

The Jewish Weekly

The Genuine Royal Signature

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

A Jewish community far from Safed once found itself in dire danger. It had always suffered under the hands of its despotic, anti-Semitic ruler but now he issued a decree throughout his kingdom demanding that the Jews pay a huge sum of money within three months or suffer banishment.

The Jews were devastated. What were they to do? How could they possibly raise such an astronomical amount? "Even if we were to sell all our possessions we could not gather such a sum!" they said to one another in despair. The ruler was hard-hearted and would not agree to compromise at all. From where could come their help?

Following centuries-old tradition, they all gathered in the synagogues - men, women and children - to pray. They blew shofars, said selichot (Supplication prayers) and wept in the hope that G-d Al-mighty would see their plight and have mercy upon them. They sent a small delegation of dignified messengers to all the Jewish communities world-wide to urge them to pray as well. The messengers traveled day and night without rest, knowing full well the danger that faced them and their people.

Late one Friday afternoon they reached Safed, weary, dusty and travel-worn. Before they made any arrangements for the coming Shabbat, they rushed to the home of the 'holy Ari' and told him of the impending calamity threatening their community. For Rabbi Yitzchak Luria was famed as a holy man and miracle worker, so they knew that he was the person to whom to turn.

When they reached his home, they found him dressed for Shabbat in a flowing white robe. He looked like a heavenly angel. His disciples already gathered about him, prepared to go out to the fields, as usual, to greet the Shabbat Queen. But a glance at the dusty, nervous travelers showed that they were there on pressing matters. The Ari sat them down and gave them his undivided attention.

Weeping and breathless, they gasped out their tale of woe. The Ari reassured them, saying, "Do not fear. G-d's salvation comes in the blink of an eye. You will be my guests this Shabbat. Go now, and prepare yourselves; forget your worries and get ready to greet the Shabbat Queen, for it is already late. Do not be sad. Shabbat is not the time for anxious prayer. Relax and put your trust in Him for you will see, when Shabbat is over, your salvation will already be at hand!"

The messengers quickly readied themselves for the holy day. They spent the Shabbat with the Ari and came to realize that all they had heard about this holy man was true. Never in their lives had they experienced such an exalted, wonderful holy day of rest.

After Havdala, the Ari turned to his guests and invited them to come along with him. He also

told several of his disciples to take some strong ropes and come as well.

The Ari went first. The way was dimly lit by the flickering stars. No one knew where they were going but they followed confidently behind the master. The group proceeded thus for a long time, not uttering a syllable, until the Ari came to a halt. The Ari pointed to a spot in front of him. By squinting, the men could make out a deep pit.

"Unwind the ropes and lower them into the pit," the Ari commanded. The talmidim did as he said. When only the ends remained in their hands, the Ari ordered them to pull. They began hauling the ropes back up, but felt, at once, that the ropes had been caught onto something. They heaved and pulled while the Ari stood over them, urging them on. They tugged with all their might.

Slowly, the weight at the end of the rope rose. Finally the object came into view. They had drawn up a magnificent four-poster canopied mahogany bed. And in it lay a figure, still fast asleep. His clothing and his appearance told them that he was a man accustomed to ruling others.

The Ari approached the bed and began shaking the sleeping figure violently, waking him. The man looked all around him, perturbed.

The Ari addressed him angrily, "Are you still stubbornly determined to banish the Jews of your country?"

The man looked back at him arrogantly and said, "Yes!" The messengers recognized him to be their king.

"Very well," said the Ari, "then you must draw up all the water in this pit with this before morning." And he handed him a pail which lacked a bottom.

The king looked at the pail and shuddered. "How can I do that?" he asked. "Were I to live one thousand years, I would not be able to draw up even a single drop of water with that!"

The Ari ignored him. "Get to work, or else..." The king was terrified and begged for mercy.

"How do you expect me to show pity when you yourself are heartless? The decree you passed against the Jews of your land is just as impossible as this task. They do not have the means to raise such a preposterous sum of money! If you do not agree to abolish your decree, this very pit will be your grave!" the Ari thundered at him.

The king trembled uncontrollably. His teeth chattered with fear; he stammered a promise to nullify the decree against the Jews of his land. The Ari then drew out a document, already written out, and read it aloud: "I hereby affirm by my own hand, that I have received the sum imposed upon the Jews of my country and that said sum has been deposited into the royal treasury. Thus, the decree is hereby null and void."

The king nodded and with a shaking hand, signed his name at the bottom of the document and handed it back to the Ari. The Ari rolled it up and gave it to the messengers who stood there, hardly

It Once Happened...

believing their eyes. The Ari turned to his disciples and told them to lower the bed back down into the pit.

The next morning when the king awoke, he found himself in his own bed, in his own bedchamber in the palace. His head ached and his limbs felt heavy. "What a strange dream I had last night," he murmured. "What curious figures peopled my dream. I must have overexerted myself yesterday for I feel as if I have come a great distance. And, oh, how my head whirls!"

