**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas shemos 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #16**

**Chassidic Story of the Week #682**

**Purposeful Carelessness**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 Before becoming the world-famous Rebbe of Pshischa, Rabbi Simchah Bunim earned his living as a businessman, often visiting the large annual trade fair at Danzig. Danzig boasted a large Jewish population, but many of these Jews were not observant. Not only did they not keep the mitzvot, they often ridiculed those who did.

 Still, Reb Bunim did not keep his distance from such people. On the contrary, he sought their company and through his clever, winning manner, often succeeded in changing their ways and making them repent.

 Once, Reb Bumin was playing chess with a secular Jew. In the course of the game he made a stupid move. His opponent smiled broadly, for the game was now as good as won. But, when Reb Bunim said that he regretted his move, his opponent did not say a word. He allowed Reb Bunim to make a different move instead.

 The game continued on. Then Reb Bunim made another careless move. Although he had already removed his hand from the chess piece, he again asked his opponent to allow him to retract the move. Now he met with refusal, This is the second time; I will not allow it.

 Reb Bumin opened his mouth, but he did not attempt to argue his right to retrieve a move. Instead, he began chanting in the plaintive melody used by traveling Jewish preachers, Woe unto the man who had gone far astray and made many false moves, but is prevented from turning back.

 His friend, who had thrown off the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, understood exactly what Rabbi Simcha Bunim was hinting at. The words penetrated deeply into his heart. He left his misguided ways and repented wholeheartedly.

 [Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Tales of Tzaddikim (ArtScroll) by G. MaTov]

 Biographic note: Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (1765 - 12 Elul 1827) spent many years as a business man and a pharmacist. He was a beloved disciple of the Seer and of The Holy Yid whom he succeeded. Known as a rebbe of rebbes, his major disciples included the Kotsker and the first Rebbes of Ger and Alexander.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed* [www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) [ascent@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1293026666&randid=1239611238)

**A Unique Shabbat – Food and Songs at Ben Gurion Airport**

**By Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu**

 (Israelnationalnews.com) Dozens of hareidi (ultra-Orthodox) religious Jews spent an unforgettable Shabbat [last week – Parshas Vayechi] at Ben Gurion International Airport after their plane landed about 20 minutes before the holy Day of Rest began late Friday afternoon.

 Approximately 80 hareidi religious Jews, including small children, left Switzerland on a flight that had been scheduled to fly in the morning but was delayed several hours.

 After the plane took off and it became clear that it would not land at Ben Gurion Airport in time for the passengers to arrive at their homes before Shabbat began. ZAKA medical and rescue authorities operated by religious Jews, went into action to make arrangements for the passengers to spend Shabbat at the airport.

 Working against the clock, they coordinated with the rabbis from the airport and El Al, although the flight was operated by Swiss Air. Petach Tikvah and Kfar Chabad authorities helped organize the special Shabbat, and a Bnei Brak caterer and bakery donated “challot,” special bread for the Shabbat, and food for three meals.

 Petach Tikvah donated mattresses and blankets from their emergency headquarters, and the airport arranged a hall for Shabbat meals. A synagogue with Torah scrolls is located in the airport.

 “It was a Shabbat of re-awakening, said ZAKA volunteer Baraleh Yakobowitz. “Everyone sat around the table and sang Shabbat songs, while hundreds of curious bystanders saw how we sanctify the Shabbat and the Creator. It was a wonderful Shabbat."

*Reprinted from the Daily Israel Report email from Arutz Sheva (www.IsraelNaitonalNews.com) from Sunday, Tevet 12 5771/December 10, 2010.*

**It Once Happened**

**Checking Up On the**

**Rambam (Maimonides)**

 Today, Maimonides (known by the acronym Rambam) is universally held in the greatest respect. Among his contemporaries, however, many were suspicious of his level of religious observance. The great rabbis of Germany sent Rabbi Meir to Spain to ascertain investigate this controversial rabbi.

 When Rabbi Meir arrived in Cordoba, he proceeded to the Rambam's residence. A servant admitted him and announced that his master would join him shortly. Soon Rambam entered the room and greeted his visitor, and invited him to dine.

Felt Faint After Looking at His Dinner Plate

 But when Rabbi Meir entered the dining room and glanced at his dinner plate, he felt faint. One of the items on his plate looked identical to a human hand. Could the renowned Rambam be a cannibal? he wondered. A very queasy Rabbi Meir politely refused any food, claiming not to be hungry.

 Rambam suggested that perhaps a glass of wine might perk his appetite. "Patrus," he called to his servant, "please go to the cellar and bring up a jug of wine." Again Rabbi Meir was confused. Patrus was obviously a non-Jewish name, and yet Rambam was sending this servant to fetch wine in violation of the prohibition against drinking wine touched by a non-Jew. It was beginning to seem that what he had heard about Rambam's heretical tendencies was true.

 Rabbi Meir declined the wine, pleading exhaustion from his long journey. When Rambam offered him hospitality for the night, he was only too glad to accept and retired to his room to ruminate on his observations. Before he retired, Rabbi Meir overheard Rambam telling Patrus to kill a calf for the next day's repast. This was too much to bear. Had the great Rambam fallen so far from Jewish observance as to eat meat which was not even slaughtered according to the laws of the holy Torah?

**More Awake Than Asleep**

 That night, despite his exhaustion, Rabbi Meir was more awake than asleep. He concluded that he had no choice but to confront Rambam directly. He would reveal his identity and the purpose of his visit, and then he would demand an explanation for Rambam's audacious behavior.

 Rabbi Meir had barely fallen asleep when morning dawned. He was awakened by a knock on his door. There stood Rambam's servant, saying that his master wished a word with him. Rabbi Meir nervously made his way to the room where Rambam stood with his hand out and a broad smile on his face. "My dear friend and colleague, I know exactly who you are and why you have come. I am aware of the fact that the great rabbis of Germany have sent you to examine the level of my observance of the laws of Torah.

**I Know That You Were So Upset**

 “I also know why you refused to partake of any food or wine yesterday at my table. I know that you were so upset that you spent the entire night pacing the floor, worrying about my eating human flesh, drinking prohibited wine and eating meat which was not properly slaughtered.

