**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Bamidbar 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #38 24 Iyar 5771/May 28, 2011**

**Chassidic Story #704**

**The Undrinkable Liquor**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000UEW0:001DmbPV00001oAa&count=1305119721&randid=1391970135&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1391970135##)

 A wealthy Jew once approached the poritz [titled landowner] of Lantchin, as well as other poritzim in the area, proposing that they lease all the inns on their properties to him and let him hire innkeepers to run them as he saw fit. He offered them a good deal and the landowners agreed.

 At the appointed time, all the poritzim informed their current innkeepers that their tenancy was over and that they must leave the inns. The area's Jewish innkeepers, together with their families and belongings, got together and traveled to apprise Rabbi Chaim of Kosov of the ill tiding that had befallen them.

**A Promise from the Rebbe**

 "Within a short time," the Rebbe promised, "you will all be restored to your former homes and positions."

 Meanwhile, the rich Jew placed his own friends in charge of the inns and bought a large quantity of whisky to sell in the taverns. But when the whisky was poured for the gentiles, they found it teeming with insects!

 The farmers went to the poritzim to complain. Disbelieving the tale, the poritzim came in person to see the whisky. To their shock, the story was true! With their own eyes they saw the bugs in the whisky. The liquor was undrinkable.

**The Goyish Farmer Shouting in Anger**

 The Jewish manager heard the farmers shouting angrily about the insect-ridden drink. Then he got wind of the news that the former innkeepers who were turned away from their posts, had gone to Kosov to visit the Rebbe. Putting two and two together, he understood that the Kosover Rebbe's hand was behind this bizarre phenomenon. He heard, too, that the Rebbe had promised the former innkeepers that they would soon return to their positions.

 Obviously, if he persisted in opposing the Rebbe's will, he would be afflicted with one trouble after another.

 Being an intelligent man, he did not wait for the Ten Plagues to strike him. Instead, he offered the former innkeepers their old jobs and homes back.

 The innkeepers, however, were not satisfied. As a group, they demanded fair compensation for the anguish and loss of profits they had suffered when fired from their jobs. They informed the wealthy Jew that he should come with them to Kosov to see the Rebbe and accept arbitration, and he agreed to do so.

**The Rebbe Gives His Advice**

 "Jewish law is clear," the Rebbe explained; "fines are not assessed outside the Land of Israel. However, the manager must sell you the whiskey he bought at a very cheap price, as it is infested with bugs." The manager, seeing no use for the insect-infested whiskey, readily agreed.

 After the manager left, the innkeepers turned to the Rebbe in confusion.

 "What," they asked, "are we going to do with insect-ridden whiskey? It is not even worth the price we paid, as no one will be willing to drink it."

 The Rebbe smiled. "Do not worry. Return to your homes and sell the whiskey at the normal price. Insect-ridden whiskey? Who ever heard of such a thing? Ridiculous!"

 And indeed it happened. Not a solitary bug was to be seen in any bottle or glass.

**Yahrzeit of Rabbi Chaim Hager**

**This Coming Sunday – 25 Iyar**

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Stories My Grandfather Told Me" (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald

 Connection: Seasonal 157th yahrzeit of Rabbi Chaim Hager of Kosov

 Biographic note: Rabbi Chaim Hager of Kosov (1755- 25 Iyar1854) succeeded his father, R. Menachem Mendel, as Rav and Rebbe in Kossov in 1827. He is the author of Toras Chayim. His son, Menachem Mendel, became the first Rebbe in Vishnitz.

*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=0000QjG0:001Di0iB00002fPy&count=1303909652&randid=994478574&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=994478574##)

**The Human Side of the Story**

**An Appetite for Life**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Many memories of the late great leader of Torah Jewry, Harav Eliezer Shach, of blessed memory, are often recalled. Among them are touching stories about the wisdom and sensitivity he displayed in helping individuals along with his historic feats of teaching Torah and leading a generation.

 One such story concerned an American young woman whose severe diet brought her to a dangerous state of anorexia. With a total lack of appetite she was literally withering away, much to the consternation of her family.

**Father Turns in Desperation**

**To Harav Shach for Assistance**

 When medical and psychological aid failed to solve the problem, her father turned in desperation to the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Ponevez Yeshiva.

 Sensing that the young lady had probably embarked on her destructive diet in order to achieve a figure which might improve her matrimonial opportunities, Rav Shach turned to her with a request that she eat the piece of cake he placed before her and added a promise that if she resumed eating she would be blessed with a good match.

**Urges the Girl to Write**

**To Him Each Day**

 After convincing her to thus break her self-imposed fast, he urged her to write him each day what she had added to her eating, once again reassuring her that she would find a good shiduch.

 The strategy worked. She recovered her appetite and her health and soon met a fine Torah scholar with whom she established “a faithful home in Israel” thanks to the brilliance of mind and heart of this Torah giant.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of The Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (*[*www.ohr.edu*](http://www.ohr.edu)*).*

**The Wonders of Creation**

**The Lesson of the Sea Tern**

 The tern has a long and straight beak, long and sharp wings and a tail that splits into two, like a two-pronged fork, just like its cousin, the land tern. The sea tern family sub-divides into around fifty species, but the most well known is the Arctic tern. Its fame results from the fact that it travels every year for over 35,000 kilometers.

**Flying Each Year from the**

**North Pole to the South Pole**

 As far as we know, there is nothing like this bird, that every year makes its way from the North Pole to the South Pole - and back! Blue-gray wings, a red beak, a black cap and duck's feet - that is the appearance of the Arctic tern.

 In the summer season at the North Pole, they gather in dense colonies and lay their spotted eggs. From the eggs, their fledglings hatch, also spotted, and when they grow a little stronger, they also join the long journey. They cross the ocean, escaping the harsh Arctic winter, and cross the coasts of America until they come to the South Pole, to enjoy the summer months there.

**Flying Continuously for 15 Hours Each Day**

 When the summer is almost over there, they return to their journey, and cross the entire globe, until coming to the North Pole. They fly for fifteen hours straight per day and feed on fish that they catch during their flight. What does the tern signal to us? Why were they given this nature?

 We are reminded of the story in the Gemara (Hagigah 5b) about the yeshivah student, "a student in the Rabbi's house one day." He left his house after the holiday of Pesach, arrived there after three months journey, stayed there for one day, and journeyed back for three months. On the day after Simhat Torah he would leave again, arriving after three months for one day again, and returning to his house.

 It says in the Gemara that he received reward for a full year of learning Torah!

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter, printed by Bnai Yosef Congregation in Brooklyn, NY.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Conclusion of Special Ops (Part Two)**

 It states in the Holy Torah this week, "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform then... you will dwell securely in your land...I will walk among you, I will be G-d unto you and you will be a people unto Me." (Vayikra 26:3-12) We see from here that the reward for keeping the Torah is that we merit having Hashem with us. The following continuation of our inspirational true story shows how Hashem escorts the Jewish people in Exile.

 (*Continued from last week...)* To Avrohom's surprise, John picked him up the next day and announced that the day's plans included flying via Cyprus to Syria! (Where the Americans had supported schools at the time.) Avrohom was shocked. Soon after, they were on a helicopter on their way to Syria, when the helicopter began to experience problems. The pilot told the passengers to hold tight, as they would need to make an emergency landing.

**Sitting Tensely as the**

**Helicopter Descends**

 Avrohom sat tensely as the helicopter descended. The ground loomed up ahead, rushing forward as they lost altitude. He sighed with relief when they gently touched the ground, still in one piece. "Where are we?" Avrohom asked the pilot as he stood shakily from his seat. "We just entered Syrian territory." Said the pilot Phil as he leaned over and unlatched the door. "We're at the tip of Kuneitra."

 Avrohom staggered out of the helicopter, taking deep, grateful breaths of the hot desert air. The area was completely deserted, without a soul or a structure in sight. As Phil and John began poking around the helicopter, Avrohom wandered around aimlessly. He knew he couldn't help them anyway. Walking away from the helicopter, Avrohom noticed a small structure standing half a mile away. The ruined house had no roof, and the windows were gone.

 Even at that distance, Avrohom could see the building had been riddled with bullet holes. Curious, Avrohom began to step closer to the destroyed house. A flicker of movement brought his gaze around to the right — and there, out of nowhere, stood a man! Avrohom squeezed his eyes shut tight, shaking his head to dispel the mirage. But when he opened his eyes, the man was still there, looking at him with an anxious expression.

 The swarthy, middle-aged man was clearly an Arab. The apparition walked closer. And then he began to speak! "You American?" the man asked in broken English. Avrohom hesitated. Should he answer? He knew Phil and John were right behind him. If the guy wanted to kill him, he would have done it before Avrohom had noticed him.

**Confessions of a Syrian Prison Guard**

 Ignoring Avrohom's silence, the man kept speaking. "I must talk to you. I good person. But something bother me, and I must tell somebody. "I Syrian and I guard prison. They take Yehudia (Jewish) man and torture him. He die, and they throw him outside like wild animal. Later I take him and bury him."

 "What was his name?" Avrohom asked suspiciously. "His name was Daadba." (The name of the woman which the Baba Sali had mentioned.)

 Avrohom felt the world begin to spin. He tried to control his shaking hands. "Wait—don't go anywhere! I just want to call my friend here." He turned, gesticulating toward the nearby helicopter. "John! Come here, please!"

**Asking the Arab to Repeat His Testimony**

 Avrohom turned to the Arab. "Could you please tell my friend what you just told me?" The Arab repeated, word for word, what he had told Avrohom. "Tell him the man's name," Avrohom prompted. "Daadba," the man said again.

 Avrohom was in such a state of shock, that he John decided that they fly home immediately. The next morning, Avrohom received a call from Rav Ovadia Yosef. Later that morning, Avrohom related the story to Rav Yosef, thanking him for giving him the opportunity to participate in this holy task.

**The Greatness of Rav Abuchatzeira**

 "The one you should thank is Rav Yisroel Abuchatzeira," Rav Yosef told him. "Only he could have accomplished such a feat." His greatness in Torah and his concern and caring for his fellow Jews, led Rav Abuchatzeira to do whatever he could — even beyond the bounds of nature — to alleviate their suffering and pain. (Later, Avrohom met again with the Baba Sali, who requested that Avrohom not reveal this story until at least 7 years after the Baba Sali's death.)

 Avrohom remained puzzled about one thing. Was it possible to accept the testimony of a non-Jew and allow a woman to remarry under these circumstances? When he voiced these concerns to Rav Yosef, the Rav described several cases where great sages in the past had relied upon a non-Jew in certain instances.

