**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas emor 5775**

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**It Once Happened**

**The Rebbe and the**

**Childless Couple**

There was once a woman named Rachel who had no children. Her husband, Nosan, considered himself to be modern and disdained rabbis and their "antiquated" teachings. Rachel, however, believed differently, and whenever her husband was away on business she would visit the great tzadik Rabbi Meir of Premishlan to beg him to bless her with children.

For poor Rachel each visit was the same. She would wait for her turn and then make her request. Each time Rabbi Meir's reply was the same: "I cannot bless you unless you come together with your husband." And each time Rachel would return home sad, but not hopeless, for she believed that somehow salvation would come to her.

On one visit her faith was rewarded when Rabbi Meir replied, "Return home. When your husband returns from his business trip, tell him, 'Rabbi Meir of Premishlan commands you to come at once.' Of course, he will refuse, but when he does, tell him, 'On the day before yesterday, which was Lag B'Omer, you attended a gathering where you spoke disrespectfully of Rabbi Meir.' When your husband hears this he will certainly come, and then you will be blessed."

Rachel was at home when Nosan returned, and she immediately repeated Rabbi Meir's words. His response was the expected one, but when Rachel countered, telling him about his untoward comments about Rabbi Meir, his face flushed. How could the rabbi know such a thing, he wondered, and he at one resolved to visit Premishlan to find out.

Nosan was not, however, ready to endure the ridicule of his friends. He decided that instead of traveling straight to Premishlan he would make a detour through Lemberg, thus cloaking his true intentions in a bogus business trip. When he finally arrived in Premishlan and was admitted to Rabbi Meir's room, he announced his name and his request. Rabbi Meir responded, "Don't think I don't know that you came here via Lemberg. If you want my blessing, you must return home and then come here directly."

Nosan was completely amazed. How could Rabbi Meir have possibly known that? If he had such wondrous powers, he would do as Rabbi Meir said. To his wife's utter joy, Nosan returned home and announced his plans to spend Shabbat in Premishlan. When the couple arrived in Premishlan, Rabbi Meir was pleased to see them. On Shabbat, Nosan was honored with an aliya to the Torah for the passage which read, "There shall not be a sterile or barren one amongst you." He was so moved, that he was about to offer a large donation. Rabbi Meir interrupted him with the words, "Because he has promised to help a Yisrael [lit. Israelite]." Nosan was confused. What could Rabbi Meir's words mean?

When the prayers ended, Rabbi Meir explained his cryptic words. "One day you will have the opportunity to save a very holy Jew, at great personal risk. If you promise to help him, you will have a son." Without giving the matter a moment's thought, Nosan said, "I promise!" In due time, the tzadik's blessing was fulfilled, and Nosan and his wife were the parents of a baby boy.

A year or more passed and Nosan was on a business trip near the Austrian-Romanian border when he heard that the illustrious Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin was also there. He was fleeing the Russian authorities and had to somehow get across the border. This was obviously what Rabbi Meir had alluded to when he had made the promise.

True to his word, Nosan presented himself to Rabbi Yisrael and disclosed to him a plan to carry him across the border over a small, frozen river. Rabbi Yisrael agreed and they set off at midnight. Nosan knew the crossing well, but he was unaccustomed to heavy physical labor. Despite the bitter cold, sweat poured down Nosan's face. Carrying a grown man was harder than he had thought, and at each step he prayed that the thin ice would hold the weight of the two men and not crack, plunging them to a frozen death. Suddenly Nosan stopped walking. "Is anything wrong?" Reb Yisrael asked.

"Nothing is wrong. I just realized that we have reached the middle of the river. If I am to make my request, this is the time. Rebbe, I have committed many sins. I have scoffed and disregarded the teachings and precepts of the Torah. But before I continue, I want your promise that I will have a place in the World to Come. If you give me your promise, I will continue; if not, I won't go on."

Rabbi Yisrael replied at once, "Of course, I will give you my word. I am happy that at such a time you can have such thoughts!"

With that assurance, Nosan continued his dangerous progress across the icy darkness. It wasn't until many hours later that they arrived safely in the small, Austrian border town. It was Nosan's good fortune to have spread the news that through his efforts, the holy Ruzhiner was finally safe.

