**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5772**

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**Saved by a Prayer (Part One):**

**One Jew's Miraculous Story.**

**By Sara Yoheved Rigler**

 A Holocaust survivor once told me, “Every Jew who survived the Holocaust survived by a miracle.” Alexander Ungar survived by four miracles.

 Alexander was born to an affluent, religious Jewish family in the village of Hidosholos in southwestern Hungary in 1906. He was married with three children by 1940, when he was drafted into the Hungarian army.

 His father-in-law, fearing for his safety, insisted on taking Alexander to the Shimoni Rebbe, a Hassidic rebbe known for the efficacy of his blessings. The Rebbe blessed Alexander and told him that whenever his life was in danger he should recite a certain Biblical verse and add the words, “with the intention of the Maharal of Prague.”

**How Could He Presume to Have**

**The Same Intentions of the Maharal**

 Alexander protested. The 16th-century Maharal of Prague had been a great scholar and Kabbalist. According to legend, he had made the Golem, who had saved the Jews of Prague from a blood libel. How could Alexander presume to say anything with the lofty intention of the Maharal?

 The Rebbe acknowledged that of course he could not duplicate the mystical intention of the Maharal, but nevertheless he must recite the words in Yiddish, “with the intention of the Maharal of Prague” at the end of the Biblical verse whenever his life was in danger.

 Alexander’s first assignment in the army was at the Hungarian Secret Police Station. He considered it a plum assignment because his aunt lived across the street from the station, and at lunch hour he could go and eat kosher food at her house. She gave him kosher sandwiches to supply him till the next day. Throughout the war, Alexander was able to keep kosher until he was deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

 In March, 1944, the Germans invaded Hungary. In April, Alexander was sent to a labor camp in Komaron. One day, on the seventh day of Passover, Alexander was ordered to join a group of 50 workers at the railroad station.

**Ordered to Load Bales of Hay**

**And Straw onto Railroad Cars**

 The Nazis ordered them to load bales of hay and straw onto railroad cars to be shipped to the Russian front. The Hungarian authorities had always given ten-minute breaks every hour for the workers to smoke or use the toilet. The Germans, however, gave no breaks. After a while, the chain smokers started to smoke while loading the hay. Alexander warned them that the hay was highly flammable, but they ignored him.

 Suddenly the hay burst into flame and started a huge conflagration. Fortunately, there was a fire hydrant nearby. The workers passed buckets hand to hand, and managed to extinguish the blaze.

**Jewish Workers Are Accused of**

**Sabotaging German War Effort**

 The German guards were irate. They accused the Hungarian Jewish workers of sabotage. They ordered the men to line up in ten rows of five and shouted that they would all be executed. The guards lifted their guns and aimed them at the hapless Jews. Alexander, in the last row, kept repeating the verse that the Shimoni Rebbe had instructed him.

 The minutes dragged on, but the guards did not fire. Suddenly Alexander felt someone behind him strike him on the right shoulder. He turned around and saw the Captain of the Hungarian Secret Police, for whom he had worked earlier during the war. The Captain, who had liked Alexander because he was an intelligent and diligent worker, asked him what had happened.

**Explains the Accident to the Captain**

 He explained that it was not sabotage; otherwise they would not have worked so hard to put out the fire. Rather, smokers could not keep from smoking, and a burning cigarette stub had accidentally ignited the straw. Alexander succeeded in convincing the Captain.

 The execution was cancelled, and the men went back to work. “This was my first experience with that prayer,” Alexander recounted a half-century later.

**The Bombs**

 Soon after, the American Air Force was heavily bombing that part of Hungary. Alexander’s work brigade was ordered to clear away the rubble after each air attack. Whenever the air raid siren sounded, the Hungarian officers allowed the Jewish slave laborers to run out of the camp and seek shelter. When the Germans took over, however, they forbid the Jews from fleeing the bombardments. The camp was next to a munitions factory, and 2,000 workers were killed during one bombing attack.