 "Nevertheless," Rav Yosef concluded, "when you return to the States, I want you to discuss it with Harav Yosef Breuer; your own rebbe, Harav Yaakov Kamenetzsky; and Harav Moshe Feinstein. Get back to me and let me know what they said."

 When he went back to the States? But Avrohom wasn't planning on returning for at least a year! As soon as he arrived home, however, Avrohom discovered that the family's plans had changed. Distressed, his wife told him that she had gotten a call from her family in the States, telling her that her father had suddenly taken ill. They needed her there immediately.

**Cooperation from the U.S. State Department**

 Avrohom got on the phone to the State Department and explained the situation. "It's okay," he was told. "You can live in the States, and just travel back and forth as needed." So in September, Avrohom and his family returned to the United States. Avrohom immediately visited Rav Breuer and presented his question. Rav Breuer, who was unable to see at the time, nevertheless was able to quote twenty-four references, allowing the woman to remarry.

 Avrohom next visited Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, who also quoted twenty-four references — and in addition gave Avrohom a blessing, that he should be successful in his efforts to help klal Yisroel. Finally, Avrohom saw Rav Moshe Feinstein, who offered thirty-one references allowing the woman to remarry.

**Relays Pasakim of American Rabbanim**

 Avrohom contacted Rav Yosef and told him what each of the rabbanim had said. And then Rav Yosef gave Mrs. Daadba permission to remarry. In the meantime, Avrohom began planning his next trip to Israel. But those plans were cut short when the Yom Kippur War broke out a few weeks later. The United States government put a hold on all foreign funding, and Avrohom was basically out of a job. In the meantime, he was transferred to another position in New Jersey, where he could stay in contact with other U.S. officials in his field.

**Helps Mrs. Daadba and Her Children**

 Mrs. Daadba was unfortunately left severely injured as the result of being shot in the back as she escaped Syria.  Avrohom arranged for her to be brought to America for surgery. Boruch Hashem that the surgery was a success. Eventually, Avrohom was able to secure the exit visas for Mrs. Daadba's children, who later grew up to be outstanding members of the Orthodox Jewish community. All because of the tremendous spiritual vision of the Baba Sali along with the dedication of Avrohom, who worked tirelessly for to help other Jews.

 We see from this story how much Hashem loves the Jewish people, in that Hashem supervises our every move and guides us with His loving hand.

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

**An Angel in the Supermarket**

**By Anonymous**

 It was Friday, on a balmy spring morning, and I was standing in line at the checkout counter in Rockland Kosher Supermarket. My cart was overflowing with groceries which would add up to a pretty penny.

 I was, however, the grateful recipient of food stamp benefits, and one swipe of my precious plastic card would cover the cost of my bimonthly food shopping trip. Nonetheless, I had chosen carefully, scanning the sale aisle for bargains, wanting to make the most of the government’s assistance. I loaded my items onto the counter and waited patiently for the cashier to add them up.

**Food Stamp Benefit Card Reads.Zero Dollars and Zero Cents**

 “Delivery, please,” I said. One hundred and fifteen dollars and sixty-three cents was my total. I confidently handed the cashier my food stamp benefit card. “Your food stamp balance is zero dollars and zero cents,” read the receipt. I stood there for a moment, not knowing what to do. “Please step aside while I put your order on hold and ring up the next customer,” said the cashier. I obediently stepped aside, racking my brain for a solution as to how to pay this bill. Please, G‑d, I thought, help me put food on my table.

**Out of Nowhere a Well-Dressed, Kind-Looking Woman Appeared**

 Out of nowhere a well-dressed, kind-looking woman appeared. She smiled and said, “I can lend you the money, and you can pay me back at your convenience.” Thinking of my family’s wellbeing, I put my dignity in my pocket for later retrieval and nodded my assent. She handed her credit card to the cashier and waited while the transaction went through. I provided the delivery boy with my address and turned back to my benefactress to obtain her name and telephone number. Not seeing her, I scanned the store and the parking lot outside. She was nowhere to be found.

 I walked out of the supermarket with a lump in my throat. Her kindness had opened up a torrent of emotions that for the past twelve months had been held in check. I quickened my pace as the tears began to flow, heading toward a quiet side street where I could cry in peace.

 Exactly one year before, my husband had walked out on me, leaving me to care for my three children. He left me a note, saying that he no longer wanted to be tied down. From one day to the next I was thrust into a world of uncertainty. I had three beautiful daughters, ages three, six and nine, who were left fatherless and confused.

**Discovering that Her Husband**

**Was a Gambling Addict**

 The years preceding this event had not been ideal. Soon after my marriage, I noticed that a large sum of money was missing from our joint bank account. When I asked my husband about it, he was evasive. That incident was the first hint that something was wrong. It took another few years to realize that I was married to a man who was addicted to gambling. He was slowly destroying his finances, himself and his family.

 I consulted experts, did research and pleaded with him to go for help. But it was to no avail. When all our resources were depleted, he picked himself up and left.

**Slowly Returning to a Life**

**Somewhat Resembling Normalcy**

 I turned to government funds to help me stay above water and provide for my children. I turned to social services and became acquainted with Medicaid, food stamps and welfare. I enrolled in a part-time college program, and the kids—though saddened by the loss of their daddy, who wanted nothing to do with them—slowly began to heal. Slowly, my life returned to something resembling normalcy.

 Although on the outside it appeared as if I was doing well, deep inside me there was an unbelievable rage which did not abate as the weeks and months rolled on. The abandonment of my husband meant the abandonment of my Father in Heaven. The losses of my childhood resurfaced and threatened to engulf me.

**Recalling Her Childhood**

**Years as an Orphan**

 During the lonely silence of the nights, I would relive my childhood memories, picturing the day my parents were killed. I, an only child, was left an orphan. I was sent to be raised by an aunt. Although my aunt and uncle were well-meaning people, they were rigid and controlling.

 At the age of thirteen, my bedtime was still 8:00 PM. A sleepover was absolutely out of the question, and many of the privileges my friends enjoyed were foreign to me. My aunt would monitor my phone conversations and all my extracurricular activities. As I had an independent personality, this created friction, and I yearned for the moment when I would be set free.

**Secretly Dreaming of Building**

**A Fine Jewish Home**

 As I moved through my teenage years, I secretly dreamed of the day when I would have a place I could truly call home. At the age of twenty-one, I was introduced to Leib. Leib was gentle and kind. He was loyal and principled, and we shared the same vision of building a fine Jewish home together. I was genuinely happy and looked forward with great anticipation to our future together. Nothing prepared me for the pain ahead.

 When I first discovered that “Leiby” was addicted to gambling, I naively thought that we would work through this problem together. Little did I know that Leiby was not going to allow himself to be helped, and that he would fall into a depression and eventually leave me.

**Fervently Praying to Her Father in Heaven**

 During those years of trial, I fervently prayed to my Father in Heaven to save our marriage. I desperately wanted my precious little girls to have a solid, stable home. The day Leiby left us, I began to function on two levels. While I marched forward, taking care of business and reconstructing our lives, my inner world was in turmoil and my faith was slowly eroding.

 That Friday morning, in Rockland Kosher, an angel appeared out of nowhere, bringing not only a box full of groceries but a message full of love. It was that Friday that I renewed my relationship with G‑d, feeling strongly the sense of caring and security that accompanies the knowledge that He continues to hold me and my children in His arms.

**Contemplating the Day’s Events**

 I felt ready, at last, to move forward and reconnect with society. I accepted a longstanding invitation to the local rabbi’s house for the Sabbath meals. Friday, before sunset, I prepared the candles for lighting. The Sabbath table was covered in white, and my children were dressed in their Sabbath best. The candles shone bright, lighting up their innocent glowing faces and warming my soul. And as I stood there, I contemplated the day’s events.

 A food stamp card that didn’t work, and a fellow human being who reached out to give without a second thought, combined to open my heart and reunite me with my Maker. G‑d has many ways of reminding his children of His loving presence. For me it happened at Rockland Kosher.

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

**An Only Child**

**By Rabbi S. Rosenblatt**

 I once had a guest for Shabbat who had 18 brothers and sisters. Nowadays, with my wife coming from a family of 12 children, it's not as big a deal to me. But at the time, I had much to ask. One of the questions that fascinated me was how did he think his parents would feel if he disappeared for a few weeks. Would they even notice? Or perhaps he could make it back before they realized he had gone? Was he just #14, or did he feel special in any way?

**Every Sibling Felt Almost Like an Only Child**

 I was amazed when he told me that he and every one of his siblings felt almost like an only child. Each felt that their parents loved them as though they had no other children. If he disappeared, his parents would feel no different than parents whose *only child* had disappeared.

 I thought about it for a moment and realized that I feel the same myself. I have six children. Take one away, G-d forbid, and I wouldn't merely have five left. I would have lost an entire world. Each is special in his or her own way. One is so responsible; one is so loving; one is so smiley; one is so full of life and one is (unfortunately for him) just like his father. They aren't five clones. They are five individuals and I love each one independently of the others.

**Each is a Unique World Unto Himself**

 Be it one, four or 19, each child is precious to his parents. Each is a unique world unto himself.

 This idea applies with G-d, too. Whether 19 children, or 5 billion, there is no difference. Each and every one of us is an only child. Each one is an entire universe. Each is precious in his or her own way. G-d loves us, because we are each unique and special.

 In this week's portion, G-d counts the Jewish people. He knows how many of us there are, but he wants us to know that each one matters. We are not a nation of millions. We are special individuals who together make a nation. No one is dispensable. If one of us disappears, G-d notices. And cares.

 In the same way as 19 children of the same parents can all feel like an only child, so too 5 billion children of a single G-d can all feel uniquely special. And when we feel secure in the love of our parents, we have the confidence to love those around us, too.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of* Shabbos Candle Lighting <shaboscandlelighting@gmail.com

**Reb Yaakov’s Most**

**Unusual Purchase**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week we begin 'Bamidbar'; the fourth book of the Chumash (Five Books of Moses). The word "Bamidbar" means "In the desert." A desert is an unfriendly and desolate place so, at first glance this is not a positive name.

 Also this week's portion begins with G-d ordering Moses to count the Jews after they left Egypt [which is why it is often called "Pikudim" ("Numbers")].  Which is not so understood; G-d is omniscient, why did He tell Moses' to count when He certainly already knew the number?