 "You may ease your mind, for now I will explain all of these apparent transgressions and put an end to your doubts. After you hear my words, you will agree that all the suspicions which have been voiced regarding me are untrue, and furthermore, you will understand how dangerous it is to cast suspicion on a person based only on outward appearances.

**A Type of Vegetable Common in Spain**

 "The food which you took to be a human hand is actually a type of vegetable which grows in this part of Spain, but not in Germany. It is very nutritious, and as a doctor, I am careful to eat a proper diet."

 "Of course," thought Rabbi Meir, "how could I have suspected him of cannibalism. But still, didn't Rambam drink the forbidden wine and eat non-kosher meat?"

 Rambam continued his explanation, refuting Rabbi Meir's suspicions about the wine. "My servant, Patrus, is an observant Jew. Surely you will recall that the father of one of the Sages of the Talmud was also called Patrus - Rabbi Yose ben Patrus is mentioned in Bereishit Rabba!"

 Again Rabbi Meir regretted his doubts. Now he was sure that his final question would be explained away and he waited for Rambam's elucidation.

"You know that a calf which was removed from the womb of a cow which was slaughtered according to the laws of Torah is considered as if it had been slaughtered according to the law. This is the calf I wished to serve in honor of your visit," the Rambam concluded.

**Making a Contrite Apology**

 When he heard these words, Rabbi Meir was so overcome with emotion that tears poured from his eyes. Thinking of all the calumny which was heaped upon this great Sage was more than he could bear, and Rabbi Meir made a contrite apology for himself and the others who had sent him. What a terrible mistake they had made, judging the scholar from afar. Rambam accepted the apology and the two parted as friends.

 In the many towns and cities Rabbi Meir passed through along his return route from Spain to Germany, he made it a point to announce: "From Moshe our teacher to Moshe the son of Maimon, there was never such a Moshe."

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Banker's Shabbat Dilemma**

**By Dovid Zaklikowski**

 Jews in Karlsruhe, Germany, were given the rights to live as equals and in relatively peaceful conditions from the late 17th century. The Jewish community thus flourished in this city, located on the Rhine River and a short distance from France.

 Shmuel Straus, a banker in this city, enjoyed a happy life, free to spend his extra time raising his children, doing good deeds and studying Torah from his vast library of Jewish books. Shmuel earned just enough to support his family without any worries. He was known to be G‑d-fearing and thus did all of his business dealings honestly.

 Shmuel's first business venture was to run a small bank, given to him by his father-in-law following his marriage. With a permit from the government, Shmuel would mainly exchange currencies and invest money for people. He owned a special coat with two large pockets, one where he would place account receivables and one for currency exchange.

 One Friday morning, before going to the ritual circumcision, *brit*, of his friend's son, he put on the special coat he would wear on Shabbat, holidays and special occasions, and transferred the wads of cash he'd ordinarily keep in his other coat. Following the celebration, he continued on his way to work as usual, changing money and accepting payments.

**Stopped to Assist in Preparations at Home**

 At midday, he stopped his work to assist in the preparations at home for the holy Shabbat. After his wife lit the Shabbat candles, he put on his Shabbat coat, and bid farewell to his wife and small children and then headed to the synagogue for the Friday night prayers.

 Shabbat was a special day for Shmuel, and he'd spend it in prayer, learning and precious time with his family. For the Shabbat meal, they would always have many guests. That Shabbat was no different. As he walked the quiet route back from the synagogue, he'd take the time to gather the words of Torah he would say at the Shabbat table. His guests would soon arrive with their families at his home.

**A Sudden Realization**

 Shmuel sat on the bench on the side of the road as he gathered his thoughts, when he suddenly realized that his pockets were still filled with wads of money from that day's dealings.

 Raised on the tradition of not "carrying on Shabbat" -- transferring anything from the private domain (his home) to the public domain (the city streets), or vise versa -- Shmuel rooted in his place was sweating from the thought of having to carry the money. He could not bear the idea of using money that he brought home on Shabbat.

**The Joy of Knowing that He Did the Right Thing**

 Sitting in the deserted street, he suddenly thought about the joy he'd have knowing that he did the right thing, and quickly unbuttoned his coat, dropping the wallets on the ground. A blanket of relief swept over him. He knew that he would have to repay many debts, and that his future was in doubt. However, his trust in G‑d empowered him to make a decision that he knew was right.

 That Shabbat was extra joyous for him. He felt that he passed the great test G‑d placed in his way, and had prevailed triumphantly. His extra joy was a mystery to his family and the many guests who had been to his table before.

 As the sun faded and the stars came out, Shmuel said the special prayer recited over wine at the conclusion of Shabbat. His wife held the special candle and the family passed around the special fragrance to soothe the soul upon the departure of the beautiful Shabbat.

**Relaying What Happened to Him**

 His extra joy was a mystery to his family and the many guests who had been to his table before After saying the after-blessing on the wine, Shmuel relayed to his family what had transpired on Friday night, thus revealing the reason for the joyous Shabbat. He also told them that it may be the beginning of a more difficult life. His wife accepted the will of G‑d and assured the family that everything will turn out for the best.

 The same night, Shmuel decided to check the route he'd used, hoping to find the wallets he'd dropped. He did! And as Shmuel opened the door to his home, the family breathed a sigh of relief, for the wallets were intact with the full sum of money inside them.

**Business Quickly Becomes More Successful**

 A few days later, the Minister of Finances of the Baden region heard about the trustworthy Straus bank, and entrusted Shmuel with a huge sum of money. The investment in the bank spread and many well-to-do people invested their money with Shmuel.

 Today, Shmuel's legacy lives on in Jerusalem, where the Straus Courtyard, a place of Torah learning, stands in his name. His children sold Straus & Company in 1938 when they fled from Germany and relocated to California.

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

**The Lesson of**

**Shimon Bodri**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week's section is called, in Hebrew, 'Names'.

It begins with a list of the names of the tribes, and it contains an interesting dialogue about G-d’s name between Moses and G-d by the burning bush (3:13).

 At first glance this is not understood. We already know the names of the tribes from the book of Genesis (for instance 44:8-28) why say them again?

 It also isn't clear why Moses wants to know G-d's name and even more unclear what G-d answers him.

 First G-d says His name is 'I will be' Then He says it is 'the L-rd', then 'The G-d of your fathers' then "The G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Issac, the G-d of Jacob". (3:14,15)

**What is G-d Trying to Say?**

 What is G-d trying to say here? Why so many names?

