

# 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 Baal Shem Tov's Unusual Marriage

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

Rav Ephraim was the head of the Beit Din in the city of Brod. Once, he himself was involved in a dispute with another Jew in the city, and both parties had to appear before a Beit Din to settle it. To prevent the slightest suspicion that the Rabbanim of the Beit Din were prejudiced toward him, Rav Ephraim agreed to travel with the other party to a distant city where no one knew who he was.

One evening, on their way to that city, they stopped at an inn in a small village. The Baal Shem Tov, who was then serving as a melamed (teacher) for the innkeeper's young children, saw with his Ruach Hakodesh (Divine inspiration) that Rav Ephraim's daughter, Leah Rochel, was destined to become his wife.

Knowing that the Av Beit Din (Chief Rabbi) of Brod would never agree to marry off his daughter to a simple melamed, the Baal Shem Tov decided to reveal part of his true greatness and began a learned discussion with the two travelers involving a deep concept in Torah.

After witnessing his incredible brilliance and clarity of mind, the two litigants said to each other: "Why should we go through the trouble of traveling for another few days when we have a true scholar right here? Let us present our case to him!"

The Baal Shem Tov agreed to hear the case and settled it to their mutual satisfaction. Rav Ephraim proceeded to have another learned discussion with the Baal Shem Tov, and he was overcome with admiration for the depth of knowledge and scholarship of this melamed, who was so young yet so wise. After discovering that the melamed was not married, he asked him if he would agree to marry his daughter Leah Rochel, and the Baal Shem Tov answered in the affirmative.

However, the Baal Shem Tov stipulated that when the tna'im (engagement contract) outlining the agreement would be written, no title should accompany his name. "Instead," he stated, "just write that you arranged a shidduch (match) for your daughter with Yisrael ben Eliezer." Rav Ephraim obliged and they wrote the tna'im, both of them receiving a copy.

Rav Ephraim took leave of his future son-in-law and prepared to return home and inform his daughter of her wonderful fortune: she was engaged to a remarkable man, a tremendous talmid chacham (scholar) and outstanding in all other virtues as well. However, since he was the Chief Rabbi not only of Brod but of all the surrounding towns as well, and since he wasn't expected to return home for another few days anyway, he decided to utilize the extra time to visit some of the nearby villages and affirm that everything was in order.

As fate would have it, in one of these villages Rav Ephraim suddenly took ill and passed away, without having had the opportunity to inform his family about the wonderful match.

Rav Ephraim's son Rav Gershon Kitover assumed his father's position as Av Beit Din of Brod. After getting up from shiva (seven days of mourning), he was surprised to find among his father's belongings a copy of an agreement concerning his sister's engagement. His surprise turned to bewilderment when he didn't see any great titles written next to the Chatten (groom)'s name.

"Can it be that the chattan is an unlearned person?" he wondered. Nevertheless, he consoled himself, saying, "My father, of blessed memory, would never have arranged or agreed to such a match, unless the chattan is indeed a genuine talmid chacham. Probably the chattan is not only a true gaon (genius) but also extremely humble and did not wish to be identified with any titles."

Not knowing who the chattan was or where he lived, the only thing the family could do was to wait and see.

Some weeks later, when the Baal Shem Tov concluded teaching his students, he informed their parents that they should hire a new teacher for the next term, as he was leaving town.

Arriving in Brod, the Baal Shem Tov put on the clothing of a simple laborer and went to meet the family of the Kallah (bride). Since Rav Gershon had assumed all of his father's responsibilities and spent most of his day in the Beit Din, that is where the Baal Shem Tov went to meet him.

Seeing a poor laborer standing at the door, Rav Gershon immediately instructed one of his attendants to give him some food and money. However, the attendant returned and said: "The person told me that he did not come for a donation, but rather to speak with the Rav Gershon about a private matter."

Although puzzled as to what this could be about, Rav Gershon agreed, and after everyone else had left the room, the visitor entered. Studying his visitor, Rav Gershon saw that as he entered he raised his hand to the mezuzah but did not touch it.

Taking out his own copy of the tna'im, the Baal Shem Tov said, "I am Yisrael ben Eliezer who, according to your father's agreement, is to marry your sister."

Rav Gershon was dumbstruck. He couldn't believe his eyes and ears. "How could my father have agreed to arrange a match with such an ignoramus?!" he thought. "Surely this is a mistake!" However, being a true Rav, he knew he had to investigate the matter and uncover the truth.

Rav Gershon took out his father's copy and began comparing it to that of the Baal Shem Tov. After a thorough examination of both documents, he saw that they were indeed identical. No, it was not a mistake; his father had arranged an unthinkable match.

Quickly composing himself, Rav Gershon offered Yisrael a substantial amount of money to annul the agreement.

"I will not take any money from you," the Baal Shem Tov replied, "nor would I allow you to go against your father's wishes. The only one who has the right to make such a decision is your sister, the kallah. Call your sister and I will speak to her for a few moments. If she then decides that she does not want to go through with the marriage, I agree to cancel the shidduch without any payment whatsoever."

