**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Masei 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #713**

**The Pacing, the Exclamation, The Confession**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000g800:001E7OND00001mFF&count=1310563663&randid=1086093054&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1086093054##)

 When Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi began teaching the new path of Chabad Chasidism, he attracted many different types of individuals. Some sincere and some not so sincere. The latter were attracted to the novel intellectual discipline introduced by the Rebbe, but not so interested in taking the difficult steps necessary to internalize the lessons for the sake of self-improvement.

 One such young man was a businessman by the name of Shlomo Feigin. Though he was brilliant and enjoyed the intellectual challenge of the Alter Rebbe's teachings, sadly, his heart was not in it.

**A Business Trip to Leipzig**

 It happened once that Shlomo needed to take a business trip to Leipzig. Prior to his departure, the Alter Rebbe summoned him. To Shlomo's surprise, the Rebbe wanted to hear his travel itinerary. And when the Rebbe heard that he was passing through the city of Karlin, he asked him to please pay a visit to his colleague, the saintly Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, and convey his regards. Shlomo promised to fulfill the Rebbe's request.

 Upon arrival at the home of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, Shlomo Feigin was shown to the waiting room, directly adjacent to the Rebbe's study. As he waited, he heard the Karliner pacing in his study.

 After a minute or two, the door to the study swung open and Rabbi Shlomo walked out and began to pace in the waiting room. Suddenly, he stopped and loudly exclaimed: "Young man, young man, what will be if indeed there is a G-d in this world?"

 The Rebbe then returned to his room. Shlomo Feigin, mesmerized by this strange scene, continued to wait.

 A few minutes went by. The Karliner's pacing inside his office could again be heard in the waiting room. Again, the door swung open in a rush. Out came Rabbi Shlomo. Again came the pacing and exclamation: "Young man, young man, what will be if indeed there is a G-d in this world?!"

**Realizing the Reason for His Visit**

 After this scene repeated itself a third time, Shlomo Feigin realized that this must be the reason for the Alter Rebbe's request that he visit the Karliner Rebbe. He was supposed to witness this scene. He left and resumed his journey to Leipzig.

 Some time later, Shlomo Feigin's spiritual wellbeing took a major turn for the worse. He eventually succumbed to the promise of grandeur and power and forsook his faith. Highly gifted, he rapidly climbed the ladder of success till he was appointed to a high position in the Czar's government.

 More years went by. Rabbi Shnuer Zalman had already passed on to his eternal rest. The government decided to build a highway that would traverse the entire breadth of the land. To the chagrin of the Chabad community, the proposed road's route ran directly through the place where the Alter Rebbe's holy remains had been laid to rest.

**Hesitant to Approach to Apostate Jew**

 The chasidim decided to use whatever influence they had to change the route. Inquiries were made, and it turned out that the one in charge of the route was the apostate Jew Shlomo Feigin. The chasidim were greatly concerned. Would a former colleague turned outsider, a man like Shlomo Feigin, be sympathetic to this cause?

 The venerable chasid Rabbi Moshe Vilenker, who years earlier had spent time together with Shlomo in the Alter Rebbe's court, was asked to intervene. An appointment was secured. The aged Rabbi Moshe sat down with Shlomo and explained the situation. Without hesitation, Shlomo promised to reroute the road. But he had one request of Reb Moshe: Could they sit together that evening and schmooze like in times of old? Rabbi Moshe agreed.

 During the course of their discussion, Shlomo confessed to something most personal: "You see all of my success, all of my wealth, all of my power? I cannot enjoy it. I constantly hear the words of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin ringing in my head. 'Young man, young man, what will be if indeed there is a G-d in this world?!'"

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from //chabad.org/766786

 Connection: Seasonal -- 229th yahrzeit of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin

 Biographical Notes: Rabbi Shnuer Zalman [18 Elul 1745-24 Tevet 1812], one of the main disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, is the founder of the Chabad-Chasidic movement. He is the author of Shulchan Aruch HaRav and Tanya as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

 Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin [1738-22 Tammuz 1792], was also a student of the Maggid, as well as of Reb Aharon the Great of Karlin, whom he succeeded in 1772. Most of the Chassidic leaders of the next generation in the Lithuanian region were his disciples. He died Al Kiddush HaShem, stabbed by a Cossack while in the midst of the Amida prayer.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**The Petirah of Aharon**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*Then Aharon the Kohen went up to Mount Hor by the mouth of Hashem and died there…in the fifth month on the first of the month*.” (Bemidbar 33:38)

 The passing of Aharon is mentioned in our perashah. This is the only mention in the entire Torah of the date of the passing of a saddik. It took place on Rosh Hodesh Ab, which is next Monday, August 1. It marks the beginning of the Nine Days.

 Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt”l explains the reason why Aharon’s date of passing is the only one mentioned from all of our ancestors. Aharon was the first Rabbi and teacher of peace. Therefore his passing is a time of deep sorrow and crying for all generations. There is no greater sorrow than the passing of the one who brought peace to the world.

 It may very well be that the law of the Nine Days, which is the period of time we commemorate the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash, is a result of the passing of Aharon. As we know, the destruction was caused by baseless hatred, which Aharon successfully eliminated.

