**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Korach 5773**

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**How Do You Spell Knaidel?**

**The National Spelling Bee Puts its Spotlight On Yiddish. Is it a Dying Language?**

**By** [**Yvette Alt Miller**](http://www.aish.com/authors/84110707.html)



***Arvind V. Mahankali, America’s National Spelling Bee Champion***

 Arvind V. Mahankali, a 13 year old from Queens, NY, won American’s 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 30 by correctly spelling the word *knaidel*. His win spotlighted Yiddish, the *mamaloshen* (mother tongue) of many Ashkenazi *yidden* (Jews) around the world.

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 Actually, his win made some people *farblonget* (confused), for as far as many are concerned, there’s no standardized English spelling of Yiddish words. *Knaidel* (dumpling), a tasty *nosh* (snack), might just as easily be spelled *kneidel* or *knaidle* – or even *knaydl*.

**An Old Jewish Language that**

**Developed in Central and Eastern Europe**

 This is because [Yiddish](http://www.aish.com/j/fs/48925037.html) isn’t written in English characters – it’s an old language that grew out of Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Combining a *bissel* (little) Hebrew, some German, with a dash of Slavic influences, Yiddish reflects the unique nature of Jewish life in Europe. Some Yiddish words capture the nuances of Jewish life in a way that no other language can.

 What’s a *machatuna*, for instance? It’s the parents of your child’s spouse. There’s no word for it in English, and reflects the importance of extended family in close-knit Jewish circles. A *balabuste* is a bustling homemaker, whose kitchen is always full of beautiful *nosh* for *Shabbos* (Shabbat). A *mensch* means person, and it’s used to mean the full measure of a man – someone who lives up to his (or her) potential: the full measure of what a person should strive to be.

**Many Other Colorful Expressions**

 There are some other colorful expressions that have endeared Yiddish to generations of people. For instance, what’s the difference between a *shlemeil* and a *shlemazel*? The *shlemeil* spills soup on the *shlemazel*. (This might cause the shlemazel to *plotz* – which means explode – in anger.)

 A *piste* *kayleh’s* an empty barrel: a person lacking gravitas. The *gantse* *megilla* means the whole story. A *shtik holtz* is someone with no personality. A *gelaimter’s* someone who drops whatever he touches. A *trepsverter* is the perfect retort you think of – after you’ve left the room.

 In all the coverage of the spelling bee, some commentators have wondered how many Yiddish speakers there currently are. As the dwindling number of Holocaust survivors and elderly European-born Jews gets smaller and smaller, it can be tempting to view Yiddish as a dying language. When the last Yiddish bookstore in New York’s historic Lower East Side closed, the New York Times called it another nail in the language’s coffin. Lovers of Yiddish might have been *ferklempt* (choked up) at the news.

**Reports of Yiddish’s Demise Are Greatly Exaggerated**

 Yet reports of Yiddish’s demise are greatly exaggerated. In fact, Yiddish is having a *gantse* *mazel* (success) as its primary speakers – Chassidim and other Orthodox Jews – see a population explosion in Europe, the United States, Israel, and elsewhere.

 I remember once reading an article in my local paper about the “death” of Yiddish in Chicago; it highlighted some elderly women who met to keep the language alive. Yet later that afternoon, I heard a conversation between a young Chassidic mother and her toddler – all in Yiddish.

 (My Yiddish isn’t great, but I think she was telling him not to get *shmutz* – dirt – on his new *mantle* – or coat.) It turned out the child spoke Yiddish not only at home with his *tatte* and *mama*, but in school, too, where all his Jewish subjects were taught in this beautiful language.

 He wasn’t alone. Since then, I’ve heard [Yiddish](http://www.aish.com/j/fs/48938262.html) on the lips of little *kindelach* (children) on three continents. I’ve shopped in shopping malls in New York where the conversations were all in Yiddish, the kids ran around yelling in Yiddish and even the toys in the toy stores came with Yiddish instructions.

