**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Acharei Mos/Kedoshim 5772**

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**A Carob Tree and a Spring**

**Talmud, Shabbat 33b**



 Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Shimeon were sitting, and Judah, a son of proselytes, was sitting near them.

 Rabbi Judah commenced the discussion by observing, "How fine are the works of this people [the Romans]! They have made streets, they have built bridges, they have erected baths."

 Rabbi Jose was silent.

 Rabbi Shimeon bar Yohai responded: "All that they made, they made for their own benefit. They built market-places, to set harlots in them; baths, to rejuvenate themselves; bridges, to levy tolls for them."

**The Roman Government Reacts**

 Judah the son of proselytes went and related their talk, which reached the government. They decreed: "Judah, who exalted us, shall be exalted, Jose, who was silent, shall be exiled to Sepphoris; Shimeon, who censured, shall be executed."

 Rabbi Shimon and his son went and hid themselves in the study hall, and his wife brought him bread and a mug of water and they dined. When the decree became more severe... they went and hid in a cave.

 A miracle occurred and a carob-tree and a wellspring of water were created for them. They would remove their garments and sit up to their necks in sand. The whole day they studied; when it was time for prayers they robed, covered themselves, prayed, and then put off their garments again, so that they should not wear out. Thus they dwelt twelve years in the cave.

**Elijah the Prophet Announces**

**That the Emperor is Dead**

 Then Elijah the Prophet came and stood at the entrance to the cave and exclaimed: "Who will inform the son of Yochai that the emperor is dead and his decree annulled?" So they emerged.

 Seeing a man ploughing and sowing, they exclaimed: "They forsake eternal life and engage in temporal life!" Whatever they cast their eyes upon was immediately incinerated.

 A heavenly echo came forth and announced: "Have you emerged to destroy My world? Return to your cave!"

 So they returned and lived there another twelve months, saying, "The punishment of the wicked in Gehenna is limited to twelve months." A heavenly echo then came forth and said, "Go forth from your cave!"

 Now wherever Rabbi Eleazar harmed [with his look], Rabbi Shimeon healed. Said Rabbi Shimeon to his son, "My son! You and I are sufficient for the world."

**Learning a Lesson from an Old Man**

 On the eve of the Sabbath before sunset they saw an old man holding two bundles of myrtle and running at twilight. "What are these for?" they asked him. "They are in honour of the Sabbath," he replied. "But one should suffice you?" they asked. "One is for 'Remember [the Shabbat day' (Exodus 20:8)] and one is for 'Keep [the Shabbat day' (Deuteronomy 5:12)]."

 Said Rabbi Shimeon to his son: "See how precious are the mitzvot to people of Israel." Thereupon their minds were put at ease.

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org.*

**Helping Your Poor**

**Cousin Farmer**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“You shall not place a stumbling block in front of a blind person and you shall have fear of G-d.” (Vayikra 19:14)

 A story told by Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman that didn’t happen, but could very well happen: A farmer was having financial difficulties. His crops were failing. His equipment was falling apart and he had no money to buy new equipment or even to repair the old. His family was hungry and creditors were pounding on his door day and night. In desperation, the farmer approached a distant cousin and asked him for a substantial loan.

 “I could lend you the money,” said the cousin, “but what good would it do you? You’re running a losing operation. A loan will just get you through your present tight spot, but in a few months you’ll be back where you are now, and you will also have the pressure of repaying the loan.

**Giving Advice to the Poor Farmer**

“I think your best course of action would be to sell your farm. It’s a good piece of land, and you could probably get a decent price. You’ll be able to pay off all your debts and have enough left over to buy a taxi. You’ll be able to provide a decent living for your family and you won’t have to worry about so many things that are beyond your control.”

 The land had been in the farmer’s family for generations, and he was very upset. But he could not argue with his cousin’s logic, and he put his farm on the market. A broker representing an unnamed client bought it at a bargain price. The unnamed client was none other than the cousin. He had advised the farmer to sell his ancestral homestead and he himself had snapped it up as soon as it went on the market.

**The Scheming Cousin’s Sin**

 This scheming cousin violated the sin of “You shall not put an obstacle in front of a blind person.” The farmer’s cousin put an obstacle in the way of his friend as surely as if he tripped a blind man. But, the verse continues, “And you shall fear your Lord”. Why does this prohibition require this additional warning?

 Rashi explains: It is not so discernable to people whether this man had good or bad intentions and he can excuse himself and say, ‘I meant well.’ Therefore he is told, ‘You shall fear your Lord.’ And why are we so concerned about what other people think? Perhaps we can say that the Torah is not really talking about the perpetrator’s excuses to other people, but about the excuses he makes to himself.

**Convincing Himself that**

**His Actions Are Not Wrong**

In our case, it is quite possible that the cousin would never dream of stabbing his relative in the back, but he covets the farmland and would love to have it for himself. So what does he do? He convinces himself that the farmer is a complete incompetent incapable of running the farm.

