**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tetzaveh 5772**

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**Richard Dawkins and**

**The Atheist’s Prayer**

**By Rabbi Shrage Simmons**

 Richard Dawkins, the worldwide Dean of Atheists and author of *The G-d Delusion,* now admits that, well, he’s not quite sure about all this.

 Last week in a public debate at Oxford University, [Dawkins said](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9102740/Richard-Dawkins-I-cant-be-sure-God-does-not-exist.html) he prefers to call himself agnostic rather than atheist – i.e. he lacks certainty over whether or not there is a Creator.



*Photo of Richard Dawkins*

 This created a big tumult and raises the question: What difference does it make whether someone is an agnostic or an atheist?

A Big Difference.

 An agnostic remains open to the idea that G-d exists and is willing to pursue the evidence, wherever it may lead.

 Indeed, there are very few atheists (is it possible to prove that G-d doesn't exist??). Those who call themselves agnostic should, by definition, be actively examining the evidence and weighing both sides of the debate. In the absence of this, “ignorant” is a more accurate term than "agnostic."

 This all reminds me of the true story that Rabbi Noah Weinberg, zt”l, loved to tell about an atheist named Jeff whom he met at Aish in the Old City of Jerusalem.

 "Fantastic! A real atheist!” said Rabbi Weinberg. “Tell me – what are you doing here speaking to a rabbi?"

 Jeff said he had been in Europe, visiting his Norwegian fiance. And he decided it was now or never: either he would come to Israel or he'll never make it.

**Went to See Some Old**

**Stones at the Western Wall**

 So he headed for Jerusalem and figured he would stop by the Western Wall to see some old stones. Yet upon his arrival he was amazed. He felt something heavy. He was moved.

 Jeff stood before the Wall, and made up an atheist's prayer. He looked at the stones and said:

 "G-d, I don't believe in You. As far as I know, You don't exist. But I do feel something. So if I'm making a mistake, I want You to know, G-d, I have no quarrel against You. It's just that I don't know that You exist. But G-d, just in case You're really there and I'm making a mistake, get me an introduction."

 Jeff finished his prayer, and one of the yeshiva students who happened to be at the Wall, saw Jeff and thought, "Perhaps he'd be interested in learning some Torah."

Startled by a Tap

On His Shoulder

 He tapped Jeff on the shoulder, startling him so much that he jumped three feet in the air. Jeff whirled around: "What do you want?!"

 "I'm sorry. I just want to know if you'd like to learn about G-d."

 The question hit Jeff like a 2-by-4 right between the eyes. He had just finished asking G-d for an introduction, and immediately someone was offering to introduce him to G-d.

 Jeff learned at Aish for the next six weeks. He was a very serious student, and went back to the States with a commitment to continue learning. A year later, Jeff came back to Israel and told Rabbi Weinberg the end of his story.

 During that previous summer he had been meandering through the cobblestone alleyways of the Old City when he saw a pretty, sweet, religious girl walk by. He said to himself, "Look at the charm of this Jewish woman. May the Almighty help me meet someone like this."

 One Shabbat morning during the next year, Jeff attended a synagogue in Boston. Standing there was the same young woman he had seen in the Old City. He made his way over to her and said: "Excuse me, but I believe I saw you last summer in Jerusalem."

 She answered, "You're right. I saw you, too."

**Married and Living in New Jersey**

 They’re now married and living in New Jersey.

 King David said: "The Almighty is near to all those who call unto Him, to all those who call unto Him in truth." (Psalms 145:18)

 The power of sincerity is so overwhelming that even an atheist can get G-d's attention. Jeff called out to G-d in a genuine search for truth. Remember Jeff's prayer. Because when you are sincere with G-d, your prayers are answered.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com. One can also access this article by clicking www.aish.com*

**It Once Happened**

**A Brit Milah or a Trap**

**In Stalinist Russia?**

 It was Stalinist Russia. The sudden banging on the door made the occupants' blood run cold. The knocking was getting louder. They were about to sneak out the back exit when the older of the two suggested that the younger one stay behind. It was better to wait a few minutes before opening the door.

