

The Jewish Weekly

Think Before You Speak

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf Kitzis, a close disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, came to say good-bye to his master. It was both a sad and happy moment. To separate from the Baal Shem Tov was very difficult, even though the reason was that he was leaving for the Holy Land. The Baal Shem Tov spoke to him seriously:

"You should keep in mind that everything that happens in life, whether seemingly significant or not, is part of the Divine Plan. So in every situation it is important to think first before acting or even speaking. And if you should encounter someone on the way and he should ask you something, be sure to think carefully before answering him."

Early in the morning after two weeks at sea, with a good part of the journey yet ahead, the ship pulled into a small port on a tiny, uninhabited island, for a short stop to pick up supplies. The passengers disembarked, to stretch their legs and break the monotony of the long voyage.

The peaceful solitude and striking scenery stirred in R. Wolf powerful emotions and appreciation of the beauty of G-d's creation. Adorned in tallit and tefillin he stood in a secluded idyllic spot, absorbed in his Morning Prayer.

When R. Wolf was "absorbed" in prayer, it meant just that: absolute total involvement. Nothing could break into his concentration, not even the ship's horn and the calls of the captain and the sailors for all passengers to return aboard. When he finally finished he looked up, but instead of his ship on the dock, all he could see was a shrinking dot on the horizon.

Realizing the desperateness of his situation, he began to explore the island, hoping to find signs of human civilization. "Baruch HaShem Blessed be G-d" he thought, at least he had his tallit and tefillin with him. He certainly did not expect to find another Jew on this tiny speck in the ocean.

Shortly before nightfall he noticed a wispy column of smoke, rising over the trees. He excitedly walked towards this beacon of hope, and finally came upon a small house tucked into the slope of a steep mountain. He knocked on the door several times and after a long while it swung open. A distinguished elderly man emerged. He had a distinctive Jewish look!

He greeted R. Wolf warmly and calmed his fears. "Don't worry," he said. "There will be another ship heading for Eretz Yisroel in a few days." He explained that although very few people lived on the island, it was part of the Turkish empire and used mainly as a stopping place and supply depot for passing ships. "Meanwhile," he said, "Shabbos approaches. Let's prepare and enjoy it together."

The man was clearly learned in Torah and observant of the commandments, and it was a

pleasure to converse with him. But every attempt by R. Wolf to find out some detail of his host's life was rebuffed by a mysterious smile, a shrug, or a change of subject. Nevertheless the Shabbos was a delight, with most of the time spent in prayer and Torah study.

Sunday morning another ship arrived, and since it was going in the right direction, R. Wolf arranged to continue his voyage on it. His host came to see him off. As he set foot on the ramp to go up to the ship, the man said to him: "By the way, seeing as you passed through Russia and Poland on your way here, perhaps you can tell me briefly how is life for the Jews there?"

"Life for the Jews there?" repeated R. Wolf, pre-occupied with his boarding. "Boruch HaShem, they live, day by day, 'thanks be to G-d for He is good and His mercy is everlasting' (Ps. 136:1)," he answered briefly.

As the ship pulled anchor and edged its way out to the ocean's deep waters, R. Wolf continued to stare at the vanishing features of his distinguished host. Suddenly the thought crashed into his reverie: perhaps that last question he asked me is what the Baal Shem Tov had in mind when he cautioned me. With a sinking feeling, he realized his pious response did not measure up to his master's instructions. His apprehension grew. At the next stop he decided to disembark, and to return home without even reaching the Holy Land. He had to apologize to the Baal Shem Tov and find out from him how to rectify the matter.

A few weeks later, a dismayed and humble R. Wolf presented himself with foreboding before his master. The Baal Shem Tov asked for a detailed report of his voyage. When he got to his final conversation with the mysterious man of the island, the Baal Shem Tov seemed to be hanging on every word.

