**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shemos 5773**

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**The Wine Merchant**

There is a story about a wine merchant who was very poor and did not earn enough from his business even for the Sabbath expenses. He had an old mother who felt sorry for him and prayed that he would get rich. Every day she came to Hashem with a new suggestion.

One day she suggested that her son should win the lottery, the next day that he find a lost treasure, and the third that he invent something everyone would buy.

The Sabbath was coming and the son had no food in the house. He remembered that he still had a few barrels of low quality wine in his cellar. Perhaps he could find someone to buy them so that he would have enough money for two Hallot (loaves of bread) for the Sabbath.

**Trying to Sell Some Low Quality Wine**

He asked his mother to offer a pitcher of that wine to a Jewish neighbor. The neighbor took the wine and paid for it. The mother was happy. The purchaser sniffed the wine and made a face. He immediately returned it and asked for his money back. The mother came back crying. Her son said to her, "Don't cry, Hashem will be merciful"!

At that moment they heard a knock on the door. A rich man came in and asked if he had any good wine. The seller was amazed. He said: "Good wine? You will determine whether it is good or not." He gave him that same pitcher that had been rejected before.

**Asking for a Gold Coin**

The man sniffed it and tasted it. His eyes lit up. "How much does it cost?" he asked. "A gold coin" answered the seller. "Do you have more of this wine?" "Oh, yes, I do"! "Good," said the rich man, "I am making a big party and I need large quantities. I will take your entire stock"!

In that moment, the poverty-stricken wine seller became rich. His mother told him: "Listen, my son. I have been praying for you for a long time. I made many suggestions to Hashem as to how He might improve your situation. This idea never occurred to me…."!!

*Reprinted from a recent edition of the Aram Sobah Foundation Newsletter.*

**It Once Happened**

**When the Doctor Says**

**That “Only G-d Can Help”**

A Jew who lived in Vitebsk, White Russia, had always enjoyed good health, but one day he suddenly fell ill. He did not know what was wrong with him and despite the various remedies he took, he became worse from day to day. He saw a doctor, who prescribed a medicine, but that did not help him either. Finally, he decided to see the greatest doctor in town, who was known as the Professor, reputedly the greatest medical specialist in the whole region.

**Gave a Very Thorough**

**Examination to the Patient**

The Professor gave the patient a very thorough examination, asked him many questions, and then told him he was sorry he could not help him. "Only G-d can help you," he said gravely.

Understandably the poor Jew was greatly alarmed.

Then he remembered hearing that in the nearby small town, Liozna, there was a saintly Rebbe who had helped many people. So he set off for Liozna to visit this great man, the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman.

Arriving at the Rebbe's house he found many other Jews waiting. He was admitted to see the Rebbe among the first ones on the list.

**Tearfully Describing His**

**Desperate Condition**

When he came into the presence of the Rebbe, he could not hold back his tears, and poured out his heart describing his desperate condition, begging the Rebbe to help him for the sake of his wife and children.

The Rebbe replied, "A doctor's job is to heal, and not to make his patient feel worse. Actually your condition is not at all serious; it is just a kind of fever and will pass."

Astonished, the Jew asked, "But Rebbe, if it is a fever shouldn't I be shivering?"

"So you well shiver," answered the Rebbe, reassuringly.

The Jew could hardly believe what he had heard and was, of course, overjoyed.

No sooner had he left the Rebbe than he felt cold, and began to shiver slightly. And, as he continued on his way home, the shivering increased. As soon as he got home, he went straight to bed.

He stayed in bed for a few days, and then suddenly the shivering stopped. He felt so much better that he was soon able to get out of bed, feeling like a new man!

**Bumps into the Medical Professor**

Sometime later, as the Jew was walking down the street, he came face to face with the professor, who recognized him at once. "Aren't you the patient who came to see me some time ago, critically ill?" the Professor asked him.

"Yes, sir," answered the man.

"I am certainly delighted to see you looking so well," the professor continued. "Tell me, my friend, what happened to bring about such an unexpected recover, and what medicine did you take?"

The Jew told him that after the professor had given him up, he went to see the famed Rebbe in Liozna, who told him that his illness was nothing but a kind of fever.

