**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas korach 5776**

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**Not Even a Simple**

**Pair of Socks**

In Yerushalayim of old there lived a great wealthy man and aside from his wealth he was also great in fearing Heaven and he gave much charity. In his old age he gathered his children and he gave them two envelopes and this is what he instructed: “Open the first envelope immediately upon my passing, before the funeral, and open the second envelope immediately after I am buried.”

A short while later the wealthy man left this world and entered his eternal world. His children gathered to honor him with the final honor and to fulfill his instructions.

When they opened the first envelope they were shocked to see these words: “My dear children, all my life I never asked anything of you, now I request of you to honor me with a final honor and bury me with socks on my feet.”

The children were shocked because they knew that their father was a learned man and how could a man so straightforward and upright ask for something like this? In their distress they went to the great men of the generation and requested ‘an authorization of exception’ to bury their father with socks. However no one could give permission for this matter. Having no choice, they buried their father properly according to the custom of Israel, without socks.

Ultimately, over the course of the funeral they asked for his forgiveness that they did not fulfill his request. Immediately after the large funeral they opened the second envelope and their shock increased sevenfold from the contents:

“My dear children, I only wanted to demonstrate to you that a person takes nothing with him from this world, not even socks! And so, do not become arrogant because of your wealth. Place this constantly before your eyes, and so shall you walk on the straight path…”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5776 email of Tiv Hakehilah.*

**Chabad ‘Welcome Centers’ in Rio to Offer Kosher Food, Multilingual Help**

**To Jewish Visitors to Olympic Games**

RIO DE JANEIRO ([JTA](http://jta.org/)) — Chabad will convert its three Rio de Janeiro centers into “welcome centers” for the estimated 40,000 Jewish visitors expected this summer for the Brazil Olympics and Paralympic Games.



**Chabad-Lubavitch of Rio de Janeiro will play an active role in welcoming and caring for the 40,000 Jewish visitors expected to descend on the city this summer. Rabbi Yehoshua Goldman (fourth from right) and Rabbi Eliyahu Haber (to his right) will serve as Jewish chaplains for the Games. Here, they pose with staff at the Olympic Village, including head of security Tsur Bunim (second from right).**

The sites in Leblon, Copacabana and Barra will provide kosher food and a prayer minyan, as well as help with other Jewish or general information,  Chabad.org [reported](http://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/3364400/jewish/Three-Chabad-Tourist-Centers-at-Rio-Olympics-to-Provide-for-Jewish-Visitors.htm). Rabbinical students from New York staffing the centers will welcome guests in English, Hebrew, Spanish, French and Russian.

“It is a large premises right in the center of Copacabana,” said Rabbi Ilan Stiefelmann, who is coordinating the facility in Rio’s neighborhood packed with hotels, hostels and tourists from around the world. “It’s really the perfect location for us to be able to greet Jewish visitors.”

The Orthodox group will host an official Shabbat program for the Israeli Paralympics delegation, including providing accommodations for athletes and staff who are Sabbath observant.

During the Olympics, an equivalent service will be provided by the Conservative Temple CJB, where some 300 guests are expected, including Israel’s Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev, the highest-ranking Israeli official expected to attend the games.

“We are preparing for about 500 additional people to join our synagogue each Shabbat” during the games, chief envoy Yehoshua Goldman told Chabad.org.

Goldman and another member of his team were appointed by the Brazilian Olympic Committee as two of the three Jewish chaplains at the Olympic village.

sPermission for a kosher food concession stand at the Olympic stadium has not yet been granted by the International Olympic Committee. At the village, there will be no kosher or other special food.

Reprinted from a June 27, 2016 dispatch of the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency.)

**Rare 1701 Bible for Sale**

**Amsterdam Bible used for 'Goral Ha-Gra' up for auction.**

**By Reut Hadar**



**Title Page courtesy of** Kedem Auction House

An antique Bible (Chumash) printed in Amsterdam in 1701 is being put up for auction in three weeks' time. This particular edition is remarkable because it was used several times to perform the 'Goral Ha-Gra' ('lottery of the Vilna Gaon').

