**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tetzaveh 5771 & 5770**

Volume 2, Issue #23

**It Once Happened**

**Rabbi Eibeshutz and**

**The Governor of Metz**

 The great scholar Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz (1695-1764) was known far and wide for his enormous erudition and remarkably sharp wit. The governor of the city of Metz took great pleasure in testing the rabbi's intellect.

 He would make an evil decree against the Jewish residents, knowing full well that Rabbi Eibeshutz would dash to his palace to intercede for his brethren. Then, the governor would pose some difficult puzzle or riddle to attempt to stump the great scholar. As history records it, fortunately, Rabbi Eibeshutz always succeeded in besting his foe and having the evil decree nullified.

 Once the governor issued a decree proclaiming that the Jews of Metz would be given a deadline by which they would all be required to submit to baptism. If they refused, which he knew they would, they would be forced from their homes into exile. The governor also knew from his past experience that Rabbi Eibeshutz would present himself at the governor's palace in order to plead for his people. Then, he would snare the rabbi in his plot, for this time, the rabbi would surely fail.

 The Jews of Metz were thrown into turmoil. None would consider con-version, but what were they to do, where could they turn? Rabbi Eibeshutz immediately went to the governor. "Your excellency," he began, "how can you punish an entire community of innocent souls. I beg of you not to inflict this terrible suffering upon innocent women and babes."

 A cold smile passed across the governor's face. "On the contrary, my dear rabbi, I am merely helping to fulfill a prophecy which is stated in scripture: 'A great trouble will ensue, so terrible as never before experienced and never to be repeated again.' This passage is interpreted to refer to the Jews. I consider it my great privilege to help bring it about."

 Now came the moment the governor had waited for with such delight. With suppressed glee he turned to Rabbi Eibeshutz and continued: "But, my dear friend, I will give you the opportunity of nullifying my decree."

 "And how may I do that," the rabbi asked.

 "All you have to do is to answer a few questions which I will pose to you. Are you agreeable to this arrangement?" asked the governor.

 "Yes, what are the questions?"

 "First, tell me immediately and without hesitation how many letters there are in the [Hebrew] sentence I just quoted to you?"

 With not even a pause, Rabbi Eibeshutz replied, "There are the same number as the years of your life, sixty."

 The governor was astounded, but not deterred. He continued with his next question: "Now, how many words did the same sentence contain?"

 The rabbi answered with the same swiftness, "There are 17 words - the same as in our famous saying, 'The people of Israel lives forever' - Am Yisrael Chai L'Olmai Ad."

 The governor couldn't contain his admiration. "Wonderful! Now, tell me how many Jews live in Metz and its surrounding areas?"

 Again Rabbi Eibeshutz didn't hesitate: "There are 45,760 Jews in the city of Metz and all of its suburbs, Your Excellency."

 The governor was momentarily thrown off guard by the rabbi's brilliant answers. But he soon regained his bearings and threw out the last, and impossible demand. "I want you to write 'Israel lives forever' 45,760 times, on a parchment no larger than the ones you use for your mezuza scrolls." This time he knew he had won and he smirked with satisfaction.

 Rabbi Eibeshutz paled when he heard this absurd and impossible order. "How long do I have to fulfill your command," he asked.

 "I give you one hour," was the triumphant reply. "And remember that the fate of your unfortunate brethren is in your hands."

 Rabbi Eibeshutz disappeared, but when one hour had elapsed he presented himself at the governor's palace.

 "Your Honor, I have in my hand a parchment with the dimensions of 2" by 4". On it is written an anagram with the solution to your puzzle. My drawing contains 15 Hebrew letters across and 19 letters down."

 The governor couldn't believe his ears. He reached out his hand to take the parchment from Rabbi Eibeshutz. As he stared at it, uncomprehending, the rabbi continued to explain:

 "When you read this you will see the words, 'Am Yisroel Chai L'Olmai Ad,' written in every direction. It is spelled out 45,760 different ways."

 The governor was too shocked to reply, and the rabbi continued. "I request of Your Honor to cancel the decree pending your deciphering this code, since it may take you some time to work it out."

 The governor agreed. It is said that the governor worked at Rabbi Eibeshutz's anagram a full year before he was able to decipher all the combinations of words. When he completed his study of it, the governor summoned the rabbi to his palace. He embraced the scholar and said, "I can truly see that your G-d has imparted His wisdom to his followers." The governor no longer tormented the Jews of his city and until the end of his life held Rabbi Eibeshutz in the highest esteem.

*Reprinted from the Tetzaveh 5768/2008 issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization of Brooklyn, New York.*

**A Soldier’s Struggle**

**To Eat Kosher**

**By** [**Dovid Zaklikowski**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=4685)

 Living under Soviet rule, Aharon Chazan, 24, was constantly [under the](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/print/true/aid/971379/jewish/A-Soldiers-Struggle-to-Eat-Kosher.htm) watchful eyes of the communists. A staunchly religious Jew, he refused to buckle under communist pressure and abandon his religious practices and beliefs.

 In 1936, Stalin ordered all citizens to [complete](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/print/true/aid/971379/jewish/A-Soldiers-Struggle-to-Eat-Kosher.htm) a census form. Everyone needed to record their name, family relationships, nationality, and whether they believed in G‑d.

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 Aharon encouraged his friends and acquaintances to declare their belief in G‑d, explaining that to falsely answer this question on the census form would constitute a grave rejection of G‑d and the Jewish religion.

 He knew that “counter-revolutionary” activities like this carried a major risk of incarceration or worse, so he decided to beseech G‑d’s mercy by traveling to the resting places of righteous sages buried in Russia, to ask them to intercede On High on his behalf.

 He was granted a month’s leave from the factory where he worked, and he traveled to Mezeritch and Berditchev.

 In Berditchev, Aharon found the three synagogues mostly filled with elderly people; many of the youth had already abandoned regular synagogue attendance and religious practice.

 One morning, a young man, Sholom Friedman, approached Aharon in one of the Berditchev synagogues and invited him to his home. Aharon told him that he had to catch a train and wouldn’t have time. The man wouldn’t relent, and continued to beg Aharon to come to his home. Finally, Aharon agreed.



Aharon Chazan

 Sholom’s parents, Rochel and Zushe, were fighters for the Jewish faith. After their synagogue had been shuttered, the family brought the synagogue to their home. Under Rochel’s loving warmth and hospitality, their home was open to all guests passing through town, many on the run from the Soviets.

 The Friedmans placed great emphasis on educating their children to fear G‑d, and not to be intimidated by the communist regime. The Friedman children were not educated in Soviet [schools](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/print/true/aid/971379/jewish/A-Soldiers-Struggle-to-Eat-Kosher.htm); rather, they were educated at home and in clandestine Jewish schools. The Friedman parents loved their children tremendously, and the children, in turn, deeply honored their parents.

**Marriage and War**

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| http://www.chabad.org/media/images/335/Jkcf3351130.jpg |
| Leah Friedman |

 Aharon learned that Sholom had been keenly interested in him all along, having heard about Aharon’s activities from a mutual friend. Sholom soon told Aharon that he thought his sister, Leah, would be a fitting match for him. The Friedman and Chazan parents corresponded, and it was agreed that Aharon would meet Leah.

 Aharon was immediately impressed by Leah’s demeanor, her noble bearing, and her pledge to firmly support his commitment to Jewish tradition, no matter the consequences. They decided to marry, and the wedding date was set for June 14, 1937.

 Though at the time most Jewish weddings were held in secrecy, the elderly Friedmans would not let that happen. Celebrating a Jewish wedding was a rare joy during those dark days. Hundreds came to the wedding, many of them Soviet secret police, who, as always, were spying on the happenings in the Friedman home.

 A week later Zushe passed away, but his family upheld his legacy by continuing to run a synagogue from their home, open to any Jew in need.

 A short while after Aharon and Leah’s first daughter, Devorah, was born, Aharon was drafted into the army. Conscription into the Soviet army was a frightening prospect for anyone, as many soldiers were killed on the front lines. Aharon tearfully bade farewell to his family, hoping, G‑d willing, he would see them again.

 Aharon was strictly observant of the kosher laws. After the first morning of rigorous training, while his fellow soldiers went to eat lunch, Aharon roamed the hallways. He would not eat a lunch composed of non-kosher ingredients.

 “Chazan, why are you here?” asked an officer whom he encountered. “Are you not supposed to be eating now?”

 Chazan told the officer that he had already eaten. The officer did not believe him, and ordered him to join him for the meal.

 They were served two plates of simmering non-kosher meat. With visible delight, the officer dug into his plate of delicious food.