**“You Showed No Signs of Shivering”**

"That I also knew," said the doctor. "But a fever can be extremely dangerous unless it develops into hot and cold shivering. For that is the way the body can rid itself of the sickness. The trouble with you was that you showed no signs of shivering. I knew of no medicine that that could bring about such shivering. That is why I told you I could not help you."

"As a matter of fact, when the Rebbe told me I had a fever, I asked him, 'If I have a fever, would I not be shivering?' to which he replied, 'So you will shiver.' And sure enough no sooner did I leave the Rebbe's presence than I began to shiver. I got into bed and shivered hot and cold for several days. Then, with G-d's help I recovered completely from my illness."

"'With G-d's help' you said. Wasn't that what I also told you, 'I cannot help you, only G-d can help you!"' the professor exclaimed happily.

All smiles, the professor and his erstwhile patient shook hands, wishing each other good health.

Added the professor, "Someday I hope to see your Rebbe, but not in a professional capacity. No doubt he can do more for me than I for him."

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. This article originally appeared in Talks and Tales published by Kehot Publications.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**.

**Next Year in Jerusalem**

Many people say “Next Year in Jerusalem... and the year after that, how about a cruise?” “Next Year in Jerusalem” does not refer to vacation plans. Next Year in Jerusalem means that we must believe that Moshiach will come at any minute and redeem us.

The Rabbis tell us that Hashem actually intended man to live a life of total enjoyment in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, we were temporarily banished from paradise after the sin of Odam and Chava. Even so, Hashem has promised us that our final destiny is to once again experience the happiness and tranquility of the Garden of Eden. (When Moshiach Comes, R.Y. Chayoun, R.Y.M.Rappaport translator.) The coming of Moshiach is an important milestone in our road back to the Garden of Eden.

**Belief in Moshiach is a**

**Basic Principle of Judaism**

Belief in Moshiach is a basic point of belief in our religion. As we recite daily in the 13 Principles of Faith according to the Rambam: “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Moshiach, even though he may delay, I anticipate his arrival every day.”

The Torah speaks about Moshiach in last week’s parsha Vayechi. As the verse tells us: “The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah nor a scholar among his descendants until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assembly of nations.”(Bereishis – Genesis 49:10) Rashi explains that this verse is referring to Moshiach who will be a Jewish King from the tribe of Yehudah. When Moshiach comes, the [non-Jewish] nations will gather around him to seek the wisdom of Hashem.

**The World Will Be a**

**Better Place for Everyone**

When Moshiah comes, the entire character of civilization will change. (Ibid, citing Rav Sadia Gaon Emunos ve’Deos 8:6) As we read in the Haftara for the last day of Pesach “The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie with the kid.... They shall do no evil, nor will they destroy... for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the sea.” (Ibid, citing Yishayahu - Isaiah 11:6-9) The world will be a better place for everyone; suffering, violence, corruption, and evil will be replaced by universal brotherhood, peace and fellowship.

In 1777, Reb Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk led a large group of Chassidim to Eretz YisroeI, where they established a community in Tiberias. Sometime after his arrival, some enterprising fool climbed up the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and blew a mighty blast from his shofar.

The simple folk who heard it assumed in their innocence that this was the long-awaited shofar of Moshiach, heralding the good news of the Redemption. But when the rumor reached Reb Menachem Mendel, he opened the window, looked around at the world outside, and said: "No. I do not feel that there is anything new in the air."

**The United Nations Will**

**Go Out of Business Forever**

All of the strife in the world will disappear with Moshiach and the United Nations will be out of business forever. For this reason, we must long for the coming of Moshiach. The Midrash in fact tells us that “A generation which longs for the reign of Moshiach will be redeemed immediately.” (Ibid, citing Yalkut Shimoni, Eicha) The Sages also teach us that when a Jew is called to give a reckoning of his deeds before the Heavenly Court at the end of his life, the first question put to him will be: “Did you anticipate the redemption?” (Ibid, citing Shabbos 31a)

Reb Moshe of Rozvidov, the son of Reb Eliezer of Dzikov, was once talking of Moshiach in the company of a group of his chassidim. They came to discuss the different dates of the arrival of Moshiach which had been calculated by various tzaddikim. The Sages tell us that the world will last for a maximum of 6000 years. Out of all the years remaining until the six thousand years elapse, there are certain times when Moshiach was predicted to come.