He convinces himself that the farmer would be better off driving a taxi for a living than running a farm. It may be that he truly had the cousin’s welfare in mind, or it could be that the whole chain of reasoning was a lie. Therefore, says the Torah, you may be able to fool yourself, but you cannot fool Hashem. Probe your heart honestly and think into what you are about to do before you do it.

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

**The Amazing Legacy of**

**The Klausenberger Rebbe**

**By Daniel Keren**

 Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, *zt”l*, better known as the Klausenberger Rebbe was an incredible *Ohev Yisroel* (lover of all Jews regardless of their level of religious observance.) If you haven’t yet become familiar with the incredible legacy of this amazing Chassidic leader (1905 – 1994), you owe it to yourself and your family to do so.

 If *Klal Yisroel* (the Jewish nation) is distinguished from the rest of the nations of the world by having accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai (and thus becoming G-d’s Chosen People), we as Jews have to recognize that we have two clubs so to speak.

**Eating Food in Order to Make Brochas**

 You have the club to which most of us belong – that club in which we recite *brochas* (blessings) in order to eat certain foods. And you have that exclusive club to which the Klausenberger Rebbe joined – the club in which refined Jews whose sole aim in life is to come closer to our Father in Heaven are defined by their eating food in order to be able to make *brochas* and have the strength to serve Hashem.



 Feldheim has just come with a new book elucidating the legacy of one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our times - “The Klausenberger Rebbe: Combined Edition of the War Years and Rebuilding” translated and adapted by Judah Lifschitz from the original Hebrew biography “Lapid HaEish” by Aharon Surasky. The new book is condensed from two earlier Targum books – “The Klausenberger Rebbe: The War Years” and “The Klausenberger Rebbe: Rebuilding.”

**Descendant of the Divrei Chaim**

 A great grandson of the Divrei Chaim (Rabbi Chaim Halberstam, zt”l, 1793 – 1876) and other illustrious Chassidic dynasties on both his father and mother’s sides, young Yekusial Yehudah was 13 years old when his father Rav Tzvi Hirsch Halberstam, *zt”l*, was *nifter.* Among the outstanding Chassidic leaders he studied with were Rabbi Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtza, the Munkatcher Rebbe and his great uncle Rabi Shalom Eliezer Halberstam of Ratzfert, *hy”d*.

 Recognized as an *illuy*, a brilliant Torah scholar as a young teenager, he married Chana Teitelbaum, a second cousin in 1925 and before the Second War broke out and so savagely disrupted the Jewish world in Europe, had 11 children. In 1927 at the young age of 22, Rabbi Yekusial Yehudah Halberstam assumed the post of *Rav* of the largely irreligious community of Klausenberg, the capital city of Transylvania, then situated in western Romania.

**Serving Hashem with Incredible Enthusiasm**

 He tried to hide his efforts to limit physical pleasures in order to intensity his *avodah* (spiritual service) to Hashem. However, some of his admirers would secretly sneak into the *bais medrash* and observe his actions such as sleeping only for three hours a night on a *shul* bench. He would study and pray most of the day with an incredible enthusiasm.

 It was observed that the Klausenberger Rebbe ate only one simple meal a day and only ate bread on *Shabbos*. However, when it came to the children who attended the *yeshivah* he established in Klausenberg, the Rebbe made sure that they had enough food, often giving up his own small meager portions if the situation required it.

**Lost Entire Family During the War**

 Tragically when the Second World War erupted, the *Yidden* in Klausenberg, including the Rebbe and his family suffered terribly from the brutality of the Germans and their anti-Semitic supporters. As a result of the war, the Klausenberger Rebbe lost his beloved wife and all 11 children to the Nazi beasts.

 But perhaps what is most impressive is the fierce commitment of the Rebbe to not allow this indescribable horror (and his own great physical sufferings during the Holocaust) affect his absolute love of Hashem and his fierce commitment to loyally observe all of His *mitzvos* (commandments) as if nothing tragic had ever happened in his life.

**Giving Inspiration to the Sharei Hapleitah**

 And even more impressive was the manner in which he started over after the Holocaust and remarried. From this second marriage came seven children who all followed in the *derech hatorah* of the Klausenberger Rebbe. The story of how he worked in the Displaced Camps in Germany after the Holocaust to give courage and inspiration to the *Sharei Hapleitah* (survivors), and how he came to America and rebuilt a new Chassidic dynasty is captured in the new Feldheim book.

 First settling in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, he later moved to Union City where he forged a new dynamic Chassidic community. At a point where most Torah leaders might have been content to rest on their laurels, the Klausenberger Rebbe while in his 60s decided to move to *Eretz Yisroel* and establish a new Klausenberg-Sanz community in the outskirts of Netanya called Kiryat Sanz and a satellite community in the Holy City of Yerushalayim. Both communities continue to flourish today under the guidance of his children.

