

The Jewish Weekly

In Loving memory of
Mendy Klein
 ר' מנחם משה ז"ל
 בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא
 נפטר ל"ג בעומר
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The Divorce Solution

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In 1740, the Baal Shem Tov came to visit the city of Slutsk. Many of the local inhabitants came to greet him. Among them was the aged scholar, Rabbi Uri Nattan Nata, who as a youth was known as the Ilui of Karinik, near Brisk.

His son, Shlomo, who had initially been educated at home by his father, left home at the age of fourteen to seek the scholarly environment of Yeshivas - first in Vilna, then in Jorodna, and then in Cracow. There he had met a prominent scholar, Rabbi Menachem Aryeh, who was one of the "Hidden Righteous". Reb Menachem accepted him as his disciple in the study of chassidut on condition that their connection was kept secret.

At the age of twenty-two, Shlomo returned to his childhood home in Slutsk. His father was overjoyed with his progress in learning, and arranged a marriage with the daughter of the leaseholder of an inn, Reb Eliyahu Moshe, who lived in a nearby village.

About a half a year after their marriage, however, the young wife tragically, lost her sanity. Since she was not in a mental state to legally accept a bill of divorce, Reb Shlomo was unable to remarry.

During the Baal Shem Tov's visit to Slutsk, Shlomo's father, Uri Nattan Nata, described their sad situation to him and asked for his advice and blessing. Soon thereafter, the unfortunate young woman's father, Eliyahu Moshe, also approached the Baal Shem Tov and asked for his advice and a blessing for her recovery.

Later the same day, the Baal Shem Tov invited both fathers to meet with him together. He politely asked if either of them bore a grudge against the other. The bridegroom's father, Reb Uri Nattan Nata, had nothing but praise for his mechtan (relative by marriage), the bride's father. He extolled that despite the pressure of business, the innkeeper fixed times for the study of Torah, maintained a hospitable house that was open to all comers, supported Talmudic scholars generously, and maintained his son-in-law in the most respectable manner.

Since Shlomo had been mentioned, his father-in-law, Eliyahu Moshe, now spoke most highly of his noble character. He was clearly proud of his son-in-law who, in addition to his assiduous study schedule, always found time on weekdays to conduct study circles for the simple farming folk who lived round about, teaching them Chumash with Rashi's commentary, and the moral lessons of Ayn Yaakov; and on Shabbos he would read for them from the Midrash and the Ethics of the Fathers. While teaching, he imbued them with a brotherly love for each other, explaining to them that no man's profit ever came at the expense of that which Divine Providence had destined for another. In a word, he was well loved by the villagers from all around, and they all were praying that his young wife would be restored to complete health, and that he would return to teach them as in happier times.

The Baal Shem Tov listened carefully to both fathers, and then said: "With G-d's help, I will be able to help the young woman return to complete health and restore her mind to its original clarity - but only on one condition: That when this happens the young couple not live together, and when several days have passed, and she is in a fit state according to the Torah Law to accept a Get (rabbinically sanctioned document of divorce), she accepts it from her husband with a willing heart."

The two fathers were stunned! Rabbi Uri Nattan Nata proposed various legal objections to such a divorce, and Reb Eliyahu Moshe argued that his daughter

would be grieved by such a procedure, since she respected her husband highly. He was certain that his son-in-law would likewise be distressed. He himself was prepared to contribute an enormous sum to charity - in the merit of which he begged the Baal Shem Tov to pray for her recovery, but to allow the young couple to rejoin each other in the love and harmony to which they were accustomed. The Baal Shem Tov answered unequivocally - that if they did not agree to the condition that he had stipulated, he would not be able to help them.

A few days later, they called on the Baal Shem Tov together with the young husband, and told him that they accepted his condition - though of course they could not guarantee that his stricken wife would agree. Upon hearing their reply, the Baal Shem Tov instructed Reb Eliyahu Moshe to immediately go home and tell his sick, ailing daughter that the Baal Shem Tov had come to Slutsk and had requested for her to come to speak with him about an important matter.

