**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Chukas 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #43 30 Sivan 5771/July 2, 2011**

**Story #709**

**Captured by a**

**Nine-Foot Cobra**

**By Lazer Brody**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1309354802&randid=1618292727)

 Sergeant Sammy Adler, USMC, crouched shin-deep in the mud of the Vietnamese jungle less than a mile from the Laotian border. The Vietcong had been smuggling massive amounts of armaments into South Vietnam by way of Laos. His company's mission was to ambush the smugglers, confiscate the arms shipment, and capture whomever they could for interrogation.

 An annoying mosquito buzzed in Sammy's ear, and a leech bit his wrist. He didn't dare slap himself, for the slightest noise could reveal his position to an enemy ambush. The mission therefore called for radio silence, which necessitated the three platoons of Company C to maintain eye contact with each other.

**A Heavy Dawn Mist in the Jungle**

 A heavy dawn mist descended on the jungle. The fog was so thick that Sammy barely saw Captain John Willis, his company commander, from a distance of three feet. Willis scribbled a note and passed it to Sammy: "Platoon B, 0800, green east". Sammy looked at his watch and nodded in understanding. His orders were to crawl over to Platoon B, one hundred yards to the right, and to inform the platoon leader that at exactly eight a.m., all three platoons would leave their present position and approach the Laotian border due east of them.

 Sammy slithered inch by inch in the mud. His life depended on his absolute silence. He looked at his watch again - five minutes after seven. He took a deep breath and continued, first an elbow, then a knee, another elbow, then another knee.

 He stopped dead in his tracks: A roundish brown object, the exact size and shape of antipersonnel mine, was right before his nose. The "mine", none other than a turtle, stuck its head out and laughed in Sammy's face, and then crawled away nonchalantly. He exhaled deeply in relief, and continued in the direction of Platoon B.

 Forty-five minutes expired; Sammy wiped the mud off the face of his watch, and read the time - ten minutes to eight. The fog lifted, but a heavy rain drenched the already saturated jungle. All along the seemingly endless one hundred yards to Platoon B's position, Sammy kept track of his crawling pace. He counted four hundred movements of nine inches each, the equivalent of one hundred yards. He should have reached Platoon B by now, but saw nothing other than mud and jungle.

**Lost and Soon to be Confronted by a Cobra Snake**

 A minute before eight: What a mess, Sammy thought. In sixty seconds, Platoons A and C will be moving east, and Platoon B hasn't been informed yet. Where in daylights is Platoon B? Where the heck am I?

 "Chikachikachik! Chikachikachik!" The cobra's forked tongue almost touched Sammy's nose. The snake snarled, exposing his two deadly fangs, and braced to an attack position.

 Sammy froze - he thought that the pounding of his pulse could surely be heard for miles away. In a few split seconds, he envisioned his entire life flashing before his eyes. What a pathetic way to go, he lamented, killed by a cobra in the muck and mire of a Vietnamese jungle, ten thousand miles from home. He couldn't ask the cobra for a stay of execution until he had a chance to send a postcard to Mom and Dad.

**All of One’s Weapons are Useless**

 Sammy's M-16 rifle lay in a futile silence beside him. His commando knife remained idle in its scabbard, as did the three assault grenades in his ammo belt. He didn't dare move a muscle. Beads of salty sweat from his forehead traversed his right eyebrow and then dripped down and stung his right eye. Wiping his forehead was out of the question.

 Jungle survival school taught him that only a bronze statue lives through an encounter with an irate cobra. I'm a bronze statue, Sammy thought to himself; I'm a bronze statue.

 "Chikachikachik! Chikachikachik!" The cobra continued with his head cocked in a foreboding assault position. The snake seemed to lock itself - only his tongue darted periodically to and fro. The cobra was massive - eight, maybe nine-feet long and no less than ten inches thick. It maintained direct eye contact with Sammy. An entire hour transpired, then another hour.

 Eventually, the rain stopped and the sky cleared. The sun was in the treetops directly overhead, indicating that the time was approximately twelve noon. Sammy heard the staccato of machine-gun fire and the thuds of mortar shells in the distance. The snake wouldn't let Sammy budge; it had been holding the exhausted, nerve-shattered Marine at bay for four hours already.

**Every Muscle Cried Out in Pain**

 Every muscle in Sammy's body cried out in pain. His neck was as stiff as granite, his fatigues were soaked, and the unbearable winter dampness seemed to chill the fibers of his soul.Another two hours passed. Each minute was a trial of a lifetime. Sammy kept thinking to himself, "One more minute, one more minute. I'm still alive. Hold on, Adler, one more minute! You can stick it out for another minute. Thank you, G-d, for letting me live another minute."

 G-d? When did He come on the scene? Sammy surprised himself. He never prayed in his life. His parents never practiced any form of religion, even though his grandparents were religious Jews. Sammy Adler was raised American - baseball, apple pie, The Marine Corp, and nothing else.

**Even the Snake Agrees that there is a G-d**

 The snake seemed to alter its facial expression from threat to understanding. The minute Sammy thought about G-d, he could have sworn that the snake nodded its head, as if to say, "You're correct, soldier!" At that very instant, the snake uncocked its head, performed a perfect West Point "at ease" and "about face", and

slithered away to the thick of the jungle.

 Sammy's head dropped like a two-ton anchor. He broke out in a cathartic sob, and his entire body shuddered for a good five minutes, releasing the pent-up tension from within. He looked at his watch - seventeen hundred hours, or five in the afternoon.

**Held Captive for Nine Hours**

 Who could ever believe it? A U.S. Marine had just been held captive for nine hours in the custody of a nine-foot cobra. Were it not for his aching muscles and the leech bites all over his body, he wouldn't have believed it himself.

 After several minutes of massaging his legs, he was able to stand. He didn't have much time, for nightfall was less than an hour away. The last nine hours felt like nine years. Sammy, a superb navigator, began walking in the direction of the company bivouac - exhausted mentally and physically, but alive. He arrived at the clearing by the river, in the proximity of his platoon's ambush position, and received the shock of his life:

 Captain John Willis and the Marines of Company C's three platoons were slaughtered to the last man in a counter-ambush. The realization of the miracle hit Sergeant Sammy Adler like a ton of bricks: The Al-mighty had sent a gigantic cobra to guard over him. Were it not for the cobra, he would have returned to his company's position and would have been slaughtered too. Nine hours of unimaginable stress and suffering, with a deadly cobra staring him in the face, turned out to be the blessing of his life, a Divine revelation in the jungles of South

Vietnam, February 1969.

**Excerpted from “The Trail to Tranquility”**

 Source: Excerpted from "The Trail to Tranquility", by Lazer Brody.

 Connection: Weekly Reading -- Num. 21:9

 Rabbi Lazer Brody [//lazerbrody.typepad.com], affectionately known as Rabbi Rambo from his past as a commando in Israel's Special Forces, is an author, broadcaster and emotional counselor, and currently the director of the English section of //breslev.co.il. His published works in English include "The Trail to Tranquility" and "The Garden of Emuna."

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**It Once Happened**

**Why Innocent Jews**

**Are Imprisoned**

 A follower of the great tzadik Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Shpole, known as the Shpoler Zeide, came to him weeping bitterly. "Rebbe," he cried, "what am I to do? Stolen property was found in my courtyard, and I am being accused of being a thief. My lawyer tells me that I will not escape with less than three months in prison."

 The Shpoler Zeide, listened and replied, "I will be a better lawyer for you, and you will receive only one month in prison."

 "But, Rebbe," the man continued, plaintively, "I am an innocent man. Why must I be punished for a month?"

 "I will tell you a tale of a similar incident which occurred to me, and you will understand. Once I was staying at the home of a very hospitable Jewish customs officer. I became friendly with another guest there, and when Shabbat ended, we made plans to continue our journey together. Unbeknownst to me, the other man had stolen some valuable pieces of silver from the house.

 "As we proceeded down the road, we heard the sounds of a carriage approaching very fast. The man asked me to watch his pack for a moment and he disappeared in the mass of trees. The carriage stopped in front of me and I recognized the customs officer and a gentile officer.

 "'Seize him,'" the Jew cried. "'He is the thief!'

**Accepting His Arrest as the Will of Heaven**

 "And before I knew what was happening they threw me into the back of the carriage and we drove away. When I recovered from the initial shock, I tried to explain that it was not I, but the other man who had stolen the silver, but they scorned my words. It was obviously nothing would avail, and I accepted it as the will of Heaven.

