**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayigash 5772**

Volume 3, Issue #14 5 Tevet 5772/December 31, 2011

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**Hashem Doesn’t Forget to**

**Reward Even a Brutal Nazi**

**War Criminal for a Good Deed**

**By Daniel Keren**

Rabbi Lazar Brody, world renowned Torah speaker and translator of “*Garden of Emunah*” spoke earlier this month in the Flatbush shul of the Sephardic Lebanese Congregation. He recalled an incredible story he heard from the great Jewish historian and educator – Rabbi Berel Wein who also has a distinguished career as a pulpit rabbi. Rabbi Wein related an event that happened in the *shul* that he is currently *rav* of in *Yerushalayim*.

**The Boys Had Perfect Payis, Sidecurls**

One *Shabbos*, there was a man who came to Rabbi Wein’s shul accompanied by his three young sons, ages 9, 7 and 5. Even with their perfect payis, sidecurls, they didn’t look Jewish with their stunning blond Aryan hair and shining blue eyes. Additionally, the boys were unusually well behaved, not running out of their seats and around the *shul* like many little children do.

After the *davening*, Rabbi Wein greeted the father and asked him where he was from. The guest said he was from Rechovoth. Rabbi Wein asked where his family originally came from and this made the man uncomfortable. Rabbi Wein apologized, and asked if he was perhaps a *baal teshuvah*.

**A German Born Convert**

The man explained that he was really a *Gior*, a convert to Judaism and that he had been born in Germany. Once started, he began to tell of how he embarked on his unusual and fascinating spiritual journey to *Yiddishkeit*. Not only was he a German, but his father was a Nazi war criminal (yemach shmo) who had spent 10 years in prison after the Second World War.

The son went to study microbiology in a college in the United States and there he for the first time met and became friendly with many Jews. In Germany he had learned about that sordid chapter of his nation’s history in which his people, brutally mistreated the Jews and he could never understand why people like his father could so hate the Jews who in his eyes were such nice people.

**Broke Off All Contact**

**With His Father**

After graduating from college in America, he enrolled in Hebrew University in *Yerushalayim* and earned a doctorate degree in microbiology, before becoming involved in researching many life-saving cures. At the same time he studied with some rabbis and converted to Judaism, breaking all contact with his father who as an officer of an SS Storm Troopers brigade had been responsible for the murder of many thousands of Jews.

Shortly before he met Rabbi Wein, this convert had received a phone call from his mother informing him that his father was dying and that he should come and see him one last time. The Gair spoke to his rabbis and they told him, that one had to have a sense of gratitude to his biological father even if he was a despicable Nazi war criminal.

**Returns to Germany with**

**His Three Little Sons**

So he boarded a plane with his three young sons and landed in Germany. He went to the hospital where his father was being treated. His father could barely look at his beautiful offspring because they all looked very *frum*. Finally, unable to control himself, the son asked his father “You must have done some good deed did that you came to deserve three such wonderful grandchildren?”

The grandfather at first was unable to think of any good action of his that might have resulted in what happened. Finally he recalled that once he led a group of murderous SS troops into a Catholic orphanage in Warsaw Poland in 1942. They were looking for Jewish children hiding as Catholics.

**One Inexplicable Moment of Pity**

At first the grandfather was unable to detect any children. But then towards the end of inspection he noticed three boys whom he was positive were Jewish. And for some strange reason which he himself to the end of his life could not understand, he felt a sense of pity for them and turned his eyes as they quickly escaped from the danger he represented.

The son shouted, “Father, why didn’t you save a fourth or fifth child? Do you know that neither my wife or I have infertility problems. But since the birth of our youngest child five years ago, we haven’t been able to conceive and have any more children. I now realize that our three sons are the result of that sole one good deed you did.”

Rabbi Brody asked the audience at the Sephardic Lebanese Congregation, what is the lesson of the above story? The lesson is that Hashem has gratitude and doesn’t deny the reward owed to a person, even if that individual is a despicable Nazi war criminal! If a Nazi can get such a reward as having three righteous grandsons, can we even imagine just what *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* has in store and will give as a reward to those of us who have served Him all of our lives with all of our strength?

*Reprinted from the December 23rd edition of the Yated Ne’eman.*

**After 123 Years, Manischewitz Creates Kosher Food for Gentiles**

**By Andrew Adam Newman**

*Andrew Adam Newman reports in the New York Times:* In recent years, Jews who keep kosher rejoiced when popular foods that had been off-limits gained kosher certification, from Oreo cookies in 1997 to the Tootsie Roll in 2009.

According to Mintel, the market research firm, the growth in sales of kosher products - up 41 percent from 2003 to 2010 and projected to grow an additional 23 percent by 2013 - owes less to the popularity of keeping kosher or to new products than to existing products becoming certified.

Now, as mainstream brands increasingly pitch to kosher consumers, Manischewitz, the 123-year-old kosher brand, is doing the opposite: creating kosher products that also appeal to gentiles.

**Company’s Popular Passover Foods**

While Manischewitz items like matzo are popular Passover fare stocked in a supermarket’s kosher sections, new products have no such association.

“Instead of taking the older products we have out of the kosher aisle and forcing them into the main aisle, we’re creating new products that have a place in the main aisle,” said Alain Bankier, who along with Paul Bensabat became co-chief executive of the company in 2008.

A new line of broths, for example, is being shelved in many supermarkets not with most Manischewitz items but rather in the soup aisle alongside such popular mainstream broths as Swanson and College Inn (Campbell Soup Company and Del Monte Foods brands).

A new line of Manischewitz gravies also will be stocked with other mainstream brands. Manischewitz ads traditionally have emphasized Judaism, showing yarmulke-wearing celebrants at, say, a Seder. But new ads, by Joseph Jacobs Advertising in New York, the Manischewitz agency for more than three decades, take a decidedly more secular approach.

**Little if Any Reference**

**To Jewish Holidays**

“Don’t miss the boat,” says a print ad for beef gravy, which shows it being poured from a sauce boat onto mashed potatoes - no shofar or Star of David in sight.

New ads “make little if any reference to any Jewish holiday,” said Elie Rosenfeld, chief executive of Joseph Jacobs. “There’s a tagline we use, ‘Bringing families to the table since 1888,’ and we want to be part of that family with you whether it’s Rosh Hashana, Hanukkah or Easter.”

Although Manischewitz typically advertises only in Jewish publications, ads for the broths and gravies will be in circulars in Sunday papers, including The Washington Post and The Star-Ledger in Newark.

**A $10 Million Advertising and Marketing Campaign**

In all, the company reportedly will spend more than $10 million on advertising and marketing in 2012, but declined to be more specific.

