourselves as if we are leaving Egypt. We must walk in the very same footsteps as our ancestors did, turning away from the dominant culture, refusing to think that it is automatically right because that is "culture," and instead turn to the divine moral code of the Torah. This is how we discover real freedom and liberate our souls from the shackles of "cultural servitude."

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com*

**The Man I Thought I Knew**

**By Jonathan Rosenblum**

*A high ranking officer in the Almighty's army -- and a member of the "Greatest Generation" who assisted General Dwight Eisenhower -- passed away recently in Jerusalem*



Reb Meyer Birnbaum, zt”l

I thought I knew Reb Meyer Birnbaum, zt"l, who recently passed away in his 95th year. But I didn't know him at all.

Nearly twenty years ago, Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, who had been a long-time neighbor of Reb Meyer's and often traveled with him on his weekday morning drive to the Western Wall for the daybreak *minyan*, had the idea of a book based on stories he had heard from Reb Meyer over the years. Reb Meyer would dictate his life story onto tapes and I would transform those tapes into a book.

Rabbi Zlotowitz envisioned the book centering on Reb Meyer's experiences during World War II as a religious soldier and officer — the Normandy landing, liberating Buchenwald, and then remaining in the DP camps for six months after he was entitled to return stateside and be discharged.

Reb Meyer initially resisted the idea of a first-person memoir. But Rabbis Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman persuaded him that by talking about what he had witnessed and the great people he had known he would be removing the focus from himself, whereas a third-person book would suggest that he was someone of inherent distinction.

Lieutenant Birnbaum served as the interpreter for General Dwight Eisenhower, the Allied High Commander, on the latter's visit to Buchewald, and later when Eisenhower was introduced to the Klausenberger Rebbe on Yom Kippur in the Feldafing DP camp.

Next, certain members of his family opposed the book, but by now Reb Meyer was enthusiastic about the project. "If I can be *mechazek* [strengthen the faith of] one person," he told a son who objected to an autobiography in his lifetime, "it will be worth it." In the end, he was *mechazek* tens of thousands, and his son admitted that he had been wrong.

dingbat

WHEN I FIRST MET REB MEYER, he was already 75-years-old. A tall man, he still stood fully erect, and would continue to do so into his '90s. At that first meeting, he told me to pretend I was trying to stab him, and showed me a few judo moves from his days in U.S. army. His grip was still vise-like.

Unfortunately, his financial condition was not equally good. He had once been the successful proprietor of the Brooklyn-based chain Mauzone Foods, but the business had gone bankrupt, through no fault of his own. He did not even own a life insurance policy, and still had a number of children left to marry. His only marketable skill, at that point in life, was his recipe for an unrivalled, unsalted herring and delicious pickles. Though he lectured annually on his wartime experiences at a few Jerusalem women's seminaries, these were non-remunerative.

Then [*Lieutenant Birnbaum*](http://artscroll.com/linker/jewishworldreview/link/Books/LTBH.html) appeared, and opened another chapter of his eventful life. On the basis of the book, Reb Meyer was launched on an international speaking career. For the next fifteen years, until he was close to ninety, he held audiences across the globe transfixed for four hours or more, as he related his experiences.

For the rest of his life, Reb Meyer was known everywhere as Lieutenant Birnbaum. The name appeared in English on the Hebrew notices announcing his death and funeral. The hapless fellow announcing them from a speaker as he traveled through Jerusalem's religious neighborhoods struggled mightily to pronounce the word lieutenant.

The title [*Lieutenant Birnbaum*](http://artscroll.com/linker/jewishworldreview/link/Books/LTBH.html) captured something essential about Reb Meyer. He was the Almighty's soldier, in chapter after chapter of his life: as one of a group of idealistic youth in the impoverished New Lots/East New York neighborhood, in whom a passion for Judaism burned, despite their lack of any formal religious education; in the DP camps after the war; and in his critical role ending the scourge of totally unnecessary autopsies in Israeli hospitals in the '60s. Before entering the hospital for the last time, he told his son Rabbi Akiva Birnbaum, "This may be my last fight. But I'm going to fight all the way."

