**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas acharei mos 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #32 12 Nisan 5771/April 16, 2011**

**The Human Side of the Story**

**A Letter to the President**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 On the occasion of the first Yahrzeit of his mother, a renowned Torah scholar in Jerusalem, American-born Rabbi Yisrael Berle, published a distinguished commentary on prayer. In his introduction he includes the following story about his mother:

 More than half a century ago U.S. President Harry S. Truman decided to give a series of weekly radio talks to the nation in imitation of the famed "fireside chats" of his predecessor. The time chosen was Friday evening.

 Fearful that some Jews would be so anxious to hear the President that they would put aside observance of Shabbat in order to do so, Mrs. Berle dashed off a letter to the President calling his attention to the fact that Jewish Sabbath observers would be denied the privilege of hearing him if the broadcast were on the Sabbath eve.

 Her efforts were rewarded with success. A letter from the President’s secretary informed her that her letter was being given serious attention. Ten days later an announcement was made that the President’s talks would be switched from Friday night to Tuesday.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach International (ohr.edu) in Yerushalayim.*

**Eulogies for the Living**

**By Rabbi Levi Avtzon**

 The funeral was in progress and the rabbi was talking at length about the good traits of the deceased. "What an honest man, what a loving husband, and a kind father. So generous, so loving, so kind…"

 The widow leans over and whispers to one of her children, "Go up there and take a look in the coffin. See if that's your dad."

 It seems there's always so much good to say about those who have departed – their accomplishments and good deeds, wisdom and grace, generosity and unconditional love.

During the Person's Lifetime,

We Get Lost in the Details

 But wasn't the deceased, like all others, a human being, a creature presented with challenges who likely made mistakes? Did you really think that he was so perfect yesterday? What of his failures and bad habits, his ego and lusts? What of the times he lost his temper?

 Of this, you don't hear a word.

 So you ask: Has this human being become an angel upon leaving this physical world?

 There is a famous jest regarding the sequence of weekly Torah portions we are currently reading: *Acharei Mot* ("after the death"), *Kedoshim* ("holy ones")*,* and *Emor* ("say"). When read as a single sentence, it would roughly translate as: "After the death, say that he was holy."

 Are we shutting our lips because we are frightened to start up with the spirits of the deceased, lest they visit in the middle of the night and whip us with sticks of fire?

 I don't think so. It isn't the departed individual who changes; we change.

 During the person's lifetime, we get lost in the details. But when death strikes, we have the chance to study the kaleidoscope, the bigger picture, with utmost clarity. And at that point, we discover – a bit too late – the beautiful life led by the deceased.

 So, here is the question: Do people need to die in order for us to appreciate them? Do we, G‑d forbid, need to lose someone before we can truly find him? Must "beloved husband, father and brother" be a postmortem adage, or can we announce it throughout his lifetime as well?

 Let us make up while our family member is living, and not with their tombstone.

 Let us forgive people, not spirits. Let's see the good in each other now.

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

**Chassidic Story #698**

**Sensitivity in the Wee Hours**

From the desk of Yerachmiel

**Tilles**

**editor@ascentofsafed.com**

 Rabbi Z.M. Steinmetz (Hebrew poet Zvi Yair 1915-2005) told:

 A family crisis had arisen in the home of my relatives, not-so-distant-cousins who lived in South America. Their daughter had met and fallen in love with a young man and the two wished to marry. But the woman's parents were vehemently opposed to the match since the man came from a non-religious background and did not lead a Torah-observant life.

 Although the young man declared his willingness to begin to observe the laws and customs of Torah, the entire family, extended family, and circle of friends were united against the woman's choice.

**The Young Woman Resented**

**Her Family’s Opposition**

 The young woman grew increasingly bitter over the fact that all those dear to her had closed ranks against her. She felt that her entire world had conspired to deprive her of her happiness. The situation continued to worsen, as both daughter and parents became more and more enraged over the other's 'betrayal.'

 Finally, they struck a deal: the case would be brought to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, ztz"l. Although the family did not count themselves among the Rebbe's chasidim, both the young woman and her parents held the Rebbe in high regard and felt they could trust him. Both parties agreed to do as he would advise.

 As the 'Lubavitcher' in the family, I was asked to accompany the young woman to her audience with the Rebbe. In those years, the Rebbe would receive people three nights a week, beginning in the late evening and continuing through the night. Often, the final visitor would depart at dawn.

 We entered the Rebbe's room close to 3:00 a.m. First, the Rebbe and the young woman conducted a brief search for a common language: she had Spanish; the Rebbe tried Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Russian and French. They finally settled on German.

**“I Know that He is Sincere”**

 As the young woman told her story, I could hear the frustration in her voice: "I don't understand what they want of me," she said. "My friend has promised to lead a Torah-true life. I know that he is sincere. Why is everyone so set against us?"

 "He may be sincere," said the Rebbe, "but of what value is his declaration if he does not know what he is committing himself to? You know, according to the law, a signed blank check is worthless, even if the holder fills it in for a single cent --one cannot legally obligate oneself without knowing what the obligation consists of. Living one's life in accordance with the Torah's precepts is a most demanding challenge for anyone, but it is even more difficult for someone who has not been raised that way."

 "But he is willing to learn," said the young woman.

**Learning Alone is Not Enough**

 "Learning alone is not enough," replied the Rebbe. "One may study and accept Torah with the best of intentions, but applying it to day-to-day life is quite another matter. This is what I suggest: let your friend live with a Torah-observant family for several months.

 “Let him study, but let him also experience firsthand what such a commitment entails on a day in, day out basis, from the Modeh Ani prayer upon opening one's eyes in the morning to the reading of the Shema before going to sleep. If he still declares his desire to lead a Torah-true life, I give my wholehearted blessing to your life together."

**Left with a Lightened**

**And Joyful Heart**

 The young woman left the Rebbe's room with a lightened and joyful heart, and I remained to discuss several personal matters with the Rebbe. But the Rebbe immediately told me to call her back in, explaining: "I do not want her to think that we are discussing her behind her back."

 It was three o'clock in the morning, and the Rebbe had seen dozens of people in the course of the night. Yet he was sufficiently attuned to her feelings to discern her sense of alienation and abandonment and to pick up on her notion of a 'conspiracy' against her.

 So although the issue had been resolved to her satisfaction, and although she would not in any case understand the Yiddish in which we spoke, he refused to speak with me without her being present in the room.

 [Source: Reprinted with slight changes from "Once Upon a Chassid" (Kehot) by Yanki Tauber, a grandson of Zvi-Meir Steinmetz and clear inheritor of his writing talents.]

 Connection: Seasonal 109th anniversary of the birth of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) [ascent@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000nHW0:001D%5eAP500002Tea&count=1301349486&randid=888593548&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=888593548##)

**It Once Happened**

**A Mother’s Special Letter**

**On Behalf of Her Children**

 Faivish Schapira was 12 years old when his mother passed away. His father, a prominent Chasidic Jew in Antwerp, Belgium, dedicated the remaining 45 years of his life to raising their seven sons and five daughters.

 Faivish grew up in a home frequented by many rabbis and important Jews from around the world. His father would make arrangements for them whenever they were in Antwerp.

 "When I established my own home I continued in my father's ways," explains Mr. Schapira. He was close with many of the Lubavitcher Chasidim in his community as well, undoubtedly influenced by the warm and glowing terms that his father would use when speaking of elder Chabad Chasidim who lived in Belgium.

 When Mr. Schapira was 35 he visited New York for the first time. He had heard much about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, so he included 770 Eastern Parkway, Lubavitch World Headquarters, in his itinerary. Mr. Schapira attended a farbrengen (Chasidic gathering) at "770" where the Rebbe spoke for many hours at the conclusion of Purim. "I wanted to meet the Rebbe personally at least for a moment. So after the farbrengen I went upstairs and waited for the Rebbe in the hallway, close to the Rebbe's room, having been told that the Rebbe would pass there on his way out of the gathering."

 As the Rebbe approached the door of his room, Mr. Schapira held out his hand to greet him, as was the custom amongst Polish Chasidim. One of the Rebbe's attendants tried to push aside Mr. Schapira's hand, as this was not the Lubavitcher custom. But the Rebbe took hold of Mr. Schapira's hand and, in a most unusual gesture, led him into the Rebbe's private office.

 Mr. Schapira stood in the Rebbe's office. "The Rebbe took out a key, opened a cabinet, and removed a letter, which he gave to me to read. I saw that it was a letter, written by my mother, before her death more than two decades earlier." In the letter, Mr. Schapira's mother had asked the Rebbe to pray for her that she should be healthy for she had 12 young children to raise. She poetically described her children as not just 12 children but as 12 generations of descendants.

