**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Mishpatim 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #21**

**Chassidic Story #687**

**Down Went the Clown**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 One Saturday night in the year 5656 (1896), a wealthy businessman in Bagdad decided to celebrate his great success. To enliven the party, he invited Nissim the comedian, who used humor to mock others publicly. Standing on the table and sipping from a cupful of strong drink, Nissim made all sorts of bold gestures while he drew from his repertoire of cruel jokes and witty insults, filling the hall with noisy laughter.

 During his performance he was offered a piece of fish, and ate from it while continuing to amuse the crowd. Suddenly, a large bone got stuck in his throat. Not knowing how to assist him, the spectators helplessly watched as Nissim turned blue and then fell to the floor, lifeless. Horrified, the wealthy host screamed in panic, for he feared he would be blamed for the comedian's death!

 One of the onlookers suggested they place Nissim upstairs, in front of Saadia the Doctor's door, and so a group of volunteers from among the many guests carried the dead comedian to the second floor, knocked on the doctor's door and hurried away.

 Saadia, hearing the knock, came to the door, but because it was dark, did not notice the man lying on the floor and tripped over Nissim's feet, causing them both to roll down the steps, one over the other. Recovering from the fall, he looked at the other fellow and gasped; by tripping over this man and making him fall, he had killed him!

 Not wanting to be punished for murder, he stood the body against a nearby wall and left. Ezra the tailor, still busy working at this late hour, suddenly noticed someone looking into his window and was overcome with fear; perhaps a thief was trying to break in? He ordered him to leave immediately, but when there was no response, he took a hot iron and threw it, hitting the dead Nissim in the face and knocking him down. Seeing the body collapse, he was mortified, thinking that he had killed a man!

 Not wanting to be caught, he dragged the body into the street and stood him up against a tree. Soon after, a drunkard passed by and thought this man was laughing at him, so he took his bottle of whiskey and hit Nissim on the head, causing the dead body to fall to the ground. At that moment, a police officer was walking by, and seeing what the drunkard had done, arrested him. The news spread around town that in two days the drunkard would be hung for having killed Nissim the comedian.

 Feeling guilty, the rich businessman, the doctor and tailor, each on their own, went separately to the police to admit that in truth, it was they who had killed Nissim.

 The judge was unsure how to pass judgment. Never had he encountered such a strange situation, that four people should admit to killing one man! He decided to seek the advice of the nearby great Jewish sage, Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, the Ben Ish Hai.

 The day of the court case arrived and many gathered to see how this episode would be resolved. The judge proclaimed his verdict: All four men are free from punishment! My decision is according to the wisdom of the great Rabbi. The judge went on to explain what he had learned. Nissim the comedian caused his own death through his public mockery, and therefore he received punishment corresponding to all four forms of execution that Jews could have been sentenced to during the time of their Holy Temple.

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a passage in Lma'an Yishme'u 47 < avreicheilubavitch@gmail.com>, which cites of the many books about the Ben Ish Hai, Ahavat Hayyim.

Connection: Weekly Reading in the Torah about court executions

Biographical note: Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, the Ben Ish Hai (27 Av 1834 - 13 Elul 1909), is one of the most important Sephardic Jewish sages in the last two centuries. At the age of 25, he succeeded to his father's rabbinical position and continued in it for 50 years. In 1869 he visited the Holy Land and was offered the position of Rishon LeZion (Sephardic Chief Rabbi), but he did not accept. A great scholar and Kabbalist and highly regarded as a pure and holy man, is rulings are adhered to still today by many Sephardim world-wide. He published many important books on Jewish law, Midrash, Kabbalah and Ethics.

*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=1296054519&randid=1434574946)

**It Once Happened**

**Calling the A-mighty**

**To a Court Case**

 When Reb Aryeh Leib, who was known as the Shpoler Zeide, had been rebbe for three years, there was terrible famine in the area. The tzadik (righteous person), whose love for the poor, the needy, the widowed was unbounded, felt compelled to provide for the thousands affected by the disaster. He could neither eat nor sleep, and his heartache was so great that for weeks he couldn't bring himself to eat anything more than bread and tea.

 As the famine spread to the furthest provinces of Russia, rebbes from the starving communities wrote to Shpola, begging Reb Aryeh Leib to raise a storm in the Heavens, and beg that the deadly decree be rescinded.

 Who, if not he, a tzadik, known to work wonders, could accomplish this?

 The Shpoler Zeide, on his part, wrote to ten of the greatest tzadikim of the day - Reb Zusya of Hanipoli, Reb Yaakov Shimshon of Shipitovka, Reb Ze'ev of Zhitomir, and others - requesting that they come to Shpola immediately.

 They soon arrived and were seated at the long table of the Shpoler Zeide, and heard his awesome words: "My masters, I am taking the Alm-ghty to a din Torah, a lawsuit, and you are to serve as the judges. It is true that, according to the law of the Torah, the plaintiff must take his case to the place where the defendant is, but since in this unique case, 'there is no place devoid of His presence,' and since, more particularly, 'wherever ten are assembled the Divine Presence rests,' we will hold the court case here."

 The holy congregation agreed, and joined in prayer, their fervent supplications battering the Gates of Heaven.

 The Shpoler Zeide then instructed his aide to announce: "By the order of those gathered here, I hereby proclaim that Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel, summons the Alm-ghty to a court-case which will be duly conducted here in three days."

 The holy rebbes spent the next three days together, in fasting and prayer, and no one was permitted to interrupt their devotions. On the fourth day, after they had concluded the morning prayers and they were still wrapped in their prayer shawls and adorned by their tefilin, the Shpoler Zeide solemnly signalled his aide to announce that the court case was about to begin.

 "In the name of all the women and children of the Jews of Russia," the tzadik declared, "I hereby state my claim against the Defendant. Why does the Creator of the Universe not provide them with food, thereby preventing their death (G-d forbid) of hunger? Doesn't the Torah itself say, 'For unto Me are the Children of Israel bondsmen; they are My bondsmen'? Do we not have His promise, recorded by the Prophet Ezekiel, that even if His children should someday desire to go in the ways of the nations of the world, that this will never happen? One can draw the conclusion that the Children of Israel are the Alm-ghty's servants for all eternity.

