**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas pekudei 5774**

Volume 5, Issue 27 29 Adar I 5774/ March 1, 2014

For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**It Once Happened**

**“Don’t Call the Doctor!”**

The Chasidim wanted to call a doctor. Maybe there was still something that could be done to help their ailing Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum. But Rabbi Teitelbaum would not hear of the suggestion. Instead, he said, "Let me tell you a story."

Rabbi Yoel Sirkes, later to be renown as the "Bach" (for his book Bayit Chadash) one day visited his son-in-law, Rabbi David ben Shmuel HaLevi, later to be renown as the "Taz" (for his book Turei Zahav.)

**Ignored by One Young Scholar**

When Rabbi Yoel arrived, the entire town went out to meet him and welcome him with the traditional greeting of "Shalom" except for one young scholar, who did not step forward.

"What nerve," Rabbi David objected to the young man.

"I was informed by Elijah the Prophet himself that Rabbi Yoel has been placed in a ban of excommunication by the heavenly court, and for this reason I did not extend a formal greeting to him," replied the young man.

Rabbi David was shocked and asked the scholar for more details.

**Passing Through a Certain Town**

"Once, Rabbi Yoel was passing through a certain town. Two men were arguing about a wagon full of wood that one man had sold to the other. The purchaser claimed that he had agreed to a price of three gold coins while the seller was adamant that he had sold it for 3 1/10 gold coins.

"When the two men saw Rabbi Yoel, they asked him if he would arbitrate their claim.

"What amont of money is under dispute,' asked Rabbi Yoel.

"'One-tenth of a gold coin,' they responded.

"'I should delay my journey and be inconvenienced for one-tenth of a gold coin?' Rabbi Yoel remonstrated.

**The Accusing Angels Were**

**Having a Heyday**

"The accusing angels in heaven had a heyday with the rabbi's flippant comment, for our Sages teach, 'A suit involving one copper coin is to be treated as earnestly as a suit involving a hundred coins.'"

Rabbi David hurried to his father-in-law to ascertain whether or not this story was true. Indeed, Rabbi Yoel remembered the incident as it was out-of-character for him to have made such a comment.

The two men realized that this young scholar had been brought by Divine Providence into their midst on this day in order to help Rabbi Yoel do teshuva (repent) and set things right. They convened a rabbinical court that immediately annulled the heavenly ban.

Rabbi Yoel then approached the young man and asked him a favor. "I see that you are an upright and G-d-fearing person in the eyes of heaven. I therefore would like to give you my manuscript, a commentary on the Arba Turim (a section of the Code of Jewish Law) that I plan to publish under the title Bayit Chadash. Before I publish it I would like you to look it over and give me your opinion."

The young man agreed. A little while later, Rabbi Yoel approached the young man and asked him if he had had a chance to look over the manuscript and was ready to return it.

**Refuses to Return the Manuscript**

"I will not return it to you even in twenty years," responded the young scholar.

Shocked, Rabbi Yoel asked for an explanation. "Does my work not meet your approval? If so, tell me what is wrong with it for I gave it to you so that you would look it over with a critical eye."

The young man said, "Your book is good and does good. However, as soon as you publish it and it is distributed around the world, you will have completed your life's mission and there will be no reason for you to live in this world. Therefore, I will do all I can to delay its publication so that you remain here with us in this world."

"If that is the reason why you have withheld your comments, then I will not delay its publication," said Rabbi Yoel. "For, as you yourself noted, the world needs it."

The young man had no option but to return the manuscript to its author, who set about publishing it, volume by volume. Over the course of nine years it was published. In 1640, soon after the publication of the final volume, Rabbi Yoel Sirkes passed away.

Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum completed his story. Then he added, "So it is with me. If with G-d's help I have completed my mission here in this world, then I have nothing to do here and do not want you to call another doctor."

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

**The Baal Shem Tov**

**And the Power of a Song**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The Baal Shem Tov (Besht for short, originator of Chassidic Judaism some 350 years ago) once came to a certain town for a visit. All of the Jews in the area, young and old, turned out to greet him with joy and escorted him to the inn where he stayed.

It wasn't the first time he had visited here and previously he stayed in the inn of a Jew where he received the hundreds of people that came to seek his advice and blessings.

But this time when he arrived at the inn the owner intecepted him in the street and begged him not to enter.

"I fear for your life! Listen, you can here them! A gang of drunken hooligans took over the place A real bunch of murderers, over twenty of them and they are looking for trouble. This is no place for the holy Baal Shem Tov! Please, there is another inn in town and the owner is a good friend of mine, I hate to do it but please I'll take you there."