[*Lieutenant Birnbaum*](http://artscroll.com/linker/jewishworldreview/link/Books/LTBH.html) struck a chord and quickly became one of ArtScroll's all-time best-sellers. Readers recognized a "normal" person like themselves, placed in extraordinary circumstances. Reb Meyer's life had not been a bed of roses. He experienced hunger as a youngster, the loss of a younger brother in the Normandy landing, divorce, and bankruptcy.

Yet his *simchas chayim*. (joy of life), in the words of his daughter-in-law Rebbetzin Blimie Birnbaum, was palpable. He could put any problem on the shelf and not just carry on, but do so with boundless gratitude to the Divine. He felt himself to be the Father's beloved "only son."

People in pain, wrote to him from around the globe. He kept thousands of letters from readers who had been uplifted by [*Lieutenant Birnbaum*](http://artscroll.com/linker/jewishworldreview/link/Books/LTBH.html), and tried to answer all of them. Something about his story moved and gave hope to many who were suffering — abused wives, religious rebellious children — just as he had once given hope to those in the DP camps who thought they had nothing left to live for.

In the later capacity, said the renowned sage Rabbi Don Segal in his eulogy, he "blew *ruach chayim* (the breath of life) into those who were nothing but bones." He assured despondent survivors that he was a rich man and would provide them with jobs when the arrived in America.

Though the first part was far from true, the great figures of that era, such as [Irving Bunim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irving_Bunim) and [Mike Tress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Tress), made good on the promise. Wherever he went in his later years, he was accosted by survivors who remembered the tall American soldier who had delivered thousands of letters and packages to survivors sent through the Army Post Office.

The fame from [*Lieutenant Birnbaum*](http://artscroll.com/linker/jewishworldreview/link/Books/LTBH.html) allowed him to fulfill his favorite role — that of a loving father giving to his children. (He had sixteen children of his own.) In the heyday of Mauzone Foods, it was a factory of kindness. He used to put a long finger under the scale to hold it up, while measuring out the orders of widows and wives of rabbinic dignataries. Only [Rabbi Aharon Kotler](%20http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aharon_Kotler)'s *Rebbetzin* (wife and helpmate), ever caught him doing so.

For more than thirty years, he packed his car and later a Mitsubishi van in a manner that would have done credit to any college fraternity for his morning drive to the Western Wall, where he had special permission, in his last years, to drive all the way to the entrance to the men's section. Later in the day, he would cruise the streets looking for people in distress to transport. Every *Shabbos* (Sabbath), the Birnbaum home was filled with either yeshiva students or seminary girls eager to soak up his joy and hear his stories first-hand.

dingbat

DESPITE ALL I KNEW ABOUT LIEUTENANT BIRNBAUM, nothing prepared me for the sight of hundreds of sages at his funeral just before Sabbath. Besides his son Rabbi Akiva Birnbaum, the eulogies were delivered by Rabbi Yitzchak Ezrachi of Mirrer Yeshiva, a long-time neighbor; Rabbi Tzvi Cheshin, the recognized *ari shebe'chabura* of Mirrer Yeshiva for four decades; and Rabbi Don Segal.

Other major Torah figures wanted to be offer their eulogy, but time did not allow. Rabbi Ezrachi expressed his "jealousy" for Reb Meyer's portion in the World to Come, and said that he did not know if there was another person in the generation with as many *zechuyos* (merits) as Reb Meyer.

In the midst of the eulogies, a very old man entered the hall sobbing. He kissed the deceased's feet, and then cried out, "These are the same *tefillin*. [prayer gear]"

This old Jew and two friends had escaped from a Nazi prison camp in the last days of the War. Freezing in their skimpy prisoners uniforms, they put on the uniforms of slain Nazi soldiers whom they found lying in the woods. The Jew in question subsequently encountered an American convoy wearing the uniform of a high German officer.

When he reached into his pocket, the American soldiers thought he was grabbing a grenade. They were about to shoot him, when he cried out, "*Ich bin a Yid* [I'm a Jew]!" Fortunately for him, Lieutenant Birnbaum understood what he was saying, and ordered his men not to shoot. In the Jew's pocket was a pair of *tefillin* that he had taken great risk to guard throughout the war.