 The banging continued even more vigorously. "Who's there?" the youngster called out, but the stranger refused to identify himself. The youth opened the door. Standing there was a high-ranking officer of the KGB. "Is this where the shochet lives?" the officer demanded.

 "Shochet?" he replied. "There's no one here by the name of Shochet."

 The officer gave him a penetrating look and said, "Then perhaps there's someone here who cuts children?"

 "No," he said in the most confident tone he could muster.

 For a moment the stranger said nothing. Then he whispered in the boy's ear: "Don't deny it. I know that the man who cuts children lives here!" The youth was shocked, for the man had uttered these words in Yiddish!

**Wants a Brit Milah for His Son**

 "I am a Jew. Seven days ago my wife gave birth to a baby boy, and I want very much for him to be entered into the covenant of Abraham. My wife is very much opposed to the idea. Tomorrow at exactly nine in the morning she will be leaving the house. I am begging you to come to my house tomorrow and bring the mohel. The baby will be in one of the front rooms."

 The officer told the astounded youngster his address and hurried away. "Remember," he said pleadingly, "Tomorrow is the eighth day of my son's life. I implore you to do me this favor."

**Only Mohel in the Entire City**

 Reb Eizik, a Chasid, was the only shochet and mohel in the entire city, and Yaakov, a boy with no living relatives, had been taken in to live with the shochet and accompanied him on his holy and very dangerous rounds.

 The officer left. Was it a trap? Yaakov was convinced that it was a clever ruse cooked up to catch Reb Eizik red-handed. When Reb Eizik came home, Yaakov filled him in on everything. Reb Eizik thought for several minutes, the deep wrinkles that lined his forehead testifying to his inner conflict and turmoil. He had reached a decision: "Tomorrow morning we will go to the officer's house to enter his son into the covenant of Abraham."

**Almost Certain that He was**

**Heading towards a Trap**

 The following day, Reb Eizik and his ward arose at dawn, recited their prayers and set out in the direction of the river. On the way, Reb Eizik explained that he was almost certain that this was a trap. He therefore wished to immerse himself in a mikva before they continued. "If this is to be our last day on earth, at least we will die in a state of ritual purity," he declared.

 The officer's house was located on one of the finest streets in the city, which only served to confirm their suspicions. The neighborhood was inhabited by the highest ranking members of the KGB and their families. But the two Jews stuck to their decision. Reb Eizik and Yaakov secreted themselves in a hiding place across from the officer's house. Seconds later they saw a woman dressed in the latest fashion exit the building and proceed down the block. Together they strode across the street.

 Reb Eizik knocked on the massive door. An older woman opened the door and motioned for them to enter. In the corner of the room was a beautiful crib, inside which a tiny baby was sleeping peacefully. They ran over and picked up the child, whereupon a small white envelope fell out.

**Father’s Letter Apologizes for**

**Not Being Present at the Brit**

 Inside the envelope was a letter from the baby's father, apologizing for his not being able to be present at his son's brit and asking that they give the baby a Jewish name. The rest of the letter was an emotional statement of his thanks and appreciation for the great mitzva they were doing, without their even knowing who he was.

 Reb Eizik quickly and deftly performed the brit, while Yaakov acted as sandek. They were about to leave when the woman who had opened the door suddenly appeared and motioned for them to stay put.

 Yaakov was terrified. Seconds later, however, the woman brought out a brand new frying pan, and handed them a dozen eggs! A veritable fortune! She invited them to make themselves omelets.

**Hesitant to Accept the Gift of Bread**

 After they finished eating and were about to leave, the woman presented them with a huge sack of bread, another gift from the Russian officer. Such a quantity of bread was something the average citizen could only dream of, but how could they walk down the street carrying the bag. Surely they would attract the attention of the ever-watchful police.