This lottery, attributed to the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Elijah Kramer, 1720 – 1797) is actually first mentioned over 200 years earlier in a book by Rabbi Saul Sirero. It is a method for resolving rare and important dilemmas. There is a specific tradition of turning pages of the Bible a certain number of times at random until one reaches a particular verse, which will provide the answer.

**Not Any Chumash Can Be Used**

According to tradition only this edition of the Bible may be used for performing this lottery because it is printed with two columns on each page, which is a necessary requirement.

It was this edition of the Bible that was famously used by Rabbi Arieh Levin when he performed the 'Goral Ha-Gra' to identify the remains of unidentified soldiers from the 'lamed-heh' ('convoy of 35').

The 'lamed-heh' set out on 16 January 1948 to bring supplies to the four blockaded kibbutzim of Gush Etzion. They were discovered and ambushed by an Arab horde and their bodies were mutilated. These bodies were recovered by the British soldiers stationed in Hebron and were buried in temporary graves in Gush Etzion. After the fall of Gush Etzion, the details of who was buried in each grave were lost.

**Rabbi Aryeh Levin was Requested**

**to Perform the Goral Ha-Gra**

In 1950 the bodies were brought to Jerusalem for burial. The parents of the fallen soldiers turned to Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank to help them identify their sons. He sent them to Rabbi Aryeh Levin who performed the 'Goral Ha-Gra' to identify the bodies.

Rabbi Aryeh Levin at first refused to perform the lottery because it may only be used in very rare circumstances. However, he eventually agreed.

Simcha Raz writes in his biography of Rabbi Aryeh Levin, *A Tzaddik in Our Time*: "In order to perform the lottery, one may only use a Bible printed in two columns. An antique Bible printed in Amsterdam in 1701... with yellowing but still complete pages, any tears patched with clear tape to keep the layout intact.

"The identification took place in Levin's *beit midrash*(study hall)*,*in the presence of representatives of the bereaved parents. Twelve candles were lit, the Bible was opened at random seven times and Rabbi Levin ruled that as they stood in front of the remains of each of the fallen fighters, the last verse on the page had to include the name, or an allusion to the name, of each of those whom they were trying to identify.

**An Illusion to the Thirty-Five (Lamed-Heh)**

"How amazed everyone was when one of the verses that first appeared was 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein,' (Tehillim 24:1) a verse that [in Hebrew] begins with the word 'to the Lord,'" which is abbreviated in Hebrew with the initials lamed-heh ('thirty-five'). "Moreover, to everyone's amazement, every page spoke unequivocally. In the first verse they reached there was a specific name that clearly identified one of the fallen ... One after the other ... the identity of the fallen was determined."

Rabbi Aryeh Levin had received the tradition of how to perform this lottery from his Rabbis in a chain of tradition stretching back to the Vilna Gaon.

This lottery was also performed by Rabbi Aharon Kotler when he wanted to leave Russia to move to Israel. However Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was pressuring him to move to the USA instead in order to strengthen Jewish life in that spiritual 'wilderness.' When he performed the lottery, Rabbi Kotler arrived at the verse, "G-d said to Aharon, 'Go to meet Moshe in the wilderness'" (Shemot 4:27). He understood the message and moved to the USA.

The Bible is being auctioned by Kedem Auction House along with hundreds of other manuscripts and rare books.

Meron Eren of the Kedem Auction House in Jerusalem stresses that one must be careful "not to perform the 'Goral Ha-Gra' without good cause. Precisely for this reason, this book has unique historical significance. Bibles like this have been used by Jews throughout the generations to resolve truly difficult and crucial dilemmas, in order to decide how to act and to know what to do."

*Reprinted from the June 29, 2016 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**Story #970**

**The Ninety-Year-Old's Father's Tallit**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1467206710&type=no%2Dmagic&session_redirect=true&userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1449696053&randid=1092193414)

A ninety-year-old man contacted Rabbi Mendel Ekstein of Bnei Brak, and hired him to transfer his father's remains from Uzbekistan to Eretz Yisrael. During the War years, his father escaped from Europe to Uzbekistan. There he became ill (he had heart trouble) and realized that his death was approaching, so he told his then twenty-year-old son, "When I die, bury me here, in Uzbekistan, but when you have the opportunity, bring my body over to *Eretz Yisrael*."