 We need a teacher to teach us the pursuit of peace, the love of peace. The nature of man is to enjoy disputes. It is more exciting; people have the opportunity to strongly express their opinions. Rabbi Avigdor Miller,zt”l,always used to say that peace is boring. We should love to be bored with peace! Disputes are fun. We need a teacher to teach us how to enjoy and love peace. After we learn to love peace, then we can do actions to pursue peace. We can’t pursue it if we don’t love it.

 A simple parable could drive this point home. Imagine a fire breaks out in a little town. All the people run to help, all the fire engines come and the firemen are heroes. A little boy watches with wide eyes as huge ladders are erected and tons of water are delivered. Even he gets involved and helps to save people. People praise him for his timely help. From then on, he waits for another fire where he can help. He might even toy with the idea to start a fire, G-d forbid. He needs to be taught not to love a fire.

 This was the great benefit of Aharon. He taught how to love boring peace, and how to hate exciting disputes. That’s why the Torah mentions only the yahrtzeit of Aharon and no other leader. If we can increase our appetite for peace, we can bring back the Bet Hamikdash.

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

**The Wonders of Creation**

**The Unichiklis Iris**

 Have you ever heard of the unichiklis iris? Even if you haven’t heard of it, you most definitely have seen it. This iris includes some of the prettiest irises, eight species of which appear in Israel in all their glory. If you’re wondering about the strange name of this flower, it is derived from the Greek term for “rainbow in the cloud.” This name was given to the iris because of its large flowers that resemble the beautiful variation of colors in a rainbow.

**A Most Intriguing Phenomenon**

 Researchers have noticed a most intriguing phenomenon with regard to this flower. Thousands of bees make this iris their lodging for the night. Why are the bees attracted to this flower? There are several reasons.

 Firstly, several species of the iris produce a special aroma that attracts bees. Secondly, even more fascinating, bees are cold-blooded creatures. At night, they fall into a deep sleep that resembles the hibernation of some mammals. Their body temperature drops to that of their surroundings.

 In order to fly again in the morning, they must shake up their wings, a process that wastes a lot of energy. Apparently, the area inside the iris provides a warm environment for the bees. Scientists believe that the iris absorbs the heat from the sun over the course of the day, thus providing a warm “hotel room” for the bees.

 The body temperature of the bees in the iris begins to rise earlier in the morning, allowing them to get out earlier to search for nectar. And the earlier a bee gets to work, the more nectar it can collect. It seems that the bees prefer the black flowers, whose color attracts heat. The bees thus pollinate these flowers more than other irises.

**A Symbiotic Relationship**

 This symbiotic relationship between the iris and the bees involves the mutual benefit received. The flower is pollinated and the bees have a warm place to sleep. Indeed, this symbiosis constitutes one of the most remarkable features of creation. In the human world, this phenomenon is called “hesed,” kindness. For us Jews, hesed is an ingrained characteristic dating back to Avraham Avinu, who was

considered the pillar of hesed. Hazal taught us a critical lesson about hesed: “More than what the giver does for the beggar, the beggar does for the giver.”

 In other words, there exists a bilateral give-and-take between the beneficiary and the benefactor. That is, the giver was given the opportunity to perform kindness as a result of the beggar. And, as a result of his charity, the giver merits the fulfillment of a missvah, is elevated and purifies his personality. In this way, he comes closer to the Almighty.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter, a publication of Bnei Yosef Congregation in Brooklyn,NY.*

**It Once Happened**

**A Special Reincarnation**

 Millions of shining pin dots of lights spotted the black sky, and not a rustle or breath of sound was heard as Rabbi Avraham Halevi Bruchim made his nightly rounds through the narrow, winding streets of Safed.

 Every night, without fail, Rabbi Avraham walked up and down the streets calling to the sleeping inhabitants: "Awake, awake, Jews; Awake Reb Yaakov! Get up, Reb Yitzchak!" calling each by his name until sleep was shaken away and they rose to address the Creator of the Universe.

 According to custom, it was time to begin praying the "Tikun Chatzot" - the midnight supplication prayers; the sleeping scholars of the city must be roused from their slumber.

 It was time to remember the Holy Temple, and plead with the Master of the Universe to remember His children and fulfill His promise to rebuild the Holy Temple.

**An Age-Old Custom of Praying for the Holy Temple**

 The age-old custom of praying for the Holy Temple was maintained with great devotion in Safed, and the scholars who lived there never overslept thanks to the dedication of Reb Avraham Halevi.

 He persistently called the people of Safed to their prayer and study until the many study halls were filled and the voices of the Jews blended into a melodious spiritual symphony of prayer and study spiraling through the starry skies in a crescendo which reached all the way up to the Celestial throne.

 The holy Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the famed Kabbalist, lived at this time and knew the tzadik Reb Avraham Halevi very well.

**The Arizal Delivers Very Grave Tidings**

 Once, the Arizal came to Reb Avraham with very grave tidings: "It has been disclosed to me that your life is coming to its end. All the years allotted to you have passed. However, I see one possibility for you to live. If you travel to Jerusalem and pour out your heart in prayer at the Western Wall, G-d may look favorably upon your prayer. If you are granted a vision of the Shechina, the Divine Presence, it will be a sign that your petition has been accepted and you will live another 22 years."

