

The Jewish Weekly



In Loving memory of
Mendy Klein
ר' מנחם משה ז"ל
בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא
נפטר ל"ג בעומר
י"ח אייר תשע"ח
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

The Bearded Doctor

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

This story occurred in Russia some 150 years ago in the days of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch; Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, known as "the Maharash".

The story begins as one of the chassidim of the Rebbe, Yehuda Leib Hoffman, had just boarded the train in Petersburg and found his seat. He was waiting to begin the ten-hour journey to Lubavitch when he felt that someone was staring at him. He glanced up and got a glimpse of a thickly bearded man, apparently a Jew, looking at him intently. He nodded cordially and the man stood, approached him, shook his hand, and said.

"Good afternoon. Please pardon the intrusion. My name is 'M...' Excuse my asking but, are you a Lubavitcher chassid? That is, of the Rebbe Maharash?"

Yehuda Leib nodded his head yes. His visitor sat down opposite him as the train started to move and began to speak:

"I know your Rebbe and he is a true G-dly man. He changed my life. That is why I am on this train. I am now on my way to see him for the second time in ten years. Please, do you mind? I feel I must tell you my story. It is so amazing that I am seeing a chassid of the Rebbe!"

He took out a handkerchief, obviously in an emotional upheaval, wiped his forehead, and continued:

"Some fifty-five years ago, not far from here, I was born into a very religious Jewish family. In school I was an excellent student in learning Torah. Even when I was very young, five or six, all my teachers were amazed at how smart I was and were sure that I would be a famous rabbi or Talmudic scholar.

"But they didn't know how wrong they were. When I was about sixteen, I got introduced to one of the secular Jewish thinkers and from there to the works of the great philosophers and secular thinkers of the day. My heart and mind became inflamed with fresh, radical, atheistic ideas and I decided to be "free" from the yoke of the mitzvot.

"It wasn't long before I was spending days on end in coffee houses discussing these ideas. I refused to return to the Yeshiva.

"Of course, my parents and teachers felt it their obligation to dissuade me but their attempts only made me angry. I began to hate them and Judaism so much that, finally, I decided I had had enough, packed my belongings, moved to another city, changed my name, and became a new person with no religion at all.

"I enrolled in medical school, excelled in my studies, graduated with honors, and married into a very wealthy gentile family. We had a few children. I opened a large clinic and became one of the most successful and famous doctors in Petersburg.

"Twenty years passed and I never even once thought of my past. I was totally involved in my

work and my life and couldn't have cared less about Judaism or my parents.

"But then, I had a dream.

"An old Jew with a white beard dressed in white stood out against a totally black background and stared at me. At first, I didn't recognize him but when he called me 'my son,' I realized that it must be my father. He told me that after I left home, he and my mother had searched for me for years, that my leaving broke their hearts. He told me that although now he was no longer among the living, he had a message for me: I should return to the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And then he disappeared.

"I woke up in a sweat but I didn't tell my wife or any of my acquaintances. Neither she nor anyone else knew that I was Jewish and I didn't want them to. But I was shaken; nothing like this had ever happened to me.

"It took me a while but after a few days I calmed down. After all, I told myself, it was only a dream. And even if it was real, so what?! I never listened to my father when he was alive. Why should I care now? I decided to just forget the whole thing. If it were to happen again I would ignore him.

"But it wasn't so simple.

"A few days later the dream recurred and this time it was much harsher. I became frightened, remorseful. I almost wanted to cry and tell him I was sorry but then, in the dream, I caught myself. 'What's there to be sorry about? Because I left the dark ages?!"

"But my father said, 'Don't do it for me; return to Judaism for the sake of the truth.' And again, I awoke in a cold sweat.

"I tried to put it out of my mind, to keep busy and think of other things but it haunted me. Day and night I thought about it. People began to notice that I was acting tense and distant some even asked me if I was ill. But I managed to get along.

"Then there was the party.

"For several months I had no dreams but I was still far from normal. I was depressed and uneasy all the time and even took to drinking. So when my wife and I received an invitation to the duke's birthday party, we took up the offer with joy. It would be packed with interesting and important people.

"The ideal opportunity to get back into life.

"We had clothes specially tailored for the occasion and it was everything we expected - a magnificent ballroom, joyous music, excellent food, plenty of good brandy, the richest and most important people in Petersburg - hundreds of them, and a lot of fun. In fact, I got a bit drunk and felt so good that, when the orchestra played a quick polka, I leaped to the middle of the dance floor and began spinning and kicking to the glee of the crowd. They all stood around me and clapped.

"Then, without warning, on the dance floor in front of me, suddenly appeared my father! But this time he looked menacing.

"I was infuriated! I stopped dancing, pointed my finger at him, and screamed, 'Leave me alone! Go away!' The music stopped and everyone fell silent in shock, but I continued, 'I do what I want and you won't stop me!"

It Once Happened...

LEAVE ME ALONE!"

