**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas yisro 5772**

Volume 3, Issue #20 18 Shevat 5772/February 11, 2012

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**Second and Final Installment**

**Of the Guru and the Hasid**

**By Sara Yoheved Rigler**

(Editor’s Note: In last week’s issue of Shabbos Stories for the Parsha, we published the first part of Sara Yoheved Rigler’s fascinating but sad story of a Jewish Holocaust survivor who instead of going on aliyah to the Land of Israel, wound up in India where ensnared by the Hindu religion he rose to lead an ashram as the world-famous guru – Swami Vijayananda. In last week’s issue, the story revealed an amazing conversation between the Guru and the Hasid – Eliezer Botzer who tried to rescue the Guru’s neshama.

**Presents the Guru With a Hebrew Bible**

 Eliezer pulled out of his backpack a Hebrew Bible and presented it to the guru.

 With a wistful smile, the guru told him, “I already have one, and I’ll tell you from where.” Relating the story like a Hasidic tale, he told how, in the 1980s, an Israeli with a dilemma came to him here at the ashram.

 The Israeli had been a soldier in the first Lebanon War. Traumatized by the war and the ceaseless specter of more wars in Israel, the non-observant ex-soldier had decided that he wanted to sever all connection with Israel and with Judaism.

**Can’t Get Rid of His Jewish Feeling**

 “He became a Christian, but he was unsatisfied and unsettled. So he came to India and started to practice Hinduism. But here, too, he felt unsatisfied. Coming to Swami Vijayananda, he complained, “Maybe the reason I’m not finding myself in India, and I can’t get rid of this Jewish feeling, is that I still have the Bible they gave me when I was inducted into the Israeli army. Is it proper to throw it away?”

 “No,” the guru replied, “don’t throw it away. Give it to me.”

 He proceeded to tell the ex-soldier the story of Rabbi Akiva, who, as the Romans were flaying him alive, recited the Shema. When his agonized students asked him how he could perform the mitzvah of Shema while being tortured, Rabbi Akiva replied that all his life he had yearned to get to the place of serving God with his very life.

 “I told him,” related the guru, “Do you know the difference between Rabbi Akiva and us? After all we went through [in the Holocaust and the Lebanon War], we asked, ‘My G-d, my G-d, why have you abandoned me?’”

**Interpreting Rabbi Akiva’s Intentions**

 The guru had been relating the story in English, but at this point he quoted the line from Psalm 22 in its original Hebrew. Then he continued in English: “’But Rabbi Akiva,’ I told the Israeli soldier, ‘understood that his suffering was not a punishment, but rather a path to the highest spiritual state of attaining complete unity with G-d.’“

 The guru peered at Eliezer and Natti. “I don’t know where he is now, but I think he must have come back to Judaism after what I told him.”

 This was Eliezer’s opening. “Maybe it’s time for you, too, to come back. You’re not young. Do you want to be cremated and your ashes thrown into the Ganges? It’s time for you to come back to Judaism.”

**The Attendants Become Angry**

 At that the attendants got agitated and angry. “You’re trying to take our guru away from us,” they accused the Jewish visitors.

 Eliezer made one last try. “G-d loves every Jew, and wants every Jew to return to Judaism.”

 The attendants had heard enough. Furiously, they evicted the two Hasids.

 In April, 2010, Swami Vijayananda died at the ashram in Hardwar.

 Every Jew has what is called a *pintele Yid*, a Jewish soul-spark that can never be snuffed out. No matter how far a Jew strays, no matter how vociferously he repudiates his Jewish roots or how diffidently she ignores her Jewish soul or how many decades have elapsed immersed in a different religion, the Jewish spark is always there, ready to be ignited anew.

 However, every Jew also is flanked by “attendants” who assiduously work to keep the *pintele Yid* from being ignited. Sometimes the attendant is fear, sometimes distraction, sometimes egotism, sometimes complacency.

 G-d repeatedly sends messengers into our lives. They come in diverse costumes: sometimes a stranger who utters a portentous, unsettling statement; sometimes a wake-up call in the form of a tragedy or near-tragedy; sometimes a blessing so bountiful it reveals its Source; sometimes an unlikely encounter with a rabbi or a rebbetzin on a plane, or on the street, or in Wal-Mart’s.

**Meeting a Jewish Doctor in India from Wales**

 In a remote town in India in 1968, I met a Jewish doctor from Wales who changed my life. I know a Jew, also a doctor, who lived an utterly un-Jewish life on a Pacific island, and who one day in the mail received an invitation to a medical conference in, of all places, Israel. All such messengers come bearing igniters.

 But the attendants, with frightened or sneering visages, wave their arms and try to keep us from heeding the messengers. The attendants utter their shrill warnings: “You don’t have time to go to that class.” “Don’t accept that Shabbat invitation or they’ll try to brainwash you.”

**Various Excuses to Ignore**

**The Spiritual Wake-Up Call**

 “You’re too old/established/comfortable to start changing now.” “Your level of Jewish observance is fine; don’t become a fanatic.” “If you start observing mitzvot, you’ll miss out on all the fun in life.” “They’re trying to take you away.”

 It takes courage to banish the attendants, to realize that rather than protecting us, they are driving away the Fedex man who is trying to deliver the tidings of a surprise inheritance.

 The Jewish spark, the *pintele Yid,* in each of us, is waiting to burst into flames of joy, love, and fulfillment.

*Reprinted from the website of Aish.com and excerpted from Sara Yoheved Rigler’s upcoming book titled “G-d Winked: Tales & Lessons from My Spiritual Adventures.”*

**Story #741**

**One Hundred Plus**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000tmG0:001FBb0%5e00002rnk&count=1328569828&randid=1435809143&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1435809143##)

(1)

 Once, during one of the Emperor's periodic visits to the Holy Land, he was strolling through an orchard in Tiberias when he came across an old man. The elderly Jew with the long white beard was obviously well on in years, yet he was busily planting saplings in the ground.

 "Ancient one!" the Roman Emperor called out to him sarcastically.

 "You must have slacked off in your youth, and thus you need to work so hard in your old age!"

**So Long as G-d Gives Me Strength**

 "No, your Majesty," the Jew replied. "I worked plenty hard when I was younger, and I see no reason to stop now. G-d willing, I will continue as long as G-d will give me strength."

 "Please tell me, grandfather," Hadrian urged, "how old are you?"

 "Today is my one hundredth birthday."

"Then surely," Hadrian persisted in taunting him, "you can't expect to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Will you not be in your grave by the time these trees

bear fruit?"

**Everything is in G-d’s Hands**

 "Everything is in G-d's hands," the Jew answered. "If G-d wants it to happen, it will happen. But even if it doesn't, my work is not in vain. In the same way my fathers toiled on my behalf, my labor will benefit future generations."