Seventy years passed since then, and he still hadn't fulfilled his father's wishes. (This is often how things are: it was after the war, he needed to re-establish himself in *Eretz Yisrael*, years passed and he forgot to take care of his father's wishes. But now, being that he was ninety years old and realizing he would soon join his father in heaven, he remembered to carry out his father's last wish.)

Transferring bones requires a strong level of fear of Heaven, expertise in the laws and in the procedure [which includes lighting candles, learning some Mishna and giving *tzedakah* - all for the merit of the departed], and Rabbi Ekstein is an acknowledged expert in this field. Even one of Israel's leading rabbinical authorities, Rabbi Shmuel Wosner (who passed away during Passover in 2015 at age 102!), would rely on him for these matters.

Reb Mendel traveled to Uzbekistan and did all the preliminary procedures. Afterwards, he opened the grave. He saw that the woolen Turkish *tallit* in which the body of the deceased was enwrapped was whole, just as if it was just freshly placed in the grave.

When Reb Mendel saw this, he was astounded. He never encountered anything like this before. He was afraid to continue. The deceased was apparently a very special and holy Jew, for his*tallit* to be uneffected by seventy years of being buried in the earth.

But this was the deathbed request of the deceased, so he accepted that he was obligated to continue. Slowly, carefully, he removed the *tallit*, and there was the skeleton of the body, exactly as one would expect to see after 70 years: the burial shrouds were totally gone, the flesh was consumed, only the *tallit* (which generally disintegrates first) was remarkably fresh, like new.

The remains were brought to *Eretz Yisrael* and after hearing the story, one of the most important rabbis in *Eretz Yisrael* delivered a eulogy. After the other eulogies were completed, Reb Mendel went over to the great rabbi and asked him, "Although the custom in *Eretz Yisrael* is to bury the dead without a *tallit*, perhaps because of this unusual miracle, it is proper to bury him with the*tallit*?"

The rabbi replied that before answering, he needs to hear more about the deceased. He brought Reb Mendel and the ninety-year-old son into a side room and he said to the son, "Tell us about your father. What was he like?"

The son said, "As your Honor heard in the eulogies. He was a genuine Torah scholar, a significant Jew."

"Yes," the rabbi said,"but tell me more. What did he do to merit that his *tallit* remained fresh for seventy years under the ground?"

"The *tallit*?" the son said, matter-of-factly, "that's a simple matter to explain. When my father put on his new *tallit* on the day after his wedding (Ashkenazi men wear a *tallit* only after marriage), he made a resolution that he would never speak while wearing the *tallit* (other than words of prayer, of course). He kept this resolution his entire life. Apparently, in this merit, the *tallit* remained intact."

After hearing this explanation, the rabbi ruled that they can make an exception this time, and bury him with the *tallit*.

***Source:*** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Torah Wellsprings (KiTeitze 5775) - the teachings of Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

***Note from Rabbi Biderman***: The ***Shlah*** writes that to never speak while wearing *tefilin* is highly desirable and propitious for long life. Nevertheless, there is no explicit source anywhere in Jewish Law that one shouldn't speak while wearing a *tallit*.

It is known that the **Sar-Shalom of Belz** taught his chasidim not to speak while wearing a *tallit*. Belzer chasidim relate that the Rebbe Sar-Shalom once instructed a *bar mitzvah* boy the first time he wrapped *tefilin* to promise to never speak words not of prayer while wearing the *tefilin*. When years later this young man was about to marry, he asked the Sar Shalom, "I kept my promise and I didn't speak while wearing *tefilin*. What should I undertake now?"

The Sar Shalom told him, "Take on never speaking while wearing your *tallit*." He continued that this will help him when, after 120 years, he stands before the heavenly tribunal. When they ask him to tell his deeds and his sins, he can signal that he cannot speak, since he is wearing a *tallit*. In this manner, he will be freed from judgment. (Outside of Israel, it is customary to bury the dead with a *tallit*.)