**Families in Israel Still Converse in this Vibrant Tongue**

 I’ve ordered food in Antwerp delis where Yiddish mixed with Flemish all around me. (The food was *geshmak* – delicious – I *fressed* it all up and made a complete *chazer* of myself.) In Israel, I’ve tried to decipher Yiddish newspapers sold in kiosks on the streets, as families all around conversed in this vibrant tongue.

 All these places where fellow *yidden* (Jews) were speaking Yiddish felt so *heimish* (homey). I thought of my great-grandmother, the last member of my family to speak Yiddish as her mother tongue. So much has changed in the world since she was alive, I’d gotten used to thinking that the world she came from – the Yiddish speaking world of pre-war Europe – was gone and forgotten. For a while, it seemed as if it might be. My great grandmother’s children abandoned the Jewish traditions she held dear; when she spoke to them in Yiddish they answered in English.

**Hearing Young Children Speak Yiddish is a Mechaya**

 So hearing Yiddish on the lips of young children all around me was a *mechaya*. (From the Hebrew root “chai”, or life, it that means a revelation: a new discovery.) The language of my great grandparents skipped me and most of my friends: we never learned Yiddish, except as a few humorous phrases and insults. But it is continuing in new generations, and we all – the sandwich generations between the generations that spoke it in the past and those still to come – are links in that chain.

 There’s one Yiddish word I know: *Yiddishkeit.* It means Jewish culture and practice. I’d hate to think of that going the way of a dying language, too. Perhaps that’s why I’m so *freilich* (happy) and *leibidik* (another word for happy – there are lots of them in Yiddish) that its future seems assured. To Yiddish let me offer a traditional blessing we say on birthdays: *ay hundrid und zvanzig* – you should last one hundred and twenty years. And to Yiddish, and all of us, whose grandparents might have spoken it, and whose descendants may still: *L’chaim*: to life!

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

**However You Spell It,**

**A Knaidel Tastes Good**

By [**The New York Times**](http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/author/the-new-york-times/)



Photo by Bryan Thomas for The New York Times

 Arvind V. Mahankali of Bayside, Queens, [won the Scripps National Spelling Bee](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/31/nyregion/queens-boy-13-wins-scripps-spelling-bee-with-knaidel.html) last week on the strength of his mastery of “knaidel,” a Yiddish word of German origin (and, it turns out, [somewhat ambiguous spelling](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/nyregion/some-say-spelling-of-a-winning-word-wasnt-kosher.html)) for the dumplings that go into, among other things, matzo ball soup.

 But never in his 13 years had Arvind tasted an actual knaidel. On Monday, he did, at the Carnegie Deli.

*Reprinted from the June 3, 2013 edition of The New York Times*

**The Story of the Chassidic Rebbe and the German Jew**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 Last week we read the strange and sad story of one of the biggest failures in history: the aborted exodus from Egypt.

 The Jews suffered over two hundred years in Egyptian slavery with only one hope: to be free and enter the land promised them by G-d to Abraham Isaac and Jacob...and finally it was about to happen!

 After a year of amazing miracles the Jews left a decimated Egypt and were standing at the borders of the Holy Land. But before entering the ‘scouts’ Moses sent to preview the land returned and convinced the Jews not to enter!!

**A Difference in Generations**

 The results were disastrous; only 40 years later, after all of the sinners died in the desert, did the next generation enter…. And it was without Moses.

 If the generation that left Egypt, 'saw' G-d and experienced His miracles constantly were afraid to do such a positive, holy thing as enter Israel, then what chance or reason do we have to think positively and overcome our ‘real’ obstacles?

 To understand this here is a story

**Many German Jews Were Still Loyal to the Torah**

 200 years ago Germany was a place of flourishing Judaism. Despite the inroads of the Reform movement hundreds of thousands of G-d fearing Jews faithfully learned and kept the Torah of their fathers.

 One of these Jews, who we will call Mr. Deutch (although his name was not mentioned in the story), had big problems. His 12 year old son was deaf and mute; he had not spoken or heard a word since birth could not read or write and apparently was doomed to a life of ignorance and silence.

 But Mr. Deutch did not give up easily. He brought the boy to the greatest specialists and professors in the world but they all concluded that although the lad seemed to be intelligent and could perhaps be taught to perform simple tasks, he would certainly never be able to really function normally.