The 2012 Man-o-Manischewitz Cook-Off, now in its sixth year, also aims to appeal to a general audience. (”Man-o-Manischewitz” was first popularized by Sammy Davis Jr. in ads in the 1960s for Manischewitz wine, a separate entity from the food company owned by Constellation Brands through a licensing agreement.)

The cooking contest is being advertised on general-interest cooking sites like FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com., and Claire Robinson, host of “Food Network Challenge,” is serving as the judge.

While the contest requires entrants to use both a broth and another ingredient by Manischewitz, and to abide by kosher guidelines, it encourages recipes from Japanese, Italian and Greek cuisines.

Four finalists for the contest, which closes on Jan. 15, will participate in a live cook-off in Manhattan on March 28, with the winner receiving a prize valued at $25,000 that includes Maytag appliances and $7,000.

In 2010, Sarah Freedman-Izquierdo of Miami Beach won with her recipe for Mandarin Dumpling Soup, besting other finalists unlikely to be encountered in a traditional Jewish deli, including rosemary duck cassoulet.

Traditional Passover products like matzo, gefilte fish and macaroons are among the biggest sellers for Manischewitz, and as recently as a decade ago sales tied to the holiday accounted for as much as 80 percent of annual revenues, according to the company.

“Our goal was to really no longer make Manischewitz the Passover brand, to turn the company around to more of a year-round market,” said Mr. Bensabat, the co-chief executive.

**A Marketing Revolution Over the Last Three Years**

Today, Passover sales account for about 40 percent of annual revenues, he said, adding that it reflects “a marketing revolution at the Manischewitz Company over the last three years.”

Along with appealing to mainstream consumers, the company has focused on sprucing up its existing lines with package redesigns that assert more health claims, and new products to appeal to a younger generation of kosher shoppers.

Manischewitz, which along with its flagship brand owns other kosher brands including Guiltless Gourmet, Rokeach, and Mrs. Adler’s, is in the midst of releasing about 70 products among those brands into 2012, Mr. Bensabat said.

While the company has a tradition of products like borscht and gefilte fish, traditional fare for Ashkenazi, or Eastern European, Jews, Mr. Bensabat and Mr. Bankier both are Sephardic Jews from Casablanca, Morocco, and grew up eating Mediterranean kosher dishes.

**Introducing a Much More Spicier Moroccan Fish Meat Balls**

This year under its Season brand, the company introduced Moroccan fish meat balls, which unlike more mild gefilte fish has bolder spices including cumin. This month, the Manischewitz brand introduced Mediterranean matzos and gefilte fish, both including rosemary, oregano and olive oil.

Other products the company hopes will appeal to more modern sensibilities include organic matzos, white chocolate-covered egg matzos, gluten-free cake mixes and a red velvet cake mix.

“We want to be able to not only retain our older consumers, but also attract younger new consumers,” said Mr. Bensabat. “What does Manischewitz stand for?” Mr. Bensabat asked rhetorically.

“Many years ago it started as Eastern European, Ashkenazi cooking, but Manischewitz is no longer just that. It’s also anything good that is kosher.”

*Reprinted from the December 27, 2011 edition of The New York Times.*

**Are the Ten Lost Tribes Ever Coming Back? The Saga of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel**

**By Rabbi** [**Yehuda Shurpin**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/15169/jewish/Yehuda-Shurpin.htm)

 Before discussing where the [lost ten tribes](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1679684/jewish/The-Exile-of-the-Ten-Lost-Tribes.htm) actually went, let us first ascertain whether they are in fact ever going to be reunited with the remaining Jews.

**A Recorded Dispute in the**

**Mishna About the Ten Tribes**

There is a recorded dispute between two great sages in the Mishnah as to whether the ten tribes are going to come back:

[Rabbi Akiva](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/277384/jewish/Rabbi-Akiba.htm) says, “The ten tribes will not return, as the verse says (Deuteronomy 29:27), ‘And the L‑rd uprooted them from upon their land, with fury, anger and great wrath, and He cast them to another land, as it is this day.’ Just as a day passes and it will never return, so too, they will be exiled never to return.”

**Rabbi Eliezer’s Reasoning**

Rabbi Eliezer says, “Just like a day is followed by darkness, and the light later returns, so too, although it will become ‘dark’ for the ten tribes, G‑d will ultimately take them out of their darkness.”

The Talmud then goes on to cite a third opinion:

Rabbi Shimon ben Yehudah, of the town of Acco, says in the name of Rabbi Shimon: “If their deeds are as this day’s, they will not return; otherwise they shall.”

So, in short, there seem to be three opinions on the matter. Rabbi Akiva holds that the ten tribes are not coming back; Rabbi Eliezer holds that they are; and Rabbi Shimon says that it depends on whether they repent.

**Rabbi Akiva Argues They**

**Are Lost Forever**

Upon further analysis, Rabbi Akiva’s opinion needs further explanation, as it seem to contradict clear prophecies about the ultimate reunion of the ten tribes with the rest of Israel.

The [prophet Ezekiel](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112374/jewish/The-Prophet-Ezekiel.htm) describes the ultimate reunion between the ten tribes and the tribe of Judah (the ten tribes are represented by the tribe of Ephraim, because their capital was in the territorial portion of that tribe):

Say to them, “So says the L‑rd G‑d: ‘Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions, and I will place them with him with the stick of Judah, and I will make them into one stick, and they shall become one in My hand.’” And the sticks upon which you shall write shall be in your hand before their eyes. And say to them, “So says the L‑rd G‑d: ‘Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side, and I will bring them to their land. And I will make them into one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be to them all as a king; and they shall no longer be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore.’”

**Foretelling How Israel Will Be**

**Divided at the Time of Redemption**

Additionally, the prophet clearly foretells in detail how Israel will be divided into thirteen portions at the time of the redemption. So what exactly does Rabbi Akiva mean when he says that the ten tribes are not coming back?

[Rabbi Joseph Albo](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112044/jewish/Rabbi-Joseph-Albo.htm) (1380–1444) attempts to reconcile these prophecies with Rabbi Akiva’s opinion by explaining that Rabbi Akiva was of the view that the prophecies had been fulfilled during the era of the second [Holy Temple in Jerusalem](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/144586/jewish/The-Holy-Temple.htm). However, this is problematic in light of the fact that in the Midrash, Rabbi Akiva himself compares the exile of the ten tribes from Israel to that of a widow, which implies that they are gone and will not return.

**Did They Already Return?**

While many have the idea that all Jews now are descendants of only two and a half tribes, the truth is that when the ten tribes were captured and sent into exile, a tenth of their population remained. As the prophet Amos proclaims, “For so said the L‑rd G‑d: The city that gives forth a thousand shall remain with a hundred, and the one that gives forth a hundred shall remain with ten, of the house of Israel.”