 Rabbi Avraham Halevi immediately did as the Ari had instructed him.

He travelled to Jerusalem and prepared himself to storm the Heavens by fasting for three full days and nights.

**Begs the Al-might to Spare His Life**

 When he finally reached his destination, he was ready. The prayer rose from the depths of his soul and he wept and begged the Al-mighty to spare his life.

 When he lifted his eyes to gaze at the Wall, he saw a vision of the Shechina, the G-dly Presence and the glory of what he saw cause him to fall upon his face on the stones. He wept from the great and turbulent emotion until he fainted.

 In his unconscious state he dreamt that the Shechina again appeared to him and said, "My son Avraham, take comfort, for there is hope for your future. Your sons will return to their borders, for I will return the captives from their exiles, and I Myself will comfort them."

 Rabbi Avraham awoke from his faint in elevated spirits, filled with joy.

He returned to Safed and resumed his activities there.

 One day the Ari met him on the street. "I see by looking at your face that you had success in Jerusalem and that you did see the Shechina. You will surely live another 22 years."

**The Prediction of the Ari is Realized**

 The prediction of the Ari was realized. Rabbi Avraham lived 22 more years, bringing many Jews to prayer and repentance.

 A full 22 years after this event occurred, he passed away to his eternal reward.

 The Ari said of him that he was a reincarnation of the Prophet Jeremiah, who also called his fellow Jews to repentance before the destruction of the First Holy Temple.

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

**The Tragedy in Norway**

**By Sara Esther Crispe**

 Still reeling from the brutal murder of little Leiby, I checked the news once Shabbat had ended to learn of the horrendous massacre in Norway, in which 93 people have been confirmed killed and another 97 wounded. This was the single worst massacre to date, and was the largest number of deaths in Norway since World War II.

 A country is in mourning, the world in shock. Once again we are witness to the depravity of one single person.

 Alongside the news of Norway, another tragedy of a different sort was reported. This was the story of a young Jewish woman, known throughout the world for her singing and creative talent, who died at the age of twenty-seven.

 Another young life, cut short, needlessly.

 We have just lost dozens of innocent people, with much left to do, to give to and to impact their world, but who are no longer here because of a monster who didn’t value the lives of others. And at the same time we have so many others who lives are snuffed out in their prime because of a monster within, disabling them from valuing their own lives.

 And where does this leave us? Those reading these stories, watching the interviews, feeling the pain?

**We Are to Live with the Times**

 Chassidic philsophy teaches us that we are to live with the times. In other words, we should glean meaning, direction and insight in our day-to-day life from the time of the year, the Torah portion of the week, etc. We are currently in the “Three Weeks” of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, which culminate with Tisha B’Av, the day of the greatest destruction for the Jewish people. The Three Weeks begin on the 17th of the month of Tammuz, which marks the day that the walls leading to Jerusalem were destroyed. Three weeks later, on Tisha B’Av, our Temple was destroyed.

 Yet all three weeks are considered a time of mourning. We do not just recognize the day of the actual destruction, but we recognize that the root of that destruction began much earlier. Had we been able to recognize it then, to stop it then, perhaps the worst could have been prevented.

**In Our Shock and Pain, We Ask “Why?”**

 We have watched so much tragedy unfold, and in our shock and pain we ask “why?” Yet no one can give us that answer. Certainly not now. Not yet. Not while our Temple is still destroyed. Not while our walls are crumbled and in need of rebuilding. We are taught that when Moshiach comes, he will have many questions to answer. He will explain the “why” for so much. But while we wait, the “why” is the one thing we will not know.

But there is something we can and must do. And not just for those tragedies that have happened, but to help prevent more from occurring.

 We must all take a piercing look into our lives and the lives of our loved ones and those around us. Are there walls there that have been weakened? Walls that have been breached, walls that have been broken? Are there walls in need of rebuilding or repair?

 Walls serve both positive and negative purposes. We can build a wall to keep others out and ourselves hidden, or we can build walls to offer protection and security. Those walls that hide problems must be destroyed, for those walls hide what must be dealt with, and do not allow others to help. Simultaneously, when we hide behind our own walls, refusing to let others in, we often find that we become prisoners within our own mind and hearts.

 At the same time, those who have no walls in their lives are vulnerable to the ills around them, and must be helped to build walls that can offer the safety that one needs. Often it is the lack of walls in the first place that leads to situations where walls are built to hide, rather than to protect.

**Mourning is Not Just for**

**The Day the Tragedy Struck**

 Our collective time of mourning as a Jewish people teaches us that mourning is not just for the day that tragedy struck, but it includes the time period when the warning signs were there and the problems escalated and we were not able to stop them. We need to protect ourselves, our children and our community by looking at our walls. And we need to remember that just as one person can wreak so much terror and destruction, so too can one person save the emotional, physical or spiritual lives of so many others. So, too, can one person impact the world and change it for the better.

 But change can only happen when we look for the breach in the walls. When we don’t wait for an event to occur to deal with the root of the problem.

**One Doesn’t Become a Predator Overnight**

 A predator does not become a predator overnight. A person who takes his or her life, either purposely or indirectly through reckless behavior, did not develop an addiction or depression or erratic behavior overnight. A terrorist does not plan an attack overnight. There are signs. There are warnings. There are behaviors. And we as a community must learn to identify them and deal with them before they lead to action.