 "In that case, they should, at least, be in the category of Jewish bondsmen. Jewish law teaches that a master is required to provide for the wife and children of his bondsman. Can the Al-mighty violate his own Torah so blatantly?

 "Now I'm well aware that some clever prosecuting angel will argue in defense of the Creator, saying that these servants are remiss in their service; that they don't serve their Master as well as they should. But to this bogus argument I have two replies: Firstly, where is it written that if a bondsman is lazy and doesn't work properly, his wife and children are to deprived of their sustenance?

 “Secondly, if these servants are lacks in their performance, their Master can fault no one, but Himself. For who else gave each servant an evil inclination whose whole job and purpose it is to drive them to abandon their loyalty and to destroy their desire to serve? Why, I can swear that if this evil inclination, which the Master Himself created, would cease to exist, they would become the most perfect servants possible!"

 Ten judge-tzadikim consulted their tomes of Torah to search the law for the correct verdict. After the passage of some time they stood to deliver the unanimous ruling:

 "This court finds in favor of Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of Rachel. The Alm-ghty is accordingly required, by whatever means at His disposal (and the whole world is His) to provide for the women and children of His People. And may the Heavenly Court above agree and support the verdict of this court in the World Below." The court pronounced its verdict three times.

 Then the Shpoler Zeide asked to have vodka and refreshments served. The tzadikim said "l'chaim" and ate together in a joyous mood before departing for home. Five days after the momentous verdict had been reached, the government announced a shipment of thousands of tons of grain. Immediately, the grain prices fell and before long, there were ample fresh supplies. For the entire following year, bread was bountiful for all.

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Mishpatim 5770**

**Understanding the True**

**Concept of a “Good Deed”**

 Good Shabbos Everyone. Everybody likes being treated nicely. So, when we treat others kindly and with respect, we fulfill the mitzvah of: “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Vayikra 19:18) It may sound obvious that must treat our fellow Jews respectfully and with feelings of love. Why then did Hashem give us a mitzvah to treat others with love and respect? The answer to our question lies in the definition of a mitzvah.

 Many people think that a mitzvah is a “good deed.” A “good deed” is optional; it is a nice thing to do. The implication of this definition is that if you want to do a mitzvah, fine. If not, that is also fine. In truth, mitzvahs are much more than just “good deeds.” Mitzvahs are an obligation. This is why we have a mitzvah to be nice to one another.

**We Must Be Kind**

**To Our Fellow Jews**

 If treating others kindly were just a “good deed” then one may decide that he does not feel like being nice to others because, for example, he was forced to wait too long in a line, or he was not feeling well or he did not have enough sleep. That is why we have an obligation to be kind to one another. It is not just a “good deed” to be kind to our fellow Jew. We must be kind to our fellow Jews.

 The Torah discusses the importance of treating others kindly in our parsha this week Mishpatim. Hashem tells us: “Do not oppress the widow and orphan. If you do oppress him, when he cries to Me, I will hear his cry. And I will become very angry and I will kill you with a sword, and your wives will be widows and you sons will be orphans” (Shemos 22:21-23) Rashi explains that this warning not only applies to widows and orphans, rather, the verse applies to all people. This verse is quite amazing. Hashem so much wants us to treat our fellow Jews with love and respect, that Hashem actually threatens to kill us if we mistreat another Jew.

 Besides reading the following beautiful and inspirational story, we will also learn some important tips on how to avoid hurting other people’s feelings. We begin with the following true story: Avigdor Ribicoff, a member of a kollel (a yeshiva for married men) in Tiberias, Israel, and his wife had been married many years and had unfortunately not been blessed with children. They sought medical help in Israel and abroad and had undergone various tests and procedures, but sadly, they still had no children. Despondency and desperation, heaven forbid, were beginning to gnaw at the young couple.

**Crying Before the Nadvorner Rebbe**

 They both came from"Litvishe" families and had no connection with chassidic Rebbes. Yet, friends urged Avigdor to go for berachos (blessings) to various Chassidishe Rebbes. Avigdor listened to this advice and went for blessings, if not reluctantly. During the summer vacation, when Avigdor saw his colleagues taking their children on outings, the pain of emptiness was worse than ever. He had to do something. Avigdor decided that he would go to the Nadvorner Rebbe, Rav Chaim Mordechai Rosenbloom (1904-1978), a Rebbe in Bnei Brak. When Avigdor went in to speak with the Rebbe, he broke down and cried.

 The Nadvorner Rebbe listened sympathetically and asked Avigdor where he would be davening (praying) on Rosh Hashanah. Avigdor said he planned to daven at a yeshivah near his home in Tiberias, where he enjoyed those he prayed with and felt comfortable with the pace of the prayer service. "Come daven with us," said the Rebbe warmly." The first day of Yom Tov, the Torah reading is, ‘And Hashem remembered Sarah [and blessed her with a child] (Bereishis - Genesis 21:1), and the haftarah is about Chanah (who finally had her long-awaited child, Shmuel) (I Shmuel 1:1). It's a segulah (omen) to have that maftir. Come here for Rosh Hashanah, and with the G-d's help, things can happen."

**Making Plans to Spend**

**Rosh Hashana in Bnei Brak**

 Avigdor had never heard that it was a segulah to be called for that maftir, but he knew that in many shuls the aliyos were usually sold for substantial sums of money on Rosh Hashanah. Did the Rebbe mean that he should buy that aliyah, or that he would receive the aliyah free of charge? He didn't have the courage to ask; he decided he would cross that bridge when he got there. Besides, if it meant having a child, he would pay anything, even if he had to borrow. Avigdor and his wife made plans to be in Bnei Brak that Rosh Hashanah. On the first night of Yom Tov, the Rebbe's shul was over-flowing with people and as Avigdor scanned the crowd, he wondered if the Rebbe would even remember him or his problem.