Additionally, there is another account of the return of some of the ten tribes: [King Josiah](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/464028/jewish/King-Josiah.htm) undertook to restore the Holy Temple, which had been neglected for a long time. While the restoration was taking place under the supervision of the high priest Hilkiah, an ancient [Torah scroll](http://www.chabad.org/library/howto/wizard_cdo/aid/339590/jewish/How-is-it-Made.htm) from the time of [Moses](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/73398/jewish/Moses.htm) was found. This unique Torah scroll had been kept in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, but in the time of the idol-worshipping kings an upright priest removed it from there and hid it in a secret place in the Temple. When the Torah scroll was opened and read, it opened to the section in Deuteronomy containing an admonition, where G‑d warns the Jewish people of the terrible consequences of neglecting the Torah and the commandments, leading to destruction and exile.

**The King is Shaken by**

**The Divine Warning**

The king, deeply shaken and heartbroken, tore his clothes and ordered Hilkiah and four other royal messengers to go to the holy prophets to inquire as to what should be done in view of the divine warning that had just been received. The king’s messengers went to the [prophetess Huldah](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112503/jewish/Huldah-The-Prophetess.htm), who then prophesied about the impending doom of exile.

The Talmud notes that under normal circumstances, the king should have sent for [Jeremiah](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112327/jewish/The-Prophet-Jeremiah.htm), who was the leading prophet. However, Jeremiah was on a divine mission to the ten tribes, and in fact he actually gathered them up and returned them to Israel, where Josiah ruled over them.

**Jeremiah Only Gathered**

**Some of the Ten Tribes**

This, however, does not mean that the prophet Jeremiah returned all of the exiles. Rather, he gathered only some people of the ten tribes who had managed to escape while being led into exile. They then joined the rest of the Jewish nation and are included in their history.

In light of the above, we can better understand Rabbi Akiva’s view that the ten tribes will not return. For what he means to say is that all those who are meant to return have already done so; the rest are lost forever, having intermingled with the other nations.

What we are left with, then, is a disagreement as to whether the rest of the lost tribes, those who have not returned, will ever return and be reunited with the rest of the Jewish nation.

Maimonides writes, with regards to this dispute between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer as to whether the lost ten tribes will ever return, that “when there is a dispute in the Talmud that has no actionable relevance to us, Jewish law does not rule either way.”

However, there are those who do rule, and say that we follow Rabbi Eliezer’s opinion that the ten tribes will ultimately be reunited with the rest of Israel at the time of the redemption with the coming of the Moshiach.

*Reprinted from this week’s emailof Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Chernobyl Rebbe**

**And Itche the Miser**

The good news spread throughout town. Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl would be visiting to celebrate the first days of Chanuka! In addition to the usual excitement that a Chasid feels upon being in his Rebbe's presence, there were others things to be excited about, as well.

The Rebbe would honor one of his Chasidim with hosting him for the evening tea. At this "tea party," which all of the chasidim would attend, the Rebbe share words of Torah that would delight the souls of his followers.

**The Rebbe Would Bless the Host**

In addition, the Rebbe would bless the host at the end of the evening with material and spiritual bounty. Lastly, everyone knew that the 18 rubles that the Rebbe "charged" for the honor of hosting him would be given to charity. Thus, the host would give charity through the Rebbe's own holy hand.

Itche the Miser went with all of the other Chasidim to greet the Rebbe when he arrived in town. Itche's father had been a prominent businessman. Like his father, Itche was also a Chasid. Unlike his father, Itche's main focus in life was his business, his luxurious home and all of its exquisite furnishings. Also unlike his father, Itche found it hard to part with even a copper for charity. So, one can only imagine how Itche felt when the Rebbe arrived and suggested, "Itche, would you like to host me for tea?"

**Itche Panics as He Agrees to the Rebbe’s Suggestion**

Of course, Itche said, "It would be my honor Rebbe." Inwardly, though, Itche panicked. Tea with the Rebbe and all of his Chasidim! They would destroy his home! Then an idea came to him; he would stand at his front door and allow only the Rebbe in. A marvelous plan! Itche was relieved. It would cost him 18 gold rubles but at least his expensive carpets and antiques would remain intact. Itche was sure his idea would work until the Rebbe said, "Itche, could you please personally transport me to your home?"

Now Itche's mind worked feverishly. If he drove the Rebbe in his carriage and they travelled quickly to Itche's home, they would arrive long before the Chasidim who were walking and he would still have time to bolt the front door so that no one else could enter. Ahhh, Itche sighed in relief.

Finally it was the first night of Chanuka. Itche lit the Chanuka menora with his family. He sat by the Chanuka lights for a little while. He took one last look at his beautiful home and then went to pick up the Rebbe. When Itche arrived, the Rebbe lit the Menora and recited the blessings after which the Chasidim all answered "Amen." Then they began to sing nigunim, wordless soul melodies, as the Rebbe meditated on the light of the small flame. An air of tranquility permeated the room, except in Itche's corner.

**Hoping to Get Home Before**

**The Hordes of Chassidim**

Finally, the Rebbe motioned to Itche that they would go now. Itche pressed his coachman to drive as quickly as possible, certain that with G-d's help he could put a fair distance between his carriage and the Chasidim.

But, halfway through the journey, the Rebbe ordered the carriage to stop. He turned to Itche and said, "I didn't realize your house is so far. Such a long journey was not included in my original price. If you want me to come any further you must pay me another 18 gold rubles." With the Chasidim nearly catching up, Itche had no choice but to agree. Eighteen gold rubles was still less than it would cost to replace his precious carpets and furniture!

Within a few moments, they arrived at Itche's home. The Rebbe stared intently at the 15 steps that led up to the door. "I had no idea you had so many steps, dear Itche. That was not included in my original price. If you want me to go inside your home, you must pay me 18 gold rubles for each step!"

**The Chassidim Catch Up and**

**Accompany the Rebbe Into the House**

Itche nearly fainted. Before he had a chance to respond, the Chasidim - who had caught up - accompanied the Rebbe up the stairs and inside.

The scene that unfolded before Itche's eyes was just as he had imagined. He was not able to concentrate on even one holy word that the Rebbe taught about Chanuka. The evening finally came to an end and Itche breathed a sigh of relief. As the Rebbe was about to leave, Itche suddenly remembered to ask the Rebbe to bless his family. Surely this would make up for everything.

Quickly Itche gathered together his children and grandchildren and requested, "Rebbe, please bless my family."

