

# The Jewish Weekly

## A Nuclear Response

By David Lapin

I am a descendant of an illustrious rabbinic family, and the son of a rabbi who served the South African Jewish community for most of his life. So it was clear to me from an early age that I too, would become a rabbi. I was educated at the Gateshead Yeshivah in England, and also at Kfar Chassidim and Mir Yeshivah in Israel, where I received my rabbinic ordination.

However, as soon as I entered the rabbinate of South Africa, I became concerned about retaining my intellectual independence – something I am fiercely protective of – while serving as a community rabbi at the will of a synagogue's board of directors. Therefore, I believed that I also needed to secure an independent source of income. And so I first went to work for an international commodities trading company, and later I founded the leadership consulting firm that I currently lead.

At about that time, an opportunity arose to join a company of commodity traders in Johannesburg, and this is what I did, as well as establishing a Torah study academy known as Beis Hamedrash Kesser Torah. This Torah academy along with Chabad and Kolel Yad Shaul became involved in the South African Baal Teshuva Movement – the movement for young people to return to their Jewish roots and Torah observance.

I held classes every Saturday night, when most young people usually went to the movies, yet these classes were attended weekly by hundreds of people. On other days of the week, I also conducted Talmudic studies, teaching advanced Talmudic methodology to bright young people, many of whom could barely read Hebrew. There were additional classes for men and for women in Chumash, Tanach, Halacha and Musar.

But I was not sure I was on the right track. Was I right to divide my time between my business and my rabbinic duties? It seemed as if I had two full-time jobs and my family was paying a heavy price as a result.

There came a time when I felt I needed the opinion of someone much wiser than me, someone who had a global perspective that embraced modernity, history and the future. I decided to seek the advice of the Rebbe – about whom I had heard so much from my Chabad colleagues and acquaintances.

In 1976 I came to New York but I had not realized that to see the Rebbe one had to make an appointment many months in advance and at first I was turned away. Only when I wrote a letter to the Rebbe in which I made the argument that my questions impacted the larger Jewish community – did he invite me to wait until he finished his appointments for the night when he would make time to see me.

I will never forget meeting the Rebbe. I recall that he got up from his chair as my wife and I came in, greeted us and insisted that we sit down. At that moment, I realized that we were going to have a real conversation – this was not going to be just a symbolic encounter.

Indeed, the meeting lasted about fifteen minutes, during which time I felt that he was looking right inside me and communicating with me on a level

that transcends the mind, getting straight to the heart and the essence of being. In addition, I sensed a kindness and warmth – all at once I was in the presence of a great man, an intellectual genius, a leader of the Jewish people, but also a grandfather who cared about me. In short, it was an amazing experience.

I asked him about the responsibilities that I faced and the limitations that I felt, which seemed overwhelming. How could I manage it all? What should I give up – my business or my Torah teaching? Where should I direct my energies?

His answer to me was that I should give up nothing and continue working in business while still teaching Torah. I do not remember his exact words, but the gist of it was that my being in business increased my ability to bring people closer to Judaism; my profession increased my influence and was a vehicle of kiddush Hashem, of sanctifying the name of G-d. He stressed that I would have greater impact if I was involved with both business and Torah.

I was still very young, and I couldn't imagine how I could continue to do both. So, I burst out with: "I don't think that this is realistic. I'm already up to here ... I feel very humbled and very honored that you would even talk to me this way, but it just isn't realistic!"

I remember clearly his response to my outburst. He said: "I'll tell you what your difficulty is – you think that human interaction is like a chemical reaction. But it isn't. In a chemical reaction, there are two elements which interact with each other, and they result in a third compound. But people aren't chemicals. When people interact, the result is a nuclear reaction. A nuclear reaction occurs at the core and then it radiates in a spherical, rather than a linear, way. As the outer rings of your sphere get bigger and bigger, the number of people you are touching gets bigger and bigger – indeed, there is no limit.

"When you touch the heart of one person, there is a nuclear reaction because that person in turn touches so many other people. So, each person you touch – even if it is a moment's interaction – represents a nuclear reaction in terms of impact. That's what it really is."