 We are in pain. We are in mourning. And we should be. The loss is great. But we have seen, and will see through every tragedy, the unity that will come about. The community will become one through extended support, help and involvement. We must use this concern and love to strengthen ourselves and fight against what seeks to destroy us, be it the demons within or those outside of our hearts and minds. And we must search and find those walls, and the breaches and weaknesses that lie within.

 Together we can fix these broken walls, and build new ones where necessary. Together we will get through this. And together we will bring comfort to one another while we await the ultimate comfort and end to this suffering with Moshiach, who will finally explain the “why.”

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

**South Korean Envoy**

**Visits Bnei Brak**

**By Yoav Zitun**

 After telling Ynet about the [Talmud](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-4065672%2C00.html) being a bestseller in South Korea, Ambassador Young Sam Ma was invited to tour the Israeli city of Torah studies – Bnei Brak – in order to witness the centrality of the ancient rabbinic writings in the lives of the city's residents up close.

 Several weeks ago, the South Korean ambassador visited Netivot Olam Yeshiva as a guest of Bnei Brak Mayor Yaakov Asher, and took part in a special discussion on the foundations of Talmud and its centrality in the life of the Jewish people.

**An Interesting Meeting Was Held**

 An interesting meeting was held between the ambassador and Rabbi Arye Visper, a yeshiva student, who fought in the Korean War and was even awarded a medal from the South Korean government.

 The panel's participants included the ambassador, the mayor, yeshiva head Rabbi Yosef Brook, and yeshiva students – among them doctors and science scholars – who discussed the importance of studying Torah among the haredi public.

 Two of the speakers were Prof. Doron Aurbach, director of the Electrochemistry Group at Bar-Ilan University, and businessman Rami Feller – both students at the yeshiva.



**Ambassador, mayor and yeshiva head (Photo: Bnei Brak Municipality)**

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 The ambassador said during the meeting that although Talmud is not part of compulsory studies in South Korea, it can be found in the bookcase of many of the country's residents, which total nearly 50,000 people.

 He added that the Korean people show a lot of interest in the Jewish people's history.

 "Jews have a high rate of Nobel Prize laureates in all fields: In literature, science and economics. It's an amazing achievement," the ambassador told Ynet in an interview about three months ago.

 "We tried to understand the secret of the Jewish people. How do they – more than other nations – manage to reach such impressive achievements? How is it that Jews are such geniuses? The conclusion we reached is that one of your secrets is studying Talmud."

 Young told his hosts that his wife had bought him all of the Talmud volumes as a birthday present.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) Update. The article originally appeared in Ynet News.*

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

**Reflections on Capital Punishment**

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| **QUESTION:** |

If capital punishment is practiced, isn't there a possibility that it'll be inflicted on an innocent person?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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And the answer is as follows, if society is **not** going to practice capital punishment, then they are sentencing an untold number of **innocent** people to be put to death, because you must have a deterrent.

 Now don't believe the liberals. They are one hundred percent liars when they say there's no evidence that it's effective. The best evidence is what our own eyes see. Look, you stand on a street today and a taxi passes by you, you notice there's a glass wall, a complete wall between the driver and the passenger. Now, how long ago was that instituted? When I was a boy you didn't have a single taxi like that. When I was a boy, none of the stores had metal gratings to protect the windows.

 In those days, you could walk through a poor neighborhood in the middle of the night. Recently, I was sitting on a bus, behind me were sitting two Italian laborers from Canarsie, tough guys, and one said, you know Bill, he said, there was once a time that I used to go out walking at night 12 o'clock with my wife, but I don't go out anymore in the streets at night. That's in Canarsie, and a tough guy!! Not a lemichel.

 You see before your eyes a difference! If in Sing-Sing there's an electric chair whether it's used frequently or rarely, it's such a lesson of Mussar and Yiras Shomayim. There's **nothing** like it! I remember when they used to report on an execution. So the reporters used to come down and take pictures. First of all of the electric chair, and explain the apparatus. Then there were close-ups of the prisoner, and interviews with the guards, and so on. You have to know, all this propaganda made such an effect on all the would-be tough guys, people who don't care for other people, selfish ones. There are a lot of wicked people in the world. There's only one way, they won't listen to instruction, all the rehabilitation is token.

 All they'll do when you put them into a prison is they'll enjoy the television that's free, and the meals that are free, and they learn better ways of killing people from more hardened criminals, and then they go out and do the same thing over and over. The best rehabilitation is, when they're put in that hot chair and they're finished. Then society is saved.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.” The above is a transcript of a question and answer from the audience after a lecture from one of Rabbi Avigdor Miller’s classic Thursday night hashkafa shiur at his Flatbush shul from the 1970’s until his petira in 2001.*

**Sloatsburg Rest Stop Offers Jewish Men Place to Pray**

**By Khurram Saeed**

 On Thursday nights during the summer, thousands of Orthodox Jewish men transform an ordinary Thruway rest stop into a sacred space.

 The travelers, who hail from Brooklyn, Staten Island and northern New Jersey, look for a place to pray as they make their way upstate to meet their families.