 "I was too shocked to even ask the Rebbe how he had known who I was. I had never before met the Rebbe. I had not identified myself. I had only extended my hand! How had the Rebbe connected me to this letter of my mother that he had received over 20 years ago?"

 The Rebbe told Mr. Schapira that he could not give him his mother's letter. For, the Rebbe explained, "Every year on the eve of Yom Kippur I take out the letter and read it before Kol Nidrei." Mr. Schapira later learned that before Kol Nidrei - the time that parents bless their children - the Rebbe had the custom to bless all of the yeshiva students who had gathered in the study-hall.

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

**Buyer of IDF Chametz**

**Is a No-show**

**By Hillel Fendel**

 (Israelnationalnews.com) Those in charge of the IDF’s not-kosher-for-Passover leaven wished to get a head-start this year on selling it, but the would-be buyer stood them up.

 Biblical law forbids Jews from owning leavened products, known as chametz (the ch is pronounced as in the Irish word ‘loch’), during the seven-day holiday of Passover (eight days, outside of Israel). Observant Jews therefore expend much effort cleaning their homes from all unknown chametz before Pesach, burn or otherwise destroy that which they find, and sell to a non-Jew the chametz that they do not wish to destroy – in the confidence that the non-Jew will either sell it back to them afterwards, or otherwise invalidate the purchase (not retroactively).

 All was set this morning for a man known as Abu-Shukri, the owner of a famous eatery in the Arab town Abu Ghosh just west of Jerusalem, to purchase the chametz of the IDF. He did not show up at the appointed time, however, and dozens of calls to his cellular phone went unanswered.

 Concern was expressed that he might have been threatened and warned not to cooperate with Jews, even though he has done so many times in the past. The search for the missing buyer continues, but the IDF says that in any event, a buyer will be found, and Israel's army will remain Kosher for Passover.

*Reprinted from the Arutz Sheva email of April 11, 2011.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Out of Love for Hashem**

 The verse in this week's portion Acharei states "You shall observe My decrees and My laws... and become alive through them -- I am Hashem." (Vayikra 18:5) The commentator Ramban, one of the foremost Torah commentators in the history of the world, has some deep insights into the meaning of this verse.

 The Ramban explains that one of the highest levels of serving Hashem is one who observes Hashem's mitzvahs out of love; such a person will merit the good life in this world and in the world to come.

 Serving Hashem out of love can be compared to a faithful son serving his dear father.  The son serves his father out a deep love for his father who has done everything for him. We owe everything in life to Hashem's kindness. We should therefore strive to serve Hashem out of love.

**The Tzadik Reb Yonason Eibshuetz**

 The following story involving the great Talmid Chacham (Torah Scholar) and Tzadik (righteous person) Reb Yonason Eibshuetz (c.1690-1764) author of "Yaaros Devash," shows the extent to which a few Jews were willing to go in their dedication to doing mitzvahs out of a love for Hashem.

 R' Yonasan Eibshuetz was married in his late teens into a wealthy family. Reb Yonasan's father-in-law gave him three thousand gulden as a wedding present. The generous gift was meant to enable the outstanding scholar to study Torah undisturbed and realize his fullest potential.

 As was (is) the norm in Europe, it happened to be that the gentiles of R' Yonasan's town had very little tolerance for Jews and their customs.  Appropriately, the gentiles decided to build a huge church right across the street from the synagogue that would overshadow and dwarf the Jews' place of worship and study.

**Decision of the Church Enrages Aryeh Leib**

 The Jews were enraged at having to face a church the moment they stepped out of their shul, but being a minority in both numbers and power, they could neither do nor say anything. That is, all the Jews except Aryeh Leib, R' Yonasan's hot-headed, temperamental young chavrusa (study partner).

 While the church was being built, Aryeh Leib seethed with anger at the audacity of the church officials. The constant flow of priests and nuns who looked at the Jews with contempt evoked a terrible fury in R' Aryeh Leib. He promised himself that someday he would avenge the insult.

 R' Yonasan could not calm his hot-headed friend. Even R' Yonasan's insistence that any attempt at reprisal would jeopardize other Jews went unheeded. Aryeh Leib was adamant. When the building was finally completed, ceremonies were held for the inauguration of the church, and services began.

**Decides to Break Off and Shatter the Cross**

 Many gentiles moved into the neighborhood to be closer to the new church, and Aryeh Leib decided that he had had enough. Late one night he entered the church and climbed the winding stairs to the steeple top, where there was a huge cross. Equipped with a hammer and chisel, he managed to break off and shatter the cross.

 The noise woke up the resident priest, who raced up the stairs to investigate what had happened. Another priest joined him and when they caught sight of an "accursed Jew" in their church, they ran after him in hot pursuit. In his blind rush to get away from the scene of the crime, Aryeh Leib lost his way in the dimly lit halls of the church.

 The priests caught him and beat him mercilessly. They then decided to lock him up until the morning when they would decide how to deal with him further. In the morning, at a conclave with other church officials, it was decided to burn Aryeh Leib at the stake for desecrating their church.

 When Aryeh Leib did not appear for learning the next day, R' Yonasan was surprised but not particularly worried, but when he did not come the next day either, his friends really began to worry.

 The next night, as R' Yonasan and a few others were learning in shul, they heard a knock on the door. It was the priest in charge of security at the church across the street. He knew that Jews are charitable, and had devised a plan that would net him a large amount of money. He told the small group that if they would agree to give three thousand gulden, he would see to it that Aryeh Leib was set free, as long as he agreed to leave town forever. The sum was a very large one, but pidyon shevuyim (redemption of the captured) is a great mitzvah.

**Decides to Donate His Father-in-Law**

**3,000 Gulden to Save Aryeh Leib**

 R' Yonasan and his friends reluctantly agreed to the priest's price. There was only a small chance that the Jews could raise such a large sum of money before Aryeh Leib would be killed. The priest might change his mind about the deal if the ransom was not paid on time. He decided that he would use the three thousand gulden that he had received from his father-in-law to redeem Aryeh Leib.

 The next morning he went to the church and met with the priest. "I have the money," R' Yonasan told him, "but first let me see Aryeh Leib." "How did you get the money so quickly?" asked the incredulous priest. "It's my own money," said R' Yonasan. "My father-in-law gave it to me as a wedding gift, but I'm glad to give it up to save my friend." The priest could not help but be in awe at the selflessness of the young scholar. He brought Aryeh Leib to a back door. R' Yonasan embraced his friend and gave the priest the money.

**Reb Yonasan Refuses to Accept**

**The Other People’s Money**

 Aryeh Leib was set free and told to leave town immediately. That evening a group of men came to the synagogue and told R' Yonasan that they had collected a large sum of money for the release of Aryeh Leib. R' Yonasan told them that it wasn't needed anymore because he had already paid the ransom and Aryeh Leib was safely out of town. The men tried to convince R' Yonasan to keep part of the money, but he refused. "But we too would like to share in the mitzvah," they argued. "Save the money for a future emergency," answered R' Yonasan, and he refused to take a single gulden of their funds.

 Meanwhile, at the church, the other priests found out that Aryeh Leib was missing. They were infuriated and tried to find out how he had escaped. They confronted the priest in charge of security who claimed that he had found the cell open and the young man gone. The others did not believe him, for he had not reported the escape to them. They unanimously decided to put the scheming priest to death, for they suspected that he might have arranged for ransom money which he kept for himself.

 The priest overheard their conversation and the death sentence they had pronounced on him. Now he would have to escape before his colleagues would be able to execute their sentence. He quickly took R' Yonasan's money together with other money and jewelry that he had amassed over the years and made his way to R' Yonasan's house.

**Wife Discovers Her Husband’s Secret Mitzvah**

 There he told the young wife how her husband had given his own money to free his friend, and then said to her, "I have no one to trust. I must get away quickly. Here, you hold the money and my gold and silver items. If I come back, I know you will return everything to me. I never saw such integrity as your husband showed. I'm sure you are the same. If I don't come back, it's all yours."

 Later that day the priest's body was found in the river, under the town's bridge. Three days later R' Yonasan returned home, somewhat uneasy about the reception he would receive. To his pleasant surprise, his wife greeted him with smiles, praise and warmth. "What a tzaddik you are. I know the whole story. I'm proud of your willingness to fulfill the great mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim, even at such great cost to yourself! But look how wonderful Hashem has been to you. He has returned all your money and even given us a great fortune."

**Wife Reveals the Priests Instructions**

 R' Yonasan couldn't believe what he was hearing. "What are you talking about? How do you know about the mitzvah?" His wife told him how the priest had had to flee for his life, how he'd given her the three thousand gulden plus other things, with instructions to hold everything until he returned.