**The Torah is a Book of Life**

 As we have said many times; the Torah is a book of life and every paragraph, sentence, word and even letter in it has practical importance. So here there must some REALLY important message in an entire book for all of us.

 To understand this here is a strange story (Ko Asu Chachmenu vol. 3, pg. 210)

 Many years ago in a port town far from Israel lived a wealthy and influential Jew. He had been born to a poor family and his childhood was spent in poverty. From the age of three years old he had attended Jewish school and learned Torah like all the other Jewish children, but he had a simple mind and never really understood what was written in the books. All he learned were the words of the prayers and not all of them at that.

**A Good, Honest and Pleasant Person**

 However, he had a good heart and was as honest and pleasant as a person can be which made him many friends. And he was industrious; he learned to be a butcher, succeeded in business and in no time his name and reputation spread until he somehow found favor in the eyes of the local duke who gave him the right to collect the toll and taxes from all the ships that entered the city harbor.

 Our hero, who we will call Yaakov (although his name is not mentioned in the story) despite his wealth never forgot his humble roots and was always on the watch for someone in need. He bought food for the poor, helped the sick, and supported Jew and gentile alike whenever possible - especially Jews.

 Once a large, sleek cargo ship entered the docks and after Yaakov routinely boarded and collected the tolls and taxes the ship's captain, a heavyset, mustachioed coarse looking fellow took him aside behind some crates, winked at him and asked in almost a whisper if he wanted to buy something precious.

 "What?" Yaakov replied.

**The Captain Guarantees**

**Satisfaction of Purchase**

 "I can't tell you." Answered the captain, "But I guarantee you that you'll like it and won't regret that you bought it."

 "I can't buy something before seeing it." Yaakov said. "Tell me what it is and how much you want."

 "What it is, I already told you that I won't tell you. How much?" The captain rolled his eyes, tapped the fingers of both hands together, looked at Yaakov and said, "Ten thousand gold pieces!"

 Yaakov took a step backward. "Ten thousand!? Why that is a fortune! Who would pay a fortune for a cat in a bag! I want to see what you have to sell or forget it!" Yaakov was already thinking to himself that possibly it was stolen goods, drugs or contraband. But his interest certainly had been aroused.

 "No! You can't see it." said the captain. "But I can tell you that if you don't buy it now I'll never sell it to you."

**Yaakov Becomes More Curious**

 Yaakov became more curious. Impulsively he stuck out his hand to shake hands and said, "Alright! I'll pay. You have my word. Just show me what you have and I'll give you the money, ten thousand gold pieces."

 The captain looked Yaakov straight in the eye and arrogantly declared. "I told you I won't show it to you till I have the money here!" as he pointed to his open palm. "Now I won't sell it to you either unless you give me TWENTY thousand!"

**Threatens to Throw Item into the Sea**

 Yaakov was shocked but being the seasoned businessman he was he didn't show it. "Good!" he said. "Fine! I'll give you Twenty thousand. But first I want to see what it is.

 "Now I won't even sell it you unless you give me FORTY THOUSAND! And I'm not showing you anything!" the Captain almost yelled. "And if you don't pay" …. he moved his face close to Yaakov's and whispered, "Then I'll throw it into the sea."

 Yaakov almost turned his back to leave. But something in his heart told him to stay. The captain was doubling the price each time he asked so he dare not ask again. He blurted out,

 "Good! I'll pay! I pay the forty thousand."

 "First give the money …… BEFORE you see the goods" sneered the captain. "You have an hour….no! A half an hour! But I'm warning you……… if I see you coming with police I'll give the order to throw it in the sea! No evidence and no deal. And you'll never see it."

**Runs Home to Get the Money**

 Yaakov ran home, got the money and in just minutes was back on the ship counting it out to the captain. "Now, bring me what I bought!"

 The captain laughed villainously. "Ha Ha HAA. Bring it? Haaaa haaa!!! Just wait here a minute and what you bought will walk here on two legs. Haaaaa Haaaa!"

 He descended the steps to the belly of the ship laughing and talking aloud to himself and after a few moments, from the bottom of the stairs came the sound of chains dragging on the ground. It grew louder until through the open door emerged ...... human beings! Bent, emaciated,dragging themselves with expressionless faces, an endless line of them, torn dirty garments hanging from their skeleton-like bodies.

**Two Hundred Captives Jews Released by Wicked Captain**

 In a few minutes two hundred Jews; men, women and children were standing before him. They had been taken captive by the captain and his pirate crew and Yaakov had saved them.

 The captain gave a sign and his men began unlocking the chains, then he turned to Yaakov, winked and said, "Well my friend …… How do you like them? Maybe you regret paying so much? Ehhh? Haa Haaaa! Well you should know that I would have thrown 'em all into the sea! The whole smelly bunch! I couldn't find anyone to buy 'em. They've been there for a month. They just took up room and I couldn't stand the sight of 'em anymore.."

**Brings the Jews to His**

**Home For Special Care**

 Yaakov took them off the ship, brought them to his home where he gave orders to take care of them and then ran to the duke's castle to try to get the pirates arrested. But when the duke's men arrived at the docks the pirates had already set sail and escaped into the open sea.

 Yaakov provided the captives with all their needs including doctors to nurse them all back to health and gradually he heard their sad story. It seems that the captain and his pirates attacked their village, burned it to the ground killed all the elders and children and kidnapped anyone they figured they could sell as slaves. For weeks they were in the dark, stuffy belly of the ship with no light or air and only water and stale bread to keep them alive.

**Finds a Perfect Match for His Son**

 After several months Yaakov got to know all of them and even find them jobs and homes.  One of them, a modest 18 year old girl, exceptionally G-d fearing, intelligent, pleasant looking and kind, impressed him as being a perfect match for his oldest son.

 When he spoke to her about it she blushed with gratitude and humbly tried to decline saying how could a penniless nobody like her possibly be a match for such a respectable person as his own son. But Yaakov understood that she was flattered by the offer. He smiled, gave her a beautiful necklace to show that he was serious and after a few meetings with his son she accepted the offer and the joyous preparations began.

**Everyone Comes for the Special Wedding**

 Two months later the wedding hall was decorated, guests came pouring in from near and far, rich and poor, gentile and Jew. The duke and his family were given a special place of honor as were the two hundred captives who had completely recovered from their ordeal. Everyone wanted to be part of this 'rags to riches' story and the mood of the entire crowd was elated.

 Yaakov was all smiles as he moved among the guests welcoming and joking with them but he noticed that one of the guests, a young man, one of the redeemed prisoners, only smiled when he saw that Yaakov was looking at him. But if not he almost looked sad.

**The Young Man is Unable to Answer**

 Yaakov figured it must have been because he was thinking about his family and friends that had been killed by the pirates or perhaps he was awed by the great changes. So he went over to him and asked if everything was all right. The young man looked at him, his eyes filled with tears and he began weeping so that he couldn't even answer.

 Yaakov waited till he calmed down and asked again if there was anything he could do for him but the young fellow just dried his eyes, apologized and said that everything was all right. But Yaakov felt that he was hiding something. And after several minutes of prodding and questioning he found out what it was.

 "In the village where we lived before the pirates came, the bride and I had agreed that after we saved up enough money we would be married. But then the pirates came and it all changed.

 "But that's all in the past. It's the way G-d wanted it. Now we both owe our lives to you. If it wasn't for you we would all be dead. And your son is such a fine person and I see that she likes him. I'm sure they will be happily married. So please don't pay attention to my tears, they are also tears of happiness."

**Offers Him a Fortune as a Test**

 Yaakov thought for a moment and then decided to test the young man; he offered him a fortune if he would be willing to look for another bride. "After all you were both young and your decision to marry wasn't really based on much. With this money you would be set for life."

 But the young man answered. "If given the choice I would not trade her for all the money in the world, but now I'm so grateful to you that I'm happy that she is marrying your son! I gladly relinquish her for free."

**Explains the Story to His Son**

 Yaakov went to his son, explained the entire story and his son declared that he was not in any way willing to cancel the wedding for any reason! Rather the occasion must go on exactly as planned…..but with a different groom.

 At the festivities Yaakov stood and said that this was the happiest moment in his life. Not only because he saw that the all sacrifices that he had made bore fruit but even more; because he saw that his son was also willing to give up everything for the sake of others.

 This answers our questions. The world is like a desert; desolate of meaning and void of blessing. The scientists' philosophers' and psychologists' after the most thorough examinations have revealed that all creation, including man, is a nothing more than a cold bundle of meaningless causes and effects.

 And the various religions of the world agree! The best they can offer is the afterworld.

**Transforming this Physical World**

 But Judaism teaches differently: The moment that G-d gave the Torah on Mount Sinai …. this physical world became more meaningful and blessed than even the highest heavens.

 Because Only in this world…. EACH AND EVERY ONE of us can actually give G\_d pleasure by learning His Torah and fulfilling its commandments.  This is what Judaism teaches.

 And this is the reason G-d wanted Moses to COUNT the Jews: To bring this potential hidden in each of us into PHYSICAL reality. Everyone is important and no one is alone!

 You, dear reader, have been counted by Moses! And YOU 'count'; i.e. are important, in your Creator's eyes.

 This is the Torah's message for us here today. We should never give up on making this world a better place; even a LITTLE light dispels a LOT of darkness and confusion and each of us was given the power to do it.

 Just as in our story, Yaakov and his son dispelled much tragedy and misery through their actions and replaced it with joy and blessing. So too EACH of us has the same power: even one good deed, word or even thought can transform the world from a desert and bring heaven on earth with …**Moshiach NOW!**

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the parsha sheet from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfaf Chabad, Israel.*

**Numbers Games**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

 The Book of Numbers begins with -- of course -- numbers. In fact, it begins with many numbers! Moshe is told by Hashem to "Count the entire assembly of the Children of Israel. by number of the names, every male according to their headcount." (Numbers 1:3) But no apparent reason is offered.

 There was no road infrastructure that had to be built, they were in a desert. There was no housing development plan that had to be assessed, they lived in sukkos. And there was no need to calculate agricultural concerns, food was sent from Heaven. So why did Hashem want them counted?

**Why are The Recorded**

**Numbers So Important?**

 And the recorded numbers seem to have no bearing on any moral issue that is necessary for us as Twenty-First Century Jews. Does it truly matter that the tribe of Gad had 45,650 males over twenty or that the tribe of Menashe had 32,200? And the customary Haftorah for this week\* tells us that "the number of the Children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which can neither be measured or counted" (Hosea 2:1). So why count?