 After davening, the warm ambiance in the shul was practically tangible. With radiant smiles everyone seemed to be wishing each other the traditional greeting: “May you be inscribed and sealed immediately, for a good year, good life, and for peace.” People stood on line, gradually making their way towards the Rebbe to receive his blessing. Avigdor stood back, allowing the "regulars" their chance to greet the Rebbe first. As he stood off to the side, he noticed another fellow his age, who also seemed to be a visitor. It appeared that the other fellow also knew no one, and he too was waiting for the "regulars" to clear the shul before greeting the Rebbe.

 Avigdor approached the fellow and extended his hand in greeting.  "Shalom Aleichem," he said.  "My name is Avigdor Ribicoff. Are you from around here?" "Aleichem Shalom," came the reply.  "I'm Yeruchem Lazar and I'm from Jerusalem. I am here to be with the Rebbe for Yom Tov." "Oh?" said Avigdor.  "To tell you the truth," Yeruchem said, "I don't know how it's going to happen tomorrow, but I heard that the Rebbe said that if [I get] maftir, it's a segulah for children. Look at this crowd..." He let his words trail off.

**Unable to Believe What He Just Heard**

 Avigdor was crestfallen. He could not believe what he just heard. Hadn't the Rebbe told him to come get maftir tomorrow? That was the only reason he and his wife had come to Bnei Brak for Yom Tov. How could both of them get maftir at the same minyan? For the last month and a half he was waiting for the next day’s Torah reading - and now this? Avigdor did not allow his disappointment to surface. Not wishing to hurt the feelings of another Jew, Avigdor was silent. He continued to make small talk with Yeruchem and wished him well.

 That night Avigdor was in turmoil deciding what to do the next day. The next morning Avigdor, in deference to Yeruchem, prayed in another shul. And sure enough Yeruchem had maftir. And within a year Avigdor and his wife had a baby girl. The Rebbe had said that "things could happen." And they did -and all because of Avigdor's extraordinary character in his willingness to relinquish a potential blessing. (Echoes of the Maggid p.39, Rabbi Paysach Krohn, names have been changed)

**Always Think of the Feelings of Others**

 Instead of arguing with the other Jew and making a fuss, Avigdor put aside his personal feelings and emotions and kept quiet. We can learn from this example to always put first the feelings of another Jew. One of the simplest ways to treat others right is the following: One should make it his business to find out what certain people like and dislike. He should then try always to do those things that the person likes, and not do the things that the person does not like.

 We are all children of Hashem, as the verse tells us “You are Children to Hashem your G-d.” (Devarim  14:1) Every parent who has ever witnessed children fighting can testify to how difficult a sight it is. Every parent who has ever witnessed children treating each other properly can testify to how beautiful a sight it is. Similarly Hashem wants very much that his children get along and show love for each other.

 Let us make an effort to treat others kindly and with respect. Often the father promises a reward to the children who behave. How much more so will Hashem, our Father in Heaven, reward us for getting along with one another.

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

**Story #637**

**Preparing for a Message**

**From Beyond**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 Rabbi Yaakov Landa was a chasid of the fifth Lubavicher Rebbe, the Rebbe Reshab, but not the usual type of chasid. The Rebbe took an unusual liking to him and even made him the 'House Rabbi.' Any questions that arouse in the household of the Rebbe; if a chicken was kosher, if something was permissible on Shabbat etc., would be directed to Rabbi Landa. And, needless to say, the devotion of Rabbi Landa to the Rebbe was boundless.

 In addition to being a great Scholar, Rabbi Landa was a very knowledgeable man in mundane things as well and was an expert at home remedies. \*\* When the very contagious and deadly disease of typhus broke out in Russia near the turn of the century Rav Landa had ample opportunity to use his skills. The regular doctors, besides having virtually no treatment for typhus, were also understandably very reluctant to come in contact with the sick, while Rav Landa both did have remedies and did not fear for himself when it came to saving others.

**Inevitably Contracts the Deadly Disease Himself**

 He succeeded in healing hundreds but it was almost inevitable that he eventually contracted the disease himself. In a matter of days he lost consciousness and his life was hanging in the balance for several weeks until the crisis finally passed and he came to. The only problem was that when he was sick and unconscious, the Rebbe Reshab passed away, unbeknownst to him.

 Every day Rav Landa was taken from his room outside into the sun to get stronger, until after several more weeks he was back to his old self. Of course all the time he was recovering he asked everyone that passed by about the Rebbe's health, but the chasidim agreed among themselves not mention a word to him about the Rebbe's passing. The answer was always the same: the Rebbe is fine.

**Life Was Virtually Tied Up with That of His Rebbe**

 But Rabbi Landa sensed that something was wrong and kept asking until somehow he got the one person that didn't know about this agreement, and he heard the bitter truth. A normal person can understand what a terrible blow this must have been to him. A Rebbe is more than just a leader or even a father, the Rebbe virtually reveals the soul and true essence of the Chassid. But the relationship between Rav Landa and the Rebbe Reshab was even deeper and more personal than that; Rav Landa had been near the Rebbe day and night and his life was virtually tied up with his.

 That night Rabbi Landa wrote a short letter to the Rebbe. He folded the letter up, put it in an envelope, and the next morning when he was taken outside, he waited for the same man to pass, to whom he handed the letter and requested that he put it on the Rebbe's grave and tell no one about it.

**A Message from the Late Rebbe**

 In the letter he wrote that he wanted the Rebbe to take him away from this world. He wanted to be with the Rebbe because he felt that life was worth nothing without him.

Two days later the Rebbe's son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (who became the Rebbe in his father's stead) came to visit Rabbi Landa. He pulled up a chair, sat next to his bed where he was laying in the sunlight, and said, I just was by my father's grave and he gave me a message to give over to you.

 Rav Landa ushered up all his strength, propped himself up on the bed and prepared himself for the Rebbe's message from 'beyond.' When the Rebbe's son saw Rav Landa was ready, he continued.

 My father said: 'Stop making stupid requests!'

\*\* Once, at a wedding, the groom suddenly began suffering from an uncontrollable nosebleed. One of Rabbi Landa's sons (Rabbi Moshe, who is now chief Rabbi of Bnei Brak) rushed to him, saying he had a trick he learned from his father. He found a piece of string, tied it very tightly around the base of the fellow's little finger and after a few seconds amazingly the bleeding completely stopped!