 As Alexander later related:

**Kept His Tefillin**

**And Book of Psalms**

 *When the Germans prohibited us from fleeing the bombs, I used what few resources I had to dig a little ditch. Whenever they sounded the siren, I took my tefillin and Book of Psalms that I had with me, and went into this little ditch. Of course, it didn’t protect me very much. If I was in the ditch and the explosion wasn’t too close, then I wasn’t harmed. But, since this kind of bomb made a tremendously large hole, like a funnel, if it hit anywhere near my ditch, there was no way to survive.*

 *One day the siren went off and the airplanes flew overhead. I ran into the ditch, and started saying the verse. The bomb dropped right on the other side of the road, and killed both the German guard and seven of my friends.*

 *Everyone in my labor brigade marveled at how I was not hurt. It was clearly a miracle. Soon after, another attack began. Everyone came running to me and jumped into the ditch with me. Even the dog ran to me for protection! It was unbelievable the way the dog behaved, as if he saw something. Maybe the dog saw the angel who was protecting me. Otherwise, why should the dog run to me in the ditch?*

**Potatoes for Passover**

 Afterwards, Alexander was deported to the infamous concentration camp of Buchenwald. He realized that his life depended on getting out of there by any means, so when the Germans started to assemble a transport of skilled workers, including auto mechanics, Alexander volunteered. The transport was sent to Tauchau, about seven kilometers from Leipzig, Germany. The factory in Tauchau manufactured the *panzer faust,* a hand grenade capable of blowing up a tank.

 The director of the labor camp announced that he needed someone to take care of the boiler, a highly technical job. This huge boiler had several tall chimneys and provided all the steam for the factory’s operation. Alexander stepped forward and declared that he was qualified to take care of the boiler.

 As proof, he claimed that he had received a diploma in engineering from Germany, and he cited the date and place where he had passed his exam. The director immediately went to the telephone and called the institute. He verified that Alexander was telling the truth and was certified to handle the boiler.

 Part of Alexander’s job was to check the chimney pipes so that the soot that collected in the S-curves of the pipes would not block the flow of the smoke. One day when he was checking the pipes, he noticed a square crack on the wall of the room. It turned out to be a large cement block. He determined to check why this block was different than the others. With great exertion, he managed to remove the block. He saw that it opened to an adjoining room that was being used to store potatoes.

**Smuggled a Jewish Calendar**

**Into the Labor Camp**

 Alexander had smuggled a Jewish calendar into the camp, so he knew that the holiday of Passover was just a week away. He thrilled with excitement to realize that he didn’t have to stay alive by eating bread on Passover. Here was an unlimited supply of potatoes!

 But how would he get the potatoes out without being caught? Alexander devised a plan, but he needed help, so he asked another Hungarian Jewish inmate named Klein to assist him. He explained his plan to Klein, who eagerly agreed, because, like all the other inmates, he lived on starvation rations and was always hungry.

 Because there was no fire in the boiler on Sundays, the following Sunday Alexander sent a note to the camp director saying that he wanted to go into the factory to do some maintenance work. The director authorized him to go into the factory, but he sent an SS guard to keep an eye on him.

As Alexander later told the story:

(To be continued next week)

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*

**Mendel Friedman of Lander College: Math Whiz Chooses Small Religious School in Queens Over Ivy League**

**By Joe Parziale**



Anthony DelMundo for New York Daily News

Mendel Friedman, 20, a student at the Lander College for Men in Kew Gardens Hills, Queens, recently placed 22nd out of 4,400 contenders in the William Lowell Putnam competition, a prestigious national math contest. It was the highest ranking of any contestant from a New York college.

 Mendel Friedman’s academic prowess could have landed him at any Ivy League college of his choice.

 But this “gifted prodigy” — as one of his teachers describes him — chose a small, religious school in Queens to hone both his academics and his faith.

 After graduating high school with an immaculate report card and near-perfect SAT scores, the 20-year-old chose the Lander College for Men in Kew Gardens Hills because of its promise for individual attention and focus on Judaic studies.

 He recently finished among the top ranks in one of the most competitive undergraduate math contests in the nation.

 “I like to develop a lot of areas which I think help me as a thinker and a problem solver,” said [Friedman](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Oleg%2BFriedman), who is set to graduate in January after 2 1/2 years of undergraduate study.

**Finished with High Ranking in**

**Prestigious National Math Contest**

 Friedman recently found out he finished 22nd out of some 4,400 contenders in the [William Lowell Putnam](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/William%2BLowell%2BPutnam) competition, a prestigious national math contest. It was the highest ranking of any contestant from a New York college.

 Friedman said he always had an appetite for knowledge. He taught himself basic calculus by the end of elementary school, and more recently learned Russian on his own so he could enjoy works by [Leo Tolstoy](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Leo%2BTolstoy) and [Anton Chekhov](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Anton%2BChekhov). He also speaks fluent French, Hebrew and Yiddish.