 The woman suddenly understood why the two Jews hesitated to accept the priceless gift. She opened a drawer, ripped off a wad of coupons from a booklet and handed them over.

**Meets the Grateful Father**

 Many months later Yaakov was walking down the street when the same Russian officer stopped him. "I must thank you again, from the bottom of my heart. I have one more request to make of you. Whenever you make a brit, you should tell my story. Let everyone know that even in Soviet Russia, there are still Jews who have a warm spot in their hearts for Judaism."

 This request led to a tradition in Yaakov's family. He is honored with being the sandek, in commemoration of the role he played in that brit so very long ago, and he relates the story of the Russian officer, from beginning to end, with great enthusiasm and fervor.

*Reprinted from last week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Originally published in Beis Moshiach Magazine.*

**Rabbi on Campus**

Rabbi Daniel Olgin, *Cleveland, Ohio* (*Ohio State BA and Cleveland College MA)*

 Daniel Olgin had a roommate in university who had never met a Jew before. As you can imagine, the boy had questions for this “living fossil”. The problem was that not only did Olgin not have the answers but he also had never even thought to ask the questions.

 This pushed him to the local Hillel House on campus, which had an Orthodox Rabbi at the time. Within a few years, it became clear that yeshiva was his destination after university. Ohr Somayach became his home for two years, and then he became an advisor in NCSY, attended YU, and got his MA in Jewish Studies from Cleveland College.

**Offered a Chance to Learn in a Kollel**

 His first Rabbi noticed his progress and offered to support him while learning in Kollel. Rabbi Olgin’s next move was back to Ohr Somayach’s Ohr Lagolah Program where he got his *smicha* ordination.

 Needless to say, he can answer a question or two these days. He works in *kiruv* outreach back at his alma mater, Ohio State, helping Jews like him get back to the Source in the sources. He is married with seven beautiful children and looking forward to having you as a guest on Shabbat.

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

**Story #744**

**The Forest and the Rose**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000zEG0:001FJWP_00001cwv&count=1330524213&randid=678539774&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=678539774##)

 Shabbat had ended. Silver stars twinkled in the black sky. The Chassidim had all returned to their homes, and their Rebbe, Leib Sarah's (called such because of the extraordinary deeds of his mother and the exceptional circumstances surrounding his birth, but that's a story for another time) left his shul for home to make havdala for his family.

 Shortly after, he returned to the shul. Agitated, he paced back and forth, muttering "Oy, Oy" over and over again. Suddenly he stood still, and after tremoring slightly, stated with finality: "Whatever happens, I must do something."

**The Rebbe Switches**

**Places with His Driver**

 Stepping outside, he summoned his driver. In a short time they were off. The tzaddik whispered something in the driver's ear, and then switched places with him, taking over the reins while the driver went to sleep inside the carriage. When he woke, the sun had already risen on Sunday morning, and he was amazed to hear from the tzaddik in the outside driver's seat how far they had come.

 Even though, being the regular driver for the tzaddik, he had experience in these miraculous-seeming journeys, this time they had actually crossed the border and were deep into Hungary. He could barely believe the

evidence of his eyes.

**His Father Recently Passed Away**

 Little Isaac was only ten years old, but was already the man of the house. His father, Yusseleh, had recently passed away, and his mother Reizel desperately needed him to help support the family. She took whatever meager work was available to her, while little Isaac took care of their tiny gaggle of geese.

 Actually, Isaac liked his job. Every morning he rose early to pray with the minyan in shul and say Kaddish for his father. He would then lead the goats to one of the fields outside of town. He loved the quiet and peacefulness there. After carefully counting his meager charges, he would sit against the trunk of a tree and enjoy the cool shade under its big, leafy branches.

