

The Jewish Weekly

The Rabbi with the Extra-Large Salary

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel (one of the main disciples of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk) served as a Rav (qualified authority in Jewish law) as well as chassidic Rebbe, and in 5560 [1800], he accepted the position of Rav in the city of Apta, one of the oldest and most important Jewish communities in Poland. In honor of their new Rav, the venerable shul in the city changed its nusach [order and slight textual distinctions of prayer] from Ashkenaz to Sfarad. It was in Apta that thousands of people began to flock to him for blessings, and he soon became famous as a miracle worker, in addition to being a posek.

For nine years, he served as Rav in Apta, and then to the astonishment and consternation of its townspeople, he accepted the position of Rav in the distant town of Yassy, Romania. The people of Apta had formed a close and strong bond with their Rav, and he too had a special affection for them. He promised the residents that he would always be referred to as the "Apta Rav" and for the rest of his life, when he signed his name, he added, "of Apta." To this day, the Jews of Apta have the eternal merit that the name of this great tzadik is forever linked with their town.

Why did he leave? According to the Munkatcher Rebbe, author of Darkei Teshuva, when the Apta Rav agreed to take the position in Apta, he insisted on a large salary. When he left, he told them the following story:

"My father, Reb Shmuel, was a poor melamed in a small town. His older brother, a very wealthy man, lived in Apta. Due to various calamities, my father and his brother had been separated from each other when they were eight and ten years old, and had no knowledge of each other's whereabouts. My uncle died childless, and left his young widow with very little information about his brother. Being childless, she was required to get chalitzta [ceremony demonstrating the brother-in-law's refusal to marry the widow] from this unknown brother - but how was she to find him?

"The Rav of Apta at that time suggested that she send the letters to all the major rabbis in all the neighboring countries, telling them that there was a widow in Apta searching for so-and-so to give her chalitzta. She should also announce that when the brother comes and fulfills his obligation, she would give him half of what she inherited from her husband.

"She followed his suggestion, and one such letter arrived at the town where my father lived. The Rav called him in and said, 'I know you don't have money to make the trip to Apta, but seeing that you stand to return home a very wealthy man, I will lend you the money for the trip. Pay me back when you return.'

"My father went home, and told my mother the story. She said, 'A great mitzvah has come your way. This is one mitzvah that most people never get a chance to fulfill, and indeed, no one wishes for such an opportunity. Now that you have the chance to do this singular mitzvah, you should do it for its own sake, and not for the sake of the money involved. In fact, you should not accept any money for it.'

"My father agreed, but my mother wasn't satisfied. The desire for money is very powerful. You may agree with me now, but when you are faced with that huge sum of money, who knows if you will be 'My father agreed, but my mother wasn't satisfied. The desire for money is very powerful. You may agree with me now, but when you are faced with that huge sum of money, who knows if you will be able to overcome this desire? Therefore, lift up my Korban Mincha prayer-book, and promise that you will not take even a single penny.'

"He then returned to the Rav and told him that he did not want to borrow the money from him. 'Who says I'm the real person?' he explained. 'Perhaps I only seem to match the description, so how will I be able to repay you? I will go there by foot and see what happens.'

"My father took his bag and walking stick and set out for Apta. He came to the Rav of Apta, and it turned out that he was the person they had sought. When the chalitzta was completed, the woman insisted that my father take half of his brother's inheritance, but my father insisted on keeping the promise he had made to my mother and steadfastly refused to take any money.

"The widow insisted that she had no wish to keep this money, and if he would not accept it, it should remain in the community's possession.

"My parents actions caused a great tumult in Heaven. It was decided to reward them; and so, although my parents were very old, they were blessed with a son. I am that son," concluded the Rebbe. "Now you know why I consented to come here and be the Rav, but only for a large salary. I was only taking back the money that had been due my father, but was left in the hands of the community. Now that I have received the full amount, I can leave here and go to Yassy."

For four years, the Apta Rav served as Rav and Rebbe in Yassy. Then, on 18 Kislev 5572 [1811], the Rebbe Reb Baruch of Medzibuzh passed away. The Jews of Medzibuzh had become accustomed to having a venerable tzadik in their midst. Only half a century earlier, the Baal Shem Tov had resided there. For the past twelve years, it had been his grandson, the Rebbe Reb Baruch, and for the twelve years before that his older brother, Rebbe Moshe Chaim Efraim of Sudylkov, the author of Degel Machaneh Efraim, had served as their Rebbe. The community decided to invite the Apta Rav to relocate to Medzibuzh, and in 5573, he left Romania and became Rebbe in the city of the Baal Shem Tov.

Two years later his close friends, the other three main "inheritors" of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhinsk: the Chozeh of Lublin, the Kozhnitzer Maggid and Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Riminov, all passed away within months of each other. The Apta Rav was then considered the oldest chassidic rebbe of the generation. All major decisions were sent to him for arbitration, and his word was accepted throughout Eastern Europe and even as far away as Eretz Yisrael.