 "I was thrown into a cell full of frightening criminals who found my appearance an occasion for great mirth. They pulled at my sidelocks and beard, and I could only entreat the One Above to rescue me from their evil clutches. They tried to extort money from me, but when they saw I had none, they set out to beat me.

**His Attacker Cries Out in Pain**

 "The first one laid into me as two others held me down. As soon as his hand touched me, he cried out in pain. His hand swelled and gushed with blood. The thieves and murderers who surrounded me took conference with one another. One said I was a sorcerer, another claimed I was a saint; regardless of their opinion, they all agreed to leave me alone.

 "When the immediate danger had passed, I looked around at the other prisoners. One, called "Gypsy" turned out to be, instead, a Polish Jew who had been imprisoned for horse-stealing. I realized that I had been incarcerated precisely in order to help this pathetic man repent. Little by little we spoke and I gained his trust. He related a sad tale of being orphaned and then falling in with a band of Gypsies, whose ways he adopted.

 "One morning the man came to me in a state of terror. He had dreamed of his dead parents who told him to do whatever I would instruct him. They said if he refused, he would die in his sleep. From that moment on he was the most willing penitent.

 "Slowly, I instructed him in the Jewish religion. He stopped eating forbidden food, began to recite prayers, and begged the Al-mighty to forgive his errant ways. After several weeks passed, he even began sleeping near me and became completely attached to me in word and deed.

 "A few days later I dreamed that Elijah the Prophet told me to flee from that place and go to the town of Zlotopoli where I would be offered the position of beadle of the town. But then I remembered the "Gypsy," and my promise not to abandon him. But, I reasoned, if a miracle could come about for me, it could come about for him, too.

**Tells His Fellow Jewish Prisoner to Follow Him to Freedom**

 "I told the repentant man to follow me. When we came to the first door, we saw it was open. He held my belt and we passed through the door together, and continued into the black night, with no thought as to where we were going. Many hours later, we stopped at the house of a Jew who told us that we had found the path to Zlotopoli.

 "Three days later, we arrived in the town, and I was appointed to the position of beadle. So you see, don't complain about the judgements of G-d, for they are very deep and beyond the understanding of men. Just be strong in your faith, for I can assure you that everything that happens, no matter how it appears, is only for the good. And, as I promised, you will sit in prison no more than one month."

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

**Jewish Gaucho Tradition Fades in Argentina**

**By Juan Forero**



CARMEL, Argentina — Through the years, they’ve seen Jewish schools and synagogues close and said tearful goodbyes to the young who migrated to cosmopolitan Buenos Aires.

 But in hamlets with names like Sajaroff and Sonnenfeld, a tight-knit community of Jewish elders, some in their late 80s, fights to hold back time. On Argentina’s endless plains, only a few Jewish cowboys still ride. Synagogues once filled with pious congregants now stand forlorn on the edge of soybean fields.

 Yet the collective memory of Jewish leaders here — of the stories their grandparents told of arriving in this remote land to build a vibrant Jewish enclave — remains fresh. And the ones who feel the links to the past deep in their bones, as Jaime Jruz, 65, passionately puts it, say they owe a debt to their ancestors to keep the old traditions alive.

**Trying to Keep Alive the Heritage**

 “This is a story we have to treasure, that we have to keep alive for our grandchildren,” Jruz, one of the last of the [Jewish gauchos](http://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Gauchos-Pampas-Latin-America/dp/0826317677), or cowboys, said on the same farm his grandfather first settled. “I cannot abandon this knowing the sacrifices they made.”

 Today, the story of their arrival in Argentina’s outback is all but a footnote in the history of the Jewish diaspora. But in the 1890s, as whole towns of Eastern European and Russian Jews began packing, the offers of a new life in the New World seemed like providence.

**An Escape from the Czarist Pogroms**

 With escalating czarist [pogroms against Jews](http://www.enotes.com/genocide-encyclopedia/pogroms-pre-soviet-russia) a foreshadowing of the calamities to come, the logical promised land was not Palestine but the wide-open spaces in the Americas — at least in the mind of an eccentric German-Jewish philanthropist and railroad financier named Baron Maurice de Hirsch.

 So at the same time as the father of modern Zionism, [Theodor Herzl](http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/biography_herzl.htm), was marshaling support for a Jewish state, Hirsch was busily buying up huge tracts of land in the United States, Canada and Brazil. His [Jewish Colonization Association](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=271&amp;letter=J), though, had its greatest success here, acquiring a a swath of farmland equivalent in size to Delaware and parceling out plots to 50,000 immigrant Jews over four decades.

 Sparsely populated Argentina wanted the new immigrants, assigning Argentine agents in Russia the job of “promoting the Israelite immigration from the Russian Empire,” as recounted in an 1881 presidential degree.

 They came en masse here to Entre Rios province in the country’s northeast starting in 1894, men in black hats and long beards, women holding newborns, the families lugging trunks of belongings.

Each Family Received a 123-Acre Plot of Land

 Each family took over a 123-acre plot, started to pay off the land over 20 years and began to farm and raise cattle. The last group came in 1936, German Jewish families narrowly escaping extermination, to start a colony called Avigdor.

 What they built here was a sort of Argentine Borscht Belt, 16 colonies encompassing dozens of towns where residents spoke Yiddish, introduced Eastern European-style agricultural cooperatives and laid out hamlets not unlike the shtetls that the immigrants had called home back in Russia, said Osvaldo Quiroga, a Catholic who runs a small museum and is considered an expert.

 Religion bound the communities together.

 “They were strict, I mean strict, about the Sabbath,” recalled Jose “Tito” Roimiser, 84, a former gaucho whose father was a baby when he arrived in Argentina. “Complete respect. And we had to walk to the synagogue. You could not ride your horse.”

**Pieces of History**

 The bric-a-brac from Roimiser’s long life — and that of other families in the town of Basavilbaso — are piled high in the storeroom of the town’s Jewish meeting hall. There are old wooden clocks, framed documents, an old tub to bathe babies in before circumcision and a cabinet of menorahs. Then there are the grainy photographs, of the man everyone here calls the Baron Hirsch and the young Jewish settlers of the 1890s, with their furrowed brows, high, stiff collars and fedoras.

 “All of it is important, all of it has a history, all of it has a reason, all of it has an origin,” Enrique Salomon, 78, a former trucker, said as he and Roimiser rummaged on a recent afternoon.

 Salomon and Roimiser, friends for decades, talk about the traditions that survive: the use of a few words in Yiddish or Russian, the preparation of gefilte fish, knishes and other Jewish food. They say they want to keep the fire alive, if possible with help from foreigners.

 But the numbers are not on their side: The hamlets around Basavilbaso once had thousands of Jews. Now there are perhaps 400. There were once 10 synagogues operating, in town and in the surrounding countryside; now there are two, the rest of them little more than monuments to the past, boarded up and dilapidated.

**Traditions Upheld**

 Of course, there are still signs of life across the Jewish circuit.

 On a recent night, Roimiser and Salomon joined about a dozen others who managed the quorum needed for Friday-night services at the Tefila L’Moises synagogue, officiated by a rabbinical student who came in from Buenos Aires. And in Villa Clara, a nearby town, Patricia Acst gave Hebrew classes to a couple of girls in the Baron Hirsch school.

 A couple of blocks away is the village synagogue, lovingly restored and featuring five torah scrolls that Abraham Kreiser­man, a 64-year-old butcher and community leader, says go back to the early 19th century. Under the tutelage of Quiroga, Villa Dominguez’s Museum of the Jewish Colonies holds the region’s best collection of Jewish artifacts, from registries and deeds to century-old prayer shawls, books and farm machinery.

 Jaime Jruz, the gaucho, often drops by; the museum features a photograph of his paternal grandfather, Moises Koselevich, with a bushy beard and fedora.

 When he looks at the photograph, Jruz said, he recalls the hardships his forefathers overcame to make a life here: a perilous migration out of Russia, droughts, floods and back-breaking work.

 “Our ancestors came from Russia with nothing and they made it,” he said. “You have to respect that.”

*Reprinted from the Washington Post, June 24, 2011 edition.*

**Rare Jewish-Indian Haggadah found in Salford**

 Dr Yaakov Wise said the Haggadah gives an insight into the community's life

 A rare Jewish text, published for the "Black Jews of India" in the 19th Century, has been discovered in a garage sale in Salford.