 Many thoughts would race through his little head - some joyous, some sad. In those moments when his young soul was bursting with a variety of different feelings, he would open his knapsack and seek the soothing comfort provided by his beloved flute. Quickly he would extract from it a medley of folk tunes, passed down from generation to generation in the Hungarian countryside, all learned from the other shepherds that he knew.

**The Words of the Folk Tune**

 Of his whole repertoire, he liked best the song whose words went:

 Forest, forest, how vast you are.

 Rose, oh rose, how far you are.

 If the forest were but smaller,

 Then the rose would be closer.

 If you would take me from this forest,

 Then we could be, the two of us, together.

**Carried Off to a World of**

**Distant Pleasurable Visions**

 Whenever he played the notes of this tune, he would close his eyes and allow the lyrics and the music to carry him off to a world of distant pleasurable visions.

\* \* \*

 Little Isaac was momentarily startled in the midst of his song, by the regal appearance of the bearded Jew who appeared suddenly from behind him. "What are you doing here, little boy?" the man asked gently. "Helping my mother by tending to our geese," Isaac answered.

 "But what about learning Torah in school like the other boys?" the man continued. Isaac looked away. "Not so long ago, I was still a student. And I was doing pretty well too. But ever since my father died, I've had to help my poor mother support our family, so I had to drop out of school."

 The tzaddik, Leib Sarah's, immediately went to visit the poor widow, Reizel. After introducing himself, he asked her for permission to take her Isaac away with him.

 "Know that your son has a very lofty soul," he explained, "and he can

become very great. But for that he must be brought up in the right way, and that means he has to study Torah intensively." He promised her a monthly stipend to more than make up for any loss of income that the boy's departure would entail.

 It took a lot of entreating, but finally his mother agreed. Leib Sarah's took little Isaac to Nicholsberg, to the Yeshiva of the great rabbinical authority and Chassidic Rebbe, Reb Shmelke, a friend of Leib Sarah's and one of the inner circle of disciples of the Magid of Mezritch. He said to him:

**A Special Soul from the**

**Chamber of Melody**

 “I have brought you a special soul from the Chamber of Melody. I hope you will help it to realize its full potential in this

world. The boy remained in the yeshiva for many years, and thrived and grew great in Torah and Chassidut.

\* \* \*

 Years later, when throngs of Chassidim would crowd into the shul of the holy rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Kaliv, he would sometimes relate to them the long path of his development from a geese-tending childhood to the present. He would also tell them about his favorite tune when he played the shepherd's flute: the Ballad of the Forest and the Rose.

 On these occasions, he always mentioned his great debt to the tzaddik Leib Sarah's, who went to such trouble to "discover" him and to redeem the holy melody which had been "held captive" for centuries.

**Changing the Words of the Song**

 "Now, however," he would always conclude, "the words are different."

 The chassidim would listen intently, for the Rebbe's musical talents were well-known.

 Exile, exile, how long you are.

 Divine Presence, how far you are.

 If only the exile were shorter,

 Then Your Presence could be closer.

 If You would take us out of exile,

 Then we could be, the two of us, together.

 This song is still sung by Kaliver chassidim, in Hungarian, till this very day.

 Source: Translated-adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles (and first published in Kfar Chabad Magazine - English) from Sichat HaShavua #528. The video link was first sent to me by dear friend Yosef Ben Shlomo HaKohen (nee Jeff Obler), who passed away this year after long illness. May he rest in peace.

 Connection: Seasonal (2) -- The yahrzeit of each of the two great rebbes in the story both fall this week.

**Biographical Notes**

 Biographical notes: Rabbi Leib Sarah’s (1730 - 4 Adar 1796) was held in high esteem by the Baal Shem Tov. One of the hidden tzaddikim, he spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the ransoming of imprisoned Jews and the support of other hidden tzaddikim. The Lubavitcher Rebbe stated the possibility that Rabbi Leib Sarah's and the

Shpoler Zeide are the same person.