 "Then here's to your good health," the Emperor said in parting, "And if you're still alive when these fruits ripen, let me know."

 "I will be happy to fulfill the Emperor's command, G-d willing," the old Jew replied.

 Years passed, and the young saplings grew into sturdy fig trees. Indeed, the old man lived to eat juicy and delicious fruit, and continued to enjoy vigorous health. The time had come to fulfill his promise to the Emperor. He filled a basket with figs and traveled to the emperor's palace.

 After some initial difficulties getting past the royal guard the old man was granted an audience, but the Emperor did not recognize him. "What do you want, old man?" he asked impatiently. "And what's that in your basket?"

 The old Jew reminded him of their previous encounter, and the promise the Emperor had extracted from him. The basket, he explained, was full of succulent figs for his Majesty's pleasure.

**The Emperor Was Shocked**

 The Emperor was shocked. After all, the elderly Jew had already been ancient at the time of their last meeting. The Emperor ordered a golden chair to be brought for the old man to sit on. He instructed that the basket be filled with gold in exchange for the figs.

 The Emperor's attendants were very surprised at the honor being paid the old Jew, until he related the story. "If the Creator saw fit to grant him such a long life," Hadrian admitted, "it must mean that he was worthy. Is it then not proper that I too should accord him honor?"

 The old man returned home with much pomp and circumstance, and all his neighbors came out to greet him.

**The Dangers and**

**Pitfalls of Jealousy**

(2)

 So far, the story teaches us that it is beneficial for a person to be active in old age, too. The aftermath of these happenings in the continuation of the Midrash reveals to us what can happen because of jealousy. We shall see that the advice of a wife of bad character causes her husband only trouble.

 When the old man returned with a basketful of gold, his neighbor's wife shouted at her husband, saying, "Look at your neighbor! All he brought the emperor was a couple of figs, and he became rich from it! And you still sit home earning next to nothing! Why can't you make a fortune from our fruit trees too?"

**Goaded By His Wife to**

**Approach the Emperor**

 Goaded by his wife's prompting, the neighbor filled a big sack with figs, loaded it onto his donkey, and rode to the palace.

 "I heard that the emperor is fond of figs and exchanges them for gold dinars," he told the palace guards.

 When Hadrian was told about the man's words, he ordered, "Let him be made to stand at the palace gate. I command that anybody who enters or leaves shall throw the figs he brought in his face!"

 The emperor's order was meticulously observed by a sneering and amusement-hungry populace.

 At night, the man was finally permitted to leave. He rode home bruised, shamed, and fuming with rage. Upon seeing his wife, he threatened her, "You will yet suffer for having caused my degradation with your bad advice!"

**Appreciate the Fact that**

**You Didn’t Bring Etrogim**

 He told her what he had endured, and she responded in bitter humor, "Why should that annoy you? Go, boast before your mother that today you had a stroke of good luck. You were fortunate to have presented the emperor with figs rather than etrogim. Moreover, the figs were soft rather than hard and green or else I would never have seen you back alive!”

 Sources: 1) Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in Living Jewish (as first posted on lchaimweekly.org).

 2) Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in "The Midrash Says" by Rabbi Moshe Weissman; (Bnei Yaakov Publications).

 Both are freely translated from an episode recorded in Midrash Tanchuma, Kedoshim 7.

 Connection: Seasonal - Tu B’Shvat, the Rosh Hashana for Fruit Trees in Israel that occurred this week [on Wednesday.]

*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=0000tmG0:001FBb0%5e00002rnk&count=1328569828&randid=1435809143&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1435809143##)

**A Parable of the**

**Ben Ish Hai**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 “*That which is in the heavens above or on the earth below*” (Ten Commandments 20:4)

 The Ben Ish Hai teaches us a seemingly simple parable that contains a profound message, with which he homiletically explains a pasuk in the Ten Commandments.

 Once, a property owner decided to take apart a wooden ladder that was attached to his house. He felt the ladder gave robbers and trespassers easy access to his roof, so he told his servant to take it apart. The servant, who wasn’t blessed with much intelligence, started his job. As he steadily climbed up the ladder, on each step he broke the rung beneath him.

**Made It All the Way to the Roof**

 He managed to make it all the way to the roof, but then looking down, he discovered that he had no way to get down. Some bystanders got him down with difficulty and gave him advice. “First you should have gone up to the roof and taken apart the ladder as you came down, from top to bottom.”

 The next day, the boss told his servant to take apart a ladder that went into a deep pit in the backyard. The servant remembered the advice, “top to bottom,” and started working. As he went down into the pit, he made sure to break every rung above him. When he got to the bottom, he was stuck with no way out.

**Everyone Laughs at Him**

 Everyone laughed at him. “But you told me top to bottom,” he said. They explained that it all depends on the circumstances. “When you are working on a ladder up to a roof, you work top to bottom,” they told him. “But when you are dealing with a ladder descending into a pit, you break it as you go bottom to top.”

 The Ben Ish Hai says a person has both physical and spiritual needs. We have a tendency to constantly compare ourselves with those around us. We have two choices. We can either contrast ourselves with those “above” us – those who have more than we do – or those “below” us, who have less than we do.

 When it comes to material needs, some tend to look at those who have more, yet when it comes to their spiritual health, their eyes aim to those below them. In essence, they are acting just like the foolish servant and are the laughing stock of the universe.

**The Road to a Successful and Happy Life**

 This week the Torah says, “which is in the heavens above or in the earth below” (20:4). The road to a successful, happy life is to know when to look where. When it comes to heavens, matters of spirituality, one should always look up. Compare your spiritual condition with those greater than you. When it comes to the earth, material matters, look down and compare yourself with those who have less.

 Happiness is not about wealth and comfort but about perspective and attitude.

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

**It Once Happened**

**The Legacy of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, a”h**

 Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka led a life which was remarkable in many ways, not the least in its utter selflessness and extreme privacy.

 She was born in 1901, the daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak. Her remarkable abilities and keen intellect brought her father to entrust her with great responsibilities. In fact, she was actively involved in many of his activities to keep Judaism alive during the explosive years following the Russian Revolution and establishment of the Soviet state.

**Exerted Herself to Help**

**Save Her Father’s Life**

 In 1927, when her father, the Previous Rebbe [of Lubavitch] was arrested, it was Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who made sure that all possibly incriminating documents were destroyed. Indeed, during his imprisonment, she was in the forefront of those seeking to commute the death sentence to one of exile, and then, finally to release.

 A unique relationship existed between Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka and her father, and he wrote many deep, philosophical letters to her, in which he expounded his concepts of Chassidic thought and Divine service. Those who were privileged to know the Rebbetzin described her as a refined, erudite woman of very extensive knowledge and great intelligence and wit.