 The Chicago native, who now lives in a dorm just off campus, credits his discipline, particularly in math, to his devout Jewish faith.

**A Division of Touro College**

 Lander has an enrollment of about 300 students and is a division of Touro College. [Dean Moshe Sokol](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Dean%2BMoshe%2BSokol) said it seeks students like Friedman who are able to invest time in both academic and Orthodox Jewish studies.

 Friedman said he believes the two are related.

 “They both stem from a very deep passion of mine,” he said.

 That passion, said his teacher Oleg Friedman (no relation), was clear from their first class together.

 When he would give lectures geared toward Mendel’s level, “I lost the whole rest of the class,” he said.

**Undertook Independent Research in**

**Functional Math & Quantum Mechanics**

 He and mathematics chair [Moshe Snow](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Moshe%2BSnow) took Mendel under their wings and gave him independent research to do in the fields of functional mathematics and quantum mechanics.

 But it’s not all work and no play, [Mendel Friedman](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Mendel%2BFriedman) said “I do have friends, too,” he joked.

 Friedman is a basektball and baseball fan, and when asked if he uses his math skills to figure out shot angles, he said:

 “Sports are a way to relax.”

 “You can’t always be caught up in academia,” he added.

*Reprinted from the May 9, 2012 edition of the New York Daily News*

**It Once Happened**

**The Rebbe’s Perceptive Questions of the Chasan**

 Rabbi Chaim of Sanz never turned away anyone in need, but when Shmuel needed to marry off his daughter, the tzadik just looked at him and refused to give him a penny. "I will give you some advice," said the Rebbe, "and I will provide you with a letter of introduction to a person in Vienna named Nachum ben Yosef.

 You must get from him 500 gold rubles. Just remember one thing: Don't take even one penny less than that amount."

**How to Find Nachum in**

**The Great City of Vienna?**

 "But Vienna is a great city; how will I be able to find this person?" asked a stunned Shmuel.

 "Don't worry. Just go into one of the shuls. There you will meet a man who will take you to him for five silver coins," replied the Rebbe.

 The poor man soon found himself outside of the Rebbe's room, perplexed at his situation. The way to Vienna was very far; his pathetic old horse would never make it. He sat down on a bench and thought for a while. He decided to sell the horse and proceeded on the journey.

 When Shmuel finally arrived in Vienna there were many shuls. He entered the first one and went up to the caretaker.

**Asks the Caretaker**

**With Great Trepidation**

 "Perhaps you know a person named Nachum ben Yosef?" Shmuel was afraid the man would laugh at him, but instead, he replied, "Yes, I know him and I'll lead you to him for five silver coins."

 The traveler was thrilled with his good fortune. He gave the man the silver coins and a short time later they were standing in front of Nachum's house. Shmuel knocked on the door and a distinguished-looking gentleman invited him inside. Shmuel handed him the letter from the Rebbe.

 "I don't understand why the Rebbe thinks I should give you such a tremendous sum of money. I will be happy to give you one or two rubles, but five hundred is out of the question."

 "No," protested Shmuel, "The Rebbe told me that I am not to accept even a penny less than the entire sum, and I am following his instructions!"

 "All right, I'll give you fifty rubles, but that's it."

**Insists on the Complete 500 Rubles**

 "You don't understand. The Rebbe told me I have to get the entire five hundred, and I must do exactly as he told me!"

 This continued for another half hour or so, with the gentleman offering a bit more, and Shmuel flatly refusing to budge. Finally, the Viennese gentleman was so frustrated he didn't know what to do. He wanted to honor the Rebbe's request, but five hundred rubles was a fortune! He decided to ask his wife's opinion on the matter.

 After reading the letter from the Rebbe the woman said, "Please give him all the money he requests, and I will explain everything to you.

**Recalling the Visit to Budapest**

 "Do you remember our trip to Budapest? When we were there, the Rebbe was also visiting. A wedding was about to take place, but none of the rabbis would agree to officiate because no one knew the groom. The bridal party was in a tizzy, not knowing what to do, when word was brought to them that the Rebbe himself would come.

 "Finally the Rebbe arrived. He stood to the side, deep in thought, and suddenly asked that the bride's parents be brought to him. 'Tell me,' he asked, 'Did you ever have other children?'

 "'We had a little boy who drowned many years ago,' replied the father.

 "'Would you tell me how it happened?' asked the Rebbe.