Hearing that, the two fathers looked at each other in amazement.

"But Rebbe, for the last six years," Eliyahu Moshe protested, "she has not uttered a syllable! She just sits between the stove and the wall, and can barely be fed. In a word, my poor daughter is utterly out of her mind. How can I possibly explain to her your request?"

The Baal Shem Tov did not reply.

Making his way homeward with a heavy heart, Eliyahu Moshe remarked to his mechtan that if the Baal Shem Tov had seen the state in which his daughter was to be found, he would not have spoken as he had. Uri Nattan Nata, in turn, sighed in sympathy from the depths of his heart for everyone suffering from this matter.

Not so his son, Shlomo. Before his marriage, when he had been a disciple of Rabbi Menachem Aryeh, he had been introduced to teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. Now that he had met him in person, and had heard his teachings, he became attached to him with all his heart. He therefore told his father-in-law that he thought they should follow the instructions of the Baal Shem Tov implicitly. Reb Uri Nattan Nata added that since they had already accepted the far more difficult condition of their daughter being crazy, they should certainly proceed to carry out the instruction that they attempt to speak to the young woman.

Opening the door to his house, Reb Eliyahu Moshe found his daughter sitting in her accustomed corner behind the stove. He told his wife all that the Baal Shem Tov had said, adding that he was widely reputed as a miracle worker.

To their amazement, their daughter suddenly rose from her chair. She approached her mother and father quietly, and in a voice they had not heard for six years, asked who was this person who worked wonders. They told her that the man about whom they were speaking was called the Baal Shem Tov, a renowned Tzadik. She answered that before hearing any more, she first wanted to immerse herself in a mikveh for purification.

After going to the mikveh, the young woman began eating, speaking and sleeping as if completely normal, though she felt very weak. On the third day, she had a high fever and in her delirium spoke about the Baal Shem Tov. When her father heard her crying and asking to be taken to the wonder-worker, he was suddenly reminded of what the surprising sudden turn of events made him forget - that the Baal Shem Tov had asked to see her. He told her of the Baal Shem Tov's request and she was visibly happy to receive the message. On the very next day, accompanied by her parents, she made the journey to Slutsk.

Reb Shlomo soon heard of his wife's recovery, for his father-in-law had sent a special messenger with the news. He now began to speak with his father about the

It Once Happened..

principles of chassidut taught by the Baal Shem Tov. He explained the emphasis which the Baal Shem Tov gave to the mystical teachings of the Kabbalah; the workings of Divine Providence not only for man, but regarding all created things, even the inanimate; the intrinsic holiness and worth of even the simplest fellow Jew; the importance and obligation of Ahavat Yisrael; serving G-d with a joyful heart; and so on.

The aged scholar pondered these matters all day and throughout the following night. On the next day, he set out to tell the Baal Shem Tov what his son had told him of his teachings, and added that he desired to become his disciple. At the same meeting, he told the Baal Shem Tov of the good news that had just reached his son. The Baal Shem Tov replied that on that same day the young woman was again unwell, but that when her father would carry out his mission she would recover and come to see him.

When the young woman and her parents arrived at Slutsk, she and her husband entered the room of the Baal Shem Tov. He told them that they would have to divorce. With bitter tears, the unfortunate young woman told the Baal Shem Tov how highly she respected her husband for his refined character. If, however he decreed that they should divorce, he must surely know that she was unworthy of such a righteous husband, and felt it her duty to comply. Shlomo, likewise moved, told the Baal Shem Tov that his wife exemplified all the noble attributes by which the Sages define a good wife. If, however, the Baal Shem Tov ordered that they divorce, he too would obey.

The Baal Shem Tov arranged to see them in four days; he would then arrange the legalities required by Jewish Law.

