

The Jewish Weekly

Unintended

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

When he was a youngster, Rabbi Naftali Katz, who would become the head of the Rabbinical Court of Posen, was once playing outdoors with his friends. They were throwing rocks, and Naftali accidentally hit the passenger of a fancy carriage that was nearby. Unfortunately, that passenger was none other than the High Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The prince's guards arrested the boy for this act of "rebellion." He was brought to court and found guilty. His sentence: public execution.

Naftali was to be escorted by a guard to the empire's capital, where his sentence was to be carried out. It was a difficult journey, and the stormy weather they encountered made travelling almost impossible. At one point they stopped at an inn that was owned by a Jew.

While the guard made himself comfortable in a corner by the stove, young Naftali sat and listened to the innkeeper's sons studying Talmud with their tutor. Naftali knew this tractate by heart, and when the boys and their tutor were stumped by a question in the tractate, Naftali supplied them with the answer.

The innkeeper realized that this was a brilliant boy, and when he found out why Naftali was being kept in custody, he thought of a plan to save the boy's life. The innkeeper offered the guard free food and drinks, thus convincing him to stay at the inn for a few days until the weather cleared up.

After a while the innkeeper approached the guard casually: "What would happen if a prisoner was to die in custody as he was being escorted from one city to another?" he inquired.

Replied the guard, "The escort would simply have to present a document testifying to the prisoner's death, signed by the local authorities."

Using his connections, the innkeeper obtained the required document and handed it to the guard, along with enough money to bribe him. The guard left Naftali with the innkeeper, who took the boy in and raised him as if he was a member of his own family.

Years passed. Naftali had become of marriageable age, as had the innkeeper's daughter. The innkeeper proposed a match between the two young people and they both agreed. The wedding date was set.

One night, sometime later, the innkeeper passed by Naftali's room and heard him talking. He peeked through the keyhole and saw Naftali sprawled on the floor, begging and pleading. "What can I do?" Naftali was saying, "these people saved my life."

The scene repeated itself the next night. The innkeeper could not contain his curiosity, as he knew no one was in Naftali's room, and he

asked Naftali for an explanation. "My parents keep appearing to me and telling me that your daughter is not my intended mate."

The innkeeper, realizing that a Heavenly hand was guiding the young man, told him to obey his parents' wishes, and that he bore Naftali no ill will.

Before Naftali left, he requested that the innkeeper give him a written account of the money paid on his behalf to bribe the guard so many years before.

"I have merited to fulfill the commandment of redeeming a hostage, and seek no reimbursement," exclaimed the righteous innkeeper.

Naftali insisted and the innkeeper finally gave him a paper stating the sum paid to the guard. Naftali left and became famous for his exceptional qualities. He married and was appointed the rabbi of the city of Posen.

The innkeeper's daughter married a storekeeper, and settled in a town near Posen. One night, as she was walking home from the store, she was kidnapped by a wealthy landowner and brought back to his estate with obvious intentions. Despite the dangerous situation, the young woman maintained her composure. "I will go along with all your wishes," she told the landowner, "but first you must go to town to purchase some fine liquor for me." The landowner readily agreed.

While he was in town, the clever woman looked for a means of escape from the mansion. The only window she found unbarred was very high up. Realizing the jump was dangerous, she looked for something to cushion her fall. She found the landowner's heavy lambskin overcoat and, wrapping herself in it, offered a prayer and leaped out the window. Miraculously, she was not hurt. She fled home, still wrapped in the coat.

The husband was thankful for his wife's narrow escape. He related the entire incident to the rabbi of Posen.

Rabbi Naftali told the husband, "Your wife is a righteous woman and her level-headedness is admirable. G-d is truly with her. Open the seam of the landowner's coat, and you will find money that rightfully belongs to you and your wife."

A few days later, the landowner came into the husband's store to make a purchase. He complained about "some Jewish woman" who had not only outwitted him, but had managed to steal his overcoat that had a large sum of money sewn inside it. The husband returned to Rabbi Naftali and told him what the landowner had said.

"This finally concludes a much longer story," Rabbi Naftali replied, and proceeded to tell the husband the whole story of his arrest and ransom. "That landowner," he concluded, "was the guard who had escorted me. The amount of money in the coat is the sum that your father-in-law paid for my release. Wait, I will show you a bill which confirms the figure exactly."

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

No Time for Putting On Tefillin

By Jack E. Rahmey

There's a story Rabbi Yoel Gold told of a young soldier who was training for Shayetet 13, the most elite combat unit in the Israeli Defense Forces, and the world. In order to get into this unit, grueling training is required. One of the final tests was an exhausting task of proving survival skills. Soldiers would hike 40 miles with 40 pounds on their backs, without drinking water for a full day. This boy's life's dream was to get into Shayetet 13. He was religious, and the test started before dawn.