But the Besht just smiled, assured him it would be all right and motioned for his followers to accompany him.

He opened the door and the previously muffled noise blasted out loud and clear.

He took one step inside. When the ruffians saw the holy man standing in the door they froze in silence and in that moment the Besht motioned to a Jew standing behind him who was holding the hand of his small son, to step into the room and stand the boy on a nearby table.

The man did so and the 'gang' looked on in interest.

**The Besht Commands the**

**Child to Sing a Happy Song**

"Now, Moshele" Said the Besht to the child, "sing something happy for our friends. Something that will make them dance."

The ruffians looked at one another, then at one who was obviously their leader who winked back at them as to say 'what have we got to lose, let's see what happens' and the boy began to sing a lively Chassidic melody.

He had a beautifully clear voice, lively and full of pure happiness. The leader of the gang listened for a second then closed his eyes in drunken stupor and began to move his bowed head from side to side in rapture, a wide smile covering his face.

After a minute he opened his eyes wildly, threw his head and arms back, opened his mouth wide and, as though he just found a hidden treasure, let out a scream of joy and began to dance. Spinning and leaping like a man possessed to the music, jumping, sweating and pointing at the boy yelling, "You are Moshke and I am Ivan!! You are Moshke and I am Ivan!" while his friends whistled and clapped their hands in glee.

After a half-hour the Besht told the boy to stop. The leader, drenched in sweat and out of breath took a deep swig from a nearby bottle, approached the boy, took both of his hands in his own and said "you are Moshke and I am Ivan!! Thank you!!" All his men were smiling and laughing good heartedly.

**The Baal Shem Tov**

**Made the Peace**

The Baal Shem Tov miraculously had made peace.

The Besht had his bags taken to his room, then walked to the nearby Synagogue followed by all the people, and the entire episode with the gentiles was forgotten.

Twenty years passed and the boy grew up. He married, settled down, had many children and went into business, becoming a wealthy cloth merchant and traveling the world. His home was open to the poor and many Yeshivas owed their existence to his generosity while he considered the charity he gave to be the secret of his success.

**Traveling on a**

**Lonely Forest Road**

One time he was traveling on a lonely forest road in his carriage on the way to a big business deal. His work was fraught with danger; travel was always a risky business.

But on the other hand, that was why people were willing to pay handsome prices for his wares and he firmly believed that his charity and good deeds would protect him. They always had.

It was an uneventful ride at first and after an hour he was already feeling safe, he had two strong, fresh horses and his driver was the best. Then suddenly the carriage stopped. He opened the door to see what had happened. A log had fallen across the road; he and the driver would have to move it. He got out and removed his coat.

Suddenly several frightening looking men armed with swords and knives popped out from behind trees and rocks all around them; it was a robbery!

Seconds later Moshe and his driver were lying on the ground bound and gagged. All their belongings had been confiscated and their carriage was being ransacked for money.

**Rejects the Option of**

**Being Sad and Afraid**

At first he was shaking with fear but then he regained his composure. "If now is the time for me to die" he said to himself, "then this is what G-d wants. So I should be happy. And if G-d wants to do a miracle, I should also be happy. And if He me to somehow get out of this by my own wits, then being sad and afraid certainly won't help. So in any case I have to be happy!"

And he began to sing a lively song.

One of the robbers yelled out at him, "Hey, shut up! What do you think, this a party?" Another scoffed over his shoulder "Hey, if he wants to sing his last song, well why not!" and the others laughed.

Then, suddenly, a third robber ran over to Moshe pulled out his knife and bent over him. He was like an animal. He smelled of whisky. 'This is my angel of death' Moshe thought to himself.

"Moshke! Moshke!!" the robber almost whispered. "You are Moshke and I am Ivan. Right?? Right Moshke?!" He removed the gag from Moshe's mouth and cut the ropes that bound him and continued as his eyes filled with tears.

**The Robber Commands Moshke to Sing**

"Sing Moshke, Sing!!! I know your song! You are Moshke. Right?" He was yelling now. "I know that song!"

He was almost crying. "That song you sang in the inn twenty years ago was...there was never...I can never forget it. It was the happiest moment of my life. That music made me crazy! For twenty years I have been crazy! I am Ivan!! Do you hear Moshke!!"

Now Moshe was standing up and rubbing his wrists where the ropes had been.

"Release the driver!" Ivan yelled out "and give them back everything; the carriage, the horses, their money… everything!"

He even tried to give Moshe bags of money and jewels as a present but Moshe refused.

