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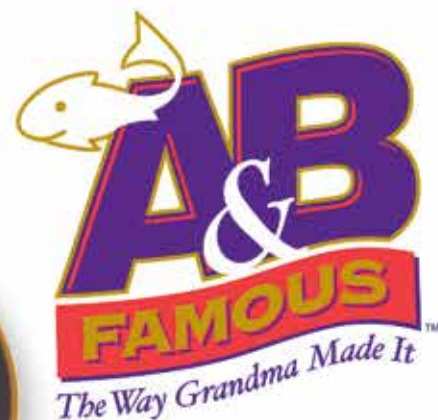
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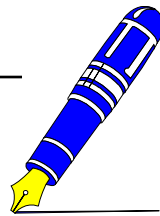
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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

It's been quite a while since we've been in touch. We had a long summer and a heavy-duty Elul, and now the Yamim Nora'im have come and almost left. We at Inspiration have worked hard to bring you another great issue full of articles that are interesting and, of course, inspiring. Naturally, we aim to live up to our name.

Everyone has his own mitzvah projects that he wants to work on, particularly during this season. The Rambam points out in Hilchos Teshuvah that we have to work hardest on improving our middos, and not only during

aseres yemei teshuvah. Even during Sukkos, when we do many things to promote simchas Yom Tov, we can't neglect the vital avodah of working on our middos.

Of all the mitzvos, the Torah emphasizes the element of hiddur – enhancing the beauty of the mitzvah – only in connection to the mitzvah of esrog. As the Midrash explains, the esrog represents a person's heart. Since the heart is the seat of one's middos, a person must have hiddur in the mitzvah of having good middos more than in any other mitzvah.

We top off the Yom Tov season with Simchas Torah, when we complete the

Torah and begin it again anew. That, too, reminds us of the symbolism of the esrog. The Torah ends with the letter lamed and begins with the letter beis, which spells out leiv, heart. The meaning here is hard to miss: it comes to tell us that the whole Torah, from beginning to end, is all about the leiv, the heart, and the good middos that a person can instill in his heart. If we take this message to heart, we will have a genuinely joyous Simchas Torah that will be a true simchah of the Torah, for the Torah will rejoice in us!

A freilichen Yom Tov to you all.

The Editor

Tzedakah



A Focus on the Third Pillar

Adapted by Moshe Mizrahi from a shiur given by Harav Shlomo Wolbe, shlita

The month of Tishrei is full of Yamim Tovim, some very serious and some very joyful. One element that all these Yamim Tovim have in common is the principal role of giving tzedakah. In our times especially, tzedakah is an essential theme of our observance of the Yamim Tovim.

The Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah taught us (Avos 1:1) that the world stands on three pillars, without whose support the world would collapse. These pillars are: Torah study and knowledge, the avodah of the Beis Hamikdash, and the practice of kindness and of sharing with

others who may need assistance.

When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the pillar of avodah was crushed along with it. The pillar of Torah study, too, was seriously damaged, as the Gemara tells us (Chagigah 5b), "There is no greater bittul Torah than the exile from our homeland." The only pillar left intact is that of gemilus chassadim. This is what Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai told his students (Yalkut Shimoni, Hoshei'a 522) when they refused to be consoled over the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash: "We still have gemilus chassadim to atone for our sins."

The pillar of gemilus chassadim is indispensable to the world's existence. David Hamelech tells us (Tehillim 89:3), "The world is built upon chessed." Hashem might allow the the Beis Hamikdash to be lost, and with it the two pillars of Torah and avodah, but the pillar of gemilus chassadim must always remain intact. The world was built upon this pillar; this pillar continues to support the world, and through it we achieve atonement for our sins.

In his commentary on Bereishis (19:5), Ramban explains: The people of Sedom and Amorah were

immoral to the core in many areas, but their fate was sealed on account of their policy of refusing to support the impoverished among them, and above all, the hapless wayfarers who were unfortunate enough to enter their borders. All peoples have some system to help their indigent and needy; it was abnormal to have an official system forbidding such activities. Nowhere in the world were people so cruel as in Sedom and Amorah.

Eretz Yisrael, the Holy Land, will not tolerate immoral behavior and will evict those who sink into evil habits. The people of Sedom and Amorah so upset the spiritual balance of Eretz Yisrael that the Land not only rid itself of them, their very location was destroyed – to be forever uninhabitable. Hashem left the utter desolation of what was once Sedom and Amorah, once comparable to *Gan Eden*, as a reminder for *Bnei Yisrael* of what could happen to them, *chalilah*, if they would be derelict in a similar fashion.

Chazal taught us (*Yevamos* 79a) that *Bnei Yisrael* have three basic characteristics that distinguish them from all other nations: they possess an inherent bashfulness, they are naturally sympathetic toward others, and they practice *gemilus chassadim*.

The *gemara* goes on to explain that we learn this last trait from what Hashem said about Avraham Avinu: "...since he will command his children and his household after him to preserve Hashem's pathway [for life] to practice charity.... (*Bereishis* 18:19). The Maharsha explains that the verse teaches us that Hashem's pathway is that of practicing *gemilus chassadim*. To preserve Hashem's pathway means to imitate His ways to the extent that we mortals are capable.

This is the legacy of Avraham Avinu, and this is what Reish Lakish proclaimed (*Kesubos* 8b), "My brethren, practitioners of *chessed*, descendants of practitioners of *chessed*, who uphold the covenant of Avraham Avinu."

Even under the most trying of circumstances, *Bnei Yisrael* have been faithful to this legacy. While suffering the most intense enslavement and persecution of their Egyptian overlords, they still organized themselves to help those less fortunate than themselves. *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* (23) tells us, "When [*Bnei*]Yisrael were in Mitzrayim they all lived together, as they had a common bond. They promised each other to practice *chessed* with one another...."

We find an example of this in the actions of Shifra and Puah, the two midwives who defied Pharaoh's command to murder all infant Jewish boys. "They did not do as the king of Mitzrayim had told them; they left the babies alive" (*Shemos* 1:17). The Midrash (1:15) asks about this apparent redundancy – if they did not listen to him, then of course they left the babies alive. The Midrash answers that it means to tell us that Shifra and Puah did not remain passive, but actively ensured the babies' survival and good health. They went to the homes of the wealthier Jews and solicited food and drink for the new mothers, so that they and their new infants would be well nourished. This is the first recorded example of Jews soliciting resources to help others.

During World War II, Premier Ion Antonescu of Romania cooperated fully with Nazi Germany. He exiled hundreds of thousands of Jews to the county of Transnistria and acted with particular cruelty

toward the multitudes of Jewish refugees who had fled the war and entered Romania illegally. In fact, he imposed the death penalty on anyone caught harboring these unfortunate souls. Despite the danger, the Bohosher Rebbe, Harav Yitzchak Friedman, *zt"l*, converted his entire house into a hostel for refugees. Every corner, including his own bedroom and his *beis midrash*, was used for this. Every guest was provided with bedding and a hot meal, and in one top-secret room forged visas were prepared en masse, each one a precious ticket to purchase life. The Rebbe paid no attention to the mortal danger to which he constantly exposed himself.

He once noticed that one of the refugees avoided eating the hot meal served him every day. Upon investigation, the Rebbe discovered that this young man was uncomfortable with the fact that among the refugees who lived in the makeshift hostel, and who participated in its upkeep, were Jews of many stripes, including some who were known to be unobservant. He feared that they might have rendered the kitchen nonkosher. The Rebbe immediately went out and purchased a new pot especially for this *yungerman* and instructed the kitchen staff that his food was to be prepared separately from that of everyone else.

After the war, a great number of these refugees made their way to Eretz Yisrael, where life was far from easy. Eventually the Rebbe himself fled Romania, leaving behind all his possessions, since the Communists refused to allow him to take anything with him. When he first arrived in Tel Aviv, the Rebbe stayed in the Eishel Hotel. When his former "clients" learned of his whereabouts, many of them showed up at the hotel,

assuming that they would receive the same hospitality as they had in Bucharest. The Rebbe instructed the hotel manager to serve meals to everyone and to bill it all to him. He borrowed huge sums of money to cover this, and only with great difficulty did he finally manage to repay the debt. When discussing this incident, he would shrug his shoulders and say, "Look, was it their fault that I was staying at a hotel with a restaurant?"

As one of the pillars of the world, and especially in our times, when it is the only pillar still intact, *gemilus chassadim* is a fundamental duty. Harav Yitzchak of Volozhin wrote in the preface to *Nefesh Hachayim*, "My father (Harav Chaim of Volozhin) always demanded that I participate actively in helping others, for that is the purpose of one's existence. Man was not created in order to do for himself, but rather to help others in whatever capacity he can."

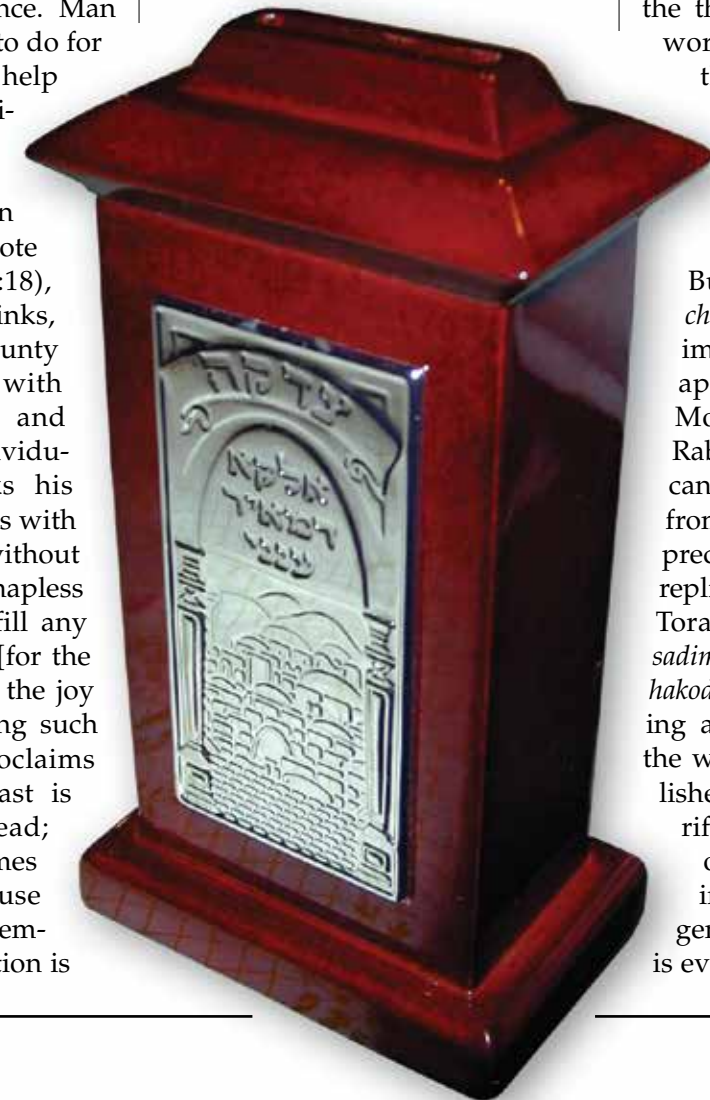
In describing the mitzvah of being joyful on *Yom Tov*, the Rambam wrote (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:18), "When one eats and drinks, one must share one's bounty with lonely people, with orphans and widows and other less fortunate individuals. Anyone who locks his doors and eats and drinks with only his own family, without feeding the poor and hapless among us, does not fulfill any mitzvah of being joyful [for the festival], for this is only the joy of one's belly. Concerning such people, the verse proclaims (*Hoshei'a* 9:4), 'Their feast is like one of stolen bread; whoever eats of it becomes defiled. [This is] because their bread is only for themselves....' Such a celebration is

shameful and a disgrace, as it says (*Malachi* 2:3), 'I will scatter filth on your faces; the filth of your feasts.' "The truth is that someone who ignores the plight of the needy is not only insensitive; he is guilty of pure ingratitude. The Vilna Gaon (commentary to *Mishlei* 13:23) taught us, "The poor bear the suffering of their entire generation. The entire world is held up by the merit of that which the poor suffer through." This being the case, we all owe a tremendous debt to the poor, for all our bounty and comfort come to us in their merit. To refuse to share one's wealth with the poor, or to fall short of the amount of support the *halachah* demands that one provide, is tantamount to refusing to pay a genuine debt.

Harav David Moshe Friedman, the Chortkover Rebbe, once asked, "What do we mean in *Birkas Hamazon* when we ask Hashem to save us from coming to *yedei matnas basar vadam* – the gifts of flesh and blood? Why not just say 'to come to flesh and blood' without saying 'gifts?'"

"We can explain it," continued the Rebbe, "according to the holy Zohar (vol. 1, p. 104a), which teaches us that when Hashem loves someone, He sends him a special gift – a poor person – to enable that someone to gain the merit of the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. We pray, therefore, that we ourselves do not become that special gift."

Gemilus chassadim has always been a fundamental basis in the lives of Torah Jews, being one of the three pillars upon which the world stands. Especially after the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, *gemilus chassadim* is even more crucial, since the other pillars can no longer properly support the world. But the practice of *gemilus chassadim* has never been as important as it is now, as we approach the times of the Moshiach. "The disciples of Rabbi Eliezer asked him, 'What can a person do to be saved from the terrible agony that will precede Moshiach's coming?' He replied, 'One should engage in Torah study and *gemilus chassadim*.'" Chazal, with their *ruach hakodesh*, saw the terrible suffering and trauma that will sweep the world before Moshiach establishes himself, and they were terrified by it. *Gemilus chassadim* is our shield. If this pillar was important for us in all the generations up to this point, it is even more vital now. □



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Yom Tov Time – Capsule of Joy

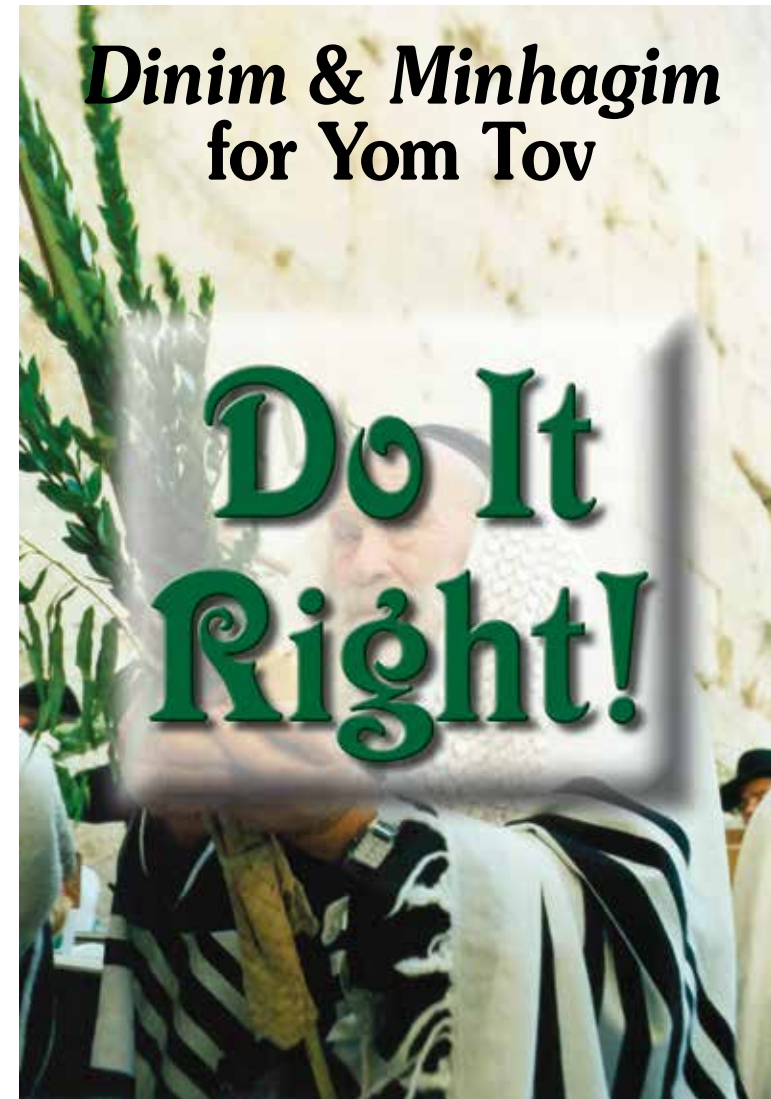
1) One of the many mitzvos we have on *Yom Tov* is that of *simchas Yom Tov*, to be joyful. This mitzvah applies equally to all the *shalosh regalim* and also to Rosh Hashanah, but the Torah emphasizes it on Sukkos more than any other *Yom Tov*. Regarding Rosh Hashanah and Pesach the Torah does not state this mitzvah openly at all, and regarding Shavuot it mentions it once. Regarding Sukkos, however, the Torah states the mitzvah of *simchah* three times. That is one of the reasons Sukkos is called *zeman simchaseinu*, the season of our joy.

2) *Chazal* (*Beitzah* 15b) taught that we are to divide the day of *Yom Tov*, dedicating half our time to prayer and Torah study, and half our time to eating, drinking and celebrating. As we shall see, the term “half” is not used here in its literal sense; rather it means *part*. We should spend a reasonable amount of time on our meals and snacks, and the rest of our time should be devoted totally to serving Hashem. (*Yafeh Lalev*)

3) The *Poskim* ruled that the correct way to manage our time is to get up early for *Shacharis* in the morning so that we can return home for the meal before we suffer pangs of hunger. The *Gemara* teaches that we begin *Shacharis* somewhat later on *Yom Tov* than on Shabbos, so that we can first do the

last-minute cooking for the *Yom Tov* feast. But it also adds that we should hurry to finish in the synagogue so that we can begin the feast early in the day. (After the meal, the men should return to the synagogue and study Torah until midday. After *Minchah* they return

mandated to celebrate in such a manner, but only to engage in the joy of serving Hashem. (*Shulchan Aruch*) The Tur adds that truly God-fearing people behave in a manner that demonstrates how much they appreciate Him for giving them this day of joy.



5) One should not skimp when it comes to purchasing what is necessary to provide for *Yom Tov*. One should honor the *Yom Tov* and indulge in pleasures as much as one does for Shabbos. One's *Yom Tov* clothing should be even nicer than one's Shabbos clothing, for that enhances one's joy. (*Shulchan Aruch*)

Chazal promised us that we can spend money beyond our budget for Shabbos and *Yom Tov* and that Hashem will make it up to us. This does not mean that one has carte blanche to spend as much money as one might want to, however. A person may overextend his means only to the point that he can reasonably hope to be able to make up, but one should not run up insurmountable debts and rely on a miracle to repay them. (*Mishnah Berurah*)

home to snack and sing *zemiros* until nightfall.) (*Mishnah Berurah*)

4) One should enjoy the finest foods, the richest meats and sweetest wines on *Yom Tov*. One should not, however, make this an end in itself and settle down to engage in gluttony, idle conversation and jokes. This behavior is not at all the mitzvah of *simchah*; we are not com-

6) Some *Rishonim* suggested that when there is no *Beis Hamikdash* and we cannot offer *shalmei simchah* on the *mizbei'ach*, there is no mitzvah from the Torah of *simchas Yom Tov*. Rambam, however, ruled that even at such times the Torah demands that we do things to enhance our joy



on *Yom Tov*. Men should enjoy eating meat and drinking wine; they should purchase new clothing or jewelry, each according to his means, for their wives and [grown] daughters; and they should provide sweets and goodies for the younger children. Part of a person's obligation in *simchah* is to share his wealth with the poor, the orphans and widows and other needy individuals. If he ignores the poor and provides only for himself and his household, Hashem holds his celebration in contempt. (Rambam)

Furthermore, Rambam's words imply that the essence of the mitz-

vah is to be in a genuinely cheerful mood on *Yom Tov*. There is a tradition that the Gaon of Vilna used to say that the mitzvah of *simchas Yom Tov* is the most difficult of all the Torah's mitzvos, for who can remain constantly cheerful for seven or eight days and not become angry or saddened even once?

On *Yom Tov* one should think about the reason Hashem instituted this day; how He saved our forefathers from Mitzrayim, how He chose us as His people and gave us His Torah and how He provided all our needs during our forty years in the desert. The more one thinks about these

things, the more happy one will feel for being part of the Jewish nation, and that is the true *simchas Yom Tov*. (Pela Yo'eitz)

7) Although people should eat meat and drink wine in order to enhance their fulfillment of the mitzvah of *simchah*, the *Poskim* recommend that one do so if one indeed enjoys meat and wine. If someone prefers other food and other beverages, he need not force himself to have meat and wine. The main thing is to partake of those things that help one feel happy. That is why we have traditional foods on every *Yom Tov*, such as *tzimmes*, cheesecake, *kugel* and *kreplach*.

8) One should not eat a meal during the last three hours of the day on *erev Yom Tov*, so that one will eat the *Yom Tov* meal with a hearty appetite. This is part of the mitzvah of honoring the *Yom Tov*. Outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, one should avoid eating a meal during those hours on the first day of *Yom Tov* also, so that one will eat the meal on the second *Yom Tov* night with appetite. (Mishnah Berurah)

9) There is no obligation to eat *se'udah shelishis* on *Yom Tov*. (Shulchan Aruch) Therefore, one must be all the more diligent to snack on various foods and to smell various fragrances through the day to make sure that one fulfills the obligation to recite at least one hundred *berachos* on *Yom Tov*.

10) *Chazal* instructed us to appoint supervisors to patrol the parks, riverbanks and other public places, and encourage everyone to keep men and women separated. *Yom Tov* should be a time when everyone is spiritually uplifted and sanctified. We rejoice that we are Hashem's people, and we hope that because of our modest behavior He will rejoice in us. (Shulchan Aruch) □

Yamim Nora'im

Any year that starts out poor will be wealthy at the end (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah).

A wealthy merchant once passed by a rubbish bin behind a restaurant and found a man picking through the garbage, trying to find something edible among the scraps that had been thrown away. He was barefoot and his clothing was filthy and torn. His sunken eyes and the loose fit of his clothing bespoke prolonged undernourishment.

The merchant felt great compassion for the poor man's plight, and he approached him and said, "Excuse me, sir but what is your name?"

"Tzvi," the man replied cautiously.

"Well, Tzvi," the merchant said, reaching into his pocket, "Here, take this hundred dollars.

Take a bath and get a haircut, buy some decent clothes and get yourself a full meal. After that, please come to my home – here's the address; I want to speak with you."

Thanking him profusely, the poor man went to carry out his "mission." A couple of hours later he appeared at the wealthy man's estate and was ushered inside. At first the host didn't recognize the well-dressed, clean-shaven guest, but the signs of many months of hunger remained on his face and gave away his identity.

Shaking Tzvi's hand with a warm welcome, the host said, "My good man, from this day on, I

intend to provide for all your needs. First of all, here is the key to your new, fully furnished apartment. And here are two books of gift coupons, which can be redeemed at any branch of my chain of grocery and clothing stores. Besides this, you will receive a monthly check that will cover any other needs you might have. After all, a man needs to have some cash in his pocket."

The formerly poor man was utterly speechless. "Th-th-thank

be happy to do it."

Tzvi was escorted to his apartment, and he spent the next couple of days filling his cupboards with food and his closets with clothing. Each morning he went dutifully to the grocery store and did his bit to help out, and each Rosh Chodesh he received his "paycheck."

After a while, Tzvi realized that almost all the customers who patronized the grocery store paid with gift coupons, just as he did. He also learned that all the employees were like himself, people who had been rehabilitated by their common patron.

One day, a fellow employee came over to Tzvi and said,

"Next week is the boss' birthday. We're collecting money from everybody to buy him a really expensive gift, to show him how much we appreciate everything he's done for us."

"Well, it's certainly good to show our appreciation," agreed Tzvi. "But I don't know if it's in place in our situation. After all, we do work for him in exchange for what he pays us."

For a moment the other man stared in disbelief. When he saw that Tzvi meant what he said in all sincerity, his demeanor changed to anger. "You fool!" he exclaimed. "You were a filthy, homeless, garbage-picking vagabond. He gave you a home, food, clothing, a generous allowance ... and all you give him in return is two hours a day doing light, and unskilled labor. He doesn't need our work! The only reason he has us do this work is so we won't feel like we get it all for free. But it isn't worth

SHORT STORIES

From the Parashah

you," was all he could manage to stammer.

"Of course, you will have to work for me in return. I would like you to help out in the local grocery store for two hours every morning. And during the high-pressure pre-holiday season, you might be required to work a full day. Will that be alright with you?"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Tzvi, still quite overwhelmed by his sudden change in fortune. "I'll



a fraction of what he gives us.”

In the same way, some people come to Yom Hadin feeling confident that their accounts with the Alm-ghty are squared. After all, they do pray three times a day, and they avoid stealing from others. They keep Shabbat and kashrus and even attend a daily shiur. They feel confident that they have the right to request that the coming year be one of health, wealth and happiness.

But if we would just think for a moment about all that Hashem has provided us: life, health, our senses of sight and hearing, homes, clothing, food, all our myriad posses-

sions and more, we will realize that we remain far, far in the red. And what about all that He did for us from the time we entered this world until we were old enough to begin to pay Him back? Even the greatest tzaddik cannot possibly do enough to repay Hashem for what He gives. This is what David Hamelech exclaimed (Tehillim 116:12), “What can I repay Hashem for all that He has bestowed upon me?”