The three months' ultimatum drew to a close, but the king had forgotten about his strange dream. Gleefully, he began making plans for spending the money or, as seemed likely, getting rid of the hated Jews.

He smirked, anyway, he would gain much wealth whether they paid the fine or not. For upon banishing them, he would confiscate all of their property.

He congratulated himself upon his brilliant plan.

On the designated day, he sat in his palace, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the Jewish representatives. He waited, but, in vain; they did not appear. Vexed, he sent his soldiers to the head of the Jewish community, demanding that they appear before sundown, or he would banish them all from his borders.

The messengers who had been sent to Safed went to the king, bowed before him and said, "Your Majesty, may your kingdom flourish, we have already paid up the sum. Here is the document which you, yourself, signed. We do not owe you anything. There is no reason to talk of banishment."

They unfurled the scroll bearing the king's signature and showed it to him. When the king looked at the document, a veil suddenly lifted from his memory.

He relived the events of that terror-filled night. So! It had not been only a nightmare, after all! Who knows what else that mighty rabbi intended to do to him. If the Jew had been powerful enough to transport him in his bed in the middle of the night, he was completely at his mercy! With trembling lips, the king acknowledged that he had, indeed, received the full sum and that the edict was no longer in effect.

From that time on, he was very wary of the Jews in his kingdom. He even issued a new decree proclaiming that the Jewish people were his protected subjects and whoever harmed them in any way would be severely punished.

It is said that after the king learned the identity of the holy rabbi who had whisked him away in the middle of the night, he always begged the Jews in his land to mention him to the Ari and ask him for a blessing. And in uttering his name, he would shake his head incredulously and murmur, "He cannot be mortal. Surely he is a living angel!"

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Va'etchanan

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:06	8:22	8:59
Tel Aviv	7:22	8:25	
Haifa	7:14	8:26	
Be'er Sheva	7:23	8:23	



Torah Compilations With Yoav Parshat Va'etchanan

The Last Jewish Organization By Rabbi Aron Leib Raskin

It was 1989. Yoav Eitan arrived in New York City from Israel having heard that the streets of New York were paved with gold. As a disabled soldier - he had been maimed in battle - he felt that he would have brighter prospects for making a living in the United States.

Like the immigrants of the early 1900s, Yoav soon found out that there was no gold lining the streets of New York city. And, try as he might, he was finding it impossible to get a job. Each time he responded to a "Help Wanted" sign in a store window, he was immediately asked, "Green card?" And every time, Yoav shook his head "No."

The small sum of money that Yoav had brought with him to America soon ran out and he was forced to sleep on benches in Central Park. Each day when he went to yet another few stores to ask for a job, he now asked for food or money in response to the inevitable question, "Green card?"

One night when he was falling asleep on a park bench, a priest who was known to make the rounds throughout Central Park tapped Yoav on the shoulder. "Do you drink?" he asked Yoav. Yoav said "No." "Do you do drugs?" the priest continued. Again, Yoav's answer was "No."

"In that case," the priest offered, "come with me. You can eat in our soup kitchen and sleep in our shelter."

That night was the first time Yoav went to sleep with a full stomach, freshly showered, and on a bed in many, many weeks. In the morning, the priest greeted Yoav warmly. Yoav began telling the priest his story, how he had come from Israel to America to try his luck in the land of opportunity but had not been lucky at all. "I'm not afraid to work hard, but I don't have a green card," he told the priest.

"I am going to call some Jewish organizations to see if any of them can help you," the priest told Yoav. "In the meantime, take this \$20, go out and see what you can find."

Each morning, upon awakening, Yoav would ask the priest if he had found a Jewish organization that could help him, and each day the priest told him that none could be of any help. "Tell him to go back to Israel," many of them even responded.

The priest would then give Yoav another \$20 and encourage him to go look for a job.

One morning the priest told Yoav, "There is only one Jewish organization left in the phone book for me to call. I will call the National Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education right now. But if they tell me, like every other Jewish organization, that they cannot help you, I would like to give you an offer. If you will convert to Christianity, then I promise you that within 6 months you will have a green card and a job."

The priest called up the NCFJE office in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and was put through to Rabbi "JJ"



Hecht, founder and executive director of the NCFJE. "I have one of your boys here in our church," the priest told Rabbi Hecht. "He's an Israeli with no money and no job. Every other Jewish organization has told me they can't help him. What about you?"

"Tell him to wait for me outside of the church. I'll be there in 15 minutes."

As Rabbi Hecht ran out of his office, he shouted to his secretary to cancel all of his appointments for the rest of the day. He dashed into his car and drove to the address of the church in Manhattan in record time. He stopped his car with a screech - on the sidewalk! - in front of the steps of the church. He ran up the steps of the church, where Yoav was waiting with the priest.

