

The Jewish Weekly

How Did He Know?

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

Rabbi Moshe Galante lived in Damascus, which is a Muslim country, where the sheik was a just person, who was loved by the people. In addition to being a fair judge, whenever someone was ill, the family would come to him and ask that he pray on their behalf. Not only did he do so, but he would tell them when to return, and when they came back he informed them if their family member or friend will survive or not.

After some time it became a regular scene. Early in the morning long lines of individuals would line up in front of his palace, to ask him for his prayers and blessings and then that evening or whenever, he instructed them to return, he would tell them what will happen.

People came to Rabbi Galante, the rabbi of that city, and asked, whether they are allowed to ask him as well. Their question was, was the sheik using the power of avodah zora (idolatry), or was it a gift from Hashem? When the Rav heard about this phenomenon, he also became curious about this ability of the sheik, and decided to find out.

He called the shamash and told him to ask the sheik if he can visit him. The sheik who was quite learned and had heard that the Jewish rabbi was extremely knowledgeable in many fields, happily agreed to meet him.

When Rabbi Galante came, the sheik asked him if he was knowledgeable in a certain wisdom. The Rav replied, with the grace of the Creator, I am somewhat knowledgeable in it. The sheik was thrilled and began discussing certain questions he had in it, and was elated with the answers.

Evidently, the rabbi was modest in his declaration that he has some knowledge in it, he is definitely an authority in it.

The time allotted passed by extremely fast and the sheik requested that the rabbi please visit him the following week. Rabbi Galante agreed, but on the third day, a servant of the sheik was knocking at Rabbi Galante's door. The Sheik requests that you visit him today, at your convenience.

Rabbi Galante replied in the affirmative that he will come, and arrived some hours later.

I apologize for asking you to come today, but my thirst for learning gave me no rest, the sheik said. Can we continue the discussion today? At the end of the discussion, the sheik said, I would greatly appreciate it if we can meet twice a week to discuss these issues.

The Rav replied, he would be happy to do so, however, he cannot promise that he will have the answers. After all, I just study it, in order to understand Jewish law, but I will try my best.

The following week when the Rav came, the sheik had a list of questions and was hoping that at least a few of them would be answered. To his surprise, the rabbi answered all of them without any difficulty.

Rabbi you said you are somewhat knowledgeable in it. I see your humility got the better of you, as

you are the leading expert in this field. The Rav simply replied, there is so much more to learn.

The sheik asked him, where did you study all this? And Rabbi Galante replied, I need to know it to understand the Torah and the greatness of the Creator. So continued their twice a week meetings for some months. Their friendship indeed grew, and his respect for the rabbi was becoming stronger and stronger.

One day during their conversation, the Sheik asked him about the seventh subject, and when the rabbi replied that he has some knowledge in it, the sheik knew that the rabbi knew it very well, and he was thrilled. He fell on his feet and pleaded to Rabbi Galante to please teach it to him. However, to his dismay, this time Rabbi Galante turned him down and said, I can't. It took me years of herculean effort and tremendous expenses to learn it, I can't just give it away.

I will pay you whatever price you ask, replied the sheik pleadingly. What is my money worth, compared to gaining such wisdom?!

Exactly as you said, replied Rabbi Galante, so why should I sell it for money? I can only give it away as an exchange, wisdom for wisdom. You teach me something and I will teach you something.

My dear friend there is no wisdom that I have that you are not better qualified than I! If I have something that I can switch with you, I would gladly do so.

Yes, there is something that I would like to know, and that is, how do you know who is going to live and who is going to die?

The sheik paled, that is something I can't reveal to anyone, I was sworn to secrecy.

I too have that problem, but I figured in order for me to gain wisdom, it is for my benefit, so it is permissible for me to share it, as I am doing so for my benefit not for yours. The same is by you my dear friend, you are using it to gain knowledge.

Rabbi, I am willing to do so, however, I can't divulge it, not because I don't trust you, but it is because I wish to protect you.

Protect me from what, inquired the Rav.

Whoever is not worthy to know this secret and found out, may perish on the spot, replied the Sheik, and I don't want anything bad to happen to you.

I am not fearful of that happening, replied the Rav.

If so, I will inform you. But you must prepare yourself properly, replied the Sheik. Starting from tonight, you must fast for two days, and in the meal that you eat this evening you should not have any meat or wine. Then if you still want to see, come to me on the third day, after you immerse yourself in water and put on a new set of linen garments.

The Rav agreed and went home and didn't break his fast even on the morning of the third day. He was somewhat nervous, but felt that he has to find out. Arriving at the palace after he davened Shacharit, the guards ushered him and the Sheik greeted him warmly.

He noticed that the rabbi was extremely pale and weak, and said, it is clear that you followed the instructions, so we can proceed.

It Once Happened...