"Listen Moshe" Ivan said when everything had been given back. "Come here." He motioned that Moshe should follow him into the woods.

**Advised to Seek the Baal Shem Tov**

When they were far from the others he said, "Listen, Moshe. It is a miracle that you are here. Something is driving me mad. Do you hear? I can't understand why that song of yours back then made me so crazy. It did something to me. I can't explain it. I felt like my soul was going to explode; like crying and laughing at once. I've never been the same. I must understand it. What was so special about that song? I must know!"

The only thing Moshe could think to say was to ask the Baal Shem Tov. "The Besht also helps gentiles, surely he’ll help you."

And so it was. One week later they met at the entrance of Besht's synagogue in Mezibuz.

Ivan the robber felt completely out of place here and if it wasn't for that song he would have left in an instant but there was no turning back now. They entered the Besht's room and before Ivan had a chance to open his mouth the Besht spoke.

"Since that day in the inn twenty years ago I have been waiting for you.

"Ivan is not your name" the Besht continued. "It is Avraham…. You are a Jew. Yes a Jew. And your father used to sing that song.

"Your parents, Chaim Lev and Sara Sterna, were killed by Ukrainians in a Pogrom some fifty years ago when you were three years old. You escaped by running into the woods and lost your memory when you fell and hit your head on a rock. But you were discovered by an old gentile peasant and his wife who nursed you to health and raised you as their son.

**Never Too Late to Return**

**To the G-d of Your Fathers**

"With your restless, intelligent soul, powerful body and lack of education it was inevitable that you turned to crime and succeeded. But now the time has come for you to return to the G-d of your fathers. Do not worry, Avraham, It is never too late; especially because all your sins were done due to 'temporary' insanity.

Ivan-Avraham began weeping, his body began to shake and bitter tears of repentance ran down his cheeks.

"Good!" said the Besht. "Cry. It's good to cry over sins. But you must never forget to be happy. A lack of happiness brought you to be a criminal and happiness brought you back. Remember, Avraham, you are a Jew! You can serve the Creator. But it must be with joy.

**Another Command to**

**Sing a Joyous Song**

The Besht turned to Moshe, "sing the joyous song you sang back then!"

Moshe began singing and the Besht motioned for him to take Avraham's arm and dance with him. He yelled out;

"Moshe! sing! Faster! Avraham, dance!! Until finally Avraham was crying and laughing at once; like when he heard the song twenty years ago.

The Besht had miraculously returned another Jewish soul.

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel. (Adapted from Sefer Pela P’laim, page 62.)*

**Rabbi Yosef Hayon**

**(Portugal, 15th Century)**

**By Rabbi Yosef Bitton**

Not many details are known about the biographical data of Rabbi Yosef Hayon (or Hayun). We know that he was born and died in Lisbon, Portugal. And that his main rabbinical activity must have been between 1440 and 1480. We also know that he was considered "The last Rabbi of Lisbon", before the forced conversion of the Portuguese Jews in 1496.

Rabbi Hayon was one of the four students of Rabbi Isaac Canpanton (1360-1463), the Gaon of Castile (Spain) and author of Darkhe HaTalmud, a book that instructs teachers and rabbis how to teach the Talmud.

**Among His Students**

**Was the Abarbanel**

We also know that Rabbi Hayon lead a selected group of students to whom he taught the More Nebukhim, Maimonides' Guide of Perplexed, a book that requires, beyond mastery of Biblical and rabbinical literature, a vast knowledge of philosophy, language and science. Among his students in that circle was the celebrate Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508)

Rabbi Hayon wrote commentaries on most Biblical books. But most of those books are not extant today. What we do have in its entirety is his commentary on Pirqe Abot, written in 1470. Some of the personal characteristic of Rabbi Hayon might be learned from his commentaries about the ideal Tora Scholar.

**A Tora Scholar Must**

**Be a Role Model**

Rabbi Hayon says (p. 163, Venezia Edition): "If a Tora scholar wants to have many students, he has to be a role model. If the teacher's personal actions do not reflect his wisdom and his moral teachings, he will not have students".

When a Tora scholar teaches or speaks (p. 104), "he has to use few words with rich meaning, and not many words with little meaning...long discourses are not easy to digest for the students"

A rabbi (p.281) "cannot lose his temper, not just with his students but with every person, because anger and wisdom exclude each other (כי הכעס מעלים חכמה). On the contrary, the rabbi has to be friendly with all those who come to learn from him. This attitude is what will allow students to getting closer to the rabbi".