Orthodox Jewish men pray on the top floor of the parking garage at the Sloatsburg rest stop along the northbound New York State Thruway. The area has been set aside for people to meet and pray. The men spend the work week in Manhattan, drive upstate Thursday evenings and use the space to say the traditional evening prayers. (Photo by Seth Harrison of the Journal News.)

**Accommodating Worshippers Due to Safety concerns**

 For nearly two decades, the New York State Thruway Authority has provided a place for religious Jews - as well as those of other faiths - to worship at the Sloatsburg travel plaza along the northbound Thruway, past Exit 15A, due to public safety concerns.

 The prayer zone is on the top level of the rest area’s two-story parking garage, far from the highway’s breakdown lanes where men once gathered.

 Rabbi Joel Friedman of Williamsburg in Brooklyn said Sloatsburg is well-known among religious Jews in New York City. The travel plaza is referred to as the “prayer stop” or the “meeting area.”

 Many Orthodox Jewish women and their children spend their summers in the Catskills to escape New York City’s oppressive heat. The men continue to work in the boroughs during July and August, but on Thursday nights, they make the four-hour drive to Ulster, Greene and Sullivan counties.

 As many as 300 Jews say their afternoon (mincha) and night (maariv) prayers there each Thursday, Friedman said. The busiest time is between 9:30 and 11 p.m., when up to 70 men in small groups pray together. That window of time lets them say both prayers within a short period before continuing on their journey.

 “They stop for one prayer before sundown, and they wait a few minutes so they can (say) another prayer after sundown,” he said.

**Serving as a Liaison with the Thruway Authority**

 Friedman spends each Thursday in the summer supervising the proceedings from 4 p.m. to midnight. As a liaison with the Thruway Authority, he makes sure things run smoothly, worshippers pray in the right location and people don’t tie up traffic.

 “A little bit, sometimes people still park on the ramp,” said Friedman, who tells them there is designated parking on the second floor of the garage. “That’s even easier. I keep explaining, ‘Why walk?’ “Friedman took over for his father, Rabbi Morton Friedman, who died in 2009.

 Over the years, Jewish community leaders and officials from the Thruway Authority and state police have worked together to ensure travel is not disrupted and motorists are safe.

**Praying Zone First Created in 1993**

 Betsy Feldstein, a spokeswoman for the Thruway Authority, said a prayer zone was created in 1993 after officials began to observe that groups of Jewish men were parking their cars on the shoulder of the highway just beyond the Harriman toll plaza in Orange County. They would wave down other cars since they needed to pray for about 20 minutes in groups of at least 10 men.

 “As they prayed, their children often played on the side of the Thruway,” Feldstein wrote in an email.

 Temporary meeting areas were set up off the Thruway, including at a nearby tandem truck stop, while a long-term solution was developed, Feldstein said. That came when the Sloatsburg travel plaza was renovated, and an area was set aside to let motorists “safely rest, gather and pray.”

**Minor Problems Arose in the Past**

 Minor problems have occurred at the prayer zone over the years, like people selling raffle tickets, some people loitering and food being served - though that’s less of an issue now that the rest area has a vending machine offering kosher food.

 “People sometimes are still upset that they cannot do their business,” Friedman said. “I keep telling them that this is not a place for business but for prayer.”

 Robert Woodill, who took over as manager of the Sloatsburg and Ardsley travel plazas late last month, said the garage has been effective. It’s underused, and it moves the worshippers’ vehicles away from traffic heading to the gas station, food court and restrooms, he said.

**Muslims Have Recently Begun Worshipping in the Prayer Zone**

 Though Thruway officials were unaware of any other religious groups using the prayer zone, Friedman said he recently has seen Muslims worshipping there.

 Rabbi David Eidensohn of Monsey said many Jews were deeply appreciative of the accommodation the state made for people of faith.

 “G-d bless America,” he said. “They make special places for us to pray.”

*Reprinted from the Journal News of July 27, 2011, a Gannett newspaper serving the counties of the Lower Hudson Valley in upstate New York.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Flohred**

 In this week's parsha Masei, the Torah details the journeys of the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Yisroel) as they traveled through the desert. Why is it so important for the Torah to describe in such great detail the wanderings of the Jewish people?

 The commentary Maor Eynayim explains that there is a reason for every place that we must go in life. Namely, we must go to that certain place to elevate the sparks of holiness, which lay there, waiting to be elevated. We elevate the sparks of holiness in that place, by serving Hashem in that place.

 This is especially true in places with little or no Jewish communities. The following inspiring true story illustrates one Jew's journeys in this world.

**A Disciple of Reb Shraga**

 Reb Yitzchok Flohr was a man who was privileged to learn under the tutelage of Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, referred to by many as the architect of Torah in America. Reb Yitzchok was a G-d fearing Jew, and his love for mitzvos was well known. He often went to great lengths to fulfill Hashem's commandments, even when it meant incurring an expense or inconveniencing himself to do so.

 As an importer of esrogim from Italy, Reb Yitzchok often had to travel to Europe to supervise the cutting of the esrogim. Reb Yitzchok usually made sure that he had his tefillin with him on the flight so he could use them while davening shacharis (praying the morning prayers) on the plane.

