

The Jewish Weekly

Pre-empting the Anti-Semites

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Reuven Yisrael Kott was a Torah prodigy whose cleverness and chutzpah saved thousands of Jews from annihilation by the Nazis.

Born in a Polish shtetl in 1897, Reuven was one of fifteen children. His family were chassidic followers of the Rebbe of Gur. Reuven's exceptional intellect was apparent at a young age. He was a gifted scholar of Talmud and Jewish scripture, so precocious that he was given rabbinic ordination when only 17 years old.

The Rebbe took a special liking to Reuven, and every Friday night Reuven sat next to the great man at his festive Sabbath gathering. Small in size - he stood only 5'1" [155 cm.] - Reuven was known for his big brain, and big heart.

Reuven was selected by his community to represent them as the Jewish voice on the local provincial council. When the Polish president died in the 1920's, young Reuven stood at the graveside with other clergy and delivered a eulogy on behalf of the Jews of Poland.

Although life still seemed fairly good for Polish Jews, the Gerrer Rebbe in that generation, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, often referred to as the Imrei Emmes, sensed that big trouble was coming. Starting in 1922, he urged his followers to get out of Poland and move to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), at that time known as "Palestine" and under British rulership.

As the Rebbe's right-hand man, Kott threw himself into the mission of helping Jews leave Poland and return to their ancestral homeland.

The British had a strict quota system restricting the number of Jews they allowed in, but Rabbi Reuven Kott managed to find a bureaucratic loophole. That is, the quota was not for a total amount of individual Jews, but rather was expressed as a maximum number of families, with "family" defined as two parents and their offspring...with "offspring" being an undetermined number!

Kott collected money and used it to bribe Polish authorities to get blank birth certificates. He would then "create" new families, matching people up, changing names and identities as needed. Every "family" had at least a dozen children.

He told those he helped that they must stick with their fake identity. Most people complied, but a few didn't and were caught. Under threat of being sent back to Poland, somebody gave Reuven Kott's name to the authorities.

Reuven and his brother were on a train in Warsaw when three plain clothes officers approached. After verifying his identity, they arrested Reuven for bribery and forgery and threw him in jail.

As a pious Jew, Reuven couldn't eat the non-kosher jail food, so every day his daughter brought him a kosher meal - a two hour journey each way.

After several long months, his brother finally got word that there was going to be a hearing in the case. He went to visit Reuven in jail, told him the

news and asked which lawyer he wanted to hire.

Reuven didn't answer. Instead he scribbled something on a scrap of paper, folded it up and slipped it through the bars of his cell.

Outside the jail, Reuven's brother unfolded the note. He was shocked to read the contents: "Hire me the most anti-Semitic lawyer in Warsaw!"

Reuven's family was baffled. With so many top-notch Jewish lawyers, why would he want an anti-Semite? Had his incarceration led to a mental breakdown?

The brother assured them that Reuven was of sound mind. Of course, there were many anti-Semitic attorneys in the Polish metropolis, but when the brother discovered that one of them was especially notorious for his fierce hatred of Jews, he promptly hired him.

The day of the hearing arrived, and the courthouse was packed with family members and hundreds of chassidim from Reuven's community. According to prison regulations, Reuven was allowed only three minutes with his lawyer whom he had not been allowed to meet previously. Those present noticed that Reuven did all the talking in the entire three-minute 'conference.' Then the hearing began.

To everybody's shock, Reuven's lawyer presented a brilliant and eloquent argument, and got the case dismissed.

As soon as Reuven arrived safely home everybody wanted to know what he had said to his lawyer in those brief three minutes.

Reuven said his Talmud study had taught him that in a business deal, if you get three "Yes" answers, the deal will close. So he asked his lawyer three questions:

"Do you hate all Jews?
"Would you like to see me rot in jail until I die?
"Do you want all the Jews in Poland to leave?"

The lawyer answered a firm 'Yes!' to all three questions.