**Our Son Disappeared Under the Water**

 "'One day, we went on an outing to the countryside. The children went bathing in the river, and our son disappeared under the water. We ran, but by the time we came, there was no trace of him.'

 "'Do you remember if he had any particular distinguishing mark on his body?' asked the Rebbe.

 "'Yes,' answered the mother, 'He had a deep scar on his knee where he had once fallen on a tree trunk.'

 "The Rebbe called over the bridegroom and asked him to roll up his trousers. Sure enough, there was the exact mark the mother had described. The parents fell on their son's neck with tears pouring down their cheeks. With the power of his holy vision, the Rebbe saved the brother and sister from a terrible transgression. Word of this miracle spread from town to town, and people flocked to see this tzadik with their own eyes.

 "I was present at the time, and I also went to the tzadik. I offered to give him a large sum of money to distribute to the needy. At the time, I didn't understand his reply, for he refused to accept any money from me. He said that one day, one of his Chasidim would come and I could 'pay him back' then. Now I am asking you to give this man the entire sum of money that the tzadik requests from you."

 The gentleman took the sum of money from a drawer and presented it to the Chasid. When the Chasid left, the woman turned to her husband and said, "There is one more thing I didn't tell you. The bridegroom in the story is none other than our own son-in- law, the husband of our daughter!"

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

**How a Smile Could**

**Save a Life**

**By** [**Sara Esther Crispe**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/7334/jewish/Sara-Esther-Crispe.htm)

 I could tell that they had no idea who I was. I tried to remind them about the Shabbat meals I had eaten at their house so many years ago. But to no avail. They really just didn’t remember me.

 I wasn’t insulted. I often bump into people I met years ago, without being able to place them or recollect how we knew each other. But in this particular case it was funny, because not only did I remember this family in great detail; they were actually responsible, to a great degree, for my life today.

 You see, about 18 years ago, one of their daughters was having her bat mitzvah. For some reason, the parents asked if I would come and speak to her group of friends. In doing so, I realized how much I loved public speaking, and began thinking that it was something I wanted to do with my life. At the time, the only public speaking I had done was teaching 12th grade high school, and that was certainly not the kind of reinforcement I needed to choose it as a career.

**Their Request was Something**

**That Greatly Changed My Life**

 They were responsible, to a great degree, for my life today. But showing up at that bat mitzvah, speaking to those girls and having them laugh with me, and then tell me that I inspired them . . . that was something that changed my life.

 If only we could know the things we said or did that might have altered someone’s life for the better. If only we could know when we were the right person at the right time who said the right thing. So often, we go through our days thinking we accomplished nothing, having no clue that the person we complimented or smiled at might have needed that smile more than we could ever imagine.

 The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, taught that we come into this world for our entire lifetime just to do a favor for another. There is even a cute little ditty that the kids sing with this message. Just one favor. Really? A whole lifetime, and that could be the sum total of it all? And yet, maybe that one favor changed a life? Inspired a life? Saved a life?

**A Man Spoke of His Jump**

**Off the Golden Gate Bridge**

 At a mental health awareness event a few years ago, I heard a man describe his suicide attempt, in which he jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Few who have made that 220-foot jump have lived to tell their stories. Actually, only 2 percent of those who jump survive. But this man was one of the fortunate ones.

 The second his feet left the bridge, he deeply regretted his decision. He spoke to us about the power of depression, about the intense loneliness one can feel. The night he made the decision to die, he rode a public city bus to the bridge. He was the last one off the bus at the last stop. As he exited, he looked at the bus driver, desperate for a kind word. But the bus driver never even bothered looking at him.

 This young man then made a promise to himself that if anyone smiled at him or asked how he was doing, it would prove to him that his life was worthwhile, and he wouldn’t jump. But no one did. At one point a couple even asked him to take their picture, but, consumed with their own lives, they didn’t pick up on the fact that minutes later their picture-taker would be attempting to take his own life.

 Feeling that no one in the world cared about him, and that he had nothing to live for, the man climbed onto the railing of the bridge and jumped. The second his feet left the bridge, he deeply regretted his decision. “I don’t want to die. I don’t want to die,” he prayed the entire way down. Miraculously, he didn’t. He broke just about every bone in his body, but he lived. Until the rescuers reached him, sea lions swam under his broken body, keeping his head above water.