**A Very Strange Rumor of a Rebbe Who Could Heal the Sick**

 But then a strange rumor reached Mr. Deutch's ears; someone told him that in Poland there were Jews called Chassidim who stressed joy and boundless enthusiasm and had leaders called Rebbes that did miracles like …… healing the sick.

 At first he didn't believe it; Jews? Miracles? Things like that only happened thousands of years ago by people like Elijah the prophet. But now!? In the 18th century?! Out of the question! And what was this business about joy and excitement? In Germany all this was totally unheard of. German Judaism was, above all, normal, balanced, and formal. Miracles, rarely, if ever entered the picture and even joy was restricted to certain occasions and holidays.

 But as he made more inquires and heard more details he began to pay attention. People were saying that there was a Jew called Rabbi Yissacher Dov of Radoshitz nicknamed the 'Saba Kadisha' (holy grandfather) Who was a genius in Torah, knew all the books, had thousands of pupils, people came to him with their problems from all over Europe and he did miracles!

**Brings a Briefcase Filled with Money**

 Mr. Deutch thought it over for a few weeks and finally decided to give it a try. He took a briefcase filled it with money, packed his bags, got into his fancy carriage with his son and a few days later they were standing in the Synagogue of the "Holy Saba of Radoshitz" waiting to be called for an audience.

 The Rabbi's door opened, a strikingly impressive Jew exited, introduced himself as Shlomo of Radomsk, a pupil of the holy Rabbi (in time, this Rabbi Shlomo would also become a holy Rebbe with thousands of followers of his own) and asked them to enter.

 Mr. Deutch entered with his son and was struck by the holiness of the old Rabbi sitting before him. The Rabbi asked what he wanted and Mr. Deutch, knowing that this was his last hope, began weeping as he explained his problem and finished, tears running down his face, with a promise from the depths of his broken heart, "Rebbe, if you can heal my son I'm willing to give you everything I own! Everything! Here is a briefcase full of money. Take it! And if you cure my son I'll sign over to you all the rest!"

 With this he burst out into uncontrollable weeping while his son just looked on from his world of silence with a blank, slightly perplexed look on his face.

**The Rebbe Offers a Deal to Heal the Boy**

 The Rebbe of Radoshitz looked at him for a few seconds, nodded his head in agreement and said, "Listen, my friend. I will make you a deal. Keep your money. All your riches can remain in your hands. You don't have to give me even one penny. You can continue being a businessman, invest your money and continue doing good deeds. Your money won't help. All I want is a promise."

 Mr. Deutch was all ears. He leaned forward expecting to hear a complicated message. The Rebbe continued.

 "I want to promise that you won't cut your beard, not even trim it, and let your payos (hair on the sides of the head) grow from now on."

 At first Mr. Deutch didn't understand. The Rebbe didn't want his money? He was ready to pay a lot of money.... ALL his money. What possible good could come from a beard? Exactly the opposite! In Germany top priority was given to being clean and neat. A full beard (and especially with payos) was sort of primitive and….. ugly!! He would be ostracized!

**Offers to Give the Rebbe All His Money**

 'Please Rabbi" gasped Mr. Deutch as he leaned forward and almost whispered to the Rebbe. Anything but that! I'm prepared to give you all my belongings; everything I have in the world! Rabbi, think of the charity and good deeds you could do with all that money.

 “It's more than you think Rabbi. I'm talking about millions of marks! Please reconsider! This people would understand. But a beard I cannot do! How could I show my face before my family and friends? I am the head of the Jewish community of my city! I would be looked at like a madman."

 The Rabbi looked at him with soft eyes and answered. "If you truly want your son to be healed then you must do as I say. The decision is in your hands."

 After a few moments of painful contemplation Mr. Deutch shook his head in agreement, lovingly stroked his son's hair, and announced emotionally that he was prepared to follow the Rebbe's orders.

 But he begged to be given just two more weeks. In two weeks would be the wedding of his niece. After the wedding he could grow the beard and payos and before the wedding he would get them ready for the change.

 The 'Tzadik' (holy Jew) gave him a look that perhaps he would agree to such a reasonable request….. but replied.