As he noticed the sun making its way up, he said to his officer, "Can we stop just for a minute, I have to put on my tefillin."

The officer said to him, "Not now, maybe soon, just a little while longer," and they kept going.

After another hour he asked again, "Please Sir, I want to stop for one moment just to put on my tefillin."

The officer said to him, "Kid, not now, you're leading the pack, and we have to keep going."

Again, a few hours later the young soldier said, "Please, Sir. I never missed a day of tefillin in my life, please let me stop for one minute. I can only put them on until nightfall." The commander did not allow him to stop. Nightfall was rapidly approaching. With only a few minutes left, the soldier declared, "Mefaked (officer), I need to stop."

The officer turned around and said, "You want to stop? You want to give up all your years of training? For tefillin? My friend, right now you have a good chance of making it into this elite unit. It is not going to look good if you fall behind now."

Without thinking much the boy said, "OK that's fine. I have to stop."

The unit kept walking without him. The young soldier sat down, took out his tefillin, slowly wrapped it on his arm, and watched as soldier by soldier walked by him, watched his opportunity to become next elite combat soldier pass him by. The boy prayed, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad."

He put his tefillin away and saw his Mefaked standing in front of him, waiting.

He said, "Welcome to Shayetet 13. Congratulations."

The soldier was at a loss, not understanding why he passed if he did not complete the test.

The Mefaked responded, "Who would you want standing behind you up in the field, someone who is willing to give up everything he believes in, or someone who stays strong even under great pressure?"

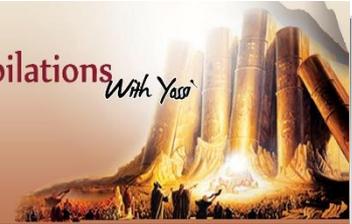
Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Anram Sananes.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Vayeira

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:10	5:23	6:01
Tel Aviv	4:24	5:24	
Haifa	4:14	5:22	
Be'er Sheva	4:28	5:26	



The "Forced" Blessing

By Asharon Baltazar

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rothenberg-Alter will forever be remembered as the brilliant founder of the Ger Chassidic dynasty.

Married to Feigele, daughter of Reb Moshe Lipshitz, a wealthy magnate from Warsaw, Yitzchak Meir was then known as the "Genius of Warsaw." After several years of intense study, he founded a yeshivah, admitting only students who were exceptionally learned and sharp. Masterfully taught, his classes required a keen mental grasp coupled with a profound knowledge of Torah. Not everyone was able to understand.

Offers for rabbinic positions poured in but he rejected them all. Even when his father-in-law suffered severe setbacks in business and thus lost all of his wealth, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir refused to accept the yoke of rabbinic leadership. He never paused his learning or teaching and relied on the meager income from his occasional role as a bookbinder.

With time, the room housing his yeshivah became too small. Students continued to show up at the doorstep, wanting to learn from the famed rabbi, and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir began to consider expanding. Ultimately, he decided not to. Transplanting the entire yeshivah for renovations, even temporarily, constituted an unwarranted interruption of Torah learning.

Yet the growing crowds of students found it more and more difficult to wedge themselves into the tight confines of the study hall. One day, the rabbi was heard to say, "If only someone was capable of completing construction on a larger space in a single day, I would be immensely pleased."

To everyone, it was an impossible dream. But not for Reb Yekel.

Reb Yekel began to brainstorm and an idea quickly evolved.

In Warsaw, there lived a certain wealthy contractor. He was not a Chassidic man, nor was he particularly G-d fearing. Reb Yekel met with him and described, in dramatic terms, the cramped yeshiva conditions. Though he'd heard of the "Genius of Warsaw," the contractor remained unmoved by the yeshivah's circumstances. He calculated a lengthy time frame and a high cost on a sheet of paper, handed it to Reb Yekel, and waited for a response.

Reb Yekel gave it a fleeting glance, and handed it back with a nod, and said, "Remember, the time frame isn't to be taken into account."

The contractor's eyebrows rose uncertainly. "Meaning?"

"Meaning," said Reb Yekel without batting an eye, "the work has to be finished in one day."

The contractor nearly fell off his chair. Fixing Reb Yekel with a frosty stare, he said, "No one can finish this work quicker than me. It is impossible."

The harsh tone didn't sway Reb Yekel, and he returned the stare. "Tell me, how many years are you married?"

Caught off-guard by the personal question, the contractor stammered a number.

"And children?"

At those words, the contractor deflated. "Sadly, none." His voice trembled.