 "He said that if he doesn't return, everything belongs to you. Today I found out that he'd drowned under the town bridge. Everything belongs to you, now," said R' Yonasan's wife. R' Yonasan's face fell, and he began to cry. His wife understood that these weren't tears of joy. "Why are you so unhappy," she asked, "when the whole incident has ended so well? Aryeh Leib is saved, we have our money back ... "

 R' Yonasan couldn't be consoled. "G-d has thrown the mitzvah back in my face," he wept. "For some reason he doesn't want me to have my reward in the World to Come, where righteous people enjoy their true reward (see Avos 2:21). That is why He gave me my reward here and now." For three days R' Yonasan fasted.

 After the third day he beseeched G-d to reveal to him in a dream why his mitzvah hadn't been accepted. That night he was told the answer in a dream. Because he had refused to share the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim with others and had kept it for himself, it was not acceptable.

 He should not have refused his friends' money. By "giving" all the money on his own, R' Yonasan had been "taking" - that is taking the whole mitzvah for himself when others wanted a share in it. He had not used proper judgment in fulfilling the mitzvah.  (R. Pesach Krohn, The Maggid Speaks, p. 52)

 Let us be inspired by this amazing true story to strive always to do mitzvahs "l'shaim shomayim" - for the sake of heaven, and out of a love for Hashem.

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

**The Rebbe Gives Matza**

**For an Imprisoned Chasid**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This Shabbat we read the Torah portion "Achari Mot" which first describes the Temple Service on Yom Kippur (Forgiveness Day) and then gives a list of forbidden sexual unions.

 But, because Shabbat spiritually prepares for the coming week we must say that this Torah portion prepares us for the holiday of Pesach which we will celebrate in two days.

 Passover celebrates the birth of the Jewish people.

 In Egypt the Jews were like a fetus in its mother's womb; almost completely unconscious of their true identity. And the Exodus was likened to a miraculous, spiritual ‘birth’; the Jews came out of their fetal state to total consciousness. (indeed, we are supposed to experience this re-birth every day.)

 But at first glance this is not understood; what is so special or miraculous about birth? Birth is nothing more than REVEALING the hidden baby.

 The real miracle is the development of the seed into a fetus within the womb BEFORE birth. So too, the Jews BEFORE they left Egypt were basically a free people: G-d had destroyed and totally defeated the Egyptians with the ten plagues. Going OUT was, seemingly, of secondary importance.

 So why do we make such a big holiday from leaving Egypt? And how and why does this week’s Torah portion prepare us for it?

 To understand this here is a story.

**On the Last Day of Passover - 1952**

 It was the last (eighth) day of Passover in Brooklyn New York 1952; two years after the passing of the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Shneerson, and one year after his son-in- law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Shneerson, took over the leadership and was now speaking at a large Chassid gathering called a ‘Farbringen’.

 Early in the evening when at the height of the Chassidic festivities a Chassid by the name of Rabbi Beryl Junik, came up to the Rebbe and yelled a desperate request over the noise

 "Please give a piece of Matza for my brother"

 Beryl's brother had been caught four years earlier, for the second time, trying to escape from Stalin's Russia with forged papers. The first time he was imprisoned for a year but this time they showed no mercy; he was sentenced to death and then, for some unknown reason, 'lowered' his sentence to 25 years in prison and five more in Siberia. Who knows if he was still alive?

**The Odds Were a Million to One**

 The odds were a million to one that a Jew could survive a week in jail or a few days in Siberia; tens of millions of people died there. But hoping against all odds Beryl was standing in Brooklyn, thousands of miles away, asking for Matza for his brother.

 The Rebbe handed him a large piece and said, "Send this to your brother."

 Beryl could hardly speak. his brother must be alive!!



 But after a few hours, when it dawned on him what the Rebbe said his excitement faded: Send Matza to his brother?! To telephone Russia was difficult; to send a letter there was almost impossible but to send Matzot, especially to a prisoner, would be ridiculous.

 Beryl waited till the next time that the Rebbe spoke publicly, again approached him and asked quickly. "Rebbe, I can’t send it. What should I do?"

 The Rebbe answered. "You can give it to him when he arrives here. And by 'here' I don't necessarily mean The United States. I mean when he leaves Russia."

 Beryl was overjoyed. After the Farbringen he rushed home to tell his father and family the good news. His brother would be free! But a year passed, then another and no news. The family was getting nervous his father was almost going crazy. Beryl decided to ask for clarification and more instructions. He arranged to have Yechidut (private audience) with the Rebbe and that would calm his father down.

**The Day of the Yechidut Arrived**

 The day of Yechidut arrived. He entered the Rebbe's office, closed the door behind him. The Rebbe was reading, his desk was stacked with letters and other papers. The room was well lit and deafeningly silent. The Rebbe looked up.

 "Rebbe" Beryl approached and said, almost in tears, "I know that you said that my brother would get out of Siberia and that gave us great encouragement. But it's already been more than two years since then. My father asked me to ask the Rebbe to promise. Can the Rebbe please give his promise?"

 The Rebbe looked at him strangely and answered. "Why do you demand such things? My father-in-law (the deceased previous Rebbe who had risked his life and the lives of his Chassidim to spread Judaism in Communist Russia) overcame bigger obstacles than this and he will overcome this one as well!" With these words the Rebbe burst out crying for several minutes.

**The Brother is Freed But Still Trapped in Russia**

 Weeks later Beryl received the news that his brother had been unexplainably freed completely after serving ‘only’ seven years of his 30 sentence; two in prison and five in Siberia! But he was not yet free to leave Russia.

 Despite his many requests for a visa to leave the country, the Russian government refused. But the words of the Rebbe still echoed in Beryl's ears, "You can give it to him when he arrives here. And by 'here' I don't necessarily mean The United States. I mean when he leaves Russia."

**A Matza Give 19 Years Later**

 Sixteen years later, in 1971, Beryl got a surprise telephone call; it was his brother. The Russian government had granted him an exit permit! He bought a ticket immediately and would arrive in Canada tomorrow!

 He arrived on Chol HaMoed Pesach almost exactly nineteen years to the day after the Rebbe made his promise and needless to say Beryl was waiting for him in the airport with that piece of Matza the Rebbe gave him and that he had been saving for nineteen years for just this occasion. He and his brother went home and made a festive meal celebrating faith and freedom.

 This answers our questions: the unique thing about birth is actual REVELATION.

 True, the fetus is complete before birth just as Berel’s brother was complete before he left Russia. But there is a world of difference between potential and actual. When Beryl's brother ACTUALLY left Russia there was much rejoicing.

 And so it is to the opposite: often beautiful ideas, philosophies and religions that look so good on paper result in murder and destruction when revealed; the world wars perpetrated by cultured Germany, purges of ‘peoples’ Communism, inquisitions of the merciful Church and anti-Semitism of the ‘objective’ U.N. are a few.

**The Problems Begin When Things are Revealed**

 Because in THEORY everything can be perfect and harmonious; the problems begin when things are revealed. (In fact the Shulchan Aruch begins with "Don't be ashamed when people scoff at your good deeds")

 That is what we celebrate on Passover; revelation! In this case the revelation of good, meaning and blessing to all mankind.

 And just as it couldn’t have happened back then without Moses so to, in our generation (and every generation) there is a potential Moshiach; a ‘Moses’ who can reveal ALL the good that is hidden in the Jewish people, in the Torah. and eventually in all mankind.

 And our Torah portion helps us prepare for this by explaining Yom Kippur and forbidden sexual acts.

**A Day that G-d Reveals His**

**Infinite Deep Connection to Jews**

 Yom Kippur is the day that G-d REVEALS His infinitely deep connection to the Jewish people; no matter what they do. He is willing to ‘go out’ of His judgement and REVEAL His forgiveness.

 And sexual prohibitions show what WE must do. Namely that going out of ‘Egypt’ means leaving behind our lower impulses and revealing, in DEED, only what G-d wants.

 May G-d help us to open our eyes and SEE, in a REVEALED way all the hidden good, blessing, meaning in joy hidden within us.

 It all depends on us. just one more good deed, word or even thought can take us out of exile THIS PASSOVER with...Moshiach NOW!!

Wishing all our readers a Kosher and Happy Pesach!!

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

**Rabbi Attacked by African Killer Bees in Zimbabwe**



**Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft**

 JOHANNESBURG (JTA) -- A rabbi handing out matzah and wine for Passover to Jews in Zimbabwe was attacked by a swarm of African killer bees.