 Also is there any connection between G-d's names and the names of the tribes?

 To answer I would like to tell a story.

 The fourth Rebbe of Chabad, Rebbe Shmuel (1834-1882) would speak very highly of the Cantonists.  The Cantonists were Jews that had been 'snatched' as children from their homes to serve in the Czar's army as part of a cruel plan to 'persuade' them to change their religion and eventually thereby destroy Judaism. But it didn’t work; despite the years of tortures and brainwashing few children left their Jewish identities and the sadistic program, as did Czarist Russia, totally failed.

**Relaying an Awesome Story**

 On the Rosh HaShanna of 5639 (1879) Rebbe Shmuel told the following awesome story.

 The Rebbe's father (third Rebbe of Chabad the 'Tzemach Tzedik') often visited groups of these brave Jewish soldiers and in one of his speeches he included the words, "A Jew must sacrifice his life rather than his Judaism. Even if the Czar himself personally tells you to change your religion you must sacrifice yourself rather than obey him."

 These words, spoken from the soul, had a deep effect on one sailor by the name of Shimon Levin.

 Shimon was an excellent and devoted soldier of the Czar. He loved his job and was one of the best, perhaps the very best sailor in the Czar's royal navy to the point that he was called by his compatriots called him Semion Bodri (Shimon the brave).

**The News of the Upcoming Visit of the Czar**

 He had been promoted to the rank of officer and served at the naval base in Svastopol on the Black sea until, one glorious day, the base received notice that the Czar was to personally make a visit.

 It is hard for us to imagine the fear and awe that the very mention of the Czar's name inspired in every Russian citizen no less an actual personal visit by his Royal Majesty! The very thought filled the sailors with trepidation and trembling.

 When the auspicious day arrived the base had been scrubbed and polished for the visit and the sailors had a grand reception prepared. The Czar’s royal entourage appeared, the band played, everyone was dressed in immaculately clean and pressed uniforms, even the decks of the ships gleamed. The Czar stepped out of his royal carriage and began reviewing the troops, strolling majestically down their ranks. But the highlight of the day was something very special.

**An Act of Unmatched Skill and Unequaled Bravery**

 The commander of the base climbed to a platform, stood to his full height and saluted. The music stopped, everyone was silent, and he announced before the Czar that in honor of his Royal Majesty, one of the officers would to perform an act of unmatched skill and unequaled bravery. The commander swung his finger majestically up pointing to the highest ship mast in the harbor some twenty meters high.

 Again the drums began to roll and suddenly stopped.

 Shimon Levin, in full battle gear, stood at the foot of the mast, saluted and bowed to the Czar and then, without hesitating climbed briskly up the mast, stood erect on its very point and, as the crowd gasped in amazement, jumped into thin air, arched his back and dived gracefully into the sea.

 The crowd broke into applause as Shimon swam to shore, walked up to the Czar and bowed deeply.

 The Czar was ecstatic. "Who is this man!?" he asked excitedly.

 "His name is Semion Bodri the commander proudly replied.

 "The Czar called out "Semion Bodri! I want you reward you. We will have another celebration at this same time here tomorrow! I will be here and you will be rewarded." And everyone once again applauded.

 The next day the parade and pompous ceremony was repeated, but this time there were tens of new officials that the Czar wanted to impress and Shimon was standing at attention, this time wearing dry garments, awaiting him.

**A Promotion to the Rank of Admiral**

 The Czar again arrived, exited his carriage, approached Shimon and was to the point. He stood proudly and announced "Semion Bodri, you are a true soldier, a credit to the Royal Navy, and a Jewel in the crown of Mother Russia.  "Because of your act of power and splendor that you demonstrated yesterday I hereby promote you to the rank of Admiral! Congratulations!" The crowd broke into wild applause, the sailors began singing a patriotic song and the band played along.

 But when it all ended Shimon just stood there without a smile on his face. "Your majesty" he replied. "I am truly grateful but according to the laws of Mother Russia; the law which your Majesty has made, it is forbidden for me to accept your magnificent gift." Silence reigned; only the wind could be heard whistling through the masts.

**A Jew is Forbidden to Rise**

**Above the Rank of Petty Officer**

 "I am a Jew, your majesty and it is forbidden for a Jew to rise above the rank of petty officer."

 The Czar was surprised and embarrassed. He had planned to brag before his generals and ministers and this Jew had made him look foolish.

 "Then you will change your religion!" He announced angrily. "Do you hear me officer Bodri?! You will change your religion and become a admiral! NOW! "

 "Your Majesty!" answered Shimon. "With your Majesty's permission, first I would like to repeat the feat that I performed yesterday for your Royal Majesty."

 Without waiting for an answer and before anyone knew what was happening, Shimon ran in the direction of the ship, swooped up his gear and, without stopping, put it on as he was running. He ran up the plank to the ship’s deck and then, even more swiftly than yesterday, he climbed to the peak of the mast, stood there proudly, the wind blowing through his hair and announced in a voice that rang out loudly enough for all to hear.

 "Your Majesty, Twelve years I have been serving in the Russian navy and I love my service with all my soul. But know, my King, that above all I am a Jew. Through my entire service I have kept the Sabbath and never eaten forbidden foods. I will never leave the G-d of Israel. 'Shma Yisroel HaShem Elokenu HaShem Echaud!!"

 Again he gracefully dived from the mast arching in the air like a javelin before plunging down into the blue sea. But this time ……………. he did not come up.

**Conquering the Czar of Russia**

 Shimon the brave had conquered the Czar of Russia.

 Three days later his body washed up on shore. The Czar was asked what to do and ordered that the body should be kept in a coffin under military guard for three days and then buried in the State cemetery.

 But in Shimon's camp were two other Cantonists that had different plans. They could not bear the idea that a fellow Jew, especially their friend Shimon, should not have a Jewish burial.

 They came up with a bold plan. Late the next night they stole into the cemetery, dug up a recently buried body, returned to Shimon's guarded body, left their corpse some distance away and managed to convince the guards to have a few drinks. When the guards were dead drunk, they switched corpses and whisked Shimon to his rest in grave they had dug earlier in a distant part of the forest.