 At the outset of his career as a journalist, Walter Cronkite worked as a copy editor for the Houston Chronicle. His boss, city editor Roy Rousell, was a stickler for detail and accuracy, who would raise a ruckus for the slightest error or inaccuracy. There was a price to pay if a Mr. Smythe was spelled as Mr. Smith.

**Responsible for Publishing**

**Houston’s Bank Clearings**

 Cronkite was responsible for a two-line item carried every day on the front page of the final edition, "Bank Clearings." Each day a small line simply read, "Today's Houston bank clearings were," followed by a large monetary figure.

 One day Rousell called him into his office. He was clearly enraged. "You had the bank clearings all wrong yesterday," he snarled. His jaw was clenched. Cronkite had the clearings at $3,726,359.27, the correct amount was $3,726,359.17. He was off by ten cents, but the city editor was adamant, and visibly distraught.

 "Such a stern reaction to a ten-cent mistake on a multi-million dollar figure?" thought Cronkite. Perhaps this outrage meant that this line of work was truly not for him.

**Can’t Understand the Fuss**

**Over a Ten-Cent Error**

 When the young Cronkite walked back toward his colleagues, they looked grim. "How you're gonna fix this one?" they jeered. "So, are you getting bodyguards?" they taunted. Cronkite was baffled and finally exploded.

 "What's all this fuss about a ten-cent error on a 3 million dollar clearing!?" He exclaimed. "What's the big deal?"

 The other reporters looked at him in shock when they realized he truly did not understand the severity of his trivial mistake, their shock turned to pity.

 Finally, the local columnist explained. "Do you think anybody really cares about the bank clearings? The numbers racket in Houston pays off using the last 5 digits of the bank clearing. Well, yesterday they paid off based on your number." He paused. "The mob don't like paying off on a bad number."

**Numbers are Not Meaningless**

 For the next few weeks, Walter Cronkite lived in literal fear of his seemingly insignificant ten cent error.

 Numbers, no matter how irrelevant they seem to the unenlightened, are not meaningless. To us in a modern society we may read that Yehuda had 74,600 males over twenty and Naftali 53,400. But they are not mere numbers. Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz comments that each Jew mentioned brought immense spiritual greatness to this earth.

 Each person counted was a cherished gem whose existence impacted eternally. We often cite numbers and statistics without realizing the tremendous impact of their importance. We teach our children the significance of the destruction of European Jewry, but can they fathom the significance of 6,000,000 Jews lost? Does a Jew harmed in a terrorist attack or an Israeli soldier killed become a statistic, or is he mourned as a soul who graced this world with tremendous significance?

 The Torah's reiteration of the importance of counting each and every member of our nation remains with us to this very day. We do not have to be counted for any socio-economic reason. We are counted for the inherent value of each and every soul. And ultimately each soul can alter the course of our history. Because each and every Jew's two cent's worth is worth more than millions.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of* Shabbos Candle Lighting <shaboscandlelighting@gmail.com

**Respecting the Teacher**

**Inherent in Every Jew**

**By Rabbi Etan Tokayer**

 B'midbar is known as the Book of Numbers. Although it actually means 'In the Desert', it clearly draws the name numbers from the various countings at the beginning of the sefer. Moshe is told to count the adult males, aged twenty and up. One tribe, shevet Levi, however, was counted differently. Namely, for shevet levi, even the youngsters were counted.

 The age of other tribes was clearly related to the age of military service. To what criteria if any was shevet Levi counted ?

 Rabbi Mordecahi Kaminetzky suggests that each tribe had a role for the Jewish nation. The tribe of Levi was composed of the teachers and mentors for Klal Yisrael. And being that their role was different, they were counted in a totally different manner, beginning at a much younger age.  Because when it comes to teaching, we need not look only to those who are officially ordained rabbis. One need not focus his appreciation or respect for those who are over a particular age. He can learn from anyone, even child. If he is immersed in the world of the Levite - the world of teaching Torah, then he is part of the teacher tribe.

 When it comes to disseminating the Torah's teaching, each and every person counts. If so, then it is incumbent on us to honor every individual as potential a teacher. As the famous Talmudic teaching states, I have learned much...but from my students I have learned the most.

 If we look at each other as potential teachers from the youngest to the eldest in our midst - then perhaps we will indeed forge greater mutual respect for one another and foster greater harmony within our community and within K'lal Yisrael at large.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Weekly Bulletin of the Kingsway Jewish Center in Brooklyn, NY.*

**U.S. Congress Approves Jewish Chaplains Memorial at Arlington**

**By Gavriel Queenann**

 A bill to build a monument for fallen Jewish Chaplains at Arlington National Cemetery is moving its way through the US legislature.



 The U.S. House of Representatives voted to authorize construction of the monument Monday. The bill now moves to the Senate.

 Dozens of national and locally based Jewish and veterans groups in the United States led by the Jewish Federations and the Jewish Welfare Board Jewish Chaplains Council of the JCC Association of America have worked for three years to establish the memorial alongside the existing memorials for Catholic and Protestant chaplains.

 The memorial, which has been designed and paid for by private donations, must receive congressional authorization before construction can begin. Thirteen Jewish chaplains have been killed while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

 "I can think of no better expression of our nation's gratitude for our Jewish War Chaplains than the passage of this resolution during Jewish American Heritage Month, and a week before Memorial Day," Congressman Jeff Miller, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said.

 "The 13 Jewish chaplains who will be honored stood beside our troops and lent their strength during good times and bad, on the battlefield and off. This memorial will serve as an inspiration to all to learn their stories that are such an important part of our nation's history."

 The congressional resolution urges for the provision of space "for a memorial marker, to be paid for with private funds, to honor the memory of the Jewish chaplains who died while on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States."

 The memorial's final design is subject to the approval of the secretary of the Army.

*Reprinted from the email of Arutz Sheva of May 27, 2011.*

It Once Happened

**The Rabbi’s Unusual**

**Trials and Tribulations**

 The rabbi was sitting at his desk, immersed in study, when there was a knock on the door. Opening it, he saw a Jew clutching a bundle of money. The man explained that he was on his way to a nearby village on business. Now that it was almost nightfall he was afraid to travel with so much. He asked if he could leave the money with the rabbi until his return trip.

 At first the rabbi hesitated, as it was very large sum of money. But the man begged and implored him, and in the end he agreed. The rabbi put the bundle in a safe place and resumed his study.

**Another Knock on the Door**

 A short time later there was another knock at the door. This time it was a Jew from his own village, who begged the rabbi to lend him five rubles to buy a cow that was being offered for sale very inexpensively. The man said he would return the money the following morning after he had sold the cow.

 "I would gladly help," the rabbi said, "but I don't have five rubles."

 The rebbetzin, who had overheard the conversation, whispered into her husband's ear: "What about the rubles in that bundle? Surely you can lend this man five rubles overnight."

 The rabbi hesitated. The Torah prohibits tampering with a pledge. But the rebbetzin pleaded the man's case so fervently that the rabbi gave in. The man promised to leave the cow in the rabbi's courtyard overnight.

**Rabbi Goes to Sleep with Regrets**

 That evening, the rabbi went to sleep uncomfortable about having tampered with the pledge.

 Early the next morning a loud banging awakened the rabbi. It was the police. Pointing to the cow in the courtyard, they informed the rabbi that it had recently been stolen from its rightful owner. The rabbi realized that he had fallen into a trap, but it was too late. He was led off to the police station.

 Foremost on the rabbi's mind was the disgrace this could bring upon the Jewish community. G-d forbid that the affair should become public knowledge! He convinced himself that in an emergency situation like this, surely he was allowed to use some of the money in his keep. He bribed the prison guards handsomely and was quietly released before word spread.

 Much to the rabbi's surprise, however, the man who had deposited the money with him for safekeeping came back earlier than anticipated. He arrived that very day to reclaim it.

 When the rabbi muttered ashamedly that he no longer had the money, the man turned white. Despite the rabbi's assurances that he would find the money, the man became increasingly agitated until he suddenly fell to the floor. A doctor who was summoned confirmed that he was dead.

**Arrested for a Second Time by the Police**

 For the second time in a day the police led the rabbi off. But this time the charges against him were worse. The investigation that ensued revealed his tampering with the original pledge, his bribery of the guards, and his role in the depositor's death. The rabbi was sentenced to 10 years in jail.

 Overnight, the rabbi was reduced from a respected leader of the community to a common criminal. Even his cell mate, a young Jewish man who was also serving a ten-year sentence, felt pity for him.

 Time passed, and the village priest paid a visit to the hapless inmates. Addressing his words to the younger Jew, the priest promised his freedom if he renounced his faith. The young man rejected the offer adamantly.

**The Young Man Expresses Regrets**

 After the priest left, the young man brooded for awhile before revealing what was troubling him. "Maybe I made a mistake. I could always run away to another country and resume my Judaism there..."

 "How could you even consider it?" the rabbi replied, aghast. "How many Jews have willingly given up their lives rather than renounce G-d's Name for even a single moment?"

 The following year the priest returned and repeated his offer. This time the young man took him up on it, and he was freed.

 Another year passed, and the priest returned. Again the rabbi pushed him away with both hands, but this time the priest would not be deterred. All the rabbi had to do was accept Christianity in his presence, and freedom was his.

**The Rabbi Agrees to Transgress**

 The rabbi knew that it was forbidden by Jewish law, but he was so despondent that he agreed. Surely it was preferable to transgress for a single moment than to remain in prison for years...

 At that moment the rabbi awoke from his dream, shaken to the depths of his soul. He could not believe that he, an esteemed rabbi, had entertained such a notion even in a nightmare!

 A few days earlier the rabbi had been at the deathbed of an elderly Torah scholar. He had helped him recite "vidui," the final confession. They recited the part stating that if the dying person utters anything against G-d in his final moments, it should be considered null and void. The rabbi wondered: How is it be possible for an 80-year-old Torah scholar to deny G-d, even in his final moments?

 "Now I have my answer," the rabbi whispered to himself. "Our Sages were certainly justified when they said, 'Do not be sure of yourself until the day you die.'"

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Bamidbar 5770**

**Story #650 (27 Iyar 5770)**

**Aliyah Funds**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 Rabbi Meir of Premislan was such a holy man that many other holy men in their own right came to seek his advice and blessing. A certain tzadik once came to see Rabbi Meir, asking for his blessing because he planned to settle in Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Meir

listened and then said,And how do you expect to raise the money for this journey?