Like the two previous tzadikim who lived in Medzibuzh, the Rebbe Reb Baruch and the Degel Machaneh Efraim, the Apta Rav lived and served there for twelve years and then passed away. Shortly before his final days, he bade farewell to the table at which he had studied, the bookcase full of holy books, and to the mezuzah on the doorpost. He returned to his bed and began to say [the first line of a hymn recited in the Shabbat morning prayers], "Ha'aderet vHa'emuna, l'Chai Olamim" - Strength and faithfulness are His, who lives Eternally," and it was with these words that he departed this world.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

A Swimming Tip for Life

By Rabbi Avraham Birnbaum

During the 1960's, when Reb Avraham (not his real name) was a yeshiva student, he learned at the Vizhnitzer Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Young Avraham had been orphaned at an early age, and his not having a father weighed heavily on him. As a result, he was a sensitive boy and often felt very homesick. Also, he found the yeshiva lacking in cleanliness and he didn't like the food and he became depressed as a result.

The Vizhnitzer Rebbe at the time, Rabbi Chaim Meir Hager, author of Imrei Chaim, noticed that the boy was discomfited and unhappy. He took the boy under his wing and suggested that perhaps a little vacation from yeshiva would be a good idea. The Imrei Chaim arranged for Avraham to travel to Netanya, where he would spend a few days in the seaside town and visit the separate beach there [secluded, with separate half-day shifts for women and men].

Avraham went to the beach and walked around on the sand, but didn't enter the water. Others at the beach were swimming, but Avraham hung back and just watched wistfully.

It so happened that the Gerer Rebbe, Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter, known as the Pnei Menachem, was also at the beach. At that time, he was not rebbe, but rather rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Sefas Emet, the flagship yeshiva of Ger in Jerusalem, a position that he was appointed to in 1957 and held for 35 years before assuming the mantle of leadership of Ger in 1992.

He noticed the somewhat forlorn-looking yeshiva boy and went over to greet him. During the conversation, he asked Avraham why he wasn't going into the water like everyone else. Avraham answered truthfully, "I am an orphan. My father passed away when I was young before he was able to teach me how to swim. I am afraid to go into the water because I cannot swim."

The Pnei Menachem smiled and said, "Don't worry! I will teach you how to swim."

The Rosh Yeshiva then waded into the Mediterranean together with the orphaned boy and taught him how to swim. Once Avraham got the hang of it and he had sufficiently mastered the art of swimming, the Pnei Menachem felt that he could be left on his own. However, before returning to dry land, he gave Avraham one last piece of advice - six words that Reb Avraham says made such an impact on him that it has remained vividly etched in his mind for the fifty years since it was given.

The Pnei Menachem said (in Yiddish), "Just remember one thing:

'Zolstu shtendig halten der kop arauf.' --

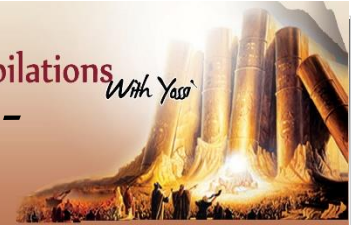
'Always hold your head up...'

Reprinted from an email of Shabbat Stories.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayakhel - Pekudei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	5:09	6:22	7:03
Tel Aviv	5:24	6:24	
Haifa	5:15	6:23	
Be'er Sheva	5:27	6:25	



Why Reb Yechezkel Levenstein was so Happy

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman zt'l invited Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l to be the mashgiach of Yeshivas Ponevezh. Reb Yechezkel Levenstein was happy with the offer, because previously, as mashgiach of Yeshivas Mir (Poland), his parnassah was very meager, and usually came late. He figured that Rav Kahaneman, who had connections with wealthy donors, will pay him on time.

Once, Reb Shalom Shwadron zt'l found Reb Yechezkel Levenstein extremely happy. Reb Shalom asked him, "Why are you so happy?"

Reb Yechezkel replied, "When I began working for Rav Kahaneman, I had only one concern. When I was mashgiach in Mir, I had to work on my bitachon (trust in Hashem) constantly. I was afraid that as mashgiach of Ponevezh, I wouldn't need to develop my bitachon anymore.

But even now, as the mashgiach of Ponevezh, the money comes in late, and I don't have enough money. I am forced to focus on bitachon once again, and that's the reason I'm so happy."

* * *

A wealthy man from Galicia once lent a large sum of money to a pauper, but when the time for payment arrived, the poor man wasn't able to pay back the loan. The wealthy man wouldn't forgive him. Although the Torah says כְּנוּשָׁה לוֹ תְהִיָּה אִלּוּ כִּשְׁמַחַת הַיּוֹם, when someone isn't able to pay back a debt, you shouldn't pressure him, this wealthy man kept demanding his money. The poor man felt that he has no other choice; he absconded to a different city.

