

# The Jewish Weekly

## An Acknowledged But Unalterable Mistake

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Some months after the passing of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe of Chabad, the Jewish community in Haditch received a letter from the Imperial Government. It stated that the cemetery that they were using was located on land that belonged to the Imperial Government, and since they converted it into a cemetery without permission, all the graves there, including the Rebbe's, must be removed to another location.

The Jewish community was shocked and distressed. It was disrespectful to move someone from his eternal rest. They replied that their decision was done with permission of the local authorities. They sent a copy of the permits from the local jurisdiction where it stated clearly that the provincial government bequeathed that parcel of land to the Jewish community of Haditch, for the specific purpose of a burial grounds.

The Imperial Government replied, "Yes, we see that the provincial government gave you permission, but they mistakenly permitted you to use land that is not theirs. Their parcel is a short distance away and you can re-inter your loved ones there. However, they must be removed from the place where they are now buried."

The provincial government acknowledged that it was their mistake and apologized. They offered to swap a larger parcel of land to the Imperial Government in order not to violate the dignity and sanctity of the cemetery. However, the government was firm: all graves must be removed!

The Alter Rebbe's son and successor, Rabbi Dov Ber, known as the Mittler Rebbe, was informed and was asked what does he prefer to do? Does he want to send someone to move his father, the Alter Rebbe, or should the community do it?

The Mittler Rebbe refused to do either. He had heard that one of his father's former chassidim was an important official in the Imperial office that has the final say on this matter. He sent a chassid to plead with that person to leave the Jewish cemetery and accept the provincial government's offer of swapping parcels of land.

The chassid, Rabbi Moshe Vilenker, who was a friend of this official when they were in Liozna together with the Alter Rebbe, was chosen to be the representative. Reb Moshe immediately travelled to the capital, Petersburg, to visit the official.

When the official saw Reb Moshe waiting in the antechamber, he immediately recognized him and granted him an audience. As soon as Reb Moshe entered his office he said, "I'm sure that you came to request something of me. But that is not the ways of chassidim. First you will come to my house this evening, where we will farbreng (chassidic gathering). After the farbrengen, you can present your request."

Having no choice, Reb Moshe agreed to this arrangement. They sat down, sang the Alter Rebbe's nigunim (songs and melodies), and reminisced about their time with the Rebbe. The officer then said, "You of course noticed that I have a beautiful mansion; I am wealthy and have whatever I desire. But you should know the truth is that I don't really enjoy it, not even for a moment. Yes, it sounds strange, but let me tell you why. Even when I was a student by the Rebbe, I had my doubts about G-d, and that is what ultimately caused me to leave and eventually become what I became. However, one time before I left, without explaining his reasons, the Rebbe instructed me to go visit the Tzadik, Rabbi Aharon of Karlin.

"R. Aharon's custom was that he didn't accept people in yechidut (private audience), as our Rebbe did. Whoever came to him would sit in the Beit Hamidrash (study hall), say Tehillim (Psalms) or learn and wait until the Tzadik gave him an answer. After I was sitting for some time, the Tzadik entered the crowded Beit Hamidrash from his room that was adjoining it, and, without directing his gaze towards any particular person, said, 'Young man, young man! Maybe, after all, there is a G-d.'

"When he said this, no one in the room took it as if his question had been answered, and everyone remained in their place. A few minutes later, he came into the room for a second time and repeated the exact same words.

"When the same scene repeated itself a third time, I realized he was talking to me! He was informing me, that notwithstanding my questions and doubts, I cannot dismiss the possibility that there is a Creator. So now, every time I sit down to enjoy something that is forbidden by the Torah, those words come back and haunt me. But I am too weak and don't have the strength and will power, to give up everything I have."

Some hours later, he said, "now that we farbrenged, please tell me what is the reason of your coming to visit me?" When Reb Moshe informed him of the dilemma and showed him the legal papers, he immediately replied, "I will agree to accept the offer of the provincial government, but only for the Rebbe's sake."