 The 137-year-old Poona Haggadah, used by the Bene Israel community at Passover, was found by University of Manchester historian, Dr Wise.

 He said he paid a "substantial" fee after recognising it at the sale.

 "I knew it was a very rare book - in fact, it may be the only copy of it in Britain," he said. The major Biblical figures, such as Moses, look Western, while the people celebrating Passover are very Indian”

 The Prestwich-based historian said he was a regular at second-hand book sales as far away as Hay-on-Wye in Powys.

 He said he had come across the Haggadah, which features text in both Hebrew and Marathi, an Indian language, in a pile of books at a local sale in Salford's Higher Broughton area.

 "A man had passed away and his family were selling his library," he said.

 "There were hundreds and hundreds of books for sale, but as soon as I saw it, I knew what it was."



 Dr Wise said he recognised it because he had given a lecture on the book's original audience, the Bene Israel, in Liverpool a few years before.

 The Bene Israel are known as "the Black Jews of India" because of their Indian appearance, as opposed to the "White Jews of India", who he said were of Middle Eastern descent and had settled in the country much later.

'Primary Source'

 The historian said he believed that the book had come to England during the post-colonial turmoil in India, when many Jews, who had British passports because of their work with the Imperial government, moved to the safety of London.

He said the book then probably came to Salford "by sale or inheritance".

 Dr Wise said the book may be unique in England

 "The format and illustrations give an insight into the Black Jews," he added.

 "The illustrations, in particular, are fascinating, as the major Biblical figures, such as Moses and Abraham, look Western, while the people celebrating Passover are very Indian."

 He said he had yet to check with the British Library in London and Oxford's Bodleian Library as to whether the book was unique in Britain, but that it was certainly a very rare text.

 "There are very few books that have translations from Hebrew into any Indian language," he said.



***Dr. Yaakov Wise holding a copy of the rare Poona Haggadah from India.***

 "As far as I know, there is only one of these in the whole of North America and that is in the Library of Congress in Washington DC."

*Reprinted from a June 24, 2011 radio broadcast of the BBC World Service*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**A Golden Gift**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 A Holocaust survivor recently passed away in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya. During their condolence visit to his surviving son in Jerusalem the comforters heard a fascinating story that expressed the inextinguishable spirit of survival and faith of the Jewish People.

 In a safe in the home of this Jew was a bar of gold around which was wrapped a note with the following explanation: “Upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael after the destruction of European Jewry I wished to express my gratitude to Heaven. I therefore used the first money I earned in the Holy Land to purchase this bar of gold which I have dedicated as a gift to the Beit Hamikdash which I hope to see rebuilt in my days.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Ohrnet, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (www.ohr.edu).*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Red Cow**

 In this week's parsha Chukas, we read about the mysterious mitzvah of Parah Aduma, the red heifer.  The procedure of the Parah Aduma involved the use of the ashes of a burned red cow to purify those who had been  contaminated through contact with a dead body.  The mystery of the power of the Parah Aduma to purify lays in the deepest level of understanding the Torah.  Even the wisest of men Shlomo HaMelech, could not fathom the mitzvah of the red cow.

**A Lesson in Human Relations**

 One lesson we can however learn from the mitzvah of the red cow, is a lesson in human relations.  One irony of the red cow procedure is the following:  it purified the impure; while at the same time, it made impure the Kohen who performed the procedure. After the procedure, the Kohen would himself have to undergo a ritual purification, albeit a less complicated procedure than the one who had touched a corpse.  The lesson we learn from this irony is the following:  We must do chesed - kindness for others, even when it causes us a loss of time or money, for example.

 A survivor of the flames of the Holocaust,  Shmuel Grunbaum left war-torn Europe and emigrated to America, hoping to rebuild a new life for himself. He made his home in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, among many other fellow Holocaust survivors. But they were all struggling for a livelihood. How would R' Shmuel support himself?

**Finding a Job in an Egg Store**

 The hand of Hashem guided R' Shmuel. After various failed attempts to find a job, R' Shmuel found a position working in an egg store. It was a dependable job, but the salary was minimal. Reb Shmuel had to devise an additional means of income. Building on his current position, R' Shmuel began an innovative service: he would sell and deliver eggs directly to the customer.

 Business began slowly, with an order here and an order there. Word of R' Shmuel's prompt and ethical business spread, and soon R' Shmuel received his first weekly customer. One afternoon, R' Shmuel was busy making his scheduled deliveries. He walked up the narrow flight of steps and carefully placed the carton of eggs on the doorstep of his one weekly customer.

**Asked to Help Make a Mincha Minyan**

 R' Shmuel walked down the steps and began making his way down the street. Quite unexpectedly, he felt a tap on his shoulder. "Excuse me, can you help us make a minyan for minchah?" The man motioned toward the basement entrance of the building he had just left. "Certainly, I will join you." Within a few minutes, the afternoon davening commenced.

 Their small minyan of ten grew as davening progressed. All proceeded normally until the middle of the chazan's recitation of the prayers. A sudden movement at one side of the shul caught R' Shmuel's attention.

**Distributing Eggs to All the Worshippers**

 A man was entering the low-ceilinged shul with a large carton in his hands. R' Shmuel had no trouble recognizing the carton—it contained the eggs he had just delivered! R' Shmuel watched in confusion as the man circulated the room. Each person took a few eggs from the carton and put them aside until the end of minchah.

 When his turn came, R' Shmuel waved the man on, indicating that he had no need for eggs. He looked at the eggs in the man's hand, then stared around the shul. Each man there was now the proud possessor of one or two eggs. R' Shmuel was flabbergasted. What was the reason for this strange ritual?

 When the davening was over, R' Shmuel approached the man with the now empty carton. "Tell me, where does this custom come from—to give out eggs by davening?" The man smiled at his puzzled expression. "This is the Skvere shtiebel (shul)" he explained.

 "The Rebbetzin, who lives upstairs, wanted to support a fellow in the wholesale eggs business. She places a weekly order, but she doesn't really need so many eggs. So she asked me to give them out to the minyan so they won't go to waste. Understand? It is as simple as that."

**Helped by the Rebbetzin**

 R' Shmuel nodded thoughtfully. "Oh, yes," he said fervently, "I understand a lot better than you think." R' Shmuel thanked the man and ascended the stairs into the waning sunlight. His burden had been lightened by the discreet concern and chesed of the Rebbetzin of Skvere Trany Twersky, blessed memory.

 We can learn from this story to try always to do chesed - acts of kindness for others.  The Mishna teaches that in fact, doing acts of kindness is one of the three foundations upon which the world rests.  (Avos 1,2)

 The Kohen sacrificed his own ritual purity for the benefit of anther Jew.  The same way, must we all sacrifice ourselves to do chesed for others. If we seek always to do kindness for others, then Hashem will surely do kindness with us, because, the mishnah in Sotah (1,7) teaches us that Hashem relates to us, based on the way we relate to others.

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

**Count Down to Charity**

**By Rabbi Yossy Gordon**

 A charity collector once visited a wealthy man in the hopes of receiving a donation. The wealthy fellow politely explained how he would love to give but can’t, because he already gave his share of charity for the year. As evidence, he pointed to a pile of receipts on his desk.

 The collector looked around the room, noticing his beautiful surroundings in the wealthy man’s home. Respectfully, he asked his host whether he could share a Torah insight. The wealthy man agreed.

**Obligated to Tithe One’s Livestock**

 “During the time of our Holy Temple in Jerusalem,” began the collector, “a Jewish livestock owner was obligated to tithe his flock. How was this done? He would pen the cattle in an enclosure and open up the door. As each animal exited the enclosure he would count: one, two, three, etc. When he counted the tenth, he would mark the animal with red dye. That animal would then be set aside to be brought to Jerusalem.

 “A question,” continued the collector, “is asked regarding this prescribed process. Why make the rancher endure this whole process of penning the animals and then driving them out the exit? Why not just take ten percent off the top, add a few extra to ensure that no less than the required ten percent was tithed, and avoid this seemingly time-consuming and senseless exercise?

**The Almighty Asks for Only One**

 “The answer,” concluded the collector, “is that a very profound message is being conveyed to the rancher by virtue of this process. As each animal goes out the door, it is as if the Almighty is telling the person, ‘One is for you, two is for you, three is for you . . .’ After giving the owner nine, the Almighty then asks for only one. After getting to keep nine, the rancher is content, and realizes how all of his wealth comes from G‑d—and that though he is giving, he is getting much more.”