**Amazing Love for Even Non-Religious Jews**

 Perhaps the most moving pages in Judah Lifschitz’s new book on the Klausenberger Rebbe are the many descriptions of the Rebbe’s incredible love for his fellow Jews, regardless of their religious level of observance. Indeed such demonstrations often inspired and turned completely irreligious *Yidden* into *baalei teshuvah*.

 Describing the appointment of Rav Yekusial Yehudah to post of Rav of Klausenberg, the new book recalls:

 “The Jewish community of Klausenberg had a long history, dating back to 1591. In 1927 it boasted a population of 16,000 Jews, the majority of whom were irreligious and associated with either Communist or Zionist groups. The Orthodox community was in a weakened state. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, a group of Chassidic Jews formed their own *minyan* and hired Reb Yekusial Yehudah as their rabbi…

**First Shabbos in Klausenberg**

 “On his first *Shabbos* in Klausenberg, more than three hundred men came to *daven* with him and to attend the *tisch* he conducted. When he spoke on *Shabbos HaGadol* and *Shabbos Shuvah* and when he lectured on *Pirkei Avos* during the long summer days, he would speak for several hours to large audiences, including the less religious Jews.

 “The Rebbe’s love for all Jews, including the nonreligious, was enormous. One *Shabbos*, as he walked down the street, a simple Jewish peddler, smoking a cigarette, called out to him sarcastically, ‘Good *Shabbos*, Rebbe.’

**An Invitation to the Rebbe’s Melavah Malkah**

 “Rather than becoming angry, the Rebbe answered softly, ‘Good *Shabbos*. What is your name? Perhaps you can join me for a *melavah malkah* tonight’

 “The peddler, embarrassed, immediately started to extinguish his cigarette. But the Rebbe stopped him. ‘*Chas v’shalom*! It is prohibited to put a cigarette out on *Shabbos*. Just put it aside.’

 “In the end this peddler returned to his faith and became the Klausenberger Rebbe’s *gabbai*.”

 For dozens of similarly uplifting accounts of one of the great Torah leaders of our times, one should consider adding the new Feldheim book to one’s home library. “The Klausenberger Rebbe: Combined Edition of the War Years and Rebuilding” translated and adapted by Judah Lifschitz is available in Jewish bookstores or from the publisher by calling (845) 356-2282 or clicking [www.feldheim.com](http://www.feldheim.com)

*Reprinted from the February 17, 2012 edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**The Expensive Medicine**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 Here is a story I heard from my friend Rabbi Chaim Dayan in Kfar Chabad just recently.

 Some sixty or seventy years ago in New York lived a poor Jewish family. The father, who had been a Rabbi, suddenly passed away just a year or so after the birth of his first son leaving his wife alone to provide for the baby.

 She managed to make ends meet by cleaning houses and somehow scraped together enough each week to provide for herself and her son and to even put a bit of money aside but then tragedy struck.

 The boy became ill and the standard treatments that their family doctor prescribed didn't help. He referred them to the hospital where, after extensive testing and probing, they also admitted that they couldn't diagnose the disease but it looked fatal.

**Persuades a Great Professor to Make a House Call**

 She had spent her meager savings but she certainly did not give up and after frantic searching and inquiring someone mentioned the name of a great medical professor. Sparing no time she got his phone number, called his office, requested that he make a house call and declared that money was not an obstacle.

 When the professor arrived at the run-down apartment building he began having serious doubts and when he knocked on her door, entered and saw that poverty was screaming from every corner he had an urge to just turn around and go home.

 But something inside of him told him to accept it with equanimity and see the patient.

**Discovers that the Boy Has a Rare Disease**

 He examined the boy, went to the sink to wash his hands, turned to the boy's mother and said. "Your son has a rare disease. I know what it is, I know what the cure is and I know where you can get the medicine. It's in a large drug store about three miles from here. They are the only ones that can make it. But there's a problem. It will be very expensive; probably several thousand dollars. I'm willing to forget about my payment, but do you have money to pay for the medicine? They won't give it to you for free, that's for sure. What are you going to do?"

 The woman, tears of gratitude filling her eyes, thanked the Professor profusely and firmly stated that as far as the money goes she was sure that … G-d would help.

**Rushes to the Pharmacy**

 He packed up his instruments, wrote out the prescription, she thanked him again and again and as soon as he left she ran outside, caught a taxi, entered the pharmacy, approached the counter and handed the prescription to the pharmacist.

 The pharmacist took the prescription and as he examined it his brow raised in wonder and he glanced at her several times. Finally he leaned forward, narrowed his eyes and said to her skeptically, "This will cost a few thousand dollars. Have you got the money?"

 She stood straight, stared him back in the eyes and replied that she was willing to promise, even to sign an agreement that she would come in and clean the drugstore every evening after she finished work until she covered the bill. But she needed the medicine to save her son's life.