Immediately, Reuven shot back, "What good would it do if one measly Jew rots in jail? If you can get me set free, I will continue to get thousands of Jews out of Poland!"

Reuven gained his freedom by blinding the lawyer with his own hate. He continued his work "creating" large families and helping them move to Palestine. The Jew-hating attorney even helped him procure more blank birth certificates!

People often asked Reuven when he would go to Eretz Yisrael. He said, "I'm like the captain of a sinking ship. It is my responsibility to get all the passengers out before I get in the lifeboat."

Over the course of 20 years, Reuven helped tens of thousands of Jews escape Poland. Unfortunately, Reuven himself never made it to the Holy Land. He was murdered at Auschwitz in 1942.

Today, almost half a million descendants of those Polish Jews owe their lives to Rabbi Reuven Yisrael Kott.

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.
Editor's Note: The story was first revealed publicly by Reuven Kott's granddaughter, Ziporah Bank. She heard it from her mother - the daughter who brought kosher meals to her father in prison. The 1/2 million calculation in the last paragraph was made by her family.*

It Once Happened...

A Unique Present for the Bride

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz grew up in dire poverty. Then, as a young man, he became engaged to the daughter of Reb Yitzhak - a man of wealth and property.

As Purim approached, R. Shlomo's mother called him over with a worried frown.

"As you know, my son, it is the custom, to send along with the mishloach manot a nice gift for the kallah - a piece of jewelry made of gold or precious stones. How will we follow this custom, when we have nothing?" She sighed deeply.

R. Shlomo did not want to distress his kallah. For some time he sat sunk in thought. Finally, he answered, "Don't worry, Mother. Leave it to me. With G-d's help, by Purim I'll manage to arrange for her something very nice!"

The weeks passed. And then it was Purim.

"Mother," said R. Shlomo, "please prepare cakes and other baked goods to send to the kallah and her family for mishloach manot. As for my gift to her, it is ready." As he spoke, he handed her a package.

His mother was radiant with joy. But when she opening the package to peek inside, she blurted in astonishment, "A manuscript? You're sending a commentary on Megillat Esther to your kallah!?"

"She has plenty of jewelry and fine stones from her rich parents." R' Shlomo said. "But a commentary on the Megillah that I composed myself is something she will not receive from anyone else."

When the kallah's family opened the mishloach manot and found the precious commentary within, her and her father's joy knew no bounds.

"Blessed is He and blessed is His Name!" R' Yitzhak exclaimed happily after reading several pages of what his future son-in-law had written, "that we have gained the merit of having such an outstanding talmid chacham [Torah scholar] fall to our lot. He is worth a thousand jewels!"

Years later, when he published the commentary, Rabbi Alkabetz named it "Manot HaLevi," because it had served its first purpose as part of a mishloach manot.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Tetzaveh

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:59	6:12	6:53
Tel Aviv	5:14	6:14	
Haifa	5:04	6:13	
Be'er Sheva	5:17	6:15	



Giving a Victory to Hitler (G-d Forbid)

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

This week, we celebrate the holiday of Purim, when the Jews fought and defeated the forces of Haman some 2,500 years ago.

These 'forces', called 'Amalek' (Ex. 17:8) are the same that attacked the Jews a thousand years earlier when they left Egypt, and exist today in the form of anti-Semitism in the world and within each of us.

Indeed, the Lubavitcher Rebbe once said that we cannot defeat the 'Amalek' outside until each of us defeats the little Amalek from within.

According to Chassidic teachings each of us has a small 'Amalek' within and according to Jewish tradition ONLY the Moshiach can eradicate both the Amalek within and without.

Here is a story that will illustrate this.

A Holocaust survivor called Oscar Liff, whose name was Lifshitz before he Americanized it, in an attempt to sever himself from the Jewish people. But one could hardly blame him after what he had been through.

He was born in Warsaw in the late 1920s into a traditionally Jewish family and when the Germans took over Poland he was in his early teens. His parents thought that Germany only wanted more land and that in the end it would be good for everyone. After all, they said, the Germans were a cultured, educated people, if anyone could refine the boorish Poles it would be the Germans.

