

The Jewish Weekly

Surprising the Spy

By Eitan Lev

For close to twenty years, during the 1960s and 1970s, I was stationed in New York, serving in a senior position with the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency.

During one of these years - I believe that it was in the end of 1967 - a few of my colleagues at the Israeli consulate in New York invited me to join them on an excursion to Brooklyn. They explained that they were going to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe's synagogue to participate in the celebration of Simchat Torah there.

"Who? What? What is this about?" I asked, but they assured me that it would be a very nice, festive event. "Can I bring my wife?" I asked, and to my delight they said that she could join. I was so totally unprepared for where we were going and what was going to happen.

When we got to Chabad Headquarters, we saw a big commotion. It turned out that the hakafof - the dancing with the Torah - had not yet begun, but a farbrengen - Chassidic gathering - with the Rebbe was taking place, and it seemed that the place was too small to accommodate the thousands of chassidim who had shown up. However, our visit had been arranged in advance, and seats had been saved for us inside.

We were led into the big hall where the excitement was palpable - the crowd was singing with great joy, and the Rebbe was beating out the rhythm on his table.

Suddenly a chassid approached me, saying, "The Rebbe would like to speak with you."

I was very surprised. The Rebbe? Speak to me? How does the Rebbe even know who I am?

"There must be a mistake," I said. But he insisted that the Rebbe wanted to converse with me.

I turned to my colleagues and asked if anyone had informed the Rebbe's secretariat that I would be coming. Of course, due to my position, I always made sure to keep a low profile. No one was supposed to know my identity nor my location. But they all shrugged their shoulders, as if to say, "We didn't say a thing. We have no idea what this is about."

I was led to the platform where the Rebbe was sitting. "It is nice to see you here," he greeted me, speaking Yiddish. Beyond the

surprise of being summoned to the Rebbe, I was shocked that he was talking to me in Yiddish.

"How do you know that I speak Yiddish?" I asked the Rebbe.

I realize that it was audacious of me to interrogate him like that, but he just smiled and began to shower me with blessings that I should succeed in the work that I was doing, that I be healthy and have a good livelihood. "Be careful and take care of yourself. Your job is very important for the Jewish people," he said.

As a member of the Mossad, I suddenly felt very exposed. I was bewildered and didn't understand what was going on. I was not used to being surprised - usually the only surprises that I experienced were the ones that I had orchestrated myself. So I was convinced that my colleagues had told the Rebbe about me. They must be lying to me, I thought. After all, they are trained experts at hiding the truth! I resolved to take care of them later.

Then the Rebbe began to ask me about my family. He asked me about my father, about my mother, and about my sister. How did the Rebbe even know that I had a sister? He also asked me about my wife and children. I told him that my wife came with me, and he responded, "Yes, I know. She is sitting with the women upstairs."

Of course, my wonderment only grew. It started to feel like someone was mocking me. Maybe the connection between the consulate and the Rebbe ran so deep that they worked together to play a prank on me. I simply didn't know what to think.

Another question that the Rebbe asked me was, "How do you feel as a Jew?" I assume that he was asking me this because I didn't look Jewish, which was one of the reasons that I was able to work in intelligence. But I felt Jewish in every fiber of my being, and I told the Rebbe so.

He then asked me how it felt to travel the world as a Jew.

I answered that, while stationed in the United States, I made sure to send my children to a Jewish school. As far as keeping kosher, I have been careful in this regard my whole life, and when my work put me in a challenging situation, I avoided non-kosher foods by claiming to be vegan.

I don't know exactly how long this conversation with the Rebbe continued, but I am certain that it seemed longer to me than it actually was. I felt that I was standing there for at least a half hour, but it must have been much less, probably just a few minutes. At a certain

It Once Happened...

point, sensing that the whole crowd was waiting for me to finish, I started to feel uncomfortable. So I tried to wrap up the conversation by saying, "We have been speaking for a long time and everyone is waiting..."

I know this was another audacious statement on my part - who was I to be telling the Rebbe what to do - but he was in no rush to finish talking.

At the end, the Rebbe gave me a piece of cake and then blessed me again that I should succeed in everything I do and that I should be healthy and strong. This blessing held special meaning for me because I had gotten injured a few times during my service.

As I made my way back to my seat, everyone along the way asked me for a small piece of the Rebbe's cake, so that by the end, I had barely a few crumbs left. When I reached my colleagues I demanded, "Guys, what's going on here?" But they seemed just as puzzled as I was.

I continued to interrogate them the next day until they finally convinced me that none of them had spoken to the Rebbe or his secretariat about me. So I still do not understand how the Rebbe knew that I spoke Yiddish, or how he knew what I was doing. And my sense was that he knew even more than he revealed.

All this was very strange for me. Was I so transparent? That would pose a serious problem. But, if I really was so transparent, why couldn't everyone see it? Why only he?

These questions were on my mind for a long time and I didn't find any answers until I met a Chabad chasid who explained it to me in three words: "That's the Rebbe."

The fact that until today, more than fifty years later, this event is still engraved in my memory is testimony to how impressed I was by the experience. I left feeling that I met a brilliant man, with vast knowledge and understanding, and exceptional analytical thinking power. I also learned from the Rebbe how to listen. When he asked me something and I answered, he was silent, letting me speak while he listened attentively.

He was an outstanding person, one in a generation. There is a lot to learn from him, and I feel too small to truly understand this great man. I was fortunate to meet a true leader, and I thank G-d for that.

