

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.

The Wayward Shochet And the Holy Hitchhikers

By Asharon Baltazar

Face flushed with emotion, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua Heschel, then rabbi of Kolbuszowa, Poland, finished recounting his story and fell quiet. His peers, Rabbi Mordechai of Neshchiz and Rabbi Aryeh Leib (known as the Shpoler Zeide), seemed oblivious that the story had come to an end.

"Esteemed gentleman," said Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua loudly, "What is the verdict? I accept whatever you decide."

Concerned, the rabbis agreed that the details were too scarce to settle on a ruling. It took another hour of pointed questioning before they felt ready to deliver a verdict.

"The circumstances surrounding your actions classify you as an accidental murderer," they decided. "Technically, you did nothing wrong, but a man of your spiritual stature should have pursued an alternate set of actions. An extended exile would be the appropriate remedy for your soul."

Because they had issued the verdict upon their friend, the rabbis assumed his punishment too. All three would aimlessly wander the country for three years, relying on G-d for their sustenance.

Several weeks prior, a small delegation of Jews from a neighboring town had traveled to Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua with shocking news about the behavior of their shochet (ritual slaughterer). Moshe had fallen on tough times, and was now known to frequent the local watering holes, whiling away entire nights in a drunken stupor. Witnesses reported seeing him swaying wildly, slurring local folk songs at the top of his lungs.

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua could hardly believe his ears. There was nothing harmless about Moshe's behavior! A shochet, the individual responsible for providing the town's supply of kosher meat, was expected to act with decorum. He packed a few belongings, and left the very next day to investigate.

The scenery rolled by uneventfully as the carriage gently rocked its passenger. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua noticed a man, hunched with age, walking deliberately along the roadside. "Why are you tiring yourself out?" he called from the carriage window. "Please, come share the bench with me. There's plenty of space."

The man climbed aboard, and although the rabbi attempted to engage him in friendly conversation, the newcomer made it clear he preferred to be left alone.

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua did not notice the tiredness descending. Without even a yawn of warning, he found himself overcome by a strong and sudden urge for deep sleep.

"How is the Rabbi of Kolbuszowa swayed by slander about a shochet who is revered by the angels themselves?"

Convinced it was the old hitchhiker who said these words, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua forced his eyes open and whirled around, only to discover that the carriage had stopped and he was alone inside it.

The driver tended the horses, then hoisted himself back up onto the seat and promptly resumed the journey.

Once again, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua spotted a lone figure trudging along the road, a heavy sack slung over his shoulder. He ordered the driver to slow the carriage and invited the young traveler inside.

Cheered by the kind offer, the young traveler took a seat and stared out the window wordlessly. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua, grateful for the company, asked a few questions, but was once again met with silence.

For the second time that day, the rabbi felt himself overcome with a sudden, heavy exhaustion, and as his eyes drooped, he heard the familiar thundering voice.

"Is it true the Rabbi of Kolbuszowa wishes to fire a shochet who even the angels above, dare not approach?"

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua woke up and realized they had arrived at their destination. The seat opposite him was empty.

In the back of his mind, the thought that his dream might not have been a dream after all frightened him.

As evening morphed into night, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua made his way to Moshe's home - a cabin on the city's outskirts, not far from the cemetery. Everything was shrouded in darkness by the time he stepped up to the door and knocked gently. A woman, clearly Moshe's wife, opened the door and regarded the holy visitor with wide-eyed reverence.

"Where is your husband?" Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua asked.

Tight-lipped, the woman directed a shaking finger at a small hut in the corner of the yard. "There."

With a quiet murmur of thanks, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua left the woman by the door and

It Once Happened..

approached the hut, treading slowly and softly through the yard. He peered through a small crack in the door and studied the scene inside. Sitting in the center of the room, swaying over a large book with utmost reverence, were Moshe the shochet, the old hitchhiker, and the young traveler who carried the heavy bundle. Their faces emanated a golden glow that filled the small room.

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua crept back to Moshe's wife, who was still standing in the doorway.