***Connection*:** Weekly Reading (outside of Israel) Shelach concludes with the mitzvah of attaching *tzitzis* (intricately woven strings) to the corners of one's four-scornered garments. (These verses also constitute the 3rd paragraph of the Shma Yisrael prayer.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5776 email of KabbalOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentofsafed.com*

**Salt in the Soup**

The Chofetz Chaim once traveled to the home of the Rav of another city. The Rebbetzin was very excited with such an honored guest, and together with her maid prepared a very special meal. Unbeknownst to her, the maid had already salted the soup, and so she salted it as well.

The Rav tasted the soup, winced, and was about to go into the kitchen to tell the Rebbetzin how oversalted it was. The Chofetz Chaim took the Rav’s hand and asked him to finish the soup together with him. “What is the point of making her upset, let her take pleasure in having served us delicious soup.”

*Reprinted from the June 29, 2016 email of the Hakhel Community Awareness Bulletin. Adapted from the sefer Kuntres Chaim V’Chesed by Rabbi Kolodetsky of Bnei Brak, Israel.*

**The Rebbe’s Advice to a Desperate Jew from Dvinsk**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**



**The Rebbe Reshab; Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber**

This story occurs 150 years ago in Tsarist Russia. His real name was not given in the story but we will call him Yona. Yona was sitting in his chair behind the counter looking sadly out the window of his meager shop at nothing.

Occasionally a cat would stray in, look around, and leave. But except for that, since he opened two months ago, he had no customers, not even one.

He looked back into his Talmud and tried to concentrate on the words but tears welled up in his eyes. Less than a year ago he had been the chief manager of a large profitable match factory in the city of Dvinsk. He had good wages and good friends, a nice house and his wife also made good money sewing and repairing expensive clothes. So they were well-off. Money was never lacking for giving to charity, his two sons got the best Torah education possible and his Shabbat and holiday tables were always packed with guests.

But then suddenly…as though someone had put a curse on him it all crumbled to pieces. First the match factory burned to the ground. Then, weeks, even months went by and as hard as he tried, he couldn't find another job.

Then, on top of it all, his wife fell sick and the doctors said there was no cure. Debts started piling up and it wasn't long before he had to sell their house and move to a small shack and take to begging just to keep his family alive.

One day, one of his acquaintances from years ago who happened to be a follower of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe (The Rebbe Reshab; Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber ) saw him begging in the street and couldn't believe his eyes.

"Yona! Is that you? What happened? Begging? OY!" He gave him a nice amount of money and said, "Listen, Yona, you have to see the Rebbe! I mean, the Jewish people aren't orphans. I know you aren't a Chassid and don't believe in Rebbes but believe me you won't be disappointed. Elijah and Moses did miracles to help Jews, right, so the Rebbe does the same thing. Yona, you have to at least ask your wife!"

But poor Yona refused. True, he was desperate and ready to do almost anything, but not this. He wasn't a misnaged (those who oppose the Chassidim) but he was far from a Chassid! He decided to ask his wife, just as the Chassid suggested. That evening he went home and quietly closed the door behind him so as not to disturb his wife's sleep and cleared his throat until she opened her eyes. She smiled and asked how it went today, if there were many donors. He told her what the Chassid told him and surprisingly, she agreed.

The next day he traveled to Lubavitch with mixed emotions, On the one hand, he didn't like the idea of putting such trust in a human being; on the other hand, the Chassidim compared their Rebbe to Moses, and you have to trust Moses.

The next evening he got a private audience (called "yechidut"). When he entered the Rebbe's room he was shocked. He had never experienced such a thing in his life. It was as though he was in another dimension--the dimension of certainty.

The Rebbe listened to Yona's story and replied calmly. "I suggest you move with your family to the city of Kovna and open a hat store. Your wife can make the hats and you can sell them."

"Hats?" thought Yona to himself, "did the Rebbe say 'hats'?" He had never sold anything in his life and had absolutely no knowledge of hats except that they

are worn on the head. And his wife was sick, she couldn't make hats! And why Kovna, which meant moving hundreds of miles?