"Stop!" he cried out. "Enough! Such a great opportunity reared its head to you and you let it go by!" Two tears rolled down the Tzadik's cheeks. R. Wolf shuddered in remorse and fear. "I came back as quickly as possible in order to fix whatever damage I caused," he choked out.

The Baal Shem Tov dismissed his plea with a wave of his holy hand. "There is nothing for you to do. You already "paid" for it by giving up your voyage to Israel in order to return here.

"I'll explain it all to you," he continued. "Our forefather, Avraham, complained sharply to the One Above about the long duration of bitter exile. The Holy One, Blessed-be-He answered him that the situation of the Jews is not so bad as he implied. To clarify the matter it was decided to have Avraham our forefather meet with an honest Jew, someone who had never uttered a false word his entire life. You, my friend, merited to spend a Shabbos with Avraham our forefather himself. But when he asked you about the welfare of the Jews, you should have answered that we are suffering heavily and are outcasts, and that we all desperately look forward to our complete redemption. Instead you automatically answered, 'Everything is fine Boruch HaShem,' and now we have to remain sunk in our exile even longer," sighed the Baal Shem Tov - May it end soon.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

One Last Chance

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

David Haber runs a successful curtain and window treatment business in downtown Boston. At times, his phone lines, like his home, seem like a raucous whirlwind of activity, as David is not only a businessman. Aside from being a devoted husband and father to six children, he is involved with local community affairs and with many national and international tzedakah organizations.

One night he had an appointment with a Mrs. Silver to show her swatches of fabric and to discuss window treatment options. David simply forgot about it as, in his frenetic schedule, he had neglected to enter it into his appointment book.

That night at 10 pm, an irate Mrs. Silver left a blistering message on his office answering machine. David called her, honestly explaining that he was simply overworked and forgot, asking for her forgiveness.

But Mrs. Silver was not in a forgiving mood; she insisted that as a businessman he should have been more responsible, and that her time was just as valuable as his.

David apologized and said, "Please, give me another appointment and this time, I promise I will be there on time."

Mrs. Silver was not a religious Jew and David was concerned that his failure to show up at her home, aside from being poor business practice, was a chillul Hashem.

There was a long pause; David thought she had disconnected the line. Then she said reluctantly, "One Jew should always give another Jew a chance. You can come Monday morning at ten and I expect you to be on time."

David gave her his assurance. David arrived at her home at 9:55 am. He rang the doorbell and waited. The door opened in a flash and a teenaged girl started screaming hysterically, "What are you doing here? I didn't call you. You don't belong here!"


David was shocked. "I have an appointment with Mrs. Silver. Is this her home?"

The girl cried, "My mother just collapsed in the kitchen. We're waiting for an ambulance. I think she had a stroke!"


David, who was a mainstay of Hatzalah of Boston, cried, "I'm a medic," and ran to his car to retrieve his equipment. He saw at once that Mrs. Silver was barely breathing. Her neck muscles had become paralyzed and her tongue, which had fallen back, was not allowing her to breathe.

David quickly opened up an air passage and got her to resume breathing. He saved her life! A few days later when David visited Mrs. Silver in the hospital she said to him, "I thought I was the one giving you one more chance, but I realize now, that it was you who gave me one more chance - at life." (Echoes of the Maggid)

Reprinted from an email of The Weekly Vort.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayishlach

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	3:59	5:15	5:52
Tel Aviv	4:13	5:16	
Haifa	4:03	5:14	
Be'er Sheva	4:18	5:18	

The Rosh Yeshiva and The Soda Machine

By Rabbi Avrohom Birnbaum

On Motzei Shabbat, I was speaking to my dear friend, Rav Menachem Savitz, who told me a story he experienced with Rav Dovid, illustrating his greatness and showing how Rav Dovid was the antitheses of 2020 culture.

Rav Savitz was working on a sefer on the halachot of marriage. He had a whole host of difficult halachic questions on this topic that he wanted to bring to Rav Dovid for clarification. One summer, during bein hazemanim, when the yeshiva was not in session, he went to the Lower East Side to try speaking to the rosh yeshiva. He was hoping to use the quiet time to have his many questions answered.