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of his friend and colleague Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, the popular teacher, musician, recording artist and storyteller, in his weekly email for the yeshiva which he heads, Ohr Tmimim ( ohrtmimim.org/torah )].

Connection: Yahrzeit

**Rabbi Yaakov Ben Moshe Landa, Zt”l**

 Biographical Notes: Rabbi Yaakov Ben Moshe Landa [1893 26 Shvat 1986], became the Rabbi of Kurenets after his father passed away in 1913. During the First world war he traveled deep into Russia, to Rostov, where the Lubavitcher Rebbe lived during those years. In 1935 he emigrated to live in the Holy Land, and from 1936 he served as the chief rabbi of Bnei Brak for 50, where he was instrumental in the development of Bnei Brak into an important religious city. His kashrut certification became perhaps the most widely accepted in Israel. He was succeeded as head of the Rabbinical Court of Bnei Brak by his son, Rabbi Moshe-Leib Landau.

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

 Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (12 Tammuz 1880-10 Shvat 1950), known as the Rebbe Rayatz, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 1940 he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

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**On Religion**

**A Rare Blend, Pro Football**

**And Hasidic Judaism**

**By Samuel G. Freedman**

LOS ANGELES

 After practice one late-summer day in 1986, [Alan Veingrad](http://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/V/VeinAl20.htm) strode into the [Green Bay Packers](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/sports/profootball/nationalfootballleague/greenbaypackers/index.html?inline=nyt-org)’ locker room, feeling both spent and satisfied.

 An undrafted player from an obscure college, he had made the team and then some. On the next Sunday, opening day of the [N.F.L.](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/national_football_league/index.html?inline=nyt-org) season, he would be starting at offensive tackle.

 In his locker, Mr. Veingrad found the usual stuff, his street clothes and sweat suit and playbook. On a small bench, though, lay a note from the Packers’ receptionist. It carried a name that Mr. Veingrad did not recognize, Lou Weinstein, and a local phone number.

 Alone in a new town, too naïve to be wary, Mr. Veingrad called. This Lou Weinstein, it turned out, ran a shoe store in Green Bay, Wis. He had just read an article in the paper about a Jewish player on the Packers, and he wanted to meet and welcome that rarity.

**Invited to Join Weinstein Family**

**For Rosh Hashana Services**

 A few days later, Mr. Veingrad joined Mr. Weinstein for lunch at the businessman’s golf club. There Mr. Weinstein invited the player to accompany his family to Rosh Hashana services at [Cnesses Israel](http://www.cnesses.org/), a synagogue near the site of the Packers’ original home field, City Stadium.

 It had been a long time since Mr. Veingrad had spent much time in shul, nearly a decade since his bar mitzvah. He knew the date of the Packers’ Monday night game against the Chicago Bears better than he did Yom Kippur. “But when I heard the Hebrew,” he recently recalled of that service in Green Bay, “I felt a pull.”

 Maybe it was a presentiment, maybe it was the sort of destiny that Yiddish calls “goyrl.” Whatever the word for it, something stirred into motion. And that something brought Mr. Veingrad into the [Chabad House](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/jewish/Centers.htm) — a Jewish center run by the Lubavitcher Hasidic movement — near the [University of Southern California](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/university_of_southern_california/index.html?inline=nyt-org) campus here five nights before the 2010 [Super Bowl](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/s/super_bowl/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier).

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| Mr. Veingrad as a tackle with the Green Bay Packers in 1987 spacer Photo by Vernon Biever/N.F.L.. |   |

**Going by the Jewish Name of Shlomo**

 A promotional flier announced the evening’s subject as “Super Bowl to Super Jew.” There was truth in that advertising. Mr. Veingrad goes these days by his Hebrew name, Shlomo. He wore a black skullcap and the ritual fringes called [tzitzit](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/110306/jewish/Tallit-and-Tzitzit.htm); he wore the Super Bowl ring he won [in 1992 with the Dallas Cowboys](http://www.cowboycards.com/playersChecklist.asp?SN=AV76) and the Rolex watch that was a gift from [Emmitt Smith](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/emmitt_smith/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the team’s star running back.

 Within his 6-foot-5 frame, Mr. Veingrad embodies two Jewish archetypes that do not often meet. He is the ba’al guf, the Jewish strongman, and the ba’al teshuva, the returnee to the faith. While two Jewish boxers on the scene now — [Yuri Foreman](http://www.yuriforeman.com/) and [Dimitriy Salita](http://www.dsalita.com/) — also are prominently observant, Mr. Veingrad may well be the only Orthodox athlete from the United States’ hugely popular team sports.

 “I believe I played in the N.F.L. and have that ring so I can share my story with other Jews,” Mr. Veingrad, 46, said shortly before the U.S.C. event.

**The Torah is a Playbook for Living Life**

 During it, he told a spellbound capacity audience, “The Torah is a playbook for how someone can live their life.”

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| spacer Ann Johansson for The New York Times Alan Veingrad, who played for the Green Bay Packers and Dallas Cowboys, at the Chabad House in Los Angeles. |

 Were Mr. Veingrad a Christian, like virtually all his teammates over the years, such G-d-talk would be as ordinary as an extra-point kick. With prayer circles at midfield and Bible verses on their eye-black, Christian football players have routinely used their fame for evangelism and witness. One of the major subplots of this year’s Super Bowl is the [anti-abortion commercial featuring the college star Tim Tebow](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/opinion/31sun4.html).

 For Jews, abundant as fans but uncommon as top players, the visibility of a Shlomo Veingrad serves both reassuring and cathartic roles. Having a Jew to root for — whether [Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax](http://www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/greenberg_and_koufax.shtml) or the Israeli [N.B.A.](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/national_basketball_association/index.html?inline=nyt-org) rookie [Omri Casspi](http://www.nba.com/playerfile/omri_casspi/index.html) — “has a lot to do with our desire to define ourselves as Americans in the most American way, which is sports,” said [Jeffrey S. Gurock](http://jeffreygurock.com/), a history professor at [Yeshiva University](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/y/yeshiva_university/index.html?inline=nyt-org) and the author of “[Judaism’s Encounter With American Sports](http://www.amazon.com/Judaisms-Encounter-American-Sports-Experience/dp/0253347009).”