**Insists that the Arrangment Must Begin That Same Day**

 "No my friend, you must begin today. If you don't, I cannot help you."

 Mr. Deutch closed his eyes and it was obvious that an inner battle was raging in his heart. Tears came from his eyes. He wiped them off, took out a handkerchief blew his nose, stood straight and said quietly but assertively.

 "Yes Rabbi, I will do as you say. From now on, beginning today, I'll grow the beard and side locks."

 The Rebbe smiled, nodded, shook Mr. Deutch's hand and invited him to join him and his Chassidim (followers) at his Shabbat table the next evening.

 The word spread like fire and on Shabbat evening (Shabbat and the holidays begin at sunset) every male in Radoshitz was crowded in the large room around the hundred or so Chassidim sitting around the well supplied and decorated table.

 The Rebbe sat at the head of the table, his pupil Shlomo of Radomsk at his right, a slightly unshaven Mr. Deutch and son sat next to him and tens of other pupils took cramped places around the table waiting for the Rebbe to fill his cup with wine and make the Kiddush prayer over a cup of wine to begin the meal.

**As Though the Room Had Been Transported to Another World**

 The Rebbe closed his eyes while the hundreds of Chassidim sang a beautiful soulful song. It was as though the room had been transported to another world. Suddenly he opened his eyes motioned for one of the Chassidim to pour him wine, lifted the full silver cup slowly, stood, said the 'Kiddush' praising G-d for giving the Holy Shabbat and then sat and drank half of its contents.

 The crowd was silent as the Rebbe motioned to the boy to approach. The boy stood slowly and when he reached the Rebbe you could hear a pin drop. The Rebbe told Shlomo of Radomsk, to hold the cup with him, together they put it up to the child's lips and he said quietly,

 "Now my son, make a blessing on the wine."

The boy hesitated for a moment, looked intently at the wine in the cup, cleared his throat and then said in shaky high pitched voice,

 "Boruch...... ataw...... Melech... HaOlom.... Borei... Pri HaGefen" and took a sip.

 Mr. Deutch began to laugh and cry alternately. He stood, then sat, shook hands and hugged everyone around him especially his son, everyone except the Rebbe. The Chassidim broke into joyous song and Mr. Deutch danced before all of them, raising his hands to the heavens and yelling "Danks Got" and kissing his son over and over again.

**Stood on a Chair and Declared…**

 Finally, when the confusion died down and Mr. Deutch caught his breath he stood on a chair and announced.

 "Today everyone made a big profit. I kept my money and got a talking son" one of the Chassidim added "and a beard with payos!" Everyone laughed.

 He continued, "My son got his hearing and speaking!" Everyone clapped.

 "But the Rebbe also got something… he now has a new Chassid.....Me!

 "Till today I was deaf too. I was deaf to the joy of being a Chassid but it's never too late to start hearing."

This answers our questions.

 The reason that the generation of the spies was afraid to enter Israel was basically the same reason that Mr. Deutch was afraid to grow a beard and payos; it was totally unfamiliar. People love security; they love to be in control what happens to them and to do what comes naturally. For sure the Jews in the desert were the same but even more so. What they wanted naturally was only holy things like learning Torah and thinking about G-d and in the desert they could do it uninterruptedly.

**Often the Opposite of What G-d Wants from Us**

 But this often can be the opposite of what G-d wants. As in our case; the Jews got used to the miraculous life, receiving food, water and protection directly from G-d and learning the Torah directly from Moses. It was like heaven on earth. So entering Israel required a lot of faith: they had to leave holy security and enter a world of totally new challenges and responsibilities. But this was exactly what G-d wanted; Total transformation.

 Just as Mr. Deutch totally transformed himself so did the next generation that actually entered Israel. They decided to let G-d control the world and their lives.

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

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

**What is the**

**Purpose of Cement?**

|  |
| --- |
| QUESTION: |

How does a *bachur* (young man) counter the effect of *pritzus* (immodest dress of females) in the street?

|  |
| --- |
| ANSWER: |

|  |
| --- |
| concrete_pigment_overlay_black_border_316x217 |

You must know that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has created cement on the sidewalk for a purpose, not only to make it comfortable and clean to walk.