Therefore, we must stand humbly before Hashem on the Yamim Nora'im and beg of Him that He renew our contract for another year under the same terms – that He provide us endless good-

ness and kindness in exchange for our symbolic payment. If we begin the year recognizing how impoverished we are, we can hope that the coming year will be one of plenty.

Based on a mashal by Harav Moshe Alshich

Sukkos

You shall dwell in sukkos for seven days (Vayikra 23:42).

Once a deadly epidemic broke out in the vicinity of Nadvorna, and the health officials warned the public to be careful not to allow any refuse or litter to be left in public areas in order to minimize the chances of infection. The police enforced these instructions strictly.

Some days before Sukkos, the Admor Harav Mordechai built his sukkah as he did every year. The police reported this activity to the chief justice, a known anti-Semite, who promptly ordered the sukkah taken apart. The Rebbe, however, paid no attention to the order. When the police came to remind him of the order, he replied simply, “I assembled the sukkah for it to remain standing, not to turn around and destroy it.”

The judge then summoned the Rebbe to appear before him, but the Rebbe ignored that also. Taking the initiative in his own hands, the judge went to the Rebbe's residence and began berating him for his disregard for the law and for endangering the entire community with his litter. For his part, the Rebbe responded to this just as he had to the police. The judge was enraged and threatened to punish him to the full extent of the law.

Rav Mordechai looked at the judge calmly and said, “Do you realize that my great uncle was the

holy Rav Meir of Premishlan?”

“I don't care if your uncle was the Kaiser,” the judge screamed. “Get rid of that eyesore in your front yard now!”

Remaining perfectly calm, Rav Mordechai said quietly, “It might be worth your while to remember who Rav Meir was. Why don't you have a seat and roll a cigarette while I tell you a short story?”

The Rebbe's demeanor defused the judge's anger, and he accepted his offer. The Rebbe closed his eyes and began relating his story.

“There was a minister who had ten strong, healthy sons. He lived on a large estate with a large orchard of fruit trees. One day he decided that it would be nice to have a flower garden, so he uprooted several of the trees to make room for it. He planted flowers of every hue and shape and was very happy with his work.

“Suddenly his oldest son became ill and in a short time passed away. Before he recovered from that tragedy his second son was suddenly stricken with the same illness. One after another, the strapping fellows fell victim to a deadly and vicious illness, until the distraught and broken minister counted nine fresh graves in his family plot. When his tenth and youngest child also fell ill, he was beside himself with anguish. He engaged all the doctors from far and wide; he tried conventional medicine and exotic alternative treatments, all to no avail. He sought the help of magicians, fortune tellers and gypsies, but the child's condition only became graver day by day.

“One of the minister's parishioners came to him at that critical period and suggested that he approach Rav Meir of Premishlan. ‘He has the reputation of a holy man and a miracle-



Harav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita dropping schach onto his sukkah.

worker,’ the man explained. ‘He helps all who come to him,

whether Jewish or non-Jewish.’

“The minister hated the thought of requesting help from an accursed Jew, but as he sat there watching his little boy's belabored breath, he realized he had little choice. Soon afterward, he appeared standing humbly before Rav Meir.

“The Rebbe refused to look directly at the minister's face, but he carefully read the note his gab-bai had prepared for him. Without looking up, he began speaking. ‘It seems that you destroyed some fine fruit trees that had been growing in your orchard. As a clergyman I am sure you are familiar with the verse “for man is likened to a tree of the field.” Now you have fallen into the clutches of the forces of evil, and there is very little that can be done.’

“Rav Meir fell silent for a few moments. Then he lifted his head and said, ‘Since you have come to me for help, though, I can promise you that this child will very soon recover.’ With that he stood up and prayed fervently that Hashem bring a kiddush shem Shamayim and heal this sick child. The child did indeed recover and survived to manhood.

“And now, your honor, you know this story and have heard it before, because you are that tenth child. Do you think, then, that it is proper for you to repay my uncle's kindness by treating me this way?”

The judge fell to his knees and begged Rav Mordechai his forgiveness. “Please,” he sobbed, “go ahead and keep your sukkah. Build ten sukkahs if you want. Just forgive me for being so ungrateful.”

Rav Mordechai forgave him completely, and the judge remained his friend and protector for the rest of his life. ■

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CHINUCH

Teddy No-No

R. Halevi

"Gitty, come quick. Mommy's telling a story!" Chaggai and Eli sang out happily.

The idea came to me one day - to tell them the story of Teddy No-No. Lately, my kids have become compulsive naysayers. Whatever the issue, whether it's what to wear or what to eat, "no" has become the standard response no matter what is at stake.

A typical morning would find me struggling with Chaggai before he got dressed. "What's wrong with the blue shirt, Chaggai?" I would ask my little boy. (Actually, he's not so little; he's six.) "You liked it last week." And supper-time? Don't ask. "Why won't you eat the meat patties, Eli? Because they're healthy? Come on, Gitty, just try them. They're delicious!" I practically had to beg them to eat, but to no avail.

Somehow the refusal itself held

a certain appeal, logic or hunger notwithstanding. I had to do something to turn the tide. Using a story to illustrate my point was the best idea I could think of.

The problem didn't end with me, though: the negativity is evident among the kids, too. They couldn't seem to be able to play together for more than a few minutes without fighting. Whenever one of them asked the other for something, the request was automatically construed by the other sibling as an invasion of territory, with the invariable response a resounding, "No!" They're still young, it's true, and there is a good chance that with time things will change for the better. But as their mother, I couldn't stand by idly. So here goes - the tale of Teddy No-No.

"I'm going to tell you a story about Teddy No-No," I said, clos-

ing my eyes and trying to recall exactly how the story went. "Did you ever hear of Teddy No-No?"

They hadn't, so I began...

Once upon a time, there was a little teddy bear who always liked to say, "No!" "Come and eat supper, Teddy," Mommy Bear would call.

"No!"

"Would you like to put on your PJ's, sweetie?"

"No!"

"Don't feel like going to bed yet, little bear? So how about playing with Lego for a while?"

"No!"

"What *would* you like to do, dear?"

"No!"

This is no way to act, thought Mommy Bear. She decided to try to teach her little bear to say, "Yes." "Teddy, dear, say, 'Yes.'" But the little bear just loved to say, "No"

all the time. He wouldn't even try to say anything else.

One day Mommy Bear took little Teddy to the playground. Teddy played on the swings and slid down the slide. He did somersaults on the grass and had a great time. Then he found an interesting path and followed it, moving further and further away from Mommy Bear all the time.

"Teddy, come back!" Mommy Bear cried out.

"No!" Teddy called back, running along the path. He ran and skipped and hopped for a long time until he was tired and wanted to go back. But then...then...

"Then what, Mommy? What happened next?" Chaggai asked impatiently.

Eli's eyes were wide open in fright. "Did the bogeyman take him, Mommy?" he asked.

No one took Teddy. And there is no such thing as a bogeyman. But Teddy couldn't find Mommy Bear. He couldn't see the playground anymore, and he couldn't see the spot where he had been sitting with his mommy, because it was already starting to get dark. Teddy started to cry. He cried and cried. He wanted his mommy.

Just then, a nice little girl heard Teddy crying and came over to him. "Why are you crying, little bear?" she asked.

"N-n-no!" sobbed Teddy.

"Why?" the girl asked again. She figured that she hadn't heard him right. But Teddy just went on crying and repeated, "N-n-no."

"Where's your mommy?" the little girl asked.

Teddy answered, "N-n-no."

"Is she at home?"

"N-n-no."

wouldn't little Teddy help himself? He was in such a bind, but he just kept right on acting silly and saying, "No." Chaggai furrowed his brow. Gitty was on the verge of tears. Enough. It was time to end the story.

Enter Mommy Bear, who finds Teddy and teaches him to say "Yes."

Now little Teddy doesn't act so stubbornly anymore. He learned how to give real answers to questions he was asked, and the best word he learned how to say was, "Yes." He tried it out and found that he could do it. "Y-y-yes! Yes!" Teddy liked the new word so much that he just wouldn't stop saying it. When Mommy Bear offered him an egg, Teddy said, "Yes!" and when she asked him if he wanted another piece of toast he said, "Yes!"

"And how about some cottage cheese on your toast, Teddy?" Mommy Bear asked.

"Yes!" Teddy replied.

"Wonderful," Mommy Bear said.

"And after supper will Teddy go to bed so that he will have strength for another day?"

"Yes!" the children answered for him in unison, pleased with the story's ending. I was feeling quite satisfied too, sure that the story had touched them. There was no doubt in my mind that I had sown the seeds of some important changes in their attitude.



"Is she at the playground?"

"N-n-no."

"Would you like me to help you look for her?"

"N-n-no."

By now the nice little girl was at her wits' end. "So what do you want? You don't want anything!"

Chaggai and Eli were beginning to feel very frustrated, too. Why

• • •

"So, how about some peas, Chaggai?" I asked the next night at supper.

"Yes!" shouted Gitty.

"For me? No," said Chaggai. "I don't like peas."

"Me, also no," Eli announced.

"Eli No-No," Gitty laughed. Eli giggled. I caught a glimpse of him out of the corner of my eye. I noticed that he was thoughtful for a moment, but not thoughtful enough to make him taste the peas - or the chicken or the mashed potatoes, for that matter. I wasn't worried, though. I know that it takes time before seeds of *chinuch* take root. It's a gradual process.

I waited a week, then two. I retold the story of Teddy No-No four times, but after three weeks, when there was still no sign of change for the better, I began to feel uneasy. Teddy No-No had become a buzzword in our home. Anyone who was stubborn or recalcitrant was immediately reminded that he was behaving like Teddy No-No. The guilty party would be upset, even angry, but would not give in.

What's going on here? I wondered. Don't I know how to teach my children how to behave? Maybe I'm not cut out for parenting...or maybe it's just what I deserve for all the times I stubbornly refused to mind my own parents. But how will these children grow up and become menshen? I was very concerned, but at a loss for answers.

One afternoon, Chaggai came in after playing outside and asked permission to go to a neighbor's house to play. "No, Chaggai," I said, bracing myself for the argument that was sure to follow.

"But why?" my son asked.

Uh oh, I thought. Here we go

again. I had said, "No," and I meant to stand by my answer.

"Because that's my rule," I said. "You can't go right now."

"But why, Mommy? Why not?" Suddenly, something clicked inside my head, and my son's question took on new meaning. I hadn't realized in the past that that "Why" had just been settling itself on the outer edge of my brain, just past my ear. Now I allowed the word to enter my heart.

That's right, why not? *Because it's probably hard for the neighbor,* I replied to myself. Then again, maybe it really isn't hard for her? Maybe it's even a convenient time for the children to play together? *Maybe, but how can I know?* I continued my internal dialogue. *When you're the one who really wants something, don't you check it out to see if you can somehow arrange it?*

Right. I could at least check out the possibility before giving Chaggai an outright, "No."

In the end I allowed Chaggai to go over to the neighbor's house and ask if he could play there. The neighbor told him that he was welcome to come in another half-hour.

"Mommy, I want to color with the new markers in the meantime," Chaggai said.

Mommy No-No, don't say, "No" right away, I warned myself. Think a moment before you answer. Check it out first.

"You want to use the markers, Chaggai? I'll give them to you, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, closer to Sukkos. Do you remember what we decided? When we bought the set, I explained to you that it has to stay on the top shelf, because we're going to use them when we make our sukkah decorations."

"Oh, yeah," Chaggai said, and walked away. End of confrontation. I breathed a sigh of relief. I got through it without saying,

"No." He didn't say, "No," either; he even said, "Yeah"...

Since then I have become Mommy Yes-Yes. I count to five before I say the word, "No," and during those five seconds I try to put myself in my child's shoes. I make myself *want* to give him what he wants, as long as his request is appropriate and in his best interest. When I must say "No," at least I sympathize with him and show him that I understand. I have discovered that even when I cannot fulfill my child's desires, it is possible to say, "No" in a way that makes him feel loved and cared for.

In the end, I admit, I was quite satisfied with what the story of Teddy No-No did for me as a mother, and I gave up any expectations I may have had for anything more than that. But I was pleasantly surprised to find that the effect of the story was even more far-reaching.

It seems that children who live with Mommy Yes-Yes also undergo a transformation. When some papers fall under the table and I ask the children to pick them up, they comply happily. They've started to fold their pajamas in the morning without my having to nag. They've even begun to share their treats and snacks with each other.

Recently I watched as Gitty gave out almost her whole bag of snacks to her two brothers. As she began to unwrap the one chocolate bar she had saved for herself, Gitty suddenly turned to me and said, "Mommy, it's been a long time since you told us the story of Teddy No-No."

"But Gitty," Chaggai said, solemnly unwrapping a peanut chew, "didn't you notice? Teddy No-No left our house a long time ago." □



THE JEWISH HOME

By Rebbetzin Malka Kaganoff

Days of Awe,
Days of JOY

As the summer draws to a close, I look ahead to the components of a successful *Yom Tov* season and my involvement as homemaker.

I like to think of myself as the conductor of the family, orchestrating a multifaceted symphony. My goal is to set the tone, the background music for the varied, almost contradictory, moods of Tishrei. The first days of the month set a serious, somber tone, which lightens considerably as Sukkos arrives. Although there are festive aspects of Rosh Hashanah, children tend to be drawn to the joyous atmosphere of Sukkos.

Sukkos is a family-oriented holiday, the kind of *chag* that memories are made of. The more mechanically-inclined family members attend to planning and building the sukkah. Then the interior designers add their input and provide the decorations. My goal is to encourage team effort and keep the tone pleasant.

Sukkah building is the perfect opportunity to assist each family member to develop talents and to feel needed in this joint effort. Participation is encouraged as a privilege and a responsibility, but not as a chore, and there is a sense of shared pride as we finally sit in the sukkah of our creation. (Truthfully, sometimes things do not go so smoothly, as one family member is certain that a specific decoration should be hung in one corner, while a different family member is equally certain that it belongs in a different place. That is where the mother comes in, helping them learn how to resolve their differences and to disagree without being disagreeable. Hopefully, team spirit prevails, and the completed sukkah is acceptable to all.)

Food preparation and presentation is also a team effort – on a volunteer basis. One daughter assembles the menu and the shopping list,

others make specific dishes, and the kitchen somehow manages to supply an ongoing, seemingly never-ending flow of delectable fare. I feel like an accomplished restaurant manager by the time the *Yamim Tovim* are over.

In fact, I feel like an activity director as well, organizing family visits and trips. The ages of the children are taken into account and varied activities are planned. Teenagers tend to make their own plans but are encouraged to join the family activities as well.

My goal is to assist the family to experience *simchah* – a *simchah* not dependent on activities or on how much money is spent. I want them to foster an inner feeling of the joy of being a *Yid*, a member of Hashem's nation, and to feel a sense of purpose found in living according to His direction. Holidays, especially Sukkos and Simchas Torah, are ideal times to focus on this *simchah* and

create positive feelings of belonging to a family and to *Klal Yisrael*.

But what of the other Tishrei holidays? They carry a much more serious message and a much less comfortable mood, and my natural inclination is to shield my children from discomfort. But I know that I am not doing my children (or myself) a service by promoting the "ostrich syndrome," the tendency to bury our heads until Yom Kippur is past. We grow more by learning how to face these important days with the proper approach.

Rosh Hashanah is the first of the Days of Awe, so our first task is to remind ourselves that Hashem is our King Who supervises our actions and attends to our needs. When presenting these ideas to children, it is important to achieve a balance between these two concepts. Hashem is our King Who expects obedience, but He is always our loving Father Who bestows good upon us.

It follows that one of our main missions for Rosh Hashanah is to daven to our Father, our King. Children of all ages can be encouraged to turn Upward in sincere prayer, causing them to reaffirm that Hashem is the Source of all goodness. There is nothing more precious than the sincere prayers of an innocent child.

Prayer is a powerful tool, because it causes us to prioritize what we want to pray for. People can pray for small things, if they are important to them, but I hope that I can guide my children to include prayers for the whole Jewish nation – for Moshiach, for peace and for prosperity. When they think of others in their *tefillah*, then they also learn to be other-centered instead of being self-absorbed.

Besides davening for the nation as a whole, I want them to learn to daven for other individual Jews – realizing that they want the best for

others, not only for themselves. They can be taught to think about others who have difficulties and to pray for improvement of their situations. In addition to learning a sense of caring for others, this makes children realize that their prayers have power. Hashem is listening to what they say – listening, but not always acting according to our requests. Our job is to daven – showing Hashem that we understand that everything comes from Him, and realizing that He knows what is right

for us at any given time.

Inherent in *tefillah* is another important concept – that Hashem loves us and cares about each and every one of us. This is a very comforting thought, one that can provide the foundation for a personal relationship with Hashem. Yes, it is true that Hashem is judging us at this time, but it is my Father in Heaven Who loves me, Who is also my Judge. The concept of *teshuvah* is evidence of Hashem's love for us. He wants to give us a chance to correct our past misdeeds and approach Yom Kippur in a cleansed state.

There are several components of

teshuvah, and it is important to explain them to children, at their level.

I have to look over my past actions and admit that I have done some things incorrectly. This teaches that it is okay to admit to being imperfect, but at the same time, I am accountable for my actions.

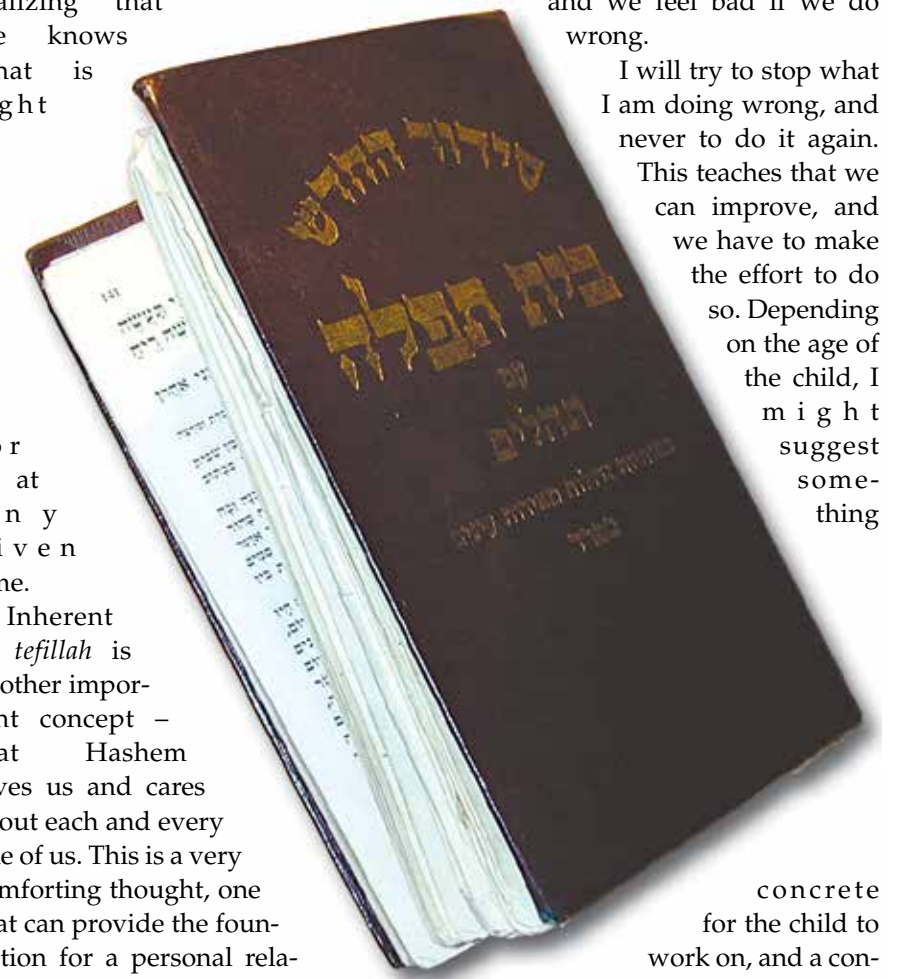
I regret what I did wrong. This teaches that there are G-d-given, absolute standards of right and wrong by which we are bound, and we feel bad if we do wrong.

I will try to stop what I am doing wrong, and never to do it again.

This teaches that we can improve, and we have to make the effort to do so. Depending on the age of the child, I might suggest something

concrete for the child to work on, and a concrete plan of action.

Some examples: "I think the time has come for you to be more careful to daven on time, so maybe you can set an alarm clock to remind you when to daven." "You seem to be constantly bickering with your little brother; maybe you need to try to feel how difficult it is to be the younger brother, always feeling left





out..." (At some point it is also important to acknowledge that even if we commit ourselves to improving, we may still slip, but we should not give up; we must rather keep our goals in mind and get back on track.)

If what we did wrong affects another person, we have to apologize.

This is an important concept, since some people try constantly to justify themselves, when they would be better off just admitting that they were wrong.

If a person has low self-esteem, then it will be more difficult for him to admit that he has done something wrong. A person with a good sense of self knows that good people sometimes do the wrong things and that apologizing is part of the

process of repairing the mistake. It is important to teach our children that they are inherently good, since they are the creations of Hashem, blessed with a G-dly *neshamah*. Someone who is good can do something that is not good, but he tries to improve.

Hashem accepts *teshuvah* and knows that we have the potential to improve. It is very important that our children know that we believe in them and think that they are capable of great things. At the same time, some degree of realism is necessary. "I can't do well in school," one child may complain. It would be unproductive to tell him that you assume that he will receive all perfect test grades from now on, but it is encouraging if you would tell him that you think he is capable of improved study habits, and then

follow up with a few concrete recommendations.

In addition to learning how to apologize, we should encourage our children to accept the apologies of others. It is a *chessed* to accept an apology when it is offered, and it shows a level of cruelty when one does not accept an apology. At the same time, someone who has been wronged may not feel like accepting an apology. It is important to show our children that we are the winners when we are gracious enough to look past an affront.

I can help my children set realistic goals of growth for the coming year and make the *Yamim Nora'im* into an inspiring experience. If people approach Rosh Hashanah with some positive but honest introspection, then they will benefit from Yom Kippur as well. Yom Kippur is not a day of affliction but a day to focus on spirituality and nourishing our souls. Sukkos, the holiday of *simchah*, follows soon after. Our *simchah* on Sukkos is more meaningful if we have gained from the *Yamim Nora'im* season. □



LIFE'S VOYAGES

A Mother's TEARS

A true story, retold by S. Schwartzman



Sometimes, small incidents in life stick in your mind that, seen through the lens of hindsight, seem to have been prophetic.

When my sister came to visit me in the hospital after Shmuel Yaakov was born, as she glanced at the baby whose shock of dark brown hair looked as if it were standing on end, she remarked, "Who does he look like? I don't see a resemblance to anyone else in the family!"

This child was indeed different from the others. His complexion was darker and, unlike his older brother and sister whom I had been able to placate with a pacifier, he screamed nonstop with a high-pitched wail, as if protesting his entry into this world. But as Shmuel Yaakov (or Shmulik, as we called him) grew up, it became clear to me that this initial variance was nothing compared to what was to come.

I had been accustomed to receiving compliments from anyone who came in contact with my children - their teachers at school, neighbors, family members. That is, until Shmulik came along. He "broke the mold," so to speak, and nothing I had learned from the raising of my two older children applied when it came to him.

Shmulik taught us the meaning of humility and kept us from feeling smug. From him we learned firsthand that children are a gift from Above, to be loved unconditionally, and that a child's ultimate success is not always the product of how intelligent the parents are or how well-versed they are in child-rearing.

It began in school. At first the rebbe hinted that Shmulik

could use a little extra help at home. After a while, we learned that he was having serious trouble grasping the rudiments of reading and that he wasn't understanding the *parashah*, either.

We thought that Shmulik had a learning disability, so we took him to be evaluated. After a series of diagnostic tests, however, we were informed that he was fine. He may not be the world's greatest genius, but without a doubt, his IQ was average. So...he wasn't on a par with his siblings. Had we received a written guarantee that all our children would be exceptionally bright? It takes all kinds. At this stage, I still had no problem explaining to myself that Shmulik was not at fault for not being overly gifted. He hadn't chosen to be born this way, and we as his parents must accept him - with love and joy - for what he was.

As the years went by, however, we began receiving different kinds of complaints - that Shmulik was hitting other children in cheder, that Shmulik was bullying the neighbors' kids. We received a phone call one night from the rebbe, who told us that he had tried every way he could think of to influence Shmulik, but now he was at the end of his rope. Since things were getting out of hand, he explained, he had decided to let us know what was happening.

I felt angry at Shmulik for shaming me with his antisocial behavior. I couldn't expect him to be at the top of his class, because by nature he didn't have that ability. But to behave, to be nice to others and not to hit other children - that seemed to be quite a reasonable expectation on my part. Besides, where had he learned such offensive behavior?



We tried speaking with him, we promised him prizes, and his rebbe in cheder even resorted to punishment, but he seemed indifferent to every approach. By then I had seven other children, but Shmulik seemed to take up the greater part of my day and most of my attention. I was at my wits' end. For the first time I felt that I had reached a dead end; I simply had no idea how to handle him.

At home, too, Shmulik didn't get along with anyone. He fought constantly with his siblings, provoking the older ones and tormenting the younger ones. As he grew older, his relationship with his father, which had never been ideal, degenerated to the point where they barely exchanged more than a perfunctory greeting in the morning. Some days were better than others, but no matter what I did, there was no overall improvement.