**More from Rabby Hayon’s Book**

Rabbi Hayon explains (p.174) that there is a balance to be kept in the relationship between a rabbi and his students. The rabbi, being an authority, has to behave with humbleness toward his students. But the students should not behave toward the rabbi according to the rabbi's humbleness; the students must act toward the rabbi with the respect owed to a high authority.

Rabbi Yosef's great humbleness is reflected in one of his commentaries (p.187) where he says that a student should not learn just from one rabbi (תלמיד חכמ**ים**), "because even a great rabbi could be mistaken in some of his opinions, and other rabbis with less knowledge might have great ideas." Let's remember that this encouragement is coming from the Senior Rabbi of Portugal.

*Reprinted from the February 19, 2014 email of the Shehebar Sephardic Center.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**The Love of a Tzaddik for Even a Wayward Jew**

**By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**

In the 1920's, a secularist leader in Eretz Yisroel, who was known for his outspoken criticism of the Torah community, suddenly became critically ill. He was brought to the British Missionary Hospital in Jerusalem which, as its name indicates, was owned and operated by Christian missionaries. The hospital was open only to Jews, for its real purpose was not to heal the sick but to introduce Jews to gentile beliefs. Near every bed was a copy of the "New Testament" and the walls of each room were decorated with religious proclamations. Jerusalem's rabbinate had issued a strict ban against even setting foot into the Missionary Hospital.

After being in the hospital for four weeks, the secularist's condition had deteriorated to the point where doctors declared that there was no hope for recovery.

**Their Only Hope Was a Hospital**

**Founded by the Torah Community**

The man's family realized that the only ones who could help them at that point were the doctors at Shaarei Zedek Hospital. Shaarei Zedek had been founded by Jerusalem's Torah community; its staff, headed by the legendary Dr. Moshe Wallach, was known to be the best in the country. The family feared, however, that the patient would not be granted admittance into Shaarei Zedek, since he had ignored the rabbinate's ban and was known as a forceful opponent of the Torah community.

The family concluded that their only hope was to speak to the city's revered Rav, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, who was known for his kindness and love toward every Jew. Someone was chosen to represent the family, and he went to R' Yosef Chaim's humble home in the Old City.

As the man made his way through the streets of Jerusalem, a terrific thunderstorm struck. Wet and shivering, the man entered the Rav's home and found him deeply immersed in study. The visitor apologized and related the entire story.

**Immediately Prepared to Leave for**

**The Hospital Despite the Thunderstorm**

R' Yosef Chaim promptly closed the sefer before him, donned his coat and prepared to leave for the hospital. Outside the thunderstorm was still raging, so the visitor blocked the door, refusing to allow the Rav to go out in such treacherous weather. "I only asked for a letter, not that the Rav should go out in the storm," he said. To this, R' Yosef Chaim replied, "When a Jewish life is in danger, a letter is not enough. I must personally attend to fulfilling this great mitzvah.

As the visitor later related: "Still speaking, the Rav dashed out of the room and in a moment he was up the steps. Young as I was, I had trouble keeping up with this seventy-five-year-old man. No sooner had we set out than the rain became torrential. I advised the Rav to wait until it let up a bit. In response, he only quickened his pace, exclaiming, 'Can a few drops of rain deter a person who is going to save a Jewish life?'

"I breathlessly followed the Rav until we reached the Jaffa Gate. There we boarded a carriage and ordered the driver to get us to the hospital as quickly as possible. The Rav drew his worn Tehillim from his pocket; I sat transfixed by the glow on his face as he quietly prayed."

**Wasting No Time on**

**Behalf of the Patient**

As soon as they arrived at the hospital, R' Yosef Chaim wasted no time in arranging for the patient's immediate admittance. Two weeks later the man was released from the hospital having fully recovered. Knowing how agitated the man became whenever the Torah community came under discussion, his friends decided not to tell him of R' Yosef Chaim's involvement in his case.

During a speech at a groundbreaking ceremony one year later, this secularist declared, "We will build the land in our own way and with our own strength. We will build this land by waging a fight to the death against the black arm of Rabbi Sonnenfeld and his cronies!"

**Defending the Honor**

**Of Reb Yosef Chaim**

Seated in the audience was the messenger who had come to R'Yosef Chaim on that stormy day to seek his help on the man's behalf. Upon hearing the man's terrible remarks, he jumped up and shouted, "How dare you! Have a little respect for the saintly rabbi to whom you owe your very life!" The messenger then made his way to the podium and spoke at length about the efforts of R' Yosef Chaim to save the speaker's life.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone. The story originally appeared in Rabbi Shimon Finkelman’s “Shabbos Stories,” page 122, printed by ArtScroll Publications.*

**‘Save the Boy –**

**He’s All I Have’**

**By Maayana Miskin**

A Syrian boy has walked out of Israel’s Rambam Hospital on his own two feet, after arriving in critical condition with a head injury that had left him in a coma.

