

## The Chassidic Rebbe And the Guinea Pig

By Rabbi Levi Welton

As a child, my mother forbade me from having a dog. It's not that she, a Chassidic woman and PhD in microbiology, was religiously pet-averse. Her reason was simple. Behind our modest home, nestled in the foothills surrounding U.C. Berkeley, was the community mikvah, a quaint redwood cottage housing the Jewish ritual bath used primarily by women.

As the volunteer director, my mother didn't want the spiritually serene "mikvah experience" to be spoiled by the barking rants of an overzealous pooch. So, in an effort to satiate my zoological curiosity, she allowed all other kinds of indoor pets.

Salamanders from the backyard. Frogs from Boy Scout camp. Hamsters. Parakeets. Guinea pigs. Even a chicken named Fwedwika. Through encouraging me to be a caretaker for my little critters, my mother taught me the meaning of responsibility, reliability, and perhaps even love.

But the guinea pigs were proficient at producing exorbitant amounts of excrement and they had begun to breed. As soon as I began to smell like them, I was told I needed to figure out an "outdoor solution."

Our neighbor, a kind and skilled architect, fashioned an outdoor guinea pig hutch for me, adjacent to the flower garden in front of the mikvah. I presume my parents agreed to it for easy access to the self-perpetuating, 100% organic, guinea-pig fertilizer.

One Friday afternoon, I was out cleaning the hutch in preparation for Shabbat. My T-shirt was splattered with guinea pig feces from my vigorous scrubbing. My hands were caked with a multicolored malodorous muck, from changing their newspaper bedding. But I loved it, because I loved seeing the guinea pigs squeal with excitement and purr with contentment when being let back into their freshly cleaned home. I was so engrossed in the task at hand that I didn't hear the crowd speaking Yiddish until they were already upon me.

I looked up and saw an entourage of men walking down the path, headed toward the mikvah. At their center was a Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Hershel Yolles, who regularly visited the Bay Area. (Many Chassidim immerse in a mikvah daily, especially before Shabbat or Jewish holidays). Like a startled guinea pig, my head jerked from side to side looking for an escape route. But it was too late. The path to the mikvah snaked right by my location. I froze. I felt so embarrassed.

Oh no, what is the Rebbe going to say to me?

I may have only been in elementary school but I knew enough to know that there were more appropriate ways to prepare for Shabbat than being caught knee-deep in

in rodent excrement. And from an animal called a "pig" no less.

As Rabbi Yolles' sharp eyes flitted in my direction, I felt the heat of shame flush onto my face. I wished the ground would just open and swallow me up. Please, Hashem, please, I thought, make them not notice me. Please make them walk straight by me. But the Samborer Rebbe, royal descendent of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Elimelech of Lizensk and the Sanzer Rebbe, stopped right in front of me.

"Yingeleh (young boy), what is your name?" he asked.

I felt my face go red as I answered, "Levi. Levi Yitzchok Welton."

"Ah," he said as he stroked his pure, white beard. "You're the son of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Welton?"

"Yes," I muttered, desperately wanting the interrogation to be over. His followers stood in respectful silence but I could tell they were restless, confused as to why the Rebbe had stopped to converse with a child.

Then he asked the question I had been dreading, "And what are you doing here?" He pointed one of his fingers toward the guinea pig hutch. Fingers, I knew, which only touched the soft pages of the Torah or the tear-soaked lines of his siddur (prayer book). I felt mortified.

I felt overwhelmed with guilt. How often did Chassidic Rebbes make pilgrimages to Berkeley, California? I should be inside, studying Torah in preparation for Shabbat. Or helping my mother prepare the Shabbat candles. I wish he would have caught me in the midst of davening (praying) or something like that!

Mumbling and fumbling, I told him, "Um. These are my pet guinea pigs. I'm cleaning their hutch for Shabbos." My eyes locked onto the tips of my feces-covered sneakers as I awaited the beratement I was sure would ensue. Instead, I heard him laugh.

I looked up. The California sun glinted off of his wrinkled face. His laugh was quiet, warm and musical. Then he leaned towards me, his eyes twinkling as they grasped my soul.

"Yingeleh," he whispered, "Der Beshefer (The Creator) made the world in six days and on the seventh day, He rested. Almighty G-d took care of all His animals before He entered Shabbat. I can think of nothing more G-dly than for you to take care of all your animals as you prepare for Shabbat." He paused and said, "May Hakadosh Baruch Hu bless you to always be a loving caretaker of the beautiful creatures in His beautiful garden."