 Moshe Silberhaft, the spiritual leader and executive director of the African Jewish Congress known as "The Traveling Rabbi," was making a pre-Passover visit to the 190 Jews left in the beleaguered capital of Harare when he was attacked by the bees while walking from the Ashkenazi synagogue to the Sephardi synagogue on the Shabbat of April 2.

 The rabbi was being accompanied by the Ashkenazi synagogue's Torah reader, Yosi Kably.

 “They suddenly swarmed on us from nowhere, buzzing around our heads and in our ears," Silberhaft said of the bees from the hive located under a wooden pole. "We didn’t even hear them coming.”

 After being stung repeatedly the two men ran into traffic, pounding on car windows, but no one would risk opening their windows for fear of letting in the bees. Passers-by attempted to help by spraying the bees with a poison and setting a tire alight to smoke them out.

 Silberhaft and Kably called for help and were taken to a private doctor’s clinic, where they received adrenaline, oxygen, antihistamines, cortisone and painkillers. Some of the stingers were pulled out one by one by the doctor and assistants.

 The rabbi returned to Johannesburg with stingers still on his head, nose and hands, as well as in his ears.

 Silberhaft, a regular visitor to Zimbabwe and other sub-Saharan African countries, was visibly upset at missing the service and was saddened that the incident occurred on Shabbat.

 “Africa is not for sissies,” he said.

*Reprinted from an April 4, 2011 dispatch of the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA).*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas acharei mos - kedoshim 5770**

**Story #647**

**Medical Corps**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 The shoemaker and his wife had prayed every day, begging the Al-mighty to grant them a child. Alas, the answer had consistently been No. But their faith was as strong as their desire, and they decided to go to the renowned tzadik, Reb Yisrael, the Maggid of Koznitz to ask for his blessing.

 When they arrived at his court and were admitted into his room they told their story and received the Rebbe's assurance that they would be blessed with a child. True to his word, the woman gave birth to a baby boy, but soon after his birth, the baby became seriously ill.

 The parents were sick with worry and the father went back to Koznitz to ask for a blessing for the baby's recovery. The Rebbe assured him that G-d would send a complete recovery. But instead of recovering, the baby went from bad to worse.

**Incessantly Reciting Words of Psalms**

 The mother sat by his cradle day and night, her lips incessantly reciting the words of the Psalms. One morning, totally exhausted, she involuntarily dozed off. When she awoke, she was startled to see a soldier standing over the baby's cradle holding a spoon and a bowl and gently spooning something into the baby's mouth. She screamed in fright and the soldier quickly disappeared.

 From that moment on the baby began improving by the hour, until he was soon completely well. The parents were overjoyed, but at the same time, they were fearful that perhaps the soldier had been some evil spirit or sorcerer. They again traveled to Koznitz to relate the strange occurrence to the Rebbe.

**Summoning the Dead Soldier**

 The Maggid reassured them that they had no need to fear. Then, as soon as the couple left, the Rebbe summoned his attendant. Go to the cemetery and knock with this cane of mine on the grave of soldier so-and-so. Announce that I request him to come to me. The attendant did as he was told, and the soldier soon appeared before the Maggid.

 The Maggid asked him, “Who appointed you to be a children's doctor?”

 The soldier replied. When I was a young child I was snatched and forced to go into military service for thirty years. I was torn from my parents and my home, and as the years passed I forgot all about being Jewish and I lived exactly like my gentile comrades. Only my identity papers proved my Jewishness, and I thought no more about it.

 One day as I was strolling in the countryside with my comrades, we came upon an elderly Jew. A few of my fellows had the idea of robbing him, and they took his 75 rubles. Then, fearing discovery, they beat him, bound him and hanged him from a tree, and left him for dead.

**My Long-Dormant Jewish Spark Flared**

 That was too much for me. My long-dormant Jewish spark flared in my heart, and I quickly slipped away from my unit and stealthily returned to the spot. There I found him mercifully still breathing, so I cut him down with my pocket-knife and sent him on his way. I even gave him 75 rubles from my own pocket.

 After I died, I found myself facing the Heavenly Court. They said they couldn't send me straight to the Garden of Eden, because I'd been sinning all my life. But they couldn't send me to the other place, either, because I had saved one man's life, and whoever saves the life of one Jew is given credit for having saved the whole world and especially since I'd actually given my life for that mitzvah. So, they decided to allow me to function as a children's doctor, and gave me permission to save the lives of little children whenever the situation is desperate. And that is how I came to heal this little baby.

**Earns Entry to the Garden of Eden**

 When he had ended his story the Maggid said to him, You may now return to the Garden of Eden, for you have earned your full reward. With that the soldier saluted and disappeared, and his soul rose to the highest level of Paradise. This story was often told by the Chasidic rebbe R. Yechiel Meir of Gostynin, who used to add: We may be expert in assessing the value of gold and silver and gems but to appreciate the true worth of a Jew is way, way beyond us.

 [Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in A Treasury of Chassidic Tales (Artscroll), as translated by our esteemed colleague Uri Kaploun from Sipurei Chasidim by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin, and from the version posted on lchaimweekly.org (#1053).]

**Connection of Story to the Parsha**

 Connections (2): Seasonal - Iyar: Month of Healing, and Weekly Reading -- Acharei Mot

 Biographical notes: R. Yisrael Haupstein (1737- 14 Tishrei 1814), 'the Maggid' of Koznitz, was a major disciple of the Rebbe Reb Elimelech, and author of the chassidic-kabbalistic work, 'Avodas Yisrael' and other books. His miraculous birth is the subject of a popular Baal Shem Tov story.

 R. Yechiel Meir Lifschitz of Gostynin [1816 - 21Shvat 1888] was sometimes known as Der Tilim Yid (the Psalms Jew) because of his constant instruction to those who came to him for advice and support that they turn to the reading of the Book of Psalms. He was a disciple of R. Menachem Mendel of Kotsk and of R. Yaakov Aryeh of Radzymin, after whose death he became chasidic leader in Gostynin. Many referred to him as one of the 36 hidden tzadikim. His teachings appear in Merom HaRim and Mei HaYam.

 DEDICATED by the ASCENT staff in honor of the shloshim of our old, good friend, Professor Jacquin Bierman, (Yaakov Dovid ben Nachum Binyamin Halevi), who passed away at a ripe old age last month on 7 Nissan (March 22).

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

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**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**Don’t Bear a Grudge or**

**Gloat at Your Fellow Man**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*You shall reprove your fellow and you shall not bear a sin because of him*.” (Vayikra 19:17)

 We are commanded to reprove and correct our fellow man. The verse continues that we must not sin because of this. Rashi explains, do not make his face pale by reproving him in public. The next verse continues, “You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people, you shall love your fellow as yourself – I am Hashem.” Is there a connection between reproving a friend and not taking revenge?

 The Divrei Yehezkel (quoted in Hameir) explains that sometimes you might reprove your friend to take the right path in life. However, he might not listen and as a result he has a downfall. Nevertheless, do not take revenge or bear a grudge by saying (or feeling) “I told you so.” Do not feel happy in his downfall because he did not listen. But, the verse continues, on the contrary, “Love your fellow man as yourself.” For just as you would not take revenge on yourself, so too you should not take revenge on your friend.

 To have compassion instead of allowing the reaction of, I told you so, takes strength of character. The Torah commands such strength

*Reprinted from this week’s Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin Email*

**Be Holy By How You**

**Deal with Others**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

“*You shall be holy*” (Vayikra 19:2)

 When we think of the term "holiness" we tend to associate it with ascetic behavior, such as fasting and abstaining from the regular activities of this world. This perashah teaches us otherwise.

 The Torah commands us to be holy and then immediately exhorts us to honor our parents, to pay our bills on time, not to embarrass others and a host of laws which contribute to peace and harmony amongst our people.

 Our concept of holiness is living a life which is very active in the society in which we live, but living it in a way which will make our stay in this world a meaningful one. If we think about others when we do our thing, not only by not hurting them but by helping and assisting them, this leads to holiness.

 All of the misvot, whether between man and Hashem or man to man, lead a person to "kedushah" - holiness. That's why all the blessings prior to the misvot have the words "asher kidshanu b’misvotav - Who has sanctified us with His misvot." Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

*Reprinted from this week’s Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin Email*

**Gedolim Sign Kol Koreh On Behalf Of Sholom Rubashkin; Asking**

**Community to do Whatever Possible**

*April 19, 2010*



 In an unprecedented move, a Kol Koreh on behalf of Sholom Rubashkin was signed by Gedolim from all sects of Klal Yisroel, asking the Tzibur to act. Never before in recent history have so many Rabbonim and Rebbes from Satmar, Lakewood, Chabad, and Litvish Roshei Yeshiva come together on a signed Kol Koreh.