 At a deeper and more anxious level, American Jews continue to grapple with the stereotypical view of the Jew as egghead, nerd, weakling. That dismissive portrayal was a staple not only of anti-Semites, but also of early Zionists, who envisioned their “new man” with his plow and rifle as the antidote to the “golus Yid,” the exilic Jew unable even to defend himself.

 “I don’t think those feelings are as conscious as in prior generations, but they still have some resonance,” Professor Gurock said in a telephone interview. “So there’s a residual pride of someone achieving in this very secular world of sports.”

 The story Mr. Veingrad tells in about 40 speeches a year attests to a ferociously competitive spirit. He started playing high school football as a teenage beanpole in Miami, could get a scholarship only from a Division II school, East Texas State, and was cut by his first two N.F.L. teams.

**Starting a Six-Year Career in the N.F.L.**

 A full year later, he caught on with the Packers, beginning a six-year career with Green Bay and Dallas. From high school through the pros, he defied the odds with a rigorous program of weight training and a relentless study of technique.

 In retirement, Mr. Veingrad brought a comparable focus and intensity to his emerging religious life, which was nurtured by Moshe Gruenstein, an Orthodox rabbi in South Florida, with whom he studied the Torah for eight years, and then by several Chabad rabbis.

 Among those who came to hear this story at U.S.C. was Spencer Kassimir, a 26-year-old graduate student in East Asian studies.

 “I drove all the way to Orange County to get this,” Mr. Kassimir said, showing Mr. Veingrad an official N.F.L. football.

 Mr. Veingrad obligingly signed with his name, his uniform number, and his message: “Jewish Pride!”

*E-mail: sgfreedman@nytimes.com*

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**The Role of Women**

**In Judaism**

**By Rabbi Moishe Lichtenstein**

 I was once asked a question about why the Shemonei Esrei, or Amidah prayer that Jews say three times a day mentions only the Patriarchs, "G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" but not the Matriarchs "Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah".

 There is a myth that in Judaism, women are considered to be inferior.

 The Torah, the blue print of the universe and everything in it, presents roles for men and women based on the intrinsic natures of the two and the infinite wisdom of how it would be best for those natures to maximize their potentials. Women are *not* inferior. Nor are they superior. A man and woman work as a team for maximum results and universal benefit.

 The Rambam, (Rabbi Moses Maimonides) teaches us how a husband and wife should treat each other. He writes that a man is a King and a woman is a Queen. They both have very different roles, but both important-- without one or the other there could not be a kingdom. A team effort is required to create, develop and maintain a kingdom.

 The Rambam also says that a man should honor his wife more than himself. Thus, the well known Jewish statement "if you want to be the king of the house, treat your wife like a queen" -- or vice versa. There is no question in Judaism about the role of women because her role is that of a Queen.

**Jewish Life is Not Unaffected by**

**Modern Trends of World Thought**

 Jewish life is not unaffected by modern trends of world thought. Jewish homes are affected by outside views of the role of women just as non-Jewish homes are. Originally, Jewish women were not maids in their homes, but true Queens. Today, many women's roles include even more responsibilities than that of a Queen. Today women are much more involved in every aspect of Jewish life and are even some times, the bread winners of the home. Today many women work outside their homes, yet they are not absolved of fulfilling the irreplaceable role of mother, wife and beacon of moral support which only she can fill.

 However there is one uncompromising, fundamental and consistent concept, seen throughout the Torah with regard to the role of women – the concept of *tzniut* (modesty). Gila Manolson writes in her outstanding book Outside/Inside "*tzniut* is infinitely more than what we wear - it's about who we are. It's the potential within every one of us, male and female and Judaism enjoins us all to actualize it. *Tzniut* is the key to all spiritual growth and therefore to a healthy society. Rather than restricting, *tzniut* is, in the most profound sense, liberating."

**The Role of Women is Intrisically**

**Private and Internal**

 The reason why the Amidah prayer mentions the patriarchs and not the matriarchs is because the role of women is intrinsically private and internal vs. the male role which is public and external, although men should be modest as well, it is the woman's role that contains within it, the power modesty brings.

 Under no circumstances do we ever see that women in Judaism are considered to be inferior because of modesty. The association of publicity or prestige with how important a person is, does not exist in Judaism. Women are at the forefront of the foundation of life and are respected accordingly even if they do not hold a public position.

 A man and woman are two parts of a whole. The Jewish woman is the back bone of her home and community and her fulfillment of that role determines the health, well being and growth of our surrounding world.

Rabbi Moishe Lichtenstein’s article “The Role of Women in Judaism” is the feature article in the latest email edition of The Oorah Spirit (February 2010/Shevat-Adar 5770). To subscribe, email your request to The Oorah Spirit <theoorahspirit@oorah.org>

**A Slice of Life**

**A Furniture Store**

**Conversation**

**By Yehudis Cohen**

 My daughter Devorah and I were doing last minute furniture-and-other-shopping for her new apartment. She was getting married in just over a week and there was still plenty to buy and do.

 We had checked Craig's List for days, had poured over the IKEA catalogue, and had gone into at least half-a-dozen furniture stores. In one particular furniture store, a gregarious thirty-something, friendly salesman was being very patient, accommodating and humorous.

 At one point in the conversation he told us that, though his given name is Peter, his nickname is Cookie. "Can you imagine what that was like for a big Puerto Rican kid who was always trying to be macho around his friends being called 'Cookie' by his family?" he asked with a twinkle in his eyes.

**Peter Gives His Business Card**

 The price Peter was ready to give us on a sofa and dinette table with six chairs seemed to be the best deal we would find. Still, we wanted to look around a bit more. He gave us his business card and wrote on it his email address and cell phone number. "Call back when you make up your mind," he told us.

 By the time we made up our mind, Peter had already left the store. But he graciously agreed to head back to the store and open up especially for us, though he had a family gathering that evening.