**Returning to the United States**

 On one return trip to the United States, Reb Yitzchok boarded the plane, made his way down the narrow aisle to his seat and started to arrange his belongings. As he looked through his carry-on bag, he suddenly realized that his tefillin were nowhere to be found. He must have forgotten to remove them from his luggage before boarding the flight. Reb Yitzchok was distressed at the thought of davening shacharis without tefillin.

 But since he would be arriving home in the afternoon, there would be ample time after claiming his luggage to put on his tefillin before nightfall. Feeling somewhat calmer, Reb Yitzchok sat back comfortably in his seat and began to relax.

 After a short time, Reb Yitzchok was startled by an announcement over the plane's loudspeaker. "Ladies and gentlemen, we will be making an emergency landing in Portugal due to engine trouble. Everything is under control, and there is no need for concern. Please remain seated and stay calm. We will be landing shortly."

 The plane erupted into a din of hushed hysteria. The crew circulated the cabin, trying to reassure the nervous passengers. Reb Yitzchok's mind immediately turned to his tefillin. Perhaps, he thought, he would be able to retrieve his luggage in Portugal and bring the tefillin on board the plane when the flight resumed.

 The plane landed in Portugal without further incident. The passengers exited the aircraft and were directed to another terminal, where they were told that there would be a delay of a few hours. Naturally, no one was pleased with this situation. For some, this meant missing an important meeting or appointment; others were simply frustrated that things weren't going smoothly.

**Concerned About Not Being Able**

**To Put Tefillin On Before Nightfall**

 And Reb Yitzchok? He, too, was concerned. For with this additional delay, he would not arrive in the United States in time to put on his tefillin. Yet how could he let an entire day pass without donning tefillin. Reb Yitzchok approached the nearest desk.

 "Excuse me," he said to the ticket clerk. "I left an important item in my checked luggage. Is there any way I can retrieve it while we're waiting?" "Just a minute, sir, I'll check that for you." The woman glanced at his ticket and pressed several keys on her keyboard, then looked up with an apologetic smile.

**Searching for a Solution**

 "I'm sorry, Mr. Flohr, but I'm afraid your luggage is on the cargo plane, headed to New York. The delay didn't affect your baggage, since it goes separately." "Thank you," Reb Yitzchok said somberly, and then walked back to his seat in the waiting area. He needed a pair of tefillin. Where does one get tefillin in Portugal-particularly when he doesn't know anyone in that country? No easy solution came to mind.

 Perhaps, Reb Yitzchok thought, he could find an earlier flight to the United States. Once in New York, he could easily call a friend and borrow a pair of tefillin. Reb Yitzchok began to walk from one terminal to the next, checking the departure times for every airline.

 It soon became clear that his own flight was the earliest one to the States. He already knew that it would be arriving too late. As he passed a departure screen, a new idea occurred to him. There was a flight leaving very soon to London. A friend of his lived there, and fortunately enough, he had the man's phone number on him.

 Reb Yitzchok quickly exchanged a few dollars for the local currency, then headed for the nearest public phone. "Hello?" came the English voice at the other end. "Hello, this is Yitzchok Flohr calling." "Reb Yitzchok! Shalom aleichem! What brings you to call me?" His friend was surprised, though pleased, to hear from him.

**Friend Agrees to Come to Arrival**

**Gate at London Airport with Tefillin**

 Reb Yitzchok explained his problem and made his request. His friend was happy to help. Soon, the arrangements were made. The friend would come to the arrival gate in London with a pair of tefillin. Reb Yitzchok would don the tefillin and then be on his way for the next leg of his journey, back to America.

 With the necessary arrangements in place, Reb Yitzchok went to the ticket desk. "I was on the flight that made an emergency landing here," he explained. "I would like to get on the next flight to London, and then travel from there to New York."

 The agent tried not to show her puzzlement at the unusual request. "Okay, sir, I'll try to book that for you." She got busy with her keyboard. "Fine," she said finally. "There were still a few seats left on each flight. I'll just need to stamp your ticket with the change and you'll be all set. But are you sure you want to do this, sir? It's quite expensive."

**Enthusiastically Agrees to a**

**Much More Expensive Ticket**

 "How much is it?" Reb Yitzchok asked. "Eight hundred dollars." "I'll take it!" he said enthusiastically, handing her the ticket to be stamped. Reb Yitzchok walked to the gate joyfully.

 The flight was uneventful, and he met his friend in London right before nightfall. Reb Yitzchok put on the tefillin with intense happiness, thankful to Hashem for giving him the resources to fulfill such a holy mitzvah, despite the odds against him. (From Reb Yosef Weiss, Visions of Greatness p.197)

 Sometimes in life, we find ourselves in far-flung places; we should know that it is no coincidence. Rather, we must go there to elevate spiritually the holiness which lays there.

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

**Bentley for a Day**

“Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children…” (32:16)

 Two people. One standing at the counter of ExecuRent-a-Car, the other sitting in Jack Barclay’s, the Rolls Royce/Bentley dealers. Two people about to get their new Bentley Continental GT (price – a mere $210,000 and change). One is taking delivery of his new car. The other is renting for a day.

 Which one has the most pleasure from his Bentley, the fellow who’s buying the car, or the one who’s renting?