**TRANSLATION OF LETTER**

**SIGNED BY RABBONIM SHLITA:**

 “To our Jewish Brethren Worldwide:

 “Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin is due to be sentenced shortly, and as the situation now stands, is facing the possibility of a very lengthy jail sentence, G-d forbid. US Legal experts have informed community leaders involved in this case, that the recommended sentence (by the US attorney) is overzealous and excessively harsh, and is totally unparalleled to similar offenses by others.

 “According to the experts involved in the case, phone calls and letters to department of justice (expressing concern) about this situation can be helpful. Therefore, there is a holy obligation  for every single individual to get involved in this matter of utmost Pidyon Shvuyim , and to do whatever they possibly can to assist in this matter.

 “As well, anyone who has the ability to urge the department of justice or political officials to rectify the (undue) harshness (displayed by the DOJ) should get in touch with the committee as soon as possible, and do whatever they possibly can to help rectify the (undue) harshness, and hereby fulfill the mitzvah of ‘Lo Taamod’ – not standing by idly while a fellow’s blood is shed.

 “As the Shulchan Aruch Yoreah Deah rules (252:3): Every moment that one delays the mitzvah of Pidyan Shvuyim, when there exists the possibility to assist sooner, is tantamount to committing bloodshed. As the Rambam’s states famously in the Laws of Matnas Aniyim (8:4): There exists no greater mitzvah than that of Pidyun Shvuyim ; One who looks away from assisting in helping to free the person, violates the injunctions of : Do Not Harden Your Heart, Do Not Be Tightfisted and Do Not Stand By While The Blood of Your Fellow is Being Shed. The Rambam then states an additional five mitzvahs involved in this.

 “Our Sages have already stated (Shabbos 151b ): All Who Have Compassion on Living Beings, Heaven will have compassion on him.

 “May Hashem positively change the hearts of the authorities to good; May the cries of the imprisoned come before Hashem, and speedily extract him from his imprisonment.

 “Amen.
 “Month of Iyor, 5770.”

**SIGNED BY LEADING RABBIS IN AMERICA & CANADA:**

Rav Dovid Feinstein (Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim),

Skulener Rebbe,

Rav Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi (Rov, Kfar Chabad),

Mattisdorfer Rov,

Pupa Rebbe,

Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky (Rosh yeshiva Philadelphia),

Rav Malkiel Kotler (Rosh Yeshiva BMG, Lakewood),

Rav Chaim Yehuda Krinsky (Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Chabad-Lubavitch),

Novaminsker Rebbe,

Satmar Rebbe of Williamsburg,

Rav Yonasan Bonyomin Weiss (Av Beis Din, Montreal),

Rav Menachem Meir Weissmandel (Av Beis Din, Monsey),

Rav Moshe Wolfson (Rosh Yeshiva Torah V’Daas)

*Reprinted from the website of Yeshiva World.*

**PERASHIOT AHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM**

**As Heard From**

**Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

“*I am Hashem your G-d*” (Vayikra 18:2) – Parashat Aharei Mot

 This expression, which is frequently reiterated, must not be overlooked because of its constant repetition. On the contrary, our utmost attention is solicited by the recurrence of these words. They actually declare the second most important principle in the entire Torah: Hashem is the G-d of Israel, and of them alone.

 Indeed He is the Creator of the entire Universe which the name Hashem signifies: “He is the true Being, that causes all things to be,” and “His mercies are upon all of His works” (Tehillim 149:9).

 But His chief interest in the universe is the holy people of the seed of the Three Fathers (Abot).

 “Behold, to Hashem your G-d belong the heavens and the heavens above the heavens, the earth and all thereon. But solely in your Fathers did Hashem delight to love them, and He chose their seed after them, you from all the peoples” (Devarim 10:14-15).

 Therefore the entire holy Scriptures, which portray Hashem’s thoughts as much as we are able to grasp, speak only about the children of Israel and their descendants.

“You *shall be holy for I Hashem Your G-d am holy*”.  (Vayikra 19:2) – Parashat Kedoshim

 Fundamentally this means: ‘Think as I think’. The most important part of the personality is the mind. Therefore we can most effectively emulate the holiness of Hashem by means of emulating His thoughts. Everything in the Torah is an example of Hashem’s thoughts, as He wishes us to think. Therefore we study His words in order to acquire (what He shows us to be) His attitudes.

 He regards Man as “the image of G-d” (Beresheet 1:27), and we should train our minds to think likewise. He considers the people of Israel as His sons (Devarim 14:1), and we must gain that same attitude. He desires kindliness (Semot 36:6; Michah 7:18) and so should we. He hates immorality (Sanhedrin 93A), and so should we. He considers His world as “Very Good” (Beresheet 1:31), and so should we.

*Quoted from “A Kingdom of Cohanim” by Rabbi  Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*

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

**The Prophetic Handshake**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 "Give me your handshake as a promise that you will always observe Shabbat and then I will give you my blessing."



**The Chafetz Chaim, zt”l**

 These were the words of the Chafetz Chaim to his student in Yeshivat Radin who came to receive his blessing before leaving the yeshiva to get married. Although he could not imagine why this was demanded of someone like himself who had always scrupulously observed Shabbat, he shook the sage's hand in making the commitment.

 Years later he miraculously escaped the Holocaust and arrived in the US with his wife and four children. He succeeded in getting a job in a factory owned by a non-Jew who allowed him not to work on Shabbat. A couple of months later he was told that he would have to start working on Shabbat, and when he refused he was fired.

 Without any livelihood his family began to suffer the pangs of hunger. The situation became so desperate that even his very religious wife urged him to go back to work. No longer able to bear the cries of his starving children he boarded the train to the factory. But midway he recalled the handshake promise to his mentor and decided to return home. An hour later there was a knock on the door and there stood the boss who had fired him with a bundle of money in his hand. He warmly embraced our hero and told him the following story:

 "I never intended to fire such a reliable worker as yourself, but did so to prove something to my partner. He insisted that any Jew would give up Sabbath observance in order to keep his job, and I disagreed. We then made a bet and my firing you was the only way we could decide who was right. I now want to give you the money I won in that bet and to inform you that I am promoting you, at a higher salary, to be in charge of a department. After all, who can be relied upon more than one who is faithful to his Creator!"

*Reprinted from the website Ohr.Edu of Yeshivat Orh Somayach in Yerushalayim*

It Once Happened

**The Story of the**

**Miraculous Glasses**

 Many years ago, in the city of Lemberg in Galicia, there lived a family by the name of Brill. According to legend their name was derived from the miraculous "brillen" (glasses in Yiddish) at the heart of this story.

 One time, a baby boy was born into a Jewish family. Their joy was short-lived, however, when it was discovered that the child was blind. As the doctors could do nothing to help, the parents accepted the Divine decree and loved their child even more. The boy's first name is not known, but for our purposes we will call him Michel.

 When Michel was three years old he was given his first haircut and brought to school. Although he obviously could not learn to read, the teacher began to teach him the blessings and prayers by heart.

 It soon became apparent that the child was unusually intelligent. Whatever he heard was immediately remembered. Over the next few years he memorized the entire prayer book, many books of the Bible and many tractates of Mishna. The child acquired a vast amount of Torah knowledge and was beloved by all.

**Drawn to Jewish Holy Books**

 Michel was especially drawn to sefarim, Jewish holy books. Even though he couldn't read, he would remove them from their shelves and lovingly caress their pages. Passing his fingers over the holy letters, he seemed to absorb their sanctity. Each book received a kiss before being put back.

 One time Michel asked his brother to bring him to the main study hall in Lemberg. As was his habit, he began to take the sefarim off the shelves and straighten out their pages. He came across a very thick volume covered with dust; it was obvious that no one had used it in a very long time.

 He opened it and was surprised to feel something hard between the pages. It was a glasses case that someone had forgotten. The boy opened the case, took out the glasses, and playfully put them on. He thought he would faint: unbelievably, he could see! The entire world suddenly came into focus.

**Thought He Must Be Dreaming**

 Michel thought he must be dreaming. He took off the glasses and again was blind. Putting them back on, he could see his younger brother and the square-shaped letters on the pages before him. It was a miracle.

 Michel fought against the urge to cry out about what had happened. But he was still in shock and needed a little more time to assimilate the change. Instead, he put the glasses in his pocket and asked his brother to take him home.

 Michel's parents could see that something was wrong. The poor boy's hands were trembling; he was deathly pale and could barely eat. But when they asked him what was the matter, he insisted that everything was fine.

 That night he waited until everyone had gone to sleep to try on the glasses. Again, he could see as if he had never been blind. A few days later he could no longer keep the secret to himself, and told his parents about the miraculous glasses. Needless to say, the entire household was filled with gladness and light. The whole city of Lemberg marveled at the miracle. Everyone agreed that there was no one more deserving of such good fortune than he. Moreover, now Michel could begin studying Torah in earnest.