**Never Despairing of the Moshiach’s Arrival**

"Believe me, my brothers," said Reb Moshe, "that even if the nine hundred and ninety-ninth year of the sixth thousand year comes around and we reach sunset of the last day of that year, right before the last minute, and Moshiach has not yet come - I will not despair, G-d forbid. I will confidently await his coming." (Sipurei Chassidim al HaTorah, p.158, Reb S.Y. Zevin, R.U. Kaploun trans.)

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak, the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin, was once discussing these same calculations of the arrival of Moshiach. Those who predicted when Moshiach would come often based their predictions on a verse from the Torah. The Chozeh commented that even though the predictions proved to be not true, the intentions of those who made the predictions may be understood, and even encouraged.

"Jewish Law," explained the Chozeh, "teaches that if a son sees his father acting against the Torah (heaven forbid), the son is not allowed to correct his father outright, because of the mitzvah to honor his parents. Instead, the son should show his father the law, and say: 'Father, thus it is written in the Torah.'

Hinting to our Father in Heaven

Certain tzaddikim would like to get the message across to our Father in Heaven that in their opinion it is time for Him to have compassion on His children, and to bring about the Moshiach. How do they go about doing this? They calculate some date or another, connect it to some verse in the Torah that speaks of the Redemption, and thus hint to the Almighty: 'Father, thus it is written in the Torah.’(Zevin, p.158)

We conclude with the blessing we say three times a day: “Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles and speedily gather us together to our land from the four corners of the world to our Land. Blessed are you Hashem, who gathers the dispersed of His people of Israel.” “Father, that is how it is written in the Torah.”

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

Thursdays with Chaim

Which is Harder: Saying

Goodbye or Saying Hello?

**By** [**Rabbi Yaakov Salomon**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48865772)

The first time I saw him he was taking out his garbage.

It was a small bag, I recall; certainly small in comparison with my Olympic size, industrial strength parcel, bulging and leaking and tearing at the seams. Calling them *Glad* bags was clearly a cruel joke or an oxymoron, I thought.

Neither of us said, "Good morning." I guess we each thought the other one would. We both just sort of nodded politely and re-entered our respective neighboring homes. I was busy.

Having just moved in, I spent much of my first couple of weeks repeating the garbage removal scene - mostly boxes, pizza and otherwise - but I rarely caught more than a fleeting glimpse of him. I concluded that he must be the reclusive type, but truthfully, I hardly gave it much thought at all. I was busy, you know.

**The Garbage Was Setting New Records**

Years passed. The kids grew up, new kids were born, and the garbage was setting new records. Every once in a while I'd see Chaim (really Hyman, but everyone called him Chaim) trimming his hedges (I knew his name because occasionally I received his mail by mistake), but he was 'older,' probably retired, I mused, and we seemed to have nothing at all in common.

By this time we had graduated to the "*Good morning*" and "*Snow coming*" stages of communication, but that was pretty much it. And I can't really say that our non-relationship bothered me very much. I had plenty of friends on the block and my family, religion, and career dominated my every waking moment. You guessed it - I was busy.

**Don’t Remember When Things Changed**

I don't remember when things changed. It may have been after I invited him to one of my children's weddings. Or it may have been after we stood outside one day discussing the parking regulations on our block. I'm not sure. But something did change. He wasn't reclusive - he was shy, I discovered, almost timid, and we did have things in common, after all, like a really dry sense of humor.

Out of nowhere, Chaim would say the funniest and most unexpected things with a face as straight as a cookie sheet and I would double-over and roar out loud. And every time I did that, the corners of his mouth would lift ever so slightly, as if to say, "*Finally, someone understands me.*"

**Stunned by His Acceptance**

**To Visit Our Sukkah**

One year, after refusing dozens of invitations to join our family at our Shabbat table, he stunned me with his acceptance to "stop in" to our Sukkah - "*just to take a look*." Exceedingly bashful, he was in and out in about four minutes, and spent more time apologizing about "intruding" than he did shaking my lulav and esrog awkwardly.

Chaim was born and bred in Brooklyn, but received very little Jewish education or exposure in his formative years. As such, his familiarity with law and tradition was quite minimal.