## It Once Happened...

Rav Gershon immediately summoned his sister. When she arrived, he informed her that her chattan had appeared. "However," he continued with great sadness and dismay, "he is a total ignoramus and seems to be a mere beggar. I can't understand why Father agreed to such a shidduch. But thank G-d there is some good news: he is willing to release you from this obligation after meeting with you for just a few minutes."

Moving to a quiet corner out of earshot from Rav Gershon, the Baal Shem Tov revealed to Leah Rochel who he really was. He told her, though, that for the foreseeable future he would have to hide his greatness, even from the members of her own family. In addition, he warned her that during that time they would be forced to live in great deprivation. He then added: "Your brother is wondering why I didn't kiss the mezuzah. However, he is unaware that the mezuzah is passul (not kosher)."

Leah Rochel approached her brother, but before she could say anything, he said: "Now that you have met him, you can see for yourself that he is a total ignoramus. Let's go ahead and cancel the shidduch without further ado. You will surely marry someone much greater than him!"

"Dear brother!" she replied, "Since Father arranged it, he must have seen some special quality in him we have yet to recognize. And if he himself possesses no special quality, perhaps we are destined to have a great son. I am going to marry him and fulfill our father's wishes."


Rav Gershon was horrified at her answer, and he tried once more to convince her to change her mind. He then mentioned the fact that when the man had entered the room, he had just raised his hand but hadn't touched the mezuzah. "You see, it's not just that he isn't a talmid chacham," he bemoaned. "He doesn't even know the basics of Yiddishkeit (Judaism)!"

Knowing who he really was but not allowed to publicize it, she answered her brother in an off-handed manner: "Perhaps the mezuzah is not kosher."

Hoping to prove her wrong, Rav Gershon immediately took down the mezuzah and checked it. To his horror it was indeed passul, just as his sister had stated, but that didn't make him change his mind. After all, how could such a person sense something like that? He was still mortified by the match.

Having no recourse, Rav Gershon arranged a modest wedding for them, much smaller than what he would have arranged had his sister married a remarkable talmid chacham. After the wedding, Rav Gershon supplied the couple with enough money to buy a horse and wagon so his brother-in-law could earn a livelihood. Knowing how painful their marriage was for Rav Gershon, they moved away a few months later.

*Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon.*



### Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Emor

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:43	7:58	8:37
Tel Aviv	6:58	8:01	
Haifa	6:51	8:02	
Be'er Sheva	7:00	8:00	



## A Blessing For a Friend By Rabbi Alter Bukiet

Due to the preparations for the 5744 (1984) "Lag b'Omer Children's Parade" and the associated heavy activity in front of 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, the World Headquarters of Chabad, it was decided that the couples who wished to receive blessings for children from the Lubavitcher Rebbe should not stand outside 770 as usual. Instead, they should wait at 10:00 am at the door of the Rebbe's house, a few streets away at 1304 President Street, where they would have more quiet and privacy.

Knowing that an enormous crowd would gather there, an organizers committee was established to maintain order, to be enforced by the students of the Kollel, of which I was a member.

As it was not my nature to push or order people around, I had requested to be in charge of the area immediately outside the Rebbe's car door, to open it as soon as the Rebbe arrives, and to close it as soon as the Rebbe is seated to ensure that the Rebbe's driver can depart without any delay.

I will never forget the scene that day. There were many couples. People from Chabad and those who were not from Chabad were waiting for the Rebbe to leave his house.

The Rebbe came out at 10:00 am. It took twenty minutes for the Rebbe to reach his car. People were crying and screaming for the Rebbe's attention. It was so intense.

The Rebbe got into the car and was seated. I began to close the door, when suddenly someone stuck his head into the car and exclaimed to the Rebbe that he is married already for several years and has no children, then hurriedly stated his name and wife's name to the Rebbe. I happened to notice that this individual was a Satmar Chossid. Meanwhile, the pressure on the door was mounting. I tried with all my might to hold the door open so that he wouldn't get smashed.

The Rebbe blessed him, and then, before the man could withdraw, I hear the Rebbe add something very unusual. He looked directly at the Satmarer and said something like, "The child will need to have someone to play with."

The guy did not get at all what the Rebbe was trying to say. So the Rebbe said to him, Zugt Amen (Say Amen)!" It finally registered and he responded with a loud shout: "Amen!" and moved away from the vehicle. I closed the door and the Rebbe's car pulled away.

Years pass. I 'graduated' to be the emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Lexington Massachusetts, near Boston. Life goes on.

Fifteen years after that Lag b'Omer incident, on the 24th of the Jewish month of Menachem Av 5759 [1999: August 6], on what would have been the 80th birthday of my father, Rabbi Chaim Meir Bukiet of blessed memory, had he not passed away a year and a half before on the 27th of Tevet, I decided to visit his grave. As it is located in the Montefiore cemetery in Queens NY, where also is located the "Ohel," the resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, it meant that I would have to leave from home soon after midnight in order to arrive around 4:00 - 5:00 AM. That would give me enough time to visit my father's resting place as well as the Rebbe's, and still be able to get back by 9:00 am to start my regular work day.