I was sure that Shmulik had been sent from Hashem as my personal *nisayon*. It's no problem to love and lavish affection on a child who gives you *nachas*, who knows how to behave in public and at home, who brings home straight As and whom everyone praises as being the apple that didn't fall far from the tree. But it's a different story entirely when your child acts wild, disturbs others and behaves unpredictably at any given time.

One incident stands out clearly in my mind. It caused me such pain and humiliation, such a feeling of rejection, that it gave me an inkling of what Shmulik must feel when he is censured - a circumstance that, unfortunately, he experi-

enced all too often. There was a family gathering at my in-laws'. The whole family, with all their respective children, had come; some had traveled quite a distance to attend. Naturally, we were all excited to be together and the atmosphere was uplifting.

My father-in-law is a special person, a well-known *talmid chacham* who holds a position of distinction in the chareidi world. All the grandchildren love him very much, but at the same time they are in awe of him and keep a respectful distance, as befits someone of his stature and formal nature. They enjoy discussing things with him, but they will think twice before speaking. Needless to say, they would never act in a *chutzpadik* way or do any mischief in his presence.

After we had sampled the various refreshments that each of us had brought, Zeidy signaled that he wanted to say a few words. As if by magic, the room became instantly silent; everyone showed respect for the revered patriarch. Zeidy had just begun speaking when a distinct "meow" was heard.

"There's a cat in here," one of the grandchildren said fearfully. It was actually quite possible that a cat had crept into the house, since my in-laws live on the ground floor. With the ruckus of all the grandchildren, the door was being opened and closed constantly.

We shifted uncomfortably and glanced nervously all around, but when nothing was found, Zeidy continued. Less than a minute later, another "meow" was heard. This

time Zeidy could not continue. Bedlam reigned as all assembled began a frantic search for the cat. We looked under the furniture and in all the corners, revolted at the thought of coming into contact with a furry feline in the midst of this dignified gathering. We searched behind doors - two older grandchildren even lifted the sofa - but there was no sign of the intruder. After ten minutes, Zeidy cleared his throat and continued where he had left off.

Again, the "meow."

To make a long story short, one of the boys finally noticed that our ten-year-old Shmulik, who had been sitting at the table with everyone else, wearing the most innocent expression, was responsible for the mewing. The cousin didn't hesitate but immediately pointed an accusing finger at Shmulik and, with the satisfaction of someone who had caught a bank robber red-handed, cried out, "It's him!"

Shmulik was chastised from all sides. Aunts and uncles gave him disapproving looks and said, "How dare you!" One particularly tactless relative said in a stage whisper, "How could such a child have come out of a family like ours?"

To this day I can't help but blush every time I relive the story. On the face of it, what great crime had he committed, after all? But Shmulik couldn't have found a more embarrassing venue to display his antics. It seemed as though he had waited for the opportunity when the entire family was assembled so that there would be no misunderstanding about who he really was. We, as his parents, were considered "accomplices to the crime" and were given scores of suggestions for how to deal with our *tachshit*. Relatives showered us with advice and, of course, criticism: "Next time leave him at home. Such a child you don't bring to family gatherings."

By now I had lost all interest in the occasion and just wanted the earth to swallow me up. Every additional moment that I was forced to remain was torture. I was so preoccupied with my private pain and shame that I didn't have the energy to check on how Shmulik was holding up under the barrage of criticism and condemnation. I was at a loss for how to deal with him. Should I punish him, or perhaps he had already suffered enough?

The next day, Shmulik came home from cheder with a note that his class was planning a *siyum*. I felt this was a test sent to me from on high. It took all of my strength, but I managed to tell him that I would bake him a cake in honor of the *siyum*.

"For me? You mean it, Mom?"

I nodded.

"But why?" he asked, his dark eyes searching me curiously. "I don't deserve it."

"Because you're my son and I love you," I said, surprised at my own spontaneous response, but also pleased at my gut reaction - for I truly felt a deep love for my son, in spite of everything.

That night, while davening *Ma'ariv*, I whispered, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, only You and I know how much I truly love Shmulik and that I want to do everything I can for him. I feel as if Shmulik himself doesn't believe that I care."

As the years went by there were more *nisoyonos* and extremely difficult moments, but in the final analysis, I can honestly say that Shmulik received large doses of maternal affection. I made it a point to shower him unconditionally with love, without taking into account his conduct or even the occasional "slap in the face" that he gave me in return. At times I felt as if I were watering a plant, constantly pouring more and more water on it, but that it accepted the water in silence and refused to grow. From Shmulik I received almost no response. I tried my best to show him how much I loved him, how much I wanted him to be happy and successful, but whenever I did something special for him, instead of showing me his appreciation, he only gave me more pain.

Shmulik was, without a doubt, a riddle. No matter what the circumstances, he was never happy. Despite my varied attempts, it seemed to me that I was never able to reach him.

When Shmulik turned seventeen he left yeshiva and went to work - a most unconventional step for a *bachur* in our circles. Afterward I learned that the work was just a symptom of a larger problem. Something had changed in Shmulik. His language had become coarse and he had begun to speak disparagingly of certain mitzvos and *min-hagim*. I feared that Shmulik was moving further and further away from us...and from his heritage.

Each night my pillow was wet with my tears. "*Ribbono shel Olam*," I davened as I wept, "You gave me a *pikadon*, and I tried to invest all my strength in it, to give without expecting anything in return. Was it all for nothing? Please, help my son find his way back...to You and to me."

Shmulik's older brother and sister both married and established fine families. The son who came after Shmulik also married, and his younger sister was engaged. Shmulik remained single.

In time he had enough money saved up to open a small store. He rented a modest apartment nearby and lived a lonely life. Shmulik's siblings had little to do with him, but I continued baking his favorite cookies and anticipated his occasional visits when I would give him the cookies, along with my tears and prayers.

Occasionally I'd come to visit him at his apartment. "Don't feel bad, Mom," he'd say when he noticed my pained expression at the sight of the neglected bachelor's flat. "I'm happy now, really." But I knew that it wasn't so.

One day, my eldest son came to visit. I could see that he was upset. As a rule, I relish these visits from my married children and look forward to sitting with them over a cup of coffee and serving them my homemade cake that I know they enjoy. But my son was in no mood for a leisurely

schmooze. Distraught, he said, “Mom, you’ll never believe what happened!”

I turned around from the kitchen counter sharply. The coffee cup that I was holding began to shake in my hand. I felt the blood drain from my face as I started imagining all kinds of horrible scenarios. “Don’t scare me like that, Chaim,” I said. “What happened? You’re keeping me in suspense!”

“It’s Shmulik...” he said, breathing rapidly. “You’ll never believe it.”

“Shmulik?” My voice was shrill. “What happened to Shmulik?” I almost shouted, bracing myself for the worst. “Don’t hide anything from me. Tell me everything.”

“Okay, Mom. Shmulik, well, his store...”

“What happened to his store?” I interrupted him, on the verge of hysteria. “Was there a fire? Did someone try to hold him up? Tell me already!”

“*Halevai* there should be a fire there, Mom. Shmulik’s planning to open his store on Shabbos!”

My strength left me all at once and I sank into the nearest chair. “*Ribbono shel Olam*,” I mumbled, “it can’t be. It just can’t be.”

“We didn’t believe it either.” I heard Chaim’s voice as if through a fog. “We thought it was a bad joke, some stupid rumor that a few people spread, but I found out that it’s true. I tried going to the store and talking to Shmulik, but he just laughed in my face and told me to leave him alone.”

“We didn’t want to upset you, Mom,” Chaim continued. “Chayale also went there and tried talking to him. She went when the store was empty. She sat there and cried. At first Shmulik just ignored her and continued putting items on the shelves. Then he turned around and spoke to her. ‘Now you’re crying, huh? All of a sudden I’m important to you. Finally you’re interested in what I’m doing! Tell me something, when was the last time you took an interest in me? Did you ever care whether I was alive or dead? When we were little, you cried because I embarrassed you. Later on you acted as if you didn’t know me. Well, I don’t know you, your husband or your children! Did it ever occur to you that you have a brother who lives all alone? Did you ever wonder if he was making a living? If he had what to eat? If he had what to wake up for in the morning?’

“You couldn’t care less! But now that your little brother is putting you to shame, you remember that he exists. It doesn’t suit you to have a brother who opens his store on Shabbos. It will give the family a bad name. Tell me if I’m wrong!”

“I’ll have you know that you can’t push me around. I’ll do whatever I please, and I plan to open my store on Shabbos precisely because it bothers you so much. Maybe you’ll finally realize that I’m part of the family, too!”

“Chayale didn’t say a word. She just got up and left.”

Chaim looked at me. I remained silent. What was there to say?

Half an hour later I was standing outside Shmulik’s

store. He smiled at me as usual and signaled to me to wait until all the customers left. When the store was empty, Shmulik sat me down on a stool and asked, “What brings you here, Mom? Is everything all right?” I had never come to the store before, and I wasn’t sure if Shmulik was really surprised to see me or whether he had already figured out what had brought me there.

There was no point in beating around the bush. “Shmulik, I heard that you want to open the store on Shabbos... For me, Shmulik - for your mother - I’m begging you, don’t do it.”

Shmulik saw the tears in my eyes, and I could see that he was struggling not to give in.

“Why should it make a difference to you, Mom? The store is far away from your house. No one from the *kehillah* will know that I’m your son. You won’t have to be ashamed.”

“I don’t care who knows and who doesn’t know. I’m not concerned about the shame. Shmulik, I won’t be able to live for a minute with the knowledge that my own son is *mechalel Shabbos* in public. I beg you, for my sake, don’t do it.”

Shmulik avoided my intense gaze. His eyes had a steely expression.

“Shmulik, have you forgotten everything I’ve done for you? This is the first time I’m asking for something in return.”

We were both quiet. A customer walked in, bought a single item and left. Shmulik pressed a button and a metal shutter descended, blocking the door. The store was now quiet and dim. We sat there in silence for a while. I could tell that a fierce battle was raging within him. Shmulik looked at me, and for the first time in many years I saw tears in his eyes. My Shmulik, who had always remained aloof, who never feared the disapproval of anyone, had finally let down his armor.

“You’re right, Mom,” he said, his voice barely audible. “You know what? For you, I won’t open the store on Shabbos.”

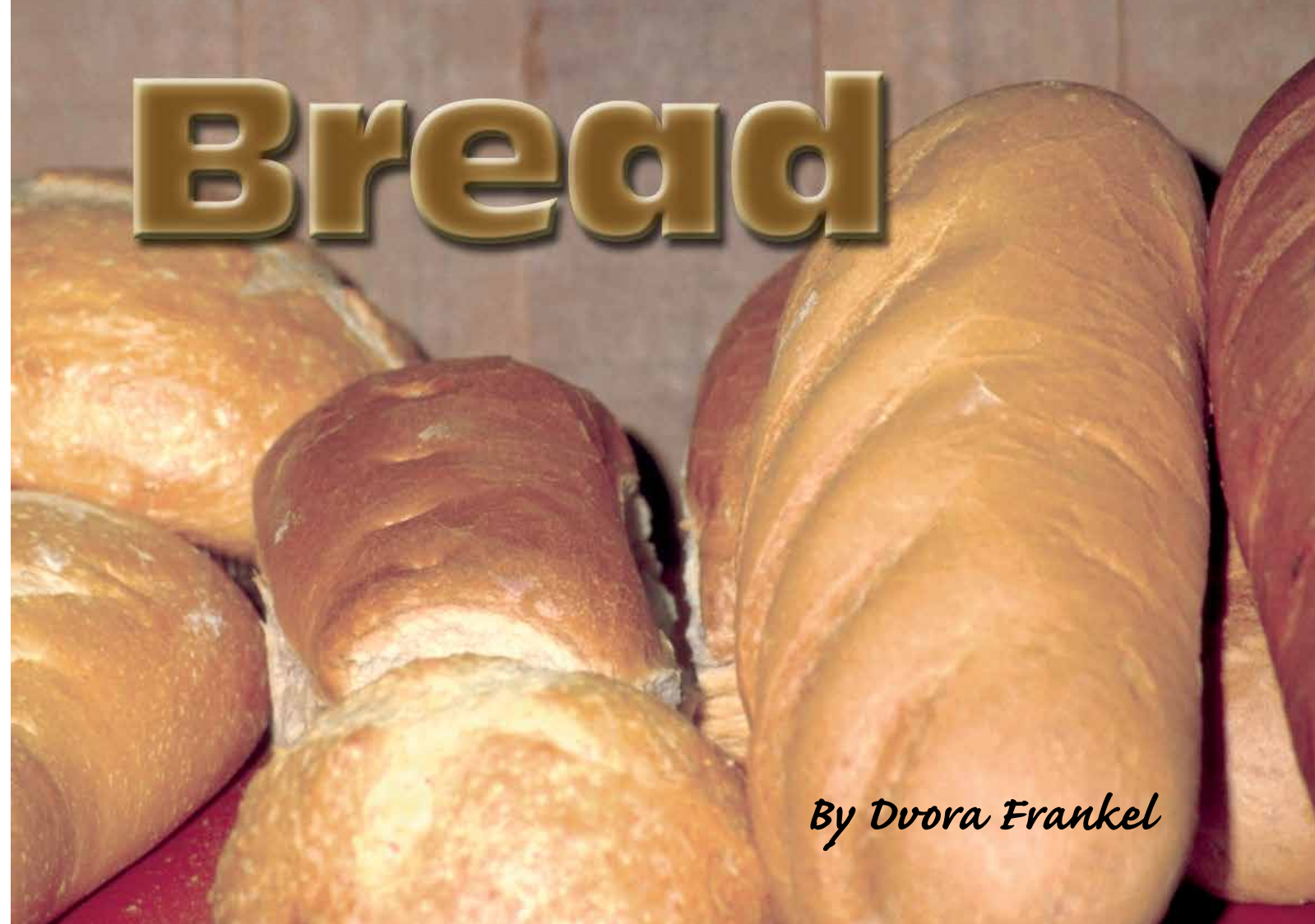
Soon after, I left. When I got home I cried and cried. That evening I began sifting flour to prepare cookies for my son.

“May Hashem help you, Shmulik,” I whispered as I mixed the batter. “May Hashem send you back to us. May you find your path in life. I still believe that day will come.”

As I was putting the cookies into the oven, it occurred to me that all my life I had been mistaken. I had always thought that my plant was silently receiving the water that I was giving it without responding, but now I knew that wasn’t the case. I had always thought that only the *Ribbono shel Olam* knew how much I loved Shmulik...and accepted him for what he was. But I was wrong. Shmulik did feel what I had been doing for him. He had known it all along.

And just as I had never given up on my son, I have faith that the *Ribbono shel Olam* won’t give up on him, either. He is waiting for him with outstretched Arms until he finds it within himself to return. □

Bread



By Dvora Frankel

After a few years in the high-tech industry, when the bottom fell out of that sector of the economy, my husband’s employer filed for bankruptcy. Overnight, our financial situation took a sharp and sudden turn for the worse. My husband found employment shortly thereafter at a *simchah* hall, but he took a severe salary cut. This has, understandably, affected our bottom line.

While we are still eating pretty well, *baruch Hashem*, many luxuries that we – or at least I – had previously taken for granted are no longer affordable. And some items that used to appear regularly on our menu are simply out of the ballpark for now. Now my husband is certainly not complaining, and I can live with it, but how do I explain to the kids that we won’t be purchasing the new “whatever” that they had their hearts set on? And do I really want to give them the impression that we can’t afford something, or should it be presented in some other manner?

My perspective shifted on Thursday afternoon a few weeks ago..

My husband called me from work. “They’re cleaning

out the walk-in freezer here. We have about two large boxes – you know, each the size of a large carton of diapers – full of various breadstuffs. They need the space, and I was told to “deep-six” it. Do you want any?”

Well, when we were kids, we were told about the starving children in India. And recent reading about the deprivations in Europe suffered by my grandparents and others like them has made me unhappy at the thought of throwing out bread. I’ll make bread crumbs, French toast, croutons, stuffing – anything, just to use that left-over bread. “Yes,” I told him. “Bring it home. If we can’t use it we’ll give it away. *Chaval* to throw out bread. Yes, I know it’s a lot. Just bring it all.”

But it was too much to bring home on the bus, his usual form of transport. Since he was getting a ride home the next day, Friday, my husband waited till then to bring it. And yes, it was a lot. Tiny dinner rolls, barely the size of a *kezayis*. Fancy breads, with cranberries and nuts; with olives; with sunflower seeds and rolled oats; whole-wheat, rye and pumpnickel; baguettes; pita. Whole loaves, sliced and unsliced. Individual slices all smashed together. One whole challah, – enormous, wedding-sized

Who has to know you had some help?

NEW!



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All Natural

With Ostreicher's Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, home-baked cookies are just an oven away. Unlike other prepared cookie doughs, Ostreicher's dough is all-natural, and cookies are pre-formed. Just pop them in the oven and enjoy freshly baked cookies in under 15 minutes!

Ostreicher's Cookie Dough. A secret well kept.

– slightly crushed at one end. Oh, my.

"I guess I looked a little overwhelmed. I told you it's a lot," my husband said.

Well, we still had almost two hours till Shabbos. I emptied my freezer and repacked it. Stuffed it would be a better description. I called three friends, each of whom lent me one shelf of freezer space. I filled a laundry basket and walked up and down my street, offering bags of bread to neighbors.

"All of it?" Raizel asked dubiously. She was looking at a shopping bag full.

"Please, take more. It will spoil if it's not eaten or frozen soon." I was feeling a little desperate. I really didn't want to have made my husband *shlepp* it all just to throw it out in our house.

Home again, I took stock of what was left. I didn't think anyone would take the smashed slices, so that went into our freezer, destined to be made into bread crumbs. (My chicken cutlets since then have tiny bits of olives and cranberries and nuts in the coating.)

Right. Now what to do with the rest? There was one hour till we'd usher in the Shabbos Queen (we make Shabbos early in the summer months) and almost two hours till regular Shabbos candle lighting. Not much time here. Then inspiration struck. My friend Estie, who lives nearby, is in charge of a *tzedakah* organization that gives out food baskets to needy families. I phoned, and her husband answered. No, Estie can't come to the phone; she's getting their sons ready to go to yeshiva for Shabbos. They'll miss their ride if she stops to talk to me.

Okay, I told him. I have some rolls and sliced bread. Can she give me a name of someone to send it to, or should we send it over to her house for them to deal with?

I heard some muffled discussion on the other end of the line. Then he got back on and gave me a name, address and instructions. "Pack it up neatly, a few rolls in each bag, so she can freeze it. Make it look nice, not like someone's old leftovers. Tell them Estie sent you. This family is really poor. *Tizku lemitzvos.*"

"Wait," I remembered to mention. "I'm not sure which *hechsher* this is. It's one of the following two, both of which we use. Is that okay for these people?"

He hesitated "Yes," he said after a moment. "They'll eat any of those *hechsherim*. They're hungry."

I heard what he said, but I can't say that it really registered. I thanked him and hung up, and I quickly began packaging the rolls as he had instructed. I made about eight packages of rolls, packed up some sliced loaves, and looked at the enormous challah. *Surely they won't want that*, I thought. *It's a little stale already, as well as being smashed at one end.* I left the challah on my kitchen table;

I'm ashamed to say that it remained there till Sunday, when we noticed that it had gotten slightly moldy, and it was thrown out.

But back to Friday afternoon: It was getting later, and later.... I still had to heat up the food for Shabbos, and dress the youngest, and set the Shabbos clock. *Surely Hashem will help me finish on time*, I half-prayed. *We should always wait for Shabbos*, my grandmother said, *not that Shabbos should wait for us.*

The bags were too large for one child to bring alone. I would never make it in time if I had to go myself. I cajoled two reluctant children into taking the heavy bags, not so far but not so near, to someone they didn't know. "I know it's almost Shabbos. That's why we have to hurry. You'll set the table, just this once, after we light the Shabbos candles. It's such a mitzvah, such a kindness. Please, go quickly." And they did. They returned as I was putting the finishing touches on things, quickly changed to Shabbos clothes, set the table.... We made it on time, *baruch Hashem*, once again.

The incident was relegated to the back of my mind; not that I forgot about it; I just didn't think about it. I made lots of bread crumbs and French toast, and my kids took fancy sandwiches in cranberry-nut bread and rolls to school for a couple of weeks.

I came home one day to find a message on my answering machine. Estie had called me. "Remember that *erev Shabbos* when you called me, and I was so busy I couldn't even come to the phone? Remember that very poor family you sent the bread to?"

I remembered. "Well, I met the mother this morning, and she said that those rolls you sent were a real gift from *Hashem*. They didn't have *lechem mishneh* that Shabbos. They used the rolls for *lechem mishneh* and ate the bread for Shabbos. She repackaged the rolls and put them in the freezer so they'll have *lechem mishneh* for a few *Shabbosos* to come, too. She is so grateful, she couldn't thank us enough. I wanted to let you know. *Kol tuv*, all the best."

For a few days I didn't call Estie back. I thought about her message and about the people who had *lechem mishneh* because we sent them some rolls that would have been thrown out. Let's take a look at this. When my kids brought the bread over to them, it was less than an hour until Shabbos. In Yerushalayim, where we are lucky enough to live, the stores close at 1 p.m. in the summer months. What would they have done had the bread not arrived? Nothing. What would they have eaten? Again, nothing. That's frightening. This is not some story from war-torn Europe. This is today, a few blocks away from my house.

I spoke to my brother, who lives in a different city in Israel. He delivers food packages every Thursday evening in his neighborhood for another *chessed* organization. "The organization really tries very hard to get quality merchan-

dise," my brother said, "but sometimes, they just can't, and it's really a bit below top quality. I've realized, too, that this food is not supplemental, as I had thought when I first began making these deliveries. For most of these families, this is it. This is all they have, until next week when I come again."

I called Estie back yesterday, to thank her for the message she had left. I also wanted to know a bit more about this family. I've been busy this week, buying schoolbooks and school supplies for the new school year. My girls also need new school uniforms; the ones from last year are too small, too stained, too torn to wear this coming year. If I'm concerned about covering these expenses, how does the mother of this family feel? What does she tell her children? I tried to get an answer from Estie, without prying.

"We have two really poor families, who truly have nothing," she explained to me. "One family has older children. We've arranged for them to receive one loaf of bread and two liters of milk every day. The mother gives each of her ten children half a cup of milk every day. Her daughter recently asked her, 'What happened, Mommy, that now we each get milk every day?' It's a big thing for them. The other family has only younger kids. When they don't have, they don't have. When there's no food in the house, which is usually the case, the mother sends the children to preschool hungry. The teacher asks if anyone wants to share their sandwich, and almost always, a classmate is willing."

Yesterday, after that conversation, I looked up the address of that family and brought over a package. A loaf of bread, some plums, an onion. Chicken wings, left over from soup made at the wedding hall. I wish we had more to give. Today I feel a lot richer than I've felt for a long time. I'd like to hold on to that feeling; we are, in truth, very well off. My own bundle of troubles and worries is lighter today, easier for me to carry with a smile.

A few years ago, I blushed to learn that my then-five-year-old was telling all her little friends (and anyone else who would listen!) that we were very rich. She was only rephrasing what I had often said, "We are very rich, *kinderlach*, because we are *semeichim bechelkeinu* – we are happy with our lot." Of course, my little one only repeated the first half of the sentence, neglecting to explain to her avid listeners that our riches are of the intangible sort. Although amusing in hindsight, this left her sounding like a braggart and the rest of us seeming wealthy monetarily and socially ill-bred.

Embarrassed, I stopped telling the kids that we're rich, but now I think that was a mistake. We are, *baruch Hashem*, very rich, just as she said. And passing that feeling on to my children, sharing that feeling with my friends, is one of the best ways to spread the wealth. □



GLIMPSES OF GREATNESS

The Inspiring Life of

Goldie Taubenfeld, Hy”d

By Devorah Levine

Although Goldie was hesitant to travel all the way to Eretz Yisrael with a five-month-old infant, she knew it was important that she attend her nephew’s wedding in Bnei Brak. “When Goldie’s sister-in-law passed away five months ago, Goldie became the surrogate mother for her fifteen orphaned nieces and nephews,” says a close family member. “She did everything for them – making sure that they had nutritious meals, speaking with the teachers at PTA meetings – all the little things and not-so-little things that are so very necessary. Obviously, she was not about to miss her nephew’s wedding.”

The Taubenfelds arrived in Israel on Sunday night and attended the wedding the following evening, returning to Yerushalayim just a few minutes before dawn. Although they were exhausted, Tuesday was 21 Av, Rav Aharon of Belz’s *yahrtzeit*, and they insisted on praying at the *tzaddik’s* grave on this auspicious day. “Five-month-old Shmuel Eliyahu would not stop crying,” says a family member. “Goldie placed him right next to the *tzaddik’s* grave, so that his tears would go

straight up to the *kisei hakavod*, a *meilitz yosher* for Klal Yisrael.”

Less than twenty-four hours later, Goldie and her son Shmuel Eliyahu were interred on Har Hamenuchos, just a few rows away from Rav Aharon’s *kever*.