 “Why are you not eating? The meat is very tasty,” the officer exclaimed.

 Aharon sat quietly, silently praying to G‑d to save him from this severe predicament.

 “Eat, eat!” the officer angrily barked. “Are you trying to shortchange the army? If you do not eat, you will receive the severe punishment you deserve. Take the spoon and eat now!”

 Aharon told the angry officer that he could not eat, as his stomach was hurting him. The officer snarled loudly, “Sick?! You are not sick!”

Aharon remained silent.

 Seething in anger, the officer sent him to the army hospital, along with a note to the doctor demanding a diagnosis. “If you are healthy,” the officer warned, “you will be court-martialed!”

Aharon was terrified. He’d surely be found healthy and ordered before a court. If convicted of treason and evasion, he could easily be executed. What would be with his wife and young daughter?

 The hospital only received patients in the afternoon, so Aharon spent several hours trying to induce symptoms of illness. He drank a lot of water, hoping to become bloated. He did a lot of running, hoping to speed up his heart rate.

 The doctor quizzically read the officer’s note, and questioned Aharon about his supposed condition. Aharon explained that he suffered from stomach issues and an abnormal heart rate. An An examination ensued, and Aharon feared the worst when the doctor quickly scribbled a return note, sealed it in an envelope and told him to deliver it to the officer.

 Aharon returned to his unit, downcast, and handed the note to the officer, who eagerly rubbed his hands, excited at the opportunity to indict a Jew. Only moments later, however, the officer stormed angrily from the room, leaving the note on the table.

 The note stated: “Mr. Chazan is unhealthy and unfit for army service.”

Aharon was duly discharged.

 Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many of Aharon and Leah’s grandchildren have returned to the former Soviet Union, where they serve as Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries.

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

**Blizzard Can't Stop**

**Couple's Love**

**By Susan Berger**

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 **The Wednesday evening nuptials of Sarah Finkel and Shmulie Schochet gave new meaning to the term “white wedding.”**

 The bride, a Skokie native, and the groom, who hails from Toronto, had decided to hold their marriage ceremony midweek so that out-of-town guests could then enjoy a long weekend in Chicago, explained Phil Finkel, the father of the bride.

 Many of the out-of-towners — and even some of the Chicago-area guests — never made it because of the history-making snowstorm. But Phil Finkel said most of the “main players” managed to be on hand. Luckily, that included the groom’s grandfather, Rabbi Dovid Schochet of Toronto, who performed the marriage ceremony.

 The couple, both 21, even followed the Orthodox Jewish tradition of setting up their wedding altar, or chuppah, outside under the stars — though the guests watched from the warm confines of the Westin O’Hare hotel in Rosemont.

 And despite the disappointment over loved ones who missed the blessed event, the families refused to view the storm as a damper.

 “It’s a happy occasion that the snow cannot deter. The snow does not change anything,” said Bernie Finkel, of Evanston, the bride’s grandfather. “There is thought in the Jewish religion about luck: the dew in the spring at Passover, the rain in the fall during Sukkot. And now I am saying snowfall is lucky too. This is a special time. There should be a special time to pray for snow.”

 The weather did lend a modern touch to the traditional Orthodox ceremony: The groom’s sister “watched” through a laptop Web camera from out of state, since she couldn’t make it to the ceremony.

 And, as Phil Finkel pointed out, there should be no trouble remembering their anniversary.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the AJOP (Association for Jewish Outreach Programs) Update. The article originally appeared in the February 3, 2011 issue of the Chicago Tribune.*

**Jews in Damascus Restore Synagogues as Syria Tries to Foster Secular Image**

**By Massoud A. Derhally**

 Albert Cameo, leader of what remains of the Jewish community in Syria, says he’s trying to fulfill an obligation to his religious heritage.

 The 70-year-old is organizing the restoration of a synagogue called Al-Raqi in the old Jewish quarter of Damascus built during the Ottoman Empire about 400 years ago. The project, which began in December, will be completed this month as part of a plan to restore 10 synagogues with the backing of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and funding from Syrian Jews.

 “Assad sees the rebuilding of Jewish Damascus in the context of preserving the secularism of Syria,” said Josh Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. “This is an effort by the regime to show its seriousness and an olive branch to the Jewish community in America, which they have been wooing.”

 While Syria is still officially at war with Israel, the country is trying to portray itself as a more tolerant state to help burnish its image internationally. Syria’s 200 Jews are mirroring the actions of their co-religionists in Lebanon, where restoration work began on Beirut’s Maghen Abraham Synagogue in July 2009.

**Diversity**

 “For Syria there is a clear dichotomy between the Arab- Israeli conflict and the Palestinian cause on one hand and her pride of her diverse cultural heritage on the other hand,” said Imad Moustapha, Syria’s ambassador to Washington.

 Indirect peace talks between Israel and Syria, mediated by Turkey, broke down in December 2008 when Israel began a military offensive in the Gaza Strip that it said was aimed at stopping Islamic militants from firing rockets into southern Israel. The previous round collapsed in 2000, when the two nations failed to agree on the return of the Golan Heights, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

 The largest Syrian-Jewish community, estimated at 75,000, is centered in Brooklyn, New York and New Jersey. Emigration dates back to the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, “when Jews feared their sons would be drafted into the Ottoman Turkish army,” according to Sara Reguer, author of “The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times.”

 Joey Allaham, 35, a Syrian Jew living in New York, still considers Syria his homeland.

 In December, he helped set up a meeting between Assad and Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella organization of Jewish groups in an effort to foster ties between Syria and the American Jewish community.

**Hoenlein Visit**

 During their visit, Allaham and Hoenlein toured the Franji synagogue across from the Talisman Hotel in Bab Touma, in the old city of the Syrian capital. The synagogue, also known as Ilfrange, gets its name from the Jews who came from Spain and dates back 400 years, according to Cameo.

 “President Assad was kind enough to support us,” Allaham said in an interview. “We are going to bring support financially.”

 Syrian Jews, a group dating back to the Roman Empire, numbered as many as 30,000 in 1947 and were indigenous Arabs or Sephardim who fled to Syria after their expulsion from Spain in 1492, according to Reguer.

 The community resided in the cities of Aleppo, Damascus and Qamishli, dwindling in size because of emigration to the U.S., western Europe and South America from the early 1900s.

 The “big flight” of Syrian Jews came after the creation of Israel in 1948 when riots erupted in Aleppo, resulting in Syria prohibiting Jews from leaving the country because they were going to Israel, said Landis.

**Dwindling Population**

 The remaining Jews were allowed to leave Syria in 1990 as relations with the U.S. thawed because Washington sought the country’s support to oust former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, Landis said.

 “Syrian Jews living in Israel, Turkey, Western Europe, and the United States feel a positive affinity toward their homeland,” said Tom Dine, who used to head the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, said by e-mail. “Reconciliation is long overdue.”

 Unlike his three brothers who live in Mexico, Cameo says he has no desire to leave Syria.

 “Morally I can’t leave my country and the religious places of worship here,” Cameo said from his home in Damascus. “I have a duty to preserve our heritage.”

*Reprinted from Bloomberg News Service edition of February 7, 2011.*

**Rabbi Zusia of Annipoli**

**And the Fear of G-d**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Boloton**

 This week's Torah portion discusses the garments worn by the Kohanim (Priests) when they served in the Holy Temple and ends with a description of the 'inner' 'golden' altar used for burning incense in the Temple. (Unlike the much larger 'outer' altar which was coated with brass and used for burning the animal sacrifices).

 This, at first glance, makes no sense. This 'inner' alter should have been discussed in last week's portion, Truma, where the other Temple vessels including the 'Outer Altar' were explained not here at the end of the Priestly garments.

 Also, this is the only Torah portion (after the birth of Moses) that does not mention Moses' name. Is there any connection?

 To understand this concept is a story.

 The first is about Rabbi Zusia of Annipoli around 250 years ago (Siporim Noraim pg.159).

 One day an old Jew came running into Rabbi Zusia's synagogue and begged from the Rebbe's Chassidim to get him an audience with the master. Usually it would take months to get a private audience with this Holy Tzadik (miracle Jew) but the poor old fellow looked on the verge of a breakdown so after an hour or so he found himself standing before the Rebbe pouring his broken, confused heart out.

 He was desperate. A group of some twenty soldiers on their way back home from some sort of victory had decided to descend on his inn to 'refresh' themselves. They ate and drank promising to pay in full for each and every detail to the last penny. But when he asked for money they just laughed pulled out wads of money, waved them in the air, put them back in their pockets and demanded more food and drink until they were satisfied.