 Peter wrote up the invoice. Before we signed on the dotted line, I said, "Peter, you can tell that the two of us aren't so savvy about buying furniture. In fact, we're pretty naïve. Are you really giving us a good price?" I asked.

 In answer, Peter said, "Let me show you a picture of my guardian angel, and then you'll trust me."

 Peter pulled out his wallet and we could see a photo of two cute children. "Well, these are my personal guardian angels, my kids. But, let me show you a different picture."

**A Photo of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

 And with that, Peter took out a photo of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. "Since I put a picture of this holy rabbi in my wallet two years ago, things in my life have been really good."

 Devorah and I were taken by surprise. "Peter, where did you get the picture? Why is it in your wallet?"

 "My mother is Christian and my father practiced Hinduism. But he had a Jewish boss who had told him about the holy rabbi and my father told me about him. My father taught me to respect and revere holy people of every faith. A number of times when I was in the Brooklyn branch of our store, I would see flyers with a picture of the holy rabbi and it bothered me that sometimes they were lying on the floor. I kept seeing the rabbi's picture all over the place and I started reading up about him. One day, I don't know why, but I just decided that this man's picture should be in my wallet. Since then I've had only good things happen in my life."

**Mocked for Kissing Store’s Mezuza**

 Devorah and I digested everything that Peter had said until now and then listened as he continued. "I began trying to talk to the Jewish customers about Jewish things, but I sensed a feeling of superiority from them. Once in a while I would touch the mezuza on the door of the store as I came in. People would mock me for doing it. But I'm used to prejudice, 'cause I'm Puerto Rican.

 "I started doing research into my family's genealogy. From my dad's side, my great-grandfather was from Spain. He had one Jewish parent and one Muslim parent. He was a free-mason. It's weird to me that I've gravitated so much to Judaism.

 "My great-grandmother on my mother's side was also from Spain and I found out that she was Jewish."

 We were stunned. "Peter, was she your mother's grandmother or your father's grandmother?" I asked.

 "My mother's," was Peter's answer.

 "And was it your mother's father or mother who was the child of your great-grandmother," I probed further.

 "It was my mother's mother," Peter answered unhesitatingly.

 "Peter, that means that you're Jewish!" I told him emphatically.

 Peter thought for a moment, then shared, "I had wanted to go to the holy rabbi's grave to pray before the new year, but I didn't make it."

 "It's never too late, Peter. And when you go there, make sure to tell them that you're Jewish and ask them to help you put on tefilin. Do you know what tefilin are?"

Peter nodded his head. "I've been doing a lot of reading about Jewish things over the past two years; I've been studying the Torah. I know what tefilin are."

**Pleads with Peter to Put on Tefilin**

 I told Peter, "Jewish teachings explain that after 120 years - 120 years is a person's lifespan according to Torah - if a Jewish man passes away and hasn't put on tefilin ever in his life, well, that's not a good thing for him when he goes to the next world. Peter, make sure when you go to the Rebbe's resting place that you put on tefilin!"

 The paperwork was filled out and signed. It was late, but we were lingering, all lost in our own thoughts. "I don't know why it is that I feel so attracted to Jewish things," Peter said softly.

 "Because you are Jewish, Peter. You have a Jewish soul. It's who you are!"

 "Yeh, I guess that's what it is," Peter said with a smile.

 I spoke to Peter a few times since our encounter in the furniture store. I asked his permission to write up our conversation and he agreed. "I've been looking forward to reconnecting with my Jewish side," Peter told me before we hung up the phone.

Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization

[**The Human Side of the Story**](http://ohr.edu/yhiy.php?seriesid=17&archive=1)

**Recipe for a**

**Happy Marriage**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Couples in the Orthodox community have a better chance of enjoying a happy marriage than those in the general community.

 This is the conclusion of a recent survey conducted by the Aleinu Family Resource Center in California.

 "Very good" or "excellent" was what 72 percent of Orthodox men said to surveyors about their marriage, and 74 percent of Orthodox women echoed this response. By comparison 62.9 percent of men and 59.5 percent of women in the general population reported that their marriages are happy.

 Commenting on these findings, one expert suggested that the success of Orthodox marriages was due to a shared vision of life, the observance of Jewish purity laws, and a more realistic expectation of marriage.

(Reprinted from this week’s Ohr Somayach website.)

**Beware of What Outside Influences You Bring**

**Into Your Home**

 What is the common denominator among a cereal box, a soda bottle and a shampoo container? They all make their way into your home in one form or another-and

they all may contain messages or pictures which are equally inappropriate for your home. Marketers try to sell product and are adept at finding ways to allure susceptible purchasers to their wares.

 While the messages and pictures are certainly not the reason these products found their way into your special home, they will nevertheless be glaringly in front of you, and any family member, guest or friend - whether in your pantry, on your kitchen or dining room table, in the shower, in your bedroom...in short, like the Zefardea (frogs in Egypt) all over the house.

**Inappropriate Pictures or Western Style Messages**

 Of course, there are other consumables with inappropriate pictures or western-style messages which appeal to prurient interests -- we name only a few. Then, there are other products, circulars and advertisements which you don’t even purchase -- but which get put into your mailbox, or pushed through your mail slot. So, you say, what can you do -- this is one of the prices to pay for galus -- living in Rome with the Romans, no?

 No, not at all. One should encourage the manager of kosher supermarkets to especially avoid these products as a service to Hashem and his customers. Alert him to the presence of the alluring picture or the filthy message, and ask him to rid his store of the product. When women go shopping, they should be on the lookout for products with labels or back-of-the-boxes unsuitable for the household, and especially for men and boys.

**One Inappropriate Sight or Thought**

**Can Haunt a Person for a Long Time**

 If men see a product which is questionable for their viewing, rather than taking a second look, they should ask a woman to take a look at it - or simply discard the label, wrapping or box as necessary. Circulars delivered to the doorstep for clothing and department stores are especially suspect, and must be treated with great caution. Some simply put it straight into recycling bin outside without as much as taking it out of its wrapping--with good reason!