For the next three days the young couple and their parents fasted and prayed. On the fourth day, with heavy hearts, they made their way to the Tzadik. They found a Rav, a scribe and two witnesses already waiting. The Baal Shem Tov asked them if they agreed wholeheartedly to the divorce. They answered that they believed that whatever the Baal Shem Tov told them would be for the best, and since they loved each other, each of them was willing to proceed with the divorce - for the benefit of the other.

The Baal Shem Tov retired to another room and stayed there for some time.

When he returned he related the following: "Six years ago a threat of terrible suffering hung over your lives because of accusations of the Heavenly prosecuting angel. The Heavenly court's verdict was that you should both undergo the troubles that you have experienced these last six years. But now that you have shown great faith in my words, to the extent that you were both willing to proceed with a divorce, this very faith has freed you from the decree of the Heavenly court. The charge against you has been annulled. Live on happily together as man and wife. You have my blessing that your home be filled with sons, daughters and many grandchildren, and that you both live to a ripe old age."

The young couple remained in Slutsk for three years. They then lived in several major Jewish communities, until they moved to Liozna as chassidim of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of the Chabad dynasty. In 1796 they settled in Eretz Yisrael, where they lived for fifteen years until Shlomo passed away at age 99.

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: The Baal Shem Tov zt"l's 322nd birthday was Monday, 18th Elul - September 7th of this year.



YGRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Nitzavim - Vayelech

Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:14	7:25
Tel Aviv	6:29	7:28
Haifa	6:21	7:27
Be'er Sheva	6:32	7:28

The Apartment Next Door

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Yossel, an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in a town in Israel, followed the Chabad custom to have his mezuzot and tefillin inspected once a year, during the month of Elul. In Elul 5749 (1989), R. Yossel brought his tefillin and mezuzot as usual to the home of a scribe. Every single mezuzah was found to be kosher. Satisfied and relieved, R. Yossel took the mezuzot home and re-affixed them on his doorways.

As an emissary of the Rebbe, Yossel wrote regular reports to the Rebbe. In his weekly letter, Yossel reported on the preparations that his community was making towards the upcoming Rosh Hashana holiday, and mentioned that his mezuzot had been checked and were found to be kosher.

The month passed quickly in a whirl of activity. Yossel barely had a moment's rest as he ran around carrying out his communal duties, helping his congregation prepare for the holidays. After all his dashing about, Yossel was not surprised to find that his feet were aching, although this was unusual for him.

The pain intensified to a stabbing, throbbing ache. As the days went by, walking became more difficult for Yossel and he realized that he could ignore the situation no longer. He hobbled to the doctor who inspected the foot and told Yossel that he had a serious infection. The doctor prescribed therapeutic soaks, cream and antibiotics. He cautioned Yossel to let his feet air out and stay off his foot until it healed.

Rosh Hashana arrived, and Yossel could barely drag himself to shul. Every step was agony. Instead of leading his congregation in prayer, Yossel was forced to stay seated the entire time with his feet elevated. His condition worsened as the infection did not respond to any treatment.

On the day after Rosh Hashana Yossel was once again in bed, being examined by his close friend a doctor. The infection is very serious and has

penetrated deep inside your foot. If it doesn't begin to subside, the foot may have to be amputated.

What more could be done? They had already tried everything. Yossel's wife decided to fax a letter to the Rebbe. Generally, Yossel believed in not being a "fair-weather friend" and writing to the Rebbe only when there were problems. He preferred to report only positive news to the Rebbe which was why he had not written yet about his foot. But now there was no other option.

He gave the letter to his wife to fax, but before she had a chance to do so, they received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary. The Rebbe instructs you to check your tefillin and mezuzot, and he will mention you in his prayers at his father-in-law's gravesite.

Yossel's first thought was, my mezuzot were just inspected last month. What could the Rebbe mean? After a short consultation with his wife and children, they came up with a possible explanation.

The family lived in an apartment building. The apartment next door belonged to a friend who had moved out. Before leaving, the friend had handed the keys to the empty apartment to Yossel and told him that the apartment was his to use for his Chabad activities, free of charge. Yossel was surprised and grateful for this generous offer.