Six-year-old “K” was brought to Israel by his father six weeks ago after suffering life-threatening injuries in an explosion. The same blast killed his mother and sister and also wounded his older brother, who later died of his injuries.

His father begged the Israeli medical team, “Save him – he’s all I have left.”

**Underwent Hours-Long Surgery**

Immediately after arriving at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, K underwent an hours-long surgery in which doctors worked to reduce pressure on his brain. Doctors were forced to remove parts of his skull.

K spent the next three weeks in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. He slowly regained consciousness and began communicating with those around him.

“When the boy came to Rambam he was in a coma, he was nearly dead,” related neurosurgeon Sergey Abeshaus.

After K began to recover, doctors performed two operations to reconnect the pieces of his skull. He remained in the hospital for tests, and began work with a speech therapist, physical therapist, and others, who helped him regain as much of his previous function as possible.

**Major Trauma Center**

“As the trauma center for northern Israel, and one of the largest in the country, Rambam has a lot of experience with injuries like this,” Dr. Abeshaus said. “Unfortunately, we treat many children with head injuries due to accidents, falls, or other injuries.”

“In this case, we used our experience to save a child who came from a war zone, who was between life and death,” he continued.

“As with all the families of the children we treat, we parted from K and his father like good friends. Ultimately we did what his father asked us to – we did everything we could to save him. I hope he has a long, happy life,” Dr. Abeshaus concluded.

*Reprinted from the February 20, 2014 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**Metropolitan Diary**

**When a Wig Parts**

**Way with Its Scalp**

**By Edith T.**

Dear Diary:

The streets of Manhattan seem to grow more jam-packed with every passing day. It was raining heavily as I exited Saks one recent afternoon and the crowds were dense.

As an observant Jewish woman, I’ve worn a wig since my marriage – and wigs don’t take kindly to rain. I opened my umbrella, taking care not to gouge passers-by. I was heading uptown when I had an odd sensation: I felt the bangs that usually cover my forehead rise above my brows and beyond. There was a tugging of my scalp, and then a breeze. Yikes! My wig and I had parted company.

A tall, well-dressed gentleman going in the opposite direction had inadvertently hooked his umbrella into the mesh netting of the wig. Unaware that my “head” was dangling precariously from the spokes of his umbrella, he strode onward.

At first I stood frozen, watching my custom-made wig recede in the distance. Then I sprang into action and took off in his direction, determined to recapture my head before it fell into a puddle and was trampled underfoot. He was moving quickly but caught a red light at the corner. I tapped him on the shoulder, and pointed to my wig.

*Reprinted from the February 21, 2014 edition of The New York Times*

[**The World’s Oldest Kurd: A Beloved Rabbi in the Heart of the Holy City**](http://matzav.com/the-world%e2%80%99s-oldest-kurd-a-beloved-rabbi-in-the-heart-of-the-holy-city)

**By Lazar Berman**

**

Rabbi Zecharia Barashi

In a humble apartment in Yerushalayim’s Baka neighborhood, about a mile south of the walls of the Old City, the world’s oldest living Jew goes about his daily ritual. As he has for over a century, the rabbi rises in the morning, puts on his tefillin with the help of one of his students, and says his morning prayers. Then, he sits to learn the Torah, Talmud, or kabbalah, examining it with the same fervor and passion he did when he started learning as a teenager.

**Both the World’s Oldest**

**Jew and Oldest Kurd**

In addition to being the world’s oldest Jew, Rabbi Zechariah Barashi, 114, is also the world’s oldest Kurd.

Barashi, still sharp and gregarious in his old age, remembers details from events 80 years ago with surprising clarity. He gives exact dates, names, and even prices of bus rides as he recounts his time growing up in the Badinan region of Kurdistan, and his journey to the British-controlled territory that would soon become Israel.

He was generous with his time to sit with me for three hours to answer questions and tell his story.

Born in Barashi in 1900, Zechariah was the last child born to Rabbi Eliyahu Barashi and his wife Simchah. Six of his siblings died in their childhood, leaving him with two older sisters, Sarah and Reichana.