"Rebbe," he stammered after clearing his throat several times. He had a lot to say but all that came out was. "Errr . . . Kovna? Err¦ that is…I live in Dvinsk. Maybe Dvinsk, a hat shop?"

But the Rebbe just repeated his suggestion, looked down at some papers, and Yona knew it was time to leave.

He returned home, told his wife what the Rebbe said and, to his amazement, as soon as she heard what the Rebbe said, she sat up in bed and declared, "Well, I have to get to work on those hats. What type of hats should I make?" And in moments she was sitting behind her sewing machine and working. Half of her illness had disappeared.

A week later they moved to Kovna, rented both a house and a small shop in Kovna and made a few shelves in the shop. Yona constructed a sign to hang outside, put a mezuzah on the door, and they were open for business! Now all they needed were customers.

But days, then weeks, passed and no customers came.

"Could it be that the Rebbe was wrong?" Yona thought to himself. "All his

Chassidim said that the Rebbe is never wrong. But after all, he's only human! Why did he pick Kovna? It's so far away. If he was going to be wrong, then at least he could have picked somewhere closer to Dvinsk? And why hats?"

Suddenly his thoughts were broken by the sound of horses and carriage stopping before his shop.

He straightened himself, put on a smile, and in walked a well-dressed, wealthy looking, heavy-set gentile.

"Is this all you have?" he asked. I never saw this store before? You must have just opened. Hey, is everything all right? You look like you've been crying? Is

everything all right?"

Yona wanted so badly to talk to someone that he poured out his heart to the stranger -- how he used to manage a huge match factory and became a pauper, how the Rebbe sent him to sell hats, of all things, here in Kovna, of all places.

"Match factory?!" exclaimed the visitor. "You managed a MATCH FACTORY??!

Why this is wonderful! Your Rebbe or whatever you call him must be a prophet or a genius! A prophet and a genius! You are the man I desperately need! Listen, I have a brother that owns a huge match factory in Kiev. If you worked in matches you certainly heard of it. It's five times a big as the one that burned down in Dvinsk.

"Anyway, one of his machines, the biggest and most expensive one, broke down about a month ago and, well, he brought the biggest experts and no one can fix it. "Listen my friend, you weren't sent here for nothing! What do you say? Fix it and you will be a rich man."

Yona explained that he had been a manager and not a mechanic, but it didn't help. The next day he was in Kiev looking at the machine. It took him three days to take it apart and figure out the problem and another three to put it back again.

But it worked!

Yona got a huge reward. He was hired as manager of the Kiev factory and became richer than ever. His wife completely recovered and a lot of people, especially Yona himself, realized the G-dliness of the Rebbe.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach/Korach 5776 email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel*

**The Story of the Baby**

**Who Was a Grandfather**

**By**[**Zalman Ruderman**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12460/jewish/Zalman-Ruderman.htm)

The work was backbreaking and the profits were meager. Yet Israel was happy. Every day he would drive his horse and cart into the mountains, where he would shovel clay onto his creaking cart. When he had a full load, he would urge his faithful but aging nag to the market, where he would sell his wares to brickmakers and potters for just enough money to purchase some groceries for himself and his wife,Chana, and some oats for his horse.

In time Israel would become known far and wide as Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, but that was far in the future. At this point the couple was content to live simple lives, far from the public eye.

“Thank G‑d,” they would frequently tell each other, “we have enough to keep body and soul together without having to rely on handouts.”

But the passage of time and poor diet conspired to make Israel’s horse weaker and weaker, until the day came when the poor creature could no longer drag the cart to the market.

“My old horse is at death’s door,” Israel confided to some of the local peasants. “How will I manage to get my clay to the market without her?”

“I know just the solution for you,” said one of the fellows. “In a town not far from Uman there lives a wealthy man named Baruch. He practices a special form of charity. Whenever a poor man’s horse is close to death, he needs only to bring the old animal to Baruch, and the rich man gives him a young, strong horse from his own stable. Why don’t you try your luck?”

Baruch was not known as a Torah scholar. But what he lacked in education he made up for in good deeds. Together with his wife, Rachel, he excelled in caring for the destitute. They were known far and wide as gracious hosts, who loved nothing more than to host wayfarers. They even built a special house next to their own home where weary travelers could get a warm meal and a clean bed.