**Cleaning Pharmacy for More than**

**A Year to Pay the Prescription Bill**

 The pharmacist relaxed a bit and replied that, in fact she was in good luck because their cleaning woman just quit and they needed a replacement. But it would only be for two hours a day and at that rate it would take ….. he took out a pencil and paper, began calculating and when he finished looked up … one year and eight months to pay off the debt!

 She immediately agreed, signed a paper obligating herself to work until she had paid for the cure and in one half hour was on her way out the door with several bottles of medicine in her purse.

 But when she looked in her pocket book she realized that she had spent her last dime on the taxi and now didn't even have money for a bus. So she began walking; walking as quickly as possible, home.

**Walking Home in the Cold Dark Night**

 It was cold outside but she was sweating. It was over an hour's walk to her house and by the time she had walked one hour it was already dark. There was no one around, she was alone, it was getting really cold and she was passing through a bad neighborhood. She put her purse under her coat so as not to draw unwanted attention, quickened her gait, said a few prayers, looked down at the pavement in front of her and walked as fast as possible, careful not to look up.

 But it didn't work.

 Suddenly she felt someone grab her by the shoulders from the front, push her against a wall and say almost sarcastically, 'Whatchu got there under that coat?" She looked up to see a massive man who had wrested her purse from her and was opening it. A freezing wind blew. No one was around.

**Pleads in Vain with the Robber**

 "Please" she pleaded "I have no money. All I have is medicine for my sick son, he's dying. Please … please let me go!" But that didn't work either.

 "Medicine!?" he smiled! "Let's see the medicine. Maybe it's something good!" He opened one of the bottles, took a big smell and waited for something to happen. "Achhhh! It's terrible! It smells like puke!!" he yelled out as he opened the rest and poured their contents all over her head and coat. Then he pushed her again against the wall, slapped her face knocking her down to the pavement, threw the empty bottles at her and left, spitting and cursing as he went."

**Returning to the Pharmacy with a Limp**

 Without hesitating she stood, brushed herself off, picked up one of the bottles, returned it to her purse, buttoned up her coat and began walking back, whimpering silently from the trauma, limping a bit, to the drug store, as fast as possible, hoping it was still open. And an hour later she arrived to find…. It was!!!

 She again entered, approached the counter and when the pharmacist appeared from the back room and saw her he gasped "My G-d, what happened?! What happened to you!? What is that smell? Your face is all swollen? Please, sit down. I'll get you some water. What is that smell?!"

**Offers to Work Longer in**

**Exchange for Replacement Medicine**

 She refused the water, said she was all right and explained quickly. "I got beaten and robbed. Thank G-d I'm alive. But it's not really important. The main thing is that right now I don't have the medicine and right now I still need the medicine. Please, give me the paper I signed and I'll sign for another year eight months. Please, I must have that medicine for my son."

 The pharmacist stared at her and began to tremble in fear. "Tell me, that smell and that stain on your coat… that's the medicine?"

 "Yes." She answered as she took the empty bottle from her purse and handed it to him. "But it's not important what happened to me. I need…."

**The Pharmacist Almost Falls Over Backwards**

 The pharmacist cut her short, took the bottle, read the label, put his hand over his face and almost fell over backwards as he repeated to himself "No! No! I don't believe it! It can't be! no!!".

 As he removed his hand and looked again at the bottle his eyes filled with tears. He gazed at her as though she was a ghost and kept repeating "I don't believe it. I just don't ….. believe it!"

 After a few minutes he came to himself and said almost in a whisper, "Listen! I made a mistake! A terrible mistake! …… I gave you …… the wrong medicine! The wrong bottles! If your son would have taken what I gave you it would have killed him! Do you understand? I would have killed him!! He'd be dead. It's crazy but… it was a miracle that that you got robbed!"

 He wiped his brow, leaned forward, lowered his voice and said. "Listen lady, don't tell anyone about this. No one! If you tell people I could lose my license. Look…. I'll give you the right medicine. Just wait here." He disappeared into the back room and in a minute returned with several bottles identical to the first.

**Insists on Giving Her Money for a Cab Home**

 "Here, take the medicine for free and, and here, see?" He took the contract she signed and ripped it up. Then he took out his wallet and gave her a bill, "here, take a hundred dollars. Take it! This time, take a cab home, don't walk! And the rest, use for your son. And here," He put some gauze pads and ointments in a bag. "Here is something for that swelling on your face. Just please, just don't tell anyone till I retire say, in ten years or so. Okay? You want more money?"

 She shook her head no and tried to give the hundred dollars back as well but he insisted she it for her son. He even escorted her outside and hailed a cab.

 The medicine worked and her son not only lived but grew to be a Rabbi of great stature; Rabbi Moshe Sherer. He became the Nasi (President) of Agudat Israel in the U.S.A. He would tell this story every year on the anniversary of his mother's passing.