**A “Cinderella Moment”**

 Even as he takes the car keys from the ExecuRent rep., somewhere in the back of his mind the fellow who’s renting the car has a “Cinderella moment”. He knows that in 24 hours he’s going to have to give the car back. The other feels that the car is his. Forever. Well almost forever.

 Things bring us pleasure in life to the extent that we perceive we own them.

 Which is why physical things never give us that much joy. For in the back of our minds we are aware that we can never hold on to physical things. The Bentley can be stolen. It can break down (Yes! Even Bentleys break down. Shhhh!)

 A person is never that happy with physical things because he knows that tomorrow someone else could be living in his house, wearing his suit, driving his

Bentley.

**A Real Sense of Ownership Gives Us Pleasure**

 When we feel we really own something — that gives us pleasure. And the only things we really own are spiritual things: our mitzvot and our good deeds.

 Those can never be taken away from us, and therefore they are the only things that ultimately make us happy.

 The two tribes of Reuven and Gad asked Moshe if they could receive their portion of the Land of Israel on the eastern bank of the Jordan. This was an ideal place for them, as it was well suited to grazing the large amount of livestock they had acquired.

 Moshe was concerned that their settling the east bank before conquering the rest of the Land would deal a severe blow to the morale of the Jewish People in the coming confrontation with the nations of the Land. He accused them of forsaking their brothers in a time of need. They explained to Moshe that their intention had never been to settle at this point and go no further rather, they wanted to build “Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children…” After which, each and every one of them would lead the Jewish People in the conquest of the west bank of the Jordan.

 Moshe agreed to their proposal and said, “Build for yourselves cities for your small children and pens for your flock.”

**Moshe Reverses the Order of the Original Sentence**

 Interestingly, Moshe reversed the original order of the sentence. The tribes of Reuven and Gad spoke of the building the animal shelter before that of their children, whereas Moshe spoke first of the children and then of the animals.

 This was an implicit criticism for being more focused on their property than on their offspring. “Why did you speak of building stables for your cattle before cities for your children? It seems you attach more importance to your possessions than to your children.”

**Connect to the Concept of “Concealed”**

 In Hebrew, the word for “possessions” is nechasim. The word nechasim is related to the word mechuseh which means “concealed”, for after a person passes from this world he no longer possesses his “possessions”, they are concealed from him by being given to someone else.

 Similarly, the coin known as a zuz derives from the verb lazuz which means “to move”, meaning that money is restless. The Hebrew word for money itself mammon is a contraction of “Ma atah moneh?” “What are you counting?” which means “What are you counting – it’s nothing.”

 Nothing more than a Bentley that’s going to turn into a Pumpkin Continental GT.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Ohrnet, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on the Internet (*[*www.ohr.edu*](http://www.ohr.edu)*) Source: Adapted from Rabbi Noach Orlowek.*

**An Unexpected Mission**

**In the Phillipines**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 This week's section is called 'Journeys' and begins with the sentence "These are the Journeys of the Jews that they left Egypt". Namely a detailed list of the 42 journeys the Jews took in the 40 years of travel in the desert from Egypt to Israel.

 The Baal Shem Tov explained that these journeys represent 42 milestones everyone must experience in life (birth, marriage, success, failure etc) from the day of birth (leaving Egypt) till the day of death (entering Israel).

 But this is not understood for many reasons.

**Why Are All Journeys Related to Leaving Egypt?**

 First; why does the Torah call the 42 journeys as leaving Egypt when, in fact, only the FIRST was from Egypt? The other 41 were APPROACHING Israel.

 Second; there were many journeys that were bad, for instance Kivrot HaTaava where the Jews sinned with the Manna (Num. 11:34) and Shitim where they sinned with the women of Moab (Num.25:1). Does that mean that according to the Baal Shem Tov, we must all sin?!

 Third; why is it called 'Journeys' and not "ENCAMPMENTS"? After all, the places they camped were the main thing; the journeys were only means to get from one encampment to the next.

 Fourth, and most important, of what practical importance is this to us now?

 Here is a story I saw in a book called Rabim Haishiv Mavon ByRabbi Aaron Dov Halperin(vol. 1 pg 161) that will help us understand.

**Thirty Years Ago a Story Occurred to a Kashrus Expert**

 Our story occurred some 30 years ago with a Chabad Chassid called Rabbi Dovber Levi who was an expert in ' Kashrut'. There are many very complicated laws and conditions that must be fulfilled for food to be permissible (Kosher) for Jews to eat and Rabbi Levi's job was to inspect various plants throughout the world to assure the food they produced met these conditions and could be certified as 'Kosher'.

 As a Chabad Chassid, before each trip he would write to the Rebbe for blessing and advice. Usually he would receive almost the same response each time; wishes for a safe and successful journey and several dollars to be given to charity when he reached his destination.

 But this time, it happened to be a flight to the Philippines, in addition to the above, the Rebbe added a check for one hundred and eighty dollars and orders to locate the Jewish community there, speak before them and give them the check.

 Rabbi Levi was a quiet man with almost no experience in speaking before crowds but for the Rebbe he would do anything. So after he arrived in the Philippines and finished his job of checking out the food (which turned out to be non kosher) he, instead of just getting the first flight out as was his custom, began searching and asking around for directions to the synagogue of the orthodox Jewish congregation.

