

# The Jewish Weekly

In Loving memory of  
**Mendy Klein**  
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 בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא  
 נפטר ל"ג בעומר  
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## Conflicting Prophecies

By Rabbi Benyamin Adilman

The Rizhiner Rebbe once related the following story. Reb Aryeh Leib who was known as the Shpoler Zeide (grandfather) and whose home was always open to guests loved his fellow Jew with a genuine and encompassing love. As a result, within a short time after he arrived in Shpole, every Jew in town became a dedicated and pious individual.

The Shpoler Zeide had a Chassid who was very devoted. Tragically, this individual was married for many years and still had not been blessed with children. On numerous occasions he came to beseech his Rebbe (who was quite fond of him), for a blessing for offspring, yet the Shpoler Zeide rejected his request every time.

One day, the Chassid and his wife decided that enough was enough. They decided that he would go to beseech the Rebbe once more. This time he resolved that no matter what, he would not take no for an answer.

He arrived in Shpole and found the Rebbe absorbed in private contemplation. He interrupted the Rebbe gently and told him the reason for his appearance. The Shpoler Zeide told him that he was involved in a matter of great importance having to do with the welfare of the entire Jewish people, and now was not the time to accept individual petitions.

When the Chassid realized the his Rebbe might actually be speaking to the Almighty face to face, he understood that this was an auspicious moment and he redoubled his efforts to gain a blessing from the Shpoler Zeide. He was so relentless that finally, with more than a trace of aggravation in his voice, the Shpoler Zeide turned on the Chassid with the full force of his presence and assured him that he would never merit having a child.

Broken, and distressed over his tragic mistake, he went on his way. If there was even a minute chance that he might have a child before, there was certainly no chance now. He absorbed himself in his business and his travel to forget his anguish.

One day he came to the town of Koretz, where the great tzadik Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was still a young man, concealing himself in the Beit HaMidrash (study hall) so that he could engage himself solely in serving G-d. The Chassid had spent enough time in Shpole to recognize a person of exemplary qualities when he saw him, so he decided to get to know Reb Pinchas a bit. His further observations only confirmed his notion that Reb Pinchas was a man of great spiritual stature. The Chassid, with the hope that maybe one day Reb Pinchas could reverse the negative proclamation of the Shpoler Zeide, made a point of visiting Koretz whenever his

business took him to the general area.

Once, he arrived in Koretz a few days before Pesach. Reb Pinchas was sitting in the Beit HaMidrash, learning and praying. As usual he was destitute. Nevertheless, even the demands of the approaching holiday did not cause him to waver from his studies.

The wealthy Chassid went to the Rebbitzen (Rabbi's wife) and inquired whether or not they had the means with which to celebrate the upcoming Pesach. The Rebbitzen informed him that they had neither meat nor chicken nor fish. Not wine, not candles, not even matzah, and no prospects were in sight for obtaining any of these items. The Chassid turned to the Rebbitzen and offered, "I will provide all the needs for the entire holiday if you will let me be at your Seder table." The Rebbitzen readily agreed.

When Reb Pinchas left his house the morning before Pesach, he knew that there were none of the provisions needed for the Holiday. Still, he went to pray and study like on any other day.

As soon as Reb Pinchas left, the Chassid and the Rebbitzen went to work. The previously ordered supplies began to arrive. When darkness fell over Koretz and the candles were lit, the home of Reb Pinchas was prepared for royalty. There was meat and fish and chicken. There was the extra-strictly prepared expensive Shmura Matzah and there were wines of every type. Fresh fruits from all over the world were piled high in baskets. All the furniture in the house was replaced. The table was decked with a new snowy white cloth, new porcelain dishes, gleaming silverware, Kiddush cups and a tall candelabra. The children and the Rebbitzen had new outfits, and a white silk Kittel was draped over the back of Reb Pinchas' chair. The family anxiously awaited the arrival of Reb Pinchas.

But he, knowing that there was nothing to come home to, stayed on at the synagogue for a long while after the prayers, before finally heading home. When he walked in the door and saw all that was before him, he was speechless. He immediately donned the silk Kittel and with great exultation made Kiddush and began to recite the Hagaddah. Reb Pinchas' exuberance was infectious and the family sang and chanted and discussed the Exodus from Egypt with great passion until finally they reached the festive holiday meal.

Reb Pinchas turned to the Rebbitzen and asked for an explanation. She motioned to the guest indicating that he had wanted to spend Pesach with them and had provided the bounty.

Reb Pinchas, still in a rapturous state, turned to the Chassid and asked him if there was anything that he could do for him. The Chassid realizing that his chance at last had come, broke down and told the whole story of how he had been a Chassid of the Shpoler Zeide and how he and his wife had been childless for so many years, and how he never merited a blessing from his

## It Once Happened..

Rebbe until he bothered him about it when he shouldn't have and received the opposite of a blessing.