 I hope to visit some relatives. When I tell them of my plans, I am sure that they will help me raise the money.

 Rabbi Meir was sunk in thought. He seemed disturbed. Your idea does not appeal to me at all. You will be wasting months of precious time which could be far better devoted to Torah study. But I see that you are determined to go. Let me suggest something: why don't you stay here with me for some time first? I guarantee to raise the money for your traveling expenses.

**The Visitor Accepts the Rebbe’s Offer**

 The visitor thought it over, then decided to accept the offer. The Rebbe did not dismiss him but told his attendant to show in the next person who was waiting to see him.

 A rich man opened the door and was about to enter when suddenly he spied the man already there. He hesitated on the threshold. Still, the attendant had told him to enter. Was there a mistake? He stood there, not knowing whether to advance or retreat. The passing moments seemed like an eternity.

 Finally Rabbi Meir spoke, telling him to enter. I have a story to tell you, he said, turning to the visiting tzadik, but I would like you to hear it too, he continued, turning now to the rich man. It has a worthwhile moral that will do you both good.

 Many years ago there lived a very prosperous Jew who owned much property. But Moshe was a very stingy person, a miser. He never let a person into his home. If a poor man came knocking at the door, begging for something to eat, he would tell him to go to his neighbor, Matisyahu, a worthy, G-d fearing Jew. 'He will feel far more comfortable there,' Moshe would say to himself.

 And, indeed, this was true. While Matisyahu was not a man of means like his wealthy neighbor, still, his family always had food on their table. And there was always room for one person more, no matter how shabby or dirty the visitor. Reb Matisyahu's home and heart were big enough for everyone in need.

**Townspeople Give More**

**Respect for Stingy Moshe**

 All of the townspeople felt a lot of respect for Matisyahu. He was so good! So kind! But if you think that they held him in higher esteem that the stingy Moshe, you are wrong. It is human nature to respect a man with money and they all treated Moshe with a special reverence, even though they knew how stingy he was.

 The injustice of this caused turmoil in heaven. The angels came before the heavenly court demanding that Moshe be stripped of his wealth and that these riches be given to none other than Matisyahu the neighbor, who had never denied anyone his help or hospitality. But before the sentence was carried out, Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) came before the court and said, 'A person should not be judged just by hearsay. I will descend to earth and give Moshe one last chance. I must see if he really is such a miser.'

 So Eliyahu disguised himself as a poor man and descended to earth. He knocked on Moshe's door. A servant answered. When he saw the poor, ragged, shivering man he shooed him away. 'Quick, be gone! Go, before my master sees you. He is a mean, cruel person. If he finds you here he will throw both of us out of the house.' He tried to slam the door shut but the poor man had his foot in the door. 'I won't take anything. Just let me warm up by the stove for a few minutes. Don't you see how cold it is outside?'

**Starting an Argument with the Stranger**

 They were still arguing, when Moshe himself arrived. 'What's going on here?' he asked. 'What do you want?' he demanded of the ragged stranger.

 The servant was so terrified at having been caught speaking to a beggar that he was struck dumb with fear. But the stranger showed no awe of the master. 'I was asking if I could come in and warm up. I wanted a small glass of shnaps (strong liquor) for my freezing bones.'

 'You must be out of your mind. This is not a hotel, nor a charity hostel!' He turned to his servant saying, 'Throw this man out at once!'Even though he had wanted to be kind, the servant was forced to take the poor man by the lapels and turn him out the door. He shut it tightly behind him. Eliyahu Hanavi stood outside in the freezing weather, weeping, pleading to be let in just for a few minutes. When he saw that there was no reaction from within, that Moshe had hardened his heart and was ignoring him, he really wept. He wept for Moshe's soul.

 Eliyahu returned to the heavenly court. He did not have good news. There was nothing he could say in Moshe's defense. The case rested. Moshe would have to lose his fortune, as had been ruled.

 After a brief pause, Rebbe Meir continued his story. He raised his voice for emphasis. When I, Meir, heard of this sentence, I rushed forward to defend this Moshe. 'How can one mete out such dire punishment without warning?' I asked the heavenly court. 'I want to warn Moshe,' I declared. I will not let him be trapped like a poor helpless fly in a spider web.

**Every Jew Deserves a Second Chance!**

 Every Jew deserves a second chance! Allow me to be the court's messenger. If Moshe agrees to give four hundred rubles to this righteous Jew standing here for his traveling expenses to Eretz Yisrael, and if he resolves to mend his ways, he will get his second chance. But if,' and here he lowered his voice, 'G-d forbid, he ignored this warning and persisted in his stingy, evil ways, he would lose his entire fortune and would become dependent upon the kindness of others for the rest of his days!'

 Rabbi Meir was silent. Turning to the rich man still standing in the door, he continued, Moshe is here right now. Let us ask him what he says. Moshe could not speak. He burst into tears, then fell to the floor in a faint. The Rebbe and the visitor tried to revive him. When he came back to consciousness, he turned to the Rebbe, saying, You are so right, Rebbe. I have sinned! I have been evil! But I will turn over a new leaf, I promise. But please have mercy!

**A Dramatic Change in Moshe**

 He fumbled in his pocket and drew out his purse. He counted out four hundred rubles and gave it to the other man. Please, he begged, when you reach Jerusalem, pray for me!With the four hundred rubles the tzadik and his family were able to go directly to Eretz Yisrael without delay.

 As for Moshe, his home became an open house for all wayfarers, troubled people, and beggars. His reputation as a generous ba'al tzedaka (charity giver) traveled far and wide, and he used his great wealth to help his less fortunate brethren in every way.

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Tales of Tzaddikim (ArtScroll) by G. MaTov]

Connection: 160th Yartzeit

Biographical 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 ruach hakodesh (prophetic spirit) and his ready wit have become legendary. He wrote no works, but some of his teachings were collected and published by his chasidim after his death.

*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://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1273586807)

the far east

**Historic Shanghai Synagogue Reopens for World Expo**

**By Joshua Runyan**

|  |
| --- |
| Built in 1920, Shanghai, China’s Ohel Rachel synagogue hasn’t seen regular use since the 1950s, but a recent government decision will allow the city’s Jewish community to use it weekly during the World Expo. (Photo: World Monuments Fund) |
| Built in 1920, Shanghai, China’s Ohel Rachel synagogue hasn’t seen regular use since the 1950s, but a recent government decision will allow the city’s Jewish community to use it weekly during the World Expo. (Photo: World Monuments Fund) |

 A delegation of Chinese officials and international diplomats will join Shanghai’s Jewish community in celebrating the reopening of the historic Ohel Rachel Synagogue.

 An imposing structure, Ohel Rachel was built in 1920 to accommodate a large contingent of Baghdadi Jews that had settled in the port city since the 1870s. Today, locals look to the synagogue, which once served as a home to 30 Torah scrolls, as one of the most significant symbols of Shanghai’s colorful Jewish history.

**The Need for Approval from the Chinese Government**

 In recent years, Shanghai’s education ministry - which has offices in the synagogue - would allow services to take place a few times a year. But according to Rabbi Shalom Greenberg, director of the Chabad-Lubavitch run Shanghai Jewish Center, government approval has ensured continued communal use of the building through at least the summer in honor of the 2010 World Expo.

 “We all wish to extend our appreciation to the Chinese government for this tremendous gesture,” said Greenberg.

 Greenberg and Maurice Ohana – the Jewish community president whose daughter got married at the synagogue in 2008, the community’s first kosher wedding in six decades – will preside over the Friday afternoon ceremony. A two-week long renovation project that just concluded in time for the ceremony was covered by the community.

**Synagogue Can Now Have Regular Shabbat Services**

 According to Greenberg, when it was built, Shanghai’s Jewish community numbered in the thousands, but when most of the community left in the 1950s, control of the building reverted to the government. The government’s decision allows for Friday evening and Saturday morning Sabbath services to take place at the synagogue.

 Since 1999, the contemporary community – comprised primarily of international expatriates – has celebrated Jewish holidays several times a year at Ohel Rachel. A year before, then-U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and First Lady Hillary Clinton visited the synagogue to promote awareness of the landmark and its history.

 “It is truly special that this beautiful synagogue will be in regular use after having been idle for so long,” said Greenberg. “That we will be using it during the Expo is monumental.”

 Earlier this week, Expo fever took the city by storm as participating country’s pavilions welcomed their first visitors to much fanfare and excitement. Israel’s pavilion, which was inaugurated by Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz, was the Expo’s first to officially open.

 Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbi Mendy Alevsky, who arrived last month with his wife Sara to help the Jewish Center deal with the onslaught of patrons in need of kosher food and other services, said that the city is bounding with energy.

 “Everyone is excited,” he said. “You can’t walk anywhere without hearing people talk about the Expo, or seeing signs about the Expo. There’s even special taxis designed specifically for the Expo.”

 With a theme of “Better City, Better Life,” Shanghai’s gala event counts more than 190 countries and 50 international organizations as participants. It’s expected to bring some 100 foreign leaders and millions of visitors to the city through Oct. 31.

*Reprinted from last week’s Chabad.Org website*

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**Man’s Struggles Do**

**Not Go Unnoticed**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*Ruth* the Moabite said to Naomi, ‘Let me go out to the field and glean the ears of grain…’” (Ruth 2:2)

 Sometimes you read something that is inspirational but so simple. As we know on the holiday of Shabuot, we read the book of Ruth. In the Artscroll edition, there is an introductory comment that I would like to quote verbatim: “The great majority of people lead lives of quiet desperation, thinking that their struggles, successes and failures have no lasting purpose.

 “No one had more right to feel that way than Ruth and Naomi, scratching for existence and scrounging for the next meal. For Ruth to gather food was a small gesture with no real significance. But G-d looks carefully at our deeds and discerns in them layers of meaning and importance beyond our imagination.

 “The deeds of the righteous people in the book of Ruth achieved the greatest of all imprimaturs: G-d let them be recorded as part of the Torah. How great man can become! G-d’s Torah was given on Shabuot, and the deeds of mortals, too, have become part of the Torah and are read every Shabuot. This shows us how much we can make of ourselves and our world – if we realize our full potential.”

 Man’s struggles do not go unnoticed by Hashem, and at the same time those struggles are man’s greatest achievements.

 Happy Holiday and Shabbat Shalom.

