

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 Twelfth Pole

By Tuvia Litzman

Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles

Five hundred years ago, there lived a king in Persia who was a descendant of King Achashverosh. He took interest in the history of his family and found out that the Jewish people had in its possession an ancient handwritten parchment called "The Scroll of Esther," which describes in detail the origin of his ancestor's royal dynasty.

The Persian king researched the details of the scroll. Among other interesting facts, he learned that it is written in the scroll that Haman had offered to pay King Achashverosh 10,000 silver ducats for the right to do whatever he desired with the Jews in his extensive kingdom. He also discovered that in the end the money was not paid. This sparked in him a clever idea.

He summoned the rabbis and the leaders of the Jewish community and asked them: "Is everything written in your Scroll of Esther true?"

The Jews could not grasp the intention of the king, but they of course assured him that everything written in Megillat Esther is true.

"If that is the case", said the king, "I command you to pay the 10,000 silver ducats you owe my ancestors!"

The Jewish rabbis tried to explain to the king that King Achashverosh remitted the money to Haman, as it says explicitly in the scroll: "The money is given to you"; but the king did not give in. "I am a descendant of King Achashverosh and you are the descendants of the Jewish people. I want the money within a month. If not - you will be expelled from your homes!"

The harsh decree shocked the rabbis. All over Persia the Jewish leaders proclaimed days of prayer and fasting. The synagogues were full of people saying Psalms day and night, and large sums of charity were distributed.

The Jewish leaders tried to estimate how much money they would be able to collect. Within a few days they reached the conclusion that even if they were to sell all their properties, they would not reach the sum that the king requested. Nor would there be enough time to send emissaries to other countries in order to collect money from Jewish communities outside of Persia.

In their desperation, they decided that their best option was to send a messenger to the "Holy Ari," Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, who resided in Tsfat in the Holy Land in order to ask for his blessing and advice.

The messenger sped away on a fast camel and shortly arrived in Tsfat. He handed over the letter written by the rabbis of the Jewish community in Persia and pleaded in tears for help, asking the holy Ari to pray on their behalf to our Father in Heaven.

The Holy Ari went into his private study for a while and then returned to the messenger, holding a small box in his hand.

The Ari said to him: "The Jews of Persia have repented with a full heart and the evil decree has been revoked. There is no need to pay the ransom money.

"Instead, on the day of payment, the leaders of the Jewish community are to hand over this box to the king. The box must not be opened by anyone but the king."

Meanwhile, the king was very satisfied with his plan. If the Jews would pay him the money - all the better. If they did not, he would confiscate their property after the expulsion and would make a tidy profit in any case.

That night the king did not sleep well. He had a fearful dream:

A mighty storm was raging outside his palace. Suddenly the windows to his room burst open. A man clad in white with fiery eyes entered his room through the window. The king wanted to cry for help, but the words got stuck in his throat and he was unable to utter a word.

The white figure took him by the hand and led him outside through the open window. They passed houses and fields until they reached a forest. There was an open area between the trees.

The white figure turned to the king and asked him in a stern voice: "What do you see in the open area?"

"I see a high pole - and somebody is hanging from its top," the king said in fear.

They continued their walk another few steps, and again the figure in white asked the king what he saw.

"I see another high pole with somebody hanging from its top - and there is another one and yet another..."

"How many poles do you see?" the figure asked.

"I can see eleven poles with people hanging from the top - and over there is another pole - but nobody is hanging from it," said the king, trembling with fear.

"The people hanging there are Haman and his ten sons," said the figure to the king. "The empty pole is meant for people who walk in their evil ways!"

A shiver went over the body of the king.

The white figure took the king by his hand and led him back to the king's palace. The figure made the king sit down next to his desk and said, "Write that you relinquish all your claims against the Jews and sign the document with the royal seal!"

The king wrote the document with a trembling hand, signed it, and stamped the royal seal over his signature. He handed the document to the man in white who disappeared through the window.

It Once Happened..

Suddenly the king woke up from his nightmare. He found himself sitting next to his desk, shivering with fear and his face covered by cold sweat.

Outside there was a quiet summer night.

"What a strange dream I had," he thought and went back to sleep in his bed.

The following morning he still remembered the dream but dismissed it.

The messenger came back from Tsfat to the Jewish leaders in Persia with good tidings. Still, the Jews did not rest the whole month. They studied much Torah, spent many hours in prayer every day, and took upon themselves to correct everything that needed to be corrected. Especially, they asked forgiveness of each other and acted with brotherly love.