He was right of course, and way ahead of the research that, since then, has proven his words to be true. For example, the Framingham Heart Study showed that people's mood affects others three times removed – that is, one's friend's friend's friends. We impact people not just with our words but with our moods and our energy.

I remembered this whenever I stood in front of a class of fifty people. I contemplated that these fifty could in turn be impacting at least one hundred and fifty others. This meant that, both in my work as a rabbi and as a business person, week after week I was affecting tens of thousands of people without realizing it. That's what the Rebbe tried to get across to me. He was talking about the huge amount of holiness that I had the potential to bring into the world.

I got it. Indeed, he changed my entire mindset when he said, "Don't underestimate what each person is capable of doing. Just remember that when you touch one person you are causing a nuclear reaction." And that's something that I've never forgotten.

*Reprinted from an email of Here's My Story (Chabad.org).*

## It Once Happened...



*The Lubavitcher Rebbe at the door to his office*

## The Phoenix

By Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky

It was in the early 1970's, when the widow of Jacques Lipchitz, the renowned sculptor, had come for a private audience with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, shortly after her husband's sudden passing.

In the course of her meeting with the Rebbe, she mentioned that when her husband died, he was nearing completion of a massive sculpture of a phoenix in abstract, a work commissioned by Hadassah Women's Organization for the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus, in Jerusalem.

As an artist and sculptor in her own right, she said that she would have liked to complete her husband's work, but, she told the Rebbe, she had been advised by Jewish leaders that the phoenix is a non-Jewish symbol. How could that be placed, in Jerusalem — no less!

I was standing near the door to the Rebbe's office that night, when he called for me and asked that I bring him the book of Job, from his bookshelf, which I did.

The Rebbe turned to Chapter 29, verse 18, "I shall multiply my days like the Chol." And then the Rebbe proceeded to explain to Mrs. Lipchitz the Midrashic commentary on this verse which describes the Chol as a bird that lives for a thousand years, then dies, and is later resurrected from its ashes.

Clearly then, a Jewish symbol.

Mrs. Lipchitz was absolutely delighted and the project was completed soon thereafter.

True to his nature, the Rebbe discerned the positive where conventional wisdom saw only negativism.

How fitting, retrospectively, this beautiful metaphor of life returning from the ashes. In his own divinely inspired way, the Rebbe had brought new hope to this broken widow. And in the recurring theme of his life, he did the same for the spirit of the Jewish people, which he raised from the ashes of the Holocaust to new, invigorated life.

*Reprinted from an email of Torah U'Tefilah.*

*Editor's Note: the Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the 7th Chabad Rebbe ז"ל's, 27th Yahrzeit is tomorrow, Sunday, 3rd Tammuz – June 13th of this year*



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times – Parshat Korach

|             | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat | Motzei Shabbat ר"ת |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Jerusalem   | 7:09            | 8:28           | 9:03               |
| Tel Aviv    | 7:25            | 8:30           |                    |
| Haifa       | 7:18            | 8:32           |                    |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:26            | 8:29           |                    |



## Trapped in a Hezbollah Mine Field

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

was no way to exit the mine field without being killed. Furthermore, he said, the Hizbollah soldiers positioned on the surrounding hills could open fire at any time.

With a trembling voice he called "Pikud Hatzafon" - the northern Israel IDF command center, located in Tsfat - and reported their dire situation. The brigade commander, Effi Eitam, was immediately informed. He grasped right away that the lives of 15 of his soldiers was hanging by a thread. But what could he do to help?

\* \* \*

At 3:00 am the house phone started ringing in the home of the former "Rishon L'Tzion", Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu. He was already awake and studying Torah. He picked up the receiver and on the line was Effi Eitam. As concisely as possible he described the deadly situation of his soldiers. He concluded with "Great Rabbi, we need the power of your honor's prayers."

"Wait a few minutes, but stay on the line," was Rav Eliyahu's reply, and he turned away to immerse himself totally in prayer.