**Nearly Tripped Over a Small Brown Paper Bag**

Early one morning, not long after that, I nearly tripped over a small brown paper bag on my doorstep. It was in the pre-9/11 era, so I simply bent down and opened it. Inside were three small tomatoes. I searched for a note, in the bag and on it. There wasn't any. It was several days later when Chaim, his face redder than the tomatoes, inquired how I liked his little home-grown gift.

"I'm not sure how ripe they were and…er… and …usually they're a little more firm," he excused, in typical self-deprecating Chaim style.

"Oh, they were great," I reassured. "Thanks."

The poets were right. A tree really did grow in Brooklyn. And on it, a relationship had begun to blossom.

But relationships, we know, are never static. Like any good tomato, if they are not watered and nurtured they can falter and wilt, and even die. And so, I decided to ask Chaim to become my Torah study partner. Mindful of his social reticence and near-total inability to take anything from anybody, I knew this was not going to be easy. But I really thought we both had so much to gain by it, so I began planning my approach.

**Worried about the Timing**

**And Wording of the Invitation**

I was certain that the timing and wording of the invitation were crucial and that I also needed a potent and convincing argument to counter his certain dismissal of this unexpected and perhaps outlandish proposal. And it took many weeks of mental scripting and rehearsal until the day finally arrived. We were standing outside, of course, (he had never, ever trespassed my hallowed threshold…nor I, his) chatting about nothing, when I realized the time was, "*Now*!"

I remember feeling foolish as I pondered my exaggerated angst. And so, I plowed ahead.

"I was thinking, Chaim. What do you say… you and I… study Torah together - maybe once a week, for an hour or so?"

I had done it. I felt the mysterious anxiety wash away in an instant as I braced for his reaction. Predictably, it was totally unpredictable.

"Of course! That's a wonderful idea," he said. "When shall we start?"

Well, you could have knocked me over with a *Glad* bag.

"When shall we start?" I bumbled.

Now there was something I hadn't prepared for.

"Um…well…I suppose… er…we could start…eh …Thursday."

**Sure Enough the Door Bell Rang**

Noon Thursday came and sure enough the door bell rang. His steps were very short and his gait, saturated with trepidation. I had never seen him wearing a yarmulke before, except that one time in my Sukkah, but somehow, amidst all the discomfort, he looked proud.

I directed him to my dining room table and invited him to sit and relax for a moment while I fetched some drinks for us. When I returned, seltzer and cups in hand, he was still standing - erect, as if he was awaiting roll call at Fort Dix.

"Because I'm waiting for you to sit first," he explained matter-of-factly.

Given his penchant for formality, I suppose I should not have been surprised that he also declined the seltzer.

His background was limited, but his grasp, curiosity, and inquisitiveness were off the charts.

**His Grasp, Curiosity and**

**Inquisitiveness Were Off the Charts**

We divided our hour in half; studying, in English, the laws of proper speech by the Chafetz Chaim (early 20th century sage and scholar) and *The Book of Our Heritage* by Eliyahu Kitov. His background was limited, but his grasp, curiosity, and inquisitiveness were off the charts. He commented on every passage we read, and asked questions that appeared to have been laying dormant for 50 years or more. 60 minutes seemed like 15.

Chaim rose to leave at a minute before one o'clock, announcing that his time was up.

"Thank you," he recited. "It was very nice."

I was surprised that he didn't salute me as he marched out, closing the door behind him. I quickly re-opened it.

"Chaim," I called out, "same time next week?"

He seemed genuinely startled by the proposition.

"Oh…are you sure you're not too busy? I mean…er…you don't have to do this if you don't want to. You probably have your own studying to do and who knows what else, you certainly don't need me to…"

"I'll see you next week," I interrupted.

Next Thursday, noon arrived, bringing Chaim with it. And so went the next Thursday, and the next, and every week thereafter. The menu hardly changed. The syllabus shifted as we completed various texts through the years (he even brought an old book on parables of the *Dubno Maggid* which we learned from), but he had to be forced to sit down before I did and the seltzer never did wet his lonely glass.

I marveled at Chaim's insight into complex principles. I often imagined that had he studied Torah when he was younger he might have scaled great scholastic heights. And those questions he asked, never-ending, revealed the incredible sensitivity that belied his reserved and proud manner.