 But he ran out of whiskey before that happened and the soldiers angrily began tearing his inn to pieces.

 First they smashed all the dishes then the tables, and chairs and finally they began joking about doing the same to him and his family as well as burning the place down. There was absolutely no way to stop them; they were all huge barbarians feared by even the police. So he had no choice but to take his family and escape. They fled the inn and found a place to hide but it was only a matter of time till the drunken soldiers would find the hiding place and burn his inn to the ground. He burst out into heartbroken tears and begged for help.

 Reb Zusia immediately put on his coat and said, "Let's get to your inn as quickly as possible. We will go in my carriage. We have no time to lose!!"

 From a distance the shouting, breaking of glass, and wild laughter from within was frightening but the Rebbe showed no signs of anxiety.

 On the contrary, he calmly entered the inn, stood serenely in the midst of the bedlam and sang out in a loud clear voice a verse from the High Holy Day prayers. "U'b'chain Ten Pach'd'chaw HaShemetc." (Therefore put your fear, G-d, on everything You have created).

 The soldiers unexplainably stopped what they were doing, became silent and looked at him in astonishment.

 When he repeated the verse a second time a bit louder their eyes widened in fear and they began trembling. And when he said it the third time, they all began screaming hysterically and tried frantically to escape the room as though it had burst into flames.

 In fact, the rush for the door created such a jam that some broke windows, leapt through and continued running for their lives.

 Just at this time their commander, who had been delayed for some reason, appeared in the distance in his carriage and was amazed to see his entire battalion running from the house in all directions waiving their arms and shaking their heads like madmen. When he alighted and tried to stop them not one of them stopped or even so much as looked at him.

 Only after firing his pistol several times in the air did he finally get them to stand at attention and try to explain what had happened.

 Most of them were so shaken up they couldn't talk and others could only say "Pach… pach…pach" (the first syllable of the word for "fear"), but, at last, one of them came to himself and tried to explain.

 When the commander finally heard the entire story he ordered them all to return to the inn, apologize to the Jew, and repay all the damages plus a fine. In addition he handed out severe punishments and got them to swear they would never harm a Jew again. But after all, he was at a total loss to understand what exactly caused his brave soldiers to experience such intense fear.

 The answer is…. They experienced truth.

 This answers our questions. The structure of Holy Temple and its vessels corresponded to the spiritual, psychological and physical structure of man in his service of the Almighty.

 And the inner incense alter corresponds to the inner fear of G-d.

 Fear, when unwarranted is destructive and negative emotion. But proper fear can be a very good; for instance, when we experience a situation or a person so awesome and real (like a King or a truly wise or holy man) that the only proper reaction is total self-negation or 'surrender'.

 This total elimination of false-ego before a greater 'Truer' reality is called healthy fear, or 'upper' fear.

 It says elsewhere (Rashi on Num. 17:11) that the incense was the antidote to death.

 Death was caused by false egotism. Adam's eating from the Tree of Knowledge began it; causing man to 'feel' separate from G-d, truth and life. But the incense, representing inner fear, negated this feeling and along with it ….. death. There is nothing better than that!

 This is what happened to the soldiers in our story; they experienced something so intense and real that it shook them to the essence of their souls, destroyed their false egotism and saved the day.

 That, possibly explains why the Inner Altar was explained last after all the other vessels and garments; to tell us that this inner fear is the goal and sum total of all personal service of G-d. As King Solomon, the wisest of men, wrote, "After all is said; Fear G-d and do His Commandments for this is the entirety of man." (Ecc. 12:13)

*Reprinted from this week’s email on the parsha fromYeshiva Ohr Tmimim.*

**NYPD Officer Celebrates**

**Bris Milah at Age 36**

 Everybody in Midwood knows Officer Khosh somehow - especially if you text whilst driving. Day in day out he patrols our neighborhood, keeping us safe. Filipp Khosh was born in Khmelnitsky, Ukraine 36 years ago. Like so many others in the former USSR, he grew up in a home with no knowledge of Yiddishkeit whatsoever. In 1992 he immigrated to New York and became a police officer. Khosh then served in the army in Iraq. Upon returning home he rejoined the police force in the 63rd precinct in Brooklyn. And for the last few years, if you talk on your cell whilst driving, you will hear from the law.



**Officer Filipp Khosh with Rabbi Yoseph Vigler (Photo by Alex Grokhov)**

 But it was a totally different side of Officer Khosh that the community got to experience this week. At 36 years of age, he took the plunge and was zoche to enter into the bris of Avraham Avinu. He tried to explain what prompted him to do it. But no rationalization was satisfactory, or necessary. All said and done the real answer is that despite so many decades of anti-religious Communist propaganda, the Yiddishe Neshama comes shining through - A Jew wants to do the Will of Hashem. More than anything else this is the living proof that Yiddishkeit will prevail no matter the odds.

 And where else do you see a community embracing so warmly a cop who issues them summons! One hundred people showed up to celebrate with him. Tickets or not, we are one. The Seudah was held at Mayan Yisroel, Merkaz haChassidus on Ave N.

 It all began a few years ago when Dave Roth met the officer whilst being issued a ticket. Upon discovering that he is a yid he informed Rabbi Vigler, who behashgacha pratis, went outside his Shul the next day looking for a Tzenter. “Are you Jewish?” He asked the officer after he finished issuing a summons. And a tzenter was indeed found.

 Slowly but surely, people got to see the other side of the Officer, who comes in to Mayan Yisroel to join a Shiur from time to time, put on Tefillin and…have a Bris…

 “I always knew I would do it - it wasn’t a matter of if but only a question of when, and finally thanks to the influence of a few people - Rabbi Vigler, Chaplain Raphi Treitel, as well as Moty Bistritzky. Yossi Kleinman and a few others I decided that the WHEN is actually NOW”.

 The Seudah was beautiful with everybody marveling at the mesirus nefesh and wondering how an “FFB” could incorporate mesirus nefesh into his life too. For his part, Officer Khosh, whose Jewish name is now Efroim - said he realized a bris is just beginning. “Let me recover from this, he said, and then we can talk further.” And of course, we need to get some of the officer’s family members to also take the plunge and have that bris.

 Mazal Tov Efroim, and to that special person behind it all - his Eishes Chayil, Tanya.

*Reprinted from the February 9, 2011 edition of Matzav.com*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**The Head Covering**

 The Torah tells us this week how Hashem commands the Bnai Yisroel regarding making the holy clothing of the Kohanim. The commentator Rashi explains that the Kohen becomes holy through wearing the special clothes. We see from here the power of clothing to influence the spirituality of a Jew.

 Everyone should be able to recognize a Jew from the way he dresses. A Jew who dresses differently will have a sense of pride of being Jewish. Just as a soldier is proud to wear his uniform, so too is every Jew a soldier in the army of Hashem, a soldier who is proud to sport the look of his ancestors.

 How should a Jew dress differently? One way is that Jewish men should cover their heads by wearing a yarmulke or similar type of head covering. In general, a Jew must cover his head at all times.



 Admittedly, in the Talmudic era, the wearing of a head covering was optional and fell within the category of midas hachasiddus - acting beyond the letter of the law.

 The deciders of Jewish Law have concluded, however, that today the wearing of a head covering is obligatory and not a matter of choice. (Yechave Da'as 4:1, see also Taz 8:3, Igros Moshe Orach Chayim 1:1) The widespread acceptance over many centuries of the custom of wearing a head covering, has imbued the custom with the significance of a halachic - legal requirement. Indeed, covering the head has assumed the status of symbolically demonstrating the adherence to mitzvos.

 Most agree that it is forbidden to recite words of Torah or blessings without a head covering. Also, one must avoid walking four amos (approx. seven feet) without a head covering (P'ri Migadim 2:6, Mishna Berurah 2:11, etc.) Ideally however, one should not walk even less than four amos (cubits) or even sit in a house without covering one's head.(Mishna Berurah 2:11)

 It is also interesting to note that it is necessary that the head covering be large enough to be seen from all vantage points. Tiny yarmulkes that are difficult to discern on the head are not adequate. (Yechave Da'as 4:1)

 Although not required according to halacha - Jewish Law, one should also sleep with a head covering (Mishna Berurah 2:11, although one need not worry if it falls off during sleep--R'Shlomo Z. Auerbach) (All of the above is from The Laws of B'rachos Rabbi Binyomin Frost, with Rabbi Aaron D. Twerski, Artscroll publications Chapter 1, p.73)

 One of the main reasons for a head covering is to remind a Jew that Hashem is above him at all times. A Jew who is meticulous in covering his head at all times shows everyone that he is proud to be in the Army of Hashem. Being a soldier in the Army of Hashem has its many privileges. The following amazing true story illustrates the amazing power a Jew has when he covers his head.