• • •

Shaindel Golda Taubenfeld and her five-month-old son, Shmuel Eliyahu, were among the victims of the bloody terrorist attack that took place Tuesday evening, 22 Av, when a Number 2 bus returning from the *Kosel* was blown up by an Arab terrorist. “Although Goldie was exhausted from the wedding and her morning at Har Hamenuchos, and was still planning to attend *sheva brachos* that evening, she insisted on traveling to the *Kosel* to *daven Minchah* and *Ma’ariv*,” says a family member. “‘I’ve already been in Eretz Yisrael for over forty-eight hours,’ she told her husband, ‘and I have not yet managed to make it to the *Kosel*.’”

“But that was so typical of Goldie,” the family member continues. “She was always running, she felt that she had so

much to accomplish, so much to do. During the *shivah*, one of her children asked, “What do people do in *Gan Eden*?” He was told that they sit back and enjoy Hashem’s presence. ‘But that’s impossible,’ retorted the child. ‘My mother could never just sit back and enjoy. She always had to be doing something; that was her greatest pleasure. What are they giving her to *do* in *Gan Eden*?’”

The youngest of nine children, Shaindel Golda Taubenfeld was born forty-three years ago to Rav Mordechai and Zissel Schwartz, prominent members of the Skverer community, renowned for their *ma’asei chessed* and *hachnassas orchim*. Raised in a busy household that welcomed everyone with open arms, Goldie learned quickly to make doing for others her top priority. “When everyone else would relax, she would pick herself up to help someone,” recalls a childhood friend. But Goldie had a knack for helping others in a way that seemed so natural – so unassuming – that people often did not even realize that she was indeed going out of her way to help them.

“One afternoon, when Goldie

was at the neighborhood clinic, she noticed that the doctors and nurses were high-strung and speaking impatiently to the patients,” recalls a family member. “Goldie walked over to the secretary and quietly asked if she had eaten lunch, but the secretary found some way to evade her question. The doctors reacted in the same way. When Goldie realized that the staff had not eaten, she slipped out of the office and returned a few minutes later bearing a pot of piping hot soup. It wasn’t long before the atmosphere in the clinic underwent a drastic change.”

“She did not look for the easy *mitzvos*,” says a prominent *rav* who knew her well. She would, for example, collect dirty clothes that had been forgotten at a public facility. After washing and ironing them lovingly, she made every effort to discover their owners. Any clothes that remained were brought to the nearby *hashavas aveidah* center.

Years ago, Goldie collected old toys, clothing and household items, and after refurbishing them so they would be as good as new, sold them at cost price in a small “store” she opened in her basement.

Every few months, Keshet, an organization that collects slightly used household items to distribute to poor families, would deliver an enormous truckload of goods to the Taubenfeld’s home in New Square. “After everyone would finish *schlepping* all the stuff into the house, Goldie would insist that the driver come in and have some of her homemade *kokosh* cake and a drink before driving back to New York. “And there were always so many things, that they would be scattered everywhere” says Mrs. Mindell, a resident of Lawrence, New York, and a close family friend. “Toys, clothing, baby equipment – every room was cluttered with things to be given away. The children, of course,

were involved in helping their mother distribute the items to needy families. While I was in the house, I could hear Goldie call up the different ladies. ‘Mireleh, I have a *gevaldige* toy for your Shloimie,’ she would say to one of the women. Then, when Mireleh arrived, Goldie would run to bring her the toy that she had put aside especially for her little Shloimie.

“Every once in a while she would invite the *bachurim* who collected all these household items to come to Skver for a Shabbaton. She cooked everything herself, from the *challos* to the *gefilte* fish, showing her incredible *hakaras hatov* for what these *bachurim* had done for needy families living in the community.”

When it came to helping others, Goldie would do whatever was necessary, even if it seemed slightly bizarre. A woman suffering from a psychiatric disorder would calm down only when people came to her house and started jumping around and acting silly. Goldie was one of the few who would go there whenever necessary.

Some people would accept assistance only from Goldie. One elderly woman, for example, would not allow anyone to take her out for a walk – except Goldie Taubenfeld.

Goldie arranged for a hyperactive child to spend the afternoons at her home, so that the exhausted mother could have a few hours of rest. “Your daughter plays so nicely with the other children,” she would say whenever the mother tried to thank her, “that it’s really our pleasure to have her here with us.”

Another time Goldie overheard someone mention that a neighbor with a newborn baby was having difficulty managing her household. The next morning, the *kimpetorin* was shocked to see Goldie’s daughter standing at her door bearing a nutritious, home-cooked

meal. “My mother instructed me to come and help you with whatever you need,” said the daughter to the startled woman when she opened the door. While others clucked their tongues, Goldie quietly did what was necessary.

A Joyful Mother

Goldie loved to do for others. *Chessed* was her greatest joy, and she literally ran to help others. Once a week Goldie prepared meals for the local *bikkur cholim* society. When the van would arrive to pick up the meals, she would invariably be standing and waiting patiently outside, with a huge shopping bag packed with the food that she had lovingly prepared. She never expected the driver to knock at her door, as he did at all the other homes. “She exuded such joy when doing for others that her children couldn’t wait for their mother to start another *chedes* project,” says a family member. “But although she was constantly running to do *chedes*, it was never at the expense of her own family. They were always her first priority, and she always made sure to be there for them. At the same time, however, she did for others with such *simchah* that her children took pleasure in helping their mother help others.”

Goldie radiated *simchah*, greeting everyone she met with a bright smile. “Every time I passed Goldie’s house,” said one of the neighbors at the *shivah*, “I would silently pray that Goldie would be outside to greet me with her cheery smile.”

Actually, *simchah* personifies the entire Taubenfeld family. When Goldie’s husband, Rabbi Moshe Menachem Taubenfeld, returned home from the funeral in Eretz Yisrael, he wondered what he could possibly say to his children to offer

them encouragement at this difficult time. But the children had been trained from infancy to search for the positive. The minute his four-year-old daughter saw him, she yelled, "Tatty, we are so lucky that we still have you; that you survived."

"Shortly after Rabbi Taubenfeld returned home," recalls a family member, "he gathered all the children together and told them that since their mother had always wanted them to be happy, they must continue to be *besimchah*. He explained to them that as hard as it was, they must accept the Heavenly decree and remain a joyous, cohesive family."

On the first day of the *shivah*, the oldest son requested that the visitors remain calm and not to display their great pain, "since there are still small children at home."

Tznius

Tznius was an integral part of Goldie's personality. She did everything quietly, without being conspicuous. Her very being was simplicity and modesty. Often, at the end of a busy day filled with acts of *chessed*, Goldie would sigh and comment that she had really done nothing the entire day to help others.

When Shmuel Eliyahu, *Hy"d*, was an infant, Goldie brought him to the local clinic on the morning of *bedikas chametz*. While she waited, the doctor told another woman there that her child must be hospitalized immediately. The woman panicked. How could she possibly spend the day of *bedikas chametz* in the emergency room when there was so much work waiting for her at home?

Goldie approached the doctor and asked why the child required hospitalization. The doctor explained that the child must have

some blood tests done immediately, many of which could be done only at the hospital.

Goldie asked if at least the initial tests could be done there, in the clinic's laboratory, and the doctor agreed. The results showed that the doctor's fears were unfounded and the child was suffering only from a simple virus.

When Goldie returned home late that afternoon, she shrugged away the hours she had sacrificed helping this woman. "I could not imagine how any Jewish woman could possibly manage if she were to spend the entire day of *bedikas chametz* in the emergency room," she told her family. "*Baruch Hashem*, everything worked out and the child did not need to be hospitalized."

Goldie edited a monthly Yiddish newsletter on the importance of *tznius*, entitled *Benos Melachim*. She tried to point out that appropriate, *tzniusdik* dress is a privilege granted to true nobility. She often mourned the fact that many Jewish women did not appreciate the tremendous treasure they had been given. More than once she returned from shul upset that there were women who did not value *tznius* properly. "I would have liked to say something," she told her husband, "but I didn't want to embarrass her."

During the *shivah*, a woman told the family that she had taken upon herself an additional *hiddur* in *tznius*, *le'ilui nishmas* Goldie, "since I knew how strongly she felt that Jewish women dress appropriately," she said. "I was in the hospital with Goldie after her youngest son, Shmuel Eliyahu, *Hy"d*, was born. Goldie insisted that I share with her the delicacies that she had been given *lichvod Shabbos kodesh*. She made all kinds of excuses to convince me to eat the food that had really been prepared for her, such as that she did not want to eat *fleishigs*,

and so on. When she realized how weak I was, she actually fed me. After we left the hospital, we remained in touch, and our relationship deepened."

During the *shivah*, a *rav* from Eretz Yisrael phoned the family and said, "There are many *tzniusdik* women in our generation, but not all of them are capable of teaching the importance of *tznius*. Goldie Taubenfeld was one of those special women who are able to teach the importance of this *mitzvah* to other women."

Hospitality

Goldie was famous for her *hachnassas orchim*. The Taubenfeld home was always open to people in need, and some remained for weeks at a time. Guests felt so comfortable that they had no qualms about going into Goldie's kitchen to prepare special dishes for themselves, even during the hectic days of Pesach, when the kitchen is in constant demand.

Goldie did everything possible to make her guests feel comfortable and at home. She once hosted a mentally unbalanced woman who insisted on sealing all the doors and windows in the house with tape, so that the air in one room would not become "damaged" by the air in the next room. Goldie simply gave her guest a roll of tape to do as she saw fit – although the paint on the walls was damaged in the process.

Whenever a *meshulach* would come to the door, Goldie would offer him a nourishing meal. If the *meshulach* was not hungry, she would insist that he have something refreshing to drink before continuing on his way.

Goldie often held Shabbatons in her home for *bachurim* and others who were interested in finding out more about *Yiddishkeit*. They came to



Skver to experience a real Jewish Shabbos in a home infused with true *yiras Shamayim*. "We used to bring forty, fifty people to their house for Shabbos," says Mrs. Mindell. "But even if there wasn't a Shabbaton going on, there were always plenty of guests at Goldie's Shabbos table.

"Goldie had a policy never to say no to people who called. Even if she personally could not accommodate the guests, she made sure to find a place for them to stay in the

neighborhood. Whenever I would call and ask the kids if they could have guests for Shabbos, they would answer, 'Sure, no problem.' One time I suggested that before telling me that it was no problem, they should ask their mother. They informed me politely that their mother had instructed them to 'never say no,' so that no one would ever feel rejected.

"The house was not particularly large, and whenever we organized a

Shabbaton, some of the *bachurim* would sleep in the homes of neighborhood families. But they would all come to the Taubenfeld's home for the Friday night meal. It was the highlight of the entire Shabbos – Friday night at the Taubenfelds. At the end of the meal, Rabbi Taubenfeld and his boys, together with the *bachurim*, would start dancing. The singing would go on for hours, until it was time to leave for the *tisch*. It was amazing. Some of the boys had long ponytails while others sported tattoos and earrings. But it didn't matter; they were all received with the same grace and comradeship. Goldie and her husband wanted their children to meet different types of Jews, so they could learn the value of every single Jewish *neshamah*.

"Goldie and I developed a close relationship. She was my *rebbetzin*, my sister, a second mother. It's impossible to define our relationship, but she was definitely one of my closest friends. She never considered herself a *rebbetzin*, but the truth of the matter is that she really was. During the last seven years, my husband and I have spent Shabbos or *Yom Tov* with the Taubenfelds dozens of times. We've had the Seder there, celebrated Simchas Torah there. I have gained so much from observing the way she lived her life."

Goldie prepared everything herself for the constant stream of guests entering her home. No matter what the affair – *aufbruch*, Shabbaton, *sheva brachos* – no matter how many guests, she insisted on serving only homemade delicacies. One time someone strongly suggested that she have a certain affair catered. "Why don't you let me have the entire *mitzvah*?" she retorted, while continuing to knead the challah dough.

Goldie often personally catered

aufruffs and sheva brachos for the numerous baalei teshuvah who frequented her home. She refused any monetary reimbursement. Many of these bachurim viewed her as their surrogate mother. "I decided to observe Shabbos when I was in their house," says one of "their" bachurim. "All of my Yiddishkeit comes from what I saw there."

Ahavas Torah

Goldie valued her husband's mesirus nefesh for limud haTorah. She often told the children, "Halavai that your love of Torah will be as great as your father's love of Torah."

She viewed the hours that her husband spent studying Torah as sacred and had an ironclad rule never to disturb him while he was learning. Even during the hectic days before Pesach, if her husband was learning, she would never consider asking for his help. The children were also taught that they must never disturb their father while he was studying Torah, and they were constantly reminded that "Torah is more important than anything else."

"My wife had true ahavas haTorah," recalls Rabbi Taubenfeld. "She did everything to allow me to study undisturbed. Never did she call me away from the yeshiva." During their first year of marriage, Rabbi Taubenfeld tried to complete masseches Sukkah before the Yom Tov, and as a result, had no time to erect a proper sukkah. On erev Yom Tov, he rushed to improvise a makeshift sukkah, which collapsed during chol hamo'ed. But Goldie was not upset. "Is it a sukkah I want? I want a masseches Sukkah."

Goldie valued her children's Torah learning as well. When her sons would arrive home after a long day of learning in yeshiva, she made sure to be in the kitchen, waiting

expectantly for them with a hot meal. "When I would retire for the night," says her son Yechiel, "she would make sure that everyone was quiet so that I could sleep. She wanted me to be able to learn properly the following day."

Kibbud Av Va'eim

Goldie was the youngest child in her family, and since she lived in such close physical proximity to her parents, she was constantly popping in to see if they needed anything. "When Goldie's parents built their daughter's house adjacent to their own, we assumed that it was so that Goldie would be able to assist her parents in their old age," says a close family member. "But now we see that Hashem planned it this way so that Bubbie Schwartz would be able to help raise the children."

"Goldie was always available for her parents," recalls Mrs. Mindell. "Every time she would be on the phone and she would hear the call-waiting beep, she would excuse herself, explaining that perhaps it was her mother calling. Eventually, she purchased call-waiting ID, so that she could identify her mother's calls and answer them."

"She visited her parents every night. On Shabbos morning before shul, Goldie and her sisters would get together for 'coffee at Bubbie Schwartz's house.'"

But despite the fact that Goldie was so devoted to her parents' welfare, she never allowed the mitzvah of kibbud av va'eim to infringe on her relationship with her husband and children. "It was amazing to watch how she balanced all her activities, giving full honor to both her husband and her parents," recalls a family member. "The time she spent with her parents never conflicted with her devotion to her

husband and family. She managed to satisfy everyone completely."

HaMakom...

"Goldie's life was so full of meaning, and that very fact helps me to deal with her death," says Mrs. Mindell. "When Goldie passed away, I was, of course, devastated. But at the same time I felt that at least I had something I could hold on to: all the wonderful things that she did. After all, she left behind so much – so many acts of chessed, mitzvos, her wonderful mishpachah, everything. It was easier for me to deal with her death, because she lived such a meaningful life."

"During the shivah, a visitor asked why we conclude a shivah call with the words, 'HaMakom yenachem eschem,' that HaMakom, literally 'The Place,' will offer consolation. Why in this case do we refer to Hashem as HaMakom?"

"The visitor explained that HaMakom can also refer to the vacuum – the empty space – that is created when a person leaves this world. If that vacuum becomes filled with mitzvos and good deeds performed by the person's children or friends, then HaMakom – that filling of the vacuum – becomes the greatest consolation."

In the days following the attack, Jews throughout the world resolved to strengthen themselves in certain areas of mitzvah-observance, le'ilui neshamos hakedoshim. It is within our power to find new, creative ways to do mitzvos and acts of chessed, to assure that these vacuums be filled and to bring closer the ultimate nechama, bimeheira beyameinu.

Readers are asked to daven for the recovery of Goldie's daughter, Bas Sheva bas Shaindel Golda, who was injured in the attack. □

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Insect-Free Foods

By Debbie Shapiro

Thirty-two years ago, when I first moved to Eretz Yisrael, I almost fainted the first time I found several worms floating in a can of olives. Although the can sported *mehadrin* supervision, printed under the *hechsher* was a warning stating that the supervision was only on the ingredients and did not include checking for insect infestation. Thirty-two years ago, that was considered the consumer's responsibility.

Things have changed a great deal since then. Ten years ago, the Orthodox Council of Jerusalem, commonly known as the Eidah Hachareidis, established a special department to deal solely with this problem. As much as is humanly possible, the Eidah Hachareidis tries to assure that all produce bearing its *hechsher* is free of insect infestation. Rabbi Shmuel Sternfeld, considered a world-class "expert on food infestation and consultant for insect-free food production," is the moving force behind this transformation.

How did a chassidic *yungerman* become an expert in the field of entomology?

"It all began about twelve years ago, when the Eidah's Kashrus Board asked me to take charge of supervising the catering establishments," Rabbi Sternfeld began. "Up

until that time, most of the 'heimishe' caterers in Yerushalayim operated without any form of kashrus supervision. People simply relied on the caterer's good name. All that changed, however, when someone discovered that one of these 'reliable' caterers was serving meat without Eidah supervision, despite the fact that he claimed to use only products bearing our *hechsher*."

But aside from making sure that the caterers used ingredients that met with the Eidah's standards, Rabbi Sternfeld also had to ensure that the food was prepared according to halacha. And that, of course, included making sure that the ingredients were checked properly for insect infestation.

"I asked each of the caterers to show me how he checks rice for bugs. Each one of them explained that they checked the rice in exactly the same way that it is done at home – by placing the rice on a clean surface and slowly looking through the grains.

"I decided to take some of the already checked rice home and look through it myself. Examining each grain individually, I discovered all sorts of interesting creatures crawling about – some on the grains of rice and some in the white powder between the grains.

"I was flabbergasted. I discussed the problem with Rabbi Avraham Roth, *zt"l*, who at that time headed the Kashrus Board, and asked him to allocate funds for a special magnifying glass to get a closer look at the food I was supervising. That simple magnifying glass was actually the first piece of equipment of what is today a sophisticated entomological laboratory."

Rabbi Sternfeld eventually came across one particular establishment that, before checking the rice by hand, sifted it with a wire strainer. "The rice remained inside the strainer, while the *pesoles* – everything else – fell onto a clean white sheet of plastic. Any signs of infestation were immediately visible in the waste material. I realized that this must be the ideal way to check rice and other grains."¹

Actually, this method was recommended by Harav Alexander-Ziskind of Harodna over two hundred years ago, in 1782. Harav Alexander-Ziskind, a contemporary of the Vilna Gaon and a disciple of Harav Aryeh Leib Epstein of Koenigsberg, the Baal Hapardes, authored the renowned *sefer Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avoda*. On page 181 of that *sefer* he states, "A person must also be very careful about grains and legumes, checking them with a strainer before cooking. In other words, one should shake them in the strainer so that the waste will fall out of the strainer onto the table or sheet of paper, and then it (the waste) should be checked. He will most certainly discover a sign of any infestation."²

A Serious Problem

"Although everyone is aware that insects are not kosher," continued Rabbi Sternfeld, "not everyone realizes the serious problem they pose in kashrus production. There are over one million different types of infestation, and for that reason it is extremely difficult to be one-hundred-percent positive that produce is insect-free. When the Kashrus Board checks that the raw materials used in producing a chocolate bar, for example, do not contain animal fats, then once that has been established, it is certified and will not change spontaneously. Although it has to be rechecked periodically, it will remain the same unless someone does something actively to change the ingredients.

"But insect infestation is another story. We can certify that a particular factory is insect-free, and then, for example, a worker can decide that he must have some fresh air, and he opens one of the windows. If an insect hap-

¹ Problems with infestation vary in different countries. It is important to consult with a Rav about how to check for insects in the area where you live.

² It should be noted that this was written when conditions were much different from what they are today.

pens to enter the factory while the window is open and then lays its eggs on the raw ingredients, the entire production line might end up becoming infested. In addition, although the plant itself might be totally free of contamination, infestation can develop in the factory's warehouse or even on the shelves in the local grocery store.

"As a result of innumerable such potential pitfalls, the Kashrus Board must remain vigilant and must constantly check and recheck the produce under its supervision. It is also extremely important for the consumer to keep an eye out for signs of infestation and inform their kashrus organization if they see anything suspicious."

Not every black dot is a sign of infestation, and therefore it's crucial that the consumer to learn to differentiate between a piece of dirt and an insect.'

To the untrained eye, many types of insects appear to be nothing more than just a tiny line or dot, often camouflaged within the actual food. But according to the halacha, if it is visible to the naked eye, we are not permitted to eat it. "At the same time," explained Rabbi Sternfeld, "it is important to point out that not every black dot is a sign of infestation, and therefore it's crucial that the consumer learn to differentiate between a piece of dirt and an insect."

The Laboratory

Rabbi Sternfeld's sophisticated entomological laboratory is probably one of the best places for the consumer, as well as kashrus supervisors, food manufacturers and caterers, to learn how to make that distinction.

The moment I stepped foot in the laboratory, I was struck by the sheer volume of equipment crowded into every corner. Prominently placed on the Rabbi's desk, for example, is a state-of-the-art computer attached to an unusually large microscope. Rabbi Sternfeld turned on the computer and showed me several greatly enlarged pictures of various insects that he had discovered in contaminated food. "Any microscope slide can be viewed on the computer and then saved for future reference, an invaluable tool for instructing the kashrus supervisors how to check for signs of infestation. A picture is worth a thousand words, and when a kashrus supervisor-in-



training sees that those seemingly innocent black dots are, for example, living creatures with several pairs of legs, they will take their work much more seriously.”

Rabbi Sternfeld has an entire collection of slides and presentation pictures that he uses for instructing kashrus supervisors. But pictures alone are not sufficient. The laboratory also contains dozens of preserved specimens. “This particular type of beetle likes to hide inside chickpeas,” Rabbi Sternfeld explained, showing me a tiny bottle containing several black insects. Near the preserved insects, I noticed a container of soup mix. “See all those tiny channels in the powder?” asked Rabbi Sternfeld. “That’s a sure sign that the soup mix is infested.” Taking down a container of obviously infested macaroni from the top shelf, he continued, “These samples demonstrate exactly what the kashrus supervisors should be looking for.”

But kashrus supervisors are not the only ones to take advantage of this wealth of information. Food manufacturers routinely consult with Rabbi Sternfeld to learn different methods to protect their factories from infestation. A major manufacturer in the process of developing a new product, for example, recently met at length with the Rabbi, and consequently, several major changes were made in the original factory plans.

When meeting with a factory manager, Rabbi Sternfeld points out things to take into account to assure that the factory will remain clean and properly sealed from outside contamination. He also suggests better ways to store both the ingredients and the finished product. Some of these suggestions include making sure that the shelves have holes in them to allow for proper air cir-

ulation and that no food items are stored next to the walls.

“Aside from the fact that manufacturers are interested in having our *hechsher*, they definitely do not want problems with infestation in their factories and therefore are eager to accept my advice. Also, once the manufacturer has a basic understanding of how infestation develops, which is where the slides and samples come in, it is easier for them to see for themselves what areas might become problematic.”

In fact, Rabbi Sternfeld is so highly respected among professionals that agronomists routinely consult with him.

The microscope on Rabbi Sternfeld’s desk, however, serves yet another purpose. Using the microscope to examine the produce, he is able to recognize the exact type of infestation, making it is easier for him to determine at what stage the food became contaminated. In order to do that properly, Rabbi Sternfeld makes sure to keep abreast of the latest entomological research. Next to his desk are several bookshelves containing a small entomological library, and he attends almost every lecture and conference in the field. He even participates in the annual symposiums of the Israeli Exterminator Society and has gleaned valuable information there. Although at first entomologists were skeptical of the rabbi sitting in their midst, that skepticism soon turned into deep respect. Today, they accept Rabbi Sternfeld as a colleague in the field and look forward to his presence at their conferences. “It’s of the utmost importance that I have a thorough knowledge of the subject,” explains Rabbi Sternfeld. “The more we understand exactly what type of infestation we’re talking about, the easier it is to get to the root of the problem, and once we’ve gotten to the root of the problem, we can start looking for a solution.”

A Detective at Work

Discovering the source of infestation can require quite a bit of detective work. “The onion chips used as an ingredient for producing soup mixes were infested with tiny black beetles. Since this type of infestation does not develop in fresh onions, we realized that the problem must be in the way the onion chips were being stored after they were dried.”

Rabbi Sternfeld, together with several other kashrus supervisors, made a thorough examination of the warehouses in Eretz Yisrael. Everything seemed to be in perfect order, so they set their sights on the factory and warehouses in Egypt.

Rabbi Sternfeld showed me a picture of himself bend-

ing down to check the dust in the recesses of a wall in an Egyptian factory. “This particular factory was actually very clean,” he explained, “but it is inevitable that in mass production some dust will find its way to the corners.”

And that is exactly the problem.

Infestation can develop anywhere – on top of the fluorescent lights, on the windowsills, on wall panels, in any quiet corner. Therefore, when Rabbi Sternfeld checks a factory, he does much more than just ask questions. “When I asked the Egyptian manager for a ladder, his mouth dropped open in shock. He tried to evade my request, but I continued to insist. Touring the factory and warehouses, I used the ladder to check those areas that might be problematic. In one of the warehouses I discovered several beetles on top of the windowsill and showed them to the manager. But he did not take my complaint seriously. Instead, he just popped the insects into his mouth and said they were delicious!

“I pretended to be extremely angry and upset, and made a point of storming out of the warehouse. The manager tried everything possible to appease me, including, of course, assuring me that the problematic warehouse would be cleaned until it was spotless.”