 The point hit home. The wealthy man recognized his many blessings and happily gave a generous donation.

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

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Chukas 5770**

**A Slice of Life**

**Coming Home**

**By Naomi Raya Permyakova**

*Adapted from a speech at the International Convention of the Lubavitch Women's Organization, May 9, 2010.*

 With great sadness in my heart I will share with you the story of my family and possibly the story of many other Russian Jews. Once upon a time, a hundred years ago, there lived in Ukraine a Jewish family. Meira and Yaakov Goldstein lived Jewishly and simply with their six children (three others had passed away young) and a cow.

 Probably nothing very extraordinary would have happened to the Goldsteins except that the October Revolution of 1917 was already in the air. As they reached adulthood, each child moved to Moscow and eventually Meira and Yaakov did as well.

**Children Involved in Revolutionary Activities**

 All of the Goldstein children were very actively involved in the revolutionary activities. They became members of the Communist party and sincerely believed in the bright future Communism held for the simple folk. Yaakov passed away during WWII under the harsh conditions of evacuation to Kazakhstan. With the passing of Meira in the 1960s came the demise of any semblance of Jewish observance in the Goldstein family.

 Some of Meira and Yaakov's children married Jews while others married Russian non-Jews. The youngest of the children was Raya Goldstein, my beloved grandmother, or "Momma," as I called her for the 20 years that I lived with her.

**First Two Husbands Die**

 Raya's first husband died before the World War II, at a very young age, leaving her with two small children (one of them was my father). Her second husband died during the war, leaving her with another baby. Finally, after the war she remarried a wonderful Russian non-Jewish man, who adopted all her children, raised them as his own, gave them his last name and his nationality for the papers. From now on they were Russians with the "correct" papers. That was the best way to blend children into the Communist society, to "protect" them from anti-Semitism, to assure that they would be treated equally in regards to their future careers, and, unfortunately, to impede the expression of their Jewish souls.

**Tries to Marry Sons to Jewish Women**

 Despite everything, Raya Goldstein looked for Jewish wives for her sons. My uncle and my father married Jewish women. Years later, though, my father divorced and remarried a non-Jewish Russian woman, my mother. In the flow of circumstances my parents moved almost to the North Pole, intending to stay for two years but ultimately staying for 20.

 At the age of almost two, I was sent to Moscow to live with my Yiddishe Bobba. She passed away when I was 21 and, until I met my future Jewish husband, there was no one who understood me as well as she did. How many questions I would discuss with her, how many things she taught me by just being Bobba Raya! On her birthday, relatives from different cities in Russia would gather to visit her and everyone would find something there: peace, a solution to a problem, or maybe just an attentive listener in her. She was a Yiddishe Momma to everyone.

**Comes to America and Converts**

 Now, let me fast-forward. I came to America in 2000. In 2001, I converted to Judaism, though not in accordance with Torah law. But the growing thirst for the true, deep and meaningful life of Torah observance was too great to ignore. Less than a year ago, I converted together with my children, this time according to Torah Law. I can hardly express all the feelings I experienced as my future conversion was becoming more and more real. T

 he anticipation of filling in all the emptiness in my soul and in my heart, the process of becoming whole again, the joy of reuniting with my Bobba Raya many years later through her name. All of that is a wonderful gift to a convert to compensate the years of feeling incomplete, of searching to find their Jewish soul[[1](http://www.lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/5770/1125.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22n1#n1)]. And as much as I wished I had been born Jewish, the precious minutes in the mikva that completed my conversion process I will treasure for the rest of my life.

**Seeing the Potential of Every Jewish Soul**

 I want to thank the Lubavitcher Rebbe for his great love for every Jewish soul. The Rebbe's love sees the potential of every Jewish soul and has the patience to wait for the Jewish soul to reawaken and to enjoy the connection with G-d, which can even take 100 years as with my family. When I left the Ohel (the Rebbe's resting place), I had the feeling that I had visited an old friend.

 It is to my dearest Rebbetzin Rivkah and Rabbi Chaim Brikman that I owe my deepest gratitude. You warmly welcomed me to our community and helped me and my children go through a kosher conversion. Only people who convert can understand how stressful it is for a potential convert to approach an Orthodox Rabbi for the first time, how fearful it is to think that one might be pushed away, since at that point I already couldn't live without being Jewish. Thank G-d, I was blessed with wonderful mentors and teachers in the Brikmans.

**Thanking G-d for the Miracle**

 And, most of all I want to thank G-d for the miracle He did for our family over the "blink-like" hundred years. Do you want to taste what I mean? Imagine my six-year-old and 2½-year-old saying the "Shema Yisrael" ("Hear O Israel") at bedtime. Two children's voices, one hardly pronouncing half of the words, but still trying to follow the tune. These few minutes of Shema are proof that my family has been successful in the battle against assimilation. And, G-d willing, this is the way it will continue until Moshiach comes, may it be now!

    

Notes:

*(**[Back to text](http://www.lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/5770/1125.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22t1#t1)) When referring to a convert, the Talmud states, "A convert who converts is like a recently born baby." Why doesn't the Talmud say, "A gentile who converts"? One explanation is that a true convert is one who, though born to a non-Jewish mother, has a Jewish soul. It is this soul that propels him/her to become Jewish through the Torah's conversion process.*

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

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Dream Car**

 In our parsha this week Chukas, Hashem commands us to perform one of the most puzzling mitzvahs of the Torah, the ritual of the parah adumah - the red heifer (cow). Hashem commands that a red heifer, perfect in its redness, be slaughtered and burned. Its ashes are then mixed in a special container with spring water, and sprinkled on anyone who was ritually impure as the result of coming into contact with a dead body. (see Bamidbar 19:2 to 19:22) The procedure of the red heifer served to purify a Jew and allow him to return to communal life.

 There are many mitzvahs in the Torah for which Hashem gives us the reason, such as Tzitzis to remember the mitzvahs and Shabbos as a reminder that Hashem created the Universe. There are several mitzvahs however, such as the red heifer, which are a total mystery. There seems to be no logical connection between the actions of the mitzvah of the red heifer and the purpose of the mitzvah, to purify the impure.

**A Foundation of Jewish Belief**

 One of the foundations of Jewish belief is that we perform all the mitzvahs even though we may not understand them. A father asks his son to do certain things. The son does not necessarily understand why he has to do what his father asks him. However, the good son does what his father asks him to do.

 The Torah tells us, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d…"(Devarim 14:1) Thus, when Hashem commands us to do a mitzvah, we do as a good son would, without asking for a reason why we have to do it. As the verse tells us: "The hidden are for Hashem, our G-d, while the revealed are for us and our children, forever, to carry out all the words of the Torah." (Deuteronomy 29:28) Again, the verse teaches us that although we may not understand all the mitzvahs of the Torah, we still must do all of them.

**The Curtain that Covers the Spiritual World**

 If we could look behind the curtain which covers the spiritual world, we would understand the secrets of the Universe. However, Hashem hides the secrets of the spiritual world. Sometimes however, Hashem opens the curtain a little and gives us a peak of the hidden mystical world.

 Dreams are often a time when the hidden is revealed. The Sages in fact tell us that dreams have a power equivalent to one-sixtieth of prophecy. In the following incredible true story, Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser tells about one amazing dream in which a little bit of the hidden was revealed.

 It was well past midnight on a particularly warm June night. Having had a busy week, I was intent on making sure that my sleep would be uninterrupted. As I drifted off, I became oblivious to the conscious world.

**A Frighteningly Real Dream**

 A few hours later I began dreaming, but the dream was frighteningly real.

 I dreamt that I was riding in the passenger side of a car with a man whom I had never met. As he barreled down the highway, I noticed that his eyes had closed and he had fallen asleep. To make matters worse, we were quickly approaching a sharp curve in the highway. With the speeding oncoming traffic approaching from the other side of the median, I immediately shouted, "Wake up! Wake up!" However, the driver, whoever he was, lowered his head slightly and seemed to descend into an even deeper sleep. Desperately, I shouted the first thing I could think of-"Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!"

 With those words, I woke up in a cold sweat. Somewhat relieved that I had been dreaming and was not actually in the car, I calmed myself with the words, "It's only a dream!" I looked at the clock on my night table. It was exactly three a.m. Needless to say, the dream was a horrific experience. I decided to give tzedakah and thank the Almighty that this event had not really happened.