**Their Daring Feat was Discovered**

 But somehow their daring feat was discovered, perhaps it was one of the guards or maybe someone saw them in the forest. In any case they were arrested and tortured to make them reveal the grave but their lips remained sealed.

 One died under torture and the other was killed by firing squad but to this day the location of Shimon's grave is unknown.

 This answers our questions. A name is a connector.

 When one has a name he can be called; connected to; his identity can be felt in the world.

Like Shimon in our story; the name ‘JEW’ brought out an identity in him than was more real than his very life.  Semion became Shimon (to hear G-d) again.

 That is what is so special about the Jews not changing their 'names' in Egypt.  Despite the difficult two hundred year exile they did not change their identities, their connection to one another, to life and to Judaism.

 And that is why Moses wanted to know G-d’s ‘name’.

 G-d’s ‘Names’ are the ways that He 'connects' to the world ….. and how we can connect to Him. That is what Moses meant when he asked at the Burning bush, “The Jewish people will ask me what is Your name, what will I tell them?"

**A Jew Wants to Know**

**How to Connect to G-d**

 In other words, ‘the Jews will want to know how to connect to You. Are You so distant that You are unapproachable? If not, then what is Your name? How can You be approached?

 That is why G-d answered in several different ways: First He said “I will be”, then He said ‘L-rd’, then “G-d of your fathers’ and finally “The G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

 According to Kabballa the name "I will be" is the mystery of mysteries and the concealed of concealed totally unapproachable and above even the spiritual.

 The name "L-rd" however is closer; it implies that G-d is the Creator of all being, past, present and future at once.

 Even closer is "the G-d of your fathers" A personal and intimate G-d that hears all prayers and forgives all sins.

**The Answer is Self-Sacrifice**

 But finally G-d reveals the true answer to the question. The way to approach Him is as “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did; 'M'sirut Nefesh' (self-sacrifice).

 True, each person is different, therefore it enumerates; the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Issac etc. but, as we saw from our story, the common theme and essence of their service (and ours) is self-sacrifice.  And the result of such service is 'Kiddush HaShem' literally 'Revealing G-d's NAME' just like Shimon the Brave did.

 This is why Abraham, Issac and Jacob are called the fathers of Judaism; they were the first to do it and they inherited it to all the Jews after them. (Therefore we say in the prayers of Shabbat and Holidays “Kol Yisroel M’kadshey Shemechaw’ All Jews sanctify G-d’s name.)

 That is why Rebbe Shmuel praised the Cantonists.

 But today the Lubavitcher Rebbe assures us that this self-sacrifice can be done in a happier way. And Moshiach will reveal this power; the essence of the soul, in each of us.

 This is because we are standing on the shoulders of the millions of Jews, like Shimon Bodri, that have sacrificed themselves through the ages. Today even one good deed, word or even thought done with self-sacrifice joy, and brotherly love can tilt the scale and bring.....**Moshiach NOW!!**

***Reprinted from this week’s email of TorahOhr Tmimim on Parshat Shemos.***

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Piggies That**

**Wiggled Away**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Jews understandably have an aversion to pigs. But what happens when Israel’s biggest importer of quality wooden toys discovers that the Country Life toy farms he has imported from Toys R Us includes three little wooden piggies?

 The importer, in this case, was an Orthodox Jew who believed that these pieces offended Jewish sensitivities and therefore replaced them with three lime-green geese. His ingenious solution might never have been noticed except that one customer complained that the geese did not match the picture of the pigs on the box he purchased and that the pig sty which remained inside hardly seemed to be the proper home for the geese.

 Subsequent pressure from secular purchasers forced the importer to replace the pigs. But at least some Jewish children were spared the negative impact of three little piggies went to market.

*Reprinted from this week’s Ohr.edu, the website of Ohr Somayach International in Jerusalem.*

**Shabbos Torah Insights**

**For Parshas Shemos 5771**

**Volume 1, Issue #1**

**Rabbis’ Messages**

**Heavenly Assistance to Those Who Want to Shield their Eyes from Evil**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 “*And these are the names of the Children of Israel*.” (Shemot 1:1)

 The week of Parashat Shemot ushers in the six weeks of Shovavim. The Kabbalists teach us that this is a time designated for improvement through teshubah on matters of kedushah, specifically from refraining from forbidden talk and guarding our eyes from forbidden sights.

 Protecting our eyes might seem too difficult a task, but our Sages teach us – “One who seeks to purify himself will be granted Heavenly assistance.” They also teach that each day the yeser hara seeks to overpower us anew and if not for Hashem’s assistance we could never win the battle.

**The Dangers of Immoral Videos**

**On International Flights**

 On international flights, videos, often of an immoral nature, are shown. On a particular Tel Aviv to New York flight some years ago, the crew was preparing to show a film, when a flight attendant was approached by a distinguished Rosh Yeshivah. “Excuse me, but I have just spoken to all the passengers in my section, all of whom are religious Jews. None of us want the film shown in our section.”

 The attendant politely responded, “We understand your feelings, but we cannot honor such requests. The film will be shown throughout the plane.”

 Everybody was ready and the power switch was pressed, but nothing happened. The screen remained blank. Something was wrong. The flight crew became concerned. If there was a short circuit somewhere, this could endanger the flight. An emergency landing would have to be made.

 Before informing the pilot of the problem, the attendant approached the Rosh Yeshivah. “Rabbi, we sincerely ask forgiveness for not accommodating you. It was a reasonable request and we should have honored it. Now we have a problem. We can’t get the film running and we don’t know whether or not there is a short circuit, a potentially serious problem.

**A Promise to the Rosh Yeshiva**

 Before we declare an emergency, we want to make one last try to see if we can get everything to work. If we can, then I give you my word that we will immediately shut off the screen in your section.” The Rosh Yeshivah nodded affirmatively. The power switch was pressed and everything worked. The flight attendant then turned off the screen in that section of the plane.

 If we make the effort to shield our eyes and ears from the forbidden, Hashem will help us to succeed.

**Reacting to Hashem’s Message to Us**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"*And Moshe said, [when he saw the burning bush] 'Let me turn and see this great vision*.'" (Shemot 3:3)

 Moshe saw a bush burning in the wilderness and realized it wasn't getting consumed. He decided to investigate this wondrous event and, according to the midrash, he either took three steps in that direction or turned his neck towards the bush.