The wealthy man found out where he was, and followed him there. The poor man went to a third city

and then a fourth, but the wealthy man was always at his heels, following him, and making his life miserable. The poor man arrived in Belz. He thought that he would have respite, but he met the wealthy man there too.

The poor man told Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l about his plight and Rebbe Aharon summoned the wealthy man. The Rebbe said, "Why are you giving this pauper such a hard time? You know that he doesn't have money to pay back the loan..."

"Yes, but he owes me the money."

The Belzer Rebbe told him, "If you lose the money through one venue, you don't need to worry, because you will always get the money back some other way. You will always have what's destined for you."

The wealthy man said, "If you will guarantee me that I will get the money back, I will let go of the debt."

The Belzer Rebbe repeated his words, "If you forgive him, you will not lose out. You will get the money a different way."

The wealthy man immediately forgave the pauper, and now that he has no purpose remaining in Belz, he took the next train back to his hometown. Right before boarding the train, he bought a lottery ticket and won exactly the amount of money that the poor man owed him. (Heard from Reb Shalom Brander zt'l.)

Reprinted from an email of Torah Wellsprings.



The second part of this week's double Parsha of Vayakhel-Pekudei is remarkable. Most of the Parsha provides for us a detailed balance sheet. After the construction of the Mishkan, we're told exactly what the nation contributed, and how Moshe used every single item in a responsible way. In this manner, Moshe wanted us to know, that what he had done was carried out faithfully and correctly.

Moshe was sensitive to what we call מראית עין. He knew how important it is, not only to do what's right, but to be seen to be doing what is right. For example, we are conscious of מראית עין if, a person goes into a non-kosher butchery in order to buy some bones for his or her dog. Someone who sees this happening, might conclude that they're buying non-kosher meat for themselves. Or alternatively, an onlooker could say 'I didn't know that that butchery is kosher.' It's right always to do what is right, and to be seen to be doing what is right.

In this spirit, the Talmud tells us, that in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, the tax collectors were instructed, never to have pockets in their clothes nor folds in their garments. They would hold the monies that they had taken, in their hands, and similarly we are told, that when raising funds for charity, we should go around not as single individuals, but in pairs.

The Mishnah tells us about the Garmu family. They were responsible for baking the shewbread in the Temple, and they kept the recipe secret within their family circles from generation to generation. They had a tradition, that they never served baked goods in any of their homes. They didn't want the thought to cross anybody's mind, that they were using Temple ingredients for the baked goods that they were serving. Similarly, the Mishnah adds, that the Avtinas family were responsible for preparing the incense in the Temple, and they had a family custom, when it came to their family smachot – none of the women ever wore perfume, lest it crossed the mind of anyone, that these women were using some of the sweet fragrances of the Temple, for their own personal needs.

The Torah is well-known to be exceptionally concise. Often we learn major laws from just one word, sometimes even from one single letter. But this week's Parsha provides all the space necessary to provide the balance sheet, in order to let us know how sensitive Moshe Rabbeinu was to מראית עין.

So we too should be sensitive to מראית עין. Always trying to do what's right, and to try to be seen to be doing what is right, 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, happy Shabbat and Chodesh Tov.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Vayakhel	Parshat Pekudei
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 1	NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 0
MITZVOT ASEH: 0	MITZVOT ASEH: 0
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1	MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 122	NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 92
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1558	NUMBER OF WORDS: 1182
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6181	NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4432

The Shabbat preceding (or on) Rosh Chodesh Nissan is called Shabbat HaChodesh.

We take out two Sifrei Torah, in the first, we have seven Aliyot in the weekly Parsha, followed by Half-Kaddish.

In the second Sefer Torah, the Maftir reads from Parshat Bo (12:1-20), which starts with the first Mitzva given to the Bnei Yisrael, while they were still in Mitzrayim, even before the Mitzvot of the Chag Pesach - the Mitzva of Kiddush HaChodesh. The reading begins with the declaration that the Hebrew month of Nissan, and not Tishrei, is to be considered the first month of the year. The passage then continues with some of the mitzvot of Pesach, which are certainly appropriate to be read and studied as the holiday approaches.

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Yechezkel 45:16 – 46:18
Sephardim & Chabad: Yechezkel 45:18 – 46:15 Plus first and last Passuk of Ma'har Chodesh

The Jewish Weekly
Pesach
Halachot, Minhagim and Customs
for the year 2021 / 5782

According to Nittei Gavriel, Mishna Berurah and Shulchan Aruch Harav
All times listed are for Jerusalem only. For more information visit www.myzmanim.com
Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachot for Pesach
Compiled by Yossi Friedman
in memory of his close friend and mentor,
Rabbi Elimelech Biderman, ז"ל, נפתי הירצקא ד"ל

COMING SOON