 The purpose of cement is, so you should gaze at it when you walk in the street. Study the cement on the sidewalk as you walk. It's a very important admonition, and it's very beneficial.

 As you walk in the street keep your eyes on the cement. Now you know what cement is for? Cement is a wonderful product. No animals use cement. Birds don't need cement. Lions don't need cement. Only we need cement!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller,” based on a transcript of his answer to questions from his famous Thursday night hashkafa lectures in his Flatbush shul.*

[**Rabbinate Warns that Palestinian Coke is Not Kosher**](http://matzav.com/rabbinate-palestinian-coke-not-kosher)



 The Israeli Chief Rabbinate released an urgent statement this week, warning the Israeli public against Coca-Cola manufactured in the West Bank town of Beitunia, near Ramallah, which is marketed alongside the strictly kosher beverage that has been manufactured in the Israeli city of Bnei Brak for the past decades.

 According to the statement, written by Rabbi Yaakov Sabag, director of the Chief Rabbinates Kashrut Department, and Rabbi Rafi Yochai, head of the Kashrut Fraud Division, “We have recently discovered the marketing of a four-pack Coca-Cola, in which each bottle carries a caption in Arabic with no kashrut mark.

**Palestinian Coke is Sold at a Reduced Price**

 This product is being sold for a reduced price and has created confusion among the population, as the brand is known to be kosher in Israel. An inquiry has revealed that the product is manufactured in the village of Beitunia, near Yerushalayim, without any kosher supervision.”

 Businesses supervised by the Rabbinate were asked in the letter to avoid selling the Coke bottles from Beitunia, even if there is allegedly no fear that the beverage is not kosher. Moreover, many kashrus observers around the world buy the brand in local stores even without a kosher mark, and it is perceived as kosher.

**A Danger of the Public Getting Used to**

**Buying Products without a Kosher Mark**

 Nonetheless, the Rabbinate wrote in its warning, businesses must avoid selling the Palestinian drink “due to the educational aspect, so as not to get the public used to purchasing products without a kosher mark.”

 Chief Rabbinate Spokesman Ziv Maor says that Coca-Cola is made in Israel and abroad according to the company’s secret and accurate formula, yet there is no way of knowing whether a factory which is not supervised by the Rabbinate uses the machine that produces the Coke to pack other drinks which are not kosher, such as camel milk.

 The warning, he adds, is aimed at making it clear to be public that it must only consume beverages manufactured in a factory supervised by the Rabbinate.

 The Coca-Cola Israel company said it had nothing to do with the production of the beverage in the Palestinian Authority. “There is no need to mention that all our products are under the fine supervision of Rabbi Landa and the Tel Aviv Rabbinate,” the company noted in a statement.

*Reprinted from the May 29, 2013 website of Matzav.com. The news item was originally published by YNET News Israel.*

**Talmud Tips**

**Advice for Life Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle (Eruvin 86 – 92)**

Talmud Tips

**“Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda the Nasi) Honored the Wealthy; Rabbi Akiva Honored the Wealthy.”**

 A) Why did they show special honor to those who had wealth? The gemara on our daf explains that they honored the wealthy who used their wealth to show kindness and supply food for the needy (Rashi). The gemara quotes Rava bar Mari as deriving from a passuk in Tehillim (61:8) that the existence of the world is sustained by merciful acts of the rich providing

food for the poor.

 B) Why is Rebbie mentioned before Rabbi Akiva if Rabbi Akiva lived before Rebbie? The Ben Yehoyada writes that Rebbie was very wealthy – as opposed to Rabbi Akiva — and was also the Nasi, a descendant of other leaders — and nevertheless honored the wealthy. The fact that even he honored them is more notable and significant.

 C) The Giliyon Hashas on our daf cites the Maharil who heard from Maharam Segel that Rebbie made a special effort to show honor to the wealthy for yet another reason. Since Rebbie was wealthy, when he exhibited special honor to others who were wealthy, if was as if to say, “Look! It is correct to honor them for their wealth alone!” In this way he hoped that people who showed honor to him would do so likewise, due to his own wealth and not because of his Torah greatness. Rebbie did not want to “use the crown of Torah” for his own personal gain.