"Bless your family?" the Rebbe looked at Itche in surprise. "I have no blessing for them," he said, and sadly turned away.

Itche felt as if the earth had opened beneath his feet. "Rebbe," Itche cried out, in a voice filled with desperation. The Rebbe looked at Itche long and hard. "In order for me to bless your family, you will have to sign over your entire fortune to me," the Rebbe said seriously.

How could he sign over everything to the Rebbe? He would be penniless! Moments of eternity passed. But then, he looked into the Rebbe's eyes and saw within them compassion. With his last ounce of strength he said, "If that is what I must do, then I will do it." And then he fainted.

**The Rebbe Offers Mazel Tov to Itche**

In a haze, Itche heard the Rebbe saying, "Mazel tov, Itche!" The Rebbe began to bless Itche and his entire family. "May you and your family know only joy and health and prosperity from now on." For many moments, blessings flowed from the Rebbe, each one greater than the previous one.

"Know, Itche, that you have just fought a great battle with your evil inclination. Until a few moments ago, you did not own your wealth, your evil inclination owned it! When you agreed to give me all of your possessions, I was able to wrest your wealth from your evil inclination. I now return it to you as Chanuka gelt (money). Use it well, dear Itche."

Itche thanked the Rebbe and began to take hundreds of gold ruble notes from his wallet. But the Rebbe declined. "I only accept 18 rubles for tea."

Henceforth, Itche was a changed man. Itche generously shared his "Chanuka gelt" throughout the entire year.

*Reprinted the recent issue of “L’Chaim” for Parshas Vayeshev published by the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn.*

**Choosing a Livelihood that Allows One a Chance**

**For a Live of Torah**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*Then you shall say, ‘Your servants have been shepherds from our youth until now, both we and our forefathers*.’” (Beresheet 46:34)

In this week’s perashah, we read a dialogue between Yosef and his brothers that is repeated between the brothers and Pharaoh. Yosef says that when Pharaoh will ask, “What is your vocation?” you should respond “We are shepherds and so were our ancestors.” Rabbi Chaim Weinberg asks, why is it so important for the brothers to tell Pharaoh how their forefathers supported their families? And second, what is so significant about being a shepherd that Yosef instructed his brothers to emphasize this to the king?

**Why Hevel’s Occupation**

**Was Favored by Hashem**

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch on Parashat Beresheet explains that Hevel’s occupation found favor in Hashem’s eyes while Kayin’s did not. It is hinted in the wording, “And Hashem accepted Hevel and his gift.” Hashem accepted Hevel’s gift not only because the gift was superior but also because Hashem was happy with the vocation he had chosen. R’ Hirsch discusses this topic and contrasts a farmer (Kayin’s occupation) who toils laboriously from dawn until late at night, with a shepherd, who sits next to his sheep with ample time to contemplate Hashem’s Torah and His greatness (Hevel’s occupation). Most of our ancestors chose to support themselves in this way so they would have time to invest in spiritual pursuits.

**The Advantage of Their**

**Ancestral Profession**

When Ya’akob and his sons went down to Egypt they did not forsake their ancestral profession even though shepherding contravened everything Egypt stood for. Their chosen vocation enabled them to remain true servants of Hashem who had the time and peace of mind to dwell on Torah study and to live a life sanctioned by Torah.

What a lesson this is to all of us! There is no doubt that there is a time when one will choose a means of livelihood. However, we must make sure our chosen parnasah is one that allows us ample time and peace of mind to pursue a Torah life and Torah study. Doing so will enable us to continue our Torah studies for our own benefit and to bring pleasure to Hashem. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin*

**Mrs. Larisa Komsky**

**Our Lost Angel**

**Dr. Jerry Bernstein and Rabbi Marvin Schneider**

About 15 years ago an angel started to appear regularly at our 6:15 Shachris minyan at the Young Israel of Avenue U. She came in for about 15 minutes in her jogging suit, sat in the rear of our shul, sitting and meditating often in semi-darkness.

With the passage of time she attended a Yom Tov service. Inwardly motivated, she embarked upon a quest to return to the source toward which her spirit drew her. In the ensuing years, she slowly and steadily came to Shabbos and Kashrus observance together with a tremendous love of learning Torah. Rare was the class that she missed.

**Revived the Shul’s Shavuos Luncheon**

Her involvement in our Shul’s activities followed her commitment to observance. She single handedly revived our Shavuos Luncheon, which had been just barely limping along for some time. Her unique style left no detail to chance and the classy way in which things were handled and presented, set a new standard for events to follow.

Who could ever forget the Shabbos luncheon which she sponsored to celebrate the full koshering of her kitchen, or the complete breakfasts that she catered to mark the various yahrzeits which she took upon herself to observe. She would speak lovingly about her father, sister and grandparents always drawing inspiration from their examples. Her tributes were both heartfelt and instructive. Not only did she draw strength from the lives of the deceased, but her listeners were duly moved as well. It wasn’t too long before we realized that our angel would be a great asset as a member of the Board of Directors, to which position she was elected.

**Instituted Weekly Hot**

**Kiddush on Shabbos**

An innovation which she spearheaded was that there should be a hot Kiddush every Shabbos. Leading the way, she sponsored three out of four kiddushim every month, so that the shul’s limited budget would not be strained by this new substantial financial obligation.

Nearly everything in our Young Israel has borne the imprint of the hand of this angel. Years ago, when our weekday Shachris minyan faltered and it was questionable whether anyone say Kaddish would be able to do so with confidence, she took out ads in the Russian language newspapers and recruited retired men for that purpose. She interviewed them and chose well. Those men are not only regular attendees of our morning minyan, but are active participants in our shul’s activities with their own unique contributions.

**Supervised the Yom Tov Bulletins**

In subsequent years, she gladly undertook getting out the Yom Tov bulletins. These were works of art, as well as informational, employing colorful graphics, making for a very welcoming and pleasing format. These were sent out to the local community and well beyond. This first-class product reflected most favorably upon our shul.

Larisa Komsky was a self-made woman who emigrated from the former Soviet Union. Raising her son Vadim alone, she had the will to complete substantial educational achievemnts. She became both a licensed CPA and CFA, besides receiving her MBA. After working for various firms, she opened a successful practice in Sheepshead Bay. Many in the community and in our congregation became her clients. She was both competent in her work and ethical in her conduct. Very often, she consulted with our Rabbi about the permissibility of certain things within the framework of halachah.

**One-Person Welcoming Committee**

With all this going on, Larisa had the will and stamina to be with us nearly every Shabbos and Yom Tov – even often during the week, She was a one-person welcoming committee in addition to all other things she did. Because of her greeting everyone and making them feel welcome, people tended to return and ultimately become part of our Bais Knesses.