**An Obsession with Fairness**

His obsession with fairness - to every single Jew, gentile, man, woman and child, animal and plant, and even to objects that were inanimate (*"They're all G-d's creations, aren't they?"*) became a constant theme that permeated our weekly, hourly journey into some of life's most beautiful places.

**Thursday Had Become Our**

**Favorite Day of the Week**

Neither of us would dare say it, but we both knew it. Thursdays had become our favorite day of the week.

Sometimes our trip included rest stops, where we ventured, ever so gingerly, into forbidden personal waters - childhood memories, minor medical concerns, and questions of faith. Those detours were brief, however, as Chaim preferred not to stray into regions where the waves were choppy and unpredictable.

As we got closer, I kidded with him about it and every so often those mouth corners of his would leap, not curl, and his hearty laugh would fill the dining room. I laughed with him and treasured those moments of bonding and true friendship. Neither of us would dare say it, but we both knew it. Thursdays had become our favorite day of the week.

It was a Tuesday. I got word that Chaim was taken to Beth Israel. He had experienced some chest pains and had possibly suffered a very small heart attack. He was alert and stable, I was assured, and would return home after some routine tests.

For some reason he had no phone in the hospital and could not use a cell phone there. I hesitated about visiting him, not sure if he would be entirely comfortable with an invasion of that magnitude. But then Thursday arrived.

Books in hand, I trekked to Manhattan.

"Chaim," I kibitzed as I entered his room, "what on earth are you doing here?"

**Like a Second Grade Kid**

**At the Ice Cream Store**

He popped up in his bed like a second grade kid at the ice cream store. I wish I had brought a camera. His bushy eyebrows seemed to jump through his head. He appeared to be stuck halfway between bewilderment and bemusement.

"Me?" he blurted, "what are YOU doing here?"

"Chaim… it's Thursday."

On the wall directly opposite the bed was a large clock. It read exactly 12 noon. He looked at it. I looked at him. I thought I detected momentary and very minute eye irritation, but it just as easily could have been my own.

Chaim looked fine - better than ever. He excused the mess in the room (as if I noticed or cared) and practically scolded me for bothering to come.

"They want to run one more test on me," he said, "but I think I'll skip it. I'll probably come home tomorrow."

**Chaim Instinctively…Fumbled for Something**

I pulled over one of those ridiculously oversized visitor's chairs and began reading from our usual text. Chaim instinctively reached into the top drawer of the nightstand and fumbled for something. I was surprised that he had brought a yarmulka to the hospital. It seems he had begun wearing one in order to recite a blessing whenever he ate something. I hadn't known. He offered me a leftover yogurt and some apple juice from a sealed plastic container, but this time it was my turn to refuse.

The hour sailed by. Worried that my meter had already expired, Chaim scooted me out the door. I turned around for a final glance. He was waving goodbye while motioning for me to hurry out.

The next night, Shabbat arrived peacefully. A neighbor mentioned that he had seen Chaim return home an hour before. I didn't stop in.

For some reason, my sleep was fitful that night. At one point, while turning in bed, I noticed some very bright lights slicing through my broken Venetian slats. I looked at my clock. It was 4:36 A.M.

I leaped from my bed to look outside. Parked in front were two fire engines, a police car and an ambulance. In seconds, my heart surged and my stomach swirled.

**Silently Screaming “Chaim!”**

"*CHAIM!*" I screamed inside.

Throwing on some pants, I dashed down the steps and out the door. His door was wide open. I gulped. I brushed past some formless and silent faces and squeezed through the narrow corridor which led to his room. I had never seen it before.

The setting was surreal, yet strangely unremarkable - like so many typical scenes in the movies. There was Chaim on the floor, surrounded by four exhausted paramedics. They had been taking turns for over an hour - trying to resuscitate a heart already departed. I anxiously peered into the eyes of the valiant heroes, but they would not return my hopeful pleas. It was just not to be. It seems Chaim came home for Shabbat and began his eternal rest.

Minutes later, I dutifully covered him with a plain white sheet and wept.