When Israel and Chana arrived at the rich couple’s estate, they were treated to delicious meals and a private room. After giving them a fresh horse, Baruch invited them to be his guests for Shabbat, and they accepted his invitation.

After a thoroughly enjoyable Shabbat had passed and the last of the guests had been fed *melaveh malkah*, the traditional Saturday night meal, Baruch went to his own quarters to retire. Glancing at the guest house for a last time, he saw a Fiery fire, he ran as fast as his legs would carry him. Upon closer inspection, however, he saw that the light was of another quality, an ethereal glow the likes of which he had never seen.

Summoning up all the courage he could muster, he entered the building and peeked into the room he had seen the light coming from. He saw Israel sitting on the floor of his room, reciting *tikkun chatzot*, the midnight prayer asking G‑d to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

With upturned palms, the young man recited the Hebrew words as hot tears streamed from his eyes. Next to him stood a tall man dressed in white, the otherworldly light emanating from his face.

Overwhelmed, Baruch fell into a deep faint and collapsed onto the door with a thud.

Hearing the noise, Israel opened the door and saw his gracious host lying on the floor. He immediately set to work reviving the man and calming his frazzled nerves.

“Please forgive me,” pleaded Baruch. “I had no idea that you were such a special person. Had I known, I would have surely given you better treatment. Oh, how can I make up for my gross oversight?”

“Don’t speak of it,” said Israel firmly. “You have done more than you should have. In fact, it was decreed in heaven that you and your wife will soon be rewarded for your good deeds. You will be blessed with a son who will be a righteous man. When that happens, take care that only your wife nurses him, and that you watch him like the apple of your eye. Make sure that he lives a life of purity, and that he receives the best Torah education, because he will be a great leader of the Jewish people.”

After hearing the good news, Baruch begged Israel to reveal the identity of the tall man who was standing near him. “If you merited to see him,” replied Israel, “you are worthy of knowing who he is. The guest was none other than your holy ancestor, Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague, known as the Maharal. The time has come for his soul to once again come into this world, and that will be your special son.

“At the circumcision, name your son Aryeh Leib (a variant of Yehudah Loew), and I assure you that I will bless him as well.”

The following morning, Israel and Chana set off on their way.

It was not long before Rachel shared the good news that she  was expecting. In due time, a boy was born amidst great joy. Hoping to once again attract his mysterious guest, Baruch announced that all poor people from the entire realm were invited to participate in the festive meal that would follow the circumcision.

As Baruch circulated among his guests, he was delighted to see that Israel—dressed in a peasant’s smock—was indeed present. “Oh, I am so honored to have you here,” he exclaimed. “Please come to the front. I would be humbled and honored if you would act as *sandek*, holding my son during the circumcision ceremony.”

“Hush,” replied Israel, “give me no honor, and let no one know that I am anything more than a simple man.”

After the circumcision was performed and the child was named after his illustrious ancestor, it was time for the baby to be returned to his mother. Baruch announced that the child would be circulated among the guests so that they would each have the opportunity to bless the child.

When it was Israel’s turn, he said:

I am an ignorant man, and I do not know how to say fancy blessings in Hebrew. But I remember how my father used to explain a verse in the Torah: “And Abraham was old *(zaken)*.” The Hebrew word for father is *av*, and the Hebrew word for grandfather is *zaken*. This verse tells us that Abraham was the grandfather of us all. I bless the child that he be a grandfather to the people of Israel, just like Abraham.”

The crowd roared in good-natured laughter at the crude homily of the strange peasant, who so readily admitted his ignorance. But the nickname stuck. From then on, he was known as the *zayde*, Yiddish for “grandfather.”

Even when he became known far and wide as a miracle worker (and an adherent of the chassidic movement, which was founded by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov), he was still known to all as the Shpoler Zayde (the “Grandfather of Shpoli”).

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

**“Welcome. You Are**

**Sitting in My Seat!”**

**By Rabbi Etan Tokayer**

It can be quite off-putting, when coming to a new shul and the first welcome one receives is, “Hi, you are sitting in my seat.” It is enough to send some out of shul and never to return.