 Because of his willingness to see what was taking place, Hashem appeared to him and appointed him the leader of the Jewish people. He took the Jews out of Egypt, brought down the Torah, taught it to them, and led them for over forty years. All this because of three steps, or just turning his neck.

 We have seen many wondrous acts in our lifetime. At the time, they may not seem as miraculous as a burning bush, but when we stop and think about them, they are just as marvelous. They all point to a Creator Who rules the world, and Who has a plan for everything in this world.

 How often do we turn our necks or take a few steps to stop and see? How often do we think about the message being transmitted to us? The one who is fortunate to look a second time, to act upon it, may be getting his or her calling from Hashem! May we open our eyes and turn our necks at the right time to hear what is being told to us.

**I Don’t Know**

**By Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

 Many situations can render people speechless. A confrontation with an important person, a frightening situation, or a set of unexpected circumstances can leave even individuals who are otherwise very talkative, dumbfounded.

 Three of the hardest words for people to get out of their mouths are “I don’t know.” Many people feel that they must know everything about everything and give some answer – any answer, even an incorrect one – in order to avoid being classified as stupid by their friends and associates.

 The urge to respond in order to cover ignorance can send people miles out of their way with incorrect travel directions. It can, unfortunately, even result in serious health complications when the perpetrator is a doctor who doesn’t know something but gives an answer anyway to a trusting patient.

 Our Sages teach that you should train your tongue to say, “I don’t know.” It prevents you from placing a “stumbling block before the blind.” It also gives you the opportunity to learn and grow if you are one of those courageous souls who can admit to a lack of understanding.

 When asked for information that you might not have, gather the courage to admit ignorance. Push the words past your lips: “I don’t know.” It’s not so hard. After doing it a few times, it will become easier. As a bonus, you will start to accumulate a vast array of data from others that will turn you into someone who is “in the know!” (Excerpted from “One Minute With Yourself” by Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

[Guest Columnists](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=344384)

**Freud's Great**

**Freudian Slip**

***By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks***

 It was Freud's greatest Freudian slip, and for some reason his commentators, at least those I've read, haven't noticed it.

 It appears in his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, a strange work if ever there was one. It was published in 1939, by which time Freud had taken refuge in Britain. Had he stayed in Vienna, heaven knows what humiliations he would have suffered before being murdered along with his fellow Jews. For some reason, at this desperate time, Freud wrote a book (he originally described it as a "historical novel") in which he tried to prove that Moses was an Egyptian. There have been many speculations as to why he wrote it, and I have no wish to add to their number. Early on in the book, though, there is a most curious episode.

**A Common Theme in Stories**

**About Childhood Heroes**

 Freud notes that several scholars have identified a common theme in stories about the childhood of heroes. The hero's birth is fraught with danger. As a baby, he is exposed to the elements in a way that would normally lead to death -- sometimes by being placed in a box and thrown into the water. The child is rescued and brought up by adoptive parents. Eventually, he discovers his true identity. It is a story told about Sargon, Gilgamesh, Oedipus, Romulus and many others. It is also the story of Moses.

 At this point, however, Freud notes that in one respect the story of Moses isn't like the others at all. In fact, it's the opposite. In the conventional story, the hero's adoptive parents are humble, ordinary people. Eventually he discovers that he is actually of royal blood, a prince. In the Moses story, the reverse is the case. It is his adoptive family that is royal. He is brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh. His true identity, he discovers, is that he belongs, by birth, to a nation of slaves.

 Freud saw this and then failed to see what it meant. Instead he changed tack and concluded that the story is a fabrication designed to conceal the fact that Moses was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he really was a prince of Egypt. What Freud failed to realize is that the story of Moses is not a myth but an anti-myth. It takes a myth and turns it upside down.

**A Simple and Revolutionary Message**

 Its message is simple and revolutionary. True royalty -- the Bible suggests -- is the opposite of our conventional wisdom. It isn't privilege and wealth, splendor and palaces. It's moral courage. Moses, in discovering that he is the child of slaves, finds greatness. It's not power that matters, but the fight for justice and freedom. Had Moses been an Egyptian prince, he would have been eminently forgettable. Only by being true to his people and to G-d did he become a hero.

 Freud had mixed feelings about his own identity. He admired Jews but was tone-deaf to the music of Judaism. That is why, I suspect, he failed to see that he had come face to face with one of the most powerful moral truths the Bible ever taught. Those whom the world despises, G-d loves.

**A Child of Slaves Can Be**

**Greater than a Prince**

 A child of slaves can be greater than a prince. G-d's standards are not power and privilege. They are about recognizing G-d's image in the weak, the powerless, the afflicted, the suffering, and fighting for their cause. What a message of courage Freud might have sent his people in that dark night! Let us at least see what he did not, that the story of Moses is one of the great narratives of hope in the literature of mankind.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine. Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth.*

**Weekly Parasha Insights (Shemot)**

**"And the Land Became**

**Filled With Them"**

**By Rabbi Eli Mansour**

 Toward the beginning of Parashat Shemot (1:7), the Torah describes Beneh Yisrael's rapid population growth in Egypt. It concludes by saying, "Va'timaleh Ha'aretz Otam" - "The land became filled with them." The situation became such that wherever the Egyptians went, they encountered people from Beneh Yisrael.

 The Midrash, commenting on this verse, says that Beneh Yisrael filled the theaters in Egypt. Egyptians would arrive at the show and find Jews sitting in their seats.This situation marked a drastic change from the previous state of affairs. When Yaakob and his family first settled in Egypt, they lived separate from the native Egyptians.

**The Original Area of Jewish**

**Settlement was Goshen**

 The Jewish area of settlement was confined to the region of Goshen, where Yaakob set up a Yeshiva and he and his offspring generally lived apart from Egyptian society. This situation began to change when the last of Yaakob's sons died.

 With the demise of the last great spiritual figurehead, Beneh Yisrael gradually left the secure confines of Goshen and assimilated. They got involved on all levels in Egyptian society. And this is when the trouble began. The Egyptians took notice of the Jews' sudden "invasion" of their society, and grew suspicious. These suspicions paved the way for the dreadful period of slavery and persecution that Beneh Yisrael endured in Egypt.