**We Never Really Said Goodbye**

At the funeral, I spoke about the privilege I had to befriend such a gentle, sensitive, and unassuming soul. I also asked Chaim forgiveness for having ignored him for so many years and for my inability to answer all his determined questions. I pictured him wondering what all the fuss was about.

I returned home after the burial. It was simple and dignified. The January gusts sent shivers that pierced my sadness. I tightened my scarf. The block seemed very quiet. I paused as I passed Chaim's bare hedges. I lingered in the cold for a moment. So many scenes flashed through my mind. But there could have been so many more.

You know, we never really said, "Goodbye." I guess we each thought the other one would.

Reprinted this week’s email of Aish.com

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Comforting a Widower**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

The great Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponovez Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, was once informed that a particular Jew who had lost his wife was plunged into a deep depression. In his grief he ceased to eat, speak or

function.

Rabbi Shach immediately went to visit him but there was no response when he knocked on the door. Seeing that the door was not locked he went inside and took a seat next to the couch upon which lay the poor fellow. Placing his hand on the fellow’s shoulder he said to him:

“I understand you so well. I too am a widower and I also felt as if my world had come to an end. We share the same grief, for whoever is without a wife, say our Sages, is without simcha. You need simcha and I need simcha.”

**Igniting a Spark of Life**

A spark of life was suddenly visible in the eyes of the listener

and Rabbi Shach continued:

“I have an idea of how we can help each other. I know how to prepare a good *cholent* for the Shabbat meal. I will prepare such a *cholent* on Erev Shabbat and send it to you here. On Shabbat I will come to your home. We will eat together, sing *zemirot* together and give strength to each other.”

For the first time a smile came to the lips of his listener who gently protested that there was no way for him to thus impose on the Rosh Hayeshiva.

“If so,” concluded Rabbi Shach as he departed, “please think of some other plan. In any case I will visit you again tomorrow because I gain strength from being together with you.”

*Reprinted from OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**The Voice of History**

**Rabbi Berel Wein's Compelling**

**Views on Jewish Destiny (Part II)**

**By** [**Rabbi Shraga Simmons**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48865357)

**Aish.com:** What is driving the anti-Semitism of today?

**Rabbi Wein:** We’re back now to the original nationalistic anti-Semitism. The mere existence of the State of Israel raises the questions: Why are the Jews entitled to a nation? Why do they win wars? Why do they need an exclusive Jewish state, instead of something more universal like the United States? People are disturbed that the Jews, so few in number, have a state that makes so much noise. This fuels the old anti-Semitism.

**Aish.com:** Let’s talk about what’s going right in the Jewish world. What stands out in your mind as a true ongoing success?

**Rabbi Wein:** The State of Israel is something we’re doing right. It’s a wonderful country, where you can live a fulfilling Jewish life.

Another positive trend is how Torah study has achieved great things in the last half century, not only in sheer numbers but in the diversity of thought.

That excitement is spreading: The Torah message is reaching people who 30, 40 years ago weren’t even willing to listen, but today are willing to acknowledge a different way. That’s a great phenomenon which has never before happened with the Jewish people.

**Aish.com:** It seems that many American Jewish families would be open to a [day-school education](http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48944166.html), but it’s so unaffordable. Is there a solution?

**Rabbi Wein:** Growing up in Chicago, I attended public school until seventh grade, because there was no Jewish school. Then some old-time Lithuanian rabbis opened a school and went knocking on doors – collecting money and begging parents to send their children. It’s a matter of determination. For the first 10-12 years, there were no tuition fees.

Today there’s enough money in the Jewish world today to float everything, to support all Jewish education without tuition. I had a yeshiva for 20 years in Monsey and no student was ever refused entry because of tuition, no student was ever expelled because of non-payment of tuition, and many people never paid tuition. But as someone who has raised funds for my synagogue and other institutions, I know that fundraising is hard work. It’s easier to just say, “Let’s raise the tuition.”

Today, the Jewish Federations have awakened to the fact that Jewish education is a good thing to support. But they still provide a very small slice of the budget. The solution is for the Jewish community to accept that these schools need to be supported by the entire community, not just by those parents who send their kids.

When Rabbi Wein was building his yeshiva in Rockland County, the contractors offered him a choice: wood that was guaranteed for 90 years, or special wood from Finland guaranteed for 300 years. Rabbi Wein refused the special wood, saying: “Who knows what’s going to be here 300 years from now. Where have the Jews been *anywhere* for 300 years?”

