

# The Jewish Weekly

## The Repeat Reincarnation

By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

The city of Nikolsberg, Moravia (now Czechoslovakia) was famous for its long chain of great Rabbis reaching back almost a thousand years. Among them were the famous Maharal of Prague and the Tosfos Yom Tov but perhaps the last in the line was the great Tzadik Rebbe Shmuel Shmelka; pupil of the Chassidic master the Maggid of Mezritch (successor of the Baal Shem Tov) some 250 years ago.

Rabbi Shmelka was truly fitting for the post; he was a great Talmudic and legal genius, his advice was impeccable and his brotherly love was seemingly without limit. Many were the nights that his eyes saw no sleep because he was involved in the problems of others and he was very proficient in the mysteries of Kabbalah.

But despite his flawless character and selfless nature he was once the center of a controversy that only miracles were able to quell.

One of the richer Jews in Nikolsberg, who we will call Groisman was sued by one of its poorer members. The details were not passed down so it's not clear what the suit was about nor the amount involved but what we do know is that Rabbi Shmelka, after hearing all the arguments and seeing the evidence, decided in favor of the poor man.

Groisman was boiling mad; not only had he been found guilty and lost money he had been humiliated publicly by a nobody! He declared war! After all, he told himself, he didn't become the wealthiest man in town by surrendering!

He was clever about it. First he began quietly complaining and, because he was rich, people began to listen. At first it was only his family and friends but slowly the circle began to widen. Friends spoke to their friends and their friends to their friends until within a few months the town became a cauldron of discontent.

Gradually Groisman's claims became clear; 'the Rabbi, he whispered to a ready audience, is one of the Chassidim who consult the Kabbalah and other mystical books for their decisions. Who knows when he would claim that some angel or spirit told him to change the Torah! Indeed, this is probably the reason he found me guilty. Maybe tomorrow he'll make up a new religion!

The tone of things became increasingly sinister until one day placards appeared on the street announcing a meeting in the great Synagogue to discuss 'pressing issues'.

That night some one thousand men were packed into the huge auditorium and the voices began to be more angry until they finally took a vote and decided to oust the Rabbi! Groisman had succeeded!

Suddenly the voice of the old Shamash (sextant) of the Synagogue rang out from somewhere. "Wait! WAIT!! I want to talk!"

Everyone looked up to see the old fellow standing at the podium in the middle of the Synagogue open hands raised for silence.

He must have been over eighty years old and his high pitched voice rang clearly over the crowd until everyone's curiosity was aroused. "Wait!! I want to talk!" He kept repeating until there was silence.

As far as anyone remembered he had never raised his voice or spoken more than a few quiet sentences in all the years he had been in the Synagogue. What could he want now? He cleared his throat and spoke.

"I want to say something important." He looked around to see that everyone was listening and continued. "Two things that I saw that I swore I would never tell... but I think it's important."

The room was still.

"It was about ten years ago, just after we chose our Reb Shmelka. Well, I was making my rounds early in the morning before sunrise, ringing my bell and knocking on windows to wake everyone up for the Morning Prayer. When I got to the Rabbi's house I saw the light was on in his window so I looked in. There he was sitting and learning Talmud with some wild-looking long-haired Jew with a leather girdle around his waist."

I figured it must be some traveler or something, really I thought it might be one of the 36 hidden Holy Men (Tzadikim) that I read about somewhere but I kept quiet.

"But when I saw him again there the next morning, standing before the Rabbi and listening to his learning I decided I'd ask. Later that day I caught the Rabbi alone in Synagogue after the prayers and asked him who the man was and the Rabbi was very surprised.

"What, you saw him?" he asked a few times. Until he finally said, 'Well if you saw him then I'll tell you. That was Elijah the prophet (who lived some 2,700 years ago and appears regularly to the righteous) but best not to talk about it.'

The Shamash cleared his voice and continued. "Then a few days later I saw him again but this time it was really frightening.

"It was late at night and the Rabbi was standing at the door holding a candle holder with two very bright candles escorting some people from his house. When they got to the door I saw them. One was the same Elijah the Prophet but the other.... Well I couldn't believe my eyes but it was a real king with royal garments and a crown .... and even carrying a royal scepter! I was petrified with fear and awe.