As part of his work, Rabbi Sternfeld often has to travel to Arab countries. “During the *shemitta* year, the Eidah supervised lettuce grown in special Jordanian hothouses,” began Rabbi Sternfeld. “As part of my job, I had to travel into Jordan to make sure that these hothouses were properly sealed against insect infiltration. We were taken through the Jordanian countryside in a car with darkened windows, so that no one could see that we were Jewish. But once we arrived in the securely guarded area where the lettuce was grown, we felt completely secure.”

Besides the computerized microscope, the Kashrus Board’s laboratory contains several additional microscopes and magnifying glasses. There is also an assortment of different-sized filters. I asked Rabbi Sternfeld to explain how the filters are used. In one corner of the room there was a large bowl of dried vegetable mix soaking in water. “One of the kashrus supervisors asked me to check if these vegetables are free of infestation. A routine request,” said Rabbi Sternfeld. “Once I’ve finished soaking the dried vegetables for several hours, I’ll place them in a strainer, so the vegetables will remain on top while the water and dirt will fall through. Then I will separate the waste matter by putting the dirty water through a very fine filter. Once that’s done, I’ll examine whatever debris remains on the filter by placing the filter on a special illuminated table. Any signs of infestation will be immediately recognizable.”

Several different types of insect traps were lined



across one of the laboratory walls. Each trap is used for a different variety of insect. “These traps are placed in the food manufacturing plants as a type of quality control. The traps contain material with a strong scent to attract insects – each type of trap attracts a different variety. The traps are checked periodically, so that if there is a problem, we can know immediately what type of insect is causing the problem, as well as the severity of the problem.”

Mushrooms

There has been a lot of talk recently about worms in mushrooms, and almost every reliable kashrus organization has removed its supervision from mushrooms produced in China. But it was Rabbi Sternfeld who originally realized that these mushrooms posed a kashrus problem.

“First of all, not all mushrooms are problematic. Until 1998, all mushrooms with Eidah supervision were grown in Holland, and these posed no problem.

“When we first authorized Chinese-grown mushrooms,” continued Rabbi Sternfeld, “we sent our kashrus supervisors to China to check for signs of infestation. Since we knew that Chinese-grown mushrooms could be more problematic, we instructed the kashrus supervisors to take sample mushrooms, cut them into sections and examine them carefully. But although the *Shulchan Aruch*

specifically mentions that mushrooms have to be checked carefully for signs of infestation, no one really knew exactly how they should be examined. We simply had no practical experience." Rabbi Sternfeld pulled out a large folder. "As you can see, all of the kashrus supervisors' reports came back stating that they had checked samples of the produce but found no signs of infestation."

Mushrooms are grown on compost that first undergoes a sterilization process to prevent insect growth. But the compost in China was not properly sterilized, and so it attracted flies that found the compost a perfect place to lay their eggs. The eggs eventually developed into maggots, which wormed their way into the mushroom, generally underneath the cap.

But if none of the supervisors noticed these maggots, how were they discovered?

In the process of making a routine examination of the canned mushrooms, Rabbi Sternfeld noticed tiny, thread-like lines underneath the cap. "I assumed that these lines were part of mushroom, but just to be on the safe side I decided to take a closer look. With the assistance of my magnifying glass, I discovered that these lines were actually tiny dead maggots. They were so small that as many as nine maggots could be contained in a half centimeter of mushroom. But although they were minuscule, they were still large enough to be seen by the naked eye and were therefore forbidden.

"At first I thought that this problem occurred in only a small percentage of the canned mushrooms. But I continued to check can after can, and now that I knew what to look for, I discovered signs of infestation in almost every single one. The Kashrus Board immediately publicized the problem and apologized for the fact that they had given their *hechsher* on a contaminated product. Within a short period of time, almost all the other kashrus organizations removed their supervision from Chinese-grown mushrooms."

One factory in China argued that their mushrooms were not contaminated, since they were grown using different technology. Rabbi Sternfeld flew to China to check it out himself. "The mushrooms were growing in what had once been an enormous underground army aircraft hangar; over one kilometer in length and twenty meters in width. But although there was a higher standard of cleanliness there, the mushrooms were still not up to our standards, and we refused to give them our *hechsher*."

Fish

The *Shulchan Aruch* talks about the different types of worms found in fish and forbids those that do not

originate within the fish. Nearly two hundred years ago, Rabbi Avraham Danzig elaborated on the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* and wrote: "Infestation found in the fish's brain, liver or intestines are forbidden, because they do not originate in the fish.... Infestation on the skin is also forbidden.... In some regions these parasites enter the area of the fish's fins and mouth. These parasites are round, like lentils, and are not easily recognizable. They have black eyes, which look like two tiny dots next to each other. Once they are recognized it is easy to remove them with a knife. In Prague, where everyone knows how to identify them, they are called fish lice.... Therefore, it is important to scrape the tail, the fins and the area near them, as well as to check behind the gills and inside the mouth..." (*Chochmas Adam* 38:28).

Most people are aware that nonkosher parasites are often found in carp. But it is important to realize that there are parasites in other varieties of fish also. Salmon, for example, is often infested with worms that burrow into the skin. These worms can be easily removed, however, by carefully scraping the salmon's skin with a knife before cooking.

Keeping Informed

Since new problems are constantly being discovered, while at the same time different solutions are found, it is important to keep up to date with the latest kashrus alerts and remain in close contact with a reliable kashrus organization. In Israel, for example, it is possible to buy carp grown in ponds that are treated to prevent parasite infestation. And specially grown, insect-free vegetables are now available in most countries.

Actually, after speaking with Rabbi Sternfeld I realized that, although insect infestation does pose a serious problem, once we are aware of what we looking for and know how to go about looking for it, the problem becomes manageable. It is possible to assure – as much as is humanly possible – that the food we serve is really insect-free.

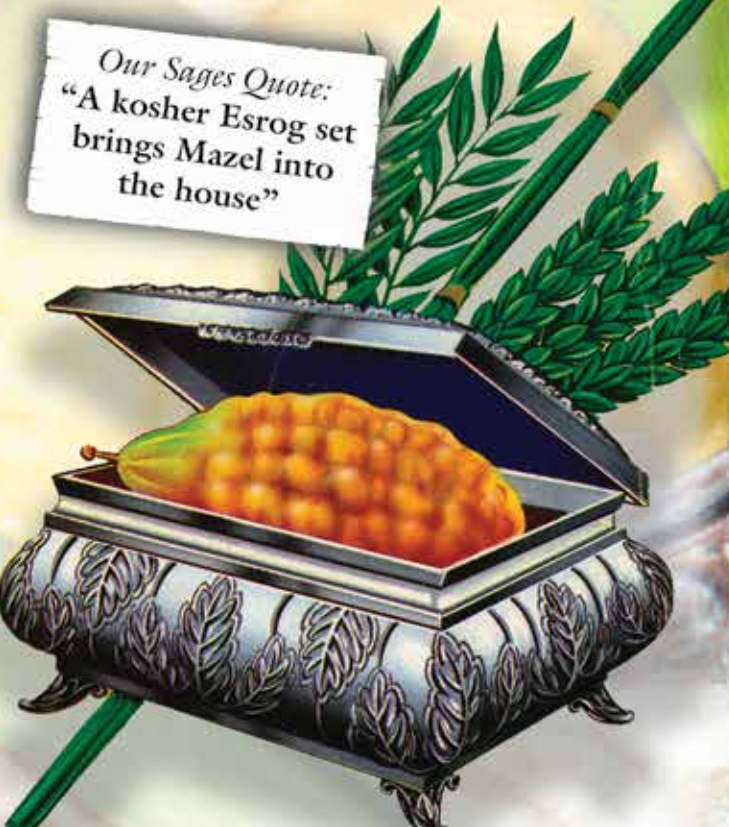
Perhaps the *Chochmas Adam* offers the most important piece of advice: "It is proper for a person to look at what he eats [especially if he knows how to look], and by doing so he can be saved [from consuming] many insects. And I can attest that by doing so I have been saved [from consuming insects], thank G-d."

"When a person wants to purify himself, he will receive assistance from Above." (*Yoma* 38b) May we be privileged to receive such Divine assistance. □

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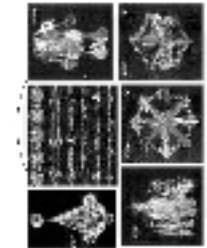
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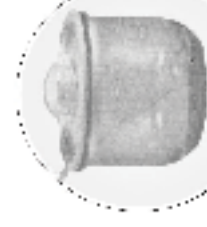
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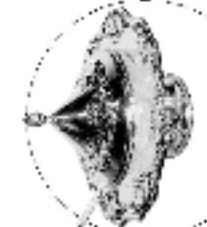
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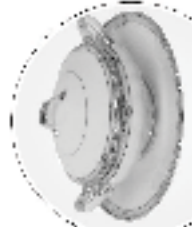
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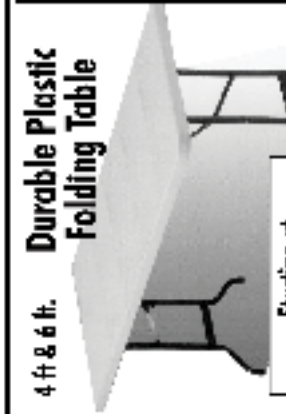
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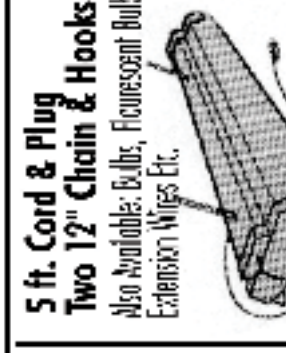
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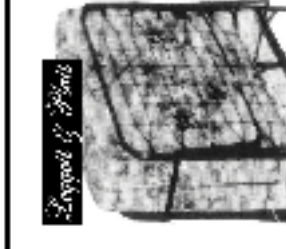
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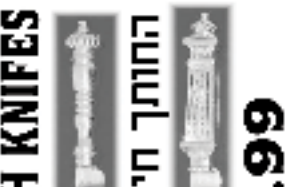
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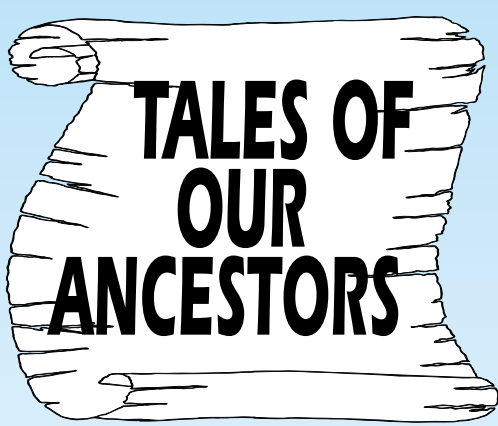


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THE RICH PAUPER

by Avraham Hoffenberg

The moon shone down icily and the night was silent. But in the home of Rav Shlomo of Karlin, everything was in tumult. Wagons came and wagons went. Streams of weary travelers climbed the front steps and the dining room looked like a railway station. Dozens of people waited for the Rebbe's help and advice.

But tonight many of them left empty-handed. Times were hard. The Rebbe had recently distributed thousands of rubles to the destitute and to cover his debts, tonight his gabbaim were allowing in only well-heeled Jews who could pay their way with a hefty donation.

The gabbaim carefully concealed every kopeck they received to prevent Rav Shlomo from distributing everything again within moments.

"But you simply have to let me in!" a poor man cried out to the gabbaim. "Do you want my daughter to remain a spinster forever?"

"You'll have to come back another time," they retorted.

But the man would not give up. Until midnight he sat in the waiting room, his eyes glued to the Rebbe's door. The crowd gradually thinned out; finally even the gabbaim went home. Timidly, the Jew approached

the Rebbe's door and gave it a little push. The door creaked open and there by his table sat the Rebbe, deeply immersed in his thoughts.

Worry and despair propelled the Jew onward.

"Rebbe!" he cried out. "Please save me! My daughter is to be married soon and I promised a huge dowry. But now I've lost everything I own! Her engagement is about to be broken off! Please help me. I can't return home without a kopeck!"

With tears in his eyes, the Rebbe rose from his place and searched for the money he knew the gabbaim had secreted away somewhere in his house. But he sought in vain. For a few long minutes the Rebbe stood deep in thought. Then his eyes lit up.

"Come with me," he told the poor man, "and I will show you the Ribbono shel Olam's power."

The two men set out into the quiet night. They passed sleeping houses with shutters firmly shut. They passed through empty streets and echoing alleys. At the very edge of the town they reached the fields, and still the Rebbe walked on. Where was he going?

The Rebbe and his companion arrived at a group of factory buildings. Watchmen shouted hoarsely at the two men; guard dogs howled and dragged at their chains. Did Rav Shlomo want to be torn to pieces?



Ignoring everything, he signaled to his companion to keep walking.

Beyond the buildings nestled the luxurious villa of the gevir who owned the factory. Rav Shlomo walked right up the steps and pounded at the door. A servant opened the door; behind him, the master of the house appeared in his night robe, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He was one of the Rebbe's close chassidim.

"What are you doing here at one in the morning?" he asked the Rebbe. "Oh! No doubt you have come for a donation for this poor man who is with you. Ask whatever you want, and I will gladly give it."

"No!" said Rav Shlomo. "I have come here not to ask for charity but to reveal to you a deep secret. Listen carefully."

The three men sat down at the gevir's ornate table and Rav Shlomo began his story.

"After the Maggid of Mezritch passed away," he said, "he appeared to me in a dream and begged me to become leader in his place, but I refused. Then other tzaddikim came along to persuade me – the Baal Shem Tov and even the holy Avos. I still refused. But when Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself, kaviyachol, also insisted that I replace the Maggid of Mezritch, I could no longer refuse, and I become a chassidic leader.

"At that time I was granted a powerful spiritual gift – the ability to see what is happening in every land and in every place – and thus bring salvation to Klal Yisrael.

"But," continued Rav Shlomo, "this wonderful gift of knowing every mystery eventually became unbearable. I'll give you one example.

"I was once invited by a gevir to his son's bar mitzvah. Of course, he also invited the poor people of his town to the celebration. Among them was a poor woman and her ragged son.

"At the start of the meal a huge challah was brought out for hamotzi. It was carefully placed next to me at the head table. There was absolute silence. Everyone was waiting for me to say the brachah. But before I could move a finger, the poor woman's son leaped from his seat, raced up to me and grabbed the challah off the table. He began to tear huge chunks off it and stuff them into his mouth. The gevir jumped from his place and managed to rescue what was left of the challah, and the seudah began.

"Along came the fish course. Waiters staggered in under the weight of a huge silver tray loaded with sliced fish and placed the tray right next to me. Everyone waited for me to be honored with the first



portion. But once again, the poor boy leaped from his seat. He began stuffing his mouth with fish as fast as he could grab it off the tray in front of me.

"The gevir could contain himself no longer. Rising from his place, he lifted his hand to give the boy a ringing slap. I swiftly leaped up and seized the gevir's hand.

"'You don't understand what's going on,' I told him. 'Ask the boy's mother if he has ever done this sort of thing before.'

"With tears in her eyes, the woman insisted that never before had her son exhibited such strange behavior.

"The gevir never found out the truth behind that boy's behavior," said Rav Shlomo, "because I never revealed it to him. But with my spiritual capabilities, I saw that the poor boy possessed the soul of the gevir's father, who had passed away about seven years earlier. When he jumped up to grab the first portion of challah and fish, he was only taking what was his rightful due. In fact, I had saved the gevir from striking his own father.

"After this painful episode, I begged Hashem to remove my special powers. It was simply too painful for me to see what lies behind the world's tragedies.

"But sometimes," Rav Shlomo told the gevir, "my old powers return. I have come here tonight to reveal to you a secret known to no one but myself."

The gevir leaned forward and fastened his eyes on

Rav Shlomo's face, paying careful attention to every word. What did the Rebbe know of his private affairs?

"You recently went to a trade fair and met a total stranger," Rav Shlomo told him. "In the hustle and bustle, you forgot to even ask him his name, but the two of you struck some wonderful deals together. You and the stranger agreed to share your profits before parting.

"Both of you boarded a ship to return home. In mid-voyage a violent storm arose at sea. The waves tossed the ship up and down like a child's toy. One moment the ship was racing heavenward, the next moment it was smashing back down. Then a desperate cry split the pitch-black night: 'The ship has split

open! The seas are pouring in! It's every man for himself now!'

"Everyone jumped overboard. You swam for your life and made it ashore with your bag of money, but your partner drowned.

"You had no way of tracing his family. Your Rav ruled that his share of the money would have to be left until Eliyahu Hanavi comes and reveals the world's hidden secrets. Of course, you feel terrible that somewhere a family may be waiting for their father who will never return. For all you know they may be miserably poor, yet here you sit with their desperately needed money.

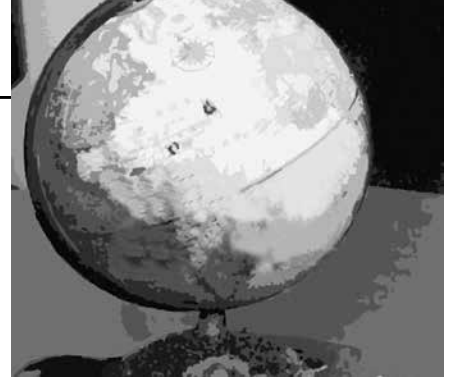
"But now I will reveal my secret," concluded Rav Shlomo at last. "Tonight this poor Jew you see sitting beside me came to me, brokenhearted because he cannot raise his daughter's dowry. As I was wondering how to help him, my spiritual vision was momentarily restored and I saw that he was none other than your dead partner's son."

Rav Shlomo broke off his tale and sat back, waiting for the gevir's response. What was there to say? Rising up, he went to his safe and took out a wad of bank notes hidden in its darkest recesses – the wad of bank notes that had been waiting for Eliyahu Hanavi. With tears in his eyes, he handed it over to the poor man.

Through Rav Shlomo's vision, the rich pauper recovered his father's wealth and married off his daughter with pomp and dignity. □



OUR NATION'S HISTORY



NAPOLEON'S CAMPAIGN IN ERETZ YISROEL

Part II

From *A Nation That Dwells Alone*
by Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz*

In order to reinforce the Turks defending Akko, the Ottoman command sent a Jewish battalion from Syria. Leading these troops was the famous Jewish philanthropist and advocate, Reb Chaim Farhi of Damascus, treasurer of the Syrian Pasha.

When Napoleon saw that he was unable to capture the fortress of Akko, he sent special messengers to Chaim Farhi to persuade him to defect to the French side. But Reb Chaim remained loyal to the Turks and refused all of Napoleon's overtures.

When the messengers returned to Napoleon empty-handed, Napoleon decided to approach Reb Chaim and the rest of the Jews with a revolutionary idea. He hoped to capture the heart of the Jewish commander and the hearts of all Jews living in Eretz Yisrael, Syria and other Asian and African countries. On Shabbos, the first day of Pesach 5559/1799, Napoleon made a special announcement inviting the Jews to join his troops in liberating Palestine from its foreign captors. Addressing the Jews as the "rightful heirs of Palestine," Napoleon promised to

**A Nation That Dwells Alone*, by Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz, published by Mayim Chayim Institute, Bnei Brak. This excerpt has been translated especially for Inspiration magazine, with the kind permission of the author.

return them to their land. In order to attract them, he announced that his chief headquarters was stationed in Yerushalayim.

This invitation appeared a month later, on the seventeenth of Iyar, in the national French newspaper, the "Moniteur," and in the "Prussische Zeitung" in Berlin: General Headquarters, Jerusalem (April 20th, 1799) in the seventh year of the French Republic

FROM BONAPARTE, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN ARMIES IN AFRICA AND ASIA, TO THE RIGHTFUL HEIRS OF PALESTINE:

People of Israel! You unique nation, which have been deprived of your ancestral land for thousands of years due to the lust of conquest and tyranny of others, and despite this have retained its name and existence as a distinct nation!

Anyone observing the destinies of nations with clarity and impartiality need not be endowed with the gifts of prophecy, like Isaiah and Joel, to realize the truth of what these prophets, with their beauti-



Tverya (Tiberius)

ful and uplifting faith, foretold, even as they witnessed the impending destruction of their kingdom and fatherland: "And the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with song, with everlasting gladness on their heads. They shall attain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee" (Isaiah 35:10).

Arise then with gladness, sons of exile! A war unparalleled in the annals of history, waged in self-defense by a nation [France] whose hereditary lands were regarded by its enemies [European countries who opposed the French revolution] as plunder to be divided...this nation [France] has now risen to avenge its own shame and that of other nations, which have been long subject to persecution and slavery, particularly the nearly two-thousand-year-old ignominy imposed upon you [the Jews].

And while time and circumstances seem most unfavorable to renew your rights, or even to mention them, to the extent that it would even seem necessary to relinquish them completely – here you are being offered, at this very time and contrary to all expectations, Israel's birthright!

The young [French] army, which operates with justice and is crowned with victory, which Providence has sent me with, has maintained its headquarters in Jerusalem. Within the coming days,

it will transfer them to Damascus and will prove a non-threatening neighbor to David's city. [Napoleon's intent was that once Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim were given to the Jews, the French would vacate the area].

Rightful heirs of Palestine!

The great nation [France], which does not deal in slaves and expanding Empires, unlike those that sold your ancestors indiscriminately among all peoples...hereby calls upon you not to conquer your fatherland but to win back for yourselves that which was wrested unjustly from you, so that you shall remain in it with the guarantee and support of this nation [France]...

Arise! Show that the formerly overwhelming might of your oppressors has served only to fortify the courage of the descendants of those oppressed heroes and that your comradely brotherhood is still your glory and honor.

Arise! Show that the formerly overwhelming might of your oppressors has served only to fortify the courage of the descendants of those oppressed heroes and that your comradely brotherhood is still your glory and honor.

Hasten! Now is the opportunity, which may not return for thousands of years, to claim the restoration of your civil rights among the nations of the

world, after they have been shamefully withheld from you for thousands of years: your political existence as a nation among the nations and the unlimited natural right to worship G-d in accordance with your faith in public for all generations.

This official document was accompanied by another, signed by an Aharon ben Levi, Rav in Yerushalayim. This was also supposedly written in Yerushalayim in Nissan 5559. The Rav's letter was similar in content to Napoleon's, except that the writer added a plea to his Jewish brethren everywhere to answer Napoleon's call and not forfeit the opportunity to see the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, with the return of the Jewish nation to its land.

The letter begins: "I, Aharon ben Levi, of the tribe of Levi, with the grace of Hashem...after countless generations, have merited to serve as Chief Rabbi and kohen in this holy city..."

It would seem that Napoleon appointed the writer to serve as Chief Rabbi and kohen in Jerusalem after the French would capture the city and restore it to the Jews.

The writer was probably a Jewish soldier or advisor in Napoleon's army who penned the letter at Napoleon's command in the rather preposterous hope that it would increase the Jews' enthusiasm and their faith in Napoleon's proclamation.

• • •

All this propaganda, though, did not accomplish what Napoleon had hoped. In fact, not one Jew in the Turkish Empire arose to rebel or to defect to the French side.

On 15 Iyar, 5559, approximately a month after these letters were publicized, Napoleon, despairing of the possibility of any results, pulled his army back from Akko and turned southward once more. On 23 Iyar the French army returned to Yaffo, blew up its fortresses and destroyed the city completely. Napoleon then abandoned Eretz Yisrael and continued his retreat toward Egypt.

The only effect Napoleon's letters had upon the Jews was to fan the burning hatred of the Muslims living in Eretz Yisrael and that of the rulers of the Ottoman empire against the innocent Jews.

In Yerushalayim, the Muslims' persecution of the Jews reached unbearable extremes. The fact that the Jews had volunteered to fortify the city against the anticipated French assault was forgotten. And there was no more mention of the Jews' prayer gathering at the Western Wall that had surely caused Napoleon to veer away from the holy city. Eventually, the Jews of Yerushalayim, in fear for their lives at the hands of their Muslim neighbors, felt they had no choice but to agree to pay a huge ransom to save the lives of each man, woman and child.

The war and the accompanying closing of the ports to

foreign ships had brought famine conditions to Eretz Yisrael. In Yerushalayim, many families were reduced to the point that they barely had bread to eat. They realized that they could not possibly attain the large sum demanded by the Muslims without enlisting help from their brothers overseas.

In Tammuz of that year, one of Yerushalayim's most venerated Rabbanim, the Gaon Harav Rafael Avraham Lev-Aryeh, set out to Western Europe to solicit contributions from the Jews there. He carried with him a letter from the *rabbanim* of Yerushalayim, which read as follows:

"These words come to you accompanied by our tears. Multiple troubles have befallen us...especially this year on account of the war.... We are surrounded by troubles wrought by the wickedness of the non-Jews who live in the Land; they have slandered us, saying that in the [French] army there are twelve thousand Jewish soldiers....This has caused us great anguish since Tammuz of 5558 [when Napoleon, while still in Egypt, ordered his army to treat the local Jews and their rabbis fairly] until today. For an entire year, every day they arise to destroy us...because the [French] army approached Yerushalayim, advanced until Azza, and from there to Akko.