His parents worked in traditional Jewish trades, including farming vineyards, dates, and nuts. Jews, Barashi told me in his home, also sewed Kurdish clothing, which were seen as especially well-made by their Muslim neighbors.

His family left Barashi six months after he was born, and settled in a small village four hours from Atrush. At the age of eight, Zechariah moved with his grandfather to Atrush itself. His father eventually joined them, becoming the rabbi of the Jewish community there, which only numbered about 100 people.

His family continued to move from village to village as Barashi’s father served the Jews living in the region’s small communities. “He would leave the house on Sunday and return on Friday,” Barashi recounted. “Sometimes he would come home after two weeks.”

**A Difficult Three-Year Famine**

Life was not easy for the Barashis. He remembers a difficult three-year famine after the First World War.

“The Turks looted whatever they could after the war,” he recalled, “and whoever survived the war died of hunger.”

It was also difficult for Jews to study Torah and Talmud, as there were no yeshivas, or study halls, in the region. However, the larger communities, like Duhok and Sindor, enjoyed large synagogues with opportunities for study.

But, as opposed to many other Jewish communities across the world, 90 percent of the Jews in Kurdistan could not read or write. Less than one in ten even knew how to pray. “Despite this,” Barashi emphasized, “the Jews kept the Sabbath and the holidays, family purity, a strictly Kosher home, fear of heaven and parents, and respect for their elders.”

**Translating the Hebrew**

**Prayers for the Village Jews**

Because of the lack of education, the rabbi had to explain the meaning of the Hebrew prayers in Aramaic or Kurmanji at the end of the service so the community would understand.

Despite the challenges, Rabbi Barashi has fond memories of his childhood. When he wasn’t studying the Torah with his father at home, he was out playing with the children of his village, Muslims and Jews together. “We had excellent relations with the Muslim Kurds, like brothers. We almost never fought. If there ever was a fight, they would quickly inform the Agha, who would warn the parents that if their child acted up again, he would expel the entire family.”

He sees no comparison between today’s tensions between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and the relationship between Jews and Muslim Kurds in Kurdistan. “It was like the Garden of Eden there,” he said. “Today, everything is madness.”

Last year, a Kurdish journalist came to Barashi’s apartment to film an interview with him for a Kurdish TV. The reporter, stunned by the purity of Barashi’s Kurdish, stayed for hours. He wrote down words that he had never heard before, and looked them up when he got home, discovering that they were old Kurmanji words that had fallen out of use.

Barashi is happy to share a blessing with his visitors, and is always ready to share his secret to a long life. “There are three things,” he says. “Always be happy, never jealous. Stay active. And never overeat - always leave the table a little hungry.”

But does he ever wish he could go back to the old villages in Kurdistan?

“No,” he says, smiling. “I have had the fortune of living in Jerusalem for 75 years. I’m in heaven.”

*Reprinted from the February 19, 2014 edition of the Matzav.com website. Originally published in Rudaw.net*

**Bombing Survivor:**

**‘I Couldn’t Even Scream or Cry’**

**By Maayana Miskin**

*Survivor of Israel’s most deadly terrorist attack*

*recalls horrific aftermath, and her miraculous ‘second birth.’*



**Nitza Meyuhas-Alber**

Sixty-six years have passed since the most deadly terrorist attack in Israeli history: a bombing on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem that murdered 58 people.

Nitza Meyuhas-Alber was just three years old when the bomb went off, a short distance from her family’s home. For hours she was trapped under the rubble, unable to move or even call for help.

**Recalling Her Two Birthdays**

“I have two birthdays,” she told Arutz Sheva. “The first was when I came out of my mother’s womb, a natural birth; the second was on February 22 [1948], when they pulled me out of the stone and concrete, out of the ruins.”

She recalled the horror that followed the blast. “When children wake up they call for mommy and daddy, they run to their parents’ bed. Instead, I found myself in a very different kind of bed, buried under the rubble.

“I was there for hours, I don’t know how many. I was injured… I remember the dust that filled my mouth, I wanted so badly to cry or to scream but I couldn’t,” she said.

“I wanted to straighten my leg but I couldn’t, because there was something very heavy on it… I touched my stomach and it was very soft. Everything that had been inside was on the outside.

“But I don’t remember much,” she continued, “because I was wavering between consciousness and unconsciousness.”

**Recovered in the Hospital**

**For Several Weeks**

Rescuers managed to find the young Nitza and to bring her to a hospital, where she remained for several weeks.

Before the bombing, Nitza lived with her parents, her mother’s sister – a new immigrant from Poland - her older sister, and her baby brother Yuval. The bombing killed her mother, father, aunt and brother immediately.