**Rabbi Moshe Sherer, zt”l**

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**A Note from**

**Beyond the Grave**

**By (Moshe) David Weinberg**

 This is a story about a prayer note, about the power of Jewish history, about survival beyond the Nazi Holocaust, and about the Jewish people’s return to Israel.

 This is a story about a "kvitel," a little prayer note, that connects five generations of my family. It is a story about the power of Jewish history, about survival beyond the Nazi Holocaust, and about the Jewish people’s historic return to the land of Israel.

 My father, Professor Henry H. (Tzvi Meir) Weinberg, of blessed memory, passed away in Jerusalem in December 2006, after a long, amazing life that took him (fleeing from the Nazis) from Poland to Ukraine, Siberia, Uzbekistan, France, Israel, the United States, Canada, and then again, some 15 years ago, to Israel.

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**Prof. Zvi Meir (Henry) Weinberg z"l**

**Elected to the Israeli Knesset**

 Here in Israel, he was elected in 1996 to the Knesset as a representative of Natan Sharanky’s Yisrael Be’Aliyah political party. He lived to see all his children and grandchildren living beside him in Israel.

 My father came from a long line of Sanz Hasidic Jews in Krakow, who were pillars of the community going back to the students of Rabbi Yeshaya of Pshedbosh in the early 1800s. His father (my grandfather), Moshe David Weinberg (for whom I am named), fled Poland with his wife and children to Russia just ahead of the Nazis in September 1939. Thus, the family survived World War II (although Moshe David himself died of an illness in Fergana, Uzbekistan, in 1942). However, Moshe David’s many siblings and their families perished in the Holocaust.

**Great Grandfather Buried in Krakow**

 Moshe David’s father (my great-grandfather), Dov Beirish Weinberg, had passed away and was buried in Krakow in 1935. My father, Henry (Tzvi) Weinberg, had searched for, found, and photographed, Dov Beirish’s gravestone in the enormous, overgrown and partly destroyed “new” Jewish cemetery in Krakow.

 Here begins the story. In early 2007, some three months after my father’s passing, my brothers and I were digging through the voluminous papers and books in his Jerusalem apartment. Among the many ancient holy books, I discovered an original, first edition copy of "Pardes Mordechai," a volume of Torah commentary written by my step-grandfather Rabbi Mordechai Wulliger (published in 1928 in Munkatch, Hungary), personally inscribed by Rabbi Wulliger to my father.

**Inside the Faded Book**

 Inside the faded book, my father had stashed documents and papers in envelopes, all neatly labeled. Clearly, he wanted us to find these papers. One of the envelopes had a red tab on it, and was labeled "the 'new' cemetery in Krakow."

 Inside that envelope, I found a photo of Dov Beirish Weinberg's gravestone in Krakow. I had seen this before, but attached to the photo was a hand-drawn map, sketched out by my father, with instructions detailing how to find Dov Beirish’s grave in the old/"new" cemetery. According to this map, Dov Beirish's plot was adjacent to the gravestone of the well-known Rabbi Shimon Sofer – a Talmudic giant.

**Request to Deliver a Kvitel**

 At the bottom of the map, my father had written, "Attached is a 'kvitel.' Please deliver the kvitel to the grave of my grandfather." A kvitel is a prayer note, the type that is often scribbled, folded and tucked by Jews into the crevices of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. There is also a tradition to leave such notes at the graves of ancestors.



 I read this out to my brothers. We shuddered. A last request from my father's grave, sending us on a mission to the grave of our great-grandfather! A last request, so carefully thought out and mapped by our father, labeled clearly, and left conspicuously behind for us to find.

**A Map Showing the Grave Location**

 We peered at the small, square piece of paper that was attached to the map, folded into four. "A kvitel for the grave of Dov Beirish Weinberg" it proclaimed. Hesitantly, we opened it. "Refuah shleima for … and bracha ve-hatzlacha for Zvi Meir Weinberg and his family," it read – a prayer for a relative’s health, and for the good fortune of our entire family.

 Here is the rub: That day – the day I found the book of Pardes Mordechai with the photo and map and kvitel and my father’s request – amazingly was a mere four days before my eldest daughter, Ariella Rachel, was scheduled to leave with her class on a heritage trip for Poland and Krakow.

**Could This Have Been a Coincidence?**

 Four days! Could my father have known? Was this but a coincidence?

 I never believed it was.

 Ariella was now on a mission for her grandfather, to her great-great-grandfather’s grave, to deliver the kvitel.

 It was no happenstance that Ariella was "chosen" for this mission. Ariella Rachel was my father's oldest and favorite grandchild, the apple of his eye, named after his mother, Rachel Weinberg of Krakow. Ariella and her "zeidy" (Yiddish for grandfather) had a special relationship. Zeidy was now sending Ariella on a posthumous mission to his grandfather's grave.