But Oscar thought differently. He didn't trust the Germans. He didn't like the way they strutted around and their anti-Semitic slogans he had seen. Against the wishes of his parents he joined the Polish underground and fought the Nazi invaders - and in the end, that is what saved him.

It wasn't long before his father died from a heart attack. Then, shortly thereafter, one afternoon as he happened to be on the roof of his apartment looking down at the street, he saw the Germans escort his sister and brother out of the house into the street with several others and shoot them dead. Minutes later a wagon laden with corpses came to take them away.

Next his mother and other sisters were taken to Auschwitz and finally, in April of 1943, the entire Ghetto was destroyed and all its remaining inhabitants were exterminated.

Now Oscar fought for revenge. True, the Polish themselves were no less Jew haters than the Germans, but luckily for him, Oscar didn't look Jewish so the Poles let him join their partisan fighters and left him alone.

Nevertheless when the Russians invaded Germany, Oscar joined their forces and finally 'merited' to be among those that liberated Auschwitz in 1945. But what he saw there would haunt him for the next thirty years.

There were emaciated, inhuman, filthy Jewish bodies dead and alive everywhere, staring insantly at nothing. This is what they got for being Jewish! For a week he wandered the camp day and night, searching madly for his mother and sisters and found nothing.

He ran from the army. The war was over, and they wouldn't let him kill any more Germans. He crossed border after border until finally he was on a ship to America.

He was alone, no roots, no past, no friends, no family and not much future. Only one passionate desire burned in his heart; to get as far from Judaism as possible. He moved to Los Angeles, changed his name to Leff, learned to speak English and threw his heart and soul into business every minute of the day. He would forget the past.

But when he would come home at night and it was still...he would remember. The memories were hell. So every evening he would turn on the T.V. and watch it till he fell asleep. That way he would never have a quiet moment.

Then one evening in 1976 after a hard day at work, just as he was drowsing off in front of the T.V. something startled him. There, before him on the TV screen was an old Rabbi speaking in Yiddish.

At first Oscar couldn't believe his eyes. Who would want to watch a thing like that? His first impulse was to turn it off but he waited a few minutes to see if something would happen. It didn't. The Rabbi just kept talking and an English translation rolled across the screen below him. All the hatred Oscar had for Judaism welled up inside of him again like a flood.

But something stopped him from just changing the channel.

The Rabbi had a unique look about him, with unusually deep and powerfully kind eyes. But what could he possibly have to say that was so important?

Again he leaned forward to turn it off when suddenly the Rabbi said, "Any Jew after the war, that runs from Judaism, is giving a prize to Hitler." Oscar stared at the translation as it moved across the screen.

"The Germans tried to destroy the Jewish people and our best revenge on the Germans, is to strengthen and continue Judaism."

He sat as though struck by lightning. He didn't remember a word of what that Rabbi said afterwards. Just that those eyes and words woke something deep in his soul.

A telephone number floated across the screen and Oscar wrote it down. When the speech ended he called the number. It was the middle of the night but someone answered and they made an appointment for the next morning. That entire night he didn't sleep; he lay in bed and wept.

The next morning Oscar found the address. It was a Chabad House in Los Angeles. There he got a written summary of the speech and spent the entire day just going over that sentence; "One who runs from Judaism gives a prize to Hitler."

The next day he went to the printers and ordered new business cards with the name Lipshitz and then went back to the Chabad House and ordered his first pair of Tefillin since his Bar Mitzva. Then he made a vow to begin being an observant Jew.

Oscar had defeated Hitler.

This is what we celebrate on Purim... the eradication of doubt. The Hebrew word 'Amalek' is the same numerical value as 'doubt' (Saffek=240).

The Jews are G-d's chosen people: chosen to inform the world that G-d creates, loves, provides for and enlivens each human being constantly. But when the Jews have doubts within themselves about this, then Amalek rears his ugly head.