 The next morning, I bumped into one of my closest friends. He startled me by saying. "You will never believe what happened last night. My brother called me shortly after three a.m. He was driving his car on the Long Island Expressway, returning from North Carolina. I guess the trip was too much for him and he fell asleep at the wheel.

**Woken Up by a Screaming Voice**

 All of a sudden, he heard a voice screaming, 'Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!' Thank G-d he did! Boruch Hashem, he tricked the Angel of Death by executing a harrowing maneuver, steering his car around a dangerous curve on the highway. My brother-who as you know is not a religious man-instantly became a believer. He called me to ask if there was anything special that he should do to thank G-d for sparing him. I explained to him that it would be appropriate for him to donate money to charity."

 I was stunned by my friend's story. I still vividly remembered my dream and was a little shaken up because of it. I related my dream of the previous night to my dear friend; we both were astounded. (from Stories of Inspiration, p.81 R. Dovid. Goldwasser) Everything is real: the soul, Hashem, Torah and mitzvahs. Good Shabbos Everyone.

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

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

“*Miriam died there and she was buried there.*” (Bemidbar 20:1)

**Learning from**

**Hashem’s Kisses**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 Our perashah marks the beginning of a new era in the life of the nation. Thirty-eight years passed since the episode of Korah in last week’s perashah. The decree that the generation of the spies would die in the wilderness has been fulfilled. The Torah tells us that Miriam passed away and immediately follows with the fact that there was no water. This teaches us that it was in her merit that the miraculous well followed the people and provided a plentiful supply of fresh water. As soon as that righteous woman died the water stopped.

 Rashi comments: “She, too, died through a kiss, so why did it not say of her, ‘She died by the mouth of Hashem’? For it is not a respectful manner of speaking with regard to Hashem Who is on high.” Rashi is explaining that her manner of passing away was like Moshe and Aharon. This was known as the kiss of Hashem, which is a very painless process of the soul clinging to Hashem, without the use of the Angel of Death. But, the Torah didn’t say so because it is not nice to say that Hashem kissed Miriam.

 To us it seems strange. Why is it a lack of honor to Hashem to say it? After all, Hashem is not physical at all. The whole concept is very distant from Hashem. Plus, the kiss is like a father to his daughter. If so, why not say it? The answer is that the Torah wants to teach us to keep a great distance and stay far away from physical contact which is inappropriate. The distance is to be so great that it shouldn’t even be mentioned.

**To Hit or Not**

**Hit the Rock**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 After Miriam passed away and the well which provided water for the Jewish people dried up, Moshe was told to speak to a rock which would become a source of water. When Moshe spoke to the rock and no water came out, he hit it twice, and although water came gushing forth, he and Aharon were punished that they would not be allowed entry into the land of Israel. What is amazing about this episode is that years before, in a similar situation of no water for the Jews, Moshe was told to hit the rock! Why all of a sudden is hitting the rock incorrect and only speaking to the rock the right way?

 The Rabbis tell us that in the beginning year of the career of the Jewish people, hitting a rock was appropriate. But after forty years being guided by Hashem, we must mature enough that the miracles should happen with words rather than by hitting. This is comparable to a child who has to be hit when he is young, but afterwards only a word is necessary. We have to learn from here that what was acceptable in the beginning of our career has to be upgraded as we get older and wiser. We should not be doing the same thing year after year. Rather we should be mature enough to serve Hashem in a more advanced way. What was good enough for children is not good enough for adults!

**Nuclear Reaction**

**By Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

 The human being is expected to grow in intellect and maturity, not merely in size and weight like other creations such as plants and animals. The character of a person should improve and become refined with age, like fine wine. And so Hashem planned the world in a way that would be conducive to personal growth.

 One of the built-in training devices is called marriage. The Torah describes a man’s mate as “ezer k’negdo” – a helper corresponding [opposite] to him. Hashem designed marriage as a place where a man and a woman who were created with different natures would live together in one home. Their different views regarding so many daily situations would thereby yield growth and perfection through the reconciliation of their opinions.

 Men are different from women, and the differences are more than just physical. In any relationship, one party moves faster than the other. The trick to domestic tranquility is not necessarily for one spouse to slow down or speed up in order to move exactly in sync with his or her mate. The trick is really to learn how to react to the difference in pace.

 One great Rosh Yeshivah in Jerusalem would always be ready to leave for semachot (happy occasions) before his wife was done getting dressed. In most instances he kept busy with learning or some other important activity while he waited for her to announce, “I am ready, let’s go!” One time the couple was invited to the wedding of one of the Rosh Yeshivah’s students. The Rosh Yeshivah had a very pressing matter to attend to that same evening; therefore he requested from his wife:

 “Tonight we must leave home no later than six o’clock, as I cannot stay past eight, and I must show proper respect to the groom and bride before I depart. Please be sure to be ready promptly at six.”

 The well-intentioned wife tried her best, but was not ready until six-thirty. When she finally came to the front door, the anxious Rosh Yeshivah accepted her apology and gave her an admiring look, as if to appreciate every detail of her simple but dignified wedding suit. “Kedai,” he said. (“It was worth [the wait].”) (Excerpted from “One Minute with Yourself” by Rabbi Raymond Beyda.)

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

**Talking Points – Chukas**

**By Rabbi Elazar Meisels**

***1. A UNIQUE WOMAN***

*"The entire congregation of the Children of Israel came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh, and Miriam died and was buried there. There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled against Moshe and Aharon." 20:1-2*

 There was no water for the congregation - From here we derive that the well that supplied them with water throughout their forty years in the desert was in Miriam's merit. *- Rashi*

 The entire congregation of the Children of Israel - Among this congregation were many great and pious individuals. Nevertheless, their merit was not equal to that of Miriam, for once she passed, their merit could not sustain it. *- Ohr HaChaim*

 Amazingly, Miriam was the only woman who passed away in the desert, for the decree of death was only pronounced upon the males. Why then, did she perish when she surely was not among those who deserved to die? *Midrash Asfah* explains that it was due to the fact that the well only existed in her merit, and the time to remove it had finally arrived.

 So long however, as she was alive, her merit was too great to allow it to be removed. Therefore, she first had to be removed from the scene and only then could the well be removed. While we can never truly fathom the true breadth of her greatness, this insight from the Midrash offers us a glimpse into just how elevated a soul Miriam truly was.

***2. SPEAK UP***

*"And Moses raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice; water rushed out in abundance, and the community and their livestock drank. G-d said to Moses and Aharon, 'Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the presence of the Children of Israel, therefore, you will not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them.'" 20:12*

 To sanctify Me - For, if you had spoken to the rock and it had brought forth water, I would have been sanctified in the eyes of the community. They would have said: 'This rock, which can neither speak nor hear, and does not require sustenance, obeys the word of the Omnipresent. How much more so should we act in a similar manner?'" *- Rashi*

 To sanctify Me - Why indeed, didn't Moses speak to the rock as he was instructed? Moses' love for the Jewish people was so great that he feared that if He would speak to the rock and it would obey his command, it would reflect negatively upon the Jewish people the next time they failed to do likewise. Rather than create an opportunity for them to fail, he chose to be the disobedient one and hit the rock instead. *- Yalkut Yehoshua*

**Rashi’s Explanation of Moshe’s Punishment**

 "The reason Moses did not merit to enter the Land of Israel was because he addressed the Jewish people in an angry tone and said, 'Listen now, O' rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?'" *- Rashi, Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 101b*

 *Maharsha* points out the apparent contradiction in the words of this verse and those of *Rashi* in Sanhedrin [quoted above], which offer a different reason for his inability to enter the Land. Here the verse implies that it was for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it, whereas in Sanhedrin, *Rashi* attributes his anger for this failure. *Maharsha* explains that certainly the primary reason was hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. Had he controlled his anger however, and been more tolerant of the human frailties of the Jewish people, he too would have been treated in kind by the Almighty and forgiven for his own disobedience. Because he assumed an uncharitable attitude toward the Jewish people, he too was held strictly accountable by the Almighty for his mistake.

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

north america

**Wounded Israeli Soldiers Address**

**War and Peace in Washington**

**By Joshua Runyan and Efrat Schochet**

 Wounded Israeli veterans touring the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States headed to the nation’s capital for a two-day series of meetings and tours at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the White House, the Israeli Embassy and other sites inside the Beltway.