 Rabbi Yitzchak-Isaac Taub of Kaliv (1744 - 7 Adar II 1821) was a leader in the dissemination of chassidism in Hungary. He was known as “The Sweet Singer of Israel.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org is 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=0000zEG0:001FJWP_00001cwv&count=1330524213&randid=678539774&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=678539774##)

**G-d on the Corner of**

**96th and Amsterdam**

**By Srolic Barber**

 Hurried, I ran out of the subway station into the bustling street, trying not to be late to my study class.

 Hurried, I buried my hands in my leather gloves, attempting to stave off the biting cold.

 Hurried, I didn’t even notice him.

 Hurried, I barely heard his *“Shabbat shalom”* as he tipped his hat.

 Hurried, when I turned around I nearly missed him.

 I raced back down the street until I caught his attention, and, between my confusion and awkwardness, asked: “Excuse me, sir, have you put on *tefillin* today?”

**Too Busy a Place for G-d?**

 Pause. He stared at me. In his silence I became acutely aware of my surroundings, the street corner of 96th and Amsterdam. The street seemed to have a life of its own: the sidewalk pulsated with buzzing pedestrian traffic, cars honked and screeched as they whizzed through the settling twilight, and sweet aromas of freshly baked pastries wafted about the vendors peddling their wares. The street corner was busy. Too busy. There was certainly no place for G‑d in this scene.

 I gazed at the man I had just met. He was still quiet as he sought his words. The sun was slowly dipping beyond the horizon; it was soon to be sundown, soon to be too late to don *tefillin*. And then, with a sympathetic nod, he answered, “I do not mean to insult you, but I have no time.”

**Not an Insult, It’s a**

**Pleaure Meeting You**

 “Insult me?” I laughed incredulously. “Not a problem at all! It’s a pleasure meeting you.” I smiled as we shook hands and exchanged names. I began to wonder what could possibly be the purpose behind our meeting—surely it was fate, surely it was Divine providence, and surely there was a reason!

 But to my surprise, he didn’t turn to leave, and so I lingered. He seemed preoccupied, deep in thought, as he considered his next words. Imagine my surprise when he asked, “How long will it take?”

**Sensing G-d in the Audience**

 And for the next few minutes we wrapped the *tefillin* and said the Shema prayer. There were no stage lights and no applause, but I felt G‑d in the audience, as though He was stopping just to see one man in service of his Creator. It was an act so simple and humbling, yet so very profound in its message: There is place for G‑d in our lives, and we decide thus with even the smallest of deeds, embracing our inherent relationship—mind and heart, body and soul.

 A week has passed, and every day I look back at the corner of 96th and Amsterdam. I look to the juncture where we met, and wonder if I might see him again. I wonder if he saw G‑d, as I did, on the street corner in those few minutes. And this I may never know; perhaps this is where the story ends. But I do know one thing for certain: G‑d made our paths cross, if only for that one mitzvah.

(Editor’s Note: Srolic Barber, of Sydney, Australia, has engaged in Rabbinical studies and community activism in many places throughout the world, most recently for two years in Caracas, Venezuela.)

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Bread or Tehillim**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Upon arrival in one of the DP camps in Europe shortly after the end of World War Two, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, one of the leading rabbis in the U.S., made an effort to lift the spirits of the pitiful surviving Jews by organizing a communal *Kabbalat Shabbat* prayer service. Noticing the refusal of one particular Jew to join the service, Rabbi Silver asked him for his reason.

 When we were in the concentration camp, the fellow explained, there was one Jew who had a Sefer Tehillim. In their dark moments there were hundreds of Jews who wished to pour out their hearts to Heaven by reciting Tehillim psalms from his book. But he insisted on receiving three slices of bread for each hour that his Tehillim book was used.

 If a religious Jew is capable of exploiting others in such a way I don’t want to be part of the religious community and their *Kabbalat Shabbat*!

