

# The Jewish Weekly

## "You are a Potato"

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Stanley was never really happy being a Jew. He learned in Yeshiva (Talmud academy) just like his father and grandfather before him, but it just seemed like a lot of work and no rewards. There was always someone brighter and wittier than he, and he just never seemed to get the attention he craved.

Finally, one day when walking home from Yeshiva he met one of the priests from the local church, and they got into a conversation.

One thing led to another, and it wasn't long before they were sitting on a park bench, and Stanley was spouting off his Torah insights and philosophies. The priest invited him to come visit his school, and a few days later they were sitting together before the priest's teacher. The teacher listened, and then heaped so many praises upon poor Stanley that he became insane with pride and joy.

A few weeks later he disappeared from the Yeshiva, went to another country where his parents wouldn't see him, converted to Catholicism, and enrolled in a monastery.

Stanley had begun a new life. He excelled in his studies, and in no time he had mastered the major texts, and even became the favorite of the Bishop that ran the monastery. But there was only one problem...the other monks there hated his guts.

They couldn't stand his clever answers, his attention seeking quips, and his stupid smile. Eventually they became so obsessed with getting him ousted, that they actually bored secret peepholes in the walls of his room with the hope of catching him in some sinful act.

And it worked! According to the Church law, it was forbidden to eat meat on Fridays. So you can imagine their joy when one Friday, before their very eyes, Brother Stanley locked himself in his room, took a box out from under his bed, opened it, put it on his table, pulled up a chair, sat down, took out a clean handkerchief, and tucked it in his collar for a bib.

Then from the box he ceremoniously took out a chicken leg, held it up, looked at it lovingly, and completely unaware he was being observed, ate the entire thing, skin and bones included, until nothing was left.

The monks gleefully ran to report what they had seen to the Bishop, who accordingly ordered that Brother Stanley be brought immediately into his office to stand charges.

But to the amazement of the monks, when he arrived and heard the accusations, he flatly and vehemently denied everything.

"What do you think I am, some sort of infidel? A traitor, a heretic!? Why, the very thought of eating meat on Friday is detestable to me. NEVER! I swear by all that is holy that it is a lie! May I burn in Hell for all eternity if it is true! I ate NO MEAT....It was a potato."

His performance was so convincing that even his accusers almost believed it, and it goes without

saying that the Bishop, despite their protests, swallowed the entire story.

Now the monks were out for blood; he may have slipped through their fingers once...but never again!!

It took a few weeks of careful planning and patient waiting, but the next time Stanley locked his door and took out the box, they were ready.

There was one monk hiding in his closet, one behind the drapes, and another under his bed. As soon as he put that chicken leg in his mouth, they leaped out from their places with tremendous speed and precision, and before he knew it he was bound and gagged with the bone sticking out of his mouth, being carried, struggling and wiggling to the Bishop.

"Your holiness" said the monks. "We caught him in the midst of..."

The Bishop was almost in tears; his beloved Stanley was a two-time sinner, and a liar to boot. "Brother Stanley, Brother Stanley, How could you?!"

But Stanley vigorously shook his head and tried his best to shout what was obviously a denial.

"UMMFFF FOUMMPFFF NU UUU" Was all he could say. But it was enough to arouse the Bishop's sense of justice, and curiosity.

"Release him!" declared the Bishop. "Even a doomed man has a right to defend himself". They tried to object, but finally did what the Bishop asked.

Brother Stanley indignantly stood up, removed the bone from his mouth, threw it angrily to the floor, swallowed the meat, cleared his throat, raised his hand majestically in the air, put the other to his heart, looked the Bishop deep in the eyes and said with the utmost sincerity.

"Your holiness. I am INNOCENT! I swear by holy script that I did not, nor will I EVER eat meat on Friday!"

The monks were astounded; their eyes were bulging out of their sockets with disbelief.

"But, B-B-But Brother Stanley" stammered the Bishop, "WE SAW YOU!! I myself just saw you eat meat!? How...?"

"Allow me to explain" said Stanley.

"I will never forget that glorious day that I first entered the fold. Remember? I was taken to the Holy Anointing Chamber and you, you yourself, your holiness, took the silver anointing spoon, dipped it into the Holy Water and sprinkled it on me three times, saying "You are a Catholic! You are a Catholic! You are a Catholic!"

"So?" said the Bishop, "So what's the point?"

"But once in a while" resumed Stanley, "I got this urge to eat meat on Fridays. It got to the point that it simply bothered me so that I couldn't think or pray. So, what did I do?"

Every Thursday evening I bought a chicken leg, took it down to the anointing room, took the holy anointing spoon, sprinkled holy water on the meat three times and declared:

"You are a potato! You are a potato! You are a potato!"

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

## It Once Happened...

### A Second Bowl of Soup

By Gitty Bald

Song and dance filled the huge brightly illuminated ballroom. The musicians played their instruments with great zeal. Thousands upon thousands of chassidim sang, their swaying bodies and dancing legs remaining in the bleachers. Even the most enormous hall could not possibly have dancing room for such a huge crowd. Only the saintly Rebbes, fathers of the chassan and kallah, with several honored relatives, sat at the single table in the center of the hall.