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*

*Editor's Note: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe of Chabad, ז"ל's 209<sup>th</sup> Yahrzeit was last Friday, 24th Tevet – January 8th of this year*

## It Once Happened...

### Give My Regards to The G-d of America

By Rabbi David Bibi

There was a wealthy Chassid who was a fervent follower of the Rebbe of Chortkov, R' Yisrael Friedman. He was a successful businessman who traveled far and wide in the varied interests of his prosperous enterprises, but he would always make the time to visit his Rebbe to discuss important matters and seek his advice on many facets of his personal and professional life.

Early in the spring of 1912, he was scheduled to travel overseas, to the shores of the United States of America on important business issues. As news of the completion of the huge passenger luxury liner, the R.M.S. Titanic, swept throughout the world, he decided to travel in style on the "grandest ship in her Majesty's fleet." He purchased a ticket and prepared himself for his voyage.

Before his voyage, he visited his Rebbe in Chortkov. The Chassid explained that he was planning to travel to America very soon and he requested a blessing for a successful trip and a safe passage back and forth.

R' Yisrael listened quietly. Then he looked at the Chassid and cryptically replied, "Give my regards to the American G-d!"

The Chassid blinked hard in confusion and astonishment. Of all the things he was expecting to hear, he never dreamed of the unusual statement that the Rebbe just said. He was totally at a loss and remained quiet, swallowing hard.

Finally R' Yisrael broke the silence. He told the man, "What I meant to say is that the same G-d that can help you in America can help you just the same here in Europe. Why must you travel there in order to be successful? If Hashem intends to allow you to succeed, He will do the very same thing here!"

The Chassid nodded in understanding. The Rebbe disapproved of his trip to America and was telling him not to go. He cancelled his plans and returned home. How fortunate he was and how utterly amazed at the Ruach Hakodesh of his spiritual mentor, when he and the rest of the world learned of the enormous tragedy and loss of life that took place just a few days later. His belief in the words of the Sages was what saved his life from the ignominious fate of the Titanic.

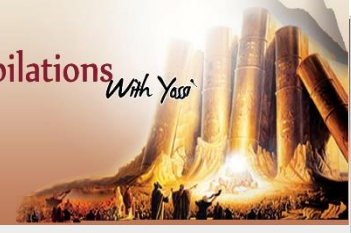
*Reprinted from an email of Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin,*



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times – Parshat Va'eira

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:22	5:38	6:16
Tel Aviv	4:37	5:39	
Haifa	4:26	5:37	
Be'er Sheva	4:41	5:41	



### The Rooster That Did Not Crow

By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

Shmuel was a religious, G-d-fearing Jew. He was a Torah scholar and was much admired and greatly respected by everyone.

There was a squire who owned the entire town where Shmuel lived. The squire heard of Shmuel's wisdom and honesty, and appointed him as his business manager.

The squire had complete trust in his Jewish manager. Shmuel was the only person to whom he gave the keys to his safe, knowing that Shmuel would never touch a thing that belonged to another person.

In the squire's court there was another person who worked as Shmuel's assistant, who was extremely jealous of his Jewish boss. He was looking for some way of making trouble for Shmuel, hoping to take his place.

Once, when the squire returned from a trip, he made a big party, inviting many guests. He related to his guests the virtues of his Jewish business manager, who was also one of the invited guests, though he could not partake of any of the food served at the party.

The squire then asked Shmuel to bring from his safe the famous diamond he had inherited from his parents. The diamond was known to be one of the largest diamonds in the world, and it was priceless.

All the guests waited breathlessly to behold this rare, precious gem.

A few minutes later Shmuel entered, bearing a golden box decorated with many beautiful gems.

The guests moved forward to get close to the squire and to get the best possible view of this remarkable diamond. But the squire seemed in no special hurry to open the box. First, he gave a lengthy talk on the history of the diamond, and then, finally, he opened the box.

To the horror of all present, the box was empty! The squire was speechless and looked ready to break into tears.

Some of the guests began to shout, "Hang the Jew!" But the squire could still not believe that Shmuel was guilty of such an act, especially to steal something so precious belonging to his employer. Yet, if Shmuel was the only person who had the keys to the safe, who else could have been the thief?

Turning to his Jewish business manager, the squire said: "It is true that you have served me honestly and devotedly for many years, but it appears that you were not able to resist temptation this time, when you saw this unique gem. Because of your past loyal service, I promise you I will not punish you if you confess your guilt and give me back my precious diamond."