 Arrangements had to be made, fast. Ariella's school principal and teacher were excited when I told them the story and showed them the kvitel. But they explained that breaking away from the class to make a special, personal side-trip to the cemetery in Krakow would not be easy.

 It would require approval by the Israeli security team that accompanies each Israeli class in Poland, the accompaniment of a teacher, and special transportation arrangements. And there wasn't much time. Nor would they have much time in Krakow to search for the grave, which they may not find at all.

**Mission Accomplished!**

 On Sunday morning, March 18, 2007 (22 Adar 5767), Ariella set out for the cemetery in Krakow to deliver the kvitel.

 Using Zeidy's map, which was extraordinarily accurate, she immediately found the grave of Dov Beirish Weinberg, placed the kvitel on the stone, and prayed for the entire family. Then she left photos of our family on the grave, and lit 10 candles shaped into the Hebrew word "chai" (life).

 "What should I do if I get to the grave?" Ariella had asked me at Ben-Gurion airport before she left for Poland.

**Instructions for the Granddaughter**

 "Well," I answered, "you deliver the kvitel. Then you can say Psalms. And then you can say to Dov Beirish: 'Hi! I'm your great-great-granddaughter! The family survived Hitler, and I live in the sovereign state of the Jewish people, in Israel!”

 And so she did.

 Upon her return to Ben-Gurion airport, Ariella excitedly showed me photos from the cemetery in Krakow. "I wish I could show these to Zeidy and tell him that I made it to Dov Beirish's grave with the kvitel," she said to me.

 "Don't worry," I replied. "I'm sure that Zeidy already knows …"

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Programs) Update. The article originally appeared in the April 19, 2012 Newsletter edition of Israel Hayom.*

**My Key to Success**

A Profile of Philanthropist

Chuck Boxenbaum.

**By Gavriel Horan**

 Born and raised in Rockaway, New York in the 1930s and ‘40s, Chuck Boxenbaum grew up firmly steeped in Jewish values during his formative years. His father emigrated from Poland at age 13 and built up a company manufacturing bedspreads and draperies.

 Although Chuck never lacked anything growing up, the family was not wealthy by any means. Nevertheless, his father pledged $5,000 to raise money to buy ammunition and supplies for the Jews of Palestine – an exorbitant sum at that time. Chuck asked his father where they would get that kind of money. His father replied that he was going to take a bank loan in order to give charity.

 From this incident, Chuck began to see the great value of giving tzedakah to Jewish causes – a value that would stay with him throughout his life.

**Falling In Love with Israel**

 After finishing his degree at the University of Chicago in 1949, Chuck decided to visit the fledgling Jewish State. “I was inspired by all the excitement of the War of Independence a year earlier and wanted to give it a try,” he recalls. “I didn’t even wait for the graduation ceremony. I just jumped on a Turkish Tramp Steamer bound for the Land of Israel.”

 Chuck never dreamed he would fall in love with Israel and end up staying for two years, living on a kibbutz on the northwest coast, just outside of Nahariya. He worked in the carpentry shop making wooden window shades for absorption centers for new immigrants.

**If Not for the Korean War**

 If not for the Korean War he may have stayed forever, but in 1951 Chuck received a draft notice to join the United States Army. When his father called to tell him the news, Chuck adamantly refused to leave Israel. “I’m not going back to fight in Korea,” he told his father, and wondered aloud, “What will happen to me if I don’t go back?”

 His father had already asked this question to the draft board; the response was that if Chuck doesn’t return to the U.S. to report for duty, he should *never* come back! Although Chuck loved Israel, he wasn’t prepared to burn bridges with his motherland, so he returned to America.

**The Army was Chuck’s First Real Contact with Non-Jews.**

 It turns out the army was a positive experience. Chuck was drafted into the 8th U.S. Army Korea G2–Intelligence unit and spent the next 18 months in Korea. “We got a tremendous amount of information and had to make sense of it,” he said. “It was essentially an office job, which was wonderful since I came back with two arms and two legs!”

**First Real Contact with Non-Jews**

 The army was Chuck’s first real contact with non-Jews. “All my friends growing up throughout high school and college were Jews,” he explains. “My first broader experience was in the army and most of the folks were terrific. This opened up a completely different world for me.”

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**Chuck Boxenbaum at the Aish L.A. dinner**

 One of his close friends in the army was a cowboy from Iowa. When someone once directed toward Chuck an off-color remark with anti-Semitic undertones, the cowboy knocked the guy out cold. Another Jew in his unit kept kosher; the Mess Sergeant was from Mississippi and even though he never met a Jew before, he always made sure to point out the foods that were made with kosher ingredients.

**California Dreaming**

 After being discharged from the army at the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953, Chuck decided to move to California for a change of scenery. “California is full of escapists,” he says, “and I was escaping my father’s business. Bedspreads and drapery weren’t for me.”