Waiters carefully climbed the bleachers time and again, distributing food to all the guests. The chassidim ate their portions hurriedly so that they could continue singing. A certain Reb Yankel was standing on a bench situated directly above the head table. He had just received his portion.

Suddenly the full bowl of boiling hot soup spilled directly below onto the shtreimel of the father of the kallah, the holy Rebbe, R' Yochanon of Rachmastrivka!

The chassidim standing nearby gasped in horror. The Rebbe's shtreimel was soaked through and through. The soup was slowly dripping down onto the Rebbe's radiant face and black satin bekeshes. R' Yankel felt faint.


The Rebbe turned his head, in the direction of R' Yankel. R' Yankel shut his eyes tightly in shame and fearful trepidation. He felt the Rebbe would surely mete out some strict punishment for his negligence. If only he could simply disappear!

R' Yankel slowly gathered the courage to speak up. "Rebbe, forgive me please. It was my fault. Please forgive me!"

With a wave of his hand the Rebbe interrupted R' Yankel's pleading as if to say that there was no need for an apology. "Oh so it was your plate of soup which spilled?" the Rebbe asked. "Then you haven't yet eaten any soup."

Immediately turning to a nearby waiter the Rebbe requested that R' Yankel be given a second portion of soup. There was no further mention of the incident. The Rebbe remained seated calmly at the head table during the entire simcha, despite his soup-soaked shtreimel.

*Reprinted from an email of The Weekly Vort.*



**Shabbat Times - Lech Lecha**

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	4:15	5:28	6:07
Tel Aviv	4:30	5:29	
Haifa	4:20	5:28	
Be'er Sheva	4:34	5:31	

**The Respectable Looking Thief**  
By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Once a merchant from the town of Whitfield returned from a buying trip with a wagon piled high with merchandise. He arrived late at night and was too tired to open up his store and unload the wagon. Instead, he un-harnessed the horses and left the wagon outside his store, planning to unload it the next morning. After all, he thought, "Who would steal such a large wagon?"

The next morning, the merchant rose early and rushed to his store to unload. To his shock, the wagon with its precious load was no longer there. He was beside himself with fear and pain at the loss of almost all his wealth. A number of his friends joined him in his frantic search through the town. But there was no sign of the wagon. He realized that a thief must have seen the unattended treasure the night before, harnessed other horses to the wagon, and stole it together with all the merchandise.

The merchant sent a letter with a friend to the Baal Shem Tov, advising him of his loss and requesting a blessing that the wagon and his merchandise be returned. When the messenger arrived in Medzibush, he found the Baal Shem Tov kissing the mezuzah of his house, as he was leaving to attend a Brit Mila (circumcision) in the Jewish community of Derzane.

The Baal Shem Tov took the letter from the messenger and quickly read through it. He then instructed the messenger, "Please wait here until I return." The messenger agreed and took lodging at the local inn.

The Baal Shem Tov left in his wagon for the long trip to the city of Derzane accompanied by Reb Zev his scribe and Alexei his gentile wagon driver. As they were entering the city, the Baal Shem Tov saw a wagon loaded with merchandise in the distance. He turned to his scribe and asked, "Reb Zev, do you see that loaded wagon over there pulled by two horses?"

"Yes," answered Reb Zev.

"And do you remember the man that spoke to me just before we left?" inquired the Baal Shem Tov.

Reb Zev nodded yes.

"That man," continued the Baal Shem Tov, "was sent by a merchant from Whitfield whose wagon full of merchandise was stolen. He requested my blessing that the wagon and the merchandise would be found and returned; it represented nearly all of the merchant's wealth. Well, that very wagon full of merchandise is the one that was stolen.

"When we get to town, I want you to immediately ask around and find out at which inn the supposed owner of the wagon is staying. Then, go to that inn, find the wagon owner and tell him that you know the wagon was stolen from Whitfield. Tell him to give it to you to return to the merchant. Meanwhile, I'll go to the Brit."

Immediately upon arriving in town, Reb Zev inquired and found that the man driving the wagon was staying at a certain inn. He went to that inn and found the man praying in his tallit and tefillin. Reb Zev was reluctant to call the man a thief since he appeared innocent, as he prayed like any honest Jewish man.

Reb Zev rushed to the Baal Shem Tov and told him what he had seen.

The Baal Shem Tov responded forcefully. "Return immediately and tell that thief as I instructed you. Otherwise he will soon leave town and the wagon and merchandise will be lost."

Reb Zev ran back to the inn where the thief was staying. This time he found the man eating breakfast. He questioned the man about the wagon and the merchandise. The man responded with a credible story. When the man stepped out for a minute, Reb Zev questioned the innkeeper. "Did that man drink a lot of whiskey like some kind of thief?"

