

The Jewish Weekly

The Tzemach Tzedek And the Aguna

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Here is a story about Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, 1789-1866 (known as 'The Tzemach Tzedek') the third leader of the Chabad Movement some 150 years ago in Russia.

Once there was an Aguna searching for a solution to her problem. An 'Aguna' is a married woman whose husband disappears. Such a woman cannot remarry until there is either proof of the husband's death or he is located alive and gives a bill of divorce.

This Aguna had been estranged for several years with two children and no clue as to her husband's whereabouts. At first his absence was a bit of relief to her. He had been a strange fellow with an occasional streak of violence. But after a few years on her own it suddenly hit her; he wasn't going to return. She was still a young woman and the burden of providing for herself and her children alone for the rest of her life would be torture.

So she began to take action. She sent letters and traveled from Rabbi to Rabbi with her sad story but with no results.

Then, one day there was a breakthrough! Two religious Jews knocked on her door, introduced themselves by name, and told her that the reason her husband did not return is because several months ago he got sick and died! They had even been present at his funeral.

On his sick bed, as he was dying, he gave them her name and address and made them promise to inform her so she could remarry. They apologized that it took them so long but it was a long journey and a big trouble for them so they kept pushing it off.

When she digested the news, she covered her eyes and wept tears of woe for her dead husband and of relief for herself.

The men suggested that they go immediately to a Rabbi and give their testimony so she could be free to remarry and they could return home.

They went together to the local Rabbi who gathered several other Rabbis to verify the testimony and after an hour of questioning they began writing a statement that she was a widow and could remarry. But just as they were finishing, an old Rabbi who had been sitting unnoticed in the corner of the room

learning Talmud, stood, raised his hand for them to stop and declared, "Don't let her marry!"

All eyes turned to him. It was the well-known 'Tzadik' of the town; a holy Jew with a long white beard and kind, deep eyes whose every word was tried and trusted to never miss the mark.

"I 'see' that he is still alive! I can 'see' him!" The judges stared at the Tzadik with wide eyed astonishment and then turned to the Rabbi of the town who shrugged his shoulders and said. "We can't continue until this is clarified!" and the court was dismissed.

But the aguna wasn't going to give up so easily. She knew that according to the Torah, testimony of two reliable eye-witnesses is always sufficient whereas prophetic 'vision' NEVER is.

She had suffered too long to just give up. She decided to go to another bigger Rabbi! The 'Tzemach Tzedek' of Chabad.

A day later she and the two witnesses were in the city of Lubavitch standing before him. He asked a few questions and then called three more judges to form a judicial court and together they solemnly heard all the testimony including the opinion of the visionary rabbi in her home town.

They asked almost the same questions as the first judges did, nodded their heads in agreement, said that apparently there was no reason she could not remarry and then turned to the Tzemach Tzedek for his okay.

The Rebbe thought for several moments, raised his gaze to the ceiling as though deep in contemplation, smiled, looked at the judges and finally nodded in agreement. "I see no reason why she can't remarry".

Again she broke out crying tears of relief. Within an hour a document was written up and signed by the judges and witnesses, that her husband was dead and she could marry.

Several months later she found a match! And several weeks after that she remarried and began life anew. Mazal Tov!!

But one afternoon a few days after the wedding there was a knock at her door and she opened to see two religious Jews. They introduced themselves, asked her name and her (previous) husband's name, asked if they could come in and sit down and then gave her shocking news.

They had been with her husband in a distant country when he got sick and passed away ... two weeks ago!!

It Once Happened...

"TWO WEEKS??" She said in disbelief and staggered backwards. "But I was told he died months ago! There were witnesses!"

"Yes" They replied. "That's why we are here. That was a lie!"

"He died only a few weeks ago. We were with him. But before he died, he confessed to us that several months earlier he had paid two Jews to travel to you and falsely testify that he was dead. He wanted you to do a sin and marry someone else while still married to him!"

"He said that he had left Judaism and it gave him a particular pleasure to make others do the same! But now that he was dying, he realized he was wrong and wanted to repent. So he sent us here to tell you."

Her mind was spinning! Two weeks ago! In other words, the first 'seeing' Rabbi had been correct! Her first husband really had been alive! If she had married back then it would have been a catastrophe!

And not only that but it seems that the Tzemach Tzedek was wrong! It was a miracle that her second marriage delayed till after he really died!

The story got around and when the first 'visionary' Rabbi heard what happened he immediately traveled to the Tzemach Tzedek to hear his explanation; how could the holy Lubavitcher Rebbe have given the okay for her to marry when in fact at that time, it had been **FORBIDDEN**

Could it be that the Rebbe didn't 'see' properly? Or, even worse, perhaps he **CAUSED** the man to die in order to save the woman from doing a sin?

"No" The Tzemach Tzedek answered matter-of-factly. "I just saw that everything would turn out according to the Torah. That, in fact, she would marry after he died."

"In fact, he killed himself! By falsely declaring to the first false witnesses that he himself was dead he actually caused it to happen! Not only that, but his death saved his wife, his two lying witnesses, her second husband and even himself from sinning."

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tnimim, www.ohrtnimim.org.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Shemot

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:16	5:32	6:10
Tel Aviv	4:30	5:34	
Haifa	4:20	5:31	
Be'er Sheva	4:35	5:36	



The Holy Shopkeeper By Elchonon Isaacs

Reb Berel Bieber, my grandmother's father, was a widely respected Chabad Chassid, a diligent student of Torah, and a kindhearted man who took an active role in community affairs. He lived in Novozybkov, Belarus, where he provided for his family from his small business.