"Please, can you call your husband?" he asked.

The woman obliged and disappeared inside the hut. Moshe then staggered from the darkness towards Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua, barely keeping his balance, a sloshing bottle of spirits swinging in one hand.

"I demand you cease this act at once!" said Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua sternly. "Tell me what is happening here."

Moshe's expression transformed mid-step into one of utter seriousness. He dropped the bottle and pulled Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua out of his wife's earshot.

"For a long while, I've kept my true identity a secret. Time after time, I buried it under various guises and behaviors. But now that you have revealed my secret, I realize my role here in this world has come to an end. I ask one thing of you — please arrange that my wife and children receive a monthly stipend."

Moshe's body was laid to rest the next day. Leading the funeral procession, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua bared his anguish in heaving sobs, a tormenting guilt seared forever into his soul. The life of an innocent, righteous man had been severed short, and it was his fault.

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua used the eulogy to reveal Moshe's identity as one of the 36 hidden righteous people and described the extreme measures he had taken to maintain his disguise. Now seeing their wayward shochet in a new light, the townspeople rushed to fulfill Moshe's last wishes.

It was these events that Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua relayed to his peers, after which he began his penance: a three-year exile through the Polish countryside.

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.org.



Shabbat Times – Eikev

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:55	8:09	8:46
Tel Aviv	7:10	8:11	
Haifa	7:03	8:12	
Be'er Sheva	7:12	8:10	



The Rebbe and the Banker

By Rabbi Amram Sananes

There's an amazing story with the Klausenberger Rebbe that occurred during the Holocaust. The story is told in his book called "The War Years". The Rabbi recounts that while in the concentration camps, 42 people were stuffed into the small barracks, so many had to sleep on the floor.

Within two weeks, the Rabbi writes, only I and one other person were left alive. The other 40 had died of starvation and disease. The other man, who came from Budapest, and I slept on the ground, enveloped in darkness and surrounded by insects and rodents.

'Are you Jewish?' I asked my companion.

'Of course! Why else would I be here?' he answered.

'Who are you?' I probed.

'I am the president of the National Bank of Hungary.' This was the most important position in finance in Hungary; it meant that this man's picture appeared on all Hungarian currency.

'I asked again, 'Are you Jewish?'

This time he answered, 'No.'

'Didn't you just say that you were?' I queried in surprise.

The man quickly explained himself: 'I converted to Christianity!' Clearly he had abandoned the faith of his ancestors in order to move up the social ladder.

It was impossible to fall asleep, so I continued the conversation, gazing pityingly at him.

'Are you married?'

Yes, but my wife is a Christian,' he answered.

'And she did not join you here?' I asked with mild astonishment.

Angrily, the man responded, 'How could you even think of such a thing? Why should she have come here? To suffer as much as I am?'

Innocently, I responded, 'I do not understand. Doesn't a good devoted wife follow her husband wherever he goes, even to Gehennom if necessary? Would a good wife leave her husband alone in this state?'

Without pausing for breath, I continued, 'Tell me, did you live well?'

'What kind of a question is that? In the thirty years we lived together, I bought her the best of everything. I gave her all that was good in the world!'

'If so, I am really shocked,' I said. 'How is it possible that you treated your wife so well for thirty years, and she is only willing to share the good times with you? In hard times like this, she leaves you to deal with it alone?' We stopped talking then. The night passed and in the morning we were called to work again. The next night, I struck up a conversation again.

'Tell me, did you accomplish important things for the Hungarian government?'

'Certainly,' the former banker responded. 'When I was hired to manage the National Bank, the economy was very depressed. The forint's value had gone way down. With one thousand forints you could hardly buy anything. I made it into a real currency, a strong currency. Hungary became prosperous, thanks to my hard work, and it began to trade with the whole world. I accomplished great things in the fields of finance and business. You never heard of me?'

I shrugged my shoulders apologetically. 'I am not involved in such matters. I am not a businessman or a banker.'

The banker asked in surprise, 'You really mean you don't know who I am and what I was? To this very day you won't find a single gentile in Hungary who doesn't recognize my name.'