 Isaac Schwartz is a plumbing-fitting salesman who often travels around the United States. As part of his business, Isaac is involved in bidding on large contracts to supply giant corporations. Isaac is a religious Jew, however, during his business trips he removes his yarmulke, so people have no idea that he is a religious Jew.

 Several years ago, Isaac traveled to Chicago to take part in a bid for a large mid-west conglomerate. Isaac packed his samples and his brochures as he had done hundreds of times before. He felt like he was forgetting something as he left the house.

 Nevertheless, he was in a rush and so there was little time to think about what he had forgotten. As he boarded the early morning flight, he sent up a prayer that his trip would be successful and that he would arrive and return safely.

 Once in Chicago, Isaac rushed to catch a cab to the corporate offices. The bidding was grueling and it lasted throughout the day. Finally, as the day grew long and the sunset approached, Isaac headed back to his hotel room. Exhausted from the traveling and the negotiations, Isaac settled into his comfortable hotel room.

 Suddenly, he realized that he had not yet davened (prayed) mincha (the afternoon prayers). He reached into his coat pocket for his yarmulke… it was not there. He reached into his pants pockets and then his jacket pockets once again… it was nowhere to be found. He searched his bags, but he simply could not find his yarmulke.

 He paced the hotel room right and left wondering what to do. As he passed by the large mirror in his hotel room, he noticed something on his head. He stopped in his tracks… He looked again and he felt his face turning red. He reached his hand on top of his head and felt the small piece of cloth; he had found his yarmulke.

 He now knew what he had forgotten to do when he left his house. He had forgotten to take off his yarmulke! He had gone the whole day spending hours in negotiations wearing his yarmulke. His face burned with embarrassment. The next day, he received a phone call with some great news.

 The corporation had accepted his bid and they wanted him to sign a very lucrative supply contract. The president of the company told Isaac that they saw that he was a religious Jew and therefore they felt they could trust him. (Told by M. Zuckerbraun who heard it from R.B.Y.Grayden - some names and details have been changed)

 Isaac was able to perform a tremendous act of Kiddush Hashem - making Hashem look good among the nations. Isaac distinguished himself among the nations and he was immediately rewarded. Let us learn from the example of Isaac. Let us be meticulous in covering our heads. And let us recognize the power of dressing Jewish.

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tetzaveh**

**& Purim 5770**

**The Secret of Why the**

**Baal Shem Tov Got**

**Angry on Shabbos Night**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 In last week's Torah portion we read about G-d's commandments to Moses to make a Tabernacle in the desert and its various vessels; The Menora, Altar, Ark etc.

 This week's Torah portion deals with His commandment to make garments for the priests (Cohanim) who worked in the Tabernacle.

 But there are many questions here. First why does the portion begin with G-d telling Moses to take pure olive oil for the Menorah and end with the commandment to build an 'inner' golden altar for burning incense? Neither of these have anything to do with the garments, which are the topic of the portion, and seemingly should have been dealt with in last week's portion with the vessels!

**What Exactly is the Purpose of the Priestly Garments**

 Also it is not very clear what exactly is the purpose of these garments and why did they have to be so detailed and precise? Why couldn't all the priests just dress in white plain robes? What difference could it possible make to G-d what they wear?

 Also, this Shabbat is Parshat 'Zachor' when, in preparation for Purim, we add a paragraph (Deut. 25:17) to the Torah reading to remind us how Moses defeated the anti-Semitic nation of Amalek from which Haman stemmed.

 Is there a connection between all these? To understand, here is a story (Stories of the Baal Shem Tov vol. 5 pg 155)

 Some 300 years ago after the Chmilnitzki massacres and the Shabatai Tzvi False-Messiah-fiasco, Judaism was in a state of shock and regression. Like a patient in intensive care, the reigning Rabbis wanted only to protect Judaism by rejecting all change.

 In this time lived one Rabbi Yechiel of Kovli. He was a great scholar and holy Jew, but when rumors began going around that there was a Jew called Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem (Baal Shem Tov or Besh't for short) who claimed to have special powers and was teaching a new type of rejuvenated Judaism called Chassidut he was suspicious. And so were the majority of Talmudic scholars.

 But unlike most of them he decided to find out for himself whether this Baal Shem was another faker or a perhaps a true leader like Moses who also had big problems changing the mindset of the Jews of his time.

 The more objectively Rabbi Yechiel investigated the more he realized that the latter was true and the reason for the opposition was that Chassidut was almost too good to be true.

**Becomes a Convinced and Devoted Follower**

 He became a convinced, devoted follower of the Baal Shem Tov, but when he tried to convince others he found it was a different issue altogether, Jews just don't want to leave Egypt.

 For instance, one Motzi Shabbat (Saturday night) he met a Jew who had spent a Shabbat by the Besh't and was totally turned off. He had been very impressed with the Baal Shem's erudition, deep insight, memory, total command of all aspects of the Torah and the communal prayers were incomparable to anything he had ever experienced. But he was repulsed at the fact that Besh't lost his temper!

 And not just for a second or two. He related how, on Friday night, shortly after the Sabbath began, the Besh't called his gentile servant Alexi and began screaming and cursing him for not wanting to go out immediately into the cold and brush the horses! The servant was so shocked he almost fainted! He meekly tried to defend himself by saying that he had just brushed them a few minutes ago and it was freezing outside but the Baal Shem Tov just kept shouting that if he didn't go immediately he would burn in hell and become blind and crippled and similar things!

**All the Chassidim Felt So Bad for Alexi**

 It was just shocking. You could see that all the Chassidim, felt so bad for the poor gentile but the Baal Shem Tov just kept yelling "'Go! go! Leave NOW! I'll kill you! get out!" etc. until Alexi ran out into the cold to again brush the horses. "I mean, who cares about horses?! What type of tzadik is this?" the guest complained, "Why, it says clearly in the Talmud that getting angry is equal to idolatry; forgetting about G-d!"

 Rabbi Yechiel tried to calm the fellow down, he assured him that the ways of the Besh't were hidden, that it was impossible that he 'lost' his temper etc. but it didn't help until promised he would personally go and ask.

 The next day Rabbi Yechiel went to the Baal Shem's Synagogue, waited for him to finish the Morning prayers, took him aside and asked him to please reveal the secret behind his yelling and screaming the day before.

 Immediately after he asked he regretted it. How could he mix in to things he had no understanding of? It was like asking Moses why he had a staff!

 "Ahh that!" the Baal Shem replied to Rabbi Yechiel's surprise "Of course I'll tell you. You are right, it really was shocking but I had no choice. I'll explain.

 "That Friday I noticed that about a hundred miles from here in the middle of the forest there was a simple Jew who had lost his way and, as he noticed that night was falling, had no choice but to stop his carriage and spend the Holy Shabbat where he was (it is forbidden to travel, carry in an open place or use horses on the Shabbat).

 "But shortly after nightfall a band of robbers noticed his lone wagon and, not sure if he was armed or not, cautiously began to surround him. Of course the only weapon the poor fellow had except for the stick he used to ocassionally prod his horse was prayer and when he saw that he was surrounded and any second was about to be attacked, he began crying out to G-d for help.

**Projecting Alexi’s Fright on the Goyish Robbers**

 "And that is why I yelled at poor Alexi. I saw that the Jew in the forest didn't have sufficient merits to save himself and I knew I had to do something to help. So I threatened my servant Alexi in order to project his fright on to the robbers! In other words I arranged it so that they felt the same fright he did! They became so insane with fear that they ran away in all directions and didn't dare approach him or his wagon again for the entire Shabbat."

 Just as the Besh't finished talking the doors of his synagogue burst open and a wide-eyed Jew who looked as though he had just escaped the angel of death staggered in. He was out of breath, trying his best to say something but it was impossible to make out a word. Someone sat him down, someone else brought him a hot glass of tea, he took a few sips, calmed down, said thanks and began to tell his story to the large crowd of Chassidim that gathered around.

**Reveals How the Robbers Fled as**

**Though Chased by Demons**

 On Friday, just two days ago, he was on the way home driving his wagon through the forest and somehow got lost. So he stopped just before sunset to set up for Shabbat and a band of robbers surrounded his wagon! Then suddenly for no reason their eyes bolted open in fear, they began clutching the sides of their heads screaming 'No! No!' and ran away as though they were being chased by demons!"

 This was the man the Baal Shem had saved! The story was verified before Rav Yechiel's eyes!