**A Replica of the Favor**

**Mentioned by the Baal Shem Tov**

 His story is amazing. But even more extraordinary than his personal survival is the promise he made to himself before he jumped. One smile could have saved his life. We could have been that one person on the bridge. Or that person on the bus with him. We could have offered a smile, or a “have a good night.” And had we offered that smile, we would have gone on our way, having no idea what that small act accomplished. That could have been the favor that the Baal Shem Tov was speaking about.

 When I met this family again after so many years, it was clear that the impact they had made on me was much greater than the impact I had made on them. And that was perfectly fine. I didn’t need them to remember me. I just needed them to know how they influenced my life. By giving me the opportunity to speak, they introduced me to something I love, something I have been doing professionally from that point onward. Ironically, I reconnected to this family at a Passover program where my husband and I were the keynote speakers!

**All Our Actions, Even the Not**

**So Big Can Have a Great Impact**

 Everything we do, the big things as well as the seemingly not so big, can have an impact. I felt so blessed that I was able to see this family again, that I was able to thank them for what they had given me, and to let them see that they had made a huge difference in the life of someone they didn’t even remember.

 Having that experience reminded me that everything we do, the big things as well as the seemingly not so big, can have an impact, sometimes even a lifesaving one. So the next time we walk down the street minding our own business, let’s take that second to look up and smile at a stranger passing by. Maybe, just maybe, that is what he is living for.

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Plot That Failed**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 It was one of the matchmaker’s rare successes and he rejoiced at the thought that both families were pleased with the *shiduch* he had initiated and that he would soon be collecting his *shadchanut* fee. But before the conclusion was reached, he received a call from a friend from abroad who was coming to Israel with his daughter in search of a *shiduch* for her. The sum he offered the *shadchan* if he succeeded was far beyond anything he had ever received in his career, and temptation overcame him.

 He was convinced that the boy whose engagement was soon to be celebrated would be ideal for his friend’s daughter. In order to make him available, he rushed off to his father and maliciously lied to him that the girl’s father was spreading terrible stories about him. He then did the same with the girl’s father and thus succeeded in breaking up the almost certain match.

**Had Doubts About the Accuracy**

**Of the Shadchan’s Report**

 This unscrupulous fellow was not so successful when he tried pairing the boy with his friend’s daughter. But the story did have a happy ending thanks to the initiative taken by the girl’s father. After his initial anger at his prospective *mechutan*, he began to have doubts about the accuracy of the *shadchan’s* report that he had maligned him. He went to see him and asked why he had spoken against him, and was surprised to hear that the same lie had been told to him.

 They then embraced each other and the original *shiduch* finally came to fruition.When the malicious *shadchan* had the gall to ask for hisfee, since he was the initiator of the match, the local rabbitold him that he would have him publicly ostracized for suchbehavior and that he had no claim to a fee since he demonstratedthat he did not want the original *shiduch* to succeed.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Story #755**

**More than Eighty Thousand Welcoming Souls**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000dqG0:001FgYcF000014Ze&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1337127295&randid=1678956562&content=central)

 One day in 1850 a chasid called on Rebbe Meir of Premishlan and, as often before, handed him a kvitl note. The tzadik took the note on which the man’s requests were noted, leaned his head on his arms, and was soon deep in thought.

Then he said: “You should know that you stand in serious danger, and are in need of the mercies of heaven. But I have a way in which you may be saved.

**Requests a Donation of 351 Gold**

**Rubles for the Needy in the Holy Land**

 “Every year I send to our needy brethren in the Holy Land 702 rubles, the numerical value of the letters that make up the word Shabbat. Half of this sum I send before Pesach, and half before Rosh HaShana. Now Pesach is already approaching, and I haven’t a single penny. Provide me with the 351 gold rubles that are needed now, and you will be spared from all evil.”

 The man trembled in awe.

 “Rebbe, of course I want to fulfill your wish,” he said, “but I haven’t got that amount with me. Let me therefore journey to Lvov to borrow the sum, and I will bring it to you.”

**Take a Message to Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin**

 “If you haven’t got the money, replied the tzadik, then your redemption will come through another means. Take a message from me to the Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin, who lives in Sadigora, and you will have no need to give me that sum of money.

 The chasid agreed at once. In fact he was quite delighted with the opportunity of not only visiting the tzadik of Ruzhin, but of passing on to him a message from his own rebbe as well. [In fact, Reb Meir of Premishlan and Reb Yisrael of Ruzhin were dear friends, although they lived shockingly different lifestyles.

 The Premishlaner’s household, furniture and all, was a picture of dire poverty. No penny was ever allowed to spend the night in his tumbledown cottage: all the large sums that people used to give him he would immediately give away in charity. The Ruzhiner household, on the other hand, was conducted in a

manner befitting royalty.