"No words can express the evils that have befallen us.... We have become impoverished and, therefore, we are asking for money to redeem the lives of the Jewish community...and also that the Torah scrolls should not *chalila* be desecrated.... We have already sold all the holy silver [the ritual articles made of silver] from the communities and not even one silver article is left.... We have also imposed taxes on all residents of Yerushalayim, young and old, even the Torah scholars, who are exempt according to halacha and who were forced to sell their



Akko (Acre)

clothing to save their lives. Now they beat our bare backs and hold the sword to our necks.

"All our pockets are empty, the debts have increased...and from the day that Yerushalayim was established we were never subjected to such a barrage of tribulations. The armies have caused tremendous inflation, and so, due to our many sins, some of our most respected citizens are stretching out their hands for charity, people who once used to distribute *tzedaka* to others...."

"...We beseech you...to have mercy on us and give us also funds collected for redeeming captives [the charity funds that communities in Western European had set aside for the mitzvah of *pidyon shevuyim*], for if we don't pay, G-d forbid...we are destined for certain death...."

This letter, which was brought to Italy, was signed by Harav Yom Tov Algazi, the Rishon Letzion, Harav Moshe Mordechai Meyuchas and other Rabbanim of Yerushalayim.

In a private letter that was also dispatched to Italy, the Rishon Letzion wrote:

"...The words of our troubles has been the arrival of the French army around Yerushalayim. The wicked non-Jews who rule here have arisen to destroy us with libelous accusations that Napoleon had with him ten thousand Jews. They almost swallowed us up alive with



Tverya (Tiberius)

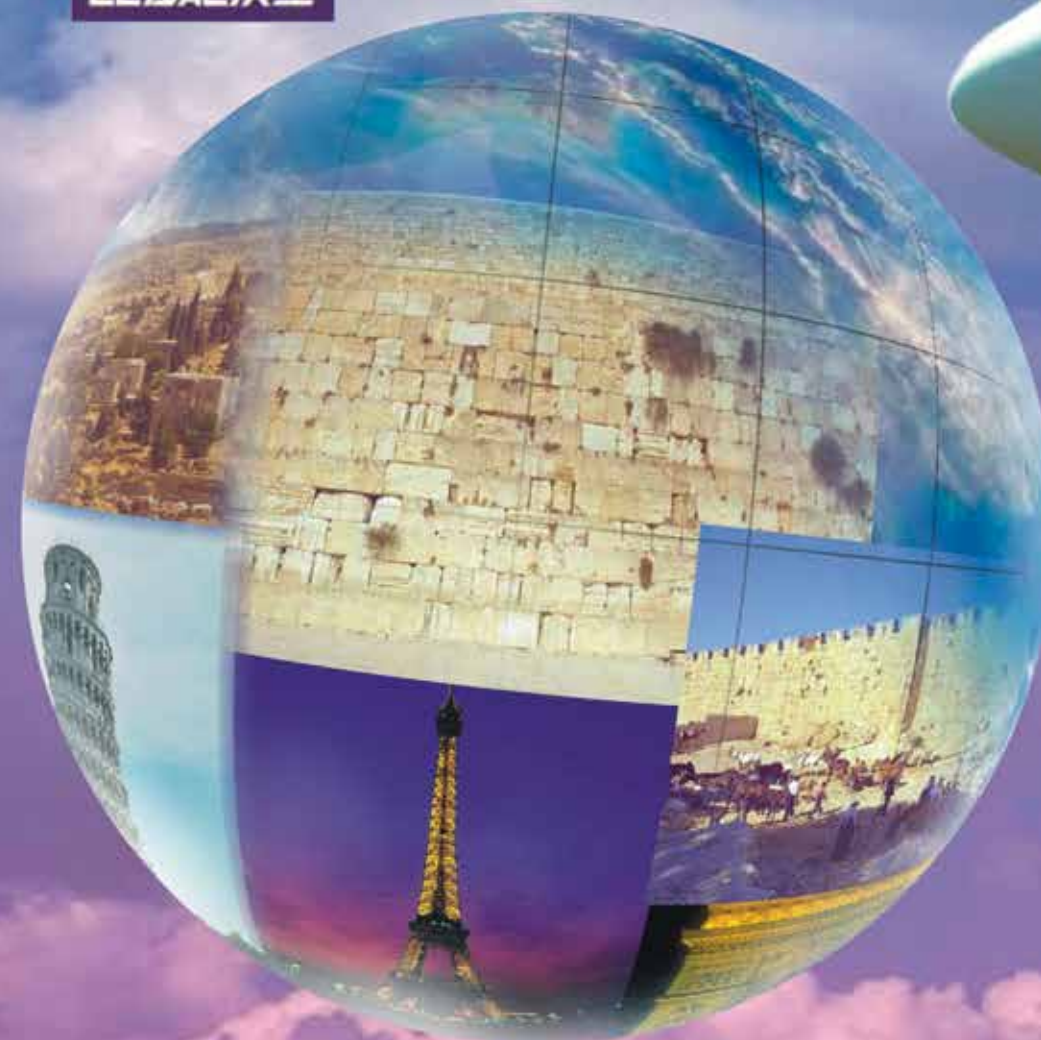
their anger, but Hashem has been with us, and they vented their anger by imposing fines...and Israel is impoverished, for every man has sold all he has, gold and silver and even his clothing...."

It is likely that similar torments were also endured by the Ashkenazic communities, the *chassidim* and *perushim*, who lived mostly in the Galil, in Teveria and Tzefas, and who were led by *tzaddikim* like Harav Avraham Hakohen of Kalisk, Harav Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka, Harav Zev Wolf from Charny-Ostrow (who was living temporarily in Haifa) and others. However, as of yet, no written records about this have been found. □

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A Crack in the Wall

By Chavi Rosenberg



What's more difficult than moving to a new house? Moving to a new cheder!

The administration, teachers and support staff of Talmud Torah Derech Hayashar in Bnei Brak were absolutely convinced of this. Most of the individuals actively involved in helping the cheder move to its new building had already experienced Moving Day on a more personal, private scale – when they had moved from one apartment to another with their families. This time, though, they felt they were facing Mission Impossible.

The contents of the cheder had to be packed up while regular sessions continued, so as not to cause *bittul Torah*. The division of rooms and floors in the new, spacious building had to be planned and replanned. Decisions had to be made about what needed to be purchased, and then the purchases had to be made. Myriads of other chores that no one had foreseen kept cropping up.

On Monday afternoon, the rebbes who had finished teaching for the day busily began packing up textbooks and workbooks – doing their best to keep each grade's materials separate – while constructing a list of what was missing, as they went along and weeded out whatever was no longer usable.

The phone kept ringing as they worked. Parents were

trying to get through to find out whether the cheder's regular schedule would be disrupted because of the move. The bus company wanted to schedule a meeting to plan the new bus routes to the building. The office-supply company wanted to verify the best time to deliver new equipment. The kitchen help phoned in to report snags in the new cheder kitchen. In short, it was bedlam.

Through it all, the rebbes kept fielding phone calls, scheduling meetings, jotting down notes...and packing, packing, packing.

Rebbe Dorfman, the sixth-grade teacher, poked his head into the room. "How's it going?" he asked. Rebbe Dorfman was still teaching, so he couldn't yet join his colleagues and help out with the packing.

"We're working hard," the others replied.

"What's with the closet on the second floor?"

"What's with what?"

"With the closet on the second floor," Rebbe Dorfman repeated.

"Which closet do you have on your mind now?"

"It's not on my mind; it's leaning against the wall, and it's filled with stencils, drawing paper and some tools."

"Nu, so who cares about that closet right now? You see how much work there is to be done over here. We

haven't even finished with the books yet, and you're asking about a closet on the second floor?"

Rebbe Dorfman did not reply. He reentered his classroom to resume teaching, leaving his colleagues to wonder at his sudden interest in the closet upstairs.

On the following day, Thursday, the state of general disarray gave way to utter chaos. One staff member detached a board containing thirty coat hooks from the wall, another counted desks, others prepared notes to the parents, and a foursome sat down to work out the new transportation schedule. The administration was busy planning the *chanukas habayis* to be celebrated in the very near future. The building contractor and his crew called every ten minutes or so to report on something or other that had gone wrong and absolutely had to be fixed before the move. Everyone pushed to work faster and harder than before.

"Reb Moshe," the principal asked the seventh-grade teacher, "please go upstairs to the second floor and remove the signs from the corridors. I'm talking about the bas-reliefs; we invested a lot of effort and money in those. Please be very careful with them."

Reb Moshe hurried upstairs, wondering whom he could ask for help when everyone was so busy. He knew he needed another pair of hands to help him remove the bas-reliefs.

When he reached the second floor, he stopped short. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. Rebbe Dorfman was standing there idly! He was not packing, not dismantling anything, not planning, not doing anything at all...just peeking behind a closet against the wall. The closet almost touched the wall, and the space between closet and wall was very narrow, just a tiny crack. Yet Reb Moshe observed Rebbe Dorfman trying to wedge his body into the impossibly small space! After trying unsuccessfully for a few moments, Rebbe Dorfman tried to move the closet, but it was far too heavy for him, and he gave up with a sigh of despair.

Reb Moshe was shocked. He could not think of a single explanation for what he had just seen. What had happened to Rebbe Dorfman? He was known throughout the cheder for his exceptional personality, his wonderful *middos*, his breadth of Torah knowledge and his amazing power of explanation. He instilled in his students *yiras Shamayim* and a fierce love for Torah. Why was he, of all people, evading work and peeking behind closets?

"Rebbe Dorfman, what are you doing?" Reb Moshe asked straightforwardly, hoping to hear a satisfactory explanation.

"I...uh..." It was obvious that Rebbe Dorfman was uncomfortable about the fact that he had been observed. "I came up here to remove the light fixtures, but I got carried away by something interesting, and I forgot

what I was supposed to be doing."

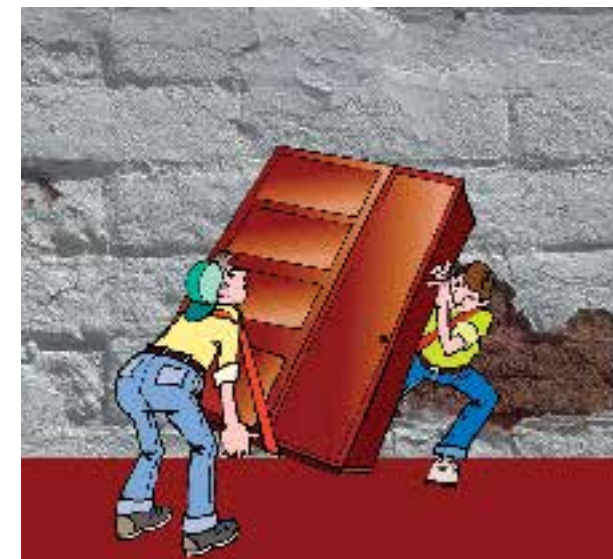
Carried away by something interesting...behind a closet pushed against a wall?

"What was it that caught your interest?" asked Reb Moshe.

"I...uh, never mind. What needs to be done?"

As Rebbe Dorfman helped Reb Moshe remove the bas-reliefs from the wall, both men were deeply absorbed in their own thoughts.

Another day passed, and then another. Preparations continued at a frenetic pace as everyone tensely awaited



"zero hour": Moving Day. At this point, the entire staff had heard about Rebbe Dorfman's strange behavior and was speculating as to its cause. Rebbe Dorfman, the phenomenal sixth-grade teacher, was not pulling his share of the weight in the monumental undertaking shouldered by his counterparts. Stranger still were his incessant questions and never-ending inquiries regarding an unimportant closet on the second floor: When would it be emptied out? When would it be removed? Would it stay there? Was there any way to light up the wall behind the closet?

"What's going on here?" the teachers asked each other. What was the connection between Rebbe Dorfman and the wall behind the closet, or the back of the closet?

It was a riddle.

"Please understand," the principal of the cheder said in a formal address to the teaching staff. "Our new building is large, spacious and very well-equipped, but it is still lacking in atmosphere. Its walls haven't yet absorbed Torah and *tefilla*, and its air hasn't yet been purified by the voices of children learning. That is perhaps the most difficult mission facing us – to transfer the spiritual atmosphere of our cheder along with the furniture and the books."

"I don't think the building itself has any effect on the educational atmosphere of a cheder," one of the teachers commented. "It's not the walls or the classrooms that create the atmosphere, you know, but the..."

Rebbe Dorfman rose from his place, his eyes glowing brightly in his unusually pale face. "You really think that the cheder's atmosphere isn't related to the walls that house it?" he said hoarsely. "Come with me to the second floor!"

The principal and teachers followed Rebbe Dorfman to the second floor. Perhaps they would finally hear the answer to the riddle of his strange behavior over the past week. Maybe now they would understand why, at a time when everyone else was working busily, Rebbe Dorfman, a *mechanech* par excellence, was preoccupied with a mysterious something hidden behind an ordinary closet.

"A cheder's atmosphere is intrinsically connected to its walls and rooms. I can demonstrate it, if we can move this closet away from the wall," said Rebbe Dorfman. His colleagues stared at him in surprise.

"To move the closet, we need to empty it," said one of the teachers.

"That's right. Otherwise I would have already moved it myself." Rebbe Dorfman smiled.

Someone fetched a few cardboard boxes, and the contents of the closet were quickly emptied out. Then, with the joint effort of a few teachers, the heavy closet was finally moved away from the wall. Everyone expected Rebbe Dorfman to reveal something stuck to the back of the closet. Instead, the sixth-grade teacher paled visibly and approached the exposed wall.

His hands skimmed the wall. "Here," he whispered, his voice cracking, "it's here. It's here..." No longer able to contain his emotions, he hid his face in the palms of his hands.

The others ventured closer. They saw what appeared to be a small crack in the wall, but on closer inspection they realized that it was just a spot that was softer than the rest of the wall, a small area where the wall was somewhat sunken.

"This is what I wanted so badly to see all week," Rebbe Dorfman related in a trembling voice. "The moment you started moving furniture and exposing walls, I began looking for this place." His eyes held a faraway look and his forehead became lined with creases as he relived old memories. Anyone could see that past and present were intermingling in Rebbe Dorfman's mind, with the past taking the upper hand.

"I studied in this Talmud Torah as a child," he began. This revelation did not come as a surprise, as the cheder was more than thirty years old. But it still did not explain the connection between Rebbe Dorfman and the depression in the wall. His audience listened raptly.

"I was six and a half years old, the class troublemaker. I knew how to read, but studies were the last thing on my mind. I was interested in marbles and fascinated by 'Three Sticks.' I was a pro at jacks and the running champion of my class. I knew how to catch butterflies and rub two stones together to produce a spark of fire. I could throw a pebble farther than any other boy in the class. I knew everything except how to learn. When we began learning *Chumash* and *mishnayos*, I became sleepy and slow. The teacher's words went in one ear and out the other."

The faces of the principal and teachers registered complete surprise. It was difficult to believe what Rebbe Dorfman was saying. They knew him as an outstanding *talmid chacham* who was held in great esteem by fellow *avreichim*. His understanding of Gemara was legendary, and he had a reputation as an excellent teacher. How could he have been such a child?

"My parents spoke to me kindly, persuasively. They described the greatness of Torah study and explained that a Jew is born with a purpose, that he has a task to fulfill. They told me that all their hopes and dreams centered around their children growing up to be *talmidei chachamim* and *ovdei Hashem*. When that didn't help, they began adopting a stricter attitude. At home and in the Talmud Torah I was punished, grounded from trips and denied prizes. I was scolded severely, but my behavior did not improve. I would try to be a good student for a day or two and then would revert to my old behavior. I didn't have the spiritual strength to really try, to ignore the temptations pulling me away from my studies, to subdue my stormy spirit and channel my energies to Torah learning. The sand, the wind, the sky and my bike held far more interest for me."

Each of the teachers listening to Rebbe Dorfman recalled at least one student in his class who fit Rebbe Dorfman's description, a student who made life miserable for his teachers and parents. To think that a student like that could turn out to be a Rebbe Dorfman! Amazing!

Rebbe Dorfman fell silent for a moment, deep in thought.

"My parents were not aware of the gravity of the situation," he continued. "Parents, after all, do not sit in on classes. Although Abba realized I knew next to nothing when he studied with me, he did not know how far removed I was from learning, that I refused to accept authority and the *ol Torah*."

"In fifth grade, we began learning Gemara, which infused the boys in my class with a sense of renewal and enthusiasm. Many of the children who had been average students until then suddenly threw themselves into their studies, aware that we were now up to 'the serious stuff.' Learning Gemara, however, did not affect

me at all. I was still the same wild, rambunctious clown with zero willpower and no enthusiasm for learning.

"And then came the PTA meeting.

"My father came to school and heard what the real situation was. 'He doesn't learn,' my teacher told him. 'He doesn't try. His head is not in learning. He's busy with all sorts of nonsense and doesn't care about anything important or holy. He finds his satisfaction in games and stories rather than in the Torah.'

"My father heard all this and could not contain himself. He understood what was happening, and he felt he could not bear such anguish. He left the room even before the teacher finished speaking, leaned on the wall next to the classroom – and began to cry. He cried and cried and cried. With every wave of tears, he unburdened a truckload of pain, but his heart was filled with so much pain that no matter how much he cried, there was always more.

"Abba stood by the wall outside my classroom and wept the way Jews throughout the ages have wept at the *Kosel Hamaaravi*, pleading with the *Ribbono shel Olam*. The concepts of time and place blurred. He sobbed and pleaded, pleaded and sobbed. *Ribbono shel Olam, raise this child for me so that he may cleave to Your Torah and serve You faithfully. Purify his heart, implant in him a yetzer tov. Oy, Ribbono shel Olam...*

"After my father had cried there for two hours, my teacher came out of the classroom. He rested his hand on my father's shoulder and said, 'Go home, Reb Meir Dorfman. The gates of *Shamayim* are never closed to tears, and your prayer has certainly reached the *kisei hakavod*.'

"The following day I arrived at the Talmud Torah as usual. I knew nothing of what had transpired there the evening before. My teacher took me by the hand and walked with me to the corridor. He brought me to the wall and lifted my hand to a spot high up. 'Touch the wall,' he told me. I did as he said. 'Do you feel that the wall is a bit soft over here?' he asked me. 'Can you feel a sort of a crack? Your father stood here yesterday and wept. Right here, he stood and wept – about you, because of you. Your father stood here and pleaded with Hashem that you become a mensch, that you be a good Jewish boy, that you put aside all the nonsense you're so busy with, and learn and learn and learn! Your father stood here yesterday, his heart shattered, his tears flowing freely; do you understand that? A river of tears fell here. His tears dissolved the wall!' " My teacher left me there and entered the classroom.

"I touched the wall again, picturing my father. I recalled that he had arrived home the night before with red, swollen eyes, and now I understood why. I imagined him leaning against the wall and crying and...I did the same thing. I took a small chair and stood up on it

so that I would reach the same spot he did. I leaned on the spot, and my tears burst forth. I cried and cried and cried – I haven't the faintest idea for how long. The corridor was quiet; not a soul passed by. While the teachers and students were in their classrooms, I stood in the corridor and cried.

"*Avanim shachaku mayim* – stones can be eroded by water. When I saw that the wall had softened somewhat from my tears (an 'accomplishment' that rivaled my father's), I understood that something could – must – give way in my heart, as well. And from that day onward, the blockage in my heart began to contract..."

To transfer the atmosphere of a cheder...

Could they transfer a crack in the wall? Could they transfer a wall that gave way to tears? They could only pray that in their new building, too, the waters of Torah would eat away at the stones blocking the entrance to children's hearts, so that the most difficult pranksters would grow into the likes of Rebbe Dorfman.

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THAT EVASIVE WORD



By Rivka Lock

I'm doing what I love best: writing. The words are flowing now, faster and faster. My fingers are doing a passionate tap dance across the keyboard at top speed. My feelings are unraveling themselves out onto the screen in neat, concise paragraphs. The piece is taking shape and I feel oh, so good.

But suddenly I'm up against a brick wall. Help! Where's that word? It was at the tip of my tongue (or finger)! I almost had it; it was just slightly beyond my grasp, and then – poof! It vanished. Try as I might, I cannot bring it back again. I feel as helpless as soloist who's lost her voice. Oh, how frustratingly frustrating! How maddeningly maddening!

It's out there somewhere, I know. I can almost hear its mocking laughter echoing up there in space, bouncing off the walls of my brain. I can imagine it rubbing its wicked little hands together in glee at the sight of my anguish. That evasive word.

And then – it's there. I got it! Just like that. It

swims into focus so swiftly and silently and takes a seat right up there in the front in my mind. The relief is so palpable, I feel it washing right through me in a wonderful wave of warmth. It's okay. Life can go on! I say the word to myself over and over again, letting my tongue revel in the delicious taste of it, and I smile. My article is complete.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dear Readers,

Can you identify with Rivka Lock's experience? Have you ever known the frustration and the joys of writing? Is finding the perfect word and getting it just right a major concern for you when you write?

Maybe, then, just maybe, you have the makings of a real writer somewhere inside you! Would you like to share your ideas or dreams with a broad but heimishe audience? Send your best efforts – essays, humorous stories and article queries – to Inspiration Magazine, PO Box 905, Monsey, NY 10952 or Fax 215-895-9926.

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THE JEWISH KITCHEN

By Michal Adam



Simchas Yom Tov

While we are trying to concentrate on the mitzvos of the hour, every *aishes chayil* will be busily preparing for the *simchas Yom Tov* that is a very important part of every *chag*. So finish up all your sewing or clothes-shopping, and start cooking!

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* explains that it is a special mitzvah to bake your own challo for Shabbos and *Yom Tov*. Maybe you are too busy to undertake this project on a weekly basis, but why not try to make your *Yom Tov* extra special with homemade challo? You'll also receive the merit of a very important mitzvah – the separation of *challah*.

Did you know that there are special shapes for the *Yom Tov* challo? We are all familiar with the round challo that many people eat during the entire month of Tishrei. They symbolize the continuing cycle of the year, or the crown of Hashem.

On *erev Yom Kippur* there is a custom to eat *challah* in the shape of a ladder with a bird. Since Hashem determines at this time who will rise and who will fall on the ladder of success, we appeal to His Mercy (symbolized by the bird), to carry our prayers up to *Shamayim*. And on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, there is a custom to use *challah* shaped like a hand, as we reach out to Hashem for a *gutte kvittel* (a favorable judgment). (Incidentally, on the Shabbos after Pesach, the challo are shaped like a key – the key to *parnassah*.)

Once *Klal Yisrael* entered Eretz Yisrael, they continued eating *mann* until Pesach. After that they had to earn their own *parnassah*.) Since it is not likely that you will find these special shapes in your bakery, your delicious homemade challo will add a special touch to your *Yom Tov* table.

This recipe makes a delicious, almost cakelike challah, perfect for dipping in honey. Be sure to make enough – your guests will keep looking for more. Raisins can be added to either recipe (if that is your minhag) just before the end of the mixing, for an extra-sweet New Year.

Sweet White Challah

- 12 cups flour (approximately)
- 1 cup sugar or honey (you can use a combination)
- 2 tsp. salt
- 4 eggs
- 2/3 cup oil
- 1 1/2 cups lukewarm water
- 4 tsp. instant yeast

Place the sugar, salt, yeast and half the flour in your mixer bowl, being careful not to put the yeast in direct contact with the salt. Add the oil, eggs and water, and mix. Slowly add more flour until the dough is not sticky. (It should stop sticking to the sides of the bowl during mixing.)



Remove the dough onto a clean surface, and knead a little by hand. Place in a slightly oiled bowl, cover it and place it in a warm place to rise until doubled in bulk. (If you are not ready to shape it when it has risen, punch it down and come back to it later. Dough can even be left to rise overnight if necessary, with good results. Just leave it in a cooler place.)

Divide the dough into the size loaves you desire and shape them. Use your imagination to design the special shapes for the various holidays – it's fun! (Use a raisin for the bird's eye.) If you like, you can even prepare all your challo at once and freeze them immediately after shaping, individually wrapped, in a quick freezer. Don't stack anything on the challo until they are frozen solid.

Before baking, place your shaped challo in a warm place to rise one last time, until doubled in bulk. The loaves are ready when you can push a finger gently into the dough and a dent remains when you remove it. If the dough springs right back up, let it rise some more. This is especially important with large challo, because if they do not rise sufficiently, they will crack in the oven. (If you are using frozen challo at this time, it will take quite a while for the dough to rise.) Challo should be loosely covered while rising, to protect them from drafts and so they don't dry out.

Paint the challo with an egg wash (mix an egg with a few drops of water – vanilla sugar could be added for a nice taste and a shiny golden glaze).

Bake in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) until brown. They should make a hollow sound when tapped on the bottom. (If the bottoms tend to burn, place a tray of water in the bottom of the oven. This is often necessary if you do not have a turbo oven.) (Yield: 2 large or 4 small challo)

No one will believe you can make a 100% whole wheat challah so light and delicious. The secret is in the two-stage mixing process, so don't try to skip steps.

Whole Wheat Challah

- 10 cups whole wheat flour (approximately)
- 3/4 cup brown sugar or honey (you can use a combination of both)
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup oil
- 3 cups water
- 1 Tbsp. instant yeast

Combine the ingredients like you did for the white *challah*, but using only half of the flour. Cover the bowl and let the dough sit for an hour. Then resume mixing while adding the rest of the flour, and proceed as described above. Yield: 2 large or 4 small challo. (Note: check halachic sources for the amount of flour necessary in order to take *challah*.)