“He was seven months old,” Nitza said, recalling her brother, “We never sang him his first ‘Happy Birthday.’”

Her father’s sister, a single mother, took in Nitza and her sister. “She was very brave,” Nitza said.

She spoke to Arutz Sheva from Ben Yehuda street, within eyesight of the place where so many lost their lives. Her aunt never returned to Ben Yehuda after the bombing, she recalled. “We also grew accustomed to not coming here, but at some point I did come and look… Every time I come here, it’s very hard for me,” she said.

“As much as I found new happiness – I have five children, thank G-d, and grandchildren, and no surprise that I wanted a big family… - I ultimately chose my own way to commemorate, which is to live with the constant lack, the loss, the knowledge of everything that should have been, but isn’t,” she said.

Her other form of personal remembrance is to make sure every day of her life has meaning, she added.

Nitza is in the final stages of writing a novel based on the tragedy. “When it is finished, I’ll feel like I did my part to commemorate what happened,” she concluded.

*Reprinted from the February 23, 2014 email of Arutz Sheva*

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

**Understanding Love**

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

*What's wrong with love?*

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

|  |
| --- |
| *Love_Cloud_Desktop* |

*Everything is wrong with love. I’ll explain it to you. Love is* ***blind****! Which means it makes you feel good, up till the time you're married. As soon as you marry and you discover that she's a slob, she's not clean, she doesn't want to wash dishes, she leaves the dishes in the sink at night, she doesn't carry out the garbage, she doesn't want to shop, she wants to lie in bed till late, she doesn't want to make supper in time for you, so then you discover that you’re like a blind man that stepped into a trap. Love was out of the perfume bottle.*

*Now, if a person has his* ***mother*** *choose a mate for him, she's not in love with that girl. She's very critical! But [if] your mother says, here's a nice girl, marry her, and then you fall in love with your mother’s choice, by all means, certainly you should love the woman that you are going to marry.* ***Love****, the more love you'll have the better off you'll be, I* ***agree****. All your life you'll continue to love her with that first love that you started, that you generated. But it has to be based on sound judgement. Just because you met a girl out of her environment, you never saw how she behaved at home, never saw how she behaved in school, never saw how she behaved on the street with her girl friends. All you know is how she behaved to* ***you****.*

**One Has to Open the Package Beforehand**

*Suddenly out of nowhere appears a dream girl with blond hair all fluffed up and she smells good, and she smiles to you, and you know* ***nothing*** *about her past. Maybe she's an epileptic. I know a man who married a girl [who was] an epileptic! He fell in love, married, and she had certain times when the seizures took place. After they were married he discovered what kind of a package he had bought. You have to open up the package beforehand.*

*Therefore, love in its place is* ***valuable****. It's precious. But if love is the criterion of choosing a mate, then it's insanity. And that's why one fourth of the love marriages end in divorce. Marriages that are arranged by parents, that's the old fashioned families that came from Europe, and the parents arranged their marriage, they have a much better chance of surviving.*

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’l” and based on a transcription of a question asked to Rabbi Miller at his popular Thursday night hashkafa lectures in his Flatbush shul from the 1970s until his petirah in 2001.*

**Chasidic Story #848**

**The Cigarette Beggar**

**By Yanki Tauber**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

Everyone in Jerusalem knew old Berl Zlodowitz. Poor old Berl, a lonely soul who lived in an old-age home in one of the new neighborhoods outside the city walls. It was rumored that back in Russia, before the Revolution, Berl had been a wealthy man, with a chain of textile factories in Minsk and philanthropic projects all over the world. Some said that he had built the very institution whose charity now housed and fed him.

**Nothing Remained of**

**His Former Glory**

If these rumors were true, nothing remained of his former glory. Berl was a shadow of a man, destitute and friendless, whose eccentricities bordered on the pathological. Take, for example, his compulsive habit of begging cigarettes. If you passed Berl on the street, he would inevitably stretch out his hand and humbly request, "Please, may I have a cigarette?" No one ever saw him smoke these cigarettes, nor could he possibly have smoked them all--he must have begged a hundred cigarettes each day.

But then, one day, old Berl underwent a transformation. There was a smile in his eyes, a lightness in his step, even his bent old back seemed to have somewhat straightened. He began speaking to people and even stopped begging cigarettes. Suddenly he was revealed as a lively old man, with a lucid mind and a healthy spirit.