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

**Short Story of the Week**

**The Ger Tzedek and the**

**Irrelevancy of Revenge**

One of the most poignant episodes in the fascinating life of the Ger Tzedek of Vilna, Avraham ben Avraham, came in the last moments of his life. Avraham ben Avraham was born as Count Potocki, and converted after taking an interest to Torah while studying in the University of Paris.

He eventually returned to Vilna to join the ranks of those who separated themselves for a life of total Torah immersion. His family had conducted a massive search for him and when he was found he was turned over to the inquisitorial board of the church that could not persuade him to forego Judaism. He was sentenced to death by fire.

An old friend of the Count from the days before his conversion was the one who was appointed to light the bonfire. As the pyre was being formed and the flames about to be set, the man approached the convert. Fearful of the terrible crime he was about to perpetrate, he asked the holy convert, "When you come to heaven are you going to ask your G-d to enact Heavenly retribution against me?"

Ignoring the commotion, around him Avraham ben Avraham smiled.

"Let me tell you a story," he began. "When I was a young child, my father gave me a beautiful toy soldier which I cherished. One day you came to play with me and because your soldier was nowhere as nice as mine. you were obviously jealous.

“So, when you thought I was not looking, you broke my soldier. I was enraged, and I swore to take revenge. Of course when I grew older, the whole incident was a joke to me. I realized that compared to all the accomplishments I had in my life and the wealth I was to inherit, the silly soldier meant nothing! It never again crossed my mind."

The holy convert emitted a slight laugh. "I am about to enter the world of Olam HaBah. One who sanctifies his life for the sake of Hashem and Torah is considered the greatest of all the righteous. Believe me, when I get there, your fate will be as irrelevant to me as the fate of my toy soldier!

“Do not fear. I will not have the need or even desire to think of taking revenge for your inane acts of this petty world."

Comment: Revenge is a natural reaction when one is hurt. But the obsessive element of revenge comes with is all-consuming. How free is the person who lets go, and lets Hashem settle the score.

*Reprinted from last week’s parsha email from Reb Mendel Berlin. (Story from Rav Mordechai Kamenetsky.)*

**A Tale to Remember**

**Onkelos and His Uncle**

**The Roman King (Hadrian)**

Onkelos was a nephew of the Roman King Adrianus (Hadrian). Onkelos was very fond of the Jews and wanted to convert so he could serve Hashem fully, but he was afraid of his uncle. Onkelos devised a plan and told his uncle, “I would like to go out in the world and learn business”.

The king was happy to hear this and offered Onkelos money, saying, “You may take all the gold and silver you need to get started,” but Onkelos answered, “No thank you. I want to learn how to build a business, and make money for myself. But please, dear uncle, what advice can you offer, so that I will succeed in my efforts?”

Adrianus said, “Look around and buy merchandise that is cheap, because its value will eventually increase!”

Onkelos thanked his uncle and left Rome.

Instead of going to learn about business, he went straight to *Eretz Yisroel*, where he learned Torah and became a *ger*, a Jewish convert!

After a while, Onkelos returned to Rome and went to visit his uncle, King Adrianus. When the king saw him, he asked why he looked so different. Onkelos replied that it was because he had become a Jew, learned Torah, and had a *bris*.

The king became very angry and yelled, “Who told you to do such a thing?!”

Onkelos replied, “You did, Uncle!”

The king was furious. “How dare you lie to me!”

Onkelos responded, “When I came to ask your advice about which merchandise to buy, you said to look for something that is low in value today, because eventually it will become valuable. I looked around at the nations of the world, and discovered that the Jewish people were held in the lowest regard. According to your own words, they will one day become a great and important people! I decided to listen to your advice, so I became a Jew.”

At that point, one of the royal advisors who was sitting nearby and heard the conversation said to King Adrianus, “It is true, what Onkelos is saying. I heard that one day even great kings will stand up for the Jewish people!”

King Adrianus was not happy to hear this and slapped his advisor on the cheek. He asked Onkelos again why he felt he had to become a Jew.

Onkelos answered, “Because I wanted very much to learn Hashem’s Torah.” The king asked, “Why couldn’t you just learn Torah without getting a *bris*?” Onkelos explained, “A Jew without a *bris* cannot learn Torah properly.”