 D) Does our Gemara imply that only the wealthy are to be honored? The Meiri says that our Gemara does not mean to limit expressing honor to the rich. Rather, if a person is smart he should honor not only the wealthy, but also the wise, the righteous, and virtually anyone who possesses a positive and aspect to his character and way of life. The case of wealth in

our Gemara is merely an example of honor that is due for a wide variety of worthy reasons.

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

**The Little Synagogue**

**That Refused to Die**

**By Andrew Connelly and Helene Bienvenu**

 BUDAPEST — (TCSM) Too often recently, Hungary has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. The elevation of the ultranationalist Jobbik party to the parliament in 2010 and the provocative, anti-Semitic statements made by their members that followed has led many to wonder: Who would want to be Jewish in this Central European, former Communist state?

 However, hidden away through a courtyard in Budapest's ramshackle District VIII, an area of the Hungarian capital known for its high population of Roma gypsies and immigrants, the *shul* ("synagogue" in Yiddish) on Teleki Square -- once known as the Chortkover *Kloyz* -- is quietly challenging this notion. It is one of the very last surviving "apartment synagogues" (*shtiblach*) in the country and may well represent the spirited renewal of Jewish life that is currently sweeping the city.

 For nearly a century since the shul's founding by Hassidic Jews from Ukraine at the beginning of the 1920s, it has survived World War II bombings, Communist oppression, and the damp — but from the last, only barely.



**The interior of the Teleki Square synagogue, once known as the Chortkover *Kloyz***

 When chairman Andras Mayer, his brother Gabor, a dozen other members and a South African rabbi decided to renovate the shul — which like many prayer houses of its era situated inside an unassuming, shabby apartment — the ceiling was near collapse and the walls rotting.

 "Everyone was waiting for this place to close down and nobody really cared about it," says Gabor. "This was nothing to do with the original Hungarian Jewish establishment. It was simply formed by a bunch of friends, they opened it and it was no one else's business."

 The shul has never closed down, even during the war, always keeping a skeletal attendance. But in the last few years, the Mayer brothers and friends started to invigorate the community with new and young members.

"People were getting older and dying off. It was a disappearing culture, so it was not just a renovation needed here; we had to start a new life."

**A DWINDLING POPULATION**

 For centuries Hungary has been home to important and vibrant Jewish communities that, until World War II, lived in relative peace. They acquired a more prominent role in the late 19th century after many Jews took part in the revolution against the Habsburg monarchy in 1848, an event that is still considered a milestone in Hungarian history. Jews grew in number as the prosperous dual monarchy of Austro-Hungary established itself and many prominent figures of world Judaism claim Hungarian roots, such as the father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl.

 During the interwar period, up to 25 percent of Budapest's population was Jewish. But under Miklós Horthy's rule as regent of post-World War I Hungary, numerous anti-Jewish laws were established restricting Hungarian Jews' ability to study and even cohabitate.

 This was the first of many discriminatory policies, culminating in the deportation of Jewish families with the active collaboration of the Hungarian Gendarmerie. Recently, some local municipalities in rural Hungary have caused uproar by erecting statues and renaming parks in honor of Mr. Horthy.

 The deportation was was almost completed when Arrow Cross, the Hungarian fascist party, took power in October 1944 under pressure from Nazi Germany. In just a few weeks, around 450,000 Hungarian Jews perished at Auschwitz, leaving the country's Jewish population a mere fraction of its former self.

 At Teleki Square, even with the new blood, it is still sometimes a struggle on Saturday mornings to make a "minyan," the 10-man quorum required for communal worship under Orthodox Jewish law. On the more quiet Sabbath mornings, some members walk to the neighboring synagogue to humbly ask to borrow a man or two.

 For Sholom Hurwitz, serving as the shul's rabbi since its revival, the job can be sometimes challenging.