 In Los Angeles, Chuck got a job as a real estate agent. “It was easy to get a job in real estate,” he recalls. “You only got paid on commission.” He soon got into commercial real estate and finally moved onto syndication. He eventually became CEO of a company that was managing some 70,000 apartments.

**The Secret to My Successful Marriage**

**Is that I Keep My Mouth Shut.**

 Chuck began dating his wife, Kharlene, whom he’d met earlier on the East Coast through the Jewish Federation of New York, and they were married in 1962. They’ve enjoyed a happy marriage ever since. What’s their secret to a successful marriage? “I kept my mouth shut,” he says. “My wife is terrific for putting up with me all these years.”

**Still Enjoys Skiing in the Sierra Mountains**

 Today, Chuck is 82 years old and in the prime of life. He sold his business six years ago. “It was the greatest day of my life,” he said. “I had begun to hate my job. We had real estate in 40 states. You can’t do real estate by remote control and traveling was hard work.” Even at his age, he enjoys skiing in the Sierra Mountains. “In my youth I would ski all day. Now I quit at noon. The resort gives skiers over age 80 a free season pass. That tells you there aren’t too many of us.”

 Chuck is strongly committed to Jewish education and values. For years he’s been attending Torah study classes with Aish LA. “It’s good to think about something else besides trying to make money every once in a while,” he says. “Jewish education is critically important if we’re going to have a steady supply of future Jewish leaders who are instilled with Jewish values like Israel, education, kindness, and tzedakah. If everyone had Jewish values, the world would be a better place.”

**The Greatest Pleasure**

 Chuck’s greatest pleasure in life may not be what he does, but rather what he gives. He is a leading supporter of several Jewish organizations including the Los Angeles Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Foundation. In 1999, Chuck and Kharlene became the magnanimous benefactors of the Boxenbaum Aish Center in Los Angeles.

 “It feels good to give,” Chuck says. “Giving charity is one of the greatest pleasures in life, but it’s also a powerful obligation. If there’s a community, you have to support it. There are no free rides. It doesn’t matter how much you give, but give whatever you can.”

**The More You Give, The More You Get.**

 From his years of experience, Chuck has detected a pattern between giving charity and becoming financially successful. “Nobody ever went broke from tzedakah,” he said. “Somehow all my life, whatever I gave away seemed to come back faster than I gave it. The more you give, the more you get. It’s magnetic.

 That state of mind helps you succeed. If you’re small and tight, you think small and tight. If you act and think big, you do big. People who don’t give are all shriveled up. Giving is wholesome. Most of the active givers and fundraisers are successful financially. It’s not a coincidence.”

 Chuck offers advice for those starting out in business: “Find yourself a good mentor. A lot of successful people would love the role of helping a younger person. Most of the mentoring I do is teaching people to fundraise. Most people are shy. The key is eyeball-to-eyeball selling. Don’t call the guy up – that’s third rate. Point out the needs, which are gigantic, and explain how others are helping.

 “The best thing you can do, however, is to set an example. You can’t ask people for a donation unless you’re giving yourself. Being a giver is the key to success!”

*Reprinted from this week’s email from the Aish.com website.*

**It Once Happened**

**The RASHBI and the**

**Holiday of Lag B’Omer**

 Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (known by his acronym, Rashbi), was one the Jewish people's greatest Sages. He was a student of Rabbi Akiva and lived at the height of the Roman persecutions. Even among the greatest of our people, he was widely recognized as exceptional in piety and holiness. It was said of him that every woman should pray that her son emulate him, and that so exceptional was he, that his merit alone sufficed to protect his entire generation.

**Romans Issue Death Decree for Rabbi Shimon**

 When it was decreed by the Romans that Rabbi Shimon be put to death for his anti-government remarks, he went into hiding together with his son, Elazar. They concealed themselves in a cave for 12 years, spending all their time learning Torah. When, at long last, the death sentence expired and they emerged from the cave, they had risen to such heights of holiness and divine comprehension that they saw the world in a different light from average person.

 Although Rabbi Shimon was great before his concealment, when he emerged from the cave he was greater by far. Before his stay in the cave he could respond to every question of his father-in-law Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair with 12 answers; when the 12 years of study had concluded, he could supply 24 answers.

**Best Known as Author of the Zohar**

 Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai composed many volumes of Torah commentary, but he is probably best known for the Zohar, which is the basic work of Kabala. In accordance with Rabbi Shimon's wishes, the anniversary of his passing, which is on the 33rd day of the Omer, is marked by great celebrations, particularly at the site of his tomb in Meron in Northern Israel, where huge crowds gather from every part of the world.

 It is somewhat unusual to celebrate on a yarzeit. One possible source for this ancient custom at Rashbi's tomb is based upon the fact that the Roman death sentence against Rabbi Shimon was annulled through a miracle. Since those killed by the Romans were denied burial, the celebration is marked at his tomb, indicating that Rabbi Shimon died a natural death.