The Sheik bolted the door from inside and then opened another door which led into a beautiful garden. He instructed the Rav to follow him and that there would be no talking, besides for the few instructions he gives.

The Rav agreed and after some distance they came to a stream. He then said, Rabbi, we will immerse in the stream and then proceed.

The Rabbi was becoming more and more bewildered, but he did as was instructed.

After walking another few hundred feet the Sheik began to tremble. He whispered to the Rav, Rabbi if you want to turn back, this is your last chance. The Rav assured him that he is alright.

They then came to a small hut made out of marble and precious stones, with pure silver carved doors that put the doors of the sheik's palace to shame. Rabbi Galante never saw a house so beautiful. The Sheik whispered, before you enter you must bow down, and before the Rav could reply, the sheik bowed for a while. Seeing him bowed, the Rav was relieved.

When the Sheik arose, he respectfully knocked on the door and then with his head bowed he humbly entered the room, and bowed down seven times. Knowing that it is expected of him to do so also, Rabbi Galante decided to say the possuk, shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid – I place Hashem constantly in front of me, and bowed to the side.

Opposite the door was the most exquisite curtain the Rav had seen, and the Sheik instructed the Rav to move the curtain and look at what is behind the curtain. There he saw four familiar words laid out in a most beautiful way, the words he had just uttered, shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid, and under it he saw the four letters of Hashem's name, Yud, Hei, Vav and Hei. He sighed a sigh of relief thankful that he did not bow to an avodah zora (idolatry).

They then returned in silence to his room, and Rabbi Galante said, I saw some words and letters, but that doesn't explain how you know who will live and who won't!

The letters you saw, are the letters that spell the name of the true Creator. He created this world, and is continuously in charge of it. When I hold up a name, either the name begins to shine, which means that that person is going to recover. If there is a shade over the letters that means they will pass on.

When Reb Moshe came home he broke out in an inconsolable cry. He sat there with tears rolling down his cheeks. After a few moments he said, we say this passuk every day, and mention Hashem's name numerous times a day. So why don't we have this present and ability, while the Sheik does?!

Because look at the respect and awe he [the Sheik] has of Hashem's name, even though he has no idea about Him and His Torah and mitzvot, and therefore he was granted this special ability. But we who do know Hashem, how much more respect should we demonstrate, when we daven?!!

Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Avtzon's Weekly Story email.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Mikeitz

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:03	5:19	5:56
Tel Aviv	4:17	5:20	
Haifa	4:06	5:18	
Be'er Sheva	4:21	5:22	



The Angels Who Did Not Know They Were Angels

By Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks OB"TM

When heaven intends something to happen, and it seems to be impossible, sometimes it sends an angel down to earth – an angel who didn't know he or she was an angel – to move the story from here to there. Let me tell the story of two such angels, without whom there might not be a State of Israel today.

One was a remarkable young woman from a Sephardi family who, at the age of seventeen, married into the most famous Ashkenazi family in the world. Her name was Dorothy Pinto; her husband was James de Rothschild, son of the great Baron Edmond de Rothschild who did so much to support the settlement of the land in the days before the proclamation of the State.

A critical juncture occurred during the First World War that would eventually lead to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the placing of Palestine under a British mandate. Suddenly, Britain became absolutely central to the Zionist dream. A key figure in the Zionist movement, Chaim Weizmann, was in Britain, experimenting and lecturing in chemistry at Manchester University.

But Weizmann was a Russian immigrant, not a prominent member of British society. Manchester was not London. Chemistry was not politics. The most influential and well-connected Jewish family was the Rothschilds. But Edmond was in France. James was a soldier on the battlefield. And not every member of the British Rothschilds was a Zionist.

At that moment, Dorothy suddenly assumed a leading role. She was only nineteen when she first met Weizmann in December 1914, and understood very little of the political complexities involved in realising the Zionist dream. But she learned quickly. She was perceptive, resourceful, energetic, delightful and determined.

She connected Weizmann with everyone he needed to know and persuade. Simon Schama, in his definitive account of "Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel", says that "young as she was... she combined charm, intelligence and more than a hint of steely resolution in just the right mixture, to coax commitment from the equivocal, enthusiasm from the lukewarm and sympathy from the indifferent."

His judgement on the effect of her interventions is that "through tireless but prudent social diplomacy she had managed to open avenues of influence and persuasion at a time when they were badly needed." The result, in 1917, was the Balfour Declaration, a milestone in the history of Zionism – and we should not forget that the Declaration itself took the form of a letter to Lord (Walter) Rothschild.

Dorothy's husband James, in his will, left the money to build the Knesset, Israel's parliament building. In her own will, Dorothy left the money to build a new Supreme Court Building, a project undertaken by her nephew Jacob, the current Lord Rothschild. But of all the things she did, it was those connections she made for Chaim Weizmann in the years 1914 to 1917 that were surely the most important. Without them, there might have been no Balfour Declaration and no State of Israel.