 Without hesitation the brilliant Rabbi responded. “Too bad that you look at is this way”, he said in a compassionate tone. “I see it in an entirely different light. Look how noble Jews are if hundreds of them were prepared to sacrifice their bread in order to say Tehillim!”

 After a few moments Rabbi Silver and this Jew could be seen walking arm in arm towards *Kabbalat Shabbat*.

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

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

**The Priority of Love**

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

 Which is the order of priority in love?

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

|  |
| --- |
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 Love of Hashem of course comes first. Love of yourself comes next, and love of your wife is afterwards.

 Now, it may seem unusual to say that in America, but the truth is, let’s say if a man is out boating with his wife and the boat is overturned and there is one lifesaver and neither can swim, he should hold on to the lifesaver. It can't be helped. Chayecho V'chayei Acheirim Chayecho Kodem, your life comes first.

 Now it's a question not because of love or not love; there is an elementary question here. Question is, suppose your brother was drowning and your cousin was drowning and you only have one life preserver, to whom should you throw it?

 You have to throw it to your brother, that's the rule. The closer relative is the one who gets precedence. Suppose it's your brother and yourself, you're closer a relative to yourself than your brother.

 You and your wife are the closest relatives, but you are closer, it can't be helped. So make it your business from now on not to go boating unless you have two life preservers.

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

**Flatbush Unites to Daven for**

**Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky, Shlita**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Rabbi Chaim Yisroel Belsky,shlita**

 Throughout the world, concerned *Yidden* are reciting *Tehillim* and praying on behalf of major *Torah Gedolim*, our nation’s leaders who have in recent weeks been hospitalized. One of those is American-born Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky, *shlita*, the Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshiva & Mesivta Torah Vodaath in the Kensington section of Brooklyn next to Flatbush.

 This past week has seen hundreds of Flatbush Jews, both men and women coming together in order to participate in heartfelt *Kinus* Events beseeching *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* to grant our *Rosh Hayeshiva* a speedy and complete *refuah shelaimah*. Last week the name *Chaim* was added to the *Rosh Hayeshiva’s* name.

**Inspirational Divrei Hisororus by**

**Prominent Flatbush Rabbonim**

 Last Thursday night, *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, the *Bais Medrash* at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin of Avenue L was packed with members of our community coming to recite *Tehillim* and be inspired by *Divrei Hisororus* by the *Mora D’Asra* of the *shul* – Rav Moshe Tuvia Lieff and Rav Yisroel Reisman, the *Mora D’Asra* of the Agudath Israel of Madison. Women participated in the *Ezras Nashim*.

 Rav Lieff began by noting the irony that the gathering was on *Rosh Chodesh Adar* when *Chazal* teach us to *michnas simcha* (increase joy.) He asked “Who is *michchas simcha b’Adar* tonight?” Where is the *simcha*? Where is the *simcha* of *Mishpocha* Belsky? Where is the *simcha* of the *talmidim*, *rebbeim* and *hanhola* of Yeshivas Torah Vodaath?

**A Global Tzoros for All Klal Yisroel**

 This is a global *tzoros.* The *Rosh Hayeshiva* is not feeling well. This is not his personal *tzoros*. This is a *tzoros* for all *Klal Yisroel*.

 Rav Lieff explained that we have to realize that every *kapital* of *Tehillim* and every prayer that we recite on behalf of the *Rosh Hayeshiva* has an effect. Quoting from the teaching of *Chazal* in *Mesechta Rosh Hashana*, he spoke of the two individuals who were sentenced to death and who suffered from serious illnesses that the doctors said were going to kill them.

 One however goes down from his bed and recovers, whereas the other fellow dies in his bed. *Chazal* tell us that both were *mispallel* and yet only one was answered by Hashem. Rashi explains that the one who recovered *davened* with *kavanah* and believed that he would be answered. And so he was cured.

**Feeling that He Was Davening for a “Lost Cause”**

 The other person also *davened* and he did so with intensity and also with tears. But he also felt that it was a lost cause and therefore Hashem did not answer him positively.