"The Rabbi escorted his guests out the door for a few more steps until they disappeared then he returned to his house to continue his Torah study.

"Well, I don't know what made me do it but I waited a few minutes, said a prayer, approached the Rabbi's door and knocked. He had been so friendly to me the time before I figured he would tell me who that king was.

"So I went in and told him that I just happened to be passing and saw what I saw and I asked my question.

"The Rabbi looked at me for a while, told me to sit down and explained.

"He said that a few weeks ago in a certain town in Poland a tragedy occurred. There, there lived a simple Jewish artisan who was obsessed with hatred for idols

## It Once Happened...

and idolatry. He made his living by making small dolls and toys and the third of the Ten Commandments "You shall not make for yourselves any carved idol or any image" literally burned in his heart. In fact he spoke of it non-stop.

"One night he went crazy. He ran into town and began smashing every statue he saw including the ones in front of the Church until he was caught by a crowd and beaten and killed for his crime. It was with greatest difficulty that the Jewish community there was able to convince the gentiles that he acted alone but the whole thing was so traumatic on the elders of the community that they refused to provide for his widow from the widow's fund.

"They argued that because the poor fellow knew very well that he would be killed for his actions he was responsible for throwing his life and his money away and she should be paid from the communal charity like all the other paupers, which meant a lot less money.

"Anyway she complained to the Rabbis of her town and when they couldn't decide what to do, they brought the case to our Rabbi.

"That was yesterday in the day. Last night the Rabbi was sitting and pouring through books for a solution when the two visitors I mentioned visited him.

"And that king was none other than Menashe, the idolatrous son of King Hezekiah (see Kings 2:21:19)!

"He said that since his death, over two thousand years ago, he had been reincarnated time and time again to atone for his blasphemous sins (among which was erecting an idol in the Holy Temple!) but his soul found no rest until it became incarnated in this Jewish artisan.

That explains his unexplainable hatred of idols; it was the result of Menashe's tormented soul seeking repentance.

"And that's why he came to Rav Shmelka; to explain to him that the artisan was neither crazy nor suicidal, rather he was sacrificing his life to destroy idolatry and sanctify G-d's name; the only thing that would purify Menashe's soul. Reb Shmelka didn't tell me what he would decide but he did ask me to keep the matter quiet but I couldn't.

Now, my friends and brothers." The Shamash concluded. "I felt I had to tell you this so you should know what a holy Rabbi we have. I beg you not to be angry with him and I hope he won't be angry with me for telling." Then turning to Mr. Groisman he said, "Surely if he decided against you it was for the benefit of everyone involved including you...or at least your soul."

The group dispersed and the impeachment was canceled.

Reprinted from *The Storyteller* Vol. 3.



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayechi

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:11	5:27	6:04
Tel Aviv	4:25	5:28	
Haifa	4:14	5:26	
Be'er Sheva	4:29	5:30	



**The Cult-buster Rabbi who Honored a Missionary**  
By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet was a world renowned author and lecturer on a myriad of topics, with over 35 books disseminated in countless countries and translated into numerous languages. Yet, he was perhaps best known for his "cult busting" lectures [and debates!] where he would dazzle audiences worldwide with his erudite presentations. His success in returning many a Jew to their roots is legendary.

A number of years ago, Rabbi Schochet authored a book encapsulating his unique style in countering Christian missionaries and cults. Due to personal and health considerations, it had never been published.

In 2016, three years after Rabbi Schochet's death, the book was made available to the public. The new book titled "For the Love of Truth" is more than just an encapsulation of Rabbi Schochet's brilliant retorts against missionaries and cults. It is very much a book which offers an understanding of basic Jewish beliefs and principles, as well as insights into the essence of Judaism as a whole.

Family members who published the book are positive that the book will invariably strengthen pride in the reader's Jewish tradition and heritage, fortifying them with a better understanding of Judaism's core beliefs, thus making this book of great interest to all readers across the religious spectrum.

In what would appear to be a strange twist of irony, the book was dedicated by Rabbi Schochet to Reverend Henk Hoek, a Protestant Minister.

In the preface to the book, Rabbi Schochet explained why:

"I humbly dedicate this work to a non-Jew, a Christian, in fact a Christian cleric, Reverend Henk Hoek, minister of the Dutch Reformed Church of Gaast, Friesland, and later of Oss, Noord Brabant, in the Netherlands, and his wife Corrie.