**At the Peak of Warsaw’s Glory**

 On the 14th of Kislev, 1929, Warsaw was at the peak of its glory, the "Jerusalem of Poland." On that day, Rebbes of numerous Chasidic dynasties, world-renowned rabbis and heads of yeshivas, illustrious Jews of many walks of life gathered to celebrate the wedding of the daughter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the son of the brilliant scholar and kabbalist, Harav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson. The marriage of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka to Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson opened a new chapter in her life. Twenty-five years later, the Rebbe described the union as a marriage which bound him to the Chasidim.

**Early Days of Their Marriage**

 The early days of their marriage were ones of onerous hardship and great personal danger. First settling in Berlin, they were forced to flee to Paris after the Nazis came to power. They fled Paris in 1940 and through the strenuous efforts of the Previous Rebbe they succeeded in boarding the last ship to leave Europe. From the day they arrived in the United States, for the next 47 years, the Rebbetzin's life was dedicated to only one thing - the wellbeing of her husband and the success of his mission in life.

 It was Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who urged her husband to assume the leadership of Chabad after the passing of her illustrious father in 1950. From that moment on, the Rebbetzin embarked on perhaps the most difficult mission of her life, for she spent the next four decades supporting every action and move the Rebbe took on behalf of the Jewish people.

**Almost Entirely Absent from the Public Eye**

 Although she was entirely absent from the public eye, she took an avid interest in the work of the many thousands of emissaries, keeping abreast of their activities. The Rebbetzin took deep personal satisfaction in their accomplishments, and commiserated in their hardships.

 For the Rebbetzin, her husband's will became her own. She was his greatest Chasid. And yet, she had the wifely wisdom to look out for his health. Knowing that the Rebbe usually refused to see a doctor, she would make her own medical treatment contingent on his agreeing to a check-up. In order to assure her well-being, he would, of course, comply.

**She Suffered in Silence**

 In her last years, when the Rebbetzin was ill, she suffered in silence, and to her last day, no complaint escaped her lips. Even to her husband she did not reveal all her suffering, in order to spare him distress. On the unanimous advice of several doctors the Rebbetzin was hospitalized. Soon after she arrived at the hospital she suddenly requested a glass of water. Shortly after midnight of Wednesday, the 22nd day of Shevat, the pure neshama of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka left this world. The Rebbetzin's forebearers, Rebbetzin Rivka and Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, her great-grandmother and grandmother, had asked for a glass of water minutes before their passing.

**The Secret of Drinking Water**

**Before One Passes Away**

 It is recorded in many holy books that tzadikim often ask for water before their passing. One explanation that is given is that their souls thereby leave this world after reciting the proper blessing before drinking water, "...and everything is created through His word" and the blessing afterward "...He who creates many souls." This same blessing will be said at the time of the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Era.

 In the merit of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, may we follow the Rebbe's injunction to take her life's accomplishments to heart, and with our many deeds of goodness and kindness, may we see the coming of Moshiach now.

*Reprinted from Issue #506 of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization that was published 14 years ago on February 13, 1998 – 17 Shevat 5758.*

**Who's Who**

**Rachel**

 Rachel, the wife of Rabbi Akiva, was the daughter of the wealthy Kalba ben Savua. Her father disowned her when she married Akiva, then an unlearned shepherd. Rachel saw potential greatness in Akiva and encouraged him to leave home and devote himself to Torah.

 Her self-sacrifice for her husband's Torah learning is legendary. When Akiva returned home after 24 years he attributed his achievements as well as those of his 24,000 students to Rachel, as recorded in the Talmud.

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

**Blossoms in the Winter**

**A Tu B’Shvat Story**

**By Gershon Kranzler**

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 Once upon a time there lived a poor *melamed*, a Hebrew teacher, in a small village in Poland. He had his daily troubles with the hardheaded farmer boys who were his students. For they would rather roam the countryside than learn the *alef-bet*, the difference between the *daled* and the *resh*, or the *hei* and the *chet*.

**Plenty of Time for**

**Himself in the Summer**

 All through the summer, the *melamed* had plenty of time for himself. The Jewish farmers needed their children to help in the fields, and his pupils would anyway prefer mowing corn or loading hay to learning how to read and write Hebrew. That was summer. But now it was winter, and a heavy layer of snow covered every inch of the ground upon which the poor *melamed* walked. Yet this was his day off. For it was Tu B’Shevat, the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat.

**Walking to a Nearby Forest**

 You know that this day is the New Year of the tree world. Our *melamed*, too, thought of the meaning of Tu B’Shevat as he left the village and walked towards a nearby forest. He knew very little about trees and nature in general, for he had hardly ever left his study and his beloved books. Thus, you will not be surprised to hear that the learned man was wondering in what manner the trees celebrated their Rosh Hashanah. Were they budding and putting on their coat of green, or was there any other form of celebrating the New Year of which he did not know?

 When he reached the forest, he was deeply disappointed to find the trees and bushes covered with thick coats of crystal-white snow. “Who knows,” he pondered, “perhaps they were *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and *kittels* (white robes), like pious Jews on their High Holidays!” Just then a strong wind blew through the treetops, and the sounds of the swaying branches sounded like the whispering of devout prayers. Our *melamed* stood quietly amidst the noise of the windy forest, as fervent melodies passed through his head.

**“What Kind of New Year**

**Do the Trees Celebrate?”**

 Again he asked himself: What kind of New Year do the trees celebrate? Don’t they look as if they were dead?

 Suddenly, the entire scene became transformed. The *melamed* was able to see through the glittering, sparkling snow, as if the bark was made of pure, transparent glass. From the marrow of each little branch, tender sprouts pushed closer to the surface; yet they were careful not to go too far. It was still too cold for them to face the harshness of the world beyond the casing of the branches. But within, life was stirring, and the beginnings of new, strong branches were marking time until the Master of the trees and bushes would bring them.

**A New Realization about what**

**Each Tree Symbolized**

 The *melamed* eagerly drank in the full beauty of this tender spectacle. His strained eyes had never looked beyond the bark of the oaks and birches and poplars that lined the streets of his village. He had never dreamt of life and sprouting twigs deep within the trunks of those impersonal trees. Now he saw and understood that they, too, were individuals, each one in his own right and own way of life, each one with his proper soul and living spirit. The New Year of Trees was no longer meaningless to him.

**Spraying Millions of Fine**

**Snow-Stars into the Crisp Air**

 A sudden gust of wind sprayed millions of fine snow-stars into the crisp air, and the *melamed*’s eyes were closed as by a curtain. when he was able to see again, the wondrous scene had disappeared. Only the slender fir trees swayed back and forth, and their naked branches seemed to shake with mockery.