After the few minutes he returned to the phone, and said in a gentle tranquil tone: "I'm holding tight...take them out now!"

Eitam, who understood only too well the lethal destructiveness of this type of bomb, of course realized the implications of giving the command to flee. On the other hand, he had complete pure faith in the power of true Torah sages, and he knew Rav Eliyahu well enough to know that he would never dare utter such a demand if he wasn't fully confident that his prayer had been accepted.

He called back the squad leader. "Go! Leave! Right now! This instant! Start running!"

One of the Military Intelligence officers at the Northern Command Center was listening in on the terrorists' communication network. He put his phone on speaker so that everyone nearby could hear the quarreling voices and the screams. The local Hizbollah commander was shouting over and over again that the terrorist on watch duty should activate the laser arc. The latter yelled back, "I'm doing it! I keep pressing the button but it is not working." The commander roared at him that he was a traitor and 'decorated' him with numerous elaborate and eloquent Arabic curses.

Effi Eitam reported back to Rav Eliyahu that right after the last soldier had crossed the perimeter and sufficiently distanced himself, all the bombs began exploding one after the other around the four sides of the mine field. All the stones in the area were now specks and the trees had become sawdust. More importantly, all the Israeli soldiers made it back to their base, healthy and whole and unharmed.

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*

*Editor's Note: HaRav Mordechai Tzernach Eliyahu z"l's, 11th Yahrzeit was last Shabbat, 25th Sivan - June 5th of this year*

What made Korach do something so crazy?

Even the most egotistically minded person would have realized that his revolt against people who had been appointed by Hashem to lead the people, would certainly not succeed.

Rashi explains that Korach had some divine insight. Prophetically, he could see that in future generations, there would be household names descended from him – well known to the people, who would be great individuals – like Samuel the Prophet, and many Levites who led services in the Temple.

Korach could contemplate on what we read in Psalm 99, which we recite in Shul on Friday night, ' משה ואהרן בכהניו ' , 'ושמואל בקוראי שמו ' , 'Moshe and Aharon were amongst those who were the Priests of Hashem and Shmuel amongst those who called on his name'.

And notice, say Chazal in the Talmud, Shmuel in his generation, is considered to be as great as Moshe and Aharon were in their generation. And notice as well, that Shmuel by himself, is compared to Moshe and Aharon combined. And this is the type of impression that Korach had, as a result of which he thought that he was greater than Moshe and Aharon combined.

I believe that Korach's mistake was rooted in the wrong definition that he gave to greatness. Korach thought that to be great means, you've got to be famous. No. He made a terrible, fatal error.

In our tradition of course, the truly great people are those who live selflessly for the sake of others, enriching our society through their piety. That's why the Talmud talks about the ' ל"ו צדיקים ' , the 36 pious people, through whose merit the world continues to exist.

To be great means being a mensch, being there for the sake of others, whether the world knows about you or not. Korach wanted us to remember him to this day because of his fame. Sadly, for him, we recall his name for the wrong reasons. And from him we can learn a lesson for us all, and that is, each and every one of us can be truly great.

Another Torah I heard from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, Rashi explains why Hashem sent the snakes as a punishment, because they talked against the Manna, the snake was punished for talking bad, another reason is because the snake tastes in everything a taste of earth, they talked against a heavenly food that tastes like everything they could imagine, the truth is that its all one meaning, the deepest depth is when one walks around talking bad on another person, seeing only bad in everything, then he tastes a "taste of earth" in everything, in all his life, but when someone has the holiest privilege to see only good in everyone, he can taste "the taste of all tastes", his life is so sweet.

So let's try to see only the best in everyone and let's pray for the soldiers, police and medical professionals protecting us 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.

*Yossi*

### The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 9  
MITZVOT ASEH: 5  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 95  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1409  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5325

HAFTORA: Shmuel I 11:14 - 12:22

This week we study Chapter 4 of Pirkei Avot

**קרת**  
תורת

This week is sponsored in honor of the  
27th Yahrzeit  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson  
of righteous memory

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