Onkelos left and went home. The king was very displeased with his nephew and sent a troop of Romans to arrest him. When the officers came to his house, Onkelos started a conversation with them about the greatness of Torah. The officers were so impressed that they decided to also become *geirim*! Obviously, this greatly upset King Adrianus.

He sent another troop of officers to arrest Onkelos, but he told them, “Make sure you don’t have any conversations with him!” As they were taking Onkelos out of the house, he said, “Do you mind if I ask you a small question?”

They agreed. Onkelos inquired, “Would a king hold a torch for his people, to light the way for them?”

The officers answered, “No! The people hold the torch for the king!”

Onkelos responded, “But Hashem is the King of all kings, and yet He held a ‘torch’ for the Jews in the *Midbar* when they left *Mitzrayim*, by giving them a Pillar of Fire so they would be able to see at night!” The officers were impressed and wanted to serve Hashem. They converted also!

Now King Adrianus was really angry! He sent a third group of soldiers and ordered them not to have any discussions at all with him! As they were taking Onkelos out of the house, he put his hand on the *Mezuzah* as they passed it.

The officers thought it was a strange thing to do.

Onkelos asked them, “Do you know what this is?” referring to the *Mezuzah* he was touching.

They replied, “You tell us!”

Onkelos explained, “The way of the world is that a human king sits inside his palace and the servants guard him from the outside. But *B’nei Yisroel*, Hashem’s servants, are inside, and Hashem, the King over everyone, guards them from the outside! That’s what this *Mezuzah* does. We put it on the door to protect us, and Hashem watches over us!”

The officers were so inspired that they converted also, and became *geirim*.

After failing three times to arrest Onkelos, King Adrianus realized that he would not win and didn’t try to arrest him again.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yeuda Winzelberg. (Adapted from Yalkut Shimoni 888 (Tehilim 147), Avodah Zarah*

**Guarding the Dead**

**By** [**Elizabeth Savage**](http://tabletmag.com/author/elizabeth-savage/)

During my first shift sitting *shmira* with a body awaiting burial, I felt sad, guilty, anxious—and grateful

A young woman who belonged to my synagogue took her own life in December at age 26. She had served on the *chesed*committee—welcoming new members, visiting the sick, and comforting the bereaved—and now a call went out to the congregation to volunteer their time on her behalf, to sit *shmira*.

*Shmira*, which literally means guarding, is one of the prescribed Jewish rituals surrounding death. The group in charge of these customs is called the *Chevra Kedisha*(literally “holy group/community”), which attends to the preparation and protection of the body between death and burial—a time when it’s believed the soul hovers in a sort of liminal space. Someone must clean and dress the body, and someone must sit *shmira*at all times.

I learned all of this eight years before, when I converted to Judaism. At the time, it had brought a strange solace to me, knowing that a body never lies alone and must be handled with the utmost respect and care. But in the years since I had become a Jew, I had not had the chance to sit *shmira*myself.

I decided now was the time.

People were requested to sit for a two-hour shift, preferably in pairs. I checked online and found that all the slots were already filled except 7-9 p.m. My heart fluttered, and I grew nervous. I chided myself for feeling this way: I wouldn’t be handling the body, just sitting with her. I decided to check back in an hour. If no one had signed up by then, I told myself, I’d do it.

In the meantime, I looked up what one is supposed to do at *shmira*: There is a prescribed group of psalms to read, and my shul said other “appropriate” books were fine to bring as well. I went over to the long bookshelves in my apartment, allowing my fingertips to graze the bindings. I squinted, reading the titles. Was [*Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity*](http://www.amazon.com/Orthodoxy-Confronts-Modernity-Jonathan-Sacks/dp/0881253634/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1429646995&sr=1-1&keywords=Orthodoxy+Confronts+Modernity) appropriate? [*The Quest for Authenticity*](http://www.amazon.com/Quest-Authenticity-Thought-Simhah-Bunim/dp/9655240037/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1429647528&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Quest+for+Authenticity)? I didn’t know. How about [*Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*](http://www.amazon.com/Moral-Grandeur-Spiritual-Audacity-Essays/dp/0374524955/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1429647046&sr=1-1&keywords=Moral+Grandeur+and+Spiritual+Audacity)? What did I want people to read alongside *my*body, I wondered, when I die?