 We must remember that one inappropriate sight or thought can haunt a person for a long while thereafter -- and especially when dealing with young and easily - influenced children and teenagers, the dangers can be especially deleterious. Perhaps an important method of demonstrating your strong desire for the Geulah is not only by praying -- but by actively demonstrating how the mores and desires of the world around us are an anathema to the purpose and goals of our lives - -in this world and the next.

Reprinted from the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin (26 Shevat 5770/February 11, 2010)

**What Goes Around Comes Around: A Lesson**

**From a Rabbi**

**By Rabbi Shmully Hecht**

 Driving down one of America’s major highways recently, I realized approaching the tollbooth that the electronic pass usually affixed to my window was missing. My friend Gregg and I scrambled for bills and change, and between our pockets and the glove compartment, we found enough in paper and coins to cover the toll and proceeded with great relief.

 Passing through the booth, however, we were both stunned to learn that we did not have to pay the toll, because the car ahead had paid its own toll and then our toll of $5.50.

 I was stunned and curious, and so we sped up to follow the other car. Was it someone I knew? Where was the license plate from?

**Benefactor Races Away to Avoid Detection**

 But as we revved up to catch a glimpse of our benefactor, so did he or she, eventually accelerating such that I felt that the other car did not want to be caught up with, and so we slowed back down.

 I asked Gregg if it could have been a friend of his who paid twice. It was not, he assured me, anyone he knew. And then he told me a story.

 Gregg is a recovering alcoholic who has attended sobriety meetings for many years, where he learned from those sober even longer than he that if you are at the bottom, a great lift up is to do something for someone else; to shock yourself out of self-centered pity, to remember your constant ability, however down, to help someone else. One of his brothers in sobriety took to leaving enough money at his regular diner to pay for the next customer’s breakfast.

**An Anonymous Benefactor**

 I don’t know if my benefactor was a millionaire or unemployed, but I do know he or she remained anonymous - and Gregg’s story brought me back to the teaching of Maimonides, the 12th century scholar who taught that the highest form of charity is where the giver and the receiver do not know of each other. Maimonides’ proscription removes the pride of the giver and stigma of the receiver and leaves only the beautiful human act of caring for another without self-interest.

 And then I remembered what happened to me earlier in the day.

 Walking to my office, I met a man seemingly homeless and certainly distraught. Could I spare him just 50 cents to help him out on his way to his sister’s house? He needed to visit her, and he assured me that it was his sister and not the liquor store owner or local drug dealer. He implored again with a sincerity and desperation that seemed in my judgment to be a genuine need to connect with a loved one and not just a chemical substance.

**Doesn’t Have the 50 Cents**

 I did not have 50 cents, but I did have several bills - which I counted before giving all of them to him, making him promise me he would take the money he needed to get to his sister’s, and give the difference to her as a gift for hosting him.

 I relate to you before my Creator and on my rabbinical honor, the difference in change was $5.50.

Rabbi Hecht is the co-founder and rabbinical adviser of Eliezer, the Jewish Society at Yale. The following article by Rabbi Shmully Hecht appeared on NYDailyNews.com and was posted on the Matzav.com Newscenter website on February 10, 2010.:

**Community Leaders Seek**

**To Prevent Execution**

 Both Jewish and non-Jewish community leaders are petitioning Florida Governor Charlie Crist for an emergency stay of execution for death-row prisoner Martin Grossman, scheduled to be executed on Feb. 16th.

 National Council of Young Israel, Agudath Israel of America,Orthodox Union, Chabad, Satmar, Rabbinical Alliance of America, are amongst a list of 200 organizations pleading with the Florida Governor to grant a 60 day stay which would enable for a comprehensive clemency application to be presented and considered.

 The case of Martin Grossman is gaining national attention. Grossman, in 1984 was a 19-year-old drug-addicted high-school drop-out with a juvenile record for trespassing. He and a friend, Thanye Taylor, drove to an isolated nature reserve to fire a found handgun. A wildlife officer stopped them, searched their car and confiscated the gun.

 Martin, who is reported to have an IQ of 77, panicked and began pleading with the officer not to report him as he would be in violation of his probation. When she reached for her radio a struggle ensued, which resulted in the officer reaching for her own gun, whereupon Martin panicked, snatched her gun and shot her. A psychiatrist who evaluated him concluded, from his psychological and medical condition, that he could not have formed the intent to kill. Taylor served less than three years in prison while Martin was sentenced to death.

**On Death Row for More than 25 Years**

 Mr. Grossman has been on death row for over 25 years.

 The petition argues that the death sentence meted out to him is disproportionate in the extreme and that his defense was inadequate. Only one percent of murder sentences end in capital punishment, crimes commonly referred to as “the worst of the worst.”

 The petition further argues that Martin’s crime, considering the lack of premeditation, his drug addiction, his IQ level, and several other compelling factors does not qualify for the death penalty, and that the court ignored mitigating circumstances. Only four of thirty-three available defense witnesses were used in the sentencing phase.

 Additionally, there are allegations of prosecutorial misconduct as well. A fellow prisoner and key witness for the government swears that he lied at trial, and that he was rewarded by having his own charges dropped. Martin Grossman’s appeals regarding these issues have been rejected without hearings, but they could be considered in a clemency petition.

**Shows a Deep and Profound Remorse**

 “Martin has shown deep and profound remorse over the years, and is no longer the same wild reckless person he was 26 years ago” argues Rabbi Menachem Katz from the Aleph Institute, who has visited Martin regularly over the past 15 years.

As of this release, Governor Crist has not agreed to grant a stay. Execution is set for February 16 at 6:00 PM.

 Concerned citizens are encouraged to call or email the Governor and ask for clemency and mercy for Martin Grossman, requesting that his death sentence be changed to life in prison without parole: 1-850-488-7146 / Charlie.Crist@eog.myflorida.com and sign the online petition <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-martin-grossman>

*Reprinted from the website of Yeshiva World*

**Weekly Parasha Insights**

**Parashat Mishpatim:**

**How to Treat Employees**

**By Rabbi Eli Mansour**

 The Mishna toward the beginning of Pirkeh Abot admonishes, "Heveh Metunim Ba'din" - "Be deliberate in judgment." Rabbenu Yona (Spain, 1180-1263) explains this comment as urging us to carefully study and analyze the Torah's laws so that we can receive guidance concerning the proper way to live our lives as Torah Jews. By probing the laws presented in the Torah, we learn the values and principles upon which proper Torah life must be based.