 When Rav Yechiel returned, found the guest and explained what the Besh't had said and what he had seen with his own eyes the guest at first did not believe it, but after a few minutes of thought decided he needed a few more days to think.

 Finally the guest became a follower of the Baal Shem Tov and admitted that when he had seen the Besht's scholarship and spirituality, although he had never seen anything like it, it wasn't enough to make him change his entire life. But now that he saw how he used anger to save that traveler it made him realize that the Besh't had the secret to making Judaism was more real than he had ever dreamed.

 This answers our questions.

This week's portion deals with the priestly garments but begins with the oil for the Menorah and ends with the inner Altar. The garments were a correction for the sin of Adam which brought shame and egotism into the world. Preceding the commandment of oil accentuates that the reason for these garments is, like the Menorah, to illuminate the world with the awareness of the Creator.

 In a more personal sense; the 'garments' of our soul are thought, speech and action (see Tanya Chapt. 4) . These three garments have the purpose of illuminating our surroundings.

 Therefore our portion ends with the inner Altar to show that in every thought, word and deed there must be an inner purpose. Something like how the Besht's actions and words really contained the deeper intention of saving that Jew in the forest.

**The Connection to Amalek and Purim**

 And that is the connection to remembering Amalek in preparation for Purim.

 The purpose of the Baal Shem's miraculous transportation of fear a hundred miles away was not only to save the Jew in the forest (like Mordechi saved all the Jews from Haman) but also to save that visiting Jew from his own doubts.

 As Chassidut points out that the Hebrew letters for 'Amalek' have the same numerical value as 'Safek' which means 'doubt'. Doubt can be the worst enemy of Judaism; Judaism is joy and love while and doubt is coldness and egotism.

 This is the purpose of the Holy Temple, the priestly garments, the shining Menorah, the Inner Altar and Purim; to dispel all doubts about the goodness, closeness, omnipotence of G-d.

 And so this is the job of the Baal Shem Tov and all the Chassidic masters after him; to dispel all doubts so the entire world will worship only the Creator; the G-d of Israel, with Joy.

 We just have to have no doubts; we must do, say and think positively. Even one more good deed can tip the scales and insure that....the Joy of Purim will never cease!!!

*Reprinted from this week’s Torah Online – Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim email.*

**Story #639**

**Purim Treats from Heaven**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 In the town of Berdichev, the shul of the famous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak began to fill up even before the sun had set. Eagerly people crowded in to hear the reading of Megilat Esther that would take place that night.

 A feeling of excitement filled the air. Children experimented whirling their graggers, to see how much noise they made. Some men spoke together quietly. Others took out books of Tehillim and began reciting Psalms.

 But where was Rabbi Levi Yitzchak? The day before Purim is The Fast of Esther, and so the evening service ought to have begun a little earlier than usual. Everyone was waiting for their beloved Rebbe to lead the prayers, but he was not there.

**A Poor Woman Asks the Berdichever Rebbe**

**To Examine if Her Chicken is Kosher**

 In fact, the Berdichever had been ready to join every-one else in shul, when his secretary told him that a woman wanted to see him. In a glance, the Rebbe realized that she was very poor. She stood there apologetically, holding a chicken in her hand, asking the Rebbe if it was kosher.

 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak examined the chicken carefully. Then he sighed. No, the chicken was not fit to be eaten. It was not kosher.

 Tears welled up in the poor womans eyes. Oh no, she sobbed. What will I do now? My husband is sick, and there is no food in the house for the children. We spent our last pennies to buy this chicken. I hoped the soup would help my husband, and fill the stomachs of the children. They are so hungry. Now what will I do? the woman cried.

 Do not worry, said the Berdichever. G-d is very great. He manages to feed the whole world every day. He will feed you and your family too.

**The Rebbe Assures that G-d Has**

**Many Way to “Take Care of You”**

 Then he smiled kindly. Now go to shul, and listen to the Megilah, and don’t worry about a thing. Purim is a time of miracles, and G-d has many ways of taking care of you.

 After the woman had left, the Rebbe put on his overcoat, and went quickly home. Delicious smells of the Purim meal filled the house. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak went straight to the kitchen, and began gathering up all the food he could find, fish, chicken, potatoes,

soup, vegetables, hamantashen (triangular Purim pastries), and other baked goods. Then he took a large white table-cloth, bundled the whole lot together, and then carried it out

in his arms.

 He made his way through the streets of Berdichev till he came to the outskirts of town where the poor woman lived. The door to her house was not locked, and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak went in.

 Is that you, Sara? her husband called weakly from the room where he lay in bed. What happened with the chicken?

 Dont worry. A happy Purim, the Berdichever called back.

 “Who is that?,” the surprised husband called.

 G-d has sent you Meshalach Manot (the traditional edible presents) for Purim, the Rebbe replied. Then he quickly set the table neatly and hurried back to shul.

 As soon as Rabbi Levi Yitzchak took his usual place in shul, the evening service began, followed by the reading of the Megilah. Nobody had left early, even though they had waited so long, and their stomachs gnawed with hunger. Every-one wanted to hear the Rebbe read the Megilah.

**The Rebbe Pleases Everyone With His Megillah Reading**

 They were not disappointed. That year the Megillah reading seemed full of new meaning, especially when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak read the parts about celebrating Purim by sending presents of food to friends, and giving charity to the poor.

 Everyone seemed to get the point. In their hearts they realized that they had to try to have more feeling for others, more Ahavat Yisroel (love of fellow Jews), and to care for the needs of others. Somehow, listening to the Berdichever, everyone found themselves deciding to make extra efforts to fulfill these mitzvot better.

 After shul, when the Rebbes wife went home, she was startled to see that all the food she had prepared was gone! Had they been robbed?!

 Aghast, she turned to her husband. But Rabbi Levi Yitzchaks face was glowing with pleasure. The Rebbetzin knew her husband well, and understood immediately what happened.

**The Rebbe Goes to His Study to Learn Torah**

 Since there was nothing left in the house to eat, the Rebbe went to his study to learn. His wife put up a kettle of water for tea for them to break their fast. Then she pulled out leftovers from here and there, and scraped together some food for a Purim meal.

 Meanwhile the poor woman returned to her home. To her amazement, she found her husband and the children all excited. The table was decked with food, and delicious aromas filled their little cottage.

 “Wha- where?,” the woman gasped, lost for words.

 “I heard someone come in. He said it was Meshalach Manot from Heaven,” her husband explained. “By the time I got up to see who it was, he was gone. It must have been... Eliyahu HaNovi (Elijah the Prophet) himself! Can you believe that?,” he laughed. “Its a miracle. You see, G-d has not forgotten us after all!”

 The woman, her husband, and the little children all began to laugh and dance with joy that they had not known in years. With deep gratitude in their hearts, they ate their Purim meal.

**The Rebbe’s Secret Mission Becomes Revealed**

 The next morning, unable to contain their excitement, the children told their friends about the great miracle, that Eliyahu had visited their home. The children of the town told their parents. And their parents understood why their Rebbe had been so late in coming to shul the night before. He had been Eliyahu HaNovi.

 Taking their hint from the Rebbe, people outdid them-selves sending generous presents of food to the poor family, and in sending food and charity to all the poor of the city.

 Of course, they did not forget their own Rebbe, who had given away his own last morsels of food. Everyone knew that he did not like to accept presents, but on Purim it was a Mitzvah. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak received so much that he had enough for his own Purim meal, and plenty left over to distribute to the poor of the city.

Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from www.berdichev.org including the drawing.

Connection: Seasonal - the festival of Purim

Biographic note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Deberamdiger of Berdichev (1740 - 25 Tishrei 1810) is one of the most popular rebbes in chassidic history. One of the closest disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, he is best known for his love for every Jew and his active efforts to intercede for them against (seemingly) adverse heavenly decrees. Many of his teachings are contained in the posthumously published, Kedushat Levi.

*Reprinted from KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**How to Handle the**

**King’s Invitation?**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*And it came to pass in the days of Ahashverosh*.” (Esther 1:1)

 As I sit in my hotel room in Jerusalem a few days before Purim, I put pen to paper and try to express some of my feelings that I have. The overwhelming emotions I feel as I live amongst the Jewish people in Israel is Ashrechem Yisrael, how great are you , Israel. After all is said and done the Jews in Israel live as Jews. The greatness of the Jews in the period of Purim is what turned it around to save them.