I was shell shocked. No words came out of my mouth. The Rebbe smiled. Then, just as unexpectedly as he had appeared, he disappeared down the path with his entourage and into the mikvah. I ran into my house to proudly tell my mother and father what had happened.

Reprinted from the website of aish.com.

## The World was Created For My Sake

By Rav Gamliel Rabinovich

Since my doctor who has been treating me for several years left to work in another hospital in the middle of the country, I called the Rav of the hospital before I went in to have a stent put in. I wanted to inquire about the hospital, were there warnings for Kohanim, since I am a Kohen and it is important to let the children know if they can come to the hospital, and also about minyanim for Tefillah.

On the day of the procedure, the Rav was concerned for me and waited for me until 2:00 in the afternoon for Mincha so that I should not miss davening with a minyan. After davening, I was told that the mother-in-law of the Rav and my wife were good friends for many years, and he knew me, and he went above and beyond to take care of all of my needs.

I told him that one of the reasons he was made Rav of the hospital was to help me with the minyan now. He replied that his father had also been the Rav of the hospital. I told him with a smile, that one of the reasons his father had been made Rav of the hospital was so that you would be the Rav after him and take care of me now.

The point and the lesson I want to say is that a person must always think this way about everybody in the world, that Hashem created him, and he does everything to help you, and if you think like this, then you will thank the Creator of the World and see the good in it.

As it is written, a good guest says that all the trouble the host went to was only for my sake, and a bad guest says that all the trouble the host went to was only for himself. We are guests in this world, and we must look at things with the eyes of a good guest and thank Hashem for all that He has bothered for us and be grateful for it.

Another example of this. In the middle of cooking and preparing for Shabbos, the gas tank ran out of gas. My Rebbetzin asked me to open another gas tank. I went down to the room where the tanks were kept, but it was closed and I did not have the strength to open it.

Just then I noticed a yeshiva bochur sitting with a cup of tea in his hand. I asked if he could help me, and with his youthful strength, he easily opened the gate. Who sent him to drink tea by the gas tanks? Only the Creator, and the reason was to help me... how grateful we must be when we see this!!!

Reprinted from an email of Tiv Hakehila.



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times – Parshat Pinchas

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:13	8:31	9:06
Tel Aviv	7:29	8:34	
Haifa	7:22	8:35	
Be'er Sheva	7:29	8:32	



## The Seudah Shlishit Vort Of the Chafetz Chaim

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Rav Dovid Hoffman relates that when the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in 1917, the upheaval forced many people to relocate. The saintly Chafetz Chaim, Rav Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan, zt"l, who had left Radin temporarily during World War I, was forced to settle in the small city of Snovsk.

There is always a shortage of food during a war, and by the Russian Revolution, the situation was worse than during other wars, because a decree was issued that anyone who possessed food was required to hand it over to an official appointed for this purpose. That official would then distribute food rations to each family, at his discretion.

Because of this arrangement, there were many families who did not have enough to eat. The Chafetz Chaim resolved to collect whatever extra food families might have and divide these scraps among the poorest families. When the war finally ended in 1921, the Chafetz Chaim announced that he was returning to Radin.

On the Shabbos before he left, the Chafetz Chaim invited the congregation to his house for Seudah Shlishit (the third Shabbat meal). On the way to the Chafetz Chaim's home, they came across the officer who was in charge of the city. He was a cruel man. His parents were Jewish but were not at all religious, and their son had continued along the same path.

At one point, he had joined the revolution against the Czar, and had been exiled to Siberia. When the Bolsheviks took over, they freed him and appointed him as the officer in charge of this city. He disliked all religious Jews, except for the Chafetz Chaim, whom he had deep respect for.

The Chafetz Chaim said to him, "Could you come to my house for Seudah Shlishit, the third meal?"

The officer answered him mockingly, "I have already eaten the 'third meal'. I have eaten much more than three meals!"

The Chafetz Chaim persisted and finally the officer reluctantly agreed. At the end of the meal, the Chafetz Chaim said to the officer, "I want to ask you for a favor, but first, I must tell you a Vort (a dvar Torah)." "A 'Vort'?" laughed the officer. "Why do I need to hear a 'Vort'? Surely I will not understand it!"