Alas, our angel who had ensured the viability of our shul, was summarily taken from us. As she came home from work on the night of November 15, 2011 (18 Cheshvon), she was brutally murdered in the front of her home as she got out of her car. This senseless killing hangs over us as a dark poisonous cloud.

Her son and mother are devastated and our shul has lost its precious angel. It is inexplicable and incomprehensible, but we have no choice but to accept it and leave it to the Supreme Judge to render justice. The Young Israel of Avenue U – which calls itself “The Little Shul with the Big Heart” has taken a body blow, but is determined to go on inspired by this warm, giving soul.

May Larisa Komsky’s memory be a blessing for her family, her shul, her community and all Klal Yisroel.

*Reprinted from a recent issue of the local Russian language newspaper Pamyat.*

*Parsha Insights*

**The Good Life**

*“The years of my dwelling have been one hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.” (47:9)*

Most of us think of life as a trip through a treasure house of experiences. “Living it up” is synonymous with living itself: White-water rafting, paragliding, sipping Margaritas around the pool, seeing the Mona Lisa or the Pyramids or climbing Everest. That’s what life is all about!

The eulogy “He had a good life” usually means that the person used his time to maximize his experiences in the world. According to this view, someone who lives his life without tasting any of this world’s countless experiences hasn’t really lived.

**Life Experiences are Like Cinderella**

Judaism’s view of the world is the total opposite. Life experiences are like Cinderella. They last, by definition, as long as one experiences them. However sweet, however exciting they may be, there comes the moment when the gilded coach turns back into a pumpkin.

Every moment of life is constantly passing and vanishing forever. As soon as the taste of one moment expires, we must seek a new taste, a new experience. If life is the sum total of our experiences, then life is really a kind of ongoing death, running from moment to moment, never being able to possess the moment itself.

We tend to think of this world and the next world like two chapters in a novel. One finishes and the other begins. This is not the case. There is nothing in the next world that is not in this world already. One of the blessings that we say on the Torah says, “and He has planted within us eternal life…”

**Our Eternal Existence is What G-d**

**Has Planted Within Us in This World**

A plant does not make an appearance out of nowhere. The plant will never be more than what the seed contained. Similarly, our eternal existence is no more than what G-d has planted within us in this world.

If we live for the moment by perceiving life as a series of fleeting experiences, then the taste of the moment lives on our lips for that second and disappears forever.

However, if we take all those moments and connect them to the Source of Life itself, if we understand that our entire life, our entire existence, is just one facet of what the Creator wishes to express and reveal in His creation, then in the next world all those passing moments return to live eternally. The seed that was planted within is nurtured and flowers into eternal life.

In this week’s Torah portion Pharaoh asks Yaakov, *“*How old are you?” To which Yaakov replies, “The years of my dwelling have been one hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.”

**Why the Lengthy Answer of Yaakov?**

To answer Pharaoh’s question required no more than a number, “One hundred and thirty.” Why, then, did Yaakov see fit to give such a long answer?

You can dwell in this world without truly living in it. On Yaakov’s level, “living” meant a life of constant Divine inspiration. Hence, he felt that he had not truly lived during the many years that he had been deprived of Divine inspiration.

Yaakov was telling Pharaoh that life is not a mere compendium of possibilities and that he who dies with the most toys wins. Life means immortalizing every second through connection to the Source.

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Silent Appeal**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

The vishnitzer Rebbe of blessed memory was in the habit of taking a short evening stroll for his health in the company of some of his followers. One evening he stopped in front of the luxurious home of the Jewish head of a local bank and informed his escorts that he was going inside for a visit. This raised some eyebrows, for this banker was not a particularly observant Jew and certainly not one of the rabbi’s followers.

The banker was even more surprised as he invited the rabbi to sit down. To his even greater surprise the rabbi took a seat but uttered not a word. His continued silence so rattled the nerves of his host that he finally asked him the purpose of his visit.

“I came to fulfill a mitzvah,” explained the rabbi. “Our Sages rule that just as it is a mitzvah to admonish someone who will heed your reproof, it is a mitzvah to refrain from saying something which will not be heeded. I am convinced that what I want to say to you will be ignored but if I stay home and refrain from saying it I will not really be fulfilling that mitzvah. I therefore came here where I have the opportunity to say it, and refrain from doing so because it will be counterproductive in making your guilt greater by ignoring the reproof.”

**The Banker’s Curiosity is Aroused**

The banker’s curiosity was aroused and he repeatedly begged the rabbi to reveal the nature of this secret message. The rabbi then told him that the bank he heads was about to foreclose its mortgage on the home of a widow in the community and he wanted him to show special consideration for her.

The banker countered by pointing out the large sum of money involved and the fact that he was only the manager and not the owner of the bank.

“You see,” said the rabbi as he rose to leave, “I told you that I didn’t want to say anything because I knew you wouldn’t listen.”

The banker’s conscience, however, was so touched that a few days later he took money from his own pocket to save the widow’s home.

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

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

**The Test of Wealth**



**The Rich Man Who Serves Hashem**

**Is Rewarded With More Riches**

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| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

Pirkei Avos, "*Kol Hamekayeim Es Hatorah Mei'oni Sofo L'kayeim Mei'osher*". Why does it say, uphold the *Torah* in poverty, finally you'll uphold it in wealth. Why is it so good to uphold it in wealth?

**ANSWER:** When our forefathers were in the *Midbar*, we were in *Oni*, the wilderness was *Oni*. *Eretz Yisroel*, *Eretz Zovas Cholov Udvash*, a land flowing with milk and honey, was wealth. Now why did *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* change from the wilderness to *Eretz Yisroel*, why shouldn't we be forever in the wilderness? Forever eat *Mon*, always traveling, what’s wrong? If that's the way to succeed because affliction is so good, so why go to *Eretz Yisroel*?

And the answer is this: When a person is good despite difficulty, *L'foom Tzara Agra*, the more difficult it is to be good, the more reward you get. For a poor man, it's easier to be good. So if a man when he is poor, upholds the *Torah* and he shows, he recognizes *Hashem* despite all the difficulties, *Hashem* says fine, I see you passed the test, now I am going to give you a bigger test, a more difficult test, you'll get more reward.

**Hashem Gives a Greater**

**Reward to a Rich Man**

|  |
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A rich man who is a servant of Hashem, a rich man who loves Hashem gets more reward than a poor man who serves Hashem. No question about that.

And therefore I am going to give you the opportunity now because you showed that you deserve this reward, I am going to give you an opportunity now to thank *Hashem* in the midst of wealth! And then you'll get much more reward. Of course, as I said before, it's a *Sakono*, wealth is a peril, a responsibility; but, *Marbeh Nechosim Marbeh Da'ogoh*.