 The miracle of Purim took place during what was surely the darkest period in Jewish history up to that time. The first Temple was destroyed and the all important ingredients of Jewish leadership were thrown into question. Let’s put forth two ways of thinking, one is common knowledge and the other is Torah knowledge. Common knowledge is of the opinion of the man in the street that interprets the events of the day. Torah knowledge is the opinion of Torah that interprets the events of the day. Torah knowledge is known by Torah leaders who have learned vast amounts of Torah knowledge.

 Rabbi Yosef Viener quotes Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler and explains that Mordechai declared that it was forbidden to attend the feast, but unfortunately people did not listen. They knew that there might be issues of immodesty and improper interaction, but they decided to go because they felt it would be politically dangerous not to go. They did not want to appear unpatriotic. “Mordechai Hasadik knows halachah well,” they said among themselves, “but he does not know politics.”

 They did not realize that by going, they would be party to the enormous hilul Hashem that would take place there. One of the reasons why the king made the party was to celebrate the downfall of the Jews and that the second Bet Hamikdash will not be rebuilt. In addition to this, there was tremendous immorality displayed. Although the Jews felt terrible to witness this, they still felt it was necessary to be there. One can be sure that after it was over, many of them remarked, “It is a good thing we went for now the king is happy. Who knows how many decrees were averted?” This was common knowledge.

 Hashem didn’t punish them right away. Nothing happened a month later or a year later or even eight years later. After nine years Haman gained power and decreed all shall bow down to him. Mordechai refused and Haman became angry and decided to kill all the Jews. Many Jews felt that again Mordechai was exhibiting bad leadership. This again was common knowledge. Mordechai explained that Haman’s decree was not due to his actions but because of what happened nine years earlier at the banquet. This was Torah knowledge.

 Whose side would we be on? To criticize Mordechai’s actions or to attribute the events to what took place nine years earlier? The truth was that Mordechai had connection to heavenly knowledge which the common knowledge man did not. At first they didn’t get it, but ultimately they turned it around and made teshubah. At that point the whole story turned around. This is what I meant at the beginning when I said Ashrechem Yisrael, how great are you, Israel.

**The Danger that Comes**

**From a Lack of Torah Study**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 When Haman’s great-grandfather, Amalek, attacked the Jewish people in the wilderness, the name of the place where he was able to fight them was Refidim. This was a station where the Jews were in a weakened state of Torah study, and because of this, Amalek was able to start up with us. Indeed, whenever a tyrant or despot threatens the Jewish nation, it is invariably because of our lack of Torah study. Thus we find that right after the Purim miracle, when Haman and his people were defeated, there was a tremendous resurgence of Torah study amongst the Jews, and this eventually culminated in the compilation of the Oral Law.

 The week before Purim, we read Parashat Zachor, which is to remember what Amalek did to us. It is just as important to remember the cause that led to Amalek’s battle against the Jews, and that is our weakness in Torah study. Let us commit ourselves to Torah study every day so that we can merit to see Hashem’s salvation.

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

**G-d Said Multiply,**

**And Did She Ever**

**By Joseph Berger**

 WHEN Yitta Schwartz died last month at 93, she left behind 15 children, more than 200 grandchildren and so many great- and great-great-grandchildren that, by her family’s count, she could claim perhaps 2,000 living descendants.

 Mrs. Schwartz was a memberof the Satmar Hasidic sect, whose couples have nine children on average and whose ranks of descendants can multiply exponentially. But even among Satmars, the size of Mrs. Schwartz’s family is astonishing. A round-faced woman with a high-voltage smile, she may have generated one of the largest clans of any survivor of the Holocaust — a thumb in the eye of the Nazis.

**A Recent Great-Great-Granddaughter**

**Named in Her Honor**

 Her descendants range in age from a 75-year-old daughter named Shaindel to a great-great-granddaughter born Feb. 10 named Yitta in honor of Mrs. Schwartz and a great-great-grandson born Feb. 15 who was named Moshe at his circumcision on Monday. Their numbers include rabbis, teachers, merchants, plumbers and truck drivers. But these many apples have not fallen far from the tree: With a few exceptions, like one grandson who lives in England, they mostly live in local Satmar communities, like Williamsburg in Brooklyn and Kiryas Joel, near Monroe, N.Y., where Mrs. Schwartz lived for the last 30 years of her life.



Yitta Schwartz, shown in the late 1980s.

 Mrs. Schwartz had a zest for life and a devotion to Hasidic rituals, faithfully attending the circumcisions, first haircuts, bar mitzvahs, engagements and weddings of her descendants. With 2,000 people in the family, such events occupied much of the year.

 Whatever the occasion, she would pack a small suitcase and thumb a ride from her apartment in Kiryas Joel to Williamsburg or elsewhere.



**MATRIARCH** The casket of Yitta Schwartz after her death last month in Kiryas Joel, N.Y. She left perhaps 2,000 descendants. (Photo by Times Herald-Record)

 “She would appear like the Prophet Elijah,” said one of her daughters, Nechuma Mayer, who at 64 is her sixth-oldest living child, and who has 16 children and more than 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. “Everybody was fighting over her!”

 There were so many occasions that, to avoid scheduling conflicts, one of her sons was assigned to keep a family calendar. But her family insists that Mrs. Schwartz had no trouble remembering everyone’s name and face.

**Her Tribute to G-d**

 Like many Hasidim, Mrs. Schwartz considered bearing children as her tribute to G-d. A son-in-law, Rabbi Menashe Mayer, a lushly bearded scholar, said she took literally the scriptural command that “You should not forget what you saw and heard at Mount Sinai and tell it to your grandchildren.”

 “And she wanted to do that,” he said, without needing to add her belief that the more grandchildren, the more the commandment is fulfilled. Mrs. Schwartz gave birth 18 times, but lost two children in the Holocaust and one in a summer camp accident here.

 She was born in 1916 into a family of seven children in the Hungarian village of Kalev, revered as the hometown of a founder of Hungarian Hasidism. During World War II, the Nazis sent Mrs. Schwartz, her husband, Joseph, and the six children they had at the time to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

 At the shiva last month, another Bergen-Belsen survivor recalled her own mother dying at the camp; Mrs. Schwartz took it upon herself to prepare the body according to Jewish ritual, dig a grave and bury the woman.

 “For her it was a matter of necessity,” Nechuma Mayer said of her mother’s actions.

 When the war ended, the family made its way to Antwerp, Belgium. There, Mrs. Schwartz put up refugees in makeshift beds in her own bombed-out apartment.

**Immigrated to the United States in 1953**

 In 1953, the Schwartzes migrated to the United States, settling into the Satmar community in Williamsburg. She arrived with 11 children — Shaindel, Chana, Dinah, Yitschok, Shamshon, Nechuma, Nachum, Nechemia, Hadassah, Mindel and Bella — and proceeded to have five more: Israel, Joel, Aron, Sarah and Chaim Shloime, who died in summer camp at age 8. Sarah came along after Mrs. Schwartz had already married off two other daughters.

 While her husband sold furniture on Lee Avenue, Williamsburg’s commercial spine, Mrs. Schwartz, who never learned English well, tended the family. She sewed her daughters’ jumpers with mother-of-pearl buttons and splurged for pink-and-white blouses — 20 for 99 cents each — at that late lamented discount emporium on Union Square, S. Klein.

**Baking Six Loaves of Challah for Every Shabbos**

 With so many children, Mrs. Schwartz had to make six loaves of challah for every Sabbath, using 12 pounds of dough — in later years, she was aided by Kitchenaid or Hobart appliances. (Mrs. Mayer said her mother had weaknesses for modern conveniences, and for elegant head scarves.) For her children’s weddings, Mrs. Schwartz starched the tablecloths and baked the chocolate babkas and napoleons.

 After her husband died 34 years ago, relatives said, Mrs. Schwartz never burdened others with her new solitude.

 “We didn’t feel even one minute that she was a widow,” Mrs. Mayer said. “She used to say, ‘When there are so many problems in life, I should put myself on the scale?’ ”

 Mrs. Schwartz did not want her children to collect photographs of her and, given that modesty, her family was reluctant to provide more than one to accompany this article. “Just keep me in your heart,” she used to say. “If you leave a child or grandchild, you live forever.”

Reprinted from the February 18th edition of The New York Times.

**It Once Happened**

**The Chofetz Chaim Recalls the Rejoicing of Purim During a Difficult Czarist Persecution**

 World War I was into its second year and the Jews of Poland were suffering tremendous deprivation. It was almost Purim and the town of Radin was plunged into darkness and despair. The rabbi of the little town was Rabbi Yisroel Meir HaKohen, the saintly Chofetz Chaim, a great leader of world Jewry in the early years of the century.

 During this black year, conditions in Radin steadily worsened. Food was scarce, taxes were high, and worst of all, most of the young men had been drafted into the military, never to be seen again.