The Chafetz Chaim replied, "Even a child could understand what I am going to tell you. The Torah says in Parshat Bereishit that Hashem made every tree, with the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Rashi explains that the Tree of Life was exactly in the center of the garden. Why was this? It is because the Tree of Life is the focus of life. This refers to eternal life, the life of the World to Come. Hashem wants every Jew to receive his portion in the World to Come.

"A person can achieve this through Davening (praying), through learning Torah, or through giving Tzedakah (charity). Perhaps a person will claim that Mitzvot are too far from him, and they are not within his reach. Therefore, Hashem put the tree exactly in the center of the garden, to show us that it does not matter where one is standing. A person can approach the tree from any direction, and have the opportunity to earn S'char in Olam Haba (a merit in the world to come).

"Upon you," continued the Chafetz Chaim to the Bolshevik official, "Hashem also has mercy. Who knows? Perhaps you were put into power for the sole purpose of fulfilling the request which I am about to make of you."

The Chafetz Chaim sighed, "During the war, I went around and collected food for the poor families of this city. Now I am going back to my own town. I am giving you a list of these poor people, and I want you to accept upon yourself to provide them with food, just as I did. You cannot say that you are unable to do so, because you are in charge and everyone here has to listen to you. Do this, and I assure you that you will reach some level in Olam Haba (the world to come)."

This officer had a heart of stone, but words which come from the heart can enter any heart, and the words that came from the Chafetz Chaim's heart, penetrated the officer's heart. He said to the Chafetz Chaim, "Give me the list, Rabbi, and I will do it." And amazingly, he did!

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



I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis that, great leaders are not irreplaceable. They ensure that they will be replaced by the best possible person. This was the hallmark of the greatest of all of our leaders – Moshe Rabbeinu.

In Parashat Pinchas, Hashem informs Moshe that he is just about to pass away. Moshe expresses no remorse. He doesn't wallow in self-pity, even though he will not be achieving his lifelong aspiration to enter into the Holy Land. What is his response? Moshe says, "יפקוד ה' אלוקי, ה'רוחות לכל בשר – May the Lord, the G-d of the spirits of every person, appoint a leader over the community."

Moshe's only consideration was, who was going to succeed him and he went about ensuring that the mantle of leadership will be passed over from him to his successor during his lifetime. And how does Moshe describe Hashem in this context? It is a description for the Almighty we do not find anywhere else. "ה' אלוקי הרוחות לכל בשר – G-d of the spirits of every person."

You see, Moshe recognized in Hashem the fact that He is the Creator, He is the Master of the entire universe and at the same time He cares about every single person.

Similarly, Moshe is saying, the type of leader I would like to be succeeded by, is someone who will lead the nation at global level but would also be a person who cares about every single individual within that nation.

Here we find the attribute that is necessary for a truly great leader. It is not just a national leader, it could be an organizational leader or the chairman of a shul. They have to worry about the entire community, the direction that the whole entity is moving in and, at the same time, they need to have genuine care for every single person who makes up that community.

We have a fascinating blessing to be recited on rare occasions. When you see more than six hundred thousand Jewish people, we say, "ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם חכם הרזים – Blessed is the Lord, the G-d of the entire universe Who has the knowledge of the secrets of every person."

When seeing such a vast crowd of people, one would have thought that the blessing is over the huge group of people, but instead the blessing mentions the fact that Hashem knows the secrets in the minds of each person. What is most important in that large gathering is every single individual. That is exactly what Moshe identified as being the characteristic of a great leader – to lead the nation and also to care for every single person.

So therefore, here in our Parshah, we have one great leader, passing on the mantle to another great leader and yet again the Torah shows the way.

So let's try to love every individual for who they are and let's pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, 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*

**פנחס**  
This week is dedicated to those  
injured and those who perished  
in the Miami disaster.

May their Neshamot be a  
blessing for all of Klal Yisrael,  
May this be the end to all  
suffering.

The Jewish Weekly staff

## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6  
MITZVOT ASEH: 6  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 168  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1887  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7853

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3 Divrei Yirmiyahu (The three Haftorot of the three weeks preceding the Ninth of Av, are called the — שלש דפורענותא - the "Three (Haftorot) of Punishment").

Rosh Chodesh - Shabbat, July 10, 2021

This week we study Chapter 1 of Pirkei Avot