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

**Our Success is Only Through Clinging to the Torah**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 On the verse in Shir HaShirim 5:6, “My soul departed when He spoke," the Rabbis explain that when Hashem said the Ten Commandments, the souls of the Jewish People left them from awe and fear. Then G-d took a certain dew from the Torah and used it to revive the Jewish Nation.

 On the surface, this seems difficult to understand. Why did Hashem allow the awesomeness of the moment to be so great that the people should die and then have to be revived again? Why not reveal Himself just a little bit less?

 The lesson to be derived from here is that when we received the Torah, we didn't just get a set of laws to have to keep. The Torah is what made us alive; we expired and had to be revived through the power of the Torah. That means that our very being is based on the teaching and the essence of the holy Torah, and it is not only possible to keep its laws, but rather our very existence depends upon it.

 On this Shabuot, let us remember this message. Our success as a nation and as individuals is through the Torah and its laws and customs. The more we study and accept its effect upon us, the closer we will become to that which we owe our existence. Tizku LeShanim Rabot.

**Talking Points – Bamidbar**

**Thinking of You**

*"These are the numbers which were counted by Moses, Aharon and the tribal leaders of Israel, twelve men, each man was the head of his fathers' house. All the numbers of Children of Israel according to the house of their fathers, from twenty years and above, all who go forth into the army of Israel. All their numbers were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty." Bamidbar 1:44-46*

 These are the numbers which were counted by Moses, Aharon and the tribal leaders of Israel - Each tribal leader was involved in the counting of each tribe, not only his own. In this manner, all were assured that there were no discrepancies in the census and that no tribe received a greater share of the Land of Israel than to what he was entitled. *- Malbim*

 These are the numbers...All the numbers...All their numbers... - Why does it repeat the word, "numbers" three times?

***Nachmanides* Enumerates Three**

**Reasons for this Census:**

 So that their existence be mentioned before Moses and Aharon, who would then pray on their behalf.

 To determine who was fit to join the army.

 To publicize the kindness of the Almighty by highlighting the fact that the seventy souls who descended to Egypt now produced offspring that numbered in the millions.

 The three times the word "numbers" is found in these verses correlates to these three reasons for the census.

 All the numbers...who go forth into the army = Now they knew who was fit to join.

 All their numbers 603,550 = From a mere 70, there now numbered three million including women, children and those older than sixty. *- Ksav Sofer*

**That Moses and Aharon**

**Should Pray on Their Behalf**

 Based upon this idea set forth by *Nachmanides* that the purpose of the census was to have their names mentioned before Moses and Aharon who could then pray on their behalf, Hasidim have a custom to present their spiritual leaders with a note containing their names and areas of need. In this manner, the Rebbe can think of them and pray for their well-being, just as Moses and Aharon did on behalf of the Jewish people.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Mentor Talk, a publication of Partners in Torah*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Going Through the Gate**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 When the great rosh hayeshiva Hagaon Rav Aaron Leib Shteinman was about to board a flight to the US he was certain that he would encounter no difficulty upon passing through the metal detector at the airport. To his surprise the alarm did go off as he passed through.

 Assuming that the machine had somehow malfunctioned, the security guard asked the rabbi to pass through once more. Although he was not carrying any metal the alarm sounded once again.

 It then dawned on him that what was responsible for this was the metal screws that had been placed in his leg when it was operated on because of a serious fracture.

 Rav Shteinman then turned to those escorting him and pointed out the lesson to be learned.

 "When a Jew arrives at the gates of Gan Eden after departing this world he may have full confidence of his merits in his lifetime gaining him easy entrance. But he may suddenly be surprised to hear the alarm go off signaling that he was not as perfect as he thought he was."

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Yeshiva Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim – Ohr.edu*

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

**Why Must All Religious**

**Jews Dress in Black?**

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

Must all religious people dress like they are in mourning? Why should they all dress in black?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**And the answer is**, black is not a sign of mourning, black is a sign of nobility. They dress like an important person. Don't you know, many senators wear black homburg hats. They used to anyhow. Senators used to wear black homburg hats. It's a sign of importance.

 And so when Jews wear a black hat, it's a sign that they are "Mamleches Kohanim", it's a nation of important dignified people. And that reminds them that their behavior should be dignified.

 Now it doesn't mean that if you wear a white straw hat, that you are permitted to be undignified. Nevertheless, when people choose dignity in their garments, it has a very big effect, an unfailing effect on their character.

**A Tough Puerto Rican Bum**

**Joins the Police force**

 Here is a tough Puerto Rican bum, and he is admitted to the police force. Because now they lowered all the requirements, you don't have to be 6 ft anymore, you can be a runt, you don't have to pass the police academy test.

 He failed all the tests, but, affirmative action, and he puts on a uniform. And now he stands on the street and is determined to enforce the law. And as he is twirling his baton, his club, he is looking for trouble makers. The truth is, some of these are better law enforcers than the white fellows. What makes the change? The uniform, clothes makes the man. Sartor Sartoris. There is a book on that subject. The clothes makes the man.

 And so, when you dress in a dignified way, you become dignified. And that's why it's always important for men and women to remember, dignity in clothing. I was walking on Kings Highway, and from a distance I saw a woman approaching. Now everybody on Kings Highway is naked, it's a naked street. I thought it was a Rebbetzin coming.

**A Decently Dress Gentile Women Obligates**

**All Jewish Women to Dress Modestly**

 So I saw she was wearing a Sheitel , a well styled Sheitel, and a nice long dress, nice sleeves. But when she came close, everything was all right except one thing, she was black. I was thinking, this black woman, is Mechayev (obligates) all the Jewish women. Because now Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, if she dresses decently, you the children of the Chosen People, what's going to happen to you. She is Mechayev them.

 We have to learn how important it is to be dignified in dress. That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants at all times. And that's going to change a man's inner behavior, his mind is attuned to his externality.

*The above is reprinted from an email of a transcription from questions that were posed on Tape #519 to Harav Avigdor Miller, zt”l, by the audience at the Thursday night lectures.To listen to the audio of this Q & A please dial: 732-534-8868*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**In the Dessert**

 This week we begin Sefer Bamidbar.  Bamidbar means "in the wilderness" or "in the desert."  It is in a wilderness where the Jewish nation would wander for 40 years in preparation of their entrance into the Holy Land.  The wilderness symbolizes a place with little resources.  Yet, it is in this very wilderness where the Jewish Nation received the Torah.  This comes to teach us that Hashem will find us and give us inspiration to come closer to Him, even in a wilderness.  The following inspirational true story, told by Hanna B. Geshelin in her own words, illustrates how even in a spiritual wilderness, a Jew can be awoken from slumber to change her life.

 The route of every Jew who becomes observant is unique. One of the turning points on my journey occurred at a large Iowa university with a minuscule Jewish population, where during my freshman year of 1963-64, I was the only undergraduate female who identified herself as Jewish.

**A Non-Jewish Student Decides**

**To Research Jewish Culture**

 Among my roommates during my first term was a junior taking a child development class on cultures. She decided to join the committee researching the Jewish culture because she had a ready-made resource to interview - me. As a fourth-generation American descendent of Reform Jews who emigrated from Germany before the U.S. Civil War, I didn't know much about Judaism, but I did my best to answer her questions.

 The relief that I felt when she finished questioning me was short-lived, however. Every term after that, the child development professor gave my name to the committee studying Judaism. To meet this challenge, I would have to learn something about my heritage.

**Begins to Read College Library’s Books on Judaism**

 The college library had two shelves of books on Judaism. I started at one end of the upper shelf and began reading. They gave me basic information about Jewish history, tradition and beliefs. With the help of the books I managed to get through the questions during the winter term.

 Then, in the spring of my freshman year, I met Janet. Janet was a Southern Baptist from a small town in Iowa. Like many students at college, she came from a family for whom church was a major focus. Her beliefs guided her behavior in all aspects of her life. I was the first Jewish person she'd ever met. She told me that she had chosen to write about the Jewish culture because she wanted to learn about the origins of her faith. Could she come with me to synagogue?

 The town had a small Reform congregation that met Friday evenings in the parlor of one of the churches. I agreed to take her, and as we strolled through the quiet streets she asked me about my religious life.

 "Where do you eat?" she asked suddenly. Mystified, I gave the name of the dorm dining hall. "How do you manage?" she asked.

 "What do you mean? I just eat." With an edge to her voice she said, "How can you 'just eat?' We get ham, pork or shellfish three or four nights a week, and most of the rest of the time there's meat and milk at the same meal."

 "Oh," I said confidently, "You mean kosher. I'm Reform, and we don't keep kosher." "You don't keep kosher? But from everything I've read, kosher is one of the cornerstones of Judaism. Why don't you keep it?"

**Words that Still Reverberate Through My Mind**

 I shrugged. "I don't know, we just don't." Janet stopped and turned to face me, hands on her hips. I can still picture her standing there in the light of a street lamp, dressed the way she would for church in a navy suit, a small white hat and white gloves. She looked me up and down as though I were a bug on a pin. Then she said words that still reverberate through my mind: "If my church told me to do something, I'd do it."

 In the long silence that followed, I rolled the words over and over through my mind. And I wondered, why did the Reform movement say keeping kosher wasn't important? I decided to find out.

 The next day I found, on one of those shelves of Jewish books, a history of the Reform movement. Breaking bread with others, said the book, is a universal gesture of friendship and goodwill. Keeping kosher prevents Jews and non-Jews from breaking bread together; thus it prevents casual communion between "us" and "them." When Jews stop keeping kosher and eat non-kosher with their neighbors, anti-Semitism will end and Jews will be fully accepted into mainstream society.

**Thoughts on Her Family’s German Heritage**

 I thought of the Jewish history I'd been reading, of Moses Mendelsohn and the Emancipation; of my mother's family, which hadn't kept kosher in at least four generations; and I thought of the Holocaust, which began in Mendelsohn's and my great-great-grandparent's home-land, Germany. I turned to the title page of the book and saw that originally the book had been published in German in Berlin in 1928.

 Maybe in 1928 German Jews could say that eating with non-Jews would end anti-Semitism. But they were about to be proved disastrously wrong. Could I continue to eat in a non-Jewish fashion, when the reasoning for permitting Jews to eat non-kosher was based on a complete fallacy? "If my church told me to do something, I'd do it."

 Janet's words took one end of my Yiddishe neshama (Jewish soul) and the book's glaring fallacy took the other end, and they shook me until I had to sit down, right there on the floor beside the library stacks. When I stopped shaking, I knew that until I could find a good reason, a true reason, to not keep kosher, I had no choice. I was a Jew, and the Jews kept kosher. It was that simple.