 The June 9 and 10 stops came as part of a 12-day tour that began with the 10 former soldiers’ arrival in New York City. Organized by the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side and the Chabad-Lubavitch Youth Organization in Israel’s Terror Victims Project, the Belev Echad trip – its name translates to “with one heart” – brought the group to Washington to allow people living in America to express gratitude for their sacrifices.

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| Wounded Israeli soldiers touring the United States on a trip sponsored by the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side and the Chabad-Lubavitch Youth Organization in Israel’s Terror Victims Project talk about their experiences with a senior Israel Police attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. |
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 Maor A., an elite Givati Brigade soldier who was wounded during Operation Cast Lead in 2009 when a bullet pierced his right arm and left it paralyzed from the elbow down, was touched by the exhibits at the Holocaust museum.

 “This is exactly what we soldiers fight for,” he said, “to be certain that nothing like this can ever occur again. The loss of my arm’s use was worth the sacrifice.”

 After touring the White House, the soldiers headed to the Israeli Embassy, where they were addressed by Senior Israel Police Attaché Uri Bar-Lev. Having lost a leg in the service of his country, Bar-Lev spoke with authority.

 “Every Israeli knows what it means to be a soldier,” he stated, his words piercing with meaning in light of recent events. “Israel’s army is like one family. Our soldiers fight on Israeli land, on Israel’s very borders, and therefore, our victories are vital.”

 Rabbi Uriel Vigler, director of the Chabad Israel Center, began planning for the trip in November. His organization raised nearly $100,000 to pay for all of the functions, room and board, from a broad swath of supporters in New York.

 In Washington, he injected some optimism into a discussion between Bar-Lev and 12-year-old Adam Lassner, who accompanied the group from New York. Lassner asked the police official how the world would be different in five years, to which Bar-Lev replied: “We will still be fighting over the same issues. They will take more than five years to resolve.”

 “That’s one answer,” countered Vigler, before invoking the long-awaited day when there would be no more war.

“Of course,” replied Bar-Lev with a smile. “May [it] come right now.”

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Chabad.org*

**THE GOLDEN COLUMN**

**Rabbi Moshe Almoshnino**

**Of Saloniki zs"l**

 Around four hundred and fifty years ago, there lived in the city of Saloniki one of the great luminaries of the generation, Rabbi Moshe Almoshnino zs"l, a colleague of the famous Maharshdam zs"l. He was described as "a massive scholar, proficient in all wisdom," and he authored several works: "Yedei Moshe" on the five Megilot, "Tefilah L'Moshe" – a work of derush (homiletics), "Pirkei Moshe" on Pirkei Avot, "Ma'amass Ko'ah" and others. His three volumes of responsa on halachah and other writings have been left in manuscript form.

 He was a loyal shepherd to his flock, and the troubles encountered by his community touched his heart. During that time, the authorities levied upon the Jews endless taxes and fees, to the point where they could no longer survive financially.

**Travels to Istanbul to Meet with the Sultan**

 Rabbi Moshe went together with two other scholars and traveled to Istanbul. He called upon several prominent figures - Don Yossef Nasi, the physician Yossef Hamon, and other people of influence – and with their help arranged a meeting with the Sultan to ask for an exemption for his community that languished under the burden of taxation. The Sultan heard the request and answered in the negative. But Rabbi Moshe was not discouraged. He requested another meeting, but it, too, yielded no results. But he did not despair, and he requested yet a third meeting, running the risk of igniting the Sultan's wrath. Here, too, he did not receive the response he had hoped for.

 He had to invest Herculean efforts to have his contacts agree to arrange a fourth meeting, but he finally succeeded. He stood before the Sultan and described to him the series of travails suffered by the people of his community. The Sultan expressed his identification with the suffering, but refused to grant them a sweeping exemption from taxation. Frustrated and distraught, Rabbi Moshe's two colleagues left him, but he still did not give up. He managed to schedule a fifth meeting, alone, and again his request was rejected.

 He paid no heed to the warnings and suggestions given to him, and he pushed for

yet a sixth meeting. He came before the Sultan for the sixth time – and this time he was successful. He achieved a writ of exemption for his town, and he was greeted with royal honor upon his return. He had but one request: that he be freed from further public responsibilities, so that he can devote his time to Torah study.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aram Soba Newsletter (Bnai Yosef Congregation, Brooklyn)*

**Perashat Hukat**

**As Heard from**

**Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

“*This is the statute of the Torah*”.  (Bamidbar 19:2)

 The subject of Parah Adumah (the red heifer) is based on the fact of the Tum’ah of a dead body. This is the most severe form of uncleanliness and is called “the father of the fathers of Tum’ah”.

 One explanation for this severity of the uncleanliness of the dead is as follows:

 The Chovot Halevavot (Yichud Hamaaseh 5) declares that the first and most prevalent doubt concerning the principles of Torah is the doubt in the truth of Life after death (Olam Haba).

**The Persistence of Such a Doubt**

 We can readily perceive the reason for the persistence of such a doubt, in the fact of death itself. When confronted by such catastrophic phenomenon as death actually is, it requires strength of character and of intelligence to overcome the powerful impression caused by the death of a person.

 In order to reinforce the confidence in the Existence after death, it is imperative that we have as little contact with the dead as possible, and also that the dead be buried immediately. To encourage these principles, the extreme restrictions of Tum’ah of the dead are especially effective.

 Death is the greatest falsehood in the Universe, for the fact of death causes men to weaken in their belief of the most important truth of the universe (after the belief in Hashem) which is the belief of Life after death.

 “This world is but a vestibule before the World to come. Prepare yourself in the vestibule in order to enter the banquet hall” (Abot 4:16). Because of this effect of Death upon the minds of men, it is the worst form of Tum’ah.

**Death is the Greatest Falsehood**

 “When a man dies” (19:4) Death is the greatest falsehood. When Hitler murdered six million innocents, and then he saw that he was losing the war and would face retribution, he thereupon swallowed a perfumed poison and thus painlessly left the world thinking he escaped the great punishment that awaited him. Thus the phenomenon of death is an enormous deception which conceals the True fate of the evil man in the Afterlife from men’s eyes. Such enormous deception requires a very great label to identify it.

 The phenomenon of death can contaminate the mind with the materialistic attitude that death is the end. If life ends so completely, it loses its value. For why strive for excellence and virtue if it all ends in the grave?

 And therefore Hashem declares here that no Tum’ah is as severe as the uncleanliness of death.

Quoted from “*Journey Into Gre*atness” by Rabbi Avigdor Miller Zt”l.

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

**It Once Happened**

**Discovering the Explanation**

**Of an Incredible Miracle**

 The story begins with a farbrengen (Chasidic gathering) of the Chasidim of the previous Lubavitch Rebbe in France shortly before WWII. The Rebbe's son-in-law (who in another ten years would become the next Lubavitch Rebbe) was also present and he was the main speaker, but some of the other Chasidim also spoke.

 One of them told of a miraculous experience that he had two years earlier. After escaping death in Russia the Rebbe had to move his headquarters to Poland and many Chasidim moved there to be with him. But in the course of his stay the Rebbe told many of them to leave Poland and settle in other countries, for instance the one telling the story was one of a group of five that the Rebbe told to go to France.

 Now back in those days this was no small task; they had several borders to cross, among them dreaded Germany, and to make matters worse one of them had an non-valid passport and no time to get a new one; the Rebbe told them to leave immediately.

 On the trains, one of them would lie on the bench and the other four would sit on him, covering him with their long winter coats to avoid the passport checks. And they even managed somehow to pass all the other borders. But the check post at the German border was notoriously dangerous, especially for Jews, and for Jews with no passports it was almost suicide.

**Deciding on a Sort of Plan**

 They decided on some sort of plan, but as they neared the front of the line they heard shouting and screaming from inside the inspection center, then a pistol shot followed by a moan and silence. They tried to look as confident as possible but were really trembling inside, if it wasn't for the Rebbe's blessing they would all have turned back and returned to Poland on the spot.

 But to their amazement when the first Chasid got to the window, the official snatched his passport from his hand and stamped it without asking questions! And so he did to the second. Then he began talking on the phone and stamped the remaining three passports without even looking at them!

**Full of Cruel Policemen**

 But their problems were far from over; the place was full of cruel robot-eyed policemen and soldiers checking and rechecking everything and everyone that moved (probably that is where the shots came from) but strangely the police paid no attention to them! They walked through the station unnoticed, as though they were invisible, hailed a taxi, and left. One half hour later they were in a telegraph office sending a message back to the Rebbe ... they were free! It was a miracle!!