My eyes alighted on Alan Lew’s [*This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared*](http://www.amazon.com/This-Real-Completely-Unprepared-Transformation/dp/0316739081/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1429647071&sr=1-1&keywords=This+Is+Real+and+You+Are+Completely+Unprepared), a spiritual meditation on preparing for the High Holidays. Lew, a rabbi who died of a heart attack in his 60s, was born Jewish but his spiritual journey led him to meditation and Eastern thought. After much searching, he returned to Judaism and became a rabbi, integrating Jewish tradition and meditation in profound ways. He was not afraid of confronting mortality: I remembered the book saying that Yom Kippur was a dress rehearsal for your own death. I pulled the book out.

Then I kept searching and landed on [*The December Project*](http://tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/167091/zalman-schachter-shalomi-december), a series of conversations between the late Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and a reporter, Sara Davidson, about the final phase of his life. I’d had the privilege of meeting Reb Zalman several times and, like so many, I respected him immensely. His reflections on death and mortality, published shortly before he [died](http://tabletmag.com/scroll/178185/rabbi-zalman-schachter-shalomi-dies-at-89) last summer, left a deep impression. This would be the second book I would take.

I checked back online. The 7-9 p.m. slot remained vacant. I signed up to take the shift, alone. I put on my most modest black dress and my black frum-lady hat and left with the two books under my arm.

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I was greeted by the funeral-home director , who motioned solemnly to follow him down the stairs. The two *shomrim*from the previous time slot were sitting there quietly, waiting to be relieved.

One of the *shomrim*, a woman, stood. “Let me show you around,” she said somewhat nervously. It was her first time doing this, too.

There was a small reception area, which faced an elevator bank, where they had been sitting. To the right of the reception area, a sort of showroom of coffins; big, small, fancy, modest. My eyes landed immediately on a little kid-sized one. I shuddered. And there were shiny caskets with various plush interiors. These weren’t the austere pine boxes I pictured when I thought of a Jewish burial.

At the other end of the room was a heavy industrial door, out of place with the muted tones and soft light of the place.

“Are you OK?” the *shomeret*said. I must have seemed not OK.

“Sure,” I said. “It’s just very sad.” This was true, but I also felt anxious.

The woman slowly opened the metal door. Cold air hit my face as I peered in. We’d arrived where the bodies were kept. It was like *Law & Order*; the neat rows of closed lockers stretching uniformly down the hall.

“And this is … ” she said.

“Yeah, I understand.” It was about to be just me and this room.

In one of the traditions I grew up in—Greek Orthodoxy—the body is prominently displayed, both at the wake and funeral. I didn’t see her body, just the rows of closed lockers.

Much to my relief, as a Jew I wasn’t required to see the body or even sit directly next to it; to be a *shomeret*, I just had to remain on the same floor.

“You can read psalms or just be still, if you want,” she said, putting on a heavy wool coat. “That’s what I did.” And with that the two of them left.

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This woman whom I would be guarding was younger than me. I could picture her face. I didn’t know if I’d ever spoken with her. A tragic death. I was severely anorexic for a period in my 20s and had perhaps my own near miss at the age at which she had killed herself. I’m now on solid ground, but sitting *shmira* for this woman I felt consciously grateful that I’d survived. It was, in large part, the kindness of strangers who had saved me from myself.

And with this gratitude, I also felt regret, sadness, and a little guilt. Why hadn’t I ever spoken to this young woman? Maybe I could have been there for her? Why hadn’t my husband and I had her over for a Shabbat meal? Becoming Jewish involves knowing what it is to be the stranger. How quickly I had forgotten what it is to be new in a community.

I sat where the previous *shomrim*had sat, noticing the giant clock staring me directly in the face. 7:02. It was so quiet. I couldn’t hear any noise. There’s something reassuring about the constant low rumble of Manhattan street noise. Maybe I’ll meditate, I thought, putting my hands into a classic meditation mudra. 7:04. No, that’s not right.

I’m freaking myself out. I’m going to read psalms, I decided.

7:13. Just nine minutes had passed?

I opened up the small worn book of psalms, searching for the correct one to begin with. I read in English rather than Hebrew, and hoped that would be OK.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me lie down in green pastures;

He leadeth me beside still waters.