When the designated day came, the leaders of the Jewish community took the box that they had received from the Holy Ari and approached the king.

"Where is my money?" the king roared.

"Your majesty, we have brought this box for you," said the spokesman of the delegation and handed the box to the king.

The king took the box in his hand, opened it and found a signed document inside. When he started to read what was written there, he suddenly screamed in terrible fear and fell in a swoon to the floor.

The king's doctors who immediately were summoned finally managed to wake him up. The king's hands and feet, were trembling.

"So it was not a dream," he whispered in panic. "The next hanging pole was meant for me because of my behavior towards the Jews..."

Nobody knew what he was talking about, but when he recovered somewhat he gave over the document to the Jewish leaders and said: "Everything which is written in this document is hereby established in law. I give up all my claims regarding the debt. I promise not to harm any Jew from now on. You are released from all previous monetary claims as well."

The Jewish leaders immediately dispatched a special messenger in order to express their gratitude to the Holy Ari. All over Persia the Jews celebrated parties of thanksgiving to G-d for their wonderful delivery. "The Jews had light and happiness and joy and honor."

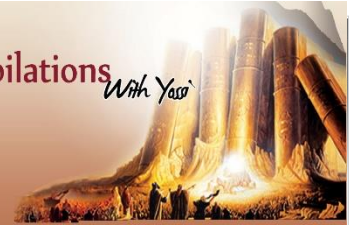
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YF GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Re'eh

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:48	8:01	8:39
Tel Aviv	7:03	8:04	
Haifa	6:55	8:04	
Be'er Sheva	7:05	8:03	



Exploring Asia in Brooklyn

By Freddy Ezekiel

I was born in Shanghai, China, where my grandfather – Judah Abraham – served as one of the leaders of the Sephardic community. In 1948, when I was twenty-one, I moved to Hong Kong where I stayed until 1963 or so, and then I immigrated to London. That is where I got married and lived until moving to Miami nearly forty years ago.

Back in 1962, while still living in the Far East, I attended a Bar Mitzvah of a relative in New York, where I met a number of young chassidic rabbis, one of whom – I later surmised – must have reported to his Rebbe that a Jew from Hong Kong was in town.

At that time, I was staying in Brooklyn with my friend Benny Fishoff, who had lived in Shanghai during the war years, and a phone message came through to his house that the Lubavitcher Rebbe would like to meet with me. I had no idea who this was – and I remember putting my hands over the telephone speaker and whispering to Benny, “Who is the Lubavitcher Rebbe?”

It was a surprising meeting. I recall that, when I walked into the Rebbe’s office, what immediately struck me was the simplicity of the room, which was dominated by a desk with a gentleman sitting behind it. As I entered, he rose to greet me and shook my hand.

He asked me questions about myself and he also spoke of his own background, and from that point, we began discussing our shared Jewish heritage and how that is observed by the different communities throughout the world.

While we were talking – he spoke an excellent English, by the way – I looked at my watch several times, not wanting to overstay my welcome. After hours passed – when it was eleven, and then when it was eleven-thirty, and then twelve – I got worried. But the Rebbe said, “Don’t worry about the time – we still have much to talk about.”

During most of our conversation, I was answering his questions, relating the history of the various Jewish communities in the Far East – in India, Singapore, China, etc. He was very interested in the history of the Sephardim who came from Baghdad and established various communities in Asia. And also, he wanted to know the history of the Ashkenazim who fled there from the Nazis.

He wanted to know all the details. He asked me many questions about how the various communities got along, about their traditions, about the existing infrastructures – the synagogues, the schools, the mikvehs etc.

I recall telling him how Shanghai changed with the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. Up until then, Shanghai was in Japanese hands, and it was a thriving city, with a prosperous Jewish community which looked after the thousands of refugees who fled from Nazi-occupied Europe. But the Pacific War disturbed everything. When it ended, and the Chinese Communists came into Shanghai, all the Jews left so that, by the time I was speaking with the Rebbe, the Jewish community there was nearly extinct.

And yet he still asked so many questions about Shanghai. He also asked about Tokyo and Kobe and Manila. I recall thinking: Why is he so interested in the fifty families living in Hong Kong? Why is he so interested in the few Jews left over in Japan? Why do the ones in the Philippines matter so much to him?