 Yet the man who returned home to the village was no longer the same poor *melamed*. Poor were only the clothes that covered his thin body. Poor was only the little hut that served him as a shelter. Yet deep within him budded spirited life, the blossoms of a hopeful future.

 What did it matter that his students were hardheaded farm boys? He realized that deep within them lay seeds of knowledge and much learning. He knew that he had only to supply the warmth of loving understanding to lure the sprouts out of their hiding, so that they would blossom and show the fruits of their harvest. They, too, would yet become good Torah students some day!

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

**Conversion and Marriage**

[**Answered by Sara Esther Crispe**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/14821/jewish/Dear-Rachel.htm)



 **Dear Rachel,**

 I am going through the process of an Orthodox conversion in order to marry the man I love, whose family wishes us to be married in an Orthodox synagogue.

 However, I have found that the process is something I would have eventually done on my own. I have always gravitated towards this life prior to meeting him. I was born into a non-religious home.

**My Fiance Doesn’t Have the Same Interest**

**As I in Living a Wonderful Observant Life**

 Now I find myself living a wonderful observant life, but my fiancé is not interested in living in such a way. He really only wanted me to go through this process for the wedding.

 How do I reconcile this separation? While we do not live together yet, he has already expressed concerns about my desire to adhere to kashrut (Jewish dietary laws), family purity and the Sabbath laws. I am very confused and concerned about the future of our marriage.

 I should mention that we are both making large sacrifices to be with each other. He is even moving to another country to be with me, and we do love each other very, very much.

 Thank you,

 K.S.B

**A Fairly Common Situation**

 Dear K.S.B.,

 Thank you so much for sending in your question. You should know that what you are describing is actually a fairly common situation. I have heard a number of stories where the partner converting is actually the one who desires to adhere to the laws, whereas the Jewish partner doesn’t.

 There are two different issues here, that are actually very connected as well. The first is the concept of conversion within Judaism, whereas the second issue is how you relate to your boyfriend and potential husband.

**Why Orthodox Conversions**

**Are So Difficult to Obtain**

 In terms of conversion, a person is allowed to convert, and is considered a true convert, only when there is no ulterior motive, and it is purely for the sake and desire of living a Torah-observant life. This is why an Orthodox conversion is so difficult to obtain, and why the potential convert is often pushed away. The goal is to ascertain that the person truly desires this way of life and will pursue it regardless of the difficulty.

 From what you describe, it sounds like this is your situation. While perhaps your boyfriend was the actual push to make you think about conversion, it appears that your motives and reasons are because of your attachment to Judaism and its way of life, and not solely based on appeasing your boyfriend or his family.

 In the Talmud a convert is called a “ger who nitgayer,” literally meaning “a convert who converted.” The question is asked: why doesn’t it say, as we might expect, “a non-Jew who converted”? The explanation given is that a Jew is one who was born to a Jewish mother, and therefore inherits that Jewish soul. A true convert has the greatest test of all, since that person was also born with a Jewish soul, but was born to a non-Jewish mother. Therefore, a true convert was born with this Jewish element and potential, and simply needed to undergo conversion to reveal it.

**Problematic and Possibly Invalid**

 So, basically, if you are to convert for the sole sake of your boyfriend, with no intention or desire to live a Jewish life, in actuality your conversion is problematic and possibly invalid. Therefore, from the point of view of Jewish law, you have no option other than to mean what you say, and to convert if you feel that you truly have that Jewish soul and want to live a Jewish life.

 The second issue is broader, in a way, and has to do with what happens when two people want very different things in life. From what you describe, it appears that the things you value, find attractive, would want to observe, keep, include and develop in your life vary greatly from those that your boyfriend would. Perhaps the problem is that he hasn’t had the opportunity to learn and find the beauty in Judaism himself, and therefore isn’t attached. But this is a real, serious issue.

**A Common Vision and Goal is Essential**

 As I am sure you know, while love is vital in a relationship, it is not enough to make a relationship thrive and grow. What is essential to a relationship is a common vision and goal, since even though we change as time passes, we need to know that we are headed in the same direction. This is going to be all the more relevant if you have children, as then it is not just about what each of you choose to do as individuals, but how you want to raise your family and how your home will be.

 I think that it is vital that the two of you really speak about how you see your futures, what is important to you and why. It is not merely about whether or not you keep a kosher kitchen, but why this is something you would want to do. What is it about keeping kosher that you find beautiful? Because, ultimately, when it comes to these fundamental aspects of your life, you need to have a mutual respect and understanding. Granted, there are couples to whom this happens after they are married, and then they have to work through these differences, but that is very different than entering a marriage with such a gap.

**If You Broke Up, Would You Still Want to Convert?**

 I think you also need to really ask yourself if you would continue with the learning and the conversion if it were not for him. If you were to break up, would you still want to convert? Because if the answer is no, then you need to be honest with yourself and recognize that being deceitful about something like this is not a great way to start a marriage. Even if your boyfriend doesn’t care, you have to recognize that there is no purpose to “converting” if it is all based on falsehood.

 And if you would convert regardless of your relationship, then your boyfriend and his family need to be aware of your interest in Judaism, and to understand that this is not a game, but a part of you and something that you want acknowledged and celebrated in your life.

 I wish you much hatzlachah (good fortune) in this journey.

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

**Thanks Beyond Words; In Tribute to Rav Yosef Tendler, Zt”l**



Rav Yosef Tendler, Zt”l

 In 1971, Rabbi Mayer Kurcfeld came to Baltimore to learn at Yeshivas Ner Yisrael. It is difficult enough for the average 15-year-old to adjust to an out-of-town yeshiva. As a stutterer, young Mayer faced even more challenges. His stutter was so bad he could not say a simple “hello”; he even had trouble getting out the words when speaking to his parents. As is typical of stutterers, he was self-conscious.

 People’s negative reactions to his speech impediment only exacerbated the sense of shame and embarrassment he felt when he tripped over words. It was all the more frustrating when they would try to finish his sentences, not allowing him to speak. He found himself limiting his interactions with people and shying away from situations he wanted to avoid. It was affecting every aspect of his life.

 About a month after he arrived in his new yeshiva, the menahel, Rabbi Yosef Tendler, called Mayer into his office. He told him that he noticed his bad stutter, and suggested that he contact Michael Katz, a South African talmid at Ner Yisrael who was simultaneously studying to be a speech therapist. Michael told Mayer that the reason for his stutter was either psychological (in which case, therapy would be in order), or it came from simple nervousness and lack of confidence.

**Naming His Most Challenging Situation**

 Working off the second premise, Michael asked Mayer to name his most challenging situation, when his stutter was at its worst. If he could conquer that, he would have it beat. Mayer admitted that when he got up in front of people, such as when he attempted to daven before the amud, he felt a paralyzing tightening in his chest, and nothing came out.