He restoreth my soul;

He leadeth me in the paths of the righteous for his name’s sake

Yea, I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me …

My eyes filled with tears. What was happening? I didn’t even know this woman. I dove back into the verse. How had I never noticed the beauty of these Psalms?

The elevator doors opened, startling me. It was the funeral director again, now with a middle-aged couple, who looked blankly at me, perhaps even beyond me. Was I supposed to say something? The director ushered them quickly by and into the coffin room. The door closed softly behind. I realized that these were her parents.

I heard muffled cries, and I tried to refocus on the poetry before me. These poor people. I returned to the words.

The three emerged from the other room.

“I’ll explain it all,” the funeral director said, as they made their way up the stairs.

“But what is she doing?” the mother asked.

“She’s a very religious lady and she’s one of the people who comes here to sit and attend. They read Torah.”

It took a moment to realize that I was the “religious lady.” The “me” of a decade ago, that reckless 26-year-old, wouldn’t have believed it. But here I was now, immersed in ancient verses, praying for the hovering soul of a 26-year-old who hadn’t escaped death as I had. I had a moment of real intensity. I wept: for her, for the beauty of psalms, and for the strangers who do *mitzvot*. How lucky I was to be alive, what a gift it is; this messy, painful, beautiful, brutal, chaotic, perfectly ordered world.

Just after 9 p.m., I emerged at street level; disoriented by the blaring sirens, honking taxis, the cacophonous chorus of New York City. I walked up Columbus Avenue, happy for the cold air. In the distance, I heard chanting. The whole *shmira*experience had me a little dazed. The voices grew closer. No, I wasn’t imagining this. They were people yelling and they were getting closer.

“[I can’t breathe!](http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/04/justice/new-york-grand-jury-chokehold/) I can’t breathe! I can’t breathe!” the protesters chanted, now just a block behind me. A different kind of death commemoration.

I stopped and waited on the sidewalk, pulling my jacket tight against the wind. Another*mitzvah*had found me. I was grateful to be alive, grateful to be part of Jewish tradition. The crowd slowly made its way up the avenue. I joined the throng and walked home.

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**Story#909**

**A Gift for King Moshiach**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=ABC&msgNum=0000q_G0:001LFtLT00000JDH&count=1430423959&randid=260347932&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=260347932)

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Rubin of Linsk/Lesko** (the father of the renowned chasidic rebbe, R. Naftali of Ropshitz), would sign his letters with his name and the title, "*Ohev Yisrael*" - "lover of the Jewish people."

One time, when he was about to sign in his customary way, the pen fell from his hand. When he picked it up and tried to sign again, the pen fell again. The Rabbi realized that this wasn't by accident, and that Heaven was preventing him from signing.

He burst into bitter tears and said, "Oy, the good trait that I crowned myself with, the attribute of *ahavat Yisrael* (love of a fellow Jew), was taken from me. What did I do wrong? Did I insult someone and is this my punishment?"

The Rebbe thought through everything that had happened that day, but did not find anything amiss. He called his family members and asked them, "Did I insult anybody unwittingly?"

The family remembered that in the morning a coarse man wearing a peasant cap had come to the door, and he wasn't allowed to enter. The man was insulted and left.

The Rebbe immediately told his aides to go and find the man. The aides searched the town but did not find him. They looked in inns and hostels, but he was nowhere to be found. They asked passersby, but nobody knew where the man was. Finally, someone said he saw the man enter a place of sin. They went there and found him.

The aides told him to hurry, for the Rebbe wanted him, but the man refused to go with them. They grabbed him and brought him to the Rebbe, and told the Rebbe where they had found him.

The Rebbe acted as though he didn't hear what they said, and greeted the man warmly. He asked the man's pardon for insulting him, and then he asked his household to prepare a nice meal for the guest.

When the man saw how much the Rebbe honored him, he regretted his actions and became a penitent. It was only after the man departed that the Rebbe explained why he had given the man such honor.

"In the Days of *Moshiach* there will be Jews who do not want to greet Moshiach, and will stay where they are. Ultimately, the gentiles will take these Jews and carry them to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

"Who will these Jews be? These Jews will be sinners who have sunk to the 49th level of impurity, who will be brought as a gift to Moshiach. And we insulted such a gift! That is why it was so important to appease and honor him."

