

The Jewish Weekly

The Unusual Shadchan (Matchmaker)

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber (1861-1920) was a holy genius, whose main concern was the Jewish people, and whose main occupation was prayer, learning or teaching Torah.

But he was a very delicate person, who often had problems with his health that forced him to travel to warmer climates for a rest. On one such trip he was accompanied by his only son Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (who years later would be the next Rebbe).

In general, the Rebbe slept very little, if at all, at nights and it was his custom to rest, sitting on a couch every afternoon, not really asleep but also not totally awake, for a half hour or so. On this vacation, it happened to be Wednesday afternoon, he sat on a comfortable chair for his usual rest, but this time it was for much longer than usual.

His son, a bit worried, tried to signal, with subtle noises, that the half-hour had passed; scuffling his feet and moving things around in the room but to no avail. Two hours later the Rebbe suddenly stood and asked, "Where am I? What day is it today? What section of the Torah are we in?" As though he had seen or experienced something very unusual.

That evening he took an unusually long time praying the evening prayer, singing the words slowly and quietly with great emotion and then, the next morning after his prayers, he asked his son how much cash they had on hand.

There was only enough for minor expenses, but his son took the hint, went to a local pawnbroker with his silver-topped cane that had been a present from his father, and came home with twenty rubles a small fortune in those days.

His father, the Rebbe, took the money and asked his son to wait in the room while he went shopping. A half hour later a package was brought to the room and in the next few hours delivery boys kept bringing more and more parcels, all recently purchased from various women's clothing stores.

All this was very strange, his father had made this vacation trip because he was tired and weak and now he was out shopping, which was also very unusual, especially that he was shopping on his own. Possibly the clothes were meant for the Rebbe's granddaughters (Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak's daughters). But in fact, they weren't.

It was early afternoon when his father returned, told him to pack all the presents in his suitcase and that they were checking out

of the hotel. On the way out his son paid the bill at the front desk and followed his father to the train station where, without any explanation, he told him to buy tickets to Pressburg.

His son did as told, but his curiosity was growing.

When they arrived in Pressburg terminal two hours later, he asked his father where they were going as he began flagging down a carriage, but his father shook his head and said no need for a carriage, they would go by foot.

This also didn't make sense, their baggage was heavy, the Rebbe, after all his efforts should have been exhausted, especially due to his frail health, but the Rebbe was never wrong, and they began walking.

On the way the Rebbe stopped a young yeshiva student who was walking quickly toward them, obviously in a hurry to get somewhere and asked him for directions to a certain hotel. But the young man replied quickly.

"I'm sorry, please ask someone else I have no time!" and continued walking.

But the Rebbe reprimanded him saying, "Is that any way to treat strangers? Is that how you fulfill the commandment of accepting guests?"

The young man, realizing he was wrong, stopped, apologized, caught his breath and explained exactly how to get to the hotel. He added that maybe they should consider another hotel, as the owner of the hotel that he mentioned just died suddenly yesterday afternoon and his wife and daughters were just beginning the 'seven' (Shiva) day mourning period.

The Rebbe thanked him, he and his son continued to the hotel and entered to see in a corner of the reception room, a woman and three young girls, probably her daughters, sitting and weeping with several comforters around them. Obviously, these were the mourners the young man mentioned.

The bellboy showed them to a room and the Rebbe, rather than resting a bit after the journey, told his son to leave the suitcase in the room and come with him for a stroll.

This really surprised the Rebbe's son. It was as though his father had totally regained his health and vigor and didn't have to rest at all.

The Rebbe led the way to a large Yeshiva (Torah academy) building, entered and made his way to a large room where some hundred young men were sitting and learning aloud. The Rebbe went from table to table asking the boys questions about the Tractate they were learning and listened to their replies.

One of the pupils really made a good impression and the Rebbe smiled him highly. Then he saw

It Once Happened...

the young man they had met earlier on the street and spoke with him for a few minutes as well, and finally they walked back to their hotel.