"Oh no," answered the innkeeper, "He just had one drink like many do after the morning prayers."

Reb Zev left again without directly confronting the man. He returned to the Baal Shem Tov and reported all that had happened. He concluded with frustration in his voice, "Rebbe, you must be mistaken. He is an upstanding Jewish merchant and can't be a thief."

This time the Baal Shem Tov stood up and pushed Reb Zev to the door saying, "He is not an upstanding Jewish merchant, he is a Jewish thief. Now go and confront him and call him a thief. Then prove your accusation with the following signs." After Reb Zev heard the signs, he rushed back to the inn.

As soon as he entered the inn, he walked up to the man and said that the Baal Shem Tov had sent him. He then told him that the Baal Shem Tov knew he was a thief and had stolen the wagon and the merchandise. Further, he offered to prove it with the signs the Baal Shem Tov told him.

"After the wagon was stolen, you hid for three nights in the forest until the owner gave up looking. During that time, you slept in an abandoned cabin near the river. Then you stayed at two inns until you arrived here in the city of Derzane." After Reb Zev related the signs, he warned the thief, "You had better return the wagon and merchandise to the Baal Shem Tov. He'll take it back to the merchant. Otherwise, I don't even want to think about what might happen to you."

The thief was overwhelmed by the Baal Shem Tov's knowledge. "You're right," he said, "I confess; I stole it. Take the wagon with the merchandise."

Reb Zev asked the innkeeper to guard the wagon and merchandise because he was going to the Brit with the Baal Shem Tov.

When the thief heard Reb Zev speak with the inn keeper, he thought, "Now that I'm a poor man again, I might as well go to the Brit and eat with the other beggars." During the meal after the Brit, the thief approached the Baal Shem Tov and asked, "Rabbi, I have a question to ask you. Since you know how thieves steal and where they sleep, you must be able to see better things than this. Why do you bother to pay attention to bad things? Why don't you look at good things instead?"

The Baal Shem Tov answered: "That is a very profound question." He began to expound words of Torah on this topic until the time of the Mincha prayers arrived, and still he had not finished.

As soon as the Mincha prayer was completed, the Baal Shem Tov turned to Reb Zev and said, "We should be going. That messenger is still waiting for us to return with the merchant's wagon and merchandise."

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

Did you know that Sheva Brachot are in the Parsha of Lech Lecha?

Immediately after Hashem commands Avram and Sarai to uproot themselves from the land of Mesopotamia in order to make Aliyah 'אל הארץ אשר אראך' – to the land which Hashem will show them'. Hashem follows up by giving seven blessings to Avram; 'ואעשה לגוי גדול' – and I will make you into a great nation', 'ואברכך' – and I will bless you', 'ואגדלה שמך' – and I will make your name great', 'הייה ברכה' – and you will be a blessing', 'ואברכה מברכך' – I will bless those who bless you', 'ומקללך אאור' – and I will curse those who curse you'. And the seventh blessing is 'ונברכתי את כל משפחת האדמה' – and may every family on earth be blessed thanks to the impact you will have on them'.

Such wonderful blessings! And actually these seven blessings match the sentiments that accompany our good wishes to every bride and groom for whom we recite 'sheva brachot' under the 'chupa' and during the first seven days of their marriage. We want them to be blessed by Hashem, we want them to have a positive impact on their surroundings. We want Hashem to be with them always and to prevent others from standing in the way of their success.

There is a further strong comparison. You see the term 'lech lecha' appears twice in the bible, once in our parsha of Lech Lecha and the second, fascinatingly, in a weeks' time, when we will read in Parashat Va'eira, 'ולך לך אל ארץ' – uproot yourself, make an Aliyah, to the land of Moriah and that's where the עקדה (the binding of Isaac) took place.

What Hashem wanted to say to Avram was that it is not good enough just to make a physical Aliyah to the Holy Land. Within the Holy Land you need to make a subsequent spiritual Aliyah to Moriah – which according to our tradition stands for 'שמעם יוצאת הוראה לישראל' – from there instruction emerges for the people of Israel'. As it says in the verse 'כי מציון תצא תורה' – the Torah comes forth from Zion' which is Moriah/Jerusalem.

Similarly we would like to inspire every bride and groom to embark on a double Lech Lecha. First of all may Hashem bless them that they should reach the promised land of their dreams and that in their marriage they will not only bond together physically but to have a spiritual Aliyah, leading to a meaningful and fulfilled life of engagement with our Torah and with our roots.

So what we find, quite unexpectedly, is that already in the Parasha of Lech Lecha, as soon as there was a couple on earth who recognized the truth of the one living G-d, not only did Hashem give them His blessing, He provided the key for them to be a blessing for everyone on earth.

So let us all try to be a key for everyone's prayers 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 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 Shabbat.

לך לך

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מ"ז חשוון

The Jewish Weekly's  
PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 1  
MITZVOT ASEH: 1  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 126  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1686  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6336

HAFTORA:  
Yeshayahu 40:27 - 41:16