 My complete transformation from a secular to a Torah observant Jew took many years and many more lessons in faith. But my first big step began that Shabbat night, when a Southern Baptist girl challenged me to stand up and act like a Jew.  Good Shabbos Everyone.

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

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt’L**

**Perashat Bemidbar/Shavuot**

 As we approach the subject of the Dor Hamidbar (the generation of the Wilderness), also known as the Dor Deah (the generation of True Knowledge), let us keep constantly before our eyes that this era was the time when Hashem’s love was strongest. These men were chosen as witnesses of the most wondrous spectacles of demonstrations of Hashem’s Presence among His people. At the same time, they were subject to the most severe chastisement, because “The one that Hashem loves, He rebukes, as a father to the son that He favors” (Mishle 3:12).

 “Gedolah Deah!”.  “How great is True Knowledge!” (Berachot 33A).

The greatest revelation of Hashem for all time was at Har Sinai. And we can look back and see that the purpose of  Yosef being sold by the brothers was to bring Jacob and his family to Egypt.

**Preparing for that Great and Fearsome Day**

 The exile in Egypt and the Nation’s witnessing of the 10 Plagues and the splitting of Yam Suf were all to prepare us for the great and fearsome day when we were going to meet and hear Hashem. In fact the purpose of the Creation of heaven and earth was only to bestow theTorah on the Nation of Yisrael.

 The Rambam says, regarding the Revelation at Har Sinai, “We must exalt it over all others” (Igerret Teman).

 This means that we must build this scene in the edifice of our minds. Picture that there were 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60, along with women, children and converts. Total over two million people.

 The thick cloud of Shechina was on the top of Har Sinai. Thunder and lightning and the strong sound of Shofar. The Voice is heard, “Anochi…”, speaking directly to the Nation. The Nation was overwhelmed with the very greatest fear and the greatest love.

 The revelation at Har Sinai was the greatest injection of  ‘Deah”, the acquiring of True Knowledge combined with actual sensory perception, which has remained an intregal part of  the Jewish Nation until today.

*Reprinted from this week’s As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l, email.*

**Tefillin Awareness Project Helps Thousands to Better Fulfill an Important Mitzvah**

**By Daniel Keren**



 Thousands of Jewish men and teenagers throughout the New York Metropolitan area have in the past three years gained a greater appreciation for an important *mitzvah* because of the Tefillin Awareness Project or (Hanacha K’halacha.) Free of charge to participants, the project which arranges for certified sofrim to come to specific shuls or yeshivas, was developed in conjunction with *Hakhel*, a Flatbush-based organization devoted to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true principles and the *V’ani Tefillah Foundation* that aims to increase the *davening kavanah* of members in our community.

**Bothered by a Fact that Many Men**

**Might Not Be Doing the Mitzvah Properly**

 The inspiration behind the Tefillin Awareness Project was the realization of a Flatbush resident, Mr. Avrohom Schachter, who was very much bothered by the fact that many of the men he observed were perhaps not fulfilling the precious *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, even though they were faithfully putting on both their tefillin *shel rosh* and *shel yad* every day. Many of these individuals had paid top dollar for their *mehadrin* pair of *tefillin* and they regularly had them examined by a *sofer*.

 Why? In many cases, the men were not placing their *tefillin* properly, either on their head or arm. At best, these individuals were *bedieved* fulfilling the *mitzvah*, or at worst not only were not doing the precious precept for which countless *Yidden* in the many millennium of our history have been *mesiras nefesh* to perform, but were actually reciting *brochos l’vatalah*.

**Something Needed to be Done**

 Mr. Schachter was, however, uncomfortable approaching strangers in order to correct them. Yet, obviously something needed to be done and the idea developed to create a grass-roots organization that would work with various shuls and *yeshivos* to make people in all segments of our community, both Ashkenazic and Sephardic, aware of this all too common problem.

 The Tefillin Awareness Project, quickly gained the enthusiastic support of leading *Gedolim* and *rabbonim* throughout the United States and Eretz Yisroel. With the help of Hakhel, the first-ever Tefillin Awareness Project was organized at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin on March 18, 2007 in Brooklyn. More than 300 individuals came that Sunday morning to take advantage of the free program, to have experienced *sofrim*, all certified by the *Vaad Mishmeres Stam*, check to see how they were wearing their *tefillin*.

 A majority of those who were examined by the *sofrim* were found to have problems of varying degrees and were guided in how to correct their performance of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* so they were again doing the *mitzvah* properly. In some cases, it was just a simple adjustment of the *retzuos*, straps or guidance on how the *tefillin shel rosh* should be placed on the head or advice on tying the *tefillin shel yad* on the arm. In some cases, the *sofrim* helped instruct the men how to blacken the straps of the *tefillin* with special ink they brought for the occasion.

**The Campaign Has Been**

**Invited to Many Communities**

 Since that initial *tefillin* campaign at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin, Mr. Schachter, the director of the Tefillin Awareness Project explained that Hanacha K’halacha has arranged or been invited to hold similar educational programs for mispallelim at *shuls* in many other parts of Brooklyn, as well as the Five Towns, Far Rockaway, upstate summer communities, and in New Jersey kehillas such as Lakewood, Passaic, Edison and Deal.

 What has been the reaction of those who have come to have their *tefillin* placement examined by qualified *sofrim*? Almost all expressed deep and heartfelt appreciation to both the *sofrim* and the organizers of the Tefillin Awareness Project for helping them to discover how they could now do the *mitzvah* better and in some cases correctly for the first time in many years.

**It Only Takes a Couple of Minutes**

 It only takes a couple of minutes for the *sofrim* to examine your tefillin. The group has now begun receiving requests for similar programs to be conducted in Monsey, Manhattan and even Miami, Toronto, Baltimore, Philadelphia and across the country in Los Angeles.

 To date, thousands of men have benefited from recent programs held in *shuls*, *batei midrashim* and *yeshivos* throughout New York and New Jersey. Undoubtedly, each person affected for the better by this selfless project helps to bring closer our dreams for the *geulah shelaima*. For more information on scheduling a Tefillin Awareness Project campaign in your community or to discuss sponsorship opportunities, please call Mr. Schachter of the Tefillin Awareness Project at (718) 377-6735 or email shelrosh@comcast.net

*Reprinted from this week’s May 12th edition of Hamodia.*

**Parshat Bamidbar & Shavuot**

**The Young Thin**

**Miracle Worker**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week's Torah portion, Bamidbar, is always read before the Holiday of Shavuos commemorating the date that G-d gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai over 3,320 years ago.

 Its Hebrew title means 'In the Desert' but in English it is called 'Numbers' (and in Hebrew it's often referred to as 'Pikudim' which means 'Numbers') because it describes, in detail, how Moshe counted the Jews after they left Egypt.

 At first glance this is not understood. 'Torah' means 'teaching' and it is very precise. There must be a lesson here.

 1) What is the connection between getting the Torah, getting counted and being in the Desert?

 2) Why did the Jews have to be counted at all?

 3) In this case G-d asked Moses to count them. Why didn't He just reveal the number to Moses and save him a lot of time and trouble? (See Rashi 3:16)

 To understand this, here is a story. (Toratcha Shashuai #552)

**A Freezing, snow Stormy**

**Night on a Desolate Road**

 Some 200 years ago on a freezing, snow stormy night on a desolate road in the middle of Poland, a Jewish businessman's wagon, laden with goods, was stuck deeply in the mud in a blizzard. Perhaps the ice broke under the wheels but the wind was whistling so crazily it would have been impossible for the driver to hear. One thing for sure, the wagon wasn't budging and the two strong horses that had previously been faithfully doing their job were now helpless.

 The driver tried all the tricks he knew; whipping, prodding, begging them turning the reigns this way and that, but nothing helped. The horses strained until they were exhausted, another few hours in the cold and they would freeze to death. The forest was filled with wolves and robbers who were just waiting for such an opportunity. The horses and the contents of the carriage would be easy pickings. The situation was desperate.

 The businessman was at the end of his wits. He turned to the driver and yelled at him over the wind to run to the nearest town; perhaps there he could find someone with a horse or two or a few strong men to come back and help. They had to do something fast. He would wait here in the carriage until he returned.

 The nearest town was the city of Apta, perhaps a half hour's run from where they were. The driver took a small swig from the small vodka flask he carried and began running. But by the time he entered the town it was well after midnight and except for the screaming winds and snow the streets were enveloped in total, black, awesome, frozen silence.

 The driver stood alone and looked around, all lights were out, everyone was certainly warmly curled up under their blankets fast asleep. Where would he find anyone to help him now? But he couldn't go back. With no choice he began walking, hoping to find some sign of life… but in vain. It was so hopeless he wanted to cry.

**A Dim Light in the Synagogue**

 He saw a dim light in the Synagogue; he had to get out of the cold.

 He entered the silent building, tried to warm himself up and after a few seconds burst into tears.

 Suddenly he heard from a corner of the room someone say something. He looked up to see that a thin, young man who had probably been sitting and learning Torah by candlelight was standing looking at him. "What's wrong?" the young man repeated. "Why are you crying? What happened?"

 The driver walked over to him, dried his tears, shook the young man's hand and told him the whole story; where the carriage was stuck, how he had come looking for some help and added that possibly there was a tavern or some other place in the town where they could find strong fellows or maybe a horse or two to help push the carriage. He was pleading for help.

**The Young Man Puts on His Coat**

 The young man told him not to worry, put on his coat, closed his book and told him to follow him. The driver couldn't believe his ears! It was a miracle!! He thanked the young man profusely and thanked G-d for sending him. Soon there would be help! Probably he knew where there were some big strong men! The driver followed him out of the Synagogue into the street but to his surprise the young man didn't turn right or left; he kept walking straight…. out of the town in the direction of the carriage!

 The driver tried to protest, to explain that it was senseless to go alone, they had to go back and get help; bring a horse or even three. But the young man just kept walking swiftly through the swirling snow and freezing wind until they arrived at the site of the carriage.

 When the businessman saw they had arrived he jumped, half frozen, out of the carriage expecting to see salvation. But when he saw that this skinny fellow was all he had brought back he turned around, held his head in agony and began to moan. "No! NO!!! This is what I have been waiting in the cold for, for over an hour?! For this?! Who knows if the horses aren't frozen dead already? How is this matchstick going to get us out? Oy!! HaShem!! Have mercy!!"