 Rav Lieff recalled that 10 days before we, *Klal Yisroel* prayed with an incredible intensity for Rav Eliyashev and everything turned around and that *Torah Gadol* became much better and came out of immediate danger.

 We need Rav Belsky! We need the *Rosh Hayeshiva*. He is the *Rosh Hayeshiva* of America. We must recognize the power we have as a *tzibbur* and that the *Tehillim* that we recite can shake up the world.

**A Kabbalah to Recite Asher Yatzar with Greater Kavanah**

 Rav Lieff suggested to all the men and women participating in the *Kinus* for Rav Belsky that they take upon themselves a *kabbalah*, perhaps to recite the *brocha* *Asher Yatzar* upon leaving the bathroom with greater concentration. Let’s take two minutes to say it, even if that means reading it from a poster or a *siddur*.

 Following those remarks, Rav Yisroel Reisman addressed the large audience attending the *Kinus* and began with the remark that Mordechai went out into the streets. What was he doing? Besides wearing sackcloth and ashes, he was shouting and screaming.

**Why Did Mordechai Cry Out?**

 Was Mordechai a commoner? Is that the way for a Torah leader to act? Why not follow the example of Chana who prayed quietly and was answered by Hashem with the privilege of giving birth to Shmuel HaNavi, a great spiritual leader for all of *Klal Yisroel*? Indeed, Rav Reisman noted that we model our saying of the important *Shemonah Esrai* prayer quietly after the example of Chana.

 So why unlike Chana did Mordechai have to cry out? The Ohr Hachayim in *Parshas Shemos* said that it was only when the *Bnei Yisroel* burdened by the terrible ordeal of their brutal bondage to the Egypitans cried out that Hashem heard them and called to Moshe to go back to *Mitzrayim* and begin the process leading to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The Nitziv writes that it is the *etzem* or essence of crying out in pain that forges a *hergesh*, a true feeling that arouses *rachamim b’shomayim*.

**We Need to Emulate the Hergesh of Mordechai**

 Rav Reisman criticized our attitude in America and Flatbush. “We are too sophisticated and we live complicated lives. Today if someone would put on *sack vi’efer*, people would consider him a *meshuganah*. But it is that very *hergash* that we need.

 We come together tonight in Brooklyn which is a great Torah center. Where do we have a *posek* [like Rav Belsky] that you can go to at all times. He is always going to speak at places where he is asked. He is always available for people to go to unburden their *tzoros* to.

**We Must Realize that our**

**Davening Can Make a Difference**

 Rav Belsky is not afflicted with a terminal illness. He is suffering from an infection that should be cured. We have to, Rav Reisman said, generate the *hergesh* that our *davening* can make a difference. Our heartfelt recitation of *Tehillim* and prayers are giving medicine to a *choleh* that all of *Klal Yisroel* needs. May *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* grant that our *davening* on behalf of this *choleh* – **Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Chana Tzirel** be answered.

 Following those words of *Divrei Hisororus*, Rav Lieff led the large audience at the *Kinus* in the recitation of *Tehillim* on behalf of Rav Belsky. Afterwards, people were asked to add to the *zechus* of the *Rosh Hayeshiva* by donating to those at the doors who were collecting *tzedakah* for helping needy *kallahs* to get married.

**Additional Kinus in Both**

**Flatbush and Across America**

 In addition to last Thursday’s *Kinus* at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin, that same night a *Tehillim* Teleconference *Kinus* on behalf of the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was organized by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation was held that attracted thousands of callers from Flatbush and across the nation.

 This past *Motzoi Shabbos*, another *Tehillim Kinus* was held at Khal Bnei Torah (Rav Schiffenbauer’s *Shul*), on Flatlands Avenue in Flatbush. A second major *Tehillim Teleconference* was conducted also on *Motzoi Shabbos* by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation that was led by Rav Eliezer Ginsburg, *Rosh Kollel* of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Flatbush and *Mora D’Asra* of Agudath Israel of Flatbush South.