 Parashat Mishpatim presents a wide array of Misvot, and a careful study of each Misva provides us with invaluable lessons for how to lead a Torah life. The very first Misva discussed in the Parasha, the laws of the Ebed Ibri (indentured servant), is a classic example of the practical lessons that can be extracted from every Misva.

**Strict Restrictions on How a Master Can Treat His Servant**

 The Sages explain that the Ebed Ibri is somebody who committed an act of theft, was convicted, and did not have the means to repay what he stole. In order to pay the victim, the thief would sell himself as a servant, and work for six years in his master's home. Interestingly enough, as the Gemara discusses in Masechet Kiddushin, Halacha imposes very strict restrictions on the master's treatment of his servant.

 In fact, the Gemara goes so far as to say that "one who purchases an Ebed Ibri for himself purchases a master for himself." For one thing, Halacha forbids the master from forcing his servant to perform menial tasks; a master would even be unable to have his servant take out the garbage!

**Must Treat Servant Even Better Than He Treats Himself**

 Furthermore, the master is required to treat the servant even better than he treats himself. If there is only one comfortable bed available, the bed must be given to the servant, and the master must sleep on the floor. If there is only one steak in the house, it goes to the servant - not to the master.

 Even though the master paid good money for the servant, and provides him with food and shelter, and even though the servant is a convicted criminal, he is not entitled to mistreat him. To the contrary, he must treat him with dignity and respect. This experience is intended to bolster the servant's self-esteem and to show him how people should be treated. He thus leaves the master's home after six years with an entirely new perspective toward people, and will conduct himself as a proper, productive, law-abiding member of society.

 There is much we can learn from the institution of Ebed Ibri, including the way we must treat our employees. All too often, employers feel entitled to abuse their workers, overburdening them and speaking down to them. They feel that since they are paying their employees respectable salaries, it is their right to treat them as they see fit. The institution of Ebed Ibri teaches us that this is not the case at all. People deserve respect and appreciation even by those who support them. If the Ebed Ibri, a convicted criminal who had to sell himself to repay the money he stole, must be given respect and consideration, then certainly we must treat workers with dignity.

**“You Don’t Understand, Rabbi…We Pay Her!”**

 I was once studying with a boy from the community in his home, and I heard him boss around the housekeeper, issuing orders in a very disrespectful and inconsiderate manner. I commented to the young man that perhaps he should speak more courteously and respectfully to the housekeeper.

 "You don't understand, Rabbi," the boy explained. "We pay her!"

 "You're scaring me," I replied.

 "Why am I scaring you?" the boy questioned.

 "Because your family pays me, too."

 As we mentioned, by studying and probing the Torah's laws we learn what Torah life entails. If a person prays with a Minyan three times a day and meticulously observes Shabbat, but mistreats his employees at the office, then he cannot be said to live in full accordance with the Torah. He might excel in the area of rituals, but he has failed with regard to the values and ethics that the Torah teaches us.

 The more we delve into the wellsprings of the Torah laws, the more we learn about how to live as Torah Jews in every area of our lives.

Reprinted from this week’s Parashat email from Rabbi Eli Mansour, Rav of Congregation Bet Yaakob in Flatbush.

**Jewish Youths Are at Center**

**Of Outbreak of Mumps**

**By Anemona Hartocollis**

 More than 1,500 people in the New York area, mostly Orthodox Jewish boys and young men in Brooklyn, have contracted [mumps](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/mumps/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier) in the worst outbreak in the United States since 2006, city and federal health officials said Thursday.

 The outbreak originated at an all-boys religious camp in Sullivan County in June and has spread through the tightly knit Orthodox Jewish communities in Williamsburg, Crown Heights and Borough Park, city officials said. Only 3 percent of the cases in the outbreak have been reported outside Orthodox communities, health officials said.

 There have also been cases in Orange and Rockland Counties, in Ocean County and surrounding areas in New Jersey and in Quebec, health officials said.

 Most of those infected are boys from 7 to 18 years old, according to a federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/) report released Thursday.

 The outbreak appears to be spreading through Orthodox Jewish schools for boys, where students may spend as many as 14 hours a day together, often in large study halls and face to face with a study partner, according to the federal report.

**The Relatively Insular Orthodox Community**

 It seems to have remained within the relatively insular Orthodox community, and the large size of Orthodox families may have made transmission easier, according to the report.

 Most of the young men who were infected had been vaccinated for [measles](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/measles/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier), mumps and [rubella](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/rubella/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier), but the mumps portion of the vaccine is less effective than the other parts, the federal report said.

 “This is a well-vaccinated community,” Dr. Jane R. Zucker, the city’s assistant health commissioner for [immunization](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/specialtopic/immunizations-general-overview/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier), said Thursday. “If it wasn’t as well vaccinated, we would be seeing many, many more cases.”

**Potentially Serious Complications**

 Mumps, which is spread through infected saliva, can have potentially serious complications, including [hearing loss](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/symptoms/hearing-loss/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier), viral [meningitis](http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/meningitis/overview.html?inline=nyt-classifier) and, for men, sterility.

 The city’s [Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/home/home.shtml) is so concerned that it is setting up vaccination programs for people age 10 or older among Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn who have never been vaccinated, or who are not sure whether they have been vaccinated. Vaccinations will be offered from 2 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday at 575 Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg and on Thursday at First Congregation Anshe Sfard at 4502 14th Avenue in Borough Park.

 Other locations for free and low-cost vaccines may be found by calling 311, city officials said.

 The outbreak has been traced to an 11-year-old boy who returned in June from a trip to Britain, where there had been an epidemic of mumps, and then attended the summer camp in Sullivan County.

*Reprinted from the February 12, 2010 issue of The New York Times*