 After reporting back to Rabbi Tendler, Mayer was shocked when the menahel told him, “You are davening before the amud this Shabbos!” The entire mechina, about 175 boys, besides the rebbeim, would hear him stutter. How would he ever survive?

**Rabbi Tendler Stood by the**

**Boy Throughout the Davening**

 But Rabbi Tendler stood by Mayer throughout the entire davening, as he stuttered over every word. He helped him overcome his nervousness, calmed him down, and was his breathing technique coach. Soaked with perspiration, Mayer breathed a sigh of relief when it was over.

 Well, it was over for then, but Rabbi Tendler told him that he would be davening again on the following Shabbos, as he would again and again for the next few months, until he became a regular. Although Mayer felt bad at first for the students who had to sit through the unusually lengthy davening, he got a tremendous amount of chizuk from it.

**He Became Much More Outgoing**

 He became much more outgoing, and became increasingly involved in school and extracurricular activities. As a Pirchei leader, he was known as an expert storyteller; he became the head of the band, started speaking out in class more, and even said divrei Torah. Although he still stumbled on his words, he was not embarrassed by his stutter any more. Overcoming his stutter affected his whole being and life; things just grew from there.

 Today, Rabbi Kurcfeld is a prominent kashrus administrator who works for the Star-K and people are astonished when he shares his story. He is as suave and polished as people come; people have never once heard him stutter. He routinely speaks to everyone, from food establishment personnel to CEOs of companies.

Lectures at Training Seminars

 He lectures at kashrus training seminars and trains mashgichim. He was even the narrator of my weekly Nachum Segal Radio Show scripts. And, not only does he continue to daven before the amud, he is one of the baalei tefila for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur at his shul in Olney, Maryland.

 “Rabbi Tendler’s sensitivity towards my stuttering and his interest in helping me conquer it has affected every aspect of my life, until this day,” says Rabbi Kurcfeld. “This is even more significant, as I realized later, because this action was done with only one student in mind, myself.

No One Else Was Benefitting from This

 “No one else was benefiting from this, not the 175 talmidim nor the rebbeim. I have often wondered how many mechanchim today would take such a bold action that benefitted only one student. About three years ago, I met Rabbi Tendler at a chasana (wedding) in Baltimore. I don’t know why it took me almost 35 years to go up to him and thank him properly. I reminded him of my story, and proceeded to thank him profusely for all he did for me.

An Apparently Insignificant Incident

 “To him, it was an apparently insignificant incident; he admitted that he did not even remember it. To me, it just boggles my mind to think of the tremendous ripple effect it has had on the successes in my life.

 “Before we parted, I said, “Rebbe, there is only one negative outcome from all that you have done for me…I have not stopped talking since!’”

*Reprinted from the February 9. 2011 email of Matzav.com*

**Parsha Insights**

**The Princess and**

**The Bentley**

**By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

*“Thou shalt not covet.” (Shemos 20:14)*

 How is it possible to command people not to covet? Coveting is a knee-jerk reaction, isn’t it? You see someone driving along in a Bentley Continental and before you can even think twice, your envy-glands go into overdrive. Covetousness is a reflex, isn’t it? It’s not in the domain of intellectual control, is it?

**Standing in Line All Day**

**To See the King Pass By**

 Once there was a peasant who stood in line all day to see the king pass by. At last, the royal procession drew close. He craned his neck to catch a glimpse of the royal countenance. Immediately behind the king stood the crown princess; the peasant was taken aback. The princess was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She had delicate pale features.

 All the women he knew had coarse sun-browned skin and bad teeth. A peasant’s life is not conducive to physical beauty. However, despite the princess’s exquisite appearance, not for one moment did the peasant desire or covet her. She was someone so above his station in life that it never entered his mind that he was even in the same world as her. She remained an ethereal unreality in another cosmos

**The Root of All Desire**

 The root of all desire is the unconscious assumption that we *could* have the object of our desire. If we feel that it’s possible for us to have that thing, if we feel that it’s within our orbit, the next step is to covet it.

 The truth of the matter is that G-d puts each of us on our own separate monorail in life. Like two trains speeding past each other in the night that come ever-so-close, but never (hopefully) touch.

 The fact that you have a Bentley Continental and I don’t doesn’t mean that if you weren’t around I could have your car. It means that if you weren’t around that Bentley Continental wouldn’t exist.

 The mitzvah of not coveting tells us to look at someone else’s Bentley as peasant looks at a princess.

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

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

**Understanding the Concept Of Derech Eretz**

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| **QUESTION:** |

What is meant by Derech Eretz Kadmah Latorah, that Derech Eretz is before the Torah? Somebody told me that he couldn't find that statement. It's a Midrash Rabah in Vayikra, and it states, Derech Eretz, that means the way to live properly, comes before the Torah. What does that mean?

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

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We're not going to wait until you learn how to live properly before you keep the Torah; it'll take too long.

 What it means is, in history it came first, because Bereishis came before Shmos. The Torah was given in Shmos but in Bereishis we learned Derech Eretz. You know what Derech Eretz is? Derech Eretz is, Sarah Shoma'as, Sarah was listening, that's Derech Eretz. When Avrohom was talking, Sarah didn't stick her head out and say, “I know all about it, you said that to the guests that came yesterday.” Sarah was listening, that's Derech Eretz.

 When Avrohom saw wayfarers traveling in a hot day, he ran out in a terrible heat and he begged them to taste of his hospitality; that's Derech Eretz. Derech Eretz is, when a stranger came with camels, an able-bodied man came with camels and he said to Rivka, "Give me a drink!" and she said, “What do you think I am? Go yourself to the well!” No, she said, “Yes, my lord, She’sai Adoni, my master drink,” that's Derech Eretz. And when she added, “Also your camels, let me give water also to your camels,” that's Derech Eretz, that's in the Torah.

**When Yosef Was Down in the Dumps**

 When Yosef Ha’tzadik was a prisoner and he was down in the dumps, because he was in prison for nothing, and he saw two of his fellow prisoners were glum. He didn't say, “What's it my business, I have my own worries.” No! He said, “Ma’duah Pa’necha Ro’im Ha’yom, why do you look bad today?” He interested himself in their welfare. That's Derech Eretz. All these things and thousands like them are written in Bereishis to teach: this is the way to prepare for Torah, good character.

 When Yaakov Avinu said that he almost gave his life to take care of Lavan's flocks. By day and by night, in the heat and in the cold he didn't forsake his charge. He was a loyal watchman. That's Derech Eretz. When Yaakov went back to look for Pa’chim Ke'tanim, little things that were left over on the other side of the river, because he was a treasurer for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, he didn't waste.

