

The Jewish Weekly

In Loving memory of
Mendy Klein
 ר' מנחם משה ז"ל
 בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא
 נפטר ל"ג בעומר
 י"ח אייר תשע"ח
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Itche, the Hero of Ger

By Rabbi Yechezkel Spero

Throughout his life, the Imrei Emet, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter of Ger, was particular that no one should touch his clothing. He was so concerned that his clothes not be affected by impurity, that he even chose his tailor very carefully. There was one person, however, who was allowed to touch his clothing. He was neither a Rebbe nor a learned individual, nor did he come from a prestigious background. Itche Greinemous was a rather simple fellow. However, because of one amazing day in his life, he had the privilege of helping the Rebbe don his Kittel on Pesach night.

At the time of the story, the Sfat Emet, Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib, stood at the helm of Ger Chassidut. One day, word began to spread that a plague had broken out in the city. Immediately, everyone ran to their homes and tried to protect themselves against the deadly plague. But it was too late; the plague spread quickly and mercilessly, claiming the lives of many, especially children. By the time daybreak had arrived, the streets were littered with the bodies of lifeless children. The authorities, desperate to get the situation under control, decreed that these bodies should be cremated to prevent the plague from spreading any further. The heartbroken families, who wanted so badly to give their children a proper final farewell, watched helplessly from inside their homes, since they knew that they were risking their lives by going outside.

The Sfat Emet was beside himself. There was really nothing anyone could do, as no one was prepared to risk his own life. After much thought, the Sfat Emet issued a declaration: Anyone who was prepared to bury one of the dead children would be guaranteed a portion in the World to Come. Families heard about the Rebbe's promise, but the streets remained eerily empty, until suddenly, one towering figure emerged. It was Itche Greinemous. With a shovel in his hand, he bent down next to a small child in the middle of the street and wrapped him in a tallit. Then he went to the cemetery and buried the boy. At the end of the day, he showed up at the doorstep of the Sfat Emet.

The Rebbe had heard about his act of selfless dedication and promised him that he would receive a special portion in the World to Come, for his Mesirat Nefesh. But Itche just stood there at the doorstep, exhausted and filthy. "Rebbe, what you promised was based on someone burying one child. I just came from the cemetery. Rebbe, I buried 16 children!"

The Sfat Emet looked incredulously at the broad-shouldered fellow. He could hardly believe what he had just heard. "Sixteen children?" The Rebbe contemplated the immeasurable comfort that Itche had provided to those 16 families. Instead of their children being reduced to ash, they now had a final resting place of dignity, where the parents could come visit them and pray.

"So what can I possibly give you as a reward?" the Rebbe asked.

Itche did not hesitate for a moment. He knew exactly what he wanted. It was neither riches nor monetary rewards he was seeking. Nor was he interested in honor or glory. Instead, he asked the Rebbe if he could have the privilege of helping him put on his Kittel every year at the Seder. Immediately, the Rebbe agreed, and so it was. Every year, after they came back from davening, the Sfat Emet allowed Itche to help him with his Kittel, a privilege that was allowed to no one else.

The obvious connection was never spoken about. While Itche had risked his life to prepare the 16 children he had buried and to dress them in their תכריכים (burial shrouds), the Rebbe had given him the privilege of dressing him in his Kittel, a special garment reserved for the Seder, and used later for burial.

In the last year of the Sfat Emet's life, as Itche helped him with his Kittel, he let out a krechitz (a sigh of pain), "Oy! There are thousands of Jewish soldiers who have written to me asking that I daven on their behalf. All they want is that they should be Zocheh (Merit) to receive a קבר ישראלי (a proper Jewish burial). How can I begin my Seder with this enormous burden on my shoulders? Who can carry such a burden? I can't do it anymore. I just can't do it."

Anyone who was in the room at that time was greatly moved by the Rebbe's cry, but perhaps no one was more moved than Itche, who had risked his life to bring so many children to Jewish burial.

After the Rebbe's passing that year, Itche continued to perform his yearly practice with the Imrei Emet, the son of the Sfat Emet. Although the Imrei Emet was particular about who touched his clothing, Itche was more angel than man.

Years later, on the first day of Succot, as he stood in the Gerrer Beit Midrash holding his Lulav and Etrog, Itche breathed his last breath. With thousands of people in the surrounding area, Itche was taken out of the Beit Midrash. The following day, he was brought to his final resting place, in one of the largest funeral processions the city of Ger had ever seen. Of course, the Imrei Emet was in attendance, as well.

Itche was buried right near the children he had buried years before.

Reprinted from Haggadah Touched by Our Story – Artscroll.com.