**Recorded in the Diary of a 16th Century Traveler**

 The antiquity and continuity of these customs are evidenced by records in the diary of a traveler dating from 1522, "...On the fifteenth of Iyar a great caravan was formed in Meron; more than one thousand souls were there, for many came from Damascus with their wives and children, and most of the community of Safed, and the whole community of Levukim, which is a village near the cave where Rashbi and his son were hidden... and there we passed two days and two nights [coinciding with Lag B'Omer] celebrating and rejoicing."

**Greatness of the Day of Joy and Exultation**

 In a later account by Rav Asher Zelig Margolies (1941) the pilgrimage to the tomb of Rashbi was described in detail: "It is impossible to describe the greatness of the day of joy and exultation with trembling which takes place in Meron on Lag B'Omer-one can actually see that it is a day of simcha for the upper worlds and the lower...it is actually a simcha (rejoicing) like that of the world-to-come.

 “Some who are there sing out and rejoice, exult and delight in dances of holiness, with the joy of singing 'Bar Yochai' and other holy songs; others stand wrapped in sacred emotions, pouring out their souls in unceasing streams of tears near the holy burial sites of Rashbi and his son Rabbi Elazer...Here and there, groups are seen with children, dancing and clapping, holding the little ones on their shoulders and giving the [three-year old boys] their first hair-cuts. Distributing wine and cakes, calling out l'chaim and exchanging blessings"

**A European Custom to Visit Cemeteries on Lag B’Omer**

 In times gone by it was customary in many places in Europe for people to visit cemeteries on Lag B'Omer led by members of the local burial society who would check the condition of all the graves, noting which needed repairs. After the survey of the graveyard was completed, the townsfolk enjoyed some boiled eggs, cakes and liquor.

 The town of Homil, which was famous as the home of the tzadik Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac, was a place which honored this custom. In Homil, only when the tables were arranged and piled with food would a carriage would be sent for Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac, who would first visit the cemetery and after deliver some words of Torah.

**Read a Certain Tombstone**

 One year on Lag B'Omer, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac passed through the cemetery and paused to read a certain tombstone. For several moments he stood deep in thought. Then he turned to one of the officials of the burial society and said, "In the Heavenly Court, they are demanding an accounting of all the marvelous things which are written about the deceased on this stone!" Then he added, "Go at once and bring me an ax!"

 When the man returned with the ax, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac ordered him to demolish the inscription on the stone. When the writing was no longer legible the rabbi returned to the waiting townspeople with the explanation: "I was delayed because I was doing a favor for a fellow Jew."

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

**A Slice of Life**

**Returning Home from**

**A Lag B'Omer Party**

**By Rabbi Uriel Vigler**

 Each year our community gives so much to ten of Israel's wounded soldiers. But as much as we give them, they give us so much more in return. They inspire us, they give us hope, they show us the strength of the individual and the strength of the Jewish nation. They teach us passion and dedication, commitment and Jewish pride.

 One of the events we organized for the Israeli veterans in June 2010 was a cruise. We invited young professionals in our community to join the severely wounded soldiers for a Lag B'Omer bash. I sent out multiple texts and emails inviting people to attend. I made phone calls and mentioned it to everyone I bumped into.

**An Email from a Participant**

 The morning after our event, I received an email from one of the attendees which really made me stop and think:

**Dear Rabbi,**

 What a great party last night!

 I found myself chatting with your brother-in-law Avi Shlomo, and we began to share more meaningfully. As we discussed some of the stresses we were both facing, we concluded that it's important not to worry too much about those day-to-day issues, because something much bigger might be right around the corner.

 Later, as I walked home with my wife and young son, I had one of those "bigger experiences". Not 20 feet before the intersection my son stopped and asked me to carry him. He said he was tired. We stopped for a minute, I picked him up, adjusted him so he was comfortable and I could walk properly, and continued on our way.

 The light was green and we began to cross the street. The first two lanes had cars which were stopped. The third lane seemed empty. But as we stepped onto the street, a car sped right through that third lane at 50mph, followed by numerous police cars! Had we been five feet ahead, that car could have killed all three of us.

**Someone Was Watching Over Us**

 My wife and I did not sleep well after that. We were both shaken, and grateful to be safe and healthy. And I can't stop thinking that Someone was watching over us. Someone "made" my son ask us to pick him up. Someone "made" us stop and fall a few feet behind where we should have been. And that Someone saved our lives.

Best Regards,

**Analyzing the Miracles**

 I re-read the email at least three times. It got me thinking: What was the miracle here? The most apparent miracle, was that G-d saved three lives. But the other miracle, the one we have to dig a bit deeper to find, is that Simon realized G-d saved his life.

 It's all too easy to go through the day-to-day of life without noticing G-d directing, protecting and nurturing us. We're all guilty of it. But Simon's email served as a wake up call to me; a reminder to open my eyes and look for G-d. And once I remembered to look, I found Him everywhere. He is there with us every moment of every day.

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