 The Rebbe's son-in-law listened attentively to the story. When it finished he asked for the exact date and time of the miracle and when he heard the answer he smiled and said, "Now I understand something that was a mystery to me these last two years.

 "The Rebbe, my father-in-law, had to have a nurse come in every day and give him an injection because of his health. (After his imprisonment and torture in Stalin's prisons he became increasingly paralyzed).

 "One day the nurse came in and saw a frightening sight: the Rebbe was sitting rigidly in his chair, eyes slightly open and completely unresponsive. She was sure that he was having a catatonic attack of some sort, and immediately called the Rebbe's wife. When the Rebbitzen entered she began weeping frantically, but before they called a doctor they called for me.

 "When I entered I also was shocked at first, but then I noticed something that made me realize that there was noting to worry about; it was almost imperceptible but the Rebbe's lips were moving, he was saying or reciting something!

 "I bent down and listened and then straightened up and announced that there was, in fact, no cause for alarm ...the Rebbe was saying 'Then Moses sang...' !! (The song that the Jews sang after crossing Red Sea. (Exodus 15:1 -19) After ten minutes the Rebbe opened his eyes and returned to normal.

 "I never asked the Rebbe for an explanation but now I have it. It was the exact same time that your miracle was occurring. The Rebbe was passing you all through the German inspection like Moses passed the Jew through the sea! That is the job of a Rebbe; to help free Jews.

Reprinted from this week’s L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization – originally printed in the Beis Moshiach Magazine.

**Story #655**

**Takes Two to Deal**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 I heard most of this from Larry Siegel of L.A. at a Rosh Chodesh (New Moon & new month) celebration one Thursday night, here in Tsfat. I was so impressed with it that when he showed up at my Melavah Malka Saturday night party at Ascent, I asked him to tell it again. Amazingly, someone else present was able to fill in more background details, which I have integrated.

 One early Friday afternoon as I was leaving the men's mikveh in Los Angeles, a young man stopped me and asked me directions to a certain address. I knew the location -- it wasn't too far awayso I explained to him clearly how to get there.

**Offered to Drive the Young Man to His Location**

 Then, as I was about to get in my car, I decided I could do better. After all, there was plenty of till Shabbat began, and I wasn't that busy. I quickly walked back and offer the young man to drive him, assuring him that it was not much out of my way.

 As we were driving, I asked him what does he do. His reply was, I bring people closer to G-d. I was surprised; he didn't look the type. I'm used to meeting Lubavitchers that do this, but this was a clean-shaven fellow with a wide necktie and the front brim of his hat rolled up.

 I asked him where he was from and he said that he was from Lakewood (the location of a famous non-chasidic yeshiva in New Jersey). I subsequently found out that the supervisor of the yeshiva had indeed sent a select group of 10-20 young men to various locations in New Jersey to work in bringing Jews closer to G-d.

 I thought the expression amazing. Just that morning someone had brought to my attention a letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, written in response to someone who described his activities with those same words, bringing people closer to G-d. The Rebbe's strong answer was, How do you know that you are closer to G-d than they? Maybe they are closer than you! Who can know what is inside the soul of a Jew?

**Advice on How to Have Much Greater Success**

 The Rebbe went on to advise him that if he would keep this in mind and approach each Jew humbly, he would probably have much greater success. I decided to share these thoughts with my passenger and see how he would react. He smiled. You should know, he said, most of the people I work with have addiction problems with gambling, drugs, or whatever. We try all sorts of ways to get through to them, including outings to various places, and so far the only activity that is consistently successful is when we take them to the Ohel (the burial site of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Queens, NY, not far from Kennedy and LaGuardia airports)!

 Now I take large groups there on a regular basis. Usually we go first to a Knicks game at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan, or something else entertaining, and then we go to the Ohel in Queens!

**Asks to Tell His Story**

 He asked if he could tell me a story. At his point you can tell me anything! I answered enthusiastically.

 One of the fellows I took to the Ohel has a more prosaic background. In fact, he is quite an intelligent and ambitious young man, and a year ago was on the waiting list for one of the very best law schools in the country. He wrote to the Rebbe that if he would be accepted, which surely would lead to a good job afterwards, he promises to put on tefilin twice a week and pray with a minyan.

**Forgets His Tefillin and Minyan Promise**

 Subsequently he was accepted. But he never got around to the tefilin and minyan part. During the second semester of his first year he received an unexpected phone call from his mother. He could tell right away from her voice that she seemed quite agitated. 'What happened, Ma? What's the matter?' he queried anxiously.

 'Do you have some involvement with the Lubavitcher Rebbe? You never told me about it.''I don't know what you are talking about. Of course, I don't,' he replied, forgetting about or not taking seriously the letter he had deposited in Queens.

 'Well, I never did either. But I'm calling to tell you that the Lubavitcher Rebbe has appeared to me in a dream several nights now. He keeps saying, I kept my side of the agreement; why doesn't your son keep his?' Needless to say, from that day on he religiously put on tefilin and prayed in a minyan.

 Editor's P.S. The truth is, it has taken me a few years to complete this much of the story. The impetus to finally finish is that my son telephoned me from the Western Wall, excited by a story he had just heard. It was this same story, from the young man himself! Plus, there is a continuation! But, not enough of the latter has unfolded yet to permit it be revealed. At the right time, with G-d's help.

**16th Anniversary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

 Connection: 16th yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

 Biographical note: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe (11 Nissan 1902 - 3 Tammuz 1994), became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away in Brooklyn on 10 Shvat 1950.

 He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

*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=1276608786)

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

**How to Protect Oneself Against the Temptations of This Generation**

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| **QUESTION:** |

 How can a person arm himself against the temptations of this generation?

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| **ANSWER:** |

 And the number one counsel is, to cut loose from the media. Cut loose from the media. First of all you must not have a television. If you persist in viewing television, it's like inviting disaster.

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| NoTV |

If you persist in viewing television, it's like inviting disaster. Your eyes are inviting into your head all the wickedness and stupidity of the world.

 And so, it's like a man who is holding onto a thorn bush and he his crying out, Oh it hurts, bring some medicine. So we say, yes we can help you but first let go of the thorn bush.

 You want to be a Frum Jew, how can you continue bringing into your head all the patterns, all the models of wickedness from the outside world. And the less contact you have with the gentile world or with the wicked Jewish world, the better off you are.

 That's number one. What's the use of bewailing the tests and trials of this world, if you are running after them. It says "Havai Boraiach Min Ha'aveirah" run away from sin. But most of the Orthodox Jews are running towards them. How can you fight sin when you run towards it? And therefore number one is, cut loose from the wicked world.

 Don't read their things. Their newspapers are full of poison. The New York Times is a text book of immorality, besides "Apikorsus". And anybody that goes with the New York Times in his pocket demonstrates that he doesn't belong to Hashem, his heart is in the enemy’s camp.

 It's like a Jew walking around with a Nazi symbol on his arm. If you walk with the "Apikorsus" in your back pocket, it shows you don't belong to Hashem. So number one, is cut loose. Now I know that it won't be obeyed, but I am telling you anyhow because that's the only remedy.

*Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, which was transcribed from one of the questions posed to Rabbi Miller by members of the audience to his classic Thursday night hashkafa lectures. To listen to the audio of this Question and Answer, please dial (732) 534-8868.*

**Mumbai Chabad House to Receive New Directors**

**By Hana Levi Julian**

 The Chabad-Lubavitch movement has announced that it is sending new permanent emissaries to head the Mumbai Chabad House in India.

 Rabbi Chanoch and Leiky Gechman, an Israeli couple with connections to the Jewish community of Mumbai, will soon arrive in the South Asian community.



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| Back in 2006, Rabbi Chanoch Gechtman was assisting Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, right, the director of the Chabad House in Mumbai, India, who perished in the November 2008 terrorist attacks. Gechman will return to the city in a couple of weeks to revive Chabad activities there. |

 The site was bereft of its former directors, Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg in a brutal attack by radical Muslim terrorists in November 2008.

Since that day, temporary emissaries have taken turns serving the Mumbai Jewish community.

 Rabbi Gechman was present at Mumbai's Nariman Chabad House to assist the Holtzbergs after the birth of their son Moishe, who was the only Jew to survive the massacre. His Indian nanny, Sandra Solomon, snatched the child and fled with him in her arms from the besieged building during the attack.