 Sometime later Michel went back to the study hall to take a good look at the book in which he had discovered the glasses. It was an ancient volume of Kabala (mysticism), and although he had made great strides in his studies, he could not understand much of what was written. Michel was determined to learn more about the book and the glasses, but no one was able to answer his questions.

**An Old Man Reveals a Secret**

 Finally, he found a very old man who remembered that as a young child, he had often seen the Rabbi of the town poring over that particular volume and wearing similar glasses. Further questioning revealed that the rabbi was none other than the famous Torah scholar known as the "Pnei Yehoshua" for his commentary on the Talmud [Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, 1680-1756], who later headed a community in Germany.

 Astoundingly, Michel later learned that he had found the glasses on the exact date of the rabbi's passing (yartzeit)! For the rest of his life he observed the Pnei Yehoshua's yartzeit as a special day of thanksgiving.

 Michel Brill grew up to be not only a Torah scholar but also a successful businessman who gave generously to charity. Years later, when he passed away after a long and fruitful life, his descendants gathered to divide up their inheritance. Everyone was willing to relinquish everything their father had left them aside from his miraculous glasses. In the course of their argument the glasses fell to the floor and shattered, and so each of his children ended up with a small sliver of glass...

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

**Learning from This Week’s Parsha to Avoid Transgressing Arayos (Immorality)**

 It is important to note that of the 79 Mitzvos in the upcoming Parshios of Achrei Mos and Kedoshim, at least 23 relate to Arayos -- forbidden relationships and immorality. As always, we must take the lesson from the Parsha as we live through it, and bolster our care in the fundamental area that avoidance of Arayos plays in a Jew’s life. Especially as the warmer weather comes upon us, and the populations around us act with increased prurience, we must fulfill Hashem’s directive in the Parsha -- “You shall be holy, for I am holy.... (Vayikra 19:2).”

 Rashi (ibid.) teaches that this Pasuk immediately follows the Parsha of the Arayos, because when one makes appropriate fences and boundaries -- properly separating or distancing oneself from Arayos in all forms -- this is where Kedusha may be found.

 The western world incredibly considers some of the Arayos as “victimless” crimes. We, on the other hand, believe that not only are the participants and those who encourage them at fault, but that the degenerate mores impact horrendously on the world at large.

 We need go no further than the Pasuk “Ki Hishchis Kol Bassar EsDarko Al Ha’Aretz” -- for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth (Bereishis 6:12), and the literal destruction of the world at the time of the Flood that resulted in its aftermath. We must do something to distance ourselves far, far, far away from this behavior.

 Each of us (man and woman, young and old, city worker and chareidi neighborhood dweller) can do something to improve his/her situation in this regard – to bring a greater, tangible Kedusha into one’s life. It is now less than 30 days to Matan Torah -- in which the Kedusha from on High -- the Torah -- was brought down to this world for transmission to us all in each generation. Let us make ourselves eminently worthy of it -- not only by contemplation and reflection -- but in deed and in restraint.

**Loving Your Fellow**

**Jew Like Yourself**

 The Parsha of Kedoshim contains the Mitzvah of VeAhavta LeRayacha Komocha. We provide the following two essential points regarding the all-encompassing nature of this great Mitzvah:

 (A) HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, teaches that one fulfills the Mitzvah not only with friends and strangers, but with family members, as well, including by showing proper attitude and behavior to one’s own spouse -- so start cashing in! (See Kiddushin 41a)

 (B) The Mitzvah can be fulfilled by thought alone in two different ways: (1) spending time thinking about a Shidduch for someone, how to help an individual in need of emotional or physical support, or on how to give constructive criticism in a way which will have a real effect too -- and other thoughts unique to the people and situations that you are aware of [after all, Hashem made you aware of them, and it is for a reason]; and (b) actually “feeling together” with the other person -- feeling their pleasure and pain,their dejection and their joy. By doing so you unite with your fellow person -- and he becomes Komocha -- like you, as the Torah adjures. As a starting point, you can try to develop this feeling with one person (who, once again, can be a relative), and witness for yourself how your “I” and “Me” has so beautifully grown!

*Reprinted from the 8 Iyar 5770/April 22, 2010 edition of the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin.Hakhel.*

**Talking Points - Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim**

**Speaking Truth to Power**

 "Hashem said to Moses: Speak to your brother Aharon that he not come at all times into the Holy Sanctuary that is inside of the Curtain, before the Ark-cover that is upon the Ark so that he not die, for in a cloud I shall appear upon the Ark-cover." 18:5

 Speak to Aharon - So that he not die in the [same] way his sons Nadav and Avihu died by entering the Holy Sanctuary without permission. - Rashi

 Speak to Aharon - When Aharon heard to news of his son's passing, he immediately said, "I offer thanks before You for the kindness that You have done [in taking my children], rather than allow them to lead corrupt lives...'

 The Almighty said to Moses, 'Since Aharon was visited by strict justice and not only did he not complain, but he even thanked Me for My kindness, go and comfort him.' Therefore, the verse says, 'Speak to Aharon,' for the term 'speak' can be used to denote comfort. - Pesiktah Rabbasi

 Although Pesiktah Rabbasi explains that the word 'speak' can indicate comforting words, more commonly it is used to connote forceful speech. The commentators explain that Moses was instructed to speak to Aharon in a forceful manner and not to soften his words in any way that could be interpreted as a show of favoritism to his brother.

 His message was a strong one, and he could not temper it in any way, just because he was speaking to his beloved brother. As a leader, Moses was expected to treat everyone equally and never to do anything that could lead to an accusation of nepotism.

*Reprinted from this week’s Partners in Torah Mentor Talk*

**Take a Crash Course**

**In Jewish History**

**By Daniel Keren**

 Ken Spiro, a historian and member of the faculty of the Aish HaTorah College of Jewish Studies in Yerushalayim has carefully crafted a fascinating a fast-reading 484-page history book that painlessly explains the highlights of Jewish history from the time of our Patriarch Abraham until the present day.



 Unlike most books on the history of the Jewish people which have been written from the eyes of secular and assimilated Jews, Spiro’s new offering titled “Crash Course in Jewish History: From Abraham to Modern Israel” focuses on the miracle and meaning of Jewish history through the eyes of a religiously committed Jew who wants to explain to the reader just how history, both worldwide in general and Jewish in particular is a controlled process by G-d leading to a predetermined destination.

 No nation can boast such a rich and incredible history as has been experienced by Klal Yisroel. The only problem is that it is so overwhelming that without simplified charts and other study aids as provided in “Crash Course in Jewish History,” it defies the mind of the average Jew to begin to comprehend the entire scope of the ongoing Divine-planned story for the Jewish people, a nation designated to be “a light unto the nations.”

**Most Frum Jews Lack a familiarity with Tanach**

 Sadly in the frum community, while most men who have gone through the yeshiva educational system are familiar with all of the famous Biblical and Midrashic tales (i.e. Dovid Hamelech/King David’s struggles to survive Shaul Hamelech/King Saul’s attempts to kill him and his victory against Goliath,) we do not even have for the most part a proficient familiarity with all of Tanach (the Jewish Bible).

 And even those (including many Bais Yaakov graduates) who have mastered an understanding of Tanach, may not be able to match it with the overall history of the ancient world that affected us (i.e. the rise and fall of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans). Add to this, almost two millennium of Post-Tanach history and you have a situation where most Jews lack the awareness of how this Jewish history has led us to where we are today.

**The Frustration of Reading Jewish History**

**From a Secular Point of View**

 Reading Jewish history from a secular point of view can only be a frustrating experience and leave a frum Jew or any Jew for that matter with the question of why did G-d choose our nation for such a painful experience. But recently, a number of good history books have been written by religious writers such as Rabbi Berel Wein. But for those who find the task of reading a trilogy of large history books a little intimidating, Mr. Spiro’s “Crash Course in Jewish History” is just what the doctor should proscribe.

 The origins of his interesting tour of Jewish history began back in 1999 as a series of classes given to students attending the Aish HaTorah Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, a center established by Rav Noach Weinberg, zt”l, to reunite secular assimilated Jews from all over the English-speaking world with their rich Torah heritage.

**Origins of Mr. Spiro’s Crash Course Book**

 Three years after the inception, Mr. Spiro’s lectures were transcribed and edited for an online series featured on the powerful Torah website: Aish.com. Following a second up-dated online series version in 2007, work was completed for a book version that was published by Targum Press in conjunction with Aish.com and distributed by Feldheim Publishers.