In 1890, Reb Berel chose to immigrate with his family to the Holy Land. To facilitate this, he first went alone to lay the groundwork for a smooth transition. He joined a new religious settlement in the Hadera region, where the main source of work was draining swamps.

The pioneers greatly respected him, as draining swamps was dangerous and difficult work, and at the end of the long day of manual labor he would immerse himself in Torah study. Reb Berel never complained; on the contrary, he was wont to say, "Thank G d for allowing me to work the earth of the Holy Land."

After a few weeks, Berel came down with a high fever and was hospitalized. With the tireless efforts of the doctors and nurses, he was saved. When he recovered, the doctor ordered him to either return to Russia or move to Jerusalem, where the air quality was better than the marshy swampland. Reb Berel was pained that he'd have to leave working the earth, which he saw as a holy mission, but the doctor's order took precedence.

Returning to Russia was out of the question. He moved to Jerusalem and, in time, settled in the Old City. He acquired a small shop in the Muslim quarter, where he sold staples such as flour and sugar. The grains were imported from Odessa to the port in Jaffa, and from there to Jerusalem.

Once the business got off the ground, his wife and children joined him in Jerusalem. Reb Berel's grandson, the late Dr. Aryeh Shoshan, related:

During my childhood, I loved to hang around my grandfather's shop. I see him clearly, sitting at the counter, his face shining, immersed in a volume of Talmud.

When customers entered, they'd do so quietly, always with an excuse for "bothering" him. As soon as he noticed them, my grandfather would mark his place, close the Talmud, and serve them patiently and graciously.

One day, an inspector from the Ottoman regime, which ruled the Holy Land from 1517 to 1917, entered the store and handed my grandfather an official document stating that he owed an enormous sum of taxes. The inspector warned my grandfather that if he did not pay up by noon the following day, they would confiscate the store and its contents.

As soon as the inspector left, my grandfather sat back down and returned to his Talmud as if nothing had happened. Astonished by his composure, I asked, "Did you hear what the person said?! They will confiscate your store tomorrow! He looked serious!" My grandfather looked at me with an ever comforting smile, "Worry not, the help of G d comes in the blink of an eye."

That night I could not sleep. Early in the morning, I returned to the store to witness with my own eyes how G d would help.

It was eight o'clock, and I asked my grandfather, "What will be?" The answer was the same, "G-d's help can come in the blink of an eye." And he returned to his study.

Ten o'clock came and went, then eleven, and I asked yet again, "What will be?" Still, I received the same answer. As the minutes ticked by, I felt my heart beating faster and stronger.

At 11:15 am, a city councilman burst into the store, and asked my grandfather in a desperate, panicked voice, "A platoon of Turkish soldiers just arrived without any advance notice and we have nothing to feed them. Perhaps you have a large amount of flour so we can bake some bread?" Grandfather deliberately closed his book and rose to serve his customer. The city official pressed, "Please! Quick, help save us all!"

Grandfather got up and calmly went to the storage house behind the store. He piled up a few sacks of flour and brought them to the city councilman. The grateful bureaucrat hastily took out a wad of bills, paid for the flour, and left just as quickly as he had arrived.

My grandfather then walked to the government office a few blocks down and paid up his debt in full. When he came back, he sat down in his chair and resumed his learning, in the familiar tune, now with a slight smile on his face.

Indeed, I was privileged to witness how G d's help comes in the blink of an eye.

Adapted and translated from an email of Sichat Hashavua.



What makes a good leader great?

In Parshat Shemot, we are told that Moshe was tending the flocks of Yitro, his father-in-law. When he was standing at the foot of Mount Chorev he noticed a burning bush. Then, coming closer to the bush, Hashem appeared from within it and charged him with the responsibility to deliver our people from Egypt.

Why was Moshe, of all people, selected to be our leader?

Let us have a look at the passage immediately preceding this. There we find that Moshe was on the run. He was fleeing for his life, from Pharaoh, king of Egypt having saved the life of a fellow Israelite by killing an Egyptian taskmaster. And now Moshe arrived in Midyan. He came to a well and he noticed an injustice: The first people to arrive at the well side were the seven daughters of Yitro with their flocks. But male shepherd after male shepherd had come along and pushed them aside. Moshe would not tolerate such unfairness – he stepped forward and personally watered the flocks of the daughters of Yitro. After that Yitro invited him into his home where he got to know one of the daughters, Tzipora, whom he married. Now let's consider that action of Moshe – it was particularly brave! After all, there was a price on his head, this was high risk! Surely he would not want to attract attention to himself now that he was a stranger in the land of Midyan. However, seeing an injustice, he was simply unwilling to stand idly by. He had to come and protect the rights of others.

The fact that Hashem chose Moshe to be the leader of our people at this specific moment teaches us that in Hashem's eyes what makes a good leader great, is not only being concerned with those within your own group but with those well beyond it. A great leader is somebody who leads his or her people but at the same time, is there for the rest of humanity because every single human being is created in the image of Hashem.

So let's learn from Moshe and let's try to protect others by praying 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, sweet, happy Shabbat and Chodesh Tov

שמות

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The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 124
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1763
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6762

HAFTORA:

Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23
Sephardim: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Shvat
Rosh Chodesh is Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021

Yossi