 At the approach of Purim, one Jew came to the Chofetz Chaim and asked, "Rebbe, our lives are so miserable this year. Our sons are off at the front. How can we be expected to celebrate Purim in this joyless, suffering world?"

**Listening to a Man Speaking from**

**His Pain and Fear for a Son**

 The Chofetz Chaim knew that the man was speaking from his own pain and his fear for the life of his own young son who was one of the draftees.

 "Don't worry, my friend," the Chofetz Chaim said. "Even in these terrible and troubled times, we must not lose our faith in G-d's salvation. Even now, we must rejoice in the thought of the great miracles which He did for our people on Purim.

 "Once many years ago when I was a young man in Vilna, it was Purim time and the Czar had issued a bitter decree. He ordered that the Jews must provide double the usual number of young men for the military draft. As you know these draftees, the Cantonists, were little more than children, and were pressed into military service for twenty years. After that long period of time, they often remembered nothing of their Jewishness and were totally lost to their families forever. That year, the draft fell out on Purim and the Jews of Vilna were in virtual mourning.

 "However, in spite of their sorrow, the Jews of Vilna performed the mitzvot of Purim - they distributed mishloach manot - gifts of food to their friends, and tzedaka - charity to the poor. Their only consolation was in reading Megilat Esther (the Scroll of Esther), recounting the miracle of Purim, when G-d brought a sudden and wondrous salvation to His people.

 "It wasn't long, though, until things became even worse. The Czar issued yet another decree against the Jews, ordering them to provide still more young men for the Russian army. All the greatest rabbis and Jewish leaders of the time petitioned the Czar to rescind this terrible decree, but all their pleas were to no avail. The young men were chosen and ordered to report for military service the following Av, the month in the Jewish year when both Temples were destroyed, the month especially marked for tragedy.

 "The orders were drawn up and ready for the Czar's signature which would finalize the fate of the young men. It took only a second for the Czar to affix his name to the document, but as he reached out to blot the wet ink, his hand accidentally knocked over the ink bottle, and it spilled over the paper, obliterating his name.

**The Czar Was Shocked by His Mistake**

 "The Czar was shocked at his mistake. In his mind it seemed an omen from Above, and so he stubbornly refused to have the document redrawn. And so, these young men were freed from the terrible fate which had awaited them.

 "The month of Av [which coincides roughly with August] had already begun when word of the sudden miraculous reprieve reached the Jews of Vilna. The young men, who had already prepared to leave Vilna quickly unpacked. Their families breathed a joyful sigh of relief, realizing how close they had come to losing their precious sons and brothers. That year the month of Av turned from mourning to rejoicing for the Jews of Vilna.

 "How can we tell whether it was the rejoicing of the Jews in Vilna on that dark Purim when the evil decree was issued that had in it the spark of their redemption the following Av? Perhaps our joyous celebration of Purim now will be the seed of a great redemption which will follow in the same unexpected way, as G-d redeems His people once again."

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

**“The Coca-Cola Rabbi”**

The following are excerpts posted on the Matzav.com website from a Jerusalem Post report by Gail Lichtman:

 

 Rabbi Tuvia (Tobias) Geffen

 Coca-Cola is a reigning symbol of America around the world, and its patented formula a better-kept secret than many countries’ nuclear programs. Yet for years, one man, almost the only person outside of Coca-Cola’s inner corporate circle, was privy to this secret formula - Rabbi Tuvia (Tobias) Geffen, the man who made Coca-Cola kosher.

 Yesterday, family, students and friends gathered at Yerushalayim’s Yedidiya Synagogue for a memorial symposium marking the 40th anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Geffen, who for 60 years was considered the dean of the Southern Orthodox rabbinate in the US.

 Geffen was born in Kovno, Lithuania, on August 1, 1870. He studied in yeshivos in Kovno and Grodno and was ordained by Rav Tzvi Hirsch Rabinowitz of Kovno and Rav Moshe Danishevsky of Slobodka. In 1898 he married Sarah Rabinowitz. The couple was married for 63 years and had eight children.

**The Family Decides to Emigrate to America**

 In 1903, after the Kishniev pogrom, Geffen and family decided to emigrate to New York. “This was at a time when many of the leading Orthodox rabbis were calling America ‘a treife land,’ yet he was not afraid to go there,” explains Jerusalemite David Geffen, one of the rabbi’s 18 grandchildren and the oldest of the six grandchildren who made aliya.

 In 1907, Rabbi Geffen accepted a pulpit position in Canton, Ohio. But his wife found the place too cold. So in 1910, with his wife and five children, Geffen went south to Atlanta to become the rabbi of Shearith Israel, a position he held until his death on February 10, 1970.

 “When he arrived in the South, he realized that there were only four other Orthodox rabbis serving the region,” recalls Ruth Ziff Adler, another one of the rabbi’s grandchildren, who today lives in the Jewish Quarter in the Old City.

**Only Four Orthodox Rabbis in the Atlanta Region**

 Geffen set about establishing kashrut standards and training shohetim (ritual slaughters) and kosher butchers. He ran a Jewish school in his home until a community school was set up in 1913. After that, he continued to provide tutorials for his children and others, including his four daughters.

 “We marvel about him,” says David Geffen. “Where did he get the deep commitment to do all he did as an Orthodox rabbi in maintaining Halacha yet also interacting with the secular world? He was not only concerned about quality Jewish education for his children but also quality general education. His children studied in the best general schools.”

 An example of this commitment was tested in 1919. Geffen’s oldest son wanted to attend Emory University in Atlanta, a Methodist university. At that time, the school required students to attend classes on Saturdays and chapel on Sundays.

 “Rabbi Geffen went to see the university’s head,” his grandson relates. “He explained that his son and another Jewish boy had been accepted but that there was a problem with Saturday classes and Sunday chapel. A compromise was worked out whereby the two would attend Saturday classes but would not be required to write or take exams. They were also exempted from Sunday chapel. But they had to walk four miles to Emory and four miles back every Saturday. Based on this compromise, six of my grandfather’s children attended Emory, although later on a Jewish family was found living closer to the campus, where they could spend Shabbat.”

**The Rabbi’s Desire for His Children to**

**Have an Excellent General Education**

 GEFFEN’S QUEST for an excellent general education for his children also led to his Coca-Cola connection. In the early 1930s, the rabbi’s daughter Helen was studying food chemistry at the University of Georgia. As part of a class project, she decided to analyze the contents of Coca-Cola and found that the drink contained a glycerin derived from animal fat. At that time, some local rabbis had given kosher certification to Coca-Cola - either because they were unaware of the animal glycerin the beverage contained or based on the 1/60th ruling, whereby if the non-kosher item is less than 1/60th of the total ingredients, it is considered nullified.

 “When the rabbi heard from Helen about this glycerin, he was very upset,” relates Adler, Helen’s daughter. “He realized there was a problem.”

 Geffen noted that the 1/60th rule applied only if the non-kosher substance was added accidentally. Since the glycerin in Coca-Cola was added intentionally, the entire mixture became forbidden.

**Contacts Harold Hirsch, Head of**

**Coca Cola’s Legal Affairs**

 The rabbi contacted Harold Hirsch, a prominent member of the Atlanta Jewish community and head of Coca-Cola’s legal affairs, and told him he would have to go public with the discovery that Coca-Cola was not kosher. Hirsch went to see Asa Candler, founder and owner of Coca-Cola. Long before the words “globalization” and “multinational” were coined, Candler envisioned Coca-Cola being sold and enjoyed around the world. When he heard there was a group of people - Jews - who would not be able to drink his soft drink, he purportedly exploded: “What! There are people who cannot drink Coca-Cola? I want everyone to be able to drink Coca-Cola. Do something about this.”

 As a result, Geffen met with Coca-Cola executives, who shared their secret formula with him. The company agreed to accept substitutes for the animal glycerin and for a corn-based derivative also in the formula, making the Coca Cola formula not only kosher but also kosher for Pessah. Once these changes were made, the rabbi issued a hechsher for Coca-Cola.

 In addition to his success with Coca-Cola, Geffen was active on behalf of Jewish prisoners and even went to see the governor of Georgia to obtain a pardon for a Jewish prisoner serving on a chain gang who had been wrongly convicted. He worked on behalf of agunot - women whose husbands went missing and were left in marital limbo - often succeeding in locating the husbands and obtaining a divorce.

 Between 1924 and 1961, Rabbi Geffen published seven books in Hebrew, Yiddish and English. He also wrote sermons, poetry, pilpulim (disputations) and teshuvot (responses) as well as scholarly articles.