**The Rich Man Who Serves Hashem**

**Is Rewarded With More Riches**

Everyone likes to be an owner of a whole block of apartment houses. You know it's a lot of trouble managing a lot of apartment houses, but you want it anyhow. And so *Hashem* gives you apartment houses, He gives you wealth, and what do you do with it as a result, you become a bigger servant of *Hashem*. Oh, *Hashem* says, the more apartment houses you get, the more you serve Me, then I am going to shower apartment houses on you, more and more.

And therefore a person who passes the test of poverty, deserves to get the next test, which is the more difficult one, the test of wealth.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l” that is based on a transcription of Rabbi Miller’s answer to a question during one of his classic Thursday night hashkafah (religious philosophical) lectures at his Flatbush shul – the Bais Yisroel Torah Center from the 1970’s until his petirah in 2001.*

**Is It Improper to Date a**

**Girl Who Has an Older Unmarried Sister?**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

If a young man is suggested a Shidduch with a girl who is, let’s say, 21 years old, and that girl has an unmarried 23-year-old sister, would it be improper for the boy to date the girl? Should he be concerned about the possibility that the older sister will feel resentment over the fact that her younger sister is marrying before her, which could invite the Ayin Hara (evil eye) or otherwise cast a dark shadow over the marriage? This question also arises in the reverse case, of a girl who is introduced to a young man who has an older unmarried brother.

**No Prohibition Against Marrying**

**Somebody with an Older Unmarried Sibling**

This question was addressed already by the Maharit (Rav Yosef of Trani, 1568-1639), who wrote that there is no prohibition at all against marrying somebody who has an older unmarried sibling. He notes that this concern was relevant only in ancient times when it was customary for the father to marry off his daughters when they were still children, by accepting Kiddushin on their behalf. When the father accepts Kiddushin for the betrothal of his daughters, it is improper to marry off his younger daughter before the older daughter.

Nowadays, of course, young women marry on their own, when they are adults, and in such a case there is no concern whatsoever when a younger sister marries before her older sister.

**The Sequence of Marriage is Only**

**Of Concern for the Girl’s Father**

Similarly, the Or Hahaim (Torah commentary by Rav Haim Ben-Attar, 1696-1743), in Parashat Vayeseh (29:26), writes that the sequence of marriage is of concern only for the girls’ father, but not for the groom. Meaning, if a man wishes to marry a younger sister, he may certainly do so, and it is the sister’s father who must worry about first marrying off the older daughter.

The Or Hahaim draws proof to this theory from Yaakob Abinu, who wished to marry Rahel even though her older sister, Leah, was unmarried. Of course, Laban switched the two sisters, but regardless, Yaakob was prepared to marry Rahel even though Leah was unmarried, proving that this is not an issue with which a groom must be concerned.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (contemporary) indeed rules that one may date and marry a girl who has an older unmarried sister, and a girl may marry a boy with an older unmarried brother, as the older sibling’s need to get married is not the responsibility of the younger sibling’s suitor. And besides, as Rav Elyashiv noted, it can generally be assumed that the older sibling does not mind the younger sibling’s marriage.

**Younger Siblings are Free to**

**Date for Purposes of Marriage**

Certainly, a younger sibling should not be forced to remain single just because he or she has an unmarried older sibling. Therefore, an older unmarried sibling should not be a factor in considering a marriage prospect. Ideally, of course, we want all our children to marry as soon as they are ready and in order, but if this does not happen, the younger siblings are free to date and marry even if there is an unmarried older sibling.

Summary: It is entirely permissible for a girl to date and marry a boy who has an older unmarried brother, and for a boy to date and marry a girl who has an older unmarried sister.

Reprinted from the December 29, 2011 email of Daily Halacha which highlights the Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin Memorial Halacha Series authored by Rabbi Eli J. Mansour.

**The Importance of**

**Speaking Sincerely**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Ani**

When Yehudah approached Yoseph, he spoke to him in Hebrew and he asked to "speak in his ears," although he thought that Yoseph didn't understand Hebrew.

Why did Yehuda insist on speaking in Hebew directly to Yoseph?

Yehudah wanted Yoseph to hear the depth of feeling behind his words, "words that come from the heart enter the heart of the listener", and he therefore hoped that Yoseph would really hear his plea.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Madison Torah Center.*

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’l**

**The Great Danger of Deceiving Ourselves**

**As Told Over by Sam Gindi**

“And Joseph said to his brothers: I am Joseph, is my father still alive?

And his brothers were not able to answer him, for they were affrighted before him”.  (Bereishit 45:3)

**The Torah has taken us along on the roller coaster ride which has been the life of Yosef Hatzadeek. Yosef's bitachon in Hashem's providence is the model for us.**

**In our Perasha, the  final confrontation between Yosef and his Brothers is described in all of its depth. As Yosef says the famous words, “I am Yosef, Is my Father yet alive"?**

**Bewildered and Terrified**

**The Brothers' response is "And they could not reply, because they were bewildered and terrified."**

**This tremendous lesson that even the most righteous must suspect their motives, and even the wisest can be led astray by envy, stands out as one of the great teachings of Hashem's Torah.**

**Our Sages have learned that from the Brothers' stunned and terrified reaction to the rebuke of the truth of Yosef's revelation, we learn great principles.**

**Firstly, that on the great Day of Judgment we will have to face the truth about our own lives since Hashem will be our Judge. We will be terrified and without answers.**

**The Shock of Realizing One’s Error for So Many Years**

**Secondly, we will also discover that we have deceived ourselves.  Just like the Brothers who had felt they were entirely justified until Yosef finally revealed himself and the truth. They saw that they had been in error for 22 years and were shocked.**

**Everyone is deceived about his character flaws.  Instruction (mussar) is needed before it is too late.** **Only by going to a Hacham to ask for advice on what and how to correct and improve your character, and by learning, can a person find out the truth about himself.**

**We are all deceived about ourselves and filled with flaws.** **Only by learning can we rescue ourselves before the Great Yom Hadin.**

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**Chassidic Story #152**

**Think Before You Speak**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000dLk0:001EnDpX00003l83&count=1322060863&randid=485364713&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=485364713##)

Rabbi Ze'ev-Wolf Kitzis, a close disciple of the *Baal Shem Tov*, came to say good-bye to his master. It was both a sad and happy moment. To separate from the Baal Shem Tov was very difficult, but the reason was that he was leaving for the Holy Land. The Baal Shem Tov spoke to him seriously:

"You should keep in mind that everything that happens in life, whether seemingly significant or not, is part of the Divine Plan. So in every situation it is important to think first before acting or even speaking. And if you should encounter someone on the way and he should ask you something, be sure to think carefully before answering him."