 “Crash Course in Jewish History” is broken down into five manageable parts: Part I (A Man, a Family, a Nation) that describes the history of our people from the time of Abraham till the tragedy of the spies; Part II (The Land Flowing with Milk and Honey) that details the story of the Jewish nation from the conquest of Canaan by Joshua till the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem by Nebudchanezzer).

 Part III (Adrift Amid the Empires) explains what happened to the Jews exiled to Babylonia, the return of a tiny community that rebuilt the Second Temple in Jerusalem, and the attempts of our nation to withstand the cultural juggernauts of the ancient Greeks and Romans who dominated the Mediterranean world.

 Part IV (In Exile) tells of the story of the Jews following the expulsion of our people from the holy land by the Romans and our subsequent trials and tribulations following the rise of Christianity, Islam and our experiences in Spain, the Crusades, as victims of blood libels and the Inquisition, the development of a community in Poland and the Protestant Reformation.

**The Long Road Home**

 The fifth and final part of “Crash Course in Jewish History” is titled “The Long Road Home.” It highlights the era of the Kabbalists in Safat, the failed Messianic hopes engendered by the charlatan Shabbetai Tzvi, the false Messiah; the subsequent emergency of the Hassidic movement, the Age of Enlightenment, the persecutions in Czarist Russia leading to the mass migration of Jews to America, the Holocaust and an overview of the return to the land of Israel culminating in the establishment of today’s modern State of Israel.

 Each section and every chapter is a highly condensed view of an important section in our overall Jewish history that is still playing out in such surprising developments that even the most blasé frum Yid or even secular Jew is inspired to talk in terms of the imminent arrival of the Moshiach (Messiah) who will bring our nation to the goal line and the fulfillment of our Divinely appointed mission throughout history.

**The 6,000 Piece Puzzle**

 Why should we Jews make the effort to understand our rich and incredible history? Mr. Spiro writes: “Jewish history is like a 6,000-piece puzzle. At the beginning, you dump the pieces on the table and it makes no sense. But as you assemble piece after piece, a picture emerges – a picture that records the actions of G-d in history.

 “There’s no chance or randomness here, because everything happens for a reason. By Jewish reckoning we have assembled almost all of these pieces and have only a few hundred left to go. History is moving toward a conclusion, its final destination is just around the corner and what it will look like has been described by the prophet Isaiah in this famous passage:

 “In the days to come, the mountain of G-d’s house shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills. And all the nations shall stream to it. And the many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the Mount of G-d, to the House of the G-d of Jacob – that He may instruct us in His ways, that we may walk in His paths.

 ‘…And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore…At that time, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb…’”

**Not Just for an Assimilated Readership**

 Perhaps “Crash Course in Jewish History” was designed by Mr. Ken Spiro and his colleagues at Aish.com as a vehicle to educate the vast majority of our assimilated Jewish brethren into appreciating the beauty of the Jewish Divine mission from the time of Abraham. But it would be a shame for those of us in the frum community to just buy this volume as a valuable gift for our secular relatives, friends and colleagues. We would also greatly benefit from the clear insights into the fascinating story of Klal Yisroel and its ultimate destination.

 Copies of “Crash Course in Jewish History” are available in Jewish bookstores or from the distributor by calling (800) 237-7149 or by clicking feldheim.com

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of The Jewish Connection*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Giving Others the**

**Benefit of the Doubt**

 Hashem created the world and all that is in it. If we want to be good people in Hashem’s world, we must play by Hashem’s rules. Many of Hashem’s rules involve our thoughts and feelings. For example, we have a mitzvah to love Hashem. We see therefore that our thoughts and emotions do have spiritual consequences. Unfortunately, thoughts can also be used for bad. In order to prevent causing bad to others with our thoughts, we must constantly study what the Holy Torah has to teach us about human relations.

**An Overlooked Mitzvah Involving Thought**

 We will focus this week an often overlooked mitzvah involving thought. We are referring to the mitzvah to judge others favorably. As Hashem commands us this week, “With righteousness you shall you judge your friend.” (Vayikra 19:15) In general, Rambam explains that this mitzvah commands us to do the following: When we see a generally righteous person doing something which appears to be against the Torah, we must give that person the benefit of the doubt and try to explain his actions for the good. (Mitzvah 177, Sanhedrin Chapt. 21 halachos 1-3)

 We must be very careful with what we think about others. Because when we judge others unfavorably, we awaken negative spiritual forces against that person; it is as if we call the heavenly prosecutor to trial against that person. The following two stories illustrate the extent to which we must give others the benefit of the doubt.

 As Rabbi Shlomo Yadin of Bnei Brak settled into his seat on his El Al flight from New York to Israel, he noticed someone a few seats over to his left who looked as though he was either an American rabbi of a shul or a rebbi in a yeshivah. Too far away to begin a conversation, Rabbi Yadin made himself comfortable, buckled his seat belt, and waited for takeoff.

**Notices that the Passenger is Not Reading a Sefer**

 After the plane was airborne, R' Shlomo noticed that the American rabbi took an obviously secular book from his attache case and settled down to read it. Even from where he was sitting, Reb Shlomo could see that it was not a sefer (Torah book.) It was definitely a secular book, and Reb Shlomo was a bit surprised. What about the mitzvah of “And [you shall study Torah] while you walk on the way?” (Devarim 6:7) R' Shlomo himself had taken along two sefarim for the long trip, and although he realized that not everyone followed his example, he felt that at least in public a rabbi should be reading from a sefer (Torah book.)

 A few hours later as the slender orange rays of the sun began to appear over the horizon, numerous men made their way to the back of the plane to form a minyan for Shacharis – the morning prayers. The American rabbi remained in his seat, and R' Yadin was upset. The American was not sleeping, so he had certainly seen people going down the aisles with their talleisim and tefillin. Perturbed, Rabbi Yadin thought, "The man dresses like a tzaddik (a righteous person), and he is probably observant where people know him. But on a plane, among strangers, he acts like an irreligious Jew. What a hypocrite!"

**The Passenger Eats Without Reciting Blessings**

 When the next meal was served, Rabbi Yadin looked to see if his fellow traveler was reciting brochos (blessings). To his shock, the man ate without a brochah and when he finished his meal, did not recite Birchas HaMazon (Grace After Meals).

 Rabbi Yadin was getting more and more furious. It took all his self-control to refrain from saying anything to the American. However, he decided that if there was a group of religious-looking people at Ben Gurion Airport waiting to greet this so-called "rabbi," he would inform them that he was an impostor.

 When the plane landed and the passengers had gone through passport control and luggage claim, Rabbi Yadin walked behind the American to see who was awaiting him. To his amazement, when the American passed through customs and left the terminal, there was indeed a group of Orthodox people waiting to receive him.

 Rabbi Yadin was about to speak to one of the men in the group when he noticed them all walking towards an old gray van. The back of the van was open, and there Rabbi Yadin could plainly see a coffin, that of the American rabbi's mother! He had come from America to bury his mother in Israel.

 Rabbi Yadin clasped his open hand to his forehead in sudden understanding of what he had seen for the past 12 hours. The American rabbi was an onen, a mourner on the day of a burial, and was thus prohibited from performing any mitzvos! He could not study Torah, pray, or recite blessings. (see Yoreh Deah 341:1) And now, to his own embarrassment, Rabbi Yadin realized that he had wrongfully suspected this man of SO many misdeeds! (Along the Maggid’s Journey, Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, p.98)

**The Goldhirsh Famiy**

**Plans a Large Chasuna**

 And now for our second story, which has similar if not worse results: About 20 years ago, the Goldhirsh family planned a large chasuna (wedding.) The Goldhirshs invited all their extended family and friends. Soon after, they sent out invitations.

 When people started to receive the wedding invitations, they became very excited, because the Goldhirsh family was very popular in that city. There was one family, however, which did not receive an invitation. The Roth family checked their mailbox everyday as the wedding approached, but they received no invitation. The Roths considered themselves close friends of the Goldhirsh family. Understandably, the Roths felt very offended that they were not included in the Simcha.

 The night of the wedding was an overwhelming success. The music was lively, the food was good and everyone left with a smile on their faces. However, the Roths stayed home that night.

**The Roths Become Bitter and Angry**

 The Roths were merely offended at first. However, with time, they later became bitter and angry that they had not been included in the wedding. They cut off all contact with the Goldhirsh family. The Roths never told anyone what had happened. And the Goldhirsh family was therefore at a loss as to why the Roths had cut all contact.