**Aish.com:** American Jewry is increasingly losing ground to [assimilation](http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48909162.html). How do you envision this playing out over the next 50 years?

**Rabbi Wein:** In 19th century Europe, 250,000 Jews converted to Christianity – French, German, Austrian Jews. Some of them were still judged Jewish by Hitler; most were not. I imagine there must be millions of people in Europe with Jewish antecedents – in Spain, Portugal, Holland, Poland.

But they’re not part of the Jewish people. The same thing will happen in America. It’s only a question of time, because people who intermarry rarely raise their children as Jewish, and the next generation certainly is not Jewish. It’s a war of attrition.

The solution is to give people a positive reason to remain Jewish. If a person doesn’t want to identify as Jewish, the fact that you count him as a demographic is useless.

**Aish.com:** How was the [Six Day War](http://www.aish.com/jw/me/Why_the_Six-Day_War_Still_Matters.html) a turning point in so many ways, in terms of Jewish pride?

**Rabbi Wein:** The Six Day War vindicated the Jewish people after the Holocaust, more so than the establishment of the State. Anyone who lived through the months preceding the Six Day War knows the palpable feeling of depression, fear, trepidation. Here was the specter of the Holocaust happening all over again. I was a rabbi in Miami Beach and Jews I’d never seen before came and sat in the synagogue all day. They thought it was all going to be over, and they felt drawn to a Jewish place.

When the triumph came, the Jews felt vindicated. It was an indication of the hidden capabilities of unity and strength that lies within the Jewish people.

**Aish.com:** The ’67 war led to all sorts of geopolitical issues which have not sorted themselves out yet – Gaza, Egypt, Syria, settlements. How do you see things moving forward?

**Rabbi Wein:** One thing I admire about the Palestinian leadership is their intransigence. They have the patience to do nothing. They say the same things now that they said 65 years earlier. This can go on indefinitely. Maybe 150 years from now our descendants will still be asking what to do about the Arab-Israeli crisis.

That’s why I mentioned the Book of Shoftim (Judges). Four hundred years after the Jewish people came into the Land, not one issue was settled. Battles, conflicts, internal strife – it was the same story for 400 years. So G-d has time. We are constrained, because our mortality always lives with us. We’re impatient; we want things settled now. G-d is not bound by our timetable. So maybe we should do nothing. “Sit and wait” is also a policy, you know.

**Aish.com:** Tell me about your decision to make [Aliyah](http://www.aish.com/jw/id/80895027.html), having been the leader of a congregation and yeshiva. What informed your decision and the timing?

**Rabbi Wein:** I always wanted to live in Israel. There’s no “right time” to go, but I wanted to come while I was still young enough to accomplish something. And I’m very grateful the L-rd helped me. I landed here on my feet. I’m the rabbi of a wonderful shul and my foundation disseminates Jewish educational materials all over the world. I’m busy – teaching, writing, doing what I want to do. I never dreamed in my life I’d be a rabbi in Jerusalem. Do you know how many people far greater than I had that dream?

On one hand, it’s a big sacrifice because my children are in the United States. But I love being here. As I said, it’s a Jewish life. I don’t have a Christmas, I don’t have a Halloween, and I don’t have the pressure to prove my loyalty to the United States. Plus the weather is great.

In the early 20th century, a Russian Jew named Wissotsky owned the contract to supply daily tea to the Czar’s millions of soldiers. The Zionist leadership approached Wissotsky and asked him to help supply tea to the residents of pre-state Israel. Wissotsky was not interested in what appeared to be a losing proposition, but he was eventually persuaded to help.

In 1917 the Communists came to power and seized all private assets. Overnight, Wissotsky’s tea business became worthless. He fled to Israel and nurtured his only remaining asset, the small Israeli tea business. Today, Wissotsky is the leading tea distributor in Israel. Says Rabbi Wein: “Investment in Israel is gilt edged.”

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

**Why Do Rabbis**

**Discourage Conversions?**

**By Rabbi Aron Moss**

Question: I am a bit confused. I have many Jewish friends, but they are mostly indifferent, and sometimes even hostile, towards their own religion. I myself am not Jewish, but I have studied Judaism and love it, and am very excited about converting.