 "After the Holocaust and the Communist suppression of religious organizations, lots of Hungarians forgot their faith, and this shul is part of the Jewish renaissance we see in Budapest," he says. "Not everybody present can read Hebrew, and in the beginning people had their mobile phone out on Sabbath! But there is a strong feeling of community here, and everyone agrees on Orthodox standards. I'm proud to say we are user-friendly and, being so diverse, we're one of the least sectarian prayer house in the city."

**RENAISSANCE**

 The "Jewish renaissance" underway in the Hungarian capital is twofold. Previously a tumbledown, crime ridden corner of the city, Budapest's historic Jewish quarter has morphed into a gentrified nexus of bohemia, replete with Jewish restaurants full of tourists and wine bars peppered amongst the towering synagogues.

 On a more intellectual level, the elevation of the ultranationalist Jobbik party and the virulently anti-Semitic beliefs held by some of their members have prompted a renewed wave of Jewish political engagement. Initiatives like the Sirály cultural center organize direct activism whilst running cultural events designed to encourage observant and non-affiliated Jewish youth alike to explore their heritage.

 The majority of the congregation, at Teleki Square, where baseball caps are sported alongside yarmulkes, do not identify themselves as particularly religious, despite the synagogue's loose affiliation with the Orthodox movement. However, the stringent rules of a kosher kitchen and the Jewish lineage of the members ensure that they can also open their doors to whoever wants to observe.

 Certainly within the walls on Sabbath morning, all the traditions are strictly kept, despite the often lighthearted atmosphere that pervades. As the rabbi chants in Hebrew from the hefty scrolls resting atop the *bimah* (the desk from which the Torah is read), the adjacent wall is dominated by a modern white clock inscribed with Hebrew numbers whose hands intriguingly tick backward.

 "We wanted a nice ornate clock with a pendulum but some guy brought this back from Israel as a joke and it has stayed. It doesn't mean anything, although entering this shul is a bit like stepping into a time machine," Gabor remarks, exposing the modern idiosyncrasies that speckle the pious history of the shul.

 The Mayer brothers are almost evangelistic when it comes to their passion for revitalizing and unearthing the Jewish history of the neighborhood, with ambitious plans afoot for two books, a documentary, specialized Teleki Square merchandise including branded yarmulkes, and even homemade brandy.

 Not every synagogue has a metallic vat of strong Hungarian "Palinka" fermenting in the kitchen, but then the shul is not like other synagogues. The equipment is brand-new, the apple mush has been checked for worms, and the whole process supervised by the resident rabbi thus denoting the potent house spirit to be kosher.

 "I think we are going to become very popular," muses Andras. However, discussions about the local area are always bittersweet.

"The saddest part about the history of this neighborhood is that people don't know about it. Sometimes that's for the best because there have been some nasty stories going on in some of the houses here. During the war this was one of the only sites of Jewish resistance against the Nazis, and there was a big bloodshed as a result. With brooms they were sweeping up the blood on the streets."

**IN JOBBIK'S SHADOW**

 Mere blocks away stands a foreboding gray edifice emblazoned with the banner of the Jobbik party, currently the third largest political force in the Hungarian parliament.

 Its vocal "anti-Zionist" stance has been accused by some as being a smokescreen for general anti-semitism, a charge that Jobbik vigorously denies, and many have drawn comparisons between the uniformed members present at their political rallies and soldiers of the Arrow Cross. Despite — or more likely because of — the high Roma and migrant population in District VIII, they maintain a high profile here.

 Andras pays little heed to Jobbik. "People make distinctions between Nazis, neo-Nazis, and Arrow Cross, but what difference does that make to me? They don't care what kind of Jew I am and I don't care what kind of Nazi they are."

 In a country with a tragic past too often misunderstood and manipulated for political gain, the restoration of the Teleki Square shul seems very much t*he* symbol of the wider reconstitution of Hungary's Jewish identity: recovering, resilient, and threatened, but reasserting itself with characteristic quirkiness.

*Reprinted from the May 29, 2013 email of JewishWorldReview.com*

**It Once Happened**

**The Meeting of Napoleon And Reb Chaim of Volozhin**

 In the year 1812 Napoleon stood at the pinnacle of his career. He had successfully swept through Europe and his conquests were the conversation of kings and peasants alike. Finally, his campaign led him to the gates of Russia and the vast, primal giant lay before him. In Russia he would meet a double foe, the huge armies of the Czar and perhaps, a more dangerous and formidable enemy, the vicious frigid winds and snows.