All this was a great mystery to the Rebbe's son; it seemed that all the events of the last two days had no real connection to anything, and certainly not to a vacation, but he didn't ask for an explanation.

Shortly everything became clear.

The Rebbe entered the hotel, approached the woman and her daughters, in the corner of the reception room, sat down and said a few consoling words. Then, motioning toward the girls asked the widow why her daughters were not married.

The woman moaned, almost began to cry and then said that even before her husband passed away, she had had no luck in finding fitting matches for them, but now it would be impossible; she hadn't enough money to even buy nice clothes for them.

At this point the Rebbe told his son to go up to their room and bring down the packages.

Moments later when he returned the Rebbe gave the packages to the woman and said, "Here are dresses and clothes for your two oldest daughters. And regarding finding a groom, well, I have two excellent candidates" and suggested the two young men he had spoken to earlier; the one he praised highly and the one they had first met on the street.

The Rebbe arranged it that that very evening they would meet and, in fact, several days thereafter both couples decided to marry!

Years later the Rebbe's son happened to be in Pressburg and, by chance, met the youngest daughter. She thanked G-d that she too was now happily married and that her two sisters were doing wonderfully with the husbands that his father had arranged!

One was the Rabbi of a large city and the other the head of a Yeshiva.

The name of their departed father, incidentally was Rabbi Avraham Bick author of the book 'Bikuray Aviv' on the Torah, and the time that he suddenly passed away coincided exactly with the time the Rebbe was 'unconscious' in the beginning of our story.

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



Shabbat Times – Parshat Behaalotecha

| | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat | Motzei Shabbat ר"ת |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Jerusalem | 7:02 | 8:20 | 8:56 |
| Tel Aviv | 7:17 | 8:22 | |
| Haifa | 7:10 | 8:24 | |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:18 | 8:21 | |

**The Blessing of
Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld**
By Rabbi David Bibi



Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld

It was a beautiful day in Jerusalem as the legendary Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l strolled down the street for a walk. The day was filled with the beauty of life and the beauty of G-d's world. But such a mesmerizing reality came to a halt as soon as Rav Sonnenfeld noticed a little four-year-old girl crying in front of a school.

Seeing that she was clearly perturbed, he approached her. "Is everything alright?" Rav Sonnenfeld gently whispered to the girl. As it turned out, today was the first day of school, and the little girl's mother was critically ill in the hospital. The doctors' prognosis was dismal. With no one to therefore pick up the girl from school, she was left alone in tears.

But Rav Sonnenfeld did not waste any time. He proceeded to obtain the girl's home address and walk her home.

The story could have ended here and it would have been a beautiful demonstration of Rav Sonnenfeld's care and concern for others. But it didn't.

When Rav Sonnenfeld shortly thereafter entered the little girl's home, he was met by total disarray. The house was not exactly organized and put together, but there was good reason for it. Yet, as Rav Sonnenfeld stepped further inside and extended his warm greetings to the family members, he said, "I just want you all to know two things. Firstly, the mother is going to have a complete recovery. Secondly, the mother is going to walk this four-year-old girl down to her chuppa."

And so it was. In an inexplicable change of circumstances, the mother underwent a total recovery. It came as an incredulous shock to all the medical staff, yet everyone graciously accepted such news. Now it came time for fulfillment of the second part of Rav Sonnenfeld's blessing.

The four-year-old girl had grown up and she was now seventeen. Although young, names of prospective shidduchim (matches) were coming her way, yet, one after another, she turned them down.

She was now twenty, and her younger siblings began getting to the age to marry. Although still unmarried herself, she encouragingly and happily let them go ahead. And indeed, it happened. Three years later, her younger brother got married. And another three years later, two more of her siblings had gotten married. All the while, she received names of some wonderful boys who seemed quite suitable for her. But she just didn't go along with

any of them. It seemed as if she was extremely picky.