 Throughout his life, the rabbi could always count on his wife. “Our grandmother was a very unusual woman,” says David Geffen. “Her support gave our grandfather more opportunity to study, meet people and write. We see this memorial service as being for her as well. The two of them were a real team. They imbued all their children and grandchildren with pride in Yiddishkeit.”

 “All of us remained Jewish,” Adler adds.

**Martin Grossman, May**

**His Soul Rest in Peace**

**By** [**Zalman S. Lent**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=14694)



Martin Grossman

 This past Wednesday, a 45-year-old Jewish man was put to death in Florida by lethal injection.

 His name was Martin Grossman, his crime was murder.

 The facts are tragic and painful. A 19-year-old young man from a troubled background, father dead, mother sick, himself on drugs and medications, was out on parole for a burglary offence.

 While on parole he and a friend were apprehended by a wildlife officer on patrol, a young woman by the name of Margaret Parks. She found a handgun in their possession and confiscated it.

 To avoid going back to prison for possession of a firearm, Martin committed a heinous crime: He ripped a gun from the officer's hand and shot her dead. A young, innocent life destroyed.

**Waiting for the Sand in the Timer to Run Out**

 Grossman sat on Death Row for more than two decades, waiting for the sand in the timer to run out... This past Wednesday it did.

 But the Martin Grossman whose life was taken, watched by a silent audience of Parks' family members, members of the press and a distraught rabbi, was not the same Martin Grossman who brutally murdered an innocent young woman all those years ago.

 The young man who committed homicide on that terrible day was possessed by demons—demons with names like PCP, cocaine and crystal meth. Aged 19 and borderline retarded, Grossman was a poorly educated, highly medicated, drug dependent young delinquent. His father had been ill and needed constant care, eventually passing away when Martin was 14. His mother was ill, delusional and addicted to drugs herself—not exactly the building blocks for a stable household and childhood. This led to a downward spiral of bad behavior and its consequences, culminating in the shooting of a young woman whilst under the influence of a cocktail of drugs and medications.

 What, if anything, can be learned from this tragic story?

 In the past few weeks, close to 35,000 people who did not know Martin Grossman signed a petition for clemency. They pleaded with the Florida Governor to allow him to spend the rest of his days behind bars—but alive.

 Why did they do this for someone they probably never heard of and definitely never knew?

**An Influential Email from the Aleph Institute**

 The reason, I believe – apart from a healthy skepticism of the justice system – is an email released by the Aleph Institute, an international organization that provides assistance to Jewish prisoners and members of the military. Part of the email reads as follows:

 Rabbi Menachem Katz with the Aleph Institute has been Martin's spiritual advisor for the past 15 years and testifies that Martin has truly turned his life around and struggles daily for repentance. "He is now a solid, humble human being, far from the disturbed youth who shot Margaret Parks over 25 years ago," says Rabbi Katz. Testimonies from fellow inmates and guards attest to the tremendous remorse Martin continues to express.

 As Jews we have a strong belief in the power of *teshuvah*—the ability to return to our inner essence, a soul which is a part of G‑d, and to atone for even the most terrible sin. And so, whilst recognizing that justice must be served, and that a heinous crime had been committed, many appealed for the life of this once-troubled youth to be spared, allowing him to live the rest of his life behind bars, repenting for his past and following a path of return.

**Martin’s Final Words on this Planet were Telling**

 Of course there are many who naturally disagree, and the Florida Governor was one of them. But whether we can say for sure if he repented fully or not, his final words on this planet were telling. Before the lethal injections took place, Martin's words were, "I completely regret everything that I did on that night, both that which I remember and that which I do not."

 He then asked to say a prayer, which the officer okayed.

 His final words, recited with intense concentration and in a loud voice, in front of a room of people waiting to see him die, were *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad* ("Hear O Israel, G‑d is our G‑d, G‑d is One")—followed by the words "*Ahavat Yisrael*" ("Love for your fellow Jew").

 A sad and tragic story, but surely one for profound contemplation. Our Sages tell us "*Yesh koneh olamo b'sha'ah achat*"—There are some who [even after having lived a life of sin] attain eternal life in a brief moment of absolute *teshuvah*.

 Maybe Martin Grossman was one such individual.

*Reprinted from this week’s Chabad.org Magazine*

**The Tour Guide and**

**Hashgacha Pratis**

 **A Frelichen (Happy) Purim Everyone.** Why did the Sages choose to call our celebration of the miracle of Mordecai and Esther - "Purim?" The Sages wanted to emphasize the nature of evil. The evil Persian King Ahasuerus used Purim - lots to randomly choose a date to kill the Jews. This act symbolized the attitude of Ahasuerus, namely, everything in life is chance.

 The idea that everything in life is chance, is the ultimate evil because such an attitude goes against the very foundation of our faith. We Jews believe that Hashem is the Master of the Universe who involves himself in even the pettiest details in the life of a Jew.

**Believing that Everything in Life is Chance is a Denial of Hashem**

 One of the 13 principles of the Jewish faith is "I believe in perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed is His Name, creates and guides all creatures." One who believes that everything in life is chance, is effectively denying Hashem. Thus the name Purim celebrates the victory over those who deny Hashem.

 We are a nation which is guided by the Hand of Hashem. As Dovid Hamelech tells us "Hashem is my Shepherd, I shall not lack... Even when I walk in the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil, for You [Hashem] are with me."  (Tehillim 23:1,4)

 Several years ago on Tisha B'Av, a Jew from Eretz Yisroel Reb Tuvia Chaim Ariel passed away and was buried in Tekoah, a yishuv (settlement) in Eretz Yisroel. During his lifetime, Reb Tuvia experienced some incredible incidents which showed him loud and clear that Hashem is guiding the Jewish people.

 Several years ago Tuvia Chaim moved from America to Eretz Yisroel and worked in a kibbutz factory that made baby formula powder. Due to an accident with a grinding machine, Tuvia Chaim lost his right leg above the knee. Undaunted, Tuvia Chaim studied and became a tour guide.

**Picking Up a Wealthy Man from New York**

 One morning Tuvia picked up an apparently wealthy man from New York at Ben Gurion Airport to bring him to Jerusalem. On the way to Jerusalem it became obvious to Tuvia Chaim that it was not a match made in heaven. Apparently their personalities clashed. Tuvia Chaim pulled the van to the side of the road and told the man that he would get him a different tour guide. The man responded "Listen, you think I am just your typical overbearing New York Jew with gold chains -- I paid my dues." The man then rolled up his sleeve to expose a tattoo from Auschwitz which ended with the numbers 7402. "I lost my mother, my father and all my brothers and sisters."

 Tuvia Chaim looked at the tattoo and turned white. In the carpentry shop on his kibbutz there worked a man who escaped from Auschwitz, fought with the Polish partisans and later made his way to Eretz Yisroel. The man also had a tattoo on his arm -- a number that ended with the same last four digits of Tuvia Chaim's Social Security number and "coincidentally" his telephone number -- 7401.

 "Did you have a brother named Zalman?" asked Tuvia Chaim.

 "Yes, but how could you know that?" replied the shocked man.

 "Was he tattooed before you or after you?" persisted Tuvia Chaim.

 "Before me, but why?" responded the puzzled man.

**“I think Your Brother is Alive”**

 "I think your brother is alive," answered Tuvia Chaim and with that he made a U-turn on the old Jerusalem road and headed back to his kibbutz near Lake Tiberias to reunite the two brothers in what Tuvia Chaim described as the most emotional, G-d-filled moment of his life.

 Tuvia Chaim was so inspired by this incident of Hashgacha Pratis - Divine Supervision, that he became a Torah-committed Jew. He went on to live a fulfilling life as religious Jew doing chessed (kindness) for many other Jews. (Rabbi Kalman Packouz-Aish HaTorah).

**The Simcha of Purim is Knowing**

**That Hashem is Watching Over Us**

 The commentator Yaaros Dvash explains that the simcha of Purim is knowing that Hashem is watching over us. All the miracles that Hashem does is to awaken us to His Torah. Because through the miracles and wonders which happen, we can see that Hashem takes personal interest in every aspect of our lives.  (Yaaros Dvash, Drush 3 for the 7th of Adar, p.75 volume 1, Even Yisroel Edition)

 Knowing that Hashem is with us is a source of happiness. As Ezra tells us "I was strengthened because the Hand of Hashem was upon me" (Ezra 7:28)   Let us be happy on Purim in knowing that Hashem is with us.  Even in these trying times we can be strengthened by a firm belief that Hashem is watching over us. **A Frelichen (Happy) Purim Everyone.**

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