The Parsha [Emor] ends with the story of the Megadef, the blasphemer who curses Hashem’s name. This violation triggers capital punishment and therefore, if we were to understand the genesis of the Megadef, we might attempt to minimize its incidence in society.

The Midrash suggests that the Megadef in our Parsha resulted from the Megadef having lost a court case. The case revolved around the status of the Megadef himself and where he would live.

The Megadef’s mother was a Jewess from Shevet Dan and his father was an Egyptian. The Megadef pitched his tent with the Tribe of Dan and to his surprise, the Dannites told him that he had no standing with them. Why are you here, they protested. You are not one of us. Even though personal status follows the mother, tribal affiliation follows the father. In other words he said, “Be-gone, you are sitting in our seat.”

The case went to Moshe Rabeinu’s court where the Megadef claimed as a son of a Dannite woman, he was connected to the Tribe of Dan. Moshe ruled in favor of Dan, and the Megadef was evicted. The Megadef was so incensed by the loss, he angrily blasphemed the Name of Hashem.

On one level, the Megadef seems to be an immature person. He doesn’t like how the court ruled so he curses the whole system. However, one may suggest that the Midrash teaches us a more fundamental point. Though Dan may have been legally correct in kicking the Megadef out, they were not REQUIRED to do so. They may have been legally right but they were spiritually and morally wrong. Shevet Dan was not just an innocent bystander watching the Megadef phenomenon develop. They in effect caused it. The message for us then is that when Jews walk away from Judaism, it is not enough to blame them or admonish them to grow up.

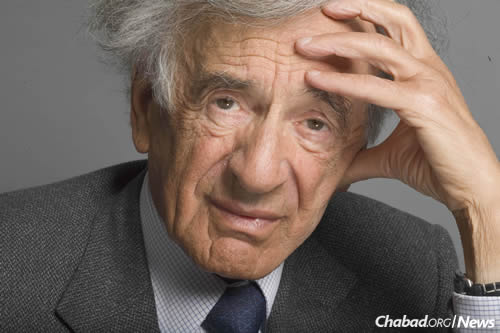
Rather, we must ask ourselves, what part did we play in their exit? By creating a welcoming environment and leading lives of personal of integrity, we may eradicate the Megadef phenomenon and create a society of dedicated and passionate Jews.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shabbos Emor bulletin of the Kingsway Jewish Center in Brooklyn, NY.. Rabbi Tokayer is the Rav of the synagogue.*

**Elie Wiesel, Author, Activist and Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Passes Away at 87**

**By Yaakov Ort**

**Holocaust Survivor Challenged World Leaders to Fight Anti-Semitism and Pursue Peace**

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Elie Wiesel, who perpetuated the memory of the Holocaust, championed international recognition of evil in all its forms and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, passed away on July 2 at his home in Manhattan. He was 87 years old.

“Wiesel is a messenger to mankind,” wrote the Nobel committee. “His message is one of peace, atonement and human dignity. His belief that the forces fighting evil in the world can be victorious is a hard-won belief.”

Eliezer Wiesel was born in 1928 to Shlomo and Sarah Wiesel in Sighet, Romania, where he received a traditional *yeshivah* education. His maternal grandfather, Dodye Feig, was a member of the Vishnitz Chassidic sect and had a strong influence on the development of the values that would eventually earn his grandson the Nobel Prize.

In 1940, Hungary annexed Sighet. Its Jewish residents were forced into two ghettoes where they lived in extreme poverty until May 1944, when the Nazis, with Hungary’s agreement, transferred the entire community to Auschwitz.

Wiesel was sent to the Buna Werke labor camp before being transferred near the war’s end to a series of other concentration camps, including Buchenwald. His book *Night*, published in 1960, details the harrowing ordeal of a 15-year-old living in a Nazi concentration camp and surviving a death march. The book has since been translated into 30 languages.

Wiesel studied at the Sorbonne in Paris following the war and began work as a journalist, translating Hebrew articles into Yiddish for the Irgun militia.