**The Difference Between the Two Tzadikim**

 Reb Meir used to make the following comment: “What is the difference between the tzadik of Ruzhin and me? To him one may apply the words of the Psalmist: ‘Treasure and wealth are in his house; his righteousness (or charity) endures forever’ [Psalms 112:3]. To me the other verse applies: ‘He distributed alms freely to the poor; his righteousness (or charity) endures forever’” [ibid. verse 9].

 Very well, said Reb Meir. Travel straight from here to Sadigora. As soon as you arrive there go directly to the household of Reb Yisrael, and tell his attendants that you have a message from me. You will arrive there on Friday morning, and when you enter the tzadik’s study you shall address him in these words: “˜Meir has given you the following order. Our passports have already been signed, giving us free passage through all the borders. It is true that eighty thousand souls are waiting to welcome you, but for Meir many more are waiting except that Meir’s passport expires before yours.”

**The Chasid Went Pale with Terror**

 The chasid went pale with terror. He begged to be excused, and tried to explain to his rebbe that he could not undertake a mission such as this. He would be prepared to contribute the sum needed for the poor folk in Israel so long as he would be freed of this mission. Nothing helped. The tzadik entreated and directed him to carry out his mission in full.

 Much against his will the chasid set out for Sadigora. When he arrived on Friday morning the attendant on duty refused him entry: this was not one of the times at which the tzadik received callers. But as soon as he said who had dispatched him, the attendant asked his rebbe, who asked that he be admitted at once.

**Approaches the Ruzhiner with His Kvitl**

 The chasid approached the Ruzhiner with a kvitl in hand.

 “This is not the time for receiving kvitlach,” said the tzadik. “Tell me,

therefore, what mission brings you here.”

 “Before I do that,” said the chasid, “I would like to receive your blessing, for my holy master in Premishlan had told me that he sees ominous things destined for me. For this reason I would request you to accept my kvitl and to give me your blessing.”

 Rebbe Yisrael blessed him, and the chasid faithfully passed on Rebbe Meir’s message, word for word. All this while the tzadik of Ruzhin sat motionless in his place, as if the message in question did not involve himself at all.

 One Thursday some months later Rebbe Meir said to all the Chasidim who were with him:

**Suggests that His Chassidim**

**Go Away for Shabbos**

 “Whoever does not want a disturbed Shabbat had better make the journey home.”

 Though no one understood what he could be alluding to, they all went home. One man only a tzadik by the name of Reb Yisrael of Kalisz requested the permission of Rebbe Meir to stay on for Shabbat.

 “If you want to be here,” answered the Rebbe, “you may do so. But just remember that Shabbat is Shabbat.”

 And on that Shabbat he departed This World.

 On Motzei Shabbat, when the Day of Rest was over, and Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin was sitting at his table on which stood two lighted candlesticks, one candle suddenly went out. Someone lit it again, but the other one went out.

**Sensing a Great Darkness in the World**

 “There is great darkness in the world,” said the tzadik. And the next day the bitter tidings from Premishlan reached them.

 Five months later Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin also passed away.

 Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in A Treasury of Chassidic Tales (Artscroll), as translated by the esteemed Uri Kaploun from Sipurei Chasidim by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin.]

 Biographic Note: Rabbi Meir of Primishlan [? -29 Iyar 1850], lived in abject but patient poverty, yet exerted himself tirelessly for the needy and the suffering. His divine inspiration and his ready wit have become legendary. He wrote no works, but some of his teachings were collected and published by his Chassidim after his death.

 Rabbi Yisrael Friedmann of Ruzhin [1797 - 3 Cheshvan 1850] was a great-grandson of the Maggid of Mezritch, at a young age was already a charismatic leader with an large following of chassidim. Greatly respected by the other rebbes and Jewish leaders of his generation, he was -and still is-referred to as "The Holy Ruzhiner." Six of his sons established Chassidic dynasties, several of which -Sadigora, Chortkov, etc- are still thriving today.

*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/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000dqG0:001FgYcF000014Ze&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1337127295&randid=1678956562&content=central)

**Uniquely Counting the Days**

**Towards Kabbalas Hatorah**

**By Savta Kops**

We are presently counting to reach *Kabbalas Hatorah*, being unique

A holy people blessed by Hashem, flourishing to reach the peak.