**Jewish Opinions on Napoleon Were Divided**

 Opinions of the Emperor were divided: the so-called "enlightened" Jews looked forward to his victory with high hopes for the emancipation of the Jews. The Torah-faithful looked with fear and suspicion upon the man who was regarded as a danger to the survival of their way of life.

 In his sweep eastward, Napoleon passed through the town of Volozhin where the tzadik (righteous person) Reb Chaim lived. The town was deserted, the wealthy gentile inhabitants having fled before the approaching troops. Only the Jews remained. Napoleon sent his officers through the town to locate and appropriate lodgings.

 Since the finer houses were tightly locked and barred, they made their way into the Jewish quarter. One of the officers spotted a light in one of the buildings, which, unbeknownst to him, was a study hall. When he entered, he saw a man sitting by the light of a candle, leaning over a large tome, deeply engrossed in his studies.

**The Emperor Napoleon Wants to Meet the Rabbi**

 The officer addressed the man in German: "We have heard very amazing things about the rabbi of your town. The Emperor Napoleon wishes to meet him."

 "Reb Chaim is here, sitting before your Excellency," replied Reb Chaim. "However, I do not perform any wonders, I merely spend my time studying our Torah."

 The soldier listened politely, but then answered in a stern tone, "Remain here until the Emperor summons you, or else you will pay the consequences."

 Not long after, Reb Chaim was escorted to the house where Napoleon had set up command. The Emperor entered and engaged Reb Chaim in conversation: "I do not believe that you are any kind of a miracle worker, but I do believe that you are a man of rare wisdom and insight. On that basis I would like to have your opinion as to how my campaign in Russia will end. What will be the result of my advance into Russia?"

 Napoleon could see in Reb Chaim's eyes a distinct unwillingness to respond. Who could know the wrath that could fall upon him? Napoleon reassured him: "Please, speak your mind freely, without fear."

**“We Jews Fear Only G-d”**

 Reb Chaim looked at the Emperor and replied, "Your Majesty, we Jews fear only G-d, for it is His hand that directs the entire world, even the ways of worldly kings. I will answer your question with a story: There was once a nobleman who traveled on a journey in a great carriage pulled by four strong horses.

 Suddenly, one of the horses fell in the mud. In his desperate effort to stand, he pulled the other horses down into the mud, and with them, the carriage, driver, and passengers.

 "A moment later a peasant farmer happened by in his cart pulled by three skinny horses. When these horses saw the other horses struggling and neighing in the deep mud, they panicked and would have also slipped into the mire, but the farmer quickly whipped them and they righted themselves.

 "The nobleman had been watching the whole scene and he cried from his carriage, 'Why is it that your skinny nags pulled your wagon out of the mud, whereas my strong horses are unable to pull out my carriage?'

 "'If your Excellency will forgive my asking, where did you get your horses?'

**The Finest Horses that Money Can Buy**

 "'Why these are the finest horses money can buy. One is an Arabian, one is a Persian, one is a pedigreed Hungarian and the fourth is from a famous Russian stable.'

 "'Well, that explains it. You see, your horses all come from a different part of the world and don't feel any connection to one another. My horses, on the other hand, are just plain horses. But they come from the same family and the same stable, so they're like brothers. When I whip one, the others jump to his side.'

 "Sire," continued Reb Chaim, "your army is great and vast, composed of soldiers from many different lands. Princes and kings from the world over have joined your forces. The Tzar's army is nothing by comparison. They lack the weaponry, the fine uniforms and training your soldiers have. The difference is that they are all from one people and one land and their loyalty is entirely to the Czar and the Motherland."

**A Terrible and Humiliating Defeat**

 Reb Chaim had made his point in the gentlest, but clearest way. Napoleon had new food for thought, but the thoughts were disconcerting. The truth of Reb Chaim's words were soon borne out in the terrible, humiliating defeat which Napoleon's troops suffered in Russia, a defeat from which the Emperor never recovered.

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