**Don’t Waste for Everything**

**Belongs to Hashem**

 Don't waste, you can't waste things, they all belong to Hashem, nothing is ours. That's Derech Eretz. When Noach got drunk and he was lying on his bed naked, and his two older sons decided to cover him up, they took the blanket and they walked backwards not to see their father. That's Derech Eretz.

 The whole Bereishis is Derech Eretz, and it's put there before the giving of the Torah to tell us, that's how to prepare for the Torah. That's what's meant by Derech Eretz Kadmah Latorah.

 *Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l, based on a transcription of questions that were posed to Harav Miller by the audience at his famous Thursday night lectures delivered at his Flatbush shul. To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 201-676-3210*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Who is Listening?**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 “Oh Merciful G-d, I am an orphan without any means and I hope to soon get married. Please help me.”

 This was a part of the impassioned plea made years ago by a poor yeshiva student at the Kotel.

 Although he had directed his prayer to Heaven alone, the passion with which he said his words caused his voice to rise enough for them to be heard by a Jew standing near him.

 When both had concluded their prayers and were about to leave the area, the young man was approached by the man who had overheard his prayers, the owner of a thriving food store in Jerusalem.

 “I heard you describing your desperate situation,” he informed him, “and I am prepared to personally provide you with the funds you need to arrange a wedding and purchase a home.”

 A touching story but, even more than that, another reminder that when G-d answers the prayers which He has heard, He makes sure that the right party hears as well and answers those prayers on His behalf.

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

**Finding a Spouse:**

***Recognizing G-d's Role, and***

***Testing for Genetic Compatibility***

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

 The Sefer Hasidim (Rabbi Yehuda Ha'hasid, Germany, d. 1217), in Siman 385 tells the story of an unmarried girl who did not wear makeup or jewelry. When she was told that this practice may lower her chances of finding a suitable mate, she replied that she has no reason for concern, as it is G-d who brings men and women together for marriage. (The Talmud indeed states that before a person's birth, G-d announces, so-to-speak, whom that child will eventually marry.) Sure enough, this girl ultimately married a pious Torah scholar.

**The Importance of G-d’s Role**

**In Finding One’s Spouse**

 This incident demonstrates the importance of G-d's role in the process of finding a spouse. It goes without saying that one must take personal responsibility and make every effort to find a suitable spouse, and the accepted practice is for young women to wear makeup, jewelry and nice clothing while dating. Still, one must recognize that this process is overseen by G-d, who ensures that everybody finds a worthy mate. Certainly a girl should not compromise her modesty to find a spouse.
 Earlier (Siman 384), the Sefer Hasidim tells a different story, of a man who observed multiple fasts as a means of beseeching G-d to find his son a suitable bride, and the son indeed married and begot children. When the father's wife passed away, the son, as an expression of gratitude, observed no fewer than forty fasts to petition G-d to find his father a new wife. This demonstrates the importance of prayer as a crucial component of the process of finding a spouse for oneself and for others.

**The Question of Testing**

**For Genetic Disorders**

 Among the Halachic questions that arise during the process of finding a spouse is the issue of testing for genetic disorders. Particularly among Ashkenazim, there are certain genetic features that are incompatible with one another, as the combination poses the risk of disease.

 Many young men and women therefore take a blood test in advance to determine their genetic compatibility. Are such tests permissible, or do they reflect an attempt to interfere with G-d's work in bringing people together, and to extend beyond the accepted range of human effort and initiative?

**Rav Moshe Feinstein’s P’sak**

 Rav Moshe Feinstein (Russia-New York, 1895-1986), in his work Iggerot Moshe (vol. 4, Eben Ha'ezer 10), writes that it is both permissible and proper to perform such tests, as part of one's efforts to ensure compatibility. Failing to perform these tests, he writes, would be akin to walking with one's eyes closed, without taking the precautions necessary to avoid injury and harm.

 Rav Moshe adds, however, that these tests should be conducted discretely in order to guarantee privacy and prevent stigmatizing and labeling should a defective gene be discovered.

 Rav Shemuel Wosner (Israel, contemporary), in his work Shebet Ha'levi, likewise maintains that these tests should be encouraged, as they help prevent dangerous diseases, and that such measures are certainly within the domain of the efforts one should take to protect himself and his children.

**A Balancing Act**

 Summary: It is important to recognize G-d's role in finding a suitable spouse for oneself or one's children, and therefore one's efforts in this regard must include spiritual efforts, such as praying and the like. At the same time, however, one must employ the natural means at his disposal in searching for a suitable mate, including testing for genetic compatibility to prevent the spread of genetic disorders.

*Reprinted from the daily halacha email of Rabbi Eli J. Mansour of February 9, 2012, rav of Congregation Bet Yaakob in Flatbush and author of the Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin Memorial Halacha Series.*

**Beit Yaakov**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Ani**

 "So shall you say to the House of Jacob **Beit Yaakov,** and relate to the Children of Israel."

 On this verse in which Hashem directs Moshe to transmit the Torah to the Jewish People, Rashi comments that the term "House of Jacob" refers to the women, while the "Children of Israel" refers to the men.

 Why did Hashem tell Moshe to give the Torah first to the women?

 The Torah can be perpetuated only if each individual and each family takes on the responsibility of transmitting it to their offspring, so that they will in turn keep the mitzvot and pass them on to their offspring after them.

 This is best achieved by the transmission of Torah at an **early age,** when an individual's heart and mind are most receptive.

 When a child grows up, his/her mindset becomes more fixed and it is much more difficult to inculcate such a fundamental and pervasive value system as the Torah provides.

 Women, who provide for the child's physical needs from the outset, are in the best position to begin the process of the child's spiritual training at the same time.

 Thus, Hashem told Moshe to give the Torah to the women first, for they are first to have influence on the future generations, without whom Judaism can not survive.

*Reprinted from this week’s email from Rabbi Shmuel Ani, director of the Sarah Dabah Elementary School and the Madison Torah Center in Flatbush.*

**Chinese Jews Feel More**

**At Home in Israel**

**By Benjamin Haas**

 (Jerusalem) As a child growing up in Kaifeng in central China, Jin Jin was constantly reminded of her unusual heritage. "We weren't supposed to eat pork, our graves were different from other people, and we had a mezuza on our door," said the 25-year-old, referring to the prayer scroll affixed to doorways of Jewish homes.

 Her father told her of a faraway land called Israel that he said was her rightful home, she recalls. But "we didn't know anything about daily prayers or the weekly reading of the Torah."

**Fulfilling Her Father’s Dream**

 Jin has since fulfilled her father's dream.

 On a hot summer day in Jerusalem, where she works as a tour guide for Chinese citizens visiting Israel, Jin, who now goes by the Hebrew name Yecholya, wore a long khaki skirt, indicative of her conservative religious views, and Teva-like sandals, the national footwear of Israel.