That is the story of Purim. One Jew: Mordechi HaYehudi, not only refused to bow to Haman, but he infused this certainty into all the Jews of his generation as well. The result was "The Jews had light, joy, happiness and glory." (Esther 8:16)

This will give us a new certainty and power to defeat all doubts and fears.

Then it is very possible that if we do just one more good deed, say one good word or even think one good thought, it can tip the scales and bring universal peace, joy, blessing and meaning with the coming of Moshiach.

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, www.ohrminim.org.

This week, in Parshat Tetzaveh, Moshe Rabbeinu is the central figure of the building and the furnishing of the משכן – the Sanctuary in the wilderness. Yet remarkably, his name does not appear in the entire Parsha. Usually, paragraphs begin, "ויבֹרַח ה' אל משה לאמר" – "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying" etc... But in this week's Parsha, pesukim commence, "ואתה" – and you – "ואתה תצוה" – you must command – and so on. Clearly Hashem goes out of His way to omit the name of Moshe. Parshat Tetzaveh is always read close to the yahrzeit, the anniversary of the death of Moshe, on the 7th of Adar, which took place a few days ago. So at the time when we mourn the loss of Moshe, his name is absent.

Rabbi Mirvis said, that there is a profound message for us, relating to the centrality of names. You see, when it comes to legacy, there are some who presume, that all depends on the preservation of their name on the lips of others. For as long as people are mentioning and quoting that name, then the legacy remains alive. But that is a mistake. Legacy has nothing to do with names. It has everything to do with impact. Through the seeds that we sow during our lifetime, the harvest can be reaped for all time. That is true legacy, and we learn it from Noach.

At the beginning of Parshat Noach. The Torah says, "אלה תולדות נח" – these are the generations of Noach. "נח איש צדיק תמים היה" – "בדורותיו את האלוקים ההלך נח" – Noach was a righteous person, he was perfect in his generations. Noach walked with Hashem.

Where are his generations? Only his good deeds are mentioned. Rashi says, "ללמדך שיעקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מששים טובים" – to teach you that the primary descendants of good people, are their deeds. Those good deeds of Noach, sustained the world, and are with us to inspire us today.

We may not mention Noach by name, but that's not what matters – it is his impact upon our lives, that is with us.

And that is exactly the case, with regard to Moshe Rabbeinu and this week's Parsha of Tetzaveh. The name of Moshe may be absent, but the Torah that he taught, the values that he imparted, they are with us to this day, and that is the essence of his legacy.

Let us all therefore guarantee, that our legacy will remain in this world forever – by living a life of good deeds, and setting a fine example to one and all, and with that, 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, happy Shabbat and Happy Purim.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 7
MITZVOT ASEH: 4
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 3

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 101
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1412
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5430

HAFTORA
Yechezkel 43:10-27

This year, (5781 / 2021) Tetzaveh in Jerusalem is a special Shabbat. It is Shabbat Purim:

The following only applies to those celebrating Purim Hameshulash in Jerusalem.

Parshat Tetzaveh through to Maftir.

The Maftir, from Shemot, the end of Parshat Beshalach, (17:8-16), On Purim we celebrate our deliverance from the death decree issued by the Persian prime minister Haman, who was of Amalekite ancestry. The brief Purim morning Torah reading recounts the original battle between Amalek and the Israelites, waged in the Sinai Desert nearly a millennium before the Purim events.

The Israelites arrive in Rephidim, and are attacked by the Amalekites. Moses charges Joshua to raise an army. On the following day, Joshua led the Israelites into battle, while Moses, Aaron and Hur went to an adjacent hilltop and prayed.

When Moses' arms were raised in prayer, the Israelites would prevail; when he would lower his hands, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur supported Moses' arms until the Israelites defeated their foe.

G-d commanded Moses to inscribe the story of Amalek's unprovoked attack in a book. "I will surely obliterate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens," G-d said.

The Haftorah is the same as last week: Shmuel I 15:2-34 Sephardim start from the first Passuk.