 In an emotional address delivered Wednesday, Chabad-Lubavitch educational vice chairman told some 500 Jewish leaders and ambassadors in Washington D.C., “Rabbi Gavriel and his wife Rivka are of course irreplaceable. But now, there's a rabbi who just got his visa on Friday and will be going there in a few weeks to continue their work, and revive Chabad activities in Mumbai.”

 More than 40 countries were represented at the Living Legacy conference hosted by American Friends of Lubavitch, where Kotlarsky thanked the Indian government for its efforts to facilitate the appointment.

**Studied Under Rabbi Holtzberg, Hy”d**

 Rabbi Gechman, 25, who studied rabbinical law under Gavriel Holtzberg, spent five months in Mumbai. Much of that time was invested in teaching Israeli backpackers who flowed through the Chabad House, an activity he said he “enjoyed very much.”

 His wife Leiky, 23, grew up in Gedera as the eldest daughter of emissaries Rabbi Binyamin and Chana Karniel. A crowded table of guests is nothing new to her, she told Chabad.org. “People would come over to our house suddenly with all kinds of ideas.”

 Both were considered a perfect fit for Mumbai by Rabbi Nachman Holtzberg, Gavriel's father, who suggested the couple to become the new emissaries. South Asian Chabad-Lubavitch regional director Rabbi Yosef C. Kantor, head of the movement's operations in Thailand, agreed. “Gabi liked him and relied on him, and for good reason. He's a wonderful young rabbi... personable, enthusiastic, organized and dedicated.”

 Still, Gechman admitted that was in shock when he first saw the news photos of the slaughter that had taken place in the rooms where once he had taught Torah to those who were visiting India. "I still haven't processed that [Gabi and Rivky] are not here,” he said. “The reality doesn't fit. Sometimes it seems like they are people who live forever.”

*Reprinted from the Arutz Sheva (IsraelNationalNews.com) email of June 17, 2010*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Saved from the Queen**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 A serious dilemma faced the great rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, author of the Responsa *Noda BiYehuda*. A *kohen* in the community asked him to officiate at his marriage to a divorcee. When he refused to do so on religious grounds, the man reported him to the Austrian Queen Maria Theresa who ordered the rabbi to perform the service or face serious punishment.

 The rabbi thereupon informed the informant *kohen* that he would indeed officiate and arrangements for the wedding were made. As the couple stood under the chupah and the climatic moment arrived, the rabbi turned to the *kohen* and asked him to repeat after him word for word this marriage declaration:

 "You are betrothed to me according to the rule of Queen Maria Theresa."

 The guests broke into loud laughter and left the *kohen* and the divorcee to themselves. The brilliant rabbi of Prague thus remained faithful to his religion and no longer in danger from the Queen.

*Reprinted from this week’s web site of Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Yerushalayim.*

**Redefining Intermarriage or**

**How to Help a Fellow Jew**

**By Daniel Keren**

 When one reflects upon the status of *Yiddishkeit* today, the image of the opening lines of Charles Dickens’ classic 1859 novel – “A Tale of Two Cities” comes to mind:

 “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way…”

**Impressed by the Peaceful Atmosphere**

 Today you can walk on parts of Avenue M or Avenue J in Flatbush or any commercial avenue in the Jewish sector of Boro Park on *Shabbos,* and you will be impressed by peaceful atmosphere of all the streets as stores owned by Jews and *goyim* alike are closed on the Holy Day.

 *Baruch Hashem*, it is very easy to be *frum* in certain parts of the Big Apple and its suburbs. But the reality is that while the population of Orthodox Jews committed to keeping Hashem’s *mitzvahs* is growing dramatically, *bli ayin hara*; the situation with the rest of *Klal Yisroel* is not so rosy.

**Tinuk shel Nishba**

 The vast overwhelming majority of Jews in America and even in the Empire State itself are in the status of *tinuk shel nishba*, captive infants who to no fault of their own have grown up totally ignorant of our precious Torah heritage and Jewish culture. Their definition of Judaism is limited to Sunday consumptions of bagels and lox, perhaps lighting the Menorah (at least on the first few days of Chanukah), observing some type of a Passover *Seder* and attending synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

 With each passing generation since the great wave of Jewish immigration from Europe to America in the years following the outbreak of pogroms in Tsarist Russia till the end of open immigration after the First World War (1880 – 1924), the level of knowledge and observance by succeeding generations of assimilated American Jewry has unfortunately become progressively weaker.

 Prior to 1950, the vast overwhelming majority of non-religious Jews felt that it was very wrong to marry out of the faith. But just 15 years after the Holocaust that saw the murder of one third of world Jewry, the number of secular Jews without any solid Jewish education began to skyrocket and today, sadly more than 50% of all Jews in America are marrying non-Jews. In some outlying regions far from the Big Apple, the figures are even more horrific.

**Dangers of Rampant Jewish Assimilation**

 What really hurts is that we as *frum* Jews have given up on the vast majority of American Jewry who as said before are not religiously observant due to circumstances beyond their control. It is not a joy to realize that in 30 years the majority of Jews in America will be observant, because the majority of Jews today (G-d forbid) will have gone spiritually lost.

 After 120 years when we come to the *Bais Din shel Mailah* (the Heavenly Court), we will be asked: “What did you do to help your brother or sister who didn’t become a *baai teshuvah* with you? What did you do to reach out to your second cousin from the Bronx? What did you to do to awaken the *pintele Yid* in your neighbor on the same floor of your apartment building or three houses down from you? What did you say that might have made a difference to your colleague at work or your classmate in college?

**Just a Sincere Concern**

 Not all of us are *kiruv* professionals. We don’t have to be. All it takes is a sincere concern for your fellow Jew. The next time a relative or friend or neighbor or colleague tells you that he or she is about to marry a non-Jew, don’t just shrug it off, by saying “Oh!” and mutter something about probably not being able to go to their “*simcha*.”

 A few years ago, Feldheim Publishers in conjunction with the ELIYAHOO College Outreach Network, a project of JAAM (Jewish Awareness America) published an important book on how to attack the problem of intermarriage. Written by Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitz, the book is titled “*Perfect Strangers: Redefining Intermarriage*.”

 This is a book that should be read first by all *frum* Jews who care about their non-observant relatives, neighbors, friends and colleagues. All too often we live in our own guilded spiritual ghettoes and we have no idea of the challenges that are threatening the spiritual future of most secular Jews. Many of us might even *delude ourselves into thinking that we don’t really know any non-frum* Yidden.

**Important Major Questions**

 Before discussing why a non-*frum* Jew who never had a true-Torah education should not marry a “nice” non-Jew, Rabbi Jacobovitz discusses the major questions that first have to be addressed. “Why Are We Here?” What is the purpose of the relationship between a man and a woman? What is love? What is the Jewish concept of marriage? After outlining Judaism 101, “Perfect Strangers” than attacks the question of why Intermarriage is wrong.

 For many members of our community, it was never a question that we would only marry a fellow Jew. Nevertheless, the book is valuable because it will reinforce our values. When you mention to a secular Jew that he or she should not marry out of the faith and they respond, “Why? This is America and it is a free country,” Rabbi Jacobovitz’s arguments will give you the answers you need to know.

**A Powerful Kiruv Tool**



 Secondly, this book seemingly written to the non-*frum* Jew is a powerful tool for you to use by giving to the secular Jew you want to help out. At the end of the book, it includes a list of additional books for the serious assimilated Jew to read along with a list of outreach groups the reader could contact for more information and help.

 Obviously the best time to try and combat an intermarriage is before the Jew becomes engaged. Often your talking to your fellow *Yid* and demonstrating your sincere concern for both their spiritual and physical wellbeing will have a powerful influence.

**Open Your Homes**

 Even if at that moment he or she pushes you off, your words will have entered their brains and heart. In addition to warning your friend against marrying out of the faith, it also helps to invite them to your home to enjoy the beauty of an authentic *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*.

 “*Perfect Strangers*” deserves to be in every Jewish home – both *frum* and assimilated. You might even consider offering to study the subject with another Jew who could benefit from the lessons in Rabbi Jacobovitz’s book. It is available in Jewish bookstores and by contacting the publisher at [www.feldheim.com](http://www.feldheim.com)

 If you would like help in reaching out to the non-*frum* Jews you come into contact with on a daily or not-so-daily basis, please contact Project Inspire, a division of Aish HaTorah International by calling (646) 291-6191 or emailing info@projectinspire.com or visiting www.kiruv.com

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