 For information about other upcoming *Kinus* or status reports on the health of the Rosh Hayeshiva, please email Rabbi Yitzchok Gottdiener, executive director or Yeshiva & Mesivta Torah Vodaath at ryg@torahvodaath.org

 Readers are requested to continue *davening* and reciting *Tehillim* for **Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Chana Tzirel.**

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Rabbi Yisroel Belsky Says There Is No Excuse for a**

**Jew to Rely on Blind Faith**

**By Daniel Keren**

 Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas spoke earlier this month at a Hakhel Yarchei Kallah in Brooklyn on the topic of “*Emunah! Practical Halachos and Hashkafos*.” Hakhel is a Flatbush-based organization dedicated to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true values in our community.

 He began his lecture by addressing the topic of the *Six Permanent Mitzvos of Belief* that emphasize to us the reality that there is One G-d and the He chose to create everything that was created in the past, that is being created now and that will ever be created in the future.

**Must We Rely on Emunah Peshutah**

 Someone recently remarked to Rabbi Belsky that there is no way to definitively prove the existence of *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* and that we as *Yidden* must therefore rely on *emunah peshutah*, or blind faith.

 To this, Rabbi Belsky countered, we have countless proofs that testify to the existence of *Hakodesh Baruch Hu*. One such proof is that of the *mitzvah* of *Shemitah*, the Sabbatical year when the majority of the Jews living in *Eretz Yisroel* in ancient times were farmers and were commanded by the Torah not to farm their land once every seven years.

 What happens to a people who depend on the land when they are not allowed to farm? We know what happened in recent history when Josef Stalin (*yemach shemo*) attempted to collectivize all the farms in the former Soviet Union. The farmers didn’t want to lose their land.

**Stalin Utilized Communist Youth**

 So what did Stalin do? He had Komosol (Communist youth) members volunteer to help the farmers to plow their land, place seed into the ground and perform all of the other functions necessary to growing and harvesting the crops. With the cooperation of the Komosol youth, the government knew exactly where all the farmers had stored their harvested crops.

 Stalin then ordered the army to go to exactly those locations and burn up all of the harvest. This resulted in the deaths of 20 – 30 million people of starvation. Also in the 19th Century, half of the Irish population died during the terrible potato famine.

 Yet, Rabbi Belsky noted that it was never recorded that there were ever any massive outbreaks of similar starvations in *Eretz Yisroel* when the *Yidden* observed the *Shemitah*. Indeed the Torah promised that enough food would be grown in the sixth year to last until food planted in the eighth year was ready to be harvested. The only way for this *mitzvah* to have been kept by our forefathers was if it was Divinely commanded and the fact that it was observed numerous times is proof concrete that *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* exists.

**The Mitzvah of Travelling**

**To Yerushalayim**

 The other *mitzvah* (*Oleh Laregel*) concerning all the Jewish males (usually accompanied by their wives and children) to come three times a year to *Yerushalayim* to celebrate the holidays of *Pesach*, *Shavuos* and *Sukkos* with the promise that nobody will covet your land and property. This Divine promise was also carried out as recorded by the ancient Romans in history books that we can still read today.

 Even today, Rabbi Belsky noted we see the conclusive proof of *Hakodesh Barucu Hu* by the mere act of eating and swallowing food, when the nutritional aspects are broken down and “miraculously” distributed to the billions of diverse cells in the human body according to the specific and unique needs of each and every cell part of the body. In each and every generation we continue to discover many new facets about the not so simple miracle of the act of eating.

 Therefore, it is not necessary, Rabbi Belsky insisted, for us to express our *emunah* in the existence of *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* based on just blind faith. All it requires is for a Jew to simply look around and observe the many natural miracles existing before our eyes.

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