The first covenant was with Avroham whose seed would be

As countless as the stars and as innumerable as the sand near the sea.

The second covenant was with the Jews that made them a nation

The single most important event that ever occurred since Creation.

Receiving the Torah, the commandments which link us together

Even if we were scattered to the four corners of the world, forever.

*Bnei Yisroel* accepted the Torah unconditionally without knowing

Because they expressed their faith in Hashem, that they were showing

He would not mislead nor dishearten them, but rather show them the path.

Which would make them a spiritual people able to restrain their wrath.

The Jews, the Torah, and Hashem are one; if we but embrace learning

The A-mighty is talking to us, and when we plead, we are yearning.

To talk to Him, requesting from our hearts, the needs so vital today

And observing the mitzvahs given to us, as we solemnly pray.

The essence of Torah must never be distorted for personal pleasure

To justify your lifestyle with definitions which suits your measure.

The Torah must always remain the model, given to us on the mount

To retain our spiritual attainments more than our financial account.

Our Torah is a tree of life for those who cherish it within their heart

It will nourish your soul, reaching exalted levels of ecstasy, to start.

We will rejoice warmly, be happy and passionately sing praises

To Hashem, our King, remaining a unique people in all phases.

*Reprinted from last week’s edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**The Blood Not Lost**

**Ethics 4:3**

*Azzai used to say: “Do not regard anyone with contempt, and do not reject anything; for there is no man who does not have his hour, and nothing which does not have its place.”* (Avot 4:3)

 The poor man stood in the doorway, smelling the sweet, freshly baked bread, and held out his hand for something to eat. Hunger gnawed at his stomach, for he had not eaten in days. He had tried to find work, but no one wanted to hire him. At last, hearing that Rabbi Yitzchak of Kalush had an open heart and an open door, he came to his house late one Friday afternoon.

**The Smell of Fresh Baked Bread**

 Even before they opened the door, he could smell the fresh baked bread. The cook looked at her *challahs*, golden baked and twisted, and sprinkled with poppy seeds. The cook did not want to give him a slice from the *challahs*. They were for Shabbat. She looked in the kitchen cabinets and drawers for an old, stale piece of bread, the kind that is usually given to beggars, but she found none.

 “Slice up a loaf,” a man’s voice said, “no blood will be lost because of it.”

And so she cut into the loaf, soft and white, and gave the poor man a thick slice to eat. Unless a person has truly been hungry, he cannot know the meaning of bread. The poor man ate greedily. As he left, a man with kind eyes nodded. He was the one who had told her to cut the bread. The poor man knew that this man had saved his life.

**The Poor Man Became the**

**Leader of a Band of Highwaymen**

 Time passed. The poor man was not a very successful beggar. He did better as a thief. In time, he even became the leader of a band of highwaymen, a whole gang of robbers. With their hideout in the mountains, they would watch the highway for passersby and travelers carrying a fat purse. And after robbing them, as often as not, they would silence their victims for good.

 Until, one day, they stopped a certain Jew. With rough shouts they tied him and his driver up, and took his money. Then suddenly, the chief took a second look. Instead of seeing the usual terror in his victim’s eyes, there was a glance of absolute calm, as if some unseen shield was protecting him. And in his eyes was a look a profound kindness.

 Suddenly the chief realized he had seen that look before. “Take this!” he said, throwing the purse back into his lap. “Unbind his driver! Let the two of them go!” he commanded his startled men. “I owe this man a debt!”

 “Do you remember?” he said to the Jew. “Once a poor beggar came to your door just before your holy day. ‘Give him some bread,’ you said. ‘No blood will be lost because of it.’

 “I’ll wager you never dreamed that the blood not lost would be your own! Go in peace, Rabbi Yitzchak of Kalush!”

*Reprinted fromthis week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Rabbi Reisman Offers Insights**

**Into Sefer Shir Hashirim**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**

 Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath and Mora D’Asra of the Agudath Israel of Madison in Brooklyn spoke at a special Pre-Shavuos Hakhel Event in his shul on Sunday night, May 6th. The topic of his lecture was an introduction to Sefer Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs, the Biblical book that has been called by many *Rishonim* “*Kodesh Kadoshim*,” the holiest of all the 24 books of *Tanach*, the Jewish Bible.

 There is always a contrary point of view and Rabbi Reisman noted that the *Tana* Rav Yose opined that *Shir HaShirim* authored by Shlomo Hamelech was in his opinion the least hold of the books that comprise *Tanach*. However Rebbe Akiva declared that in his opinion the *sefer* was indeed “*Kodesh Kadoshim*.”