My confusion is this: when I went to speak to a rabbi about conversion, he discouraged me from converting, saying that it is more serious than I think, and that I can live a fulfilled life without becoming Jewish. I told him how excited I am about Judaism, but he still pushed me away.

What is going on? I am thirsty for Judaism and I am pushed away, while so many Jews are not even open to learning more about their own religion!

Answer: There is a Jewish belief that Judaism is not just good for the Jewish soul, it’s *natural* for the Jewish soul. The soul feels at home when it says Hebrew prayers, experiences a Shabbat table, or puts up a *mezuzah*. These acts are what makes the Jewish soul comfortable. A Jew has an innate affinity towards Judaism.

So, why do so many Jews not seem interested in their religion? Because there is another Jewish belief that every energy has a counter-energy. If the Jewish soul is attracted to Judaism, there must be an equal and opposite force that drives the Jew away from Judaism. Materialism, cynicism, laziness, apathy—all these, and more, conspire to drive the Jew away from connecting to his or her Jewishness. In fact, the more powerful the Jewish soul, the more intense this resistance will be.

And it must be this way. Otherwise the spiritual life would be too easy—a Jewish soul would just naturally fall into Judaism. And G‑d wants us to be challenged. When Jews engage in Judaism, they are taking upon themselves the lifelong challenge to overcome these internal obstacles and find their deeper self.

When a non-Jew approaches Judaism, it is a whole different story. He or she has no “baggage,” and is open to what Judaism has to say. He may be attracted, he may not be—but he doesn’t have the emotional resistance that a Jew does. This is why many non-Jews come to respect Judaism when they actually study it. They are coming with an open heart, unlike the Jew, who has an automatic resistance to anything Jewish.

This is fine—until the non-Jew considers conversion. She may feel that Judaism has a depth and warmth that she seeks; she may feel good going to synagogue and celebrating festivals; and this may lead her to think that it would be so easy to just become Jewish and make it her spiritual home. But there is one factor that she’s not aware of.

Now it all seems so nice and comfortable, because you’re just visiting. It's not yours yet, so you can look at it objectively and just enjoy it for what it is, without any resistance. But the minute you become Jewish, everything changes. Conversion means that not only do you receive the Jewish soul, but you also receive the Jewish baggage that weighs you down and tries to hold you back from being an active Jew (again, in order to retain balance and give you a challenge).

This is one reason why we push away converts. We set obstacles in their way so they can taste what it’s *really* like to be Jewish. So that it should be clear from the outset that a Jewish life is not an easy one. There will always be obstacles.

The only difference is, before conversion the obstacles are from without—stubborn rabbis who tell you, “Don’t bother with Judaism.” After converting, those same rabbis will welcome you with open arms, and there will still be a voice telling you not to bother—but then it will be a voice from within you.

If you can overcome the resistance set up by the rabbis, then you have a good chance of being able to overcome the inner resistance that is the struggle of every Jew.

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**Love of the Land**

**I Have No Other Father**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

Among the many legends of how Jews braved all odds in order to reach Eretz Yisrael is one with a most important lesson.

Rabbi Yeshaya Bardaky was the son-in-law of Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov, an outstanding disciple of the Gaon of Vilna. He eventually became the leader of the Parushim community in Yerushalayim made up of the Gaon’s followers.

The ship on which he traveled to the Holy Land from Europe together with his two young children was wrecked by a storm and sank. No lifeboat was available so he told his children to climb on his back and he would make a desperate swim to safety. After a couple of hours of such strenuous swimming, he felt that he could no longer continue carrying the weight of both children and asked one of them to let go.

When he tried to explain to this child why she had to let go, they both wept at what this implied. But, then the little girl cried out “But Abba, I have no other father!”

Upon hearing these words Rabbi Yeshaya told her to hold on again and made a superhuman effort to reach shore where he collapsed in a faint.

Upon waking up he turned to his daughter and asked her to forever remember what she had said to him when she was on the brink of drowning. “Remember that whenever you are in trouble,” he advised her, “just turn to G-d and say to Him what you said to me, that you have no other

father except for me, and you will discover that you *do* have another Father Who can and will come to your rescue.”

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