"I need a green card," Yoav told the rabbi, defiantly.

"You need a neshama (soul)," Rabbi Hecht told him boldly.

"The church is promising me a green card in 6 months if I convert," Yoav countered.

"I'll get you one in 3 months," said Rabbi Hecht.

Yoav thanked the priest for all of his help, gathered his little bundle of belongings, and got into Rabbi Hecht's car (still parked on the sidewalk). When they arrived in the NCFJE office, Rabbi Hecht told Yoav, "Anything you need, any time you need, you come to me." Rabbi Hecht then introduced Yoav to some of his sons, saying, "These are my sons and now you are like another one of my 12 children."

Over the next few days, Rabbi Hecht found Yoav an apartment and a job. Once every week or so, Yoav would inquire about the green card. "I'm working on it," Rabbi Hecht would tell him.

One day Yoav arrived at the office looking for Rabbi Hecht. The secretary told Yoav gently that Rabbi Hecht had passed away the week before. After Yoav got over the initial shock, he asked, "How am I going to get my green card now?" The secretary just shrugged.

The story could end here, and probably no one would be the wiser about another one of the thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people whose lives Rabbi Hecht personally touched, changed, saved. But it doesn't.

Soon thereafter, Yoav became engaged to Alba, who had been working in the Kiddie Korner Preschool of Congregation Bnai Abraham Synagogue in Brooklyn Heights. Alba asked her boss, the rabbi of the Congregation and director of Chabad of Brooklyn Heights, Rabbi Aron Leib Raskin, to officiate at the wedding.

The rabbi happily agreed, and then promptly invited Yoav to come see him so they could get acquainted. In their meeting, Yoav told his story, speaking in loving and respectful terms about Rabbi JJ Hecht and how Rabbi Hecht had literally saved him, body and soul.

That's when Rabbi Raskin told Yoav that he was Rabbi Hecht's grandson! Yoav became extremely excited, and doubly happy that this was the rabbi who would officiate at their wedding.

Not only that, when Rabbi Raskin heard that Yoav still didn't have the green card, he told him that as Rabbi Hecht's grandson, he was duty bound to take care of it. A highly energetic fellow, very much in the style of his grandfather, Rabbi Raskin succeeded in helping Yoav find a better job, and volunteered to be his sponsor for a green card, and thus was fulfilled the final clause of his grandfather's promise.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda ("J.J.") Hecht's, 31st Yahrzeit is Today, 15th Menachem Av which is the "Jewish Matchmaking" Day - July 24th of this year.

The words שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אהד from this weeks Parsha of Parashat Va'etchanan comprise the pillar upon which Jewish faith stands; our absolute belief in the One True G-d. Now, when we recite the Shema in our prayer services, when we are in a Minyan, the Chazan concludes the three paragraphs of the Shema through reciting out loud: ה' אלקים אמת, The Lord G-d is True. These are the last two words of the third paragraph and the first word of the paragraph that follows.

Herein we have an echo of those words of ירמיהו הנביא in Chapter 10 Verse 10: ה' אלקים אמת, The Lord G-d is True. In the absence of a Minyan, before reciting the Shema some say the words אל מלך נאמן, G-d is a faithful King, and the first letters of these three words make up the word Amen, through which we affirm everything that follows in the Shema.

So why the additional three words? Here we have a rare example where numerology determines what the Halacha should be.

You see, altogether in the three paragraphs of the Shema, we have 245 words, but we want the total tally to be 248. That is because there are 248 positive precepts in the Torah and 248 limbs in the human body.

248 therefore represents action and so it is that Avraham, the founder of our faith, became absolutely dedicated to a life of fulfilling deeds - Avraham adds up to in Gematria 248. במדבר, in the wilderness, where we as a nation committed ourselves to embracing a life of Torah practice, that too has a Gematria of 248.

Emerging from this is a very important lesson for us. Shema Yisrael, to believe in G-d is so central and so crucial within our tradition. Yes, it is important to think, to intend and to have great dreams, but ultimately there is one thing that counts more than any other, and that is action. It is not what we think that counts, but what we achieve in life that really matters.

So let's join together and cry out שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אהד and let's ask from Hashem to get rid of all the trials and tribulations we are going through at this time and let's pray with all our hearts, for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for 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, loving, sweet Shabbat and Tu B'Av Sameach.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 12
MITZVOT ASEH: 8
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 118
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1878
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7343

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 40:1 - 26 (this is the first of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

The Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, is called Shabbat Nachamu - The Shabbat of consolation or comfort. The Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu, for the Haftorah which begins with the words: "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami - Be comforted, be comforted, my people..." In this chapter, the Navi describes the Ultimate Redemption (Moshiach) which we have yet to experience. May it be speedily in our days.

Today July 24, IS TU B'AV.