During the entire month of Tishrei, we have the custom to eat sweet foods to symbolize our wish for a sweet year. The best-known example is probably honey cake (also known as lekach, which means "portion") – we pray that we have a goodly portion in the coming year.

Honey Cake

- (makes 1 large oven sheet)
- 6 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups honey
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups strong coffee
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 6 cups flour



our sustenance for the coming year will be determined now, by Hashem, and not by our own efforts.

Taiglach

Dough:

3 eggs, beaten
3 Tbsp. oil
2 Tbsp. brandy
1 tsp. ginger
3 cups flour
1 tsp. baking powder

Filling:

½ cup raisins
½ cup pecan halves

Syrup:

1 cup honey
1½ cups sugar
2 tsp. ginger

Coating:

1–2 cups chopped nuts
¼ tsp. cinnamon
Mix all the ingredients for the dough to make a smooth, soft dough – if it comes out a little dry, add a drop of water. It should be just firm enough so that it does not stick to your hands or the table.

Divide the dough into several pieces and roll out with your hands into thin ropes. Cut each rope into 3-inch-long pieces. Tie each piece into a knot with a pecan half or some raisins in the center.

Now mix all the syrup ingredients in a pot and bring to a boil. Drop the balls into the boiling syrup and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. When they are done, they will sound hollow when tapped. Add 3 Tbsp. of water to syrup and leave balls in the pot for about 15 minutes longer. Remove with a slotted spoon and roll in chopped nuts.

One more project for the minhag-conscious cook. We have a custom to make “wrapped” foods for erev Yom Kippur and Hoshanah Rabbah. The usual choices are kreplach and stuffed cabbage.

1 cup oil
½ cup brandy
1 tsp. salt
4 tsp. baking powder
2 tsp. baking soda

Mix the eggs and sugars well. Add the next five ingredients and continue until thoroughly mixed. Then add the oil, brandy, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Pour into a large oven pan lined with baking paper or 4 individual loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees F (180°C) for between 45 minutes and an hour. After the cake is completely cooled, wrap well in plastic wrap. Honey cakes improve with time, so these should last you through most of the Yamim Tovim.

It is said that the mann tasted like dough fried in honey. So during Tishrei we eat foods made of fried dough, like this recipe from the “Old Country,” to remind us that



Kreplach

Dough:

2 eggs
3 Tbsp. water
½ tsp. salt
dash of white pepper
2 Tbsp. oil
2 cups flour

Filling:

1 chopped onion
½ pound ground beef, raw
1 tsp. garlic powder
dash of pepper

Mix all the dough ingredients (a food processor is very good for this) until smooth, adding a little more flour if necessary. The dough should be a little sticky, but should not stick to the table. Remove from the processor and knead a little more by hand.

Divide dough into a few pieces, wrap well and refrigerate for about 15 minutes or more. Now mix all the filling ingredients. Roll out each piece of dough until thin. Cut into 3-inch squares or circles. Put a small spoon of filling on each piece and fold in half, pinching the edges. (You can find special gadgets for shaping ravioli in some housewares departments. These work quite nicely and make very uniform-looking kreplach.)

If you use fresh ground meat for your filling, you

can freeze the kreplach at this point and cook them as needed. (If you use defrosted meat, do not refreeze before cooking.) Make enough for Yom Kippur and Hoshanah Rabbah. Sometimes I even deep-freeze some for Purim, too. Once you start this project, it’s worthwhile to make in bulk. To cook, drop kreplach into boiling salted water or broth, and cook for 20 minutes. If you cook these in your soup, beware: the kreplach will absorb some of the soup. Yield: 24 kreplach.

Stuffed Cabbage

To make stuffed cabbage easily, take 1 or 2 large heads of cabbage (bug-free) and put them in the freezer the day before you want to prepare them. Remove the cabbages in the morning and allow them to defrost. They will become a little soggy and much more pliable. Separate the leaves and fill each one with a mixture of raw ground meat, a little raw rice, and spices. Fold in the sides of the cabbage leaves and roll. Small leaves that cannot be filled can be placed on the bottom of the pot. Cook in spiced tomato sauce on the stovetop, in the oven or in a Crock-Pot. □


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The Lost Children Gemach

By H. Schorr

Karen slowly closed the door to her room and made her way to the nearby shul. It was *leil Rosh Hashanah*, and all the other girls in the dormitory had left before her, anxious to hear the *chazzan's* opening strains. Karen held tightly onto the brand new *machzor* that she had received from the Goldsteins, the family that had helped her as she was taking her first steps on the path to *teshuvah*.

As she climbed the stairs of the basement apartment, she felt her heart sinking. Every step seemed to loom before her, as tall and steep and forbidding as a mountain. She suddenly felt an urge to run back to her room in the dorm and escape into a deep sleep that would make her blissfully unaware of today's date – and the responsibility it involved.

That morning she had confided in Debbie, her roommate, telling her

about the doubts and feelings of guilt that had plagued her throughout the week. But Debbie had only dismissed Karen's words with a sweep of her hand. "Nonsense. Hashem is close to everyone, and He loves His children who call to Him," she had said, quoting the words Rabbi Hoschander used in his lectures. "You make Hashem happy when you daven to Him; you should simply put the past behind you and stop making life difficult for yourself." Debbie had added a few more platitudes, which rang true but did nothing to quell Karen's uneasiness.

During *Ma'ariv*, Karen couldn't help but become increasingly depressed. She felt so different, so apart from the others – the women with snow-white *tichels* and the young girls who were davening with such fervor. Never before had she been so sharply aware of the huge gap that separated her from them.

After davening, each girl from the dorm went to her "adopted" family. As usual, Mrs. Goldstein welcomed Karen with her warm, gracious smile. In Karen's eyes she was the epitome of perfection: always smiling, calm and with infinite reserves of patience. Karen was tempted to share her feelings with Mrs. Goldstein, as she had on many previous occasions, but this time something stopped her. There was no way that Mrs. Goldstein could begin to understand what she was going through. Her world was so pure and holy, in such contrast to the issues with which Karen grappled.

Karen returned to the dorm at a late hour, walking slowly, the starlit sky a canopy over her head.

Tomorrow, she thought, *Am Yisrael will be standing in shul, pouring out their hearts in prayer*. She, too, had planned to be among them. She had even purchased a seat and had

perused her *machzor* in advance so as to gain some familiarity with the *tefillos*. But now something was hindering her. She felt like...an imposter. How could she stand in shul with everyone else, when just a few months before she had not even acknowledged *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* presence? How could she, burdened as she was with her ignominious past, offer prayers and supplications to the Most Exalted One?

A few months earlier, when she had changed her path in life and taken upon herself to fulfill Torah and mitzvos, Karen knew that a lot of hard work lay ahead of her. Now, when she had barely succeeded in accomplishing anything, Rosh Hashana was already upon her!

Karen had learned about the custom of wearing light-colored clothing on the *Yamim Norai'm*. She smiled bitterly to herself. Sure, she owned a number of pastel outfits, but she knew that her true garment – the one that clothed her soul – was pitch black.

The next morning, Karen found it difficult to overcome her melancholy. The feelings that had tormented her the previous night were intensified, and she felt it would be impossible for her to stand among the other daveners. She was a foreign element, impudently shouldering its way into that holy place, a vile creature that had arrived uninvited at the King's palace.

Eventually she mustered the fortitude and prepared herself for shul. Just as she stepped outside, she saw a little boy about two and a half years old standing alone on the sidewalk, crying. He was dressed in a smart, light-blue outfit with a new velvet *kippah* perched atop his golden curls and attached with four clips. In his chubby fist he clutched a plastic sandwich bag full of treats, and he was sobbing uncontrollably.

Karen looked up and down the

street. There was no one in sight. She bent down next to the child and asked him, "What's your name, little boy?" He was quiet for a moment, as if trying to decide whether or not to answer this stranger, then he burst into a new bout of crying.

Karen shrugged her shoulders and straightened up. She had no experience with lost little kids. She looked again in all directions, hoping to see someone searching for the boy, but the street was deserted.

"Come, sweetie." Karen took the little boy's hand in hers and steered him towards the dorm. In her room she handed the boy a plastic cup with cold water, which he drank thirstily. She gave him some more water and, after washing his face and rinsing and drying his sticky hands, offered him some cookies.

The little boy seemed to calm down somewhat and looked at Karen with new interest. She tried again. "What's your name?" she asked in a soft, cajoling voice.

"Sruli," he answered, his mouth full of cookies.

"Sruli what?" Karen asked.

The child did not answer. He frowned slightly and once again looked at her suspiciously. Karen took the boy's hand and led him back out to the sidewalk. "Maybe your mommy or daddy will come soon to look for you," she explained, scanning the street in both directions.

She chose a spot in the shade and, ten minutes later, spied a woman coming in their direction. Karen approached her bashfully. "Um...excuse me...do you recognize this little boy? I found him here, and he was crying. I have no idea who he is, and I don't know where to take him."

The woman looked closely at the

boy and shook her head. "I don't know who he is, but a couple of blocks away from here is a lost-children *gemach*. Why don't you take him there?"

Karen had to smile. The whole idea of *gemachim* was new to her, and she never ceased to be amazed at the variety and ingenuity of the various *gemachim* in her community. But a *gemach* for lost children? That took the cake!

"Okay, Sruli. Let's go." Karen took the boy's hand and, after getting exact directions, made her way to the *gemach*.

When they reached the address, Karen saw that the door of the apartment was open, and in the entrance stood a young woman balancing a baby on her hip. The woman sounded worried; Karen could hear her making arrangements in case her child would turn up. All of a sudden, Sruli tore his hand from Karen's and ran to the woman. "Mommy! Mommy!" he cried.

"My little Sruli!" The woman gasped and hugged her son close to her. The child buried his head in his mother's shoulder, and both mother and child started to cry.

When the mother managed to compose herself somewhat, she asked, "Sruli, where were you? Mommy was looking all over for you!" Then she noticed Karen, and she smiled. "Oh, thank you so much. I was on my way to shul, and all of a sudden I noticed that Sruli had disappeared. I've been looking for him for over an hour. He's so mischievous, he must have been roaming the streets for a long time. I guess you found him just a few minutes ago and brought him here."

"Actually, I found him quite a while ago," Karen smiled,



"but it never occurred to me that there would be a *gemach* for lost children. As soon as someone told me about it, I came straight here."

They parted warmly, and Karen hurried to shul. The heaviness that had been bothering her earlier steadily began to lift. Gradually she felt her mood improving and, without even realizing it, started to hum one of the moving tunes she had heard during *selichos* under her

breath. Together with the awe and fear of the holy day, she was filled with genuine joy and gratitude.

By the time Karen approached the shul, she could hear the *chazzan* leading the congregation in *tefillah*. Before entering, Karen closed her eyes and whispered, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, if just a few blocks away from here there is a *gemach* for lost children, I'm sure that You too have a *gemach* for Your lost children. And if I am not deserv-

ing to stand and daven together with everyone, I beg of You, Hashem, please take me into Your *gemach*! Your *gemach* accepts all the sobbing children with sticky hands and dirty faces who've lost their way. There has to be room there for every one of Your children – no questions asked!"

Karen blinked away her tears and, with a spring in her step, climbed the staircase leading to the *ezras nashim*. □

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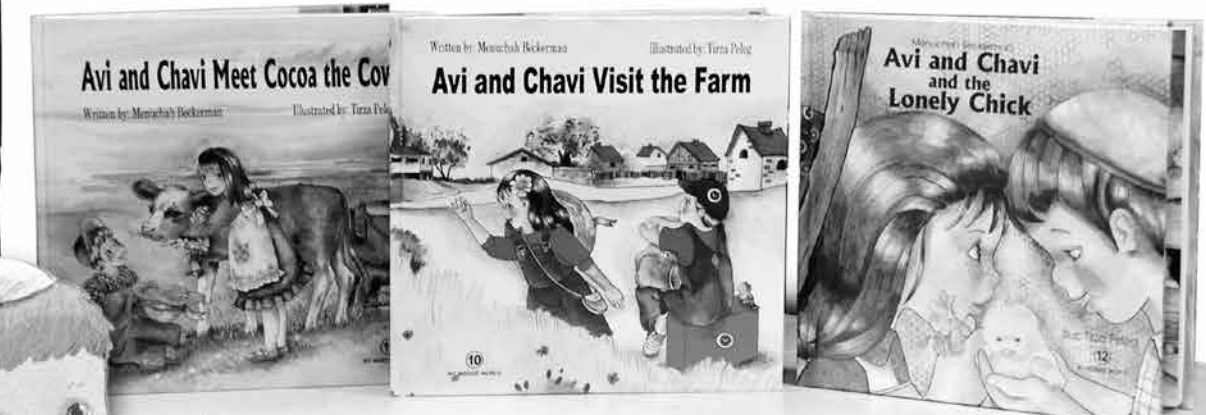
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The Wonders of the Sun

By Avraham Stimler

Grrm, grrm, grrm, grrm... It was fall, and Ima and I were standing outside listening to the drone of the fuel truck filling up the tank for our central heating system. Finally the tank was full. The driver wound up his long hose and presented Ima with the bill.

"*Oy vey!*" she cried. "The price is up again."

"Don't complain, lady," laughed the driver. "At least sunlight is still free."

The truck roared off, and we stayed outside a few minutes watching the setting sun drop like a huge red ball in the west. It was beautiful.

"That man was right," Ima said softly. "Some of the best things in life are free, but we take them for granted. Take the sun, for example. Without it the world would be a

frozen desert. Even the air would turn into ice. It's the sun that draws water from the sea, and it's the sun that makes the winds blow the clouds back over the land to water the earth."

Bang! Whenever Ima starts talking about nature, she sets me off with a million questions. And for every answer she gives me, I think up two more questions. But that's okay. Ima has lots of patience.

Why Doesn't the Sun Burn Out?

"Ima," I asked, "how come the sun never burns itself out? It looks so small, and it just goes burning on and on. Does Hashem fill its gas tanks every fall?"

"Not exactly," laughed Ima. "First of all, the sun is much bigger than you think. It's gigantic! If the sun

was an empty ball, 1.3 million planets the size of Earth could fit inside it."

"But how can that be?" I protested. "It doesn't look much bigger than a street lamp!"

"That's because it's so far away," said Ima. "Let's say you jumped into a rocket tomorrow morning and zoomed off for the sun at 600 miles an hour. How long do you think it would take you to get there?"

"I guess about a month," I answered.

"No!" said Ima. "It would take you seventeen years."

"Seventeen years?" I gasped. "Forget about that trip - I don't want to miss my cousin Moshe's bar mitzvah. But why does it take so long?"

"Because the sun is about 93 mil-

lion miles away."

"Phew!" I said. "Sunlight must have a great, big job getting down to us all that way."

"Not really," said Ima. "Sunlight reaches us here from the sun in a little over eight minutes!"

"It must go a zillion miles an hour," I suggested.

"It does!" Ima agreed. "Light travels 186,000 miles every *second!*"

"Wow! But Ima, I still don't understand. Why doesn't the sun burn out?"

"If the sun were a huge ball of burning coal, it would have burned out after a thousand years, because it's burning as brightly as 3 trillion trillion light bulbs. But the sun is made of hydrogen and helium. The middle of the sun is like a huge pressure cooker. Every second the sun changes 600 million tons of hydrogen into 596 tons of helium (in a process called nuclear fusion), and the other 4 million tons turn into sunlight."

"If the sun is losing 4 million tons every second," I tried to explain to Ima, "it should be melting away before our eyes."

"Remember how huge the sun is," she laughed. "It has an almost endless supply of fuel that will last millions of years!"

"Well, now I'm beginning to understand something that always bothered me," I confessed. "I could understand why we say such a long *brachah* of *Yotzer Or* every morning, thanking Hashem for the sun. But 4 million tons a second is surely a lot to be thankful for!"

The Sun's Dangers

"That's right!" said Ima. "Actually, the sun's rays spread in every direction, and the Earth receives only a billionth of all that brightness. But Hashem gives us the exact amount of sunlight we need.

Too much, and the sea would boil away into steam. Too little, and even the air would freeze. But even the small bit of sunlight we do get can be very dangerous."

"Dangerous?" I asked. "How can the sun be dangerous?"

"Spending too much time in the sun can lead to skin disease," sighed Ima. "People have to be careful to always wear hats or caps when they go out to play in the sun. And they should use a good sunscreen lotion, especially during the middle of the day, when the sun's rays are strongest."

The Food Factory

The next day Abba took us out for a drive to see the beautiful fall leaves in all their colors.

"Why are leaves usually green?" I asked.

"It's a good thing you asked," said Ima. "I was thinking of telling you about that yesterday, because it has to do with the sun. Tiny plants do what the greatest scientists with their most sophisticated laboratories can't do. Leaves contain a green chemical called *chlorophyll*, which makes the tree's food out of sunlight, water and air."

"So every plant is made of sunlight, and animals eat those plants, and then we... Wow!" I shouted. "That means that all our food comes from the sun!"

Ima winked at me in the rear-view mirror. I got the hint. Instead of asking my next question, this time I decided to let my mother relax and enjoy the ride! □





Fisherman's Island

By Calanitte K.

Mrs. Greenbaum's patience was wearing thin. Her right foot began tapping a staccato beat against the boardwalk. She was sitting on a chair near the docks at Lake Bluestone, watching her husband, Nachum, and oldest son, Raphael, as they tried desperately to fit two "fold-up" sukkahs into a motorboat and still leave room for passengers. After half an hour of watching them, Mrs. Greenbaum went from being highly amused to extremely annoyed, as the men fussed to no avail.

Finally, exhaling a huge sigh of exasperation, she stood up and approached the boat.

"Nachum, this isn't working. I knew we shouldn't have brought two sukkahs."

"We don't have room for everyone in just one sukkah, Ruchi. What could I have done?"

"I know, but what are we going

to do now? The little ones are getting antsy and hot and can't wait to go out onto the lake already."

Nachum looked down at the boat sadly, shaking his head and rubbing his beard in thought. He knew his wife was right, but what could they do? If they didn't have three little ones who needed their mother's constant attention, Ruchi could have taken a separate boat.

As if he'd heard his father's thoughts, Raphael came forward with an idea.

"Abba, why don't I take a separate boat with a sukkah? You could send some of the kids with me, too, and then you won't be so squished and uncomfortable with your sukkah."

Nachum's face twisted into a worried but thoughtful look. He turned to Ruchi questioningly.

"What do you think? He does have his lifeguard certificate, and

he is seventeen already..."

Ruchi nodded. "Yeah, I think you can handle a boat, Raphi," she said, smiling. "But some kids, too? Are you sure you can handle them?"

Raphi didn't get a chance to answer before his ten-year-old brother Yochanan and his six-year-old brother Shuey started jumping up and down, shouting, "I wanna go with Raphi! I wanna go with Raphi!"

Mr. and Mrs. Greenbaum laughed. Although their worries had not completely abated, they let the boys join Raphael and took one-year-old Sari with them into their boat.

• • •

Soon the Greenbaum family was finally on its way, gliding along beautiful Lake Bluestone.

The view was both breathtaking and relaxing. Even the smallest children were quiet and calm as the water splashed beside them and little islands rose up all around them. In the distance they could see the majestic, snow-capped "Stony Mountains," named for the great, smooth stones that grew out of the mountain's sides.

For the first forty minutes of their trip, Ruchi swiveled her head around every three minutes to make sure that Raphael and the boys were not too far behind.

"Are you boys all right?" she would yell.

"Yes, Ima! Don't worry so much!" they shouted back happily.

"I'm your mother!" she would yell back "It's my job to worry!"

Then suddenly, Sari got seasick. Ruchi gave all of her attention to caring for the little girl, and while

she was focusing on Sari, the motor on Raphael's boat died.

"What's going on? Why isn't it turning back on?" Raphi grumbled as he tried to restart the motor again and again. Nothing worked.

Raphi and the boys were so involved with the motor that by the time they thought to look up and call for their parents, the other boat was nowhere in sight. A little way ahead stood an island that blocked their view.

"Raphi," Shuey moaned, clutching his stomach, "I'm hungry."

Raphi tried to hide his rising panic. "Sorry, Shuey. I'll keep trying the motor. Yochanan, how about some *Tehillim*?"

Yochanan nodded and searched his bag for his *Tehillim*. He was trying desperately not to do what his eyes were threatening to do at any moment. Little kids cry, not ten-year-olds! he scolded himself

silently. He had to be strong for Shuey and even for Raphi, whom he had always looked up to. He had so looked forward to this vacation, and now this had to happen...

Ten minutes and several *pirkei Tehillim* later, Raphi finally succeeded in starting up the motor, and they were on their way again.

"Where should we go, Raph?" Yochanan asked, seeing how wide the lake had become. "Left or right?"

"Well, the Gemara says that when in doubt, one should take the right path. So, right it is!"

They steered to the right of the island. Raphi sat in silence, trying to think of what to do next. The boys are hungry. I have to stop somewhere...I know! I'll dock at the next island!

About fifteen minutes later, a large and very green island came

into view. Raphi noted happily that two small boats were docked on its shore.

Maybe those people have a phone or a radio or something, he thought, hope rising in his heart.

As they neared the shore, Raphi turned off the motor, threw out an anchor and, together with Yochanan and Shuey, clambered out of the boat in search of help. They looked all around but didn't see anyone.

"Could those boats have been abandoned? Are we really alone?" Raphi wondered nervously.

"Raphi, I'm really hungry. Can we eat now?" Shuey groaned.

Raphi realized that he had to take care of his little brother first. Okay, Raphi, pull yourself together. You're the oldest, you're in charge. Think! Okay, I can give Shuey some crackers and then I'll put up the sukkah with Yochanan. I'm not giving up! Eventually Ima and Abba will come looking for us, right?

Without further ado, Raphi took out crackers and cheese from the picnic basket, which his mother had wisely put into their boat at the last minute. Then he started to put up the sukkah with Yochanan.

They had just propped up the poles and hooked on a cloth wall when they heard voices. Raphi looked up and saw a couple of middle-aged fisherman approaching them, carrying fishing rods and gear.

"What's going on here?" one of them asked, his eyes narrowing suspiciously.

"Uh, we got lost," Raphi replied, a little unnerved by the unfriendly greeting. "We lost sight of our parents' boat, and we had to have something to eat, so we're setting up our sukkah here ..."

"Your what?" the second fisherman barked. "You're not allowed to build anything here. This is park property!"

"You don't look lost," the first fisherman added. "You look like you're up to something. What are those white strings hanging out of your pants? What's that black beanie on your head? What are you, spies?"

Raphi didn't know what to say. "W-w-we're Jews," he began hesitantly, "and this is our holiday of Sukkos. It's a mitzva for us to build a sukkah..."

"It's a what?" the first fisherman repeated. "This whole thing looks very fishy to me. What are you really doing here?"

Raphi waved his hands helplessly.

Overwhelmed by the standoff, Shuey suddenly burst into tears. Yochanan put his arm around the little boy to comfort him. He remembered what his rebbe had said, that they should never be afraid to say they were Jews. But had his rebbe ever met someone who didn't know what Jews were?

Yochanan tried to think of something – anything – that would convince these men that they were okay. His eyes roamed over the fishermen's rods and tackle. A fish's tail flapped up and down in one of the pails. It gave him an idea.

"I can tell you what a mitzva is," he volunteered bravely. "You know those fish you've got there? Well, any fish that has scales also has fins...you'll never find a fish that has scales but not fins."

The fishermen stared at him in shock. "He's right, Bill," Fred admitted.

"How'd you know that, kid?" Bill asked Yochanan.

"Because G-d told us so in His Torah. It's part of the mitzva of keeping kosher. Just like G-d told us to build a sukkah and sit in it during the holiday of Sukkos. That's also a mitzva," he finished proudly.

The fishermen didn't understand most of he was saying, but they sensed his sincerity as he gestured to the half-finished structure.

"At home we have a really nice sukkah, with wooden walls and pictures and fruit hanging from the *sechach*," Yochanan added. "But when we go out for a *chol hamo'ed* picnic, we bring a portable sukkah like this one, you see?"

"Maybe you can help us finish putting it up, so I can eat my sandwich?" Shuey begged in a small voice.

The fishermen chewed over the new information. "Never heard of such a thing; did you, Bill?" Fred asked.

"Nope. But there's always a first time," said Bill, who was won over by Yochanan's simple faith and Shuey's hopeful expression.

Grinning, the men threw themselves to the task. Working with Raphi and Yochanan, they had the sukkah finished in no time. Raphi invited Fred and Bill to join them inside, but the fishermen refused politely. While the boys sat in their sukkah, eating and singing *zemiros*, the fishermen made a campfire a few yards away and dined on barbecued trout.

Afterwards, Fred and Bill came back to the sukkah to compliment the boys on their singing. They asked Raphi to tell them more about why Jews build sukkahs, as well as the meaning of those "white strings" and "black beanies." He did his best to explain everything to them.

As Raphi continued to answer their questions, Shuey suddenly jumped up and shouted, "Voices! I hear voices!"

Everyone hurried outside to see who was com-

ing. Three more fishermen were making their way toward the sukkah.

"What is this?" one of the newcomers demanded.

"Hey, there's Bill and Fred!" another exclaimed.

Bill approached the new group of fishermen with a smile and said, "This is a sukkah, obviously." He then explained the Greenbaums' predicament. To the boys' delight, one of the fishermen pulled out a cell phone and called George, the man back at the docks.