Editor's Note: My fellow dear medical personnel, my fellow dear Chevra Kadisha members, we are going through a very bad plague, people are dying all over the world from it. Some countries want to make it a law to cremate because they can not handle the burial of the numbers of dead they have. The Chevra Kadisha all over the world are working tirelessly, following in Reb Itche's footsteps to make sure that every Jew gets brought to קבר ישראלי (a proper Jewish burial). I am so proud to be involved in this big Mitzvah. You are the ones who put on Klal Yisrael's kittel Seder night. You are on the forefront of saving Klal Yisrael, you are the ones who have put yourselves and your entire being into making sure that Klal Yisrael gets a Refuah and for those who can not be saved, a Kever Yisrael. Your zechutim (merits) are great, your Brachot are great, הקב"ה ישיבם שרם (may Hashem protect you, may Hashem strengthen you, may Hashem save you, and your families. Klal Yisrael owes you a tremendous debt of gratitude..... Thank you

It Once Happened..

The Ponevezher Rav's Morning Appointment At the Train Station

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The Ponevezher Rav [Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman] zt'l (1886-1969) was in the Diaspora, collecting money for the Ponevezh Yeshiva [in Bnei Brak, Israel]. One philanthropist told him to meet him in the morning, at the train station. He explained that he had to catch the 8:00 a.m. train, and he could speak with the Rosh Yeshiva before boarding.

The Ponevezher Rav was glad that he obtained this appointment, but he soon realized that the only way he could get to the train station before eight o'clock, would be by missing tefillah b'tzibbur. He debated whether he should forgo tefillah with a minyan just this one time, because it was for a mitzvah — to raise money for the yeshivah.

But then he decided that he wouldn't rush. He would daven Shacharit serenely with a minyan as usual, and go to the train station afterwards. Maybe he would still meet with the baal tzedakah.

He arrived at the train station close to 9:00, the wealthy man wasn't there. As the Ponevezher Rav turned to leave, he saw that the philanthropist had just arrived. "I'm sorry you waited for me all this time," the philanthropist said, assuming that the Ponevezher Rav was waiting for him since before eight. "I was delayed this morning, and I will catch the next train. I thought that you wouldn't be here anymore. I'm glad you waited for me..." and he gave the Ponevezher Rav a very large check; enough to support the yeshiva for about a half-year.

When the Ponevezher Rav returned to his yeshiva, he showed the yeshiva bachurim the big check, and said, "I'm not telling you this story so you should know that one doesn't lose out by being careful to daven with a minyan, because that's obvious. I'm telling this story so you shall know what one gains by davening with a minyan.

"If I would have rushed and davened beyichidut (alone) and then rushed to the train station to be there before eight o'clock, I would wait some time, perhaps a half hour, see that the philanthropist wasn't showing up and I'd leave. I wouldn't wait around until close to nine. By being devoted to davening with a minyan, I merited receiving this large check."

Reprinted from an email of Torah Wellsprings.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Shemini

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:34	7:48	8:27
Tel Aviv	6:49	7:51	
Haifa	6:41	7:51	
Be'er Sheva	6:51	7:50	

Slice of Life

Torah Compilations With Yossi Parshat Shemini

The King and Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Here is a short but powerful story I heard attributed to Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz, the chief Rabbi of Prague, some three hundred years ago.

Because he was a great and famous figure, eventually the king invited him for a private audience.

The king held himself to also be an intellectual and it wasn't long before he began peppering the Rabbi with difficult questions, comparing Judaism to the other religions, trying to trip him up.

Of course, in such cases it was as dangerous to win as it was to lose. One word against the king's religion could result in disaster as could an insufficient reply.

Finally, the king asked the most difficult question of all; what does it mean when the Bible calls the Jews G-d's chosen people? How do we see they are different from any other people or religion? Exactly the opposite! They are outnumbered and belittled by all the other nations! Obviously the 'Old Testament' is speaking about days of old, but not now!

Rabbi Eibeshitz thought for a moment and answered.

"I can show Your Majesty the difference, but only on the condition that I have Your Majesty's word that no harm will come to the Jews from anything Your Majesty sees today."

The king promised, the Rabbi asked him to disguise himself as a common citizen so as not to be recognized and to follow him to the synagogue.

It happened to be in the middle of the holiday of Passover. Rabbi Eibeshitz stood on the podium and announced that after the evening prayer he wanted to make an announcement. The word spread like wildfire and in just moments the entire place was packed.

"You all know," the Rabbi said as the room fell silent. "That it is forbidden by Royal decree to be in the possession of silk. Well I want everyone to run home and bring all the silk he has hidden." (The Jews sold the silk to tailors or to other merchants to keep them from poverty).