At 5 in the morning I was in the Ohel and reading the Maaneh Loshon (the long texts recited by many at the grave of a tzadik, based on the Zohar). As I was standing there, I noticed a Satmar chassid enter with two young boys. I thought it strange that they should be here at such an hour. My bewilderment increased when after they all finished reciting the Maaneh Loshon, the father turned to his sons and told them, "take out the maamar (chassidic in-depth discourse)."

Each son took out a printed copy of the maamar traditionally recited by Chabad boys who reach the age of Bar Mitzvah. The two Satmar boys proceeded to each read the entire maamar. After leaving the Ohel, I saw them again in the reception area, standing near the coffee stand. I couldn't resist the urge to satisfy my curiosity. I approached the father and asked him in Yiddish what brings him here and at such an hour?

He responded: "These are the Rebbe's children, they were born as a result of the Rebbe's blessing." He continued that he had been married several years with no children and so decided to try getting a blessing for a son from 'the Lubavitcher.' "The Rebbe blessed me as I requested and then said to me, "The child will need to have someone to play with." I was speechless, so the Rebbe added, "Zugt Amen!" ('Say Amen'). Three times! Finally I realized what he intended and I responded with a loud 'Amen.' And in the merit of his blessing, my wife gave birth to twins, the boys you see in front of you."

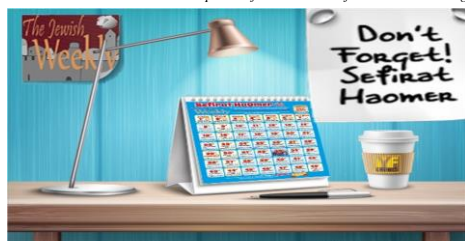
I couldn't believe my ears! I must admit I became emotional. "Tell me, when exactly did this happen? Was it perhaps on Lag b'Omer in 5744? Outside the Rebbe's House?"

"Yes and Yes, on Lag b'Omer in 5744 outside the Rebbe's house on President Street inside the Rebbe's car!" confirmed the Satmarer.

"Wow! Amazing!" I exclaimed. "I am the one who held the door open with all my might that it shouldn't get slammed shut on you. Do you remember me?"

"That's right, of course!" he answered quickly, looking into my eyes to see if he could remember the face from so long ago. "And now you are seeing the happy outcome of the story. These twins were born two years and three months after that Lag b'Omer in the merit of the Rebbe's blessing. They are our only children and today is their Bar Mitzvah. They are the Rebbe's children!"

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



At the commencement of Parashat Emor, Moshe was instructed "אמר אל הכהנים בני אהרן ואמרת להם - say to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon, and say unto them". He's told twice to say something to the Kohanim. Why 'אמר' and 'ואמרת' - why both?

The Ramban explains that here we have an important principle - it relates to the world of 'טהרה' and 'טומאה' - purity and impurity. Keeping the children away from contamination, guaranteeing that they lead a life of קדושה, of holiness, to be imbued with the sacred at all times. Therefore it is something that needs to be repeated, and repeated again - just saying it once won't be enough.

Our sages in the Talmud give a different suggestion 'אמר' and 'ואמרת', saying and saying again, they say, is 'להזהיר' - to warn parents with regard to their children'. The first 'saying' is for Moshe to say it to the parents, and the second 'saying' is for the parents to say it to the children - to guarantee the continuity of that instruction through the ages. Rav Moshe Feinstein says something beautiful on this point. With regard to the impact that parents have on their children, it's not always about formal instruction - in fact, the primary impact that parents have is informally through the example that they set.

Sometimes one might have a particular persona in the workplace, in the community, or within society - and you hope that people will be suitably impressed by what they see. But when you come home, you wind down, you relax - that's when you become your real self. It's within the family circle, particularly at times of leisure, that children see their parents for what they actually are. As a result, children very easily size their parents up - are they sincere or insincere? Do they speak in a lovely way or do they shout and scream? Do they maintain high standards of morality or not? Are they truly ethical people? When it comes to mitzvot, do they try to cut corners, or are they the real thing?

Our children internalize what they see from the very youngest age. Therefore the primary arena within which Jewish children are raised and influenced is within the family home. 'אמר' and 'ואמרת' is the instruction whereby we must study, we must learn and we must practice, and through the example we set hopefully we will inspire future generations to do just likewise.

I would like to end with what the Ramban wrote earlier about keeping our children away from contamination, what we are going through right now is not easy times, yet, the government and health ministries are setting restrictions and regulations, not because they want to, but in order to save lives, so let's follow their instructions and 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 and happy Shabbat.

Yossi

## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 63  
MITZVOT ASEH: 24  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 39

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 124  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1614  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6106

HAFTORA:  
Yechezkel 44:15 - 31

This week we study Chapter 4 of Pirkei Avot

# אמור

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

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