 Jin and her relatives belong to a community of Chinese Jews that was established in the ninth century by Persian traders who traveled along the Silk Road to Kaifeng, at the time China's capital. Records documenting the group's history are spotty, but experts do know that some of the Jewish traders settled in Kaifeng and eventually built a synagogue with official recognition from the emperor.

 After the last rabbi in Kaifeng died in 1809, many began to forsake their religious practices while holding on to certain traditions, like the prohibition against pork and the celebration of a communal meal on Passover. Then in 2005, Shavei Israel arrived.

 The privately funded conservative religious organization, based in Jerusalem, specifically targets descendants of Jews who have lost their connection to the religion, such as those forced to convert to Catholicism during the Inquisition in Spain.

**A Strong Reverence for Ancestry**

 "Chinese have a strong reverence for ancestry," said Michael Freund, founder and chairman of Shavei Israel. "Even though they don't know how to read the Torah, they know they're Jewish."

 So far the organization has helped 14 Jews, out of an estimated 3,000 who live in Kaifeng, move to Israel. But Freund complained that Israel's bureaucratic and religious red tape has prevented Shavei Israel from bringing over more of these Chinese Jews.

**Need to Undergo Orthodox Conversions**

 Because the community intermarried and based Jewishness on patrilineal heritage rather than matrilineal, the norm in Judaism, Kaifeng Jews who want to move to Israel need to undergo Orthodox conversions under Israeli law. The process takes a year or more of study at an Orthodox yeshiva, and requires a final examination before a rabbinical court.

 Jin was brought to Israel with three others from her hometown by Shavei Israel specifically to begin the conversion process. Once converted, she was eligible to remain in Israel under the country's Law of Return. The statute allows Jews to claim citizenship, which she did along with her three Chinese classmates. Jin's father remains in China, although she said he hopes to join her soon.

**At First a Feeling of Indignation**

 At first, Jin and others were indignant about the need to formally convert to Judaism. "According to me and my family, we were always Jewish," she said. "I was confused why we needed to go through the conversion process."

 But after she started studying in Jerusalem, Jin said, she realized how little she knew of Jewish traditions and rules. Jin eventually became such an expert in prayers before meals, Freund said, that she stumped him at a dinner with other Jews from Kaifeng at a kosher sushi restaurant, where they discussed which prayer should be uttered first: the one for the rice or for the fish.

 "This is something that I, or most Jews for that matter, would never have given a second thought," Freund said. "It shows how much they can add to Judaism."

 The first family of Kaifeng Jews to immigrate to Israel was almost sent back to China. Shlomo and Deena Jin (no relation to Yecholya Jin) had overstayed their tourist visas in 2005. As they faced deportation, Shavei Israel worked with authorities to allow them to stay after going through the conversion process. Shlomo, at the time in his late 40s, endured a circumcision to complete the conversion.

**More at Home in Israel than in Kaifeng**

 More recent arrivals have been in their early 20s and most have felt more at home in Israel than in Kaifeng.

 Wang Yage said he stood out his whole life. His house was filled with Hebrew books, a language no one in his family understood, and even his name was different: It's the transliterated version of Jacob, a biblical name. After studying one year at Henan [University](http://www.sfgate.com/education-guide/) in Kaifeng, the 25-year-old jumped at the opportunity to move to Israel. He hasn't looked back.

 "I feel Israel is my home and I'm more comfortable here," said Wang, who now refers to himself as Yaakov. "Israelis help you out when you need it; it's like belonging to a big family."

**Plans to Become a Rabbi and**

**Help Other Kaifeng Jews**

 After his conversion, Wang plans to become a rabbi to help Kaifeng Jews immigrate to Israel. If he succeeds, he will be the first Chinese rabbi in almost 200 years.

 Despite this progress, bureaucracy in Israel and China may prevent larger-scale immigration. According to Shavei Israel, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior has been reluctant to give visas to a group not officially considered Jewish by Israel's chief rabbinate.

 Meanwhile, because Jews are not among China's 56 officially recognized ethnic groups and Judaism is not one of the five officially recognized religions, the Chinese government is suspicious of the Kaifeng community's efforts to organize.

 "The government is still worried about religion and its negative effects," said Xu Xin, director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at Nanjing University. "They worry it will affect stability and encourage fundamentalism."

 Ultimately, the government sees organized religion as a challenge to its power and state-sponsored atheism. Along with a newfound freedom of religion, the 14 Kaifeng Jews are looking forward to stretching their political wings.

 "The first time I went to vote, it was raining hard and three of us went together," Jin recalled. "I was so proud. For everyone else there it was just another election, but for us, it was the beginning of a new life."

*Reprinted from the November 5, 2011 edition of the Los Angeles Times.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Shabbos Heals**

 Let us begin this week with a short piece from the Kabbalah. The holy Zohar teaches us, that "Anyone who keeps the Shabbos, it is as if he has fulfilled the entire Torah." (Zohar, Part 2, 92a) The only way truly to understand this piece of Kabbalah is for one to keep Shabbos. Because, keeping Shabbos empowers a Jew to reach the highest spiritual heights. A Jew can only reach his potential with Shabbos.

 We read about Shabbos this week in the 10 Commandments. As the Holy Torah commands us in the fourth commandment: "Six days you shall work… but the seventh day is Shabbos to Hashem, your G-d, you shall not do any work…" (Shemos 20:9-10)

**Shabbos Has Kept the Jewish People**

 The Sages have taught us that more than the Jewish people have kept the Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jewish people. The following amazing true story, told by Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin, Rav of Congregation Bnai Zion in Detroit, Michigan, illustrates the power of Shabbos.

 Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin, of blessed memory, was a chaplain of the State of Michigan. Part of his duties involve making rounds in hospitals for the mentally ill. Every year before Pesach, a secular Jewish man named Milton helped Rabbi Gruskin in the distribution of Pesach boxes to the mentally ill. One Sunday morning, Rabbi Gruskin received an unexpected phone call.

 "Hello, Rabbi. This is Milton." "Milton! How are you?" There was a short silence. Then, "I'm calling from Sinai Hospital, Rabbi." Milton's voice broke. "Rabbi, please pray for me. I'm very ill." "I'm so sorry to hear that, Milton. Not only will I pray for you, but I'll also come down to see you as soon as I can."

 Rabbi Gruskin went to see Milton the very next day. He had lost weight, his cheeks looked sunken, and his complexion appeared jaundiced. "Rabbi, please pray for me," Milton begged. The doctors say that I have a tumor in my pancreas."