Reprinted from an email of "Here's my Story".



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Terumah

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:53	6:07	6:47
Tel Aviv	5:08	6:09	
Haifa	4:58	6:07	
Be'er Sheva	5:11	6:10	



The Tears of the Righteous Women

By Shimon Neubort

names appeared on the assessment list given to them by the court. From people whose names did not appear on the list, they had no authority to accept cash or pledges. Upon hearing that their husbands' names were not even mentioned on the list, the women raised such a cry that even Reb Nachman and Reb David heard it, and became very frightened.

When the members of the Rabbinical court learned that the collectors had returned with their mission accomplished, they hurried through the rest of their prayers. Against their better judgment (for the husbands were very impoverished Chassidim), they accepted the pledges from the women. The special messenger was dispatched to bring the sixty gold florins to the Baal Shem Tov.

When the Baal Shem Tov's emissaries finished praying, a feast was prepared in honor of the great privilege the Baal Shem Tov had bestowed upon them. For the Baal Shem Tov loved them so much that he had given them the privilege of participating in the mitzva of pidyon sh'vuyim; he was so devoted to the Chassidim in Zaslov that he had sent to them the two famous Tzadikim. All the Chassidim were in such a joyful mood: you can't imagine how great their delight was.

When the feast was finished, Reb Nachman spoke about the women who had wept while begging the collectors to accept their contributions toward the sum the Baal Shem Tov had assessed from the Chassidim of Zaslov. "The Rebbe," said Reb Nachman, "is very fond of simple Jews. He says that a simple Jew who recites a chapter of Psalms with his whole heart and sincerely loves his fellow Jew is favored by the Supreme King more than great tzadikim.

"How profoundly genuine those women's tears were! Their sole desire was for their husband's names to be included in the list of those assessed to contribute money for the great mitzva of pidyon sh'vuyim. A mitzva is so precious, and the Baal Shem Tov so sacred to them, that when their husbands' names were omitted from the list their poor hearts broke and they burst out weeping. How precious such tears are to the Master of the World; how sweet and delightful they are to the Angel Michael and his 180 thousands legions of defending angels! Such genuine heartfelt tears can annul all evil decrees."

Reb Nachman then related an awe-inspiring story about an evil decree against an entire Jewish community. When a certain woman uttered a few truly sincere words that came from the depth of her heart while she wept profusely, the decree was annulled. "If only we would weep on the holy Yom Kippur with the same sort of tears with which our own women wept!" he concluded.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



Our kindness is directly linked to the sanctity of Hashem!

What is the connection between our generosity and the name of Hashem?

Parshat Terumah commences with the mitzvah of 'לי ייקחו - take for yourselves a contribution that is for Me,' says Hashem. Of course, the implication here is that when we give, we receive, and therefore 'ויקחו' - you are 'taking' - but why does Hashem say for Himself?

Rashi says 'לי' means 'לשמך', taking a lesson from the Tanchuma. Rashi is telling us that Hashem is stating, 'this must be for the sake of My name'. So what is the connection between our generosity, the contributions we were giving to the creation and upkeep of the sanctuary and the name of Hashem?

The Be'er Mayim Chaim suggests as follows. In the Gemara in Mesechet Pesachim, (Daf 50a) our rabbis teach us that the name of Hashem is never to be uttered by us - the only occasions it could be uttered were in rare circumstances in the Mishkan, the Sanctuary, and later in the Beit Hamikdash. Therefore, Hashem is saying to us, in order for My name to be uttered, you have to be generous. Without that "תרומה - your contribution", My name will never be said. Give generously said Hashem, to enable My name to be heard.

I believe that there is a deeper message here for us. Hashem wants us to know that our natural kindness, our selflessness, the contribution we make to the world around us, is an integral part of what He Himself stands for. We should never separate the concepts of our relationship with Hashem, from our relationship with our fellow human being. On the contrary, the greater we are in the performance of kindness the more "קדושה - the greater the sanctity" in our world. It is through the Terumah that we give, the contributions we make to others, that we enhance the name of Hashem within our world.

So let's give as much as we can and join 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, sweet, happy Shabbat and Happy Purim.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 3
MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 96
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1145
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4692

This year, (5781 / 2021) Terumah is a special Shabbat. It is Shabbat Parshat Zachor: The Shabbat immediately preceding Purim is called Shabbat Zachor.

The Maftir, from Devarim, Parshat Ki-Teitze, (25:17-19), deals with the commandment to "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, upon your departure from Egypt.... how they perpetrated a cowardly and unprovoked attack... You shall erase the memory of Amalek from the heavens, you shall not forget." This commandment, to remember Amalek, is one of the 613 commandments. It is incumbent, therefore, upon every person to try to attend a Minyan on Shabbat Zachor (within the Corona laws of your country or state) in order to hear this special reading and remember its message.

What is the connection between erasing the memory of Amalek and Purim? Haman was a descendant of Amalek.

HAFTORA
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Shmuel I 15:2-34
Sephardim: Shmuel I 15:1-34

אסתר אסתר - תענית אסתר - the fast of Esther is observed on Thursday, February 25, 13 Adar followed by PURIM on Friday and in Jerusalem on Shabbat and Sunday. Please feel free to check out our Halachot and Minhagim sheets for Purim and specifically for Purim Meshulash for Jerusalem.

תרומה - זכור

Look out for the Halachot and Minhagim of Purim. Plus Halachot and Minhagim for this unique year of a three-day Purim in Jerusalem, on our website, www.thejweekly.org.

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