"This couple was an outstanding example of truly religious, honest and decent people in the best sense of these words. They exposed themselves to life-threatening dangers by hiding and fostering a young Jewish girl in Nazi-occupied Holland. They kept her in their house for nearly three years under the eyes of the German vultures.

"There were a good number of other Christians who hid Jewish children, but too many of them did so for the terrible price of the children's Jewish identity by raising them as Christians and not restoring them to their families or people after the war.

"Not so the Rev. Hoek and his wife. Though a minister of a Christian denomination, committed to a faith in which evangelizing and proselytizing plays so great a role, Rev. Hoek informed the girl's parents, themselves in hiding with a Roman Catholic family, not only of their daughter's safety but also to assure them that no attempts will be made to wean her away from her Judaism.

"To avoid suspicion, that young girl had to accompany her foster-parents to church services and had to partake of their non-kosher food; but the prayers they made her say were kept free of any Christological content. He did not take advantage of the circumstances to rob that girl of her identity and heritage; he did not seek to impose his beliefs and values, to seduce her mind and heart. He proved himself to be a truly honest, decent and sincerely religious man.

"That young girl became my dear wife and the worthy mother of our children. Rev. Hoek was an honored guest at our wedding (his wife died shortly after the war). When he passed away in the fall of 1970, I eulogized him in the major sermon of Kol Nidrei, the beginning of the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, as an exemplary role-model of honesty, decency, true religious values, in short, of the very theme of our High Holidays.

"Rev. Hoek symbolizes the very spirit and purpose of this work, and therefore it is dedicated to him and his wife, in profound gratitude, respect and humility. It is this spirit which this work seeks to inculcate, in addition to the educational goal of teaching a considered response to the odious attempts of missionaries. If this work in its present form will achieve even a part of the success of its original format, this will be the greatest reward I could wish and pray for."

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*



The Torah begins this week's Parsha by telling us that "Yaakov lived". Yaakov Avinu, when we look through the last few Parshiot, did not by any means have an easy life, from his birth, to constant battle with Eisav, including when Elifaz stole everything he had on his way to Lavan. He was by Lavan, not the most easy going father in law, for many years, then had to fight off the angel of Eisav before facing the physical Eisav. His daughter got raped by the local prince as they passed through a village, Yosef disappeared for 22 years, and because of a famine he went to go live out the rest of his life in Egypt. There is no one who would call this an easy life by any standard. Yet Yaakov lived, and he never gave up on life, he lived every day to the fullest.

There are those who define success, by how much money they have in the bank, and they make that the value of their life, at any cost. People like that will leave their wife and kids for days at a time, and their families certainly suffer from that lack of attention. They leave their houses early in the morning, and don't come back until late at night. Some people call that a life, but is there any real value to such a life? You would think that once they have enough money, they would be smart enough to stop and enjoy the real things in life, like their families and their friends. Not only don't they, they tell others "You want to be successful like me? "Divorce your wife, disown your kids, and focus only on the job, and you will start becoming a millionaire." They call that 'life' but is it?

Friends, we all have hardships in our lives. Some people have financial issues, so they run to slave their lives away, to try to make a buck, and their families suffer, as we wrote in the previous paragraph. Others have money, but have health issues in the family. As they say, if all people packaged their own positives and negatives, and we put all the packages into the middle of a room to be chosen, we would all run and take our own back, because once we see what other people go through, we realize that what we have in life, is exactly what we need, designed by our dear Father in Heaven Who loves us very much and wrote a screenplay just for us. "בשבילי נברא העולם" - The world was created for my sake", and the minute we accept that, we need to take that life, think about Yaakov Avinu, and live our lives to their fullest, and enjoy all the great things we have. R' Noach Weinberg z"l said, "If you don't know what you are worth dying for, you have not begun living yet."

So let's join together to see the value, and what is important in our lives, and LIVE our LIVES like never before, 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.

*Yossi*

The Jewish Weekly's  
**PARSHA FACTS**

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 85  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1158  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4448

HAFTORA: Melachim I 2:1 - 12

**פרשת ויחי**

This week has been sponsored by  
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