The friend moved out, taking all the contents of the apartment with him, including the mezuzot. Yossel set up the apartment as his office and put up plain mezuzot, since he was not sure if, according to Jewish law, he was actually responsible for maintaining mezuzot in the apartment. Because of the Rebbe's instruction, Yossel decided to take down all the mezuzot in his office and have them inspected.

Two weeks later, during the holiday of Sukkot, R. Yossel received a call from the scribe. The mezuzot were checked, and all were found kosher except for the one on the doorway leading to the porch. Yossel's wife ran out to purchase a new mezuzah and then attached it properly in place.

That same day, she "happened upon" an article in a medical journal that described a simple, natural remedy for the infection her husband had. Yossel was incredulous - could such a simple method help his foot, after he had already used the most powerful antibiotics? Still, it was worth a try.

Wonder of wonders, as soon as Yossel applied the salve, the infection began to subside. Within a day, his foot was completely healed.

The following day was Simchat Torah, and Yossel gave his congregation a most pleasant surprise, when he walked in on two healthy feet to dance with the Torah together with his community.

You are what you do.

This powerful message emerges for us from the beginning of Parshat Nitzavim which is always read close to Rosh Hashanah.

Hashem declares 'אתם נצבים היום לפני ה' אלוהיכם' - 'all of you are standing here this day, before the Lord your G-d' and some categories of people are given: וְקִנְיָיִם וְשׁוֹטְרֵיכֶם - your leaders, your tribes, your elders and your officers. And then other examples follow: your children, the women, the strangers, from the hewers of wood to the drawers of water, but there is one word which does not fit into this context, it's the term 'שבטיכם' - 'your tribes' - because all the others refer to specific categories of people. Elders, officers, but what do we mean by tribes? Rashi explains that very simply, ראשיכם שבטיכם should be read as ראשיכם לשבטיכם - which would mean the leaders of your tribes. But the trouble is, that is not what the Torah actually says!

Some of our other mefarshim (commentators) explain that actually, שבט doesn't only mean tribe - it also means staff, the item that the leader carries and therefore it describes the leader.

It's like 'the crown' which is a term used to describe a monarch because the monarch wears a crown. Similarly, 'first violin' refers to the most significant person in the orchestra because they play the first violin. So to with שבטיכם which can mean your staff and it refers to the people who carry that staff - those who are leaders, parents, educators, etc. If you are a leader you are a שבט because, you carry the staff in your hand, so to speak. And in English, we refer to the staff as being those who are the 'doers' in a particular capacity.

Hashem wants to convey to us that the essence of what we are is not a title, it's not how people describe us, but rather it's what we do that matters.

We find this expressed in the Shema, the essence of course, is a statement of the depth of our faith in the Almighty. But the Shema altogether has 248 words, as a symbol of the 248 positive commandments and the 248 limbs of the body - showing that the expression of our belief must be found in our actions.

As we approach the High Holy Days, let's take advantage of these Days of Awe to change ourselves, and in that way change the world around us. The way to do it is through action.

From Parshat Nitzavim we learn that it is the actions that count - you are what you do.

So let's try to be the best, by only doing good for example, by joining me in praying 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.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Nitzavim	Parshat Vayelech
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 0	NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 2
MITZVOT ASEH: 0	MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0	MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 40	NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 30
NUMBER OF WORDS: 657	NUMBER OF WORDS: 553
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 2575	NUMBER OF LETTERS: 2123

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 61:10 - 63:9 (שׁוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ) (this is the last of the seven Haftorot, that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapter 5 and 6 of Pirkei Avot.

Motzei Shabbat, after midnight, or in the early hours of the morning, Ashkenazim begin the recitation of Selichot.



The Tishrei Guide will not be available in print this year, it is only available online at www.thejweekly.org or ladaat.info, dirshu.co.il, and parshasheets.com

Plus separate guide to "Tishrei during The Corona Period".

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