 But the young man seemed totally unaffected by all this. He just said quietly. "You have already been stuck here too long. I hate to see it when people are stuck. The time has come that you should continue in your journey."

 There was something so simple in this young man's words that it caught the driver by surprise. "What do you mean?" he asked.

 "I mean, go back up to your seat, crack your whip over the horses and continue in your journey." He replied.

 "And what will you do?" The driver asked.

 "I'll get in the coach and return with you to Apta".

**The Tone of Young Fellow’s**

**Voice Inspires the Driver**

 The tone of the young fellow's voice made the driver, without a further thought, jump up onto the carriage, climb to his place, grab his whip and snap it over the horses and amazingly, the horses, as though they had just been waiting for this, with no effort pulled the carriage smoothly out of the mud …… to freedom!!

 The businessman and the driver turned in astonishment to the young man who waited for the businessman to enter the carriage, then entered after him and motioned for the driver to go. Minutes later they entered Apta and when the carriage stopped the young man alighted and walked quietly off into the darkness without saying a word.

 Before they could digest what just happened the irresistible smell of freshly baked bread wafted softly into their nostrils. The bakery of Apta was preparing for the morning customers. They followed the smell and in just moments found themselves entering the bakery and being greeted by its owner, a religious Jew. "Welcome! Welcome honored guests! Come and partake of freshly baked bread! Come wash your hands and sit down" he said in the most friendly voice possible.

**Enjoying the Baker’s Hospitality**

 It was as though they had suddenly been transported into a warm pleasant, new world as though in a dream. They suddenly realized that they their ordeal had left them very tired and hungry. They washed for bread while the baker prepared some hot tea and as they ate they told their host about the miracle that they had just experienced.

 "Young man? Miracles? I know everyone in this city" the baker said "and I can tell you for sure there are no young, thin miracle workers here. Must be someone from another city, or maybe it was Elijah the prophet! You know it says in the Talmud that he makes miracles! But one thing for sure, you should have asked him for a blessing! I mean, if he could free wagons then who knows what else he could do for you?!"

 Suddenly the side door of the bakery opened and a thin figure wrapped in an old cloth winter coat slipped into the room. The baker's smile faded and a look of disgust darkened his face. "Oy! That's my son in law! What a lazy bum! The whole day I work like a slave to support his family and ….. you know what he does?! Nothing! He drives me crazy!"

 The driver's face became pale. That's him! Tha… that's the one that … took us out of the mud!!"

 As soon as the baker understood what happened his eyes widened like saucers! "Him? He's the Tzadik (miracle worker)?!" He fell with a thud on the chair behind him totally confused, mumbling, "It can't be! It just can't be!"

 As soon as the baker's son in law heard the thud and the commotion he ran to his father in law's aid but when the latter came to his senses he fell to one knee, took his son in law's hand and began to beg his forgiveness.

**A Hidden Tzadike Becomes Revealed**

 That night a hidden 'Tzadik' became revealed to the world; a great miracle worker who would help thousands 'out of the mud' known as "Ha'Y'hudi HaKodesh M'Pashiska" (The Holy Jew of Pashiska).

 This answers our questions.

 The connection between receiving the Torah, the desert and getting counted is simple; all three are mundane things that the Jews transformed to holiness.

 The Torah is a book, ink on paper, like any other book in the library. It can be (and unfortunately is) treated as an interesting piece of literature, history or religion.

 But in reality it is something else all together. It is the will and wisdom of the Creator of all being and contains the plan to transform the entire world and everything in it into pure holiness.



**Grand Synagogue of Pashishka**

Transforming a Desert into an Oasis

 Or in more metaphorical terms: to transform this meaningless 'desert' of a world into an oasis of meaning and joy.

 And the Jews have special powers to do this; to activate the Torah and use its holiness to make 'heaven on earth. But these powers are hidden in them.

 And that is why G-d wanted Moses to count them; to bring these latent powers into revelation.

 By being counted each Jew became 'ONE'. And this connected each of them with the ONENESS of G-d and awakened their capabilities to use the Torah to transform the world (as G-d wants) and free it from 'the mud' like the hidden Tzadik in our story.

 That is why G-d wanted Moses to count them. Because only Moses can do this.

 It is the job of the Moses of each and every generation (which, ultimately will be completed by Moshiach); to awaken the unique power (called "Yechida"; the highest of the soul's five levels) in each Jewish soul so they can 'fill the world with the awareness of G-d like water fills the sea" (Isaiah 11:9) .

 So when Moses counted the Jews, brought them the Torah and afterwards led them through the desert he revealed the hidden powers of good in each of them (us)….. so that today even one positive deed we do, word we say or even thought we think can pull all mankind from the mud and bring…Moshiach NOW!

*Reprinted from this week’s TorahOhr Tmima email.*

**THE GOLDEN COLUMN**

**Rabbi Moshe Hayyim, Zs”l**

 Friday, 8 Sivan, marks the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Moshe Hayyim zs”l of Baghdad, the grandfather of Rabbi Yosef Hayyim, the Ben Ish Hai zs”l, who told the following story about his grandfather.

 Aman once came before Rabbi Moshe Hayyim zs”l, claiming that another person owed him money. The other insisted that he owed no money and was prepared to swear to that effect. However, the rabbi sensed that the claimant was correct and the other was prepared to swear falsely.

 He said, “Do you think I will let you swear with a Sefer Torah? Not a chance. I will have you swear with the Two Tablets of the Covenant.”

 He called the attendant of the Bet Din and said, “Go and dip ten times in the mikveh, and then bring me that Two Tablets of the Covenant - they are in my room in my house, on my table.”

**The Litigant Becomes Terrified**

 The litigant was terrified, knowing that the rabbi does not speak falsely. He must be referring to the Two Tablets which Moshe took from the Heavens and placed in the ark, which was subsequently brought to Babylonia and kept there.

 Now, he is forced to hold them and swear falsely. Surely, a fire from the heavens will come down and burn him alive! Terrified, he said, “Okay, I am willing to pay, and I will not swear.”

 The rabbi responded, “No, you are already obligated to swear.”

 The other finally admitted, “Rebbi, I lied.” He then told the whole story, that he had borrowed money and denied it. As he was preparing to pay, he asked curiously, “The Tablets of the Covenant, where are they?”

 “My attendant will come back soon, and you will see.”

 Shortly thereafter, the attendant returned, his hair still wet from the mikveh, carrying the book, “Shenei Luhot Haberit” which was on the rabbi’s table.

*Reprinted from this week’s Aram Sobah Newsletter email.*

**It Once Happened**

**Posing a Question to**

**The Rebbe in Belz**

 One Shavuot morning, an elderly Chasid posed a question to his fellow Chasidim who had traveled from great distances to be with their Rebbe in Belz. "Our trip here to Belz was a difficult one. But once we are here, our Rebbe will not be with us. He will undoubtedly be in the World Above experiencing spirituality on a far higher level than we can even imagine. Therefore, I ask you, what is the point of our coming here to be with him?"

 The other Chasidim listened, but had no answer. And so, they all decided to enter into the Rebbe's room and pose the question directly to him. Although in Belz, no Chasid would dream of entering the Rebbe's room without having first been summoned, this question so plagued them that they gathered their courage to enter.

 Standing before their Rebbe, the delegation asked the troublesome question and waited for the Rebbe's reply. He told them the following:

 "It is true that if a person hears Torah thoughts from his Rebbe and learns them and then translates them into action in the service of G-d, then he retains his connection to his Rebbe and remains together with him in the World Above. But that is not all. Even if a person completely forgets the words his Rebbe spoke, but at the time was spiritually aroused by those words, he retains his connection.

 "There is a hint of this in the words of the hymn, Akdamut, which we say today, for it says, 'Pure when you hear the praise of this melody, Your places will be fixed in this company." This means that even those who are pure only when they hear, they too will remain together with the holy company."

 The Chasidim left the Rebbe's room comforted and uplifted by his encouraging words.

**The Sanz Rebbe Refuses to Make Kiddush for His Chassidim Until…**

 The Shavuot prayers had ended and the Chasidim of Reb Chaim of Sanz had gathered to receive the Rebbe's blessings and to hear him recite kiddush and partake of some wine and cakes. They lingered, waiting for their Rebbe to complete his lengthy prayers until he finally emerged from the shul.

 Reb Chaim had become legendary for his great compassion for the poor and needy and his generous dispensing of charity, but still, his followers were surprised at his words as he took his place at the table.

 "When I was a young man, I used to deliver a carefully honed discourse every Shavuot to a group of great scholars. Now, however, I am an old man, and I don't have the strength for that kind of learned give and take. Instead, I will deliver to you only a very short word: I need one thousands reinish for a needy cause, and I will not recite Kiddush until you decide between yourselves how much each of you will bring to me. I need the money in cash, as soon as the holiday is over. I leave you to arrange it between yourselves. At that, the Rebbe left the room.

 The Chasidim had no choice but to discuss how to meet their Rebbe's demand. Four of the wealthiest divided the entire amount between themselves, and a delegate was sent to the Rebbe to assure him that the matter was taken care of. Only then did Reb Chaim make Kiddush.

 No sooner had the holiday ended than the entire sum of money was given to the Rebbe who handed it to a certain pauper who needed it for a dowry for his daughter.

**A Lesson from**

**Reb Avraham, the Malach**

 The son of the Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Avraham, was called the Malach, "the Angel." It was related by his grandson, Reb David Moshe of Chotkov, that once his grandfather visited a certain scholar named Rabbi Feivish of Kremenets. Although the entire town turned out to greet the great rabbi, he stood with his face averted from them. He stood gazing out a window at a high mountain in the distance.

 The townsfolk longed to hear some holy words of Torah from him, but he remained rooted to the spot deep in meditation. One of those gathered there was a scholarly young man from a renowned family. Unfortunately, his self-esteem outstripped even those two qualities. A fervent opponent to Chasidic teachings, he assumed that this rabbi, whom the Chasidim esteemed so highly, was simply and purposely ignoring and slighting the scholars who had assembled to honor him. This, the young man could not abide.

 Clearing his throat, the young scholar spoke. "Honored Sir, would you so kindly explain to us why you are staring so intently at that mountain, which is, after all, you must admit, no more than a pile of dust?"

 The Malach didn't miss a beat in replying to the young man. "That is exactly what is so amazing to me. How is it that a mere pile of dust can inflate itself so tremendously that it can assume the shape of a proud mountain?"

 With that comment, he effectively silenced the young man, and taught him a valuable lesson at the same time.

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