"Heaven forbid," called out Shmuel. "I would never steal anything, especially anything belonging to you, my kind and generous employer. I can see that, under the present circumstances, you cannot believe otherwise. But please, I beg you, give me an opportunity to clear myself."

Shmuel asked the squire to keep all the guests in the hall, for the real thief was present there. Then he asked for permission to go home and bring something which would reveal the identity of the thief.

A short while later Shmuel returned, and, to everyone's astonishment, he had a black rooster in his hand.

"Honored guests," called out Shmuel. "I have here a remarkable rooster. It will allow any honest person to stroke it, but no sooner would a thief do so, than it would flap its wings and burst out in a cry of cock-a-doodle-doo! And, as the real thief is among us here today, I shall ask all present to come forward, one at a time, and stroke the rooster with their right hand. When the rooster starts to crow—you will know who the thief is."

Breathlessly and eagerly, the assembled participated in this strange procedure. But when the last of the guests had stroked the rooster and it still remained silent, all the guests began to shout:

"How dare the Jew make a laughingstock out of us with his crazy suggestion!"

"Patience, dear guests. Don't get excited. I haven't finished yet," said Shmuel calmly. "You will soon know who the real thief is."

Thereupon Shmuel asked the guests to lift up their right hands. They did so, and what the assembled saw, were black hands except for one white hand. The white hand was that of Shmuel's assistant.

"There is the thief," called out Shmuel. "The rooster I brought is a rooster like any other. All I did was smear its back with soot. I knew that the real thief would be afraid to stroke the rooster, in case it would begin to crow. So he just pretended to stroke the rooster's back, but didn't really touch it. So you see, the hands of the innocent guests were black, while the hand of the thief remained white and clean, though in truth, it was the dirtiest in the entire hall."

"Bravo!" cried all the guests, and made a rush to grab the thief. The culprit had no choice but to confess that he had managed to get copies made of the keys to the squire's safe. He had been quite sure that the Jew would be blamed for the theft. The thief received his just punishment, while Shmuel was reinstated in his important trusted position.

*Adapted and translated from an email of The Storyteller.*

What's the connection between the Waldorf Astoria and one of the 10 plagues?

In the 1890s there were two hotels right alongside each other in Manhattan. The Waldorf and the Astoria. The Waldorf was owned by William Waldorf and the Astoria by his aunt, Caroline Astor. The two were engaged in a bitter family feud and in fact, the hotels existed alongside each other in order to compete with each other. But then William Waldorf's manager suggested to him one day "Why don't you make up with your aunt? Can you imagine what kind of a hotel we could have, if we break down the walls in between and join the two together? We could have the best hotel in the world. William was convinced, he then approached his aunt and they made up. Together they created the Waldorf Astoria hotel and the rest, as they say, is history.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky makes a connection between the historical background of the Waldorf Astoria and the plague of hail as is described in Parshat Va'eira. The hail that fell upon the Egyptians then, was not hail as we know it today. The Torah tells us "ואש מהלקחת בתוך הברד" - there was fire flashing from within the hail" and therefore that hail was a combination of fire and water. Now we know that fire can melt ice, and water can douse flames, however, when brought together and fused into one, fire and water produced hail which was a mighty, powerful force. Indeed, this is something Pharaoh the king of Egypt noticed, it was after this plague that he called Moshe and he said "ה' הצדיק ואני ועמי הרשעים" - this time Hashem is right, I and my people are wrong". Pharaoh was obviously deeply impressed with this phenomenon of the hail, to be convinced that actually instead of being pitted against his adversary, the Israelites, he momentarily saw the value of making peace with them. Unfortunately his heart quickly hardened once again, but at that particular moment the hail made an impact.

From the plague of hail, we therefore, learn a hugely important lesson which applies to each and every one of us. Instead of engaging in unnecessary feuds within our families and our communities – nationally and globally – let's combine forces. If the Waldorf and the Astoria can do it, we too can produce a power for good within our lives to the benefit of all of humanity.

So let's join together 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, sweet and happy Shabbat.

*Yossi*

## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 121  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1748  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6701

HAFTORA:  
Yechezkel 28:25 - 29:21

# תורת וארא

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