He visited Israel in 1949 as a foreign correspondent for the French newspaper *L’Arche,* and was subsequently hired by the Hebrew daily *Yedioth Ahronoth* as its Paris correspondent. He also worked as a freelance writer covering the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. In subsequent years, he devoted himself in novels, essays and public speaking to keeping the memory of the Holocaust and its atrocities alive in the world’s consciousness.

Through his early work as a reporter and columnist, he met fellow journalist Gershon Jacobson, who suggested that he meet the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. “But I’m a VishnitzerChassid,” Wiesel jokingly told Jacobson, who advised that he visit the Rebbe “as a journalist, not as a Vishnitzer.” Wiesel agreed and met the Rebbe for the first of a number of long, private audiences.

The first encounter, which Wiesel called “transformative," lasted until the early hours of the morning, during which they discussed Wiesel’s early works, and what at that point was the writer’s “anger at G‑d."

From their first meeting in the early 1960s, Wiesel formed a deep relationship with the Rebbe, whom he considered to be his spiritual guide and with whom he engaged in deep correspondences regarding G‑d, life after the Holocaust, issues of personal faith and family matters. It was the Rebbe who persuaded Wiesel to marry, with Wiesel remembering years later: “The greatest bouquet of flowers I ever received was from the Rebbe for my wedding.”

Wiesel would frequently cite the inspiration he received from the Rebbe in speeches around the world.

At the conclusion of one long letter on how to help people cope with suffering and loss, the Rebbe concluded: “Too long a letter? If, however, with good fortune you will be married after the festival of Shavuot, according to the tradition of Moses and Israel, this lengthy letter, as well as the time you spend reading it, will have been well worth the while.”

Subsequently, Wiesel did marry, and he attributed his decision, in part, to the Rebbe’s prodding. As he related in an interview, the Rebbe was overjoyed at the news: “He was [always] nudging me to get married. I have letters—one letter in which we speak about Jewish theology—seven, eight pages about theology. At the end [of the letter], he said, ‘And by the way, when are you getting married?’ As if the two had something in common.”



Wiesel receives honey cake from the Rebbe prior to the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah. (Photo: JEM/The Living Archive)

**Facing Evil With Faith**

[In one 1965 letter to Wiesel](http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/2619807/jewish/The-Holocaust-Facing-Evil-with-Faith.htm), the Rebbe asserted that only a true believer could sincerely confront G‑d with the question: Will the judge of all the earth not do justice? The challenge for humanity, the Rebbe concluded, is not only to remember the Holocaust, but to actively work against Hitler’s “final solution.”

**Praise From World Leaders**

The reaction to news of Wiesel’s passing was swift. In the United States, President Barack Obama remembered Wiesel as “one of the great moral voices of our time, and in many ways, the conscience of the world.”

“Like millions of admirers,” Obama continued, “I first came to know Elie through his account of the horror he endured during the Holocaust simply because he was Jewish,” he said. “But I was also honored and deeply humbled to call him a dear friend. I’m especially grateful for all the moments we shared and our talks together, which ranged from the meaning of friendship to our shared commitment to the State of Israel.”

Wiesel’s devotion to Judaism was evident in his writings and personal conduct throughout his life, as was his steadfast support of Israel, especially in recent years.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised Wiesel as “a beacon of light” in the “darkness” of the Holocaust, and said that Israel and the Jewish world were “shedding bitter tears” over his passing.

“Elie, the wordsmith, expressed through his extraordinary personality and fascinating books the triumph of the human spirit over cruelty and evil. Throughout the dark period of the Holocaust, in which our 6 million brethren perished, Elie Wiesel was a beacon of light and an example of humanity that believes in man’s inherent good,” he said.

Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin said Wiesel was a “hero of the Jewish people and a giant of all humanity.”

Rivlin called him “one of the Jewish people’s greatest sons, who touched the hearts of so many, and helped us to believe in forgiveness, in life and in the eternal bond of the Jewish people. May his memory be a blessing, everlastingly engraved in the heart of the nation.”

Wiesel is survived by his wife Marion, their son Shlomo Elisha Wiesel, his stepdaughter Jennifer and two grandchildren.

*Excerpted from the current website of Chabad.Org*