"Yeah, hi George, it's Craig," Raphi heard him say. "We're on Fisherman's Island with some kids here who lost their parents. Oh, yeah? Well, tell them they're right here with us, and they're just fine. Sure, we'll see you all soon, then, okay?"

Raphi and Yochanan beamed with excitement as little Shuey started jumping up and down, chanting, "We're saved, we're saved!"

"*Baruch Hashem*," Raphi whispered.

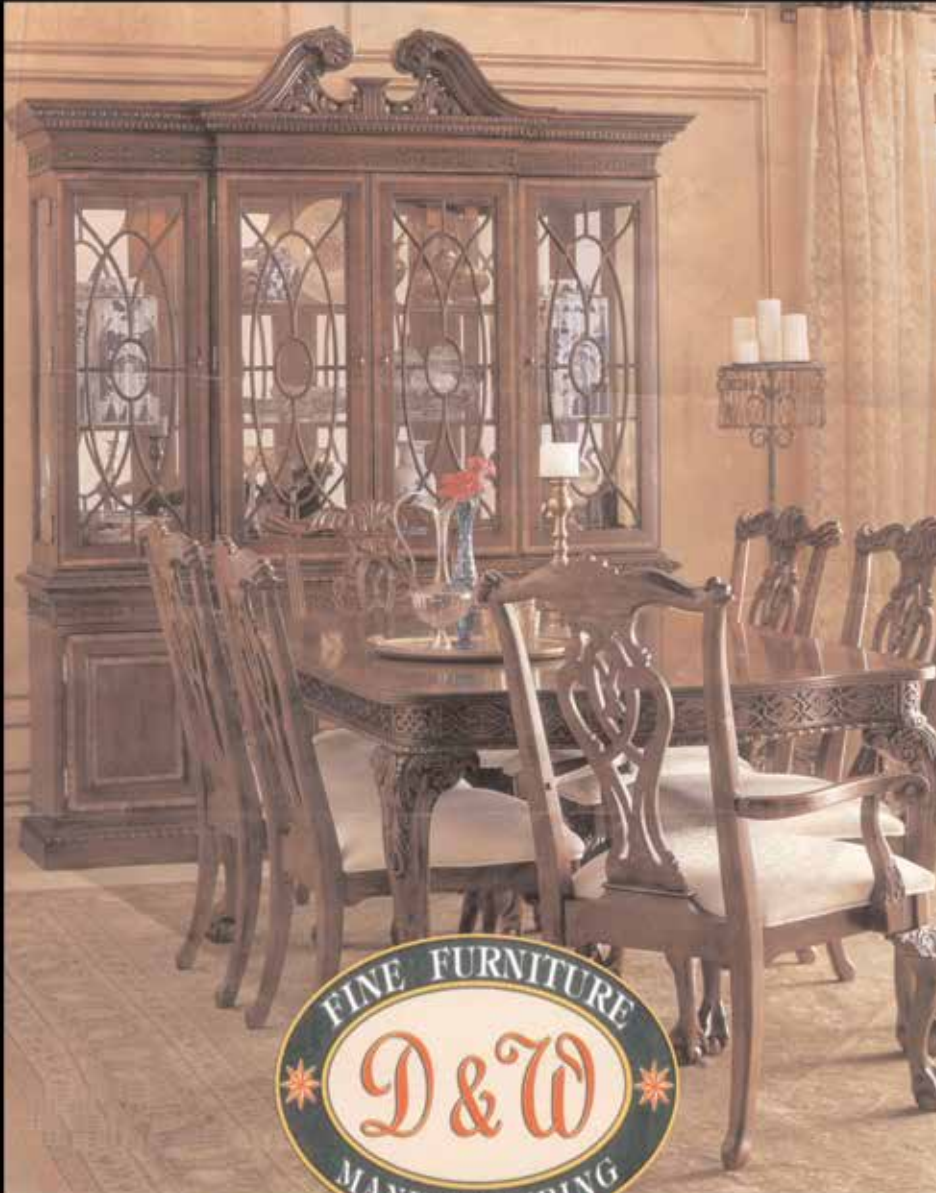
Within forty-five minutes, the rest of the Greenbaum family arrived with George at Fisherman's Island. After submitting to their mother's hugs and reassuring her that they were okay, Raphi and the boys told their parents everything that had happened. Nachum and Ruchi were extremely impressed and proud of their sons.

"*Yashar ko'ach*, Raphi. You really handled that boat well in a crisis," Nachum told his eldest. "And you, Yochanan, saved the day. It's easy to keep mitzvos, but it's harder to show others how much they're really worth."

In all the commotion, the Greenbaums hadn't eaten

lunch yet, so they decided to erect their sukkah right next to that of their sons.

"You mean we get to hear more singing?" Fred asked with a twinkle in his eye. "Hey, Craig, Jim and Gerry, wait'll you hear this!" □



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FOR YOUNGER FOLK



Raizy's Easy Life

By Menucha Beckerman

Menucha Beckerman is an internationally acclaimed author, whose books "My Middos World" and "My Little World" have been warmly welcomed into thousands of homes and schools worldwide. This story is from the forthcoming "Heart of Gold" Series, distributed by Israel Book Shop, (888) 536-7427.

Every single day, without exception, Raizy has lots of extra time to play in the afternoon. When she comes home from school, she eats her lunch and then...that's it! She has almost no other responsibilities. She spends the afternoon jumping rope, playing ball, swapping stationery with her friends and, well, just wasting her time.

Even when all the other girls in her class have lots of homework to do – like questions in *Chumash* or *Navi*, exercises in long division, sentences to complete or essays to write – even then, Raizy is still able to spend the afternoon playing happily, as though she didn't have a care in the world.

What's even more amazing is that Raizy always does her homework. Her answers are almost always correct, and most of the time none of her work is missing.

How is that possible?

The secret is that Raizy really is a very smart and

talented girl. While her friends spend an hour, sometimes even two hours, doing their homework, it takes Raizy just a few minutes to finish everything. And it's common knowledge that Raizy doesn't really listen to what the teacher says in class. So how is she able to hand in such beautiful assignments?

Raizy is the youngest child in her family. She has two married brothers, one married sister and eight nieces and nephews (who she thinks are the cutest children in the entire world). She also has two brothers studying in yeshiva, two sisters in high school, one sister in eighth grade and another sister in sixth grade. Everyone in the family pampers Raizy and treats her as if she's still a baby. Sometimes it seems almost as though they've forgotten that she has grown up. No one asks her to help in the house. Her older sisters manage very well without her. They even prefer that she play outside so that they can finish their work more quickly.

Don't think that it's always so great to be the youngest in the family. Many things are kept secret from the youngest. When Raizy's sister, Tova, was about to become a *kallah*, Raizy was told about it only on the very last day, when everyone else in the family already knew about it and were getting ready for the *l'chaim*.

Sometimes she is not allowed to join long family outings because everyone is afraid that she will tire out too quickly. When the family traveled to Meiron on Lag B'Omer, Raizy was told that she had to stay home together with her sister-in-law, who had a small baby to take care of. No one ever asks Raizy for her advice. When Raizy's parents went to buy new furniture for the girls' room, only the older children were invited to come along to help them choose what to buy. And the older children are the ones who decide how the family will spend its vacation.

But Raizy is quite happy. She ignores things that are unpleasant and takes advantage of her position in the family to get what she wants. And that is the secret of how she manages to do her homework so well.

When Raizy is about to start her math homework, for example, she opens her workbook, takes one look at the long rows of problems she is supposed to solve, and feels her heart sink. "Why?" she asks herself. "Why should I have to work so hard? Why should I have to sit at home and do my homework when there's such gorgeous fall weather outside?"

So Raizy goes over to her sister, puts on her cutest smile and says sweetly, "Shiffy, you're such a good student. You always know the right answers. Tell me, how much is twenty times twenty-one?"

"Four hundred and twenty," replies Shiffy. Raizy jots down the answer and continues, "How much is one thousand divided by five? And ten times fourteen? And five hundred divided by twenty?" Shiffy has no difficulty answering Raizy's questions. Within five minutes the long row of problems is finished, and Raizy didn't even have to think about it.

Whenever Raizy has to draw a pretty picture in her notebook, the one to turn to is, of course, her older sister Miri. After all, Miri knows how to draw so well that she could almost be a professional artist. So while Raizy plays, Miri decorates Raizy's notebook.

When Raizy has to write a composition, she doesn't even try to write a single sentence. She runs right over to her sister-in-law Malka and makes a deal with her. "Malka, you're such a great writer," she cajoles. "It will only take you a few minutes to write a beautiful composition for me. So please, please, write the composition for me, and while you're doing it, I'll put your

children to bed."

"You really shouldn't do that, Raizy," says Malka, trying to resist the tantalizing offer. "It's better for you to write it yourself. That's the only way that you'll ever learn how to write. You need to practice writing. No one is born perfect, and if you want to learn how to do something, you have to practice doing it over and over again."

But Raizy knows exactly what to do when someone refuses to help her. She makes herself look helpless and in a hopeless tone of voice she whines, "You know that I could never write as well as you do. Every other girl in my class has someone to help her with her homework. None of my friends have to write their own compositions. That's why they get such good grades. Is it my fault that my mother won't help me? Do you want me to become the worst student in the whole class?"

Malka wonders if this is true. Does someone really write the other girls' compositions for them? When she was in school, no one ever wrote them for her. But Raizy's arguments sound so convincing that Malka gets upset at the very idea that her precious Raizy could lose her place in the class. So while Raizy reads a bedtime story to her adorable nieces and nephews, Malka quickly sits down and writes a composition that sounds as if it was written by a girl in the third grade. When the composition is finished, all Raizy has to do is copy it into her notebook.

But I'll tell you another secret that's *so* secret, even Raizy's mother doesn't know about it. Every once in a while (well, actually more often than every once in a while), when it's already late and the children are finally sleeping, Raizy tells Malka that she is so exhausted she cannot even hold a pencil in her hand. Malka worries that Raizy may have worked too hard taking care of the children, and she feels so guilty that she actually copies the composition she wrote into Raizy's notebook, making sure to write in big, round letters, just like a third-grader would.

To answer questions in *Chumash* or *Navi* you need a thorough knowledge of the subject, and for that Raizy's older brother Shloimy is the right address. When he comes home from yeshiva at night she asks him all of her questions, and smart Shloimy gives her all the answers. He's almost as fast as a computer. So it's really no wonder that Raizy's answers are always correct.

That's how Raizy does her homework. With so many brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, if one of them is busy, there's always someone available to help her.

Everyone seems to be happy with this situation. All of Raizy's brothers and sisters are more than willing to help their baby sister. The teacher is satisfied, because Raizy's notebooks are always neat and organized, and she almost always finishes all of her homework. Raizy is content because she has lots of extra time on her hands, and she never feels that her homework is too hard for her. And that is exactly why Raizy barely listens to what is being said in the classroom. After all, she never has to worry that she can't do her homework. So Raizy feels she can daydream in class while her friends are busy listening to everything the teacher says.

Only Raizy's mother is worried.

"What's going to become of you, Raize'le?" she asks every once in a while. "When are you going to start taking your work seriously? When will you start doing your own homework? You're only harming yourself this way."

"Don't worry," Raizy replies. "The main thing is that my notebooks are complete and that I get good grades on my report card."

"But how will you ever know the material if you don't study?"

"Everything will be fine. Don't worry, Mommy. When I grow up, I'll know everything."

"And how are you going to know everything if you don't learn it now?"

"Because grownups know everything, that's how." Raizy had already made up her mind, and she was not about to let this bother her.

Why should she worry about the future when everything was so good now? Everything works out in the end, doesn't it?

* * *

As time went on, other people in the family began to suspect that maybe they weren't really doing Raizy a favor by helping her with her homework. Maybe they were, in fact, hurting her.

Once, in the middle of a Shabbos meal, Tatty asked, "What happened to Yosef *Hatzaddik* in *Mitzrayim*?"

"His mother put him in a small basket," answered Raizy. She couldn't understand why everyone, even her father, started laughing so hard. Poor Raizy! She could not even remember the stories that she had learned in kindergarten.



When Raizy's mother served watermelon, Raizy recited the *berachah*, "*borei pri ha'eitz*." Tatty was surprised, and even a bit upset. "They never taught you in school what *berachah* to make on watermelon?" he asked.

What could Raizy answer? They had learned *berachos* in school. But Tzivia had been the one who

answered Raizy's homework questions, and Raizy, of course, had been daydreaming in class.

When the rains came late that winter and everyone was worried that there would be a drought, Raizy couldn't understand why people were so upset. After all, the faucet is always full of water.

"This is going too far," said Tzivia. "You've already learned about the water cycle, and a girl in third grade is old enough to understand that water doesn't just come out of the faucet."

But it took a very unpleasant experience to make Raizy finally realize what was really happening.

A few weeks later, Raizy's teacher broke her leg and had to spend several days in the hospital. The girls decided to make a party to welcome her back. First they had to decorate the classroom and

buy her a present. Raizy was chosen to organize everything. Everyone knew that she was the perfect person for the job. After all, she was creative, resourceful and got her homework done quickly, so all the girls were positive that she would do a great job.

Raizy collected money from all the girls. The day before the teacher was supposed to return to school, she asked some girls to help her decorate the classroom in the afternoon.

Eight girls volunteered to help. Raizy wrote out eight notes

telling each girl what to bring, folded the notes carefully and handed one to each girl. "Don't open the notes until you get home," she instructed them. "That way there will be no arguments over who brings what to school this afternoon."

All the girls showed up in front of the school at exactly four o'clock that afternoon, just as they had



agreed. But there was only one girl, Avigail, who brought what Raizy had asked her to bring: two pairs of sharp scissors.

"Ruthie," asked Raizy, "why didn't you bring the paints?"

"You didn't write *paints*, you wrote *pants*. But my father wouldn't let me bring his pants to school. He said that they would get ruined, and my mother couldn't understand why you needed my father's pants for a school party."

"And you wrote that I should bring *noodles*," added Sara'le. "My mother said that we were going to have enough nosh for the party, there was no reason for us to bring noodles too. Besides, she had no idea whether or not you wanted her to cook them beforehand."

"And you wrote that I should bring *litter*," reported Shoshi. "Don't you think that's silly? There's enough litter in the trash cans without us bringing more."

None of the girls, other than Avigail, understood Raizy's notes. Raizy was so embarrassed that her face turned as red as a beet. How could she admit to her friends that she didn't know how to write simple words like *paint*, *needles*, *glitter*, *thumbtacks*, *pencils*, *ribbons*, and *crepe paper*? Who would imagine that a girl her age would make such silly mistakes?

When Ruthie noticed Raizy's embarrassment, she jumped up and said, "Girls!

Raizy misspelled the words on purpose, to see if we would be able to figure out what she wanted us to bring this afternoon! Since we failed the test, let's just buy everything that's missing, okay? We'll use the extra money that Raizy collected. After all, the salad bowl we picked out for the teacher only costs eleven dollars and eighty-seven cents, while Raizy collected fourteen dollars."

Raizy let out a sigh of relief.

Ruthie had saved the day. She raced out to the store and bought everything that they would need to decorate the classroom. The bill came to three dollars and ninety-eight cents.

Before paying the bill, Raizy tried to figure out in her head if she would have enough money left to pay for the salad bowl. Perhaps she shouldn't buy everything? But as hard as she tried, she couldn't figure it

out. She had never learned how to add and subtract dollars and cents.

"Why are you standing there and thinking for so long?" the saleslady asked. "My granddaughter is much younger than you, and she has no problem figuring out such things." Raizy was so embarrassed that she quickly paid the bill and ran out of the store.

The girls started to make posters, but Raizy was afraid to write. Maybe she would make a mistake again. So she went to hang up the decorations while her friends had a great time together, writing and coloring in the letters.

When the girls finished decorating the classroom, they went together to buy the present for their teacher. The saleslady gift-wrapped the salad bowl, and the girls pleaded with her until she agreed to decorate it with a beautiful satin bow as well. Raizy handed the saleslady all the money that she had left. The saleslady carefully counted the coins before looking up at the girls. "You're one dollar and eighty five cents short," she informed them.

"What happened?" Shoshi asked Raizy in shock. "Did you forget how much money we needed for the present? You could have bought less crepe paper or ribbons!"

The saleslady was furious. "You girls have already come here three times to ask me about the price.

And now, after you insisted that I gift wrap it and add a special ribbon, you don't have enough money to pay for it?"

"I'll run home and get my own money to make up what's missing," Raizy mumbled.

Raizy raced home. She ran so fast that it was not long before she was running up the front stairs of her house. But it was long enough for her to realize that she had better make a few changes in her life.

From that day on, Raizy started to pay attention to everything the teacher said in class. She worked very hard – just as all the other girls did – to do her homework all by herself. She learned the hard way that we go to school to learn, and if we don't, life can be very difficult indeed. □



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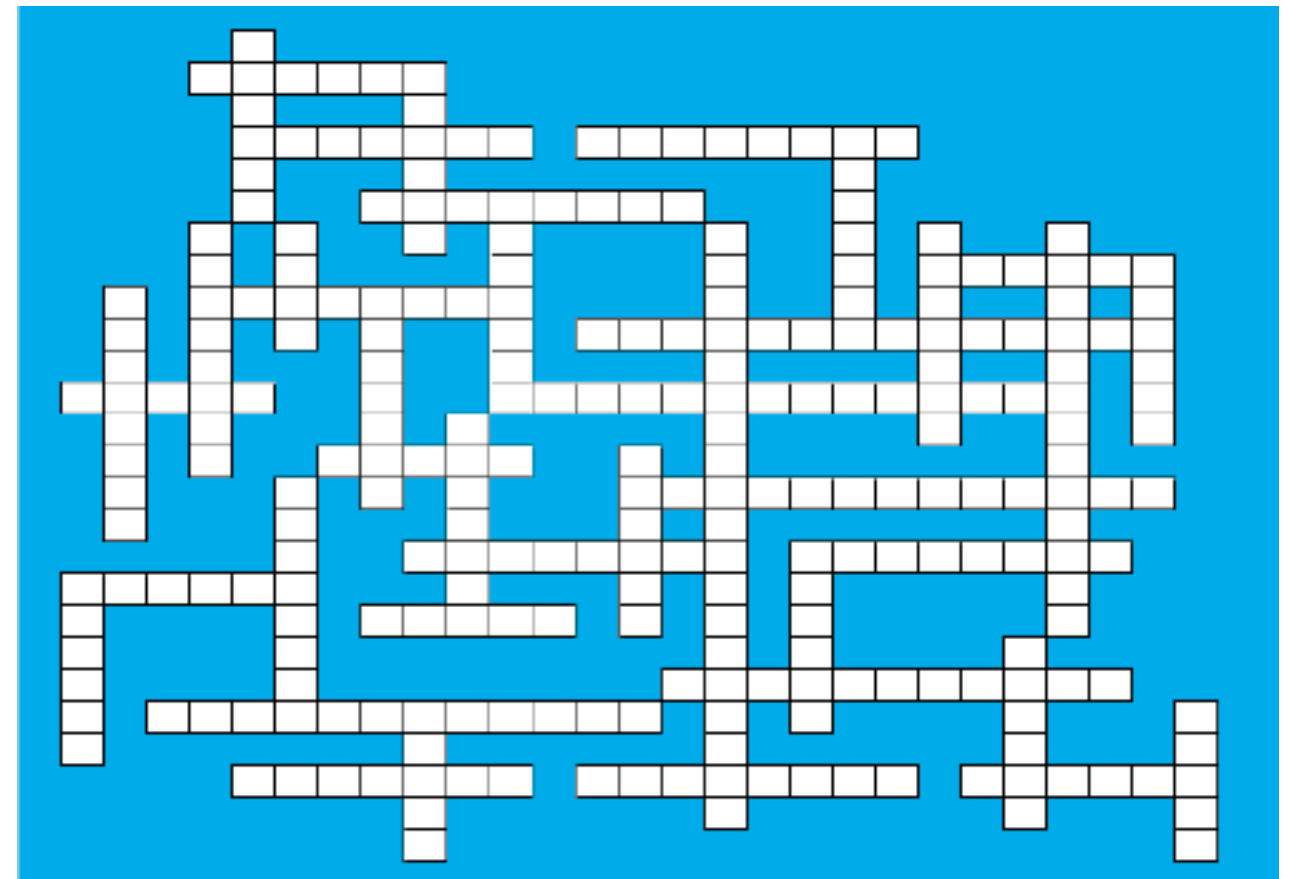
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PUZZLE PAGE

Tishrei – Chock-Full of Mitzvos and Minhagim



4 LETTERS
FAST

5 LETTERS
APPLE
ESROG
HONEY
LULAV
YONAH

6 LETTERS
ARAVOS
HALLEL
KITTEL
MIKVEH

SHOFER
SIMCHA
SUKKAH
TAANIS
TEKIAH
TERUAH
YIZKOR

7 LETTERS
CANDLES
HAKAFOS
KAPARAS
KIDDUSH
KOEHELES
MACHZOR

SIMANIM

8 LETTERS
FISHHEAD
HADASSIM
NEWKNIFE
SHEVARIM
TASHLICH
TEFILLAH
TESHUVAH
TZEDAKAH
USHPIZIN

11 LETTERS
POMEGRANATE

12 LETTERS
SHEHECHEYANU

13 LETTERS
AVINUMALKEINU
UNESANEHTOKEF

14 LETTERS
BIRCHASHABANIM
HATARASNADARIM

19 LETTERS
SIMCHASBESHASHOE-
VAH

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BEFORE

דעת תורה

קריאה קדושה לחצלת ילדי ישראל
 A Call to Save Our Jewish Children

AFTER

1 NAOMI IS CRYING.

2 NAOMI, WHAT'S WRONG?
 DID SOMEONE HURT YOUR FEELINGS? DOES SOMETHING HURT?

3 EVERYONE IS ASLEEP, EXCEPT FOR NAOMI. SHE IS THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED DURING RECESS.

4 CAN I PLAY?
 SURE!

5 YOU'RE OUT, MALKIE. IT'S MY TURN NOW.
 WHEN WILL IT BE MY TURN? I'M TIRED OF TURNING.

6 YOU'RE OUT, RUCHIE.
 FINALLY, IT'S MY TURN.

7 NO I'M NOT! YOU TURNED THE ROPE TOO FAST. I TURNED IT JUST RIGHT.
 (SIGH!)
 IT'S RUCHIE'S ROPE. IF I DON'T GIVE IN, SHE WON'T LET ME PLAY.

8 ESTI, YOU'RE OUT.

9 HURRAY! IT'S MY TURN! FINALLY I GET TO JUMP.

RUCHIE STEPPED RIGHT ONTO THE ROPE.

10

NO! THAT WAS NAOMI'S FAULT! SHE PUSHED ME AND I TRIPPED ON THE ROPE.

HERE, TURN THE ROPE.

WHAT? I DIDN'T TOUCH YOU!

11

NOT TRUE! FIRST YOU TURNED THE ROPE WRONG, AND NOW YOU PUSHED ME TO GET ME OUT. I DON'T WANT TO PLAY WITH YOU!

12

BUT, POOR RUCHIE! SHE WORKED SO HARD ON THAT PROJECT. SHE'LL FEEL TERRIBLE WHEN SHE FINDS OUT IT WAS RUINED. WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO BE ANGRY OR TAKE REVENGE.

19

RUCHIE, RUCHIE!

20

WHAT'S UP?

YOUR CANTEEN IS DRIPPING

21

I TURNED THE ROPE FOR SO LONG, AND WHEN IT WAS FINALLY MY TURN, RUCHIE SAID I WAS OUT THE FIRST MINUTE. SHE DIDN'T WANT TO TURN, SO SHE BLAMED ME.

13

IN THE MORNING, A SAD, TIRED NAOMI GETS UP AND LEAVES FOR SCHOOL.

14

HER FRIENDS ARE WALKING UP AHEAD.

I DON'T FEEL LIKE WALKING WITH THEM.

15

OH, NO! EVERYTHING IS ALL WET

22

POOR RUCHIE. SHE WORKED SO HARD ON THAT DECORATION

MY SUKKAH DECORATION IS RUINED

23

DON'T CRY, RUCHIE. HERE, TAKE MY PROJECT

WOW! YOURS IS MUCH NICER THAN MINE WAS.

24

HEY, WHAT ARE ALL THESE DROPS OF WATER ON THE GROUND?

16

IT'S DRIPPING OUT OF RUCHIE'S BRIEFCASE.

17

HER CANTEEN MUST HAVE OPENED. WELL, IT SERVES HER RIGHT! NOW THE SUKKAH DECORATION WE'VE BEEN MAKING IN SCHOOL WILL GET ALL RUINED.

18

THANK YOU!

25

WHAT A GOOD FEELING! I WAS STRONGER THAN MY ANGER; I COULD FORGIVE HER!

26

TO NAOMI:
I FEEL TERRIBLE THAT I HURT YOUR FEELINGS, AND I WANT TO ASK YOU TO FORGIVE ME. I'M SURE THAT JUST LIKE YOU FORGAVE ME, HASHEM WILL FORGIVE YOU AND GIVE YOU A SWEET YEAR FULL OF BRACHOS.
SINCERELY,
RUCHIE

THE NEXT DAY NAOMI FINDS A NOTE IN HER MAILBOX:

27



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