By her 32nd birthday, the last of her siblings was finally married. Within a number of months, the four-year-old girl who was now 32, finally got engaged and then married. It was an unbelievably joyous occasion for all of the family. And like Rav Sonnenfeld had said, her mother walked her down to the chuppa.

As the next morning rolled around and everyone began to get up for another day, the mother did not. And that was not because she was tired. Rather, in fact, she had passed away in her sleep. The newly-married girl of 32 would be going to her mother's funeral.

As is the custom in Jerusalem, children ask forgiveness from their parents before they are lowered down to the earth for their repose. The kallah of just barely 12 hours had difficulty speaking, but went on to say:

"Ma, I want to ask mechillah (forgiveness) from you. For fifteen years, I appeared to be overly picky in the many shidduch offers I received, and it brought much heartache to you. I am sorry, and I am asking for mechillah. But I just want you to know why I was so picky. It was because I wanted all of my younger siblings to also benefit from Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's blessing to have you at their chuppa. Only after every one of them had gotten married and you walked them down to their chuppas was I ready... Please be mochel me..."

All along, it may have seemed like the girl was being picky for herself. It was about her finding the perfect boy. But, in reality, nothing could have been further from the truth. It was all about her siblings and her beloved mother.

It was about affording her brothers and sisters the opportunity to have their mother dance at their weddings, and about her mother having the chance to reap the nachas of seeing her children's most joyous moments where they would begin building the family's future and legacy. That is what it means to lead a selfless existence. That is what it means to care for others outside of yourself.

Can one be truly humble and also be the greatest of them all?

I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, that that is exactly what happened in the life and times of Moshe Rabbeinu. Our Parasha, of Behaalotecha, describes him as being, "ענו מאד מכל האדם [ענין] מאד מכל האדם – He was more humble than any other person." This is referring to the past, present and the future.

At the end of the Torah, accolades are given to Moshe. He is described as being the greatest of all the prophets and he had the privilege of speaking "פנים אל פנים – Face to Face" with The Almighty.

In the Mishna, Masechet Sanhedrin our Rabbis taught that when Adam was created, the entire world existed just for him. And since each and every one of us are as unique as Adam was, we should all declare "בשבילי נברא העולם – This world was created for me."

This statement, however, sounds quite arrogant. Rather, the Mishna is encouraging us to appreciate the potential each and every one of us has and that our ability and our talent comes from Hashem.

It should not be a case of "כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה" – That it is my power, my might and my ability that has brought this all about. But rather, when one is paid a compliment, one should respond "Baruch Hashem – It is not me, it is thanks to Hashem, Who has enabled me to achieve all of these goals."

The great rabbinic master of the nineteenth century, Reb Simcha Bunim of Pshischa, would always carry with him two pieces of paper, one in each pocket. On one piece was written the words "בשבילי נברא העולם – This world was created for me." On the other piece of paper were the words of Avraham to Hashem, "אנכי עפר ואפר" – I am just dust and ashes." He would always be mindful of these two messages. First of all to recognize his own, incredible potential and at the same time to know that he was just dust and ashes.

That was the secret to the success of Moshe Rabbeinu. He was indeed more humble than any other person but he knew he had talents, he knew he had ability. However, when he achieved much, indeed more than all others, he ascribed that success to Hashem.

Similarly, let each and every one of us recognize the talents and potential we possess, in order to make the maximum impact on the world around us. However, at the same time we should recognize, it is not thanks to our greatness, it is all Baruch Hashem, thanks to the gifts, the Almighty has given us.

So let's try to recognize all of Hashem's gifts and let's pray for the soldiers, police and medical professionals protecting us through this very tough time in Israel and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's
PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 5
MITZVOT ASEH: 3
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 136
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1840
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7055

HAFTORA: Zechariah 2:14 - 4:7

This week we study Chapter 2 of Pirkei Avot

תורה בהעלותך

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