**One Man Knew Berl’s Story**

One man knew the story behind Berl's metamorphosis. His name was Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tikochinsky, and he headed the "Etz Chaim" institutions in Jerusalem which included the old-age home where Berl resided. Only years later, after Berl had passed on to his eternal rest, did Rabbi Yechiel reveal what he knew about Berl Zlodowitz.

Rabbi Yechiel's acquaintance with Berl went back many years. They met when Rabbi Yechiel was in Minsk raising funds for his charitable works. Berl had received Rabbi Yechiel in his luxurious office and agreed to sponsor the building and maintenance of a home for the old and destitute of Jerusalem. Berl continued to correspond with Rabbi Yechiel and send his annual pledge until all contact between them was disrupted by the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

**A Penniless Refugee in Jerusalem**

The next time Rabbi Yechiel saw Berl, the latter was a penniless refugee knocking on his door in Jerusalem. Needless to say, the former patron was given a room at the old-age home, and all his needs were provided for as best as the institution was able in those lean years. Rabbi Yechiel would drop by each day to sit for a few minutes with Berl, and his heart would ache at the sight of his old friend, whose troubles had left him broken in body and spirit.

One morning, when Rabbi Yechiel knocked on Berl's door, he was greeted with a broad smile, something he hadn't seen on his friend's face in twenty years. "Reb Yechiel," said Berl, noticing the Rabbi's surprise, "today I have been granted a new lease on life. This is the happiest day of my life!

"Sit down, Reb Yechiel," continued the old man, "and let me tell you a little about myself. You know what I was and what I am today, but you don't know how it happened. I do. I have only myself to blame. G-d had blessed me with wealth and good fortune, and I failed to make proper use of His blessings. Yes, I gave generously to charity; yes, my factories provided a livelihood to hundreds of Jewish families; but I was blind to the true significance of my wealth, blind to my responsibilities toward G-d and man.

**A Tyrant Who Mistreated His Workers**

"I thought that my wealth was mine, my due for my genius and toil. I thought that my workers owed me their lives for the few pennies I gave them to feed their families. I was a tyrant who used his power to crush those who failed to please him. If a worker was late to work or lax in fulfilling my expectations of him, I lashed out at him, deducted from his wages, and threatened to fire him--a threat I often carried out, for there was no shortage of able-bodied men crowding the cities and begging for work. I shudder to think of how many lives I made miserable with my heartlessness. Almost all the factories in Russia operated in this way--but does that excuse my behavior?

"One incident would haunt me for many years to come. A worker had come to work ten minutes late. I summoned him to my office. When the man mumbled something about a sick wife, I said coldly, So your wife is sick. What concern is that of mine? and sent him back to work after deducting half a day's pay, as clearly stipulated in the rules posted on the factory gate.

**A Turning Point in His Life**

"In my mind, this incident marks the turning point of my life. Shortly thereafter, the Bolsheviks stripped me of all my possessions. Somehow, I managed to avoid arrest when the industrialists of Minsk were rounded up. I escaped across the border into Poland and made my way to Jerusalem.

"Here I found shelter and respite, but no tranquillity. I was haunted--not by memories of my lost wealth, but of the type of person it had made me. I kept thinking of the worker who had tended all night to his sick wife cowering before me in my office, pleading for his job. How did it feel to be at the mercy of another human being, to be humiliated by his callous indifference to your fate? I had to know. I felt that until I had experienced what I had made that man experience, I would not find atonement for my soul.

"So I decided to become a beggar. I didn't want to collect money--I was loathe to handle the vile stuff--and all my needs were generously provided by your institution. So I begged cigarettes. For hours each day I stood on the street, asking passersby for cigarettes. But everyone treated me kindly, perhaps because they had heard of who I was or out of pity for an old man somewhat soft in the head.

**Blessed with Humiliation**

"This morning, I approached an elegantly-dressed gentleman and asked for a cigarette. The man eyed me coldly and said: So you want a cigarette. What concern is that of mine? His words, and especially the tone in which they were said, cut to the quick of my soul. Never had I been so humiliated.

“For a moment, I felt that I was nothing, that my existence was utterly without worth. And then an icy shudder passed through me. Why, these were exactly the words I had said to that worker in my factory more than twenty years ago! Suddenly I was filled with an incredible joy. The circle had been closed. Now I can die in peace, knowing that G-d has accepted my repentance...."

**Source:** Reprinted from *//Chabad.org*, with permission. Translated and adapted by Yanki Tauber from the Hebrew weekly *Sichat Hashavuah*.

**Connection:** None that I can think of, other than a continuation of the smoking theme from last week.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

[*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentsafed.com*