The other figure, who could not have been less like Dorothy de Rothschild, was Eddie Jacobson. The son of poor Jewish immigrants, born in New York's Lower East Side, he moved with his family to Kansas City where he met a young man called Harry Truman. They knew one another in their youth, and became close in 1917 when they underwent military training together. After the end of World War I, they opened a haberdashery business together. It failed in 1922 because of the recession.

From then on, they went their separate ways, Jacobson as a travelling salesman, and Truman successively a county administrator, Senator, Vice-President, and then when F.D. Roosevelt died in office in 1945, President of the United States. Despite their very different life-trajectories, the two stayed friends, and Jacobson would often visit Truman, talking to him about, among other things, the fate of European Jewry during the Holocaust.

After the war, the position of America vis-à-vis the State of Israel was deeply ambivalent. The State Department was opposed. Truman himself refused to meet Chaim Weizmann. On 13 March 1948, Jacobson went to the White House and persuaded Truman to change his mind and meet Weizmann. Largely as a result of this, the United States became the first nation to grant diplomatic recognition to Israel on 14 May 1948.

Many years later, Truman wrote: One of the proudest moments of my life occurred at 6:12 p.m. on Friday, May 14, 1948, when I was able to announce recognition of the new State of Israel by the government of the United States. I remain particularly gratified by the role I was fortunate to play in the birth of Israel as, in the immortal words of the Balfour Declaration, "a national home for the Jewish people."

Two people, Dorothy de Rothschild and Eddie Jacobson, appeared on the scene of history and connected Chaim Weizmann with individuals he might otherwise not have met, among them Arthur Balfour and Harry Truman. They were like the stranger who connected Joseph and his brothers, but with infinitely more positive consequences. I think of them both as angels who did not know they were angels.

Perhaps this is true not only about the destiny of nations but also about each of us at critical junctures in our lives. I believe that there are times when we feel lost, and then someone says or does something that lifts us or points the way to a new direction and destination.

Years later, looking back, we see how important that intervention was, even though it seemed slight at the time. That is when we know that we too encountered an angel who didn't know he or she was an angel.

Reprinted from an email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The 'שש זכירות' are the 6 commandments of the Torah, which call upon us to recall key biblical events of the past. 'זכירה - remembrance', is very central to us. It is in the very same spirit that we have Mitzvot which are 'זכר למעשה' - to remember the creation of the earth', and of course, 'זכר ליציאת מצרים' - to remember our exodus from Egypt'.

Memories of the past are so central to us. But you know sometimes, forgetfulness can also be a good thing. We learn it from this week's Parsha of Mikeitz. Yosef and Osnat are blessed with their very first child. Yosef calls him Menashe, which comes from a root which means 'to forget'. Yosef's rationale, 'כי נשני אלהים את כל עמלי ואת כל בית אבי' - it is because Hashem has caused me to forget all of my toil and to forget my father's house'.

Surely this is an astonishing statement: Yosef, of all people, knew how important it was for him to preserve everything that he had learnt in his father's house, to be proud of his traditions and yet, here he is thanking Hashem who has enabled him to forget it all?

Once, in a social context, I bumped into a man whom I knew had experienced a very painful bereavement and I said to him, "How are you doing? How are things going?" And his reply was "Thank G-d for forgetfulness!"

Of course, he had fond memories of the person who had passed away. Of course, he wanted to retain that person's precious legacy, but at the same time, he wanted to move on in life.

many years ago that the person at that time who held the world record for the number of decimal points of 'pi' that he was able to remember – more than 30,000 – that very talented man, that brilliant individual had a very troubled life and that's because he remembered just about everything. So, he couldn't forget the challenging parts of his life, the traumas he had endured, the tragedies he had experienced.

That is exactly the point that Yosef made when he called Menashe by that name. Yosef had grown up in a very troubled home, he was hated by his brothers to the extent that they even attempted to murder him. How was he going to put that behind him?

Now that he was in Egypt, now that he was blessed with his first son, now that he had a family at a time when he was leading Egyptian society, he said thank G-d that I could have forgotten all the pain that I endured in my father's house.

From Yosef we learn, how important it is always to remember the past, to cherish those experiences, personally and nationally, and to use them for the sake of the betterment of our future.

At the same time, sometimes like Yosef, we can declare, 'Thank G-d for forgetfulness', but now in what we are living through today we need to remember all He has done for us individually and to 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 Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 112
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1558
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5972

HAFTORA: Malachim 1, 3:15 - 4:1

Friday, Dec. 25, 2020, is Asara B'Tevet (Fast of Tenth Of Tevet).

מקץ
פרשת

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