"Insane with anger, I pulled out my pistol, aimed at him, and fired!"

"Pandemonium! Women screamed and fainted and men began to run for the door. Several men jumped on me and took the gun. Luckily, no one was hurt.

"Everyone thought that I, their honorable doctor, had totally gone mad. Well, they were right! I ran desperately out of the room and began to weep. I was going insane! I had to have a cure. But who could understand my problem? No one even knew I was Jewish.

"I decided I had to find a holy Jew, a miracle worker even. Somehow, the name of the Lubavitcher Rebbe popped up in my mind. He was known as a holy man, a healer with great spiritual powers; I would pay him big money and he would save me! I ran home packed some clothes, took a lot of money, and headed for the train station.

"The next day I arrived in Lubavitch, arranged a meeting, rested up, put on my best clothes, and the very next evening entered his private office with the money in my pocket and a letter explaining my situation. But as soon as I closed the door behind me and stood facing him, I froze. It was a totally different experience than I had ever had. I cannot explain it but when I saw his holy face it was like looking into heaven.

"But the Rebbe didn't even look at me. He got up, went to his window, opened it as though to let in fresh air, and yelled, 'What is a man who tried to kill his own father doing in my house?!"

"Suddenly the truth hit me like a huge hammer! I fell to my knees and held my head in my hands. It was as though the entire world turned upside down in an instant.

"He was right. I did try to kill my father, not only now but for the past twenty years! Even worse, I tried to do the same thing to G-d!"

"I lowered my head to the ground and began to weep and weep until I felt my soul was about to leave my body. My whole life had been a huge, ugly mistake and now I regretted every second of it.

"After several minutes I came to and begged the Rebbe to fix me. He said I should leave my gentile family, giving them my house, all of my belongings and half of my money. Then I should move to a distant town, and devote myself to Torah and prayer until a certain thing, which I cannot divulge, would happen. This will be the sign that I have been forgiven by G-d. He told me that when I see that sign I should return to him in Lubavitch and that is why I'm on this train.

"He is truly a G-dly man! Today I saw the sign he spoke of and I am on my way to see him!"

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Acharei - Kedoshim

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:38	7:53	8:32
Tel Aviv	6:53	7:55	
Haifa	6:46	7:56	
Be'er Sheva	6:55	7:55	

Slice of Life

Torah Compilations With Yossi Parshat Acharei-Kedoshim

Baruch's Promise to The Chofetz Chaim

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Baruch was a young man learning in the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshivah in Radin, where he excelled and became a Talmid Chacham. It reached a point where his parents felt he should leave the Yeshivah to come home and get married. Baruch went to the Chofetz Chaim's house to say goodbye, and get a Brachah before he departed. After telling the Chofetz Chaim of his plans, the Chofetz Chaim gave him a stern look, and asked Baruch to promise that he would never be Mechalel Shabbat (desecrate Shabbat).

Baruch didn't know whether to laugh or cry, since he was never Mechalel Shabbat in his life, but realized that maybe his Rebbe saw him do something once. He promised the Chofetz Chaim that he would never desecrate Shabbat, but the Chofetz Chaim kept his stern look, and extended his hand.

He said, "Shake my hand and guarantee me that you will never, under any circumstance be Mechalel Shabbat." Now, Baruch felt like crying because obviously his Rebbe suspected him. Baruch shook the Chofetz Chaim's hand and made the promise. He left feeling dejected instead of uplifted.

At home, Baruch met Rochel, got married and started building a family. They had four children. Baruch learned in the Kollel, and worked a few hours a week in the local grocery, and they somehow made ends meet.

Everything changed when war broke out, and Baruch and Rochel made the difficult decision to leave for America. This meant to change everything they had ever known in their life, and say goodbye to their family, not knowing if they would ever see them again.

They boarded the boat and came to America, and it was not long before they realized that the streets were not paved with gold, and it certainly wasn't the land of opportunity, especially for someone from (religious). Baruch got a job in the textile industry for a low wage, and he didn't have time to learn much anymore since he was focusing on bringing home food for his family.

He became known as a reliable, hard worker and worked his way up in the company. Soon, the Great Depression set in, and his meager salary was cut, making things even more difficult. One day, Baruch came to work and received notice that his boss, Mr. Mark, wanted to see him. He had always been on good terms with his boss.

Mr. Mark told him, that the company was not doing as well in the poor economy and they would be forcing all employees to work seven days a week.

He told Baruch that he understood that he was a religious Jew and that this would be hard on him, but he wanted Baruch to be one of the first to know.

Baruch finished work and made his way home at the end of the day and broke the terrible news to his wife. He refused to work on Shabbat and he would have to quit his job. He already knew many people who were out of work as it was, and looking to be off for Shabbat made it more difficult. Few people were able to start new jobs on Sunday, but were fired the next Sunday when they didn't show up to work on Shabbat.

How was he going to find work? Slowly, their small meals became even smaller and most nights the children went to sleep starving. Day after day Baruch went on interviews, but with all the same result: no job unless you work on Shabbat.