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*Source*: Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from *//lchaimweekly.org* (#903), with permission.

*Biographical note:* **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Rubin of Linsk (Lesko)** (c.1740 - 1803 [23 Tishri 5564]) was a disciple of the Hasidic rebbes Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, and Elimelech of Lizhensk. He is often considered the first *rebbe* of the Ropshitz dynasty, of which his son, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz, was the most famous.

Connection: seasonal- Iyar 11 is the 178th yahrzeit of **Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz**

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**The Religious Hypocrite**

**By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn**

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.

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!"*

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)

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

**Ahavas Yisroel in Kathmunda, Nepal**

**By Rabbi Yoseph Vigler**



*Rabbi Cheski Lifshitz on a helicopter mission*

*to rescue stranded Israeli backpackers in Nepal.*

A couple of years ago I invited Rabbi Cheski Lifshitz, a yeshiva classmate of mine and a good friend, to come share his experiences [with members of my shul in Flatbush, Brooklyn] from life in Kathmandu, Nepal where he, along with his wife and kids, run the Chabad House. Yes, that means they live there and manage to keep kashrus - strictly Cholov Yisroel, which requires them to actually go watch the milking of the cows or import frozen yogurts, and find a way to be mechanech their kids on the online school, at home, or by sending them away; and everything else a frum lifestyle involves.

He riveted everyone with his experiences - how he followed a stream to its source in the mountains to find out if its waters were predominantly spring waters, and thus kosher for mikvah or were they rain waters, and thus unfit; or how he discovered a Jew long lost to yiddishkeit living the life of a hermit.

A Nepalese once asked an Israeli backpacker, “How many Jews are there in Israel?”  The Israeli answered, “about 6,000,000”. The Napalese responded, “I did not ask how many Israelis in Nepal! How many are there in Israel?

The Far East is swarming with young Israeli backpackers, the types who are running away from their Jewish roots and want only to escape.

Unfortunately, at home in Eretz Yisroel, many of these chevra would not set foot near anyone or anything frum, they literally hate frumkeit. Yet, in Kathmandu, the Chabad House is non – threatening, on the contrary, it is a welcoming oasis, a home away from home. In the most casual atmosphere you could imagine, Rabbi Cheski and Chani Lifschitz, teach seminars in the Himalayan mountains. Jews who come to Nepal in hopes of discovering spirituality through eastern religions, find out that there is no better address to find spiritual energy than right under their noses, in Yiddishkeit.

The Israeli media constantly interviews them from afar, and the Kiddush Hashem the Lifshitz’s have created, is remarkable.

This week, in the wake of the devastating tragic earthquake in Nepal, a natural disaster that took 6,100 lives to date - including nineteen hikers killed by avalanches on Mount Everest - Nepal took the international stage.

Israel joined the aid effort and dispatched 270 workers to an expansive field hospital in Nepal.

Rabbi Cheski is the only local address for these Israelis, a home away from home. Amidst the craziness going on, Rabbi Cheski was able to track many of the Jewish backpackers via special satellite phones that were donated to the Chabad House by a family who lost a loved one tragically not long ago because he could not be tracked. Rabbi Cheski himself flew by helicopter to rescue twenty five Israelis in the mountains while his wife Chani stayed home, serving thousands of kosher meals. Their children were air lifted to the safety of Eretz Yisroel, where the President of Israel invited them in for chocolate! He called their parents to express thanks on behalf of Israel.

Imagine the incredible Kiddush Hashem that caused.

The Baal Shem Tov said: A soul may descend to this world and live for seventy or eighty years just to do a favor for another Jew - even one time, even in a material matter.

We are currently in the period of Sefiras Ha'omer, mourning the 24,000 talmidim of Rabi Akiva who died because they did not honor one another. Obviously the tikkun has to take the form of senseless Ahavas Yisroel - go out of your way to find another Jew and do a favor for him or her – be it a physical favor or a spiritual one.

Oh, and the Jew does not have to necessarily dress like you or look like you. It's just plain and simple, senseless Ahavas Yisroel

You don't have to go to Nepal to do so. You could even do so right here in Brooklyn

And please donate to the relief efforts of Chabad of Nepal. [www.MayanYisroel.net/Nepal](http://www.mayanyisroel.net/Nepal)

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