**A Similarity to Recent**

**Events in Germany**

 We cannot overlook the similarity between this process and the process that occurred more recently in Germany. The Jews of Germany decided to leave their enclaves and adopt a German lifestyle. They thought that by breaking down the barriers, by being more like the Germans, by abandoning traditions and practices that made them different, they would earn the gentiles' favor and goodwill.

 In short, they figured that assimilation is the answer to anti-Semitism. But they were tragically mistaken. It was specifically as a result of the Jews' becoming more like the Germans that the Germans felt threatened and suspicious. Like in Egypt, the Jews' presence in the "theaters" bred resentment and laid the groundwork for deadly persecution.

**Igniting Haman’s Hatred**

**Towards theJews**

 Megilat Ester begins by telling of the lavish party that King Ahashverosh hosted in his palace for the people of Shushan, and tradition teaches us that the Jews of Shushan attended and fully participated in the celebration. One Rabbi suggested that this event may have likely ignited, or at least exacerbated, Haman's feelings of hatred toward the Jews. He began wondering why these foreign people are taking up space in the palace, why they are feeling so at home in Persia.

 It is a mistake to think that we will earn the trust and favor of other nations by being like them and embracing their values and lifestyle. History has proven that assimilation makes matters worse, not better, as it causes mistrust and resentment, rather than respect.

**The Safest Way to**

**Live in Exile**

 The safest way to live in exile is to remain in "Goshen," to remain fully committed to our ancient traditions and stay away from the "theaters" of the non-Jews. We will then succeed in preserving our traditions and avoiding the hostility and resentment of the people around us.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Rabbi Eli Mansour’s “Daily Halacha.” Rabbi Mansour is the Rav of Congregation Bet Yaakob in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.*

**My Mother’s Candle**

**For Me**

**By Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**

 One Friday evening the conversation at the table turned to the Shabbat candles, whose kindling is in itself a beautiful way of ushering in the sacred day of rest. Lighting a candle is rich in symbolism.

 There are acts which we do totally for ourselves, and others which may be completely altruistic. Generating light, however, defies such limitations. I may light the candle for myself, but I cannot contain the light, because of necessity it illuminates the room for others. If I create light for the benefit of another, I too can see better.

**None of Us Can Be an Island**

 What better way to begin the Shabbat, the final step in creation of the universe and its ultimate goal, than by lighting the candles, an act which symbolically binds the inhabitants of the world together. None of us can be an island; what I do affects you, and what you do must have bearing upon me.

 If we could only realize this, we would well understand why the candle lighting is referred to by our sages as an essential for peace in the household. Dissension can occur only when individuals believe they are separate and distinct and can each go their own particular way, untouched by one another.

 Our Shabbat guest asked why there were six candles burning on our table rather than the usual two.

**An Additional Candle**

**For Each Child**

 I told him it was traditional in many families to begin lighting two candles after marriage, and to add an additional candle for each child. One of the lights Mother kindled each Friday night was for me. I recall how much this had meant to me as a child, when I used to watch the flames flicker and realize that the house, nay, the world, was a brighter place because of my existence.

 The full impact of this message did not occur until many years later, when it became evident to me in my psychiatric practice that countless people have emotional problems and varying psychological symptoms because of deep-seated feelings of inadequacy.

 There are numerous reasons why people have unwarranted feelings of inferiority, and this is not the place to elaborate on these. Suffice it to say that anything that can be done to counteract these influences contributes to a person's sense of adequacy and wholesomeness, and allows a more satisfactory adjustment to life.

**Non-Verbal Communication**

**Is Often More Impressive**

 Non-verbal communications are frequently more impressive than verbal. The weekly message to a child, delivered at the initiation of Shabbat, that his being has brought additional brightness into the home can be a powerful ingredient in one's personality development.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine. Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, a psychiatrist, rabbi and founder of the Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is a renowned author of more than 50 titles on self-help issues.*

**Love of the Land**

**No Complaints About**

**The Weather**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 When it became too hot in the place where two great Talmudic Sages, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, were engaged in Torah study, they moved to a shadier spot. When the winter cold became too intense where they were studying they moved to a warmer spot. They went to this trouble, explains Rashi (Mesechta Ketubot 112b ), in order to avoid complaining about the weather in Eretz Yisrael .

 It must be assumed that these two Sages could have continued their studies where they were despite the heat or cold. Making the move to a more comfortable place probably entailed a loss of precious time which could have been dedicated to intense Torah study. They nevertheless were prepared to make this sacrifice to avoid the temptation of complaining about the weather of the land they loved.

Reprinted from this week’s Ohr.edu website of Ohr Somayach International in Jerusalem.

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

**Is It Necessary to Keep**

**Up with Current Events?**

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

How important is it for us to keep up with the current events?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Peanuts** |

Current events, intrinsically, are nothing at all; a 100% waste of time. However, if someone is capable of interpreting to you current events, then there is one of the most valuable things you can get.

 To explain history, whether it’s history of the past or history of day to day, is one of the most important lessons; I'll explain to you.

**Everything is Full of**

**Tremendous Lessons**

 Nothing in this world was made except by Hashem, therefore everything in the world, whether it's a peanut or a cloud, anything in this world is full of tremendous lessons, because it's Hashem’s wisdom.

 Now, just as objects are all fountains of great wisdom - you know a peanut is a wonderful Mussar Haskel. You take a peanut in your hand, you notice it has a backbone, and you press on the backbone - it opens up by itself, you don't have to break the shell. The peanut is corrugated not smooth, in order to give it more strength; it's soft but strong.

 When you open it up, inside are clean meats wrapped in beautiful red wrappers. The meat separates into two parts, with a straight cleavage; it opens up because it's made to open up. In between are the cotyledons\* of the future plant waiting. And in those cotyledons it has information and millions of bits of information, what is necessary to produce a new plant.

 So therefore when you study a peanut you can become great in Daas Hashem. Now just as the objects of this world, because they are made by Hashem, teach us great things about Hashem, the events of this world are also done by Hashem. Everything happens only because of Hashem.

*Good Shabbos To All.*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’l” which is based on a transcription of Rabbi Miller’s answer to a question from a member of the audience to one of his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures in his Flatbush shul during the period of the early mid 1970’s till his petirah in 2001.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shemos 5770**

**Story #632**

**To Fill in the Blanks:**

**From Moshe to Moshe**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 The 20th of the Hebrew month Tevet [this year: Jan. 6] is the *yahrzeit* of the great Torah sage, **Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon**, known as the *RaMBaM* or Maimonides. A descendant of the royal line of King David, he was born on the eve of Passover in the year 4895 (1135) in Cordoba, Spain.