**Ship Pulls Into an Uninhabited Island**

Early in the morning after two weeks at sea, with a good part of the journey yet ahead, the ship pulled into a small port on a tiny, uninhabited island, for a short stop to pick up supplies. The passengers disembarked, to stretch their legs and break the monotony of the long voyage.

The peaceful solitude and striking scenery stirred in R. Wolf powerful emotions and appreciation of the beauty of G-d's creation. Adorned in *talis* and *tefilin* he stood in a secluded idyllic spot, absorbed in his Morning Prayer.

When R. Wolf was "absorbed" in prayer, it meant just that: absolute total involvement. Nothing could break into his concentration, not even the ship's horn and the calls of the captain and the sailors for all passengers to return aboard. When he finally finished he looked up, but instead of his ship on the dock, all he could see was a shrinking dot on the horizon.

Realizing the desperateness of his situation, he began to explore the island, hoping to find signs of human civilization. "*Boruch HaShem*-Blessed be G-d" he thought, at least he had his *talis* and *tefilin* with him. He certainly did not expect to find another Jew on this tiny speck in the ocean.

Shortly before nightfall he noticed a wispy column of smoke, rising over the trees. He excitedly walked towards this beacon of hope, and finally came upon a small house tucked into the slope of a steep mountain. He knocked on the door several times and after a long while it swung open. A distinguished elderly man emerged. He had a distinctive Jewish look!

**Invites R. Wolf to Join Him for Shabbos**

He greeted R. Wolf warmly and calmed his fears. "Don't worry," he said. "There will be another ship heading for *Eretz Yisroel* in a few days." He explained that although very few people lived on the island, it was part of the Turkish empire and used mainly as a stopping place and supply depot for passing ships. "Meanwhile," he said, "Shabbos approaches. Let's prepare and enjoy it together."

The man was clearly learned in Torah and observant of the commandments, and it was a pleasure to converse with him. But every attempt by R. Wolf to find out some detail of his host's life was rebuffed by a mysterious smile, a shrug, or a change of subject. Nevertheless the Shabbos was a delight, with most of the time spent in prayer and Torah study.

**A Ship Arrives on Sunday Morning**

Sunday morning another ship arrived, and since it was going in the right direction, R. Wolf arranged to continue his voyage on it. His host came to see him off. As he set foot on the ramp to go up to the ship, the man said to him: "By the way, seeing as you passed through Russia and Poland on your way here, perhaps you can tell me briefly how is life for the Jews there?"

"Life for the Jews there?" repeated R. Wolf, pre-occupied with his boarding. "*Boruch HaShem*, they live, day by day, 'thanks be to G-d for He is good and His mercy is everlasting' (Ps. 136:1)," he answered briefly.

**A Horrible Thought Crashes His Reverie**

As the ship pulled anchor and edged its way out to the ocean's deep waters, R. Wolf continued to stare at the vanishing features of his distinguished host. Suddenly the thought crashed into his reverie: perhaps that last question he asked me is what the Baal Shem Tov had in mind when he cautioned me.

With a sinking feeling, he realized his pious response did not measure up to his master's instructions. His apprehension grew. At the next stop he decided to disembark, and to return home without even reaching the Hold Land. He had to apologize to the Baal Shem Tov and find out from him how to rectify the matter.

A few weeks later, a dismayed and humble R. Wolf presented himself with foreboding before his master. The Baal Shem Tov asked for a detailed report of his voyage. When he got to his final conversation with the mysterious man of the island, the Baal Shem Tov seemed to be hanging on every word.

**Two Tears Roll Down the**

**Baal Shem Tov’s Cheeks**

"Stop!" he cried out. "Enough! Such a great opportunity reared its head to you and you let it go by!" Two tears rolled down the *tzadik*'s cheeks. R. Wolf shuddered in remorse and fear. "I came back as quickly as possible in order to fix whatever damage I caused," he choked out.

The Baal Shem Tov dismissed his plea with a wave of his holy hand. "There is nothing for you to do. You already "paid" for it by giving up your voyage to Israel in order to return here.

"I'll explain it all to you," he continued. "Our forefather, Avraham, complained sharply to the One Above about the long duration of bitter exile. The Holy One, blessed-be-He answered him that the situation of the Jews is not so bad as he implied. To clarify the matter it was decided to have Avraham our forefather meet with an honest Jew, someone who had never uttered a false word his entire life.

**Your Automatic Answer Has Caused**

**Us to Remain in Exile Even Longer**

“You, my friend, merited to spend a Shabbos with Avraham our forefather himself. But when he asked you about the welfare of the Jews, you should have answered that we are suffering heavily and are outcasts, and that we all desperately look forward to our complete redemption. Instead you automatically answered, 'Everything is fine *Boruch HaShem*,' and now we have to remain sunk in our exile even longer," sighed the Baal Shem Tov - May it end soon.

[*Translated by Yrachmiel Tilles from* Sichat HaShavuah *and* Sippurei Chassidim]

Biographical Note: Rabbi Yisrael [18 Elul 1698 - Shavuot 1760], son of Eliezer and Sara, known as the Baal Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name"), formally revealed the Chassidic movement in 1734. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Medzibuz. One work based on his teachings, Tzava'at Ha-Rivash, has recently been published (Kehot) in annotated English translation.

*Reprinted from this websitel of KabbalaOnline.org. a project of Ascent of Safed.*

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**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Turning Over a New Leaf**

In this week’s portion Vayigash tells us about the emotional reunion between Yosef and his brothers. During his opening remarks to his brothers, Yosef refers to the divine intervention which brought about the unusual set of circumstances of the reunion, namely, that Yakov’s sons had come to Egypt to ask for food from their long-last brother whom they had sold into slavery many years earlier.

The verse quotes Yosef as saying, “Thus Hashem has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance.” (Bereishis 45:7) We see from here Yosef’s recognition of the concept of Hashgacha Pratis – divine intervention, which is one of the foundations of Jewish belief. As the Rambam teaches us in the first of his 13 Principles of Faith: “I believe in perfect faith that the Creator blessed is His Name, is the Creator and the Guider of all creations…”

**Believing that Hashem Guides Even**

**The Minutest Details of the Universe**

Believing in Hashgacha Pratis – Divine intervention means believing that Hashem guides even the minutest details of the universe. From this belief stems the belief that life is not random. Rather, everything that happens in life is for a purpose.