**Not Your Ordinary Orthodox Synagogue**

 It took a bit of time but when he finally found it, traveled there and entered, he was shocked; it was filled but the men and women were sitting together in one big room for the prayers!

 Although this may not seem important to the average reader, and it wasn't at all to them, it is, in fact, forbidden in Judaism for several reasons. The foremost of which is that prayer requires concentration on spiritual matters and removal from worldly ones, which is impossible in mixed seating.

 His original plan was to fulfill the Rebbe's directive by saying a few nice words but now, with a goal and a topic he asked for permission to speak and the crowd, sensing that he had something important to say, fell silent as he took his place before them. He spoke of the importance of making a division (me'chi'tza), explained what it is, told stories, jokes, examples and finally produced the Rebbe's check as participation in its building.

**The Members Promise to Build a Mechitza**

 To his amazement the crowd was enthusiastic! They accepted the check and promised to build a ' Mechitza' according to whatever standards he dictated.

 But that wasn't all.

 As he was completing explaining to them all the technical details of the Mechitza suddenly the door of the synagogue burst open and a young man came running in while putting on a Yarmulke as he yelled, "Is Rabbi Levi here!? Is Rabbi Levi here?!"

 When he saw the Rabbi he ran up to him, shook his hand, sighed a sigh of relief and said.

 "Hello! Shalom! My name is Y…., I'm from New York, not far from where you live. That's why I want to talk to you." He caught his breath and continued. "I came to learn medicine here a few years ago after I didn't get accepted to any University in the U.S.A. Anyway, I did pretty well, that is I'm doing well here and, well, I met a really nice girl here in medical school and, well, she's very intelligent and we get along great. Phew! Let me catch my breath. Well, we decided we want to, err, that is, we're getting married. I plan to take her to New York and we'll get married and set up a clinic there.

 "I don't want to just call my parents and tell them such an important thing long distance. And, well, you are a Rabbi and know how to talk. So what I'm asking is that when you get back to New York, please do me a favor and visit my parents and tell them you were here and that I'm doing well and I'm going to get married to and the girl happens to be non-Jewish."

**The Revelation Shocks Rabbi Levi**

 Rabbi Levi almost fell down in shock. If it wasn't for the Rebbe he would have been long gone from the Philippines and would have never met this young man. He had to convince him to call off the wedding. But it wasn't so easy. So he used every argument he could think of, with no results; Y... was determined to get married and NOTHING would change him.

 So with no alternative Rabbi Levi promised to relay the sad news to the fellow's parents and left.

 But when he got to New York and told Y……'s parents they didn't take it well. They both broke out in hysterical weeping and after a few minutes his father actually passed out cold on the carpet for a few minutes.

**Mother Begs the Rabbi to Speak Again to Her Son**

 "Please" his mother begged "Please, we know you spoke to our son but we beg you, please try again."

 Rabbi Levi got the young man's number. He lifted the phone, called him in the Philippines, explained what happened when his parents heard the news and spoke as he had never spoken before.

 "That was only when they HEARD you're marrying a gentile." He said passionately. "Think what will be when they actually see her! Not only that but I understand they gave you all their life's savings for you to learn medicine. Is this how you repay them?"

 The next morning at 7 a.m. Y... called his parents and told them that he called off the wedding.

**A Letter from the Philippine Synagogue**

 Several months later Rabbi Levi received a letter in the mail from the president of the Philippine Synagogue containing pictures of, not only the new mechitza they had built but also the new Mikva that they were beginning to build and a note from the young doctor that he was now part of the congregation and was looking for a Jewish girl to marry.

 This answers our questions.

 Everyone, especially every Jew, is supposed to take 42 major journeys in life. But without Moses the chances are slim of even making the first one; leaving Egypt. But really each of them is 'leaving Egypt'.

**The Hebrew Word for Egypt is Synonymous**

**With the Word for “Limitations”**

 The Hebrew word for Egypt( Mitzrayim) is synonymous with 'limitations' (Maitzarim). So these 42 journeys are really 42 levels of leaving one's egotistical limitations and becoming a new person as we saw in our story; the congregation, the young doctor and even the Rabbi changed attitude totally.

 And, as in our story, by opening ourselves totally to change we too can transform even the most negative, seemingly inevitably 'bad' journeys…..to good and positive ones.

 And that is why our Torah portion is called 'Journeys' and not "Encampments'. Because even though the encampments i.e. accomplishments in life are important, the main thing is to constantly 'move' and change ourselves and the world around us according to the Torah.

 This is the work of Moshiach alluded to in the name of the final journey (33:48) ' Yardain Ye raecho' (referring to Moshiach who will judge with 'Raecho' i.e., his sense of smell (Isaiah 11:1)

 But the key is to follow the words of the Moses. This will move us to make the first journey and bring us to the last journey; all the Jews will gather to Israel and together with all mankind will worship only the Creator according to His Torah.

 Then the world will be filled with the knowledge of the Creator like water fills the ocean and there will be no more suffering, war, or ignorance. (Rambam, Laws of Kings 11:1)

 It all depends on us. Even one more good deed, word or even thought NOW can tip the scale and bring...**Moshiach NOW!**

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