It was the summer. No one was around and he had the rosh yeshiva to himself. The rosh yeshiva was so friendly and patient as he listened to Rav Savitz's questions. They spent approximately two hours together.

During their conversation, something happened that Rav Savitz can never forget. Rav Dovid began walking out of the bais medrash with Rav Savitz following behind. He went into the hallway, pulled a key out of his pocket, and began to open...the soda machine. Before Rav Savitz could even register what was happening, he saw the illustrious rosh yeshiva, a man already in his 80s, filling up Mesivta Tiferet Yerushalayim's soda machine.

Nearly tongue-tied, Rav Savitz begged the rosh yeshiva, "Please, let me do it."

With a look of wonder on his face, Rav Dovid exclaimed, "Why should you do it?"



Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, zt"l

"The rosh yeshiva is a zakein (an elder)," Rav Savitz protested. "It is not lefi chevodo (not in accordance with his honor)."

Rav Dovid again looked at him, innocently, uncomprehendingly, and asked, "Why not? It brings the yeshiva money. What could be not honorable about that?"

Rav Savitz again begged Rav Dovid to please let him fill the machine, but Rav Dovid would not relent and personally finished filling the machine with soda.

Living in this world of 2020, we cannot even begin to fathom such self-effacement, such tzidkut (righteous), such pashtut (simplicity) and such gadlut (greatness). But for Rav Dovid? That was just him. That was who he was. He didn't even realize that there was anything remarkable about it. This self-effacement was seen in a man who knew the entire Talmud and is said to have learned the entire Talmud hundreds of times.

It made me appreciate more and more the towering greatness of the modesty that Rav Dovid exuded.

Reprinted from an email of the Yated Ne'eman.

What did Yaakov do on the day that could have been almost the last day of his life?

The twin brothers, Yaakov and Eisav had been separated for 22 long years. Yaakov recalled how Eisav swore to take his life because Yaakov had taken the birthright. And now it was reported to Yaakov that Eisav was approaching with 400 armed men. There were two possibilities, either Eisav was going to kill Yaakov or he was going to embrace him.

The Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, talks about these two options – how did Yaakov respond? In Rashi's reading of the text, he tells us that Yaakov adopted a three-pronged approach: 'תפילה', 'דורון', and 'מלחמה'. 'תפילה' means prayer. Yaakov did what came naturally to him. He prayed before Hashem and pleaded for the mercy of the Almighty to save him. 'דורון' means present. He had a strategy. He wanted to appease his brother, so he sent him hundreds of animals which were part of the salary which he had received from Lavan in Aram Naharaim. He wanted to indicate to Eisav that he bore no intention to do evil. And then there was the third plank of Yaakov's strategy, 'מלחמה' or war. Yaakov prepared for the worst-case scenario. He divided his family into two camps so that if Eisav attacked, at least half his family would survive.

Throughout all subsequent generations, the greatest of our biblical personalities adopted Yaakov's approach in situations such as this. It was Moshe who led our nation through prayer and strategy. Our great prophets and kings were the ones who combined prayer with action. It's from Yaakov that we learn how important it is to always pray to Hashem. But as the Talmud tells us 'אין סומכין על הגם' – you should never rely exclusively on a miracle. You need to have a strategy. You must plan. You must understand the minds of people. Try and work out a way to win the day for yourselves. And in addition, from Yaakov we learn that sometimes tragedies occur, and we need to prepare for a worst-case scenario. From Yaakov, we learn about prayer, about protection and about prevention. All are crucially important.

It was Yaakov Avinu who taught the world the invaluable lesson that Hashem helps those who help themselves. So let's try to help ourselves by joining together 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 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 and happy Chanukah.



The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

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

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 154
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1976
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7458

HAFTORA:
Ovadiah 1:1-21

Chanukah starts after sundown, Thursday, December 10 and lasts for eight days thru Friday, December 18.