 Shortly after his bar mitzvah, the Almohades Muslims conquered Cordoba.  These ruthless fanatics didn't tolerate other religions and the Jews were forced to choose between conversion and exile. The family wandered from place to place for ten years, constantly fleeing. Eventually they settled in Fez, Morocco, but after five years they again had to eek refuge elsewhere.

**Settling in Cairo, Egypt**

 They left for Israel.  Unfortunately, the Holy land at the time was being ravaged by the Crusaders and wasn't safe for Jews.  In 1165 they settled finally in Cairo, Egypt. There, in addition to his many duties as Rabbi and teacher, the Rambam was also appointed to the staff of the court of Saladin as royal physician.

 It was in Egypt that Rambam wrote his great masterworks on Jewish law and philosophy that made him famous in his generation and for all generations thereafter. Some of his renowned Torah works are: *Pirush HaMishnayot*—a commentary on the Mishna, *Sefer Hamitzvot*—where he enumerates the 613 mitzvot, and *Mishna Torah*—an explanation of each of the mitzvot and acodification of Jewish law.  He also formulated the Thirteen Principles of Faith (*Ani Maamin*) and wrote *Moreh Nevuchim*: A Guide to the Perplexed—a masterful philosophical work, which was eventually translated into many languages.

 Nor was he esteemed only in the Jewish world.  He was also well-known and highly respected as a physician, philosopher and scientist. His medical writings influenced medical practice throughout the world for centuries.

 When the Rambam felt his end approaching, he instructed his family to bury him in the Holy Land.  Rabbi Moshe died at the age of sixty-nine, in the year 4965 (1204).

 People from all over gathered to attend the funeral.  When the procession was over, the coffin was perched atop a sturdy camel, and a caravan of hundreds of friends, family and disciples escorted it to Israel.  After they crossed the border, no one could agree in which city to lay the Rambam to rest. This the Rabbi had not specified.

**An Attack by an Armed Band of Bedouins**

 All of a sudden a band of armed Bedouins attacked the caravan and everyone panicked and scattered in all directions. The Bedouins, assuming there was a treasure inside the large box, tried to lead the camel away, but they could not get it to budge. Nor, as much as they tried, were they able to remove the box. In the end they pried up the lid, but saw only a body inside. Realizing that this must be the remains of a holy man, they terrifiedly asked forgiveness and fled.

 The people of the caravan returned to the coffin. To their surprise, the camel began moving determinedly, on its own.  The caravan leader cautioned the other people not to interfere, but simply to follow.

 The camel continued all the way to the northern city of Tiveriyah (Tiberias), on the shore of Lake Kineret (Sea of Galilee). It paced through the narrow streets of the city until it suddenly stopped and knelt on the ground.

**An Most Amazing and Wonderful Miracle**

 The people understood that this was the place where they should bury the Rambam. Everyone was amazed by the wonderful miracle.

 Over the years, a beautiful structure and park was erected around the site. Throughout the year, and especially on the anniversary of his passing, thousands of people from all parts of the world come to visit this holy burial place. What is more, each year there is a *siyum* (completion) of the entire fourteen books of the Mishna Torah.

 Prominently displayed there is the saying: "*From Moshe* (who received the Torah from G-d) *to Moshe* (ben Maimon), *there was none like Moshe.*"

*Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from L'Chaim #96 and TorahFax* ***Tevet 20****, 5757.*

*Connection:* Yahrzeit date

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org,*

*a project of Ascent of Safed*

[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000nF00:001F0iDk000029s3&count=1325611907&randid=1833757664&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1833757664##)

**We Must Allow Hashem’s Miracles**

**To Influence Our Lives**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*I shall send forth my hand and I shall strike Egypt with all my wonders that I shall perform in its midst*.” (Shemot 3:20)

 About a year ago, the Israeli army entered Gaza and fought a war known as “Cast Lead.” An article was written by Rabbi Daniel Yaakov Travis based on a class given by Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, the head of the Eidah Hacharedit of Yerushalayim.

 “As the war in Gaza unfolds, miracles are apparent to all who are willing to open their eyes. Many miraculous stories are emerging from Israel’s south, and all are worth retelling over and over. However, one practically remarkable case highlights an important message. Before the Israeli incursion began, the enemy laid minefields in the hope of killing and maiming as many soldiers as possible. Yet Hashem gave the Arabs the idea that they should make a map showing where each and every mine was placed. Although this document was top secret and closely guarded, it fell into the hands of Israeli intelligence. As a result, mass casualties were avoided.

**A Responsibility Comes from**

**Witnessing Incredible Miracles**

 “We are indeed privileged to witness such miracles, the likes of which have rarely been seen in our history. Yet we must be aware of the responsibilities that come with living in such an era. It is easy to attribute these miracles to the incompetence of our enemy or just pure luck. Such an outlook betrays a dangerous lack of insight and puts the entire Jewish people at risk as demonstrated by the story of the Exodus from Egypt.”

 The connection to the Exodus is as follows. Hashem told Moshe from the beginning, as quoted in the pasuk above, that He will perform miracles when He takes the Jews out of Egypt. However, when the Exodus actually took place only a small fraction, one fifth, of the Jews left Egypt and the rest perished during the plague of darkness.

**Will We Be Worthy of**

**Experiencing the Redemption**

 Many Jews saw the miracles, but attributed them to magic and natural causes. Hashem made it clear that those who do not perceive the true nature of His miracles and do not interpret them as a wake-up call for teshubah are not worthy of experiencing the redemption. It is not sufficient to say, “What a miracle!” and then go back to our business as if nothing has changed. Rabbi Sternbuch concludes, “If we don’t do this and the redemption would take place today, I don’t know how many members of Klal Yisrael will merit redemption.”

 We should all pray that Hashem should protect our soldiers, and praise Him about His miracles, thereby guaranteeing us to be redeemed speedily in our days, Amen.