In moments the room was empty and minutes later it was full again. Each man produced a roll or two of silk hidden under his coat. The Rabbi looked briefly at the rolls of cloth and then announced.

"Fine! Now I want everyone to take your silks back and appear back here as soon as possible with all the Chametz (unleavened bread and cakes, forbidden on Passover) you have in your homes."

The people looked at each other and then at the Rabbi in horror. "But Rabbi!" they blurted out "That is impossible. No one has Chametz! G-d forbid! No one would even dream of having Chametz on Passover! G-d forbid!!

Where could we possibly get Chametz from??"

"Very good!" said the Rabbi, "That is what I wanted to hear. Have a good holiday, all of you! G-d bless you all!!" And the people filed by the Rabbi, shook his hand and soon the Rabbi and the King were alone in the synagogue.

"Do you see?" the Rabbi said. "Your Majesty has soldiers and police everywhere and anyone caught in possession of silk will be heavily fined and even imprisoned. And nevertheless, you see that some of the Jews do possess silk.

But none of those people ever saw G-d and He has no soldiers or police. In fact, today a Jew can, G-d forbid, transgress all of the commandments and receive no fine, no imprisonment, not even a slap on the hand; no punishment what-so-ever! But despite all this, you see that none would think to own Chametz.

That is why the Jews are 'chosen', not because G-d necessarily favors them, but because WE favor G-d. We do what G-d wants above all logic and reason!"

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, www.ohrtmimim.org.



The fact that this week's Parshah is called Shemini, which means 'the eighth', issues an invitation to us to answer the question of what is special about the number 8?

In Kabbalistic teachings, the number six represents the natural world. Hashem created our world in six days, and therefore we work on six days. The number seven represents the perfection of people. On the seventh day we celebrate Shabbat which is known as "מעין עולם הבא" – the closest we can come in this world, to the perfect spirituality of the World to Come. The number nine represents אלהים הקדוש ברוך הוא - Hashem, it is the Divine number.

In maths, quite extraordinarily, a number can only be divided by nine if its digits add up to nine, or a multiple of nine. For example, in the number 459, 4+5+9 = 18 which is a multiple of 9, and therefore we know it is divisible by 9. It shows that 9 fits perfectly into the world around it, and that is a description of Hashem.

At the end of the Shema, we conclude the words "ה' אלוהינו" – the Lord your Hashem, but we always add the word 'אמת' onto it which means truth. That is because the Talmud teaches us "ה' אמתו של הקב"ה", the seal of Hashem is truth. The gematria of the word 'אמת' adds up to 441, which is 4+4+1, which equals 9, indicating that the truth of Hashem is represented by the number 9.

So if seven represents the perfection of people, and nine represents Hashem, eight represents the bridge, connecting us with our Creator. That is why a baby boy has his 'ברית מילה – circumcision' through which he establishes a covenant between himself and Hashem - on the eighth day. That is why the festival of Chanukah is eight days long when we recall the Divine intervention which saved our people. And that is why between Pesach and Shavuot for a period of 7x7 days we prepare ourselves for the re-enactment of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Once we reach that number 49, we are prepared for the festival of Shavuot, which takes places at the beginning of the eighth week, reminding us of that ultimate revelation when Hashem appeared to us, and of the first two of the ten commandments. He delivered them directly to us – the ultimate bridge between Heaven and earth.

Now we can understand our parshah, "ויהי ביום השמיני" – and it came to pass on the eighth day – once the "משכן - the sanctuary in the wilderness" had been completed, and the altar was there to be dedicated, for seven continuous days the people offered sacrifices with no response from Hashem, but after those seven days, "והתנצח אש מן השמים" – on the eighth day, fire came from Heaven and consumed the animal on the altar – there was that connection between Heaven and earth.

The number eight is a special number which issues a call to us. Let us embrace the natural world represented by the number six. Let us strive to reach our greatest potential for perfection, represented by the number seven. And in that way, may we merit to live up to the aspirations of the number eight, to feel the presence of Hashem in our lives and to enable Him to bless us always and let's pray with all our hearts for all those who are sick from the epidemic as well as praying for our soldiers who go out to protect us and those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 17
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 11

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 91
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1238
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4670

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Shmuel II, 6:1 - 7:17
Chabad & Sephardim: Shmuel II, 6:1 - 19

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Iyar which falls on Friday and Shabbat Parshat Tazria-Metzora, Apr. 24 & 25.
This Shabbat afternoon we begin the weekly study of Pirkei Avot, every Shabbat until Rosh Hashana. This week we study Chapter 1.

שמיני
This week is dedicated in memory of all those who perished recently, and for a speedy recovery for all those effected from this pandemic which we are living through. We also dedicate this issue to all our medical personnel and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide
The Jewish Weekly staff salute you