"Well then," said Reb Yekel enthusiastically. "We have a deal. You renovate the yeshivah within 24 hours and the great rabbi, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, will bless you with offspring!"

(Perhaps it's too obvious to note, but Reb Yekel never spoke with Rabbi Yitzchak Meir about such an arrangement. This was a spontaneous promise on Reb Yekel's part.)

A spark of hope ignited in the contractor's eyes. Hands were extended and shaken, and a date was set.

Within days, the final stages of the plans were drawn up and palettes of building materials sprung up around the yeshiva. The contractor marshalled an army of workers. When everything was ready, Reb Yekel told Rabbi Yitzchak Meir that construction was to start the following day, exactly in the manner he prescribed—to be completed in a single day.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir's class took place somewhere else the following morning. In turn, the workers swarmed the tiny yeshivah and began renovations at a rapid clip. Orchestrated by the contractor, walls were torn down, cement was mixed and spread, and new floors were planted. Despite the brisk pace, the work stretched throughout the entire day and continued into the night, not winding up until the early hours of the morning. When only an hour remained to the 24-hour deadline, the windows were finally installed. Even as the last few minutes ticked closer, workers were still seen fussing over details.

Where a pitiful room once stood, a magnificent hall, amply furnished, now supplanted its place. One would be hard-pressed to say it was built in just one day.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir arrived and immediately toured the unrecognizable structure, admiring it from every angle. "Amazing," he kept muttering. "Absolutely amazing."

Reb Yekel seized the chance to reveal his impulsive promise to Rabbi Yitzchak Meir.

"Rabbi, I agree it's indeed beautiful, but the price is quite expensive! We pledged—in your name—a son for the contractor."

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir's delightful expression curled into a thoughtful frown. For a minute, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir was silent, seemingly lost in thought.

"Hashem will help him," he finally declared, and stepped inside his new yeshivah building.

And indeed, within the year, the contractor invited Rabbi Yitzchak Meir to act as sandak at his son's circumcision.

Reprinted from an email of Sichat Hashavua.

I heard from Rabbi Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, that immediately after the Akeida, Hashem gave Avraham a wonderful blessing: 'הרבה ארבה את זרעך ככוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על שפת הים' - I shall significantly increase the number of your offspring so they will be like the stars in the heavens above and like the sand which is by the seashore.'

Why this repetition?

Surely we don't need both examples? Both the stars in the heavens above and the sand by the seashore, indicate a number so high that nobody could count them. The Midrash helps us, by saying that when Hashem says that the Jewish people will be like the stars above, that refers to a time when we are loyal to the words of Hashem. That we'll be like the grains of sand on the seashore below – that's when we rebel against the words of Hashem. The Midrash explains that one cannot touch the stars – they are safe, they are secure and that represents the people of Israel in good times, whereas sand is trampled underfoot and that represents the people of Israel in challenging times.

Rabbi Mirvis is troubled by this commentary because the context here is one of pure blessing. It's in the immediate aftermath of the greatest statement of faith in Hashem – the Akeidah (sacrifice). Hashem wants to reassure Avraham that thanks to the loyalty that we the Jewish people place in Hashem above, He will forever bless us. So therefore both the stars and the sand must indicate blessing and therefore he suggests the following... Like the stars in the heavens above – that means innumerable. Like the sand on the seashore is different. It's not just 'חול – sand'. It's 'חול אשר על שפת הים' - sand by the seashore', which is wet, like mud. It appears as one single entity. Though it is made up of separate grains, they are clasped together as one.

This is a further blessing! In addition to being like the stars above, Hashem is saying that the Jewish people will be blessed with unity. Each individual will retain his or her own unique identity but we will stand together as one great nation.

Through the ages, Hashem has indeed blessed us to survive together as a nation, against the odds. And true to His word we have been like the stars of the heavens above.

Let us help Hashem to bless us just as the sand which is by the seashore and guarantee that we will always have unity within our midst 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.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

Although none of the Taryag (613) mitzvot are counted from Vayera, there are many mitzvot to be found in the Parsha.

Many of the details of the Mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim, considered part of the mitzvah of G'milut Chassadim, are derived from the behavior of Avraham Avinu. Similarly, Bikur Cholim, is also a part of G'milut Chassadim, as well as being part of the mitzvah to emulate Hashem.

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 147
NUMBER OF WORDS: 2085
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7862

HAFTORA:

Ashkenazim & Chabad: Melachim II 4:1-37

Sephardim & Community of Frankfurt am Main: Melachim II 4:1-23

Yossi

וירא

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רבקה לאה בת חיה ברכה

And

יוסף בן רבקה לאה

Whose birthdays are

כ"ג חשוון

ספס

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