Obviously, he had a far-reaching vision of how things would change in the coming decades, and he was thinking ahead. I have to say that it never occurred to me to wonder what the future would hold for Yiddishkeit in the Far East. The thought didn’t cross my mind. Whereas, clearly, it had been on the Rebbe’s mind. He was already anticipating how the world would change, and he must have been thinking not just how to preserve some of the dwindling Jewish communities in Asia but how to develop them.

Today, there are thousands of Jews in Shanghai. And Chabad is there – with three Chabad centers – to give them all the strength they need. In Hong Kong there are now five strong communities with five synagogues and two Chabad centers. Whereas in 1962, it was hard to get a minyan together. In total, Chabad has thirteen centers in China!

The Rebbe saw into the future and the starring role that Chabad would come to play in these communities. Indeed, he gave me a clue of how he envisioned that happening, but at the time I didn’t fully grasp his intention.

I remember that he told an anecdote about a lake, the water of which was completely smooth, except when someone would throw in a pebble. Then the still waters would ripple out in concentric circles, spreading through the entire lake. When he related this anecdote, he said, “This is what Jewish influence is like. No matter how small a pebble you drop into the water, the ripples reach the furthest edges.”

Later, as I learned more about the Rebbe and Chabad, I asked myself the question: How did the Rebbe come to have so much influence over so many people? And this anecdote provided the answer. It all came down to the ripples he created and how they spread throughout the world.

Reprinted from an email of Here's My Story.

We can learn a wonderful lesson from the stork. The Torah in Parshat Re’eh tells us about the laws of Kashrut. As is well known, when it comes to animals, there are two ‘סימנים’ – two signs, of being kosher. The animals need to have parted hooves and they also need to chew the cud.

With regards to fish, there are also two signs; fins and scales. But when it comes to birds, no signs are given. Instead the Torah provides for us a list of all the non-kosher birds. If a bird is on the list we cannot eat it, if it is not on the list, it is kosher.

The Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis says that one of the birds that is featured on the list is the ‘חסידה’- the stork. The Gemara in Masechet Chulin (63A) tells us that the stork is called ‘חסידה’ because it is righteous and because it is selfless. It is an exceptionally kind bird.

But there is a problem, because the Ramban tells us that there is a common denominator amongst all birds which are not kosher. He tells us that they all have a cruel streak in their nature and some of them are out-rightly birds of prey. So how is it possible therefore that the ‘חסידה’, this pious stork, is actually not kosher?

The Chiddushei Harim, the founder of the Chassidic sect of Gur in the nineteenth century, gives a beautiful explanation. He tells us that the ‘חסידה’- the stork, is indeed selfless and kind-hearted, however, only to birds of its own feather. Towards other birds and other creatures, it acts with cruelty and disdain. As a result it is not kosher.

The Chiddushei Harim goes on to tell us that the laws of Kashrut in our Parshah do not only relate to what we can and can’t eat, but they tell us about, ourselves. We shouldn’t lead a stork-like existence. In the event that our compassion and selflessness extends only to those within our own limited social clique, those within our own echo chamber, then ultimately, that is a ‘non-kosher’ form of existence.

In order to be kosher, we need to recognize the image of Hashem within the soul of every human being and to reach out with kindness toward one and all.

So let’s try to love every individual for who they are, and let’s pray with all our hearts, for the recovery of all the sick from this crazy pandemic, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevre 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, sweet Shabbat and Chodesh Tov.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 55
MITZVOT ASEH: 17
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 38

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 126
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1932
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7442

HAFTORA:

Yeshayahu 54:11- 55:5 (עניי סוֹעֶרָה). (this is the third of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Elul
Rosh Chodesh - Thursday & Friday - August 20 & 21.

This week we study Chapter 6 (Diaspora and some in Israel study chapter 5) of Pirkei Avot

ראה

This week is sponsored

לע"נ

ר' ראובן

בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה

רבינוביץ

נפטר י"ז מנחם אב תשנ"ב

Last week Friday

By his daughter and son in law
Gershon and Rivka Fraenkel

המולד יהיה
ביום רביעי,
54 דקות
ו-16 חלקים
אחרי 1
בבוקר

ראש חדש אלול יהיה ביום חמישי ובוים ששי
Rosh Chodesh will be Thursday & Friday, August 20 & 21

We begin to recite אורי לידוד ה' on the 2nd day Rosh Chodesh until Shmini Atzeret, some hold until Simchat Torah and some hold Hoshanah Rabbah inclusive. Some begin on the first day of Rosh Chodesh.

We begin to blow Shofar every week day at the conclusion of Shacharit until the day before Erev Rosh Hashanah where we don't blow at all.