**More than a Simple Love Story**

 At first glance when reading the “Song of Songs,” if one doesn’t study the deep commentaries, one might think that the *sefer* is simply a love story between a man and a woman and not a symbolic praise of the special love that *Hakodesh Baruch Hu* has for His special chosen nation – *Klal Yisroel*.

 The Ramban writes that there are *apikorsim* who only care about the physical pleasure of this world and they attempt to misrepresent the meaning of *Shir HaShirim*.

 Rabbi Reisman spoke about the custom of many to recite the entire *Shir HaShirim* on the first night of *Pesach* after the *Seder*. Moshe Rabbeinu realized after Dasan and Aviram had reported on him to Pharaoh for having killed the Egyptian taskmaster that the reason for the terrible and brutal bondage of his fellow *Yidden* was because of the serious sin of *lashon hora*. Therefore on the *Seder* night as a demonstration of our rectifying that *aveirah*, there is the *minhag* to read the Song of Songs in which we say pleasant and non *lashon-hora* praises of our love to Hashem.

 When we read the beautiful words in *Shir HaShirim*, the question arises as to what are we doing? Are we just simply repeating the praises of Hashem written by King Solomon or are we using his words to communicate our own feelings of love to G-d.

**The Intention of Shlomo Hamelech**

 Rabbi Reisman quoted Rashi as saying that Shlomo Hamelech had in mind when he wrote his deep love for Hashem that his words would be able to likewise serve all future generations of *Klal Yisroel* in being a vehicle for them too to express their great affection and *hakoras hatov* to *Hakodesh Baruch Hu*.

 Indeed whereas Dovid Hamelech’s *Sefer Tehillim* was the book to portray a Jew’s heartfelt desire for Hashem to help him in times of need, *Shir HaShirim* was the *sefer* best designed to convey a Jew’s strong love for *Hakodesh Baruch Hu*.

 Our reciting *Shir HaShirim* should inspire us to search out ways in our *avodas Hashem* to better serve G-d. Why? Rabbi Reisman explained that in a relationship with another in which one expresses *ahavah*, love, it is not enough to give to the other what is expected or required. If you want to demonstrate that your love is true, you have to give extra.

Doing More than Just the Letter of the

Law to Prove our Love for Hashem

 A husband can’t show his love to a wife by buying her a set of pots that are necessary for cooking food for the two of them or the family. Likewise, we as *Yidden* can’t claim that our love is demonstrated by our performance of *mitzvahs* that we anyways obligated to do. Rather we must find ways to go beyond the letter of the law in serving Hashem as our way of proving that our *ahavas Hashem* is sincere. That is the theme of *Shir HaShirim* – about doing more than you have to for the One you love.

**Talmud Translated**

**Into Arabic**

**By Arutz Sheva Staff**



Arabic translation of the Talmud

 A group of researchers and translators in Jordan have translated the Talmud into Arabic. Translated version sold in local book fairs.

 The National Library in Jerusalem introduced this week a new purchase: The Babylonian Talmud translated into Arabic.

Behind this project is the Middle East Studies Center in Jordan, which in recent months published 20 volumes of the Babylonian Talmud translated into Arabic.

 These books are currently being sold in Jordanian markets, particularly at local book fairs. The National Library recently acquired a copy of the translated Talmud and it is now on public display in the library.

 The project was published following work which lasted for about six years. The hard work was done by a group of 95 researchers, translators and language editors, including translators from Hebrew to Arabic and from Aramaic into Arabic. The Middle East Studies Center’s headquarters are located in Amman, where researchers and translators worked on the translation and preparation of the Talmud in Arabic.

 According to the editors of the project, this is a first and historic precedent. “They wanted to show the academic world the principles of Jewish thought,” according to the National Library.

 The Talmud, which comprises both the Mishnah (Oral Law) and the Gemara, is one of the Jewish people's most sacred and central texts, forming a coded record of ancient rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, customs and history, and written mostly in Aramaic. The Babylonian Talmud was recorded in about the 6th century while the Jerusalem Talmud was recorded some 200 years earlier.

 There are several English translations of the monumental work. Last year, for the first time in history, the Italian government began collaborating with the Italian Jewish community on a special project to translate the Talmud [into the Italian language](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/141912).

 In South Korea, Talmud study [is a mandatory part](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/143192) of the country’s school curriculum.

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