'Then how is it that you were sent here, and the Hungarian nation did not protest? After all you did so much for them. How could a person as important and as accomplished as you be run out of the country and into a concentration camp without any legitimate reason?'

'Why are you provoking me so much?' the banker exploded.

'Perhaps you can tell me why you are imprisoned here?'

'I am just a poor rabbi,' I answered.

'They hate me.'

'But you did so many good things for them. How can they hate you? I would expect them to carry you on their shoulders, not send you to a concentration camp.'

'Well, as you can see they did not carry me on their shoulders.'

'I simply cannot understand it. After all, you converted to Catholicism and became a complete non-Jew in order to be like them and to be accepted by them – and they ignored it all.' As aside, I asked, 'What about your children? What do they do?'

'My children? One is a doctor, the other a lawyer, and the third a successful businessman.'

'Did you also provide for them?'

'Of course!' the banker answered. 'I sent them to the best schools so that they would be well educated.'

'And why did your children not come after you?' I pressed. Even when a person dies his children follow the casket to the cemetery. 'Your children have left you to be exiled in shame.... They didn't follow you to the border. Not a single one has come here to see where their father is and what is happening to him.'

'You are hurting me very much with your worlds. You want to annoy me.'

'I don't want to annoy you, God forbid I just want to understand how bitter your situation is.'

We continued talking until late at night. My words began to penetrate the assimilated banker, for on the third night, he initiated the conversation.

'You know, Rabbi, I've been thinking about your words all day... I have come to the conclusion that you are right!' He expressed genuine regret for having converted, for having married a non-Jewish woman, even for spoiling his children so much. The banker saw clearly that absolutely nothing from his pathetic life remained with him. 'I made a mistake,' he cried in a choked voice. 'I made a terrible mistake with my life.'

'On the fourth night, the banker was no longer among the living. I was grateful for the opportunity that had been sent my way. He had at least done teshuvah and regretted his deeds a day before his death.'

Reprinted from an email from Jack E. Rahmey.

A Passuk in this week's Parshah says, "יִדְעַת עַם-לְבַבְךָ - You should know in your heart, that just as a man chastises his son, so does Hashem, your G-d, chastise you." The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh reminds us that when Hashem chastises us, it is out of pure love, because it is the natural thing for a father who loves his child, to chastise him when he sees his son doing something wrong.

Reuven had recently graduated medical school with a specialty in oncology, and started his shifts in the hospital, when unfortunately he learned that his son Chaim had a deadly sickness for which one would see an Oncologist. Reuven started bringing Chaim to the hospital, where he put a needle in his son's arm to start pumping poison into his child to administer chemotherapy. One day, a very mentally challenged person comes out of the psych ward, and says: "Idiot, why are you pumping poison into your son's arm? First, you prick him with the needle and then you start pumping him with poison? What's the matter with you?"

Does Chaim listen to the mentally challenged person's criticism, or does he realize, accept, and know that his father loves him, and though he is doing something now that is hurting him it is really for a greater good in the long run?

Friends, so many of us, or our friends or relatives, go through some serious pain in our lives. If only we would realize that The One Who is putting the needle in our arm, and is "causing us the pain" is Avinu Av HaRachaman, who loves us unconditionally. He is only doing it to fix whatever needs to be fixed and never because He hates us, G-d forbid. We need to remind ourselves not to listen to the people who know much less than us about the ways of Hashem, when they tell us "it's messed up, that a loving G-d can do this to you". We do not have to understand why Hashem does what He does, or He allows what He does, but we need to believe that, He loves us more than anything, and is doing what He is doing because of that love. Once we realize that, the pain becomes easier to live with.

So let's pray that Hashem takes away all pain from all of His children with the ultimate consolation, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days and let's pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for 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, and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 8
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 111
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1747
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6865

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 49:14- 51:3 (ותאמר ציון) (this is the second of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapter 5 (Diaspora and some in Israel study chapter 4) of Pirkei Avot

תורת
עקב

This week is sponsored
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