One night, Baruch and Rochel made the horrible decision for Baruch to go to work on Shabbat, because they simply could not survive anymore. They rationalized that this was a case of Pikuach Nefesh (preservation of human life) because the children were suffering so much, and their very lives were likely at risk. The next morning, Baruch got on a train to go find a job where he would work on Shabbat.

Suddenly he burst into tears and his hands began to tremble. He had forgotten about his promise to the Chofetz Chaim! Baruch got off the train at the next stop, turned back the other way, and went home. Through tears, he told his wife of his promise, so many years earlier.

Rochel started to cry herself, and said how much she regretted the decision, saying that the suffering of the children affected her. They were sitting at the table thinking of what to do to somehow make ends meet, when there was a knock at the door. Baruch opened his door and was surprised to see Mr. Mark, his old boss standing there and asked if he could come in.

He said he came to apologize. Mr. Mark explained that he had a partner who didn't like religious Jews very much. He said that the most important thing to a Jew is money, and if put under a little pressure, their religion would be tossed out the window. Mr. Mark disagreed, and they made a bet that they would pick one Jew in the company to test. They picked Baruch because he had grown in the company and he stood to lose more than others.

Mr. Mark said to Baruch: "You won the bet. You didn't give in to the pressure and agree to work on Shabbat." He then took out an envelope from his briefcase and gave it to Baruch. It contained a fortune of \$1,000. He also gave Baruch a promotion and made him manager of his branch in the company. After Mr. Mark left, Baruch and Rochel cried tears of joy, astounded at how close they had come to being Mechalel Shabbat. Baruch attributed it all to his Rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim, and the hand shake from so many years ago. This is the power of influence that a Tzaddik can have!

Reprinted from an email of Torah U'Tefilah.



In Parashat Acharei Mot we are told, "בזאת יבוא אהרן אל הקדש – With 'this', Aharon, the High Priest will enter the Holy of Holies. But the word 'זאת – this', seems to be surplus to requirements in the context of the text. So what was it that Aharon came with, as he entered into the קודש הקודשים – the Holy of Holies? The Midrash explains that Aharon took with him the merit of all the Shabbatot that the Jewish people had kept during the previous year. This indicates to us the power and significance of keeping Shabbat.

But we still need to understand, what the thematic connection is between Shabbat, Yom HaKippurim and the service of the Kohen Gadol on that day?

I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, the following: Remarkably, on the day of Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol changed his garments five times. And before every single one of those occasions, he immersed himself in a Mikvah and then purified his feet and his hands with kiddush yadayim ve'raglayim.

But the question that Rabbi Mirvis asks is this: Yes, we can understand why he needed to purify himself when he was coming from the outside, inwards. But going from inside the Holy of Holies to the outside, to his regular garments, to his regular environment – why did he have to sanctify himself before that as well? Why was there a need to immerse himself in a Mikvah once again?

It's a bit like being given the privilege of meeting a monarch. You might try on this garment and that, you would get yourself ready, you would look forward to that remarkable occasion. But whilst actually experiencing that audience with the monarch, would you start preparing for the experience of going back to your ordinary life afterwards?

But that's exactly what the Kohen Gadol was doing – and that's the connection with Shabbat.

You see, Shabbat is so special for us, not only because it is an incredible day's experience but also because it provides inspiration for us throughout the week that follows. That is why in our Havdalah ceremony, we take the בשמים – the spices, we smell them to symbolize the way that the spirituality of Shabbat lingers on. So too with the Kohen Gadol. He didn't want his experience in the Holy of Holies to just be a one-off moment of spirituality. He wanted it to empower him, to inspire him. To take that קדושה – that holiness and infuse the rest of the year with the sanctity of what he had experienced. And that is why he immersed himself in the Mikvah to prepare for putting on his ordinary clothes thereafter. From the experience of the Kohen Gadol we learn how important it is to savor every precious moment in life and also how important it is to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

In today's pandemic, we have learnt how important it is to savor life, so let's pray with all our hearts for the recovery of all those who are sick from the pandemic, as well as praying for our soldiers who go out to protect us and 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 Pesach Sheni Sameach.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Acharei Mot
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 28
MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 26
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 80
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1170
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4294

Parshat Kedoshim
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 51
MITZVOT ASEH: 13
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 38
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 64
NUMBER OF WORDS: 868
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3229

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Amos 9:7 - 15
Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel 20:2 - 20

שני פסח - Pesach Sheni is Monday, 14 Iyar - April 26, 2021.

לג בעומר - Lag B'Omer is Friday, 18 Iyar - April 30, 2021.

This Shabbat we study Chapter 3 of Pirkei Avot

אחרי מות - קדושים

This week is sponsored in honor of the third Yahrzeit of my close friend and mentor, Mendy Klein

ר' מנחם משה ז"ל בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא ז"ל
לג בעומר - י"ח אייר