Reb Pinchas, being in the exalted state that he was and very moved by the man's story, replied, "If I have any merit in the Heavens at all, it is my oath that this year you will be blessed with a son!"

The Rizhiner Rebbe related that the moment that Reb Pinchas made his oath, a great tumult erupted in the Heavens. Here were two promises, made by two great Rebbes, and they contradicted one another. Whose would be upheld?

The Heavenly Court finally decided to examine the chronicles of the lives of each Rebbe, to see if one of them had been so cautious as to have never before made an oath or promise. They found that only Reb Pinchas had been so circumspect in his speech that he had never made an unqualified promise or oath. Therefore the Chassid and his wife were indeed blessed with a child within the year. The fame of Reb Pinchas began to spread.

The Rizhiner Rebbe concluding his story said, "Despite the fact that Reb Pinchas' blessing was upheld, one must nevertheless learn from this an important lesson that one ought not go against the words of another tzadik.

The grandson of that Chassid was Shimshon Finkelman, who brought false accusations against Pinchas and Avraham Abba, the grandsons of Reb Pinchas of Koretz leading to their arrest and torture by being sentenced to receive 1500 blows in a gauntlet of two long rows of brutal soldiers holding a club in each hand. The victim would have to pass between the two rows absorbing the brutal blows as he struggled to reach the end. One in a thousand survived. Most barely made it a third of the way through. Surviving was not necessarily desirable since the survivor would be sent to Siberia. The two brothers actually made it through, but they were disfigured and mutilated in the process.

They survived and were sent to Siberia. However, they got only as far as Moscow and were not able to travel any further because of their injuries. They were admitted to a government hospital where they stayed for a number of months until the Czar died and they were granted pardons.

They returned to Slovitza as heroes, mutilated in body but elevated in spirit. Many Jews were drawn to them and they acquired large followings of Chassidim inspired by the Yirat Shamayim (Awe of Heaven) of the grandsons of Reb Pinchas of Koretz.

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Editor's Note: Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz ז"ל's 229th Yahrzeit was Sunday, 10th Elul – Aug 30<sup>th</sup> of this year



### Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Ki Tavo

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:23	7:35	8:14
Tel Aviv	6:39	7:37	
Haifa	6:30	7:37	
Be'er Sheva	6:41	7:37	



## Greater than Resurrection By Tzvi-Meir HaCohen

Once, the chassidic master known as the Baal HaToldot, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye (one of the three main disciples of the Baal Shem Tov), told his son-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Dov of Chmelnik, "As you well know, I was not always a follower of Rabbi Yisrael, the Baal Shem Tov. I'd like to tell you the story of how I became a chassid of the man I once so strongly opposed.

"For many years, I had heard much about the Baal Shem Tov. I heard that he could perform miracles, heal the sick and interpret dreams. Honestly, these reports did not surprise me. After all, if the Almighty wishes to heal one who is sick, or enlighten one with spiritual insight, He can do so to any person, for no reason whatsoever.

"But I wanted to learn more about the great piety that his followers spoke about, and of his scholarship in all areas of Torah knowledge - the revealed and the hidden. Perhaps this was a man of great spirituality, and so I decided to find out for myself if that was true.

"I traveled to Mezhibuz, the home of the Baal Shem Tov, and stayed for several weeks. During that time, I actually did see the Baal Shem Tov perform wonders, but as I said, that ability did not interest me and I never expected to deny his supernatural powers. In truth, I had come to see remarkable levels of sanctity. So throughout that time, I carefully observed his daily behavior - in prayer and Torah study - but I saw nothing that could be considered extraordinary.

"I therefore assumed that he concealed his piety. So I resolved to remain in Mezhibuz longer, hoping to somehow observe the Baal Shem Tov during times when no one else had.

"One day, a villager came to the Baal Shem Tov weeping bitterly. His son was critically ill and had been bedridden for the past week. Could the Rebbe please come and visit him? The Baal Shem Tov agreed and immediately asked that his carriage be prepared for the trip. Then, to my surprise, the Baal Shem Tov invited me to accompany him.

"When we arrived at the villager's home, we were offered some refreshments after our long trip. Suddenly, the villager's wife rushed in screaming that her son was in the throes of death. I looked expectantly at the Rebbe, but he did not seem disturbed by the situation. He had not even yet seen the boy. Seeing that the Baal Shem Tov was unmoved, she returned to the boy's room crying.