**Someone Else You Should Ask to Help You**

 "Milton," Rabbi Gruskin began, "You're a kindhearted person, and you've helped me a lot during the past few years. I am certainly going to pray for you. But I have to tell you that there is someone else you should consider asking to pray for you-someone whose prayers will be answered faster than mine will."

 "Who is it, Rabbi?" Milton asked anxiously. "I must call him immediately!" Shabbos, Milton. The Shabbos can pray for you." "What do you mean?" Milton asked. "Milton, start keeping the Shabbos," Rabbi Gruskin said. "In that merit, she [Shabbos] will pray to the Almighty to heal you."

I Don’t Anything About Keeping Shabbos!

 Milton thought for a moment. "But I don't know anything about keeping Shabbos!" "Don't worry ," Rabbi Gruskin told him. "I will send you books that will introduce you to Shabbos, and describe every thing that you have to do."

 Several days after Rabbi Gruskin brought the books, Rabbi Gruskin dropped in for another visit. Milton was in a somber mood. "They think the tumor is malignant," Milton told him "and they want to operate." He paused for a moment. "I thought about our conversation, and I decided that I will keep Shabbos."

**Pressed the Call Button for the Nurse**

 Milton pressed the call button for the nurse, and sat silently until she arrived. When the nurse came in, he said to her, "Tomorrow is the Sabbath. I don't want the television on, and I won't be taking any phone calls. I am going to observe the Sabbath from now on." Rabbi Gruskin turned to Milton and said "Let's shake on it." Milton took his hand and shook it vigorously.

 Rabbi Gruskin came to visit Milton on the day of the operation. It was after 4 p.m. by the time he arrived at the hospital and he was sure that the operation would have long since finished, with Milton already out of the recovery room. But Milton's bed was empty. He must still be in the recovery room, Rabbi Gruskin thought. But he wasn't there either.

 Nervously, he went downstairs to the surgical lounge, where he found Milton's family waiting on tenterhooks for news of the patient's condition. Just as he arrived, a doctor entered the corridor to meet the family and report on Milton's progress. The expression on his face already told them that the news was not good.

**“We Don’t Expect Him to**

**Make it Through the Night”**

 "The tumor was malignant. As we had suspected," the doctor said. "But that's not our problem now. We're having difficulty closing the incision, and he's hemorrhaging badly." He paused. "We don't expect him to make it through the night." Milton's wife broke down crying.

 Rabbi Gruskin calmed her down the best he could. After she was somewhat calmed, Rabbi Gruskin said," As long as Milton is with us, we must do everything we can. I'm going to shul now for the afternoon prayers, and afterwards I'll add the name Rafael to his name. We are in Hashem's Hands now."

**Special Tehillim Recited for Milton**

 After davening (praying) Minchah (the afternoon prayers), the men recited Tehillim - psalms for Milton, and the name Rafael was added to his Hebrew name. (Rafael means "Heal him, G-d. " It is commonly added to the name of a seriously ill person as a prayer and plea to Hashem)

 Rabbi Gruskin went back to the hospital at eleven-thirty that night. He found the family still sitting in the waiting room, hoping to hear good news from the doctors. Rabbi Gruskin stayed for several hours, giving them some badly needed emotional support. When he finally left, he reassured them that he would return immediately after davening Shacharis the following morning.

 As soon as Rabbi Gruskin walked in the door of his home, the phone rang. "This is Bill, Milton's brother," a tired voice said. "The doctor just told us that he doesn't think Milton will live another hour. Do you think you could come back to stay with us during Milton's last moments?" "I'll be right over." Said Rabbi Gruskin.

 Rabbi Gruskin returned to the hospital, and he went to where the family was waiting. He asked the doctors for permission to see Milton. The doctors gave their consent, and Rabbi Gruskin quietly entered the room, with the family filing in behind him.

 Milton lay quietly in bed, with tubes in his nose and mouth helping to keep him alive. As Rabbi Gruskin came closer, Milton suddenly opened his eyes. He looked at Rabbi Gruskin, looked at his family, and then raised his hand. He tapped his fingers against his thumb and pointed toward heaven. "Do you want us to pray for you?" Rabbi Gruskin asked. Milton shook his head, no. Rabbi Gruskin was puzzled; he could not figure out what Milton was trying to tell him.

**Asked the Doctor to Remove the Tubes**

 Rabbi Gruskin went over to the doctor. "Is it possible to remove those tubes?" he asked. "It might be important to know what he is trying to tell us." The doctor thought for a moment. "I suppose it's all right," he said finally. Rabbi Gruskin turned to Milton. "Do you want the doctor to take the tubes out of your mouth, so you can speak?" he asked. Milton nodded vigorously. So the doctor removed the tubes and stepped back.

 To everyone's surprise, Milton sat up in bed and began speaking. His voice was hoarse, and they had to strain to hear him. "All of you can go home, I am going to be all right," he whispered. "Rabbi please stay here." Milton's wife was in shock. The doctor was staring open-mouthed at his patient.

**Reveals His Visit to Heaven**

 They filed out slowly, turning their heads for one final look at Milton as they left the room. After they had gone, Milton said, "I had to ask them to leave, because they wouldn't understand what I'm about to tell you. The truth is that since the operation began, I have not been on this world-I have been in heaven."

 Rabbi Gruskin looked at Milton a bit dubiously. It sounded like the effects of anesthesia to him. But Milton shook his head emphatically. "I know what it sounds like, Rabbi, but it's the truth. They told me up there that if the Rabbi will be at your bedside when you first open your eyes, you'll know that you'll live. But if he's not there, you will die." Milton stopped to catch his breath. "When I opened my eyes and saw you, I knew I was going to make it."

 From that point on, Milton began the long slow road to recovery. Shortly after the operation, Milton told Rabbi Gruskin, "Thank you for praying for me. It saved my life." Rabbi Gruskin took hold of Milton's hands. "No, Milton, it wasn't me. It was Shabbos."

 Milton stayed in the hospital for seven months, running up a medical bill that exceeded $260,000. When he was finally able to go home, he weighed a mere eighty-three pounds-and he is six feet tall! The horrible disease in the pancreas kills quickly-usually two or three months after diagnosis-but more than thirteen years have passed since Milton's operation. His oncologist says that Milton is a medical miracle.

**Continues to Observe Torah and Mitzvos**

 Today, Milton fully observes Torah and mitzvos. Every weekday he drives twenty-five miles to daven in shul. And for many years before Pesach, he continued to help Rabbi Gruskin deliver packages to the inner city. (from Visions of Greatness, p.26, Rabbi Yosef Weiss)

 More than the Jewish people has kept the Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jewish People.  If you are keeping Shabbos, let this encourage you to be more dedicated to keeping Shabbos properly.  If you are not keeping Shabbos, let this encourage you to find out what you are missing. Good Shabbos Everyone.

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