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

**The Virtue of Amram,**

**Father of Moshe Rabenu**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

“*And a man went from the house of Levi*” (Shemot 2:1)

 Did you even wonder what merit the parents of Moshe Rabenu had, to have a son like him? Rabbi Nissim Yagen z”l once said in our synagogue the answer to this question. When Amram, the father of Moshe, saw that Pharaoh was drowning all Jewish baby boys, he divorced his wife, reasoning that it doesn’t make sense to be married and have children and they should then be killed. All the people followed suit and divorced their wives, since Amram was one of the leaders of the generation.

**Reprimanded By His**

**Five-Year-Old Daughter**

 When his daughter, Miriam, who was only five years old, saw this, she told her father, “Your decree is worse than Pharaoh’s, because by your separating from your wife there will be no Jewish boys and no Jewish girls, whereas Pharaoh only decreed on the boys.”

 When Amram heard the truth in these words, although it came out of the mouth of a child, he accepted them wholeheartedly and remarried his wife, Yocheved. From that union came out Moshe Rabenu, about whom it is said, “Moshe is the paragon of truth who gave us the Torah of Truth.” Since Amram accepted the truth wholeheartedly and changed a decree, although it was not easy to do, he merited to have Moshe, who represented the truth.

 Do we hear the truth about things we may have done incorrectly, and change them, or do we try to ignore the whole subject

*Think About: Extraordinary Reflections About Ordinary Events” by Rabbi Yaakov Salomon, C.S.W. Rabbi Salomon lives in Flatbush and is a well-known psychotherapist and kiruv activist. “Something to Think About” is published by The Shaar Press, a division of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications and is available in Jewish bookstores or from the publisher by calling (718) 921-9000.)*

**A Slice of Life**

**A Subway Conversation**

**By Malka Touger**

 On a stormy winter day in 1991, Rabbi Shalom Lew, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissary in Glendale, Arizona, with his wife and two small children, had just finished an inspiring visit to the Rebbe. They were now standing before the ticket booth trying to buy tokens for the subway.

 The plan was to take the subway to Penn Central and take another train to Hartford, Connecticut, to visit Mrs. Lew's family and then fly to Glendale. But they overlooked one thing: small change.

**Lacking Small Bills For the Subway Tokens**

 It just so happened that all they had were two hundred dollar bills and the subway clerk at the token booth would not accept bills larger than $20. They were stuck. Mrs. Lew was feverishly looking through her purse, the children were getting restless and the solution was not in sight. He'd have to miss the train, run up the stairs into the storm and look for change.

 Suddenly they heard a woman's voice from behind them. "Can I help? What, you don't have change? Here I have change... it's only a few dollars."

It was a friendly, well-dressed young woman smiling pleasantly with a few dollar bills in her outstretched hand. In no time they were through the turnstile and on the subway, the woman right ahead of them looking for seats.

 After the subway began to move Rabbi Lew went over to the woman, and thanked her profusely. "No problem," she said, "I know how it is to travel with small children. I'm glad to help."

**Asking if She was Jewish**

They spoke a bit and somehow it entered Rabbi Lew's mind to ask her if she was Jewish and, when the answer was positive, if she lit Shabbat candles.

 "No, I don't" she replied. "What good is it if I just do one commandment when I don't do any others? I don't observe the Shabbat, I'd be lying to myself if I lit Shabbat candles."

 Suddenly Rabbi Lew remembered a conversation his grandfather, Reb Zalman Jaffe of Manchester, England, told him that he had had years earlier with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

 The Rebbe made a speech that revolutionized Judaism. Until that speech, Torah Judaism had been on the defensive; trying to ward off non-religious influences. But the Rebbe changed all that.

**Even One Mitzvah Can Fill the**

**World with Meaning and Blessings**

 He declared in a farbrengen (Chasidic gathering) that Judaism holds the solution to all the world's problems. If every Jew does a commandment, even one, it will fill the world with meaning and blessings unequaled in the history of man: Moshiach will arrive.

 The Rebbe told his Chasidim to begin with Tefilin for men and Shabbat candles for women. They had to go into the streets if necessary and change the world.

 Shortly thereafter Reb Zalman Jaffe reported to the Rebbe that he had approached a neighbor of his (an unheard of thing in England) with the suggestion that she light candles and she answered, "What good will just one commandment do when I am completely non-observant?" (Exactly like the woman was answering Rabbi Lew in the subway!)

**Each Commandment Has a**

**Special Quality and Charm**

 Mr. Jaffe replied that each commandment has a special quality, a "charm" and blessing of its own, not connected to the others. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, smiled and nodded in complete agreement with his approach.

 So Rabbi Lew, inspired by this memory, said the exact same words. But, although the woman seemed pleased with the conversation, she did not seem at all convinced. When her stop came she bade the rabbi and his wife a polite farewell and exited the subway

 Three years later Rabbi Lew got an email:

 "Dear Rabbi Lew.

 "I got your email address from Chabad.org. My name is Melissa. You probably don't remember me. I met you and your family almost four years ago in the subway in Crown Heights. I gave you change for the hundred dollar bill so you could get on the train and you tried to convince me to light Shabbat Candles.

 "Well, believe it or not, it took some time but I lit them. Just one commandment, like you said, with no connection to anything else.

**Married to a Wonderful Jewish Man**

 "But it didn't stop there. I got married to a wonderful Jewish man by the name of Marty and we decided to start doing more.

 "Believe it or not, today we keep most of the laws of Shabbat, eat kosher food and hope to have a completely Jewish house. I just wanted to thank you for caring. Since then I've thought a lot about what you said: 'Just light candles,' and I just want you to know that because of those words I am the person I am today, believe it or not! If possible please keep in contact. Melissa."

**Another Offshoot of the**

**Grandfather’s Conversation**

 A few days later Rabbi Shalom Lew called his father, Rabbi Shmuel Lew in London and told him the story; especially how the memory of his grandfather's conversation with the Rebbe put the right words in his mouth on the subway.

 "Amazing!" His father exclaimed. "You'll never guess where I'm just coming from! I was just at the engagement party of a young lady who told me that she is an observant Jew today thanks to a conversation your grandfather Zalman, had with her grandmother years ago about lighting candles.

 "That was the conversation you remembered on the subway!"

 *Reprinted from an excerpt from “Excuse Me, Are You Jewish?” published by Emet Publishing in this week’s issue of L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*