Torah giants recognized greatness in Reb Meyer. He exemplified the *temimus* (simplicity/purity) that Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz used to say characterized his generation of Americans. His respect for religious dignitaries was without limit. Reb Meyer and friends like the late Reb Moshe Swerdloff gathered around [Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yitzchak_Hutner) upon his arrival in New York from Europe, and later did everything possible to help [Rabbi Leib Malin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aryeh_Leib_Malin) and other great survivors of the Mirrer in Shanghai establish Yeshivas Bais HaTalmud.

[Rabbi Beinisch Finkel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binyomin_Beinush_Finkel), the late Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir, was famous for never accepting a favor from anyone. Yet he accepted a ride from Reb Meyer, from the very first day the latter started driving to the daybreak *minyan* at the Western All, and would even ask Reb Meyer to drive him to various lifecycle events. He knew that he was giving Reb Meyer boundless joy by doing so.

Every morning at the Western All, Reb Meyer would read through pages of names of people in anguish before the start of davening. Once, in his last years, he exclaimed, "*Ribbono shel Olam* [Master of the Universe], I have no more strength, You have to bring *Mashiach* [the Messiah]." His Rosh Hashanah blessing to his fellow pilgrims at the Western Wall this past Rosh Hashanah eve was: "Next year, may we be merit to gather on the other side of the Western Wall."

May he continue to implore the Divine, Whom he always addressed as a beloved son speaking to his Father, on behalf of Jewry, from his high place on the other side.

*Reprinted from the March 11, 2013 email of Jewish World Review*

**Chassidic Story #797**

**Real Rebbe Criteria**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000gBW0:001HFki800001nnI&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1363095339&randid=518227877&content=central##)

One day in 1866, when the ***Rebbe Rashab*** an acronym for Rabbi Sholom [Dov-]Ber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe-to-be--was five years old, he and his brother [Shneur-] Zalman Aharon decided to play "chasid and Rebbe."

The Raza [an acronym for Rabbi Zalman Aharon], who was about a year and a half older, would act as Rebbe and the Rashab would be the chasid entering the Rebbe’s room for private audience. The Raza sat on a chair and straightened his hat, and the Rashab belted his waist as preparation for coming to ask him for a tikun [soul] rectification.

"For what are you asking a tikkun?" the Raza asked.

The Rashab replied, "This past Shabbos I ate some nuts, and later found out that the Alter Rebbe [their great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe] writes that it is preferable to refrain from eating nuts on Shabbos." \*\*

The Raza counseled him to make sure henceforth to pray looking at the words in the Siddur prayer-book and not by heart.

"Your advice won't help, and you're not a Rebbe!" exclaimed the Rashab.

“Why not?” asked his puzzled brother.

"When a Rebbe answers, he is supposed to sigh. You didn't sigh, so your advice is no good!"

Retelling this incident, the Lubavitcher Rebbe of our generation (1902-1994) commented that when one Jew helps another, the assistance itself is not enough. What is vital is his sigh, empathizing with the other's pain. Doing a favor for another for the sake of merit and improving oneself, for the sake of one's own self-perfection, without feeling the other's heartache, is not kindness, but the opposite.

Editor’s note: \*\* Due to technical problems involved in the disposal of the shells see Shulchan Aruch HaRav 319:9.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles primarily from Lma'an Yishme'u #122, and from other Chabad sources.

Connection: Seasonal -- The 93rd yahrzeit of the Rebbe Reshab falls this Wednesday (2 Nissan).

Biographical note: **Rabbi Sholom Dov-ber Schneersohn** (Cheshvan 20, 1860 - Nissan 2, 1920), known as the ***Rebbe Reshab***, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought.

**Rabbi Shneur-Zalman Aharon Schneersohn** (19 Tammuz, 1858 â€“ 11 Cheshvan, 1908), known as the ***Raza***, was the eldest son of the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Maharash. Although his brilliance and holiness was well-known to all, after his father’s passing he refused all leadership positions, so his younger brother, Rabbi Sholom Dov-Ber, eventually became the fifth rebbe of the dynasty.

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