 What followed was decades of hard feelings, distrust and hatred, with the Roths and Goldhirshs avoiding each other at weddings and fund raisers, etc. Some 20 years after the Goldhirsh wedding, the Roths received a curious letter in the mail. The letter was one letter with a plastic bag attached to it. The main letter was a letter from the United States Post Office with something like the following:

 “During our recent remodeling, we found the attached letter under one of the older machines. We apologize for the delay in delivering this piece of mail. Better late than never! Thanks for your understanding.” In the plastic bag was the Goldhirsh wedding invitation from 20 years previous.

 In order to know how to treat others properly we must constantly study the Torah. Without a clear understanding of what hurts others, we may go through life hurting many people without ever realizing it. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

*Reprinted from the Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim 5771 email.*

**Parshat Acharei-Kedoshim**

**The Miraculous Transformation of Itzi**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week's reading begins with the service of the High Priest (Cohen Gadol) in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur where he secured G-d's forgiveness for the sins of all the Jews. This is not so clear - how can one person make G-d forgive the sins of others?

 Also, this week's double Torah portion contains 76 of the 613 commandments and one of them is "You shall love your friend as yourself." (19:18) which many consider to be the most important commandment in the entire Torah. (See Rashi there)

 And if it is so important, then why are there so many other commandments that divide between the more and less religious and make it hard to love them?

**The Analogy of Hot Peppers**

 Also it's not so clear exactly what does it mean to love others "AS yourself". For instance, if I love to eat hot peppers does that mean I should make everyone else eat hot peppers? Why doesn't the Torah explain?

 To understand this, here is a story. (Sichat HaShavua #1214)

 Over three hundred years ago a awful and frightening thing happened in Judaism. For the first time in 3,000 years since they received the Torah at Mt. Sinai some Jews actually stopped believing that G-d exists!

 Up to then the Jews had their problems with G-d for sure. They doubted G-d's power, His love, His care, His presence. They rebelled against Moses, King David and the prophets when they tried to teach them differently. But NEVER did Jews totally deny G-d's existence…..until the arrival of the 'enlightenment' movement when Jews (like Spinoza) began preaching that only nature REALLY exists.

 Such a Jew was Itzi (Short for Yitzchak). He had been born in a religious home but shortly after his Bar Mitzva party he began chumming around with gentiles, became 'enlightened', stopped doing the commandments and by the time he was 16 had left home and was 'free'.

**Succeeding in Business with Gentile Friends**

 Paradoxically instead of G-d punishing him, as his parents had warned, the business he formed with one of his gentile friends succeeded tremendously and by the time he was in his twenties he was already a millionaire with a mansion, servants, properties, forests and more. The world was his and Judaism was no more than a bone in his throat.

 He hated religion but most of all he hated the Chassidic 'Rebbes'. He could find some justification for the 'normal' 'paranoiac' Rabbis who stressed heaven and hell but the Chassidic Rebbes taught that we can and must reveal G-d, HERE in this world! As far as Itzi was concerned this was blatant charlatanism and an obvious lie. How can one reveal G-d if there is no such thing!!!

**A Satirical Play on a Famous Chassidic Rebbe**

 So you can imagine Itzi's glee when he heard that a well known group of actors was presenting a satirical stage play on the famous Chassidic Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. And to add fuel to the fire it was to be staged on the coming Shabbat in the theater in the city of, of all places, Berditchev!! In other words they would be making a fool of this 'Rebbe' in his own back yard!!

 Itzi had to see this! He couldn't miss it! He loved theater and hated Rebbes! Two birds with one stone! He bought a front balcony seat and looked impatiently forward to Saturday.

 Friday arrived. Early that afternoon Itzi told his driver to prepare his carriage for the trip from Brod, where he lived, to Berditchev. Itzi was dressed in his very best, filled with anticipation. But as they neared the city suddenly a genius thought popped into his mind. He could do something all the gentiles in the crowd could never do!! See the Rebbe!!

**The Rebbe’s Shul is Just a Block Away from the Theater**

 He heard from someone that the "Shul" (Synagogue) was just one street from the theater, he could go to there, see the Rabbi at his prayers, which the Chassidim make a big production of, and make it back in plenty of time before the play. Then he would really appreciate the humor!

 Itzi fixed his tie, straightened his hat, stood erect and entered the Synagogue. He found a prayer book and stood in the crowd like everyone else. He felt a bit out of place in his colorful suit and hat among the black garbed Chassidim but it didn't seem to bother anyone. Suddenly the room became silent and all eyes turned to the door. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak entered. He walked hurriedly to the podium in the front of the Shul, raised his hands to heaven and said in a loud clear voice,

 "Master of the Universe! All your heavenly emanations, formations and creations are singing praises to your awesome name! Now I, your lowly servant Levi Yitzchak the son of Sara Sasha, want to also praise you!" And then he began to sing the fist lines of the Shabbat prayers.

**Itzi Suddenly Loses His Identity**

 Suddenly Itzi lost his identity. All the experiences, successes, thoughts, words and deeds since his Bar Mitzva seemed to peel off, paper thin, and fade into nothing. He became lost in the beauty, power, longing, depth and fullness of each word the Tzadik (totally holy Jew) sang. It was as though he entered a time tunnel where there was no past or future.

 An hour later when the prayers finished and the Synagogue emptied out Itzi approached the gabbai (sexton) who was waiting to lock up, and asked if he could find him a place for the Shabbat meals. He made up a story about how his wagon broke down and he got stuck in a hotel with no kosher food etc.

 The Gabbai didn't believe him but didn't show it. He invited him to his home where Itzi, deep in thought, just picked silently away at his food and after the meal he took him back to the Shul where Rebbe Levi Yitzchak was sitting before several tens of his Chassidim singing and occasionally interrupting with words of Torah. Itzi sat down and just stared at the Rabbi till 2 a.m. when the Rabbi stood and left the room.

**That Night Itzi Cannot Fall Asleep**

 That night Itzi did not sleep. He sat in the Shul until dawn, then he just waited for the Rabbi to enter and then gazed at him throughout the Morning Prayers until the moment he left. That evening, when the Shabbat was over, Itzi, approached the holy Rabbi and asked if he could have a word with him.

 Hundreds of times in his life Itzi had felt certain and followed his hunches, but never had he ever been more certain of anything as he was now. It was as he had woken from a dream. Up to now he imagined that he himself was god but in fact the great, rich, atheistic Itzi was, nothing more than a mere creation. G-d is creating him constantly! It was obvious! The Creator loves him infinitely more than he could ever love himself.

 And somehow looking at this Chassidic Rabbi made him feel all this!

 He asked the Rabbi if he could prescribe a path of 'tshuva' (lit. return) for him for his sins.

 "What sins have you done?" Rabbi Levi Yitzchak asked.

 "What HAVE I done!? Better ask which sins haven't I done." He replied.

 "Except for murder and a few others I've done almost all of them."

 Tears began to cloud Itzi's eyes.

 "If so," The Tzadik answered "You have to become a totally different person; someone that has never sinned. Go back home, sell all your possessions, give half to the poor and then come back here."

 Itzi was afraid. He figured that if he went back to Brod his friends would think he was crazy, and scoff at him until he changed his mind and never return to Braditchiv. But it wasn't so; either because of the blessing of the Tzadik or because it was all simply paranoia....no one said a word to him.

**Itzi Returns to the Rebbe and His Jewish Consciousness**

 In a week's time Itzi returned to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and returned to Jewish consciousness. In time he married, and lived to see children and children's children living a life of Torah and Mitzvot.

 This answers our questions.

 The purpose of the Torah and the Jews is to reveal the good hidden in each creation of G-d. And the only way to do this is through love. Love, if directed properly according to the Torah, reveals the 'spark of holiness' in everything.

 That is what happened in our story. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, who was renowned for his unquestioning, total love for all humanity, brought out the good in Itzi just by being the positive person he was, available to everyone who needed him.

**The Secret of the High Preist**

 That was also the secret the High Priest. He brought forgiveness for the sins of the entire Jewish people through love. As the Mishnah says about Aaron, the first Cohen and founder of the Priesthood, "He loved the creations and brought them close to the Torah' (Avot 1:12). Namely he loved even people like Itzi whose only saving grace was that G-d created them, and revealed the good in them through the Torah.

 And when this saving grace was revealed, G-d forgave them.

 This is the lesson to each of us. The Torah teaches that everyone and every creation is basically good. As King Solomon said "All her (the Torah's) ways are pleasant and her paths are peace' (Prov. 3:17).

 But only on the condition that there is love; that we use the power of the Torah to see the good in everyone and have faith that this good exists. (For instance, how the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that all Jews want to do the commandments of the Torah… if asked with love.)

 But we must put this Torah love into action; one good deed, word or even thought (as we saw in our story) can transform the entire world and bring the total redemption of all mankind with ….Moshiach NOW!

*Reprinted from the week’s email of TorahOhr tmimim*