Once, one of the Baal Shem Tov’s students noticed that a leaf had fallen from a tree in the distance. The student asked the Baal Shem Tov fallen from a tree in the distance. The student asked the Baal Shem Tov about the significance of this occurrence; why did Hashem cause the leaf to fall? The Baal Shem Tov instructed his student to lift up the leaf, which the student did. Under the leaf was a caterpillar. Now the student understood the reason why the leaf had fallen; the leaf fell in order to provide shade for the caterpillar.

**Going Back to the Yeshiva**

Back to yeshivah, Eli Berkoff was thinking as he rode along the green-fringed mountain roads. Although he was a friendly, outgoing person, at this moment he was glad to be sitting in the backseat, removed from the animated conversation taking place between his friends Chaim and Shmuel in the front.

The trip back from camp provided a brief time for thinking, for letting go of the relaxed mood of summer and embracing the challenges of the new year. In yeshivah, everyone knew Eli as a staunch, reliable friend, a serious student and, most notably, the "guy with the pushka." (the one who went around during minyan with the tzedaka box).

Every morning at Shacharis, Eli could be seen carrying the pushka around the beis medrash, collecting a few coins or a dollar from each student. No one could say no to Eli. Going back to yeshivah would be great, he said to himself. There was still so much to accomplish.

**Merging Onto the Garden State Parkway**

His eyes scanned the passing scenery as his friend Chaim's compact four-door Oldsmobile merged neatly onto the Garden State Parkway.  The ride proceeded at a smooth, relaxed pace, and Chaim handled the steering wheel lightly, adjusting a little to the left, a little to the right as the road wound its way south. Suddenly, as if a phantom had grabbed the steering wheel, the car lurched sharply to the right. Chaim battled the steering wheel, yanking it with all his might back to the center, but the car had a mind of its own. Like a child's toy, it flipped on its side and began tumbling, crashing over the guardrail and launching Chaim, Eli and Shmuel into a free fall down a 100-foot cliff.

Eli landed just a few feet from the car, which lay like a dead insect on its back, its wheels jutting uselessly into the air.  He didn't know how long he had been lying there before he regained consciousness. The first thing he noticed was the car. It could easily have landed on top of him, but Hashem had saved him from that crushing blow.

**Feeling like a Speck of Floating Dust**

As he looked around for his friends, however, he realized that they were trapped inside, perhaps seriously injured. Although he lay a few hundred yards away from a well-traveled highway, he felt as though he were utterly alone in a vast void — a speck of dust floating through the eternity of outer space.

Maybe I can move, he thought. Maybe I can get out of here. But his muscles wouldn't respond to his wish. He was in the middle of the woods with no help in sight. Then he noticed something that turned the situation from merely frightening to potentially lethal. His upper arm was deeply gashed and blood was spurting from the wound faster than he could ever have imagined blood could flow.

He tried to scream, but he had no strength. In the midst of the thick forest underbrush, surrounded by nothing but moss-covered rocks and trees, there was no one to hear him but G-d. "Hashem yeracheiml" he cried. "G-d, have mercy on me. I'm completely in Your hands. Please make a miracle ... save me!"

Suddenly, out of nowhere, two men arrived at his side. They were athletic, confident-looking men who seemed completely at home in this untamed swath of roadside wilderness.

"Hi, my name is Todd, and this is my friend Brian," the taller of the two men said. "Don't worry. We're going to help you. Just so happens we're a couple of soldiers on leave from the Army, and believe me, we're trained to deal with all kinds of crazy accidents. This is nothing compared to the time we had to ...."

Todd kept talking to Eli, apparently to prevent him from going into shock and sliding back into unconsciousness. Meanwhile, Brian ran to the overturned car, grabbed a jacket off the front seat and ran back to Eli, whose blood was still rushing from the wound.

**Making a Tourniquet to Stop the Bleeding**

"We're going to make you a tourniquet to stop the blood flow," Brian told him. He began wrapping the jacket tightly around Eli's shoulder. Todd fetched a stick and wedged it between Eli's arm and the jacket. He then twisted it to tighten the tourniquet as much as possible. The bleeding stopped.  
"You're going to be all right," Todd told Eli. "An ambulance is on its way."

Eli watched helplessly as his two saviors receded back into the forest, leaving him alone once again, still desperately in need of medical attention. But before his fears could fully surface above his murky consciousness, he witnessed the magnificent sight of a crew of Hatzolah volunteers heading down the slope with a stretcher. Their faces betrayed the seriousness of the situation as they rapidly transferred him to the stretcher and edged carefully back up the slope, holding onto a rope they had rigged in advance to prevent slipping.

**Utilizing a Mast Pants Device**

"This tourniquet saved your life," they told Eli as they examined Brian's and Todd's handiwork. Fortunately, this ambulance was one of the few equipped with a device called mast pants, which are pants that compress the legs and push blood back up to the heart. With the mast pants, the Hatzolah crew was able to keep Eli alive until he reached the emergency room.

There, Eli found out that, of the six pints of blood contained in a healthy human body, he had lost four. His blood pressure was unobtainable.  "You were as near as you could have come to the Next World," the doctor told him.

His life had been saved, but recovery was slow. Yeshivah began that year without Eli, and his friends kept careful track of his progress. One day, a student reported to Eli's rebbi that the doctors felt they had no choice but to amputate Eli's arm. The tourniquet had cut off the blood supply so completely that the arm did not seem to be capable of recovering its full circulation.

"It's impossible," said the rebbi. "The hand that held that pushka every day will not be amputated." And it was not.

Two weeks after the accident, Eli asked his mother to help him identify the men who had saved his life so that he could thank them. She contacted the state police and spoke to an officer who had been at the scene. "Sir, by any chance do you know who those kind men were who saved my son's life?" The officer replied, "What men? When we arrived, no one with the description you're giving was there." Mrs. Berkoff was confused. She decided to contact Hatzalah. Surely they would know who had helped Eli just moments before they arrived. But once again, she received a bewildered response.

**Convinced that His**

**Rescuers Were “Angels”**

As Eli and his family reviewed the frantic jumble of events surrounding the accident, they became certain that Eli's rescuers were "angels." Would men who were kind enough and able enough to save him have left him unattended? Would two soldiers on leave have been spending their time in the empty wilderness alongside the Garden State Parkway? Would they, under natural circumstances, have arrived at just the right moment, possessing just the right rescue skills?

Eli recalled the pure cry he had uttered from the depths of his soul — "Hashem yerachaim ... have mercy on me," and he was certain that Brian and Todd were messengers of the Divine mercy for which he had pleaded. Just as Hashem had sent His messengers to our forefather, Avraham, in the form of travelers, He had sent these messengers to Eli! (Stories for the Jewish Heart Rabbi Binyamin Pruzansky, p.67)

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