"Soon thereafter, the boy's mother returned to the dining room sobbing bitterly - her son had died. As I am a Kohen, I quickly stepped out of the house, since it was forbidden for me to remain under the

same roof with a corpse. While I stood outside, I looked through the window and saw the Baal Shem Tov rise from his chair and enter the boy's room. After several minutes of silence, he opened the door and said to the boy's mother: 'Bring some soup for your son.' Then the Baal Shem Tov returned to his seat to finish his meal.

"Since it appeared the boy was alive and there was no longer any reason for me to remain outside, I returned to the dining room. I was greatly impressed by this exhibition of reviving the dead, but this was still not what I sought from this man who was reported to be such a holy person. I had yet to see an indication of the Baal Shem Tov's piety that might induce me to accept him as my Master.

"By the time we left the village, it was dark. Our carriage drove into the night along a path that led through a forest. The trip should have taken no more than an hour, but after two hours of traveling with no civilization in sight, we realized that we were lost. It was past midnight of a Thursday evening. The Baal Shem Tov knew that if he did not soon find the way to Mezhibuz, he would be forced to transgress an extra strictness he had taken upon himself of not traveling on a Friday, not even in the morning, in order not to chance desecrating the Shabbat.

The Baal Shem Tov stopped the carriage, stepped down, and wandered off into the dense forest. I quietly followed at a short distance. The Baal Shem Tov wandered in a circle for a few minutes and then prostrated himself on the ground.

"Ribono Shel Olam,' he cried, 'You know that all that I do is for Your sake and to glorify Your Name on earth. You know that I have made a personal oath not to travel on Fridays to not risk profaning the holy Shabbat. If I am forced to break this pledge, it would be for me as if I profaned the Shabbat itself, G-d forbid. Please, beloved G-d of mercy, have pity on me and save me from violating my promise. Direct me on the right path home and enable me to return before daybreak ....' The Baal Shem Tov then cried bitterly for some time, pouring his heart out in devotion.

"It was then that I saw that this man was truly a tzadik, a perfectly righteous man who feared G-d from the depths of his being. At that moment, I no longer doubted that his piety was genuine.

I quietly returned to the carriage and waited for him. When he returned, we began to travel again. The horses did not hesitate but led us out of the forest, and we reached Mezhibuz before sun rise.

"After I had had time to contemplate what I had seen and heard, a deep remorse took hold of me. How had I dared doubt the greatness of such a man? I was so overcome with a desire to beg forgiveness; I rushed to the Baal Shem Tov's study. Before I opened my mouth, the holy Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, 'I know what you have come for. Let me answer you in the words spoken by the Almighty to Moshe Rabbeinu - 'Salachti Kidvarecha' - You are forgiven according to your word.'"

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In this week's Parasha of Ki Tavo: the long list of the קללות, the curses, of the Tochecha is presented to us. The Torah gives a reason why these awful things might occur: 'תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוהיך בשמחה', 'on account of the fact that you did not serve the Lord, your G-d, with happiness'.

I heard from The Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, that usually we explain this to mean that in the event, G-d forbid, that there is מחלוקת, serious division, let's say within a community, a lot of tension. And as a result, the community cannot function in a happy and joyous way, the impact of what we are doing is limited and so, as a people we don't function as we really should.

That's a good message, but can we really justify so many קללות, so many curses, happening?

I love the peirush of the Kotsker Rebbe on this verse. You see, he reads this as follows: 'תחת אשר לא עבדת', it's when your 'לא עבדת', when the absence of your serving of Hashem is carried out 'בשמחה', 'with joy'.

Says the Kotzker Rebbe, here we are talking about a phenomenon, where people have no shame whatsoever with regard to what they are doing and in a brazen way, they are flaunting their rebelliousness and encouraging, thereby, others, to follow them. That's when we as a nation have a problem.

You know, I'm sure in some Shuls on some Shabbatot, people have a mobile phone in their pocket, and they turn it off and you know, they will be exceptionally embarrassed if anybody knew about it. But I've known in a few instances, in a Bar Mitzvah, somebody taking out a phone to take photos while the boy is singing his Haftorah, without any embarrassment, any shame. You see, if you know that it's wrong, then there is some hope, there is some recognition of respect for the law. But if the 'לא עבדת' is carried out with 'שמחה', and people flaunt what they are doing, and more than that, they might even encourage others to be just like them, then as a nation we are in trouble.

So, the message therefore from our Parasha is, of course, do what is right. In the event that you are ever going to stray from that path, if you are embarrassed or ashamed about it, that actually is a good thing. It's good for you and it's also good for us.

Let's join together and 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 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: 6  
MITZVOT ASEH: 3  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 3

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 122  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1747  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6811

HAFTORA:  
Yeshayahu 60:1- 22 (קומי אורי) (this is the sixth of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapters 3 and 4 of Pirkei Avot