

The Jewish Weekly

In Loving memory of
Hershy Weiss
 הבחור ישראל צבי
 בן משה הי"ו
 י"ט מנחם אב תשפ"א
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

Time for You to Change

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In the days of the third Rebbe of Chabad, the Tzemach Tzedek, the lands in Russia were controlled by the 'nobility'.

The town of Lubavitch happened to be under the jurisdiction of a particularly savage one; a 'Poritz' (Baron) that from time to time revealed a sadistic pleasure for issuing cruel decrees on 'his' serfs... especially the Jewish ones.

The decrees would come like lightning on a clear day sometimes because he needed money, sometimes from boredom, but most often from pure meanness.

All of his serfs, Jew and gentile alike, hated and feared him and secretly hoped that he die and leave them alone permanently (although the other nobles weren't much better). But to even dream that he have a change of heart and treat them more kindly was unthinkable.

Once it so happened that the Poritz came out with a new decree that was so severe that the gentiles went to the Chabad chassidim in the Poritz's domain and asked them to request their leader to do something to help.

But just as the chassidim were preparing a delegation to visit the Rebbe, one of the Rebbe's most faithful followers received a message from the Rebbe to come see him immediately.

The chassid entered the Rebbe's room and stood in awe before him waiting for the Rebbe to speak.

"Go to the Poritz and tell him, in my name, 'It's time you changed!'"

The chassid looked with disbelief at the Rebbe. Suddenly he felt faint. It was difficult for him to breathe, his knees began knocking and he felt dizzy.

Perhaps he had heard incorrectly. But no. It was no mistake. Just the thought of the Poritz was overwhelming. The man was simply not human! To actually visit him would be suicide!

"But Rebbe! How can ...? There are guards...with dogs!...at the castle door. I'll be killed before I can say a....!"

He stopped. He knew that the Rebbe never made a mistake.

"Don't worry," The Tzemach Tzedek continued, "I will teach you a special holy 'name' (a Kabbalistic word) that will protect you from all evil. You have absolutely nothing to worry about."

The Rebbe taught the chassid how to pronounce this word and what to think when he said it. Finally, when he was sure that the chassid understood and would remember, he told him to set off as soon as possible.

The Chassid returned home (for what he hoped would not be the last time) told his wife he would be gone for a day or so, kissed his children and set off in the direction of the Poritz's castle.

After an hour he began to see the huge building looming in the distance through the forest trees and mist. A cold fear filled his soul. He tried to muster up courage but he just couldn't. So he pictured the Rebbe's face and although he was still frightened, he continued walking.

Suddenly he got a glimpse of the guards with their dogs. Thank G-d they were far away and he was downwind, so the dogs didn't smell him. He stepped behind a tree, peeked out, composed his thoughts and said the 'name' the Rebbe taught him.

They came closer and closer, the dogs sniffing the ground before them. But they passed some fifty yards away and didn't notice him at all.

Nevertheless, he wasn't taking any chances. He waited till they were sufficiently distant and again proceeded to the castle, trying to be as quiet and quick as possible, repeating the 'name' over and over as he went. When he reached the steps before the massive castle door he said it with even more fervor.

Standing there at attention were two huge guards armed with spears and swords, each with a jumbo fierce dog at his side.

But strangely, the guards suddenly turned to one another and began a lively conversation, while the dogs just lay there panting as though they sensed nothing.

The chassid stepped gingerly by them, pushed the door open and entered. There sitting on a plush chair, drinking a glass of vodka with a smoking cigar dangling from his fingertips and one foot on the table, sat the dreaded Poritz.

He turned toward the door to see who entered.

"What the...? Who are you? You, Jew! How did you get into my castle?" He screamed with fury and disbelief as he rose to his feet and put his hand on the handle of his gun in his belt. But the chassid, having become accustomed to miracles, calmly straightened himself and said,

"My Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch, sent me. He told me to tell you that...."

He cleared his throat and spoke slowly and clearly, "It is time for you to change!"

It was as though someone threw a bucket of cold water on the Poritz. He took one step back and his body shook as though awakened from a dream.

He lowered his head for an instant, then looked up directly into the eyes of the chassid and said "Yes".

The chassid, realizing his mission was complete, turned on his heels, and being careful to say the

It Once Happened...

'name' the Rebbe had given him, walked quietly out the door past the guards and exited the castle grounds.

Interestingly, the instant he didn't need the 'name', it simply slipped out of his mind. No matter how he tried he could not remember even one letter of it!

Several months later, a rumor spread that the Poritz went on a hunting excursion alone and his horse returned a few days later without him. A search was made with no results. All trace of him had been lost as though the ground had swallowed him up.

But the chassid knew that it must have been because of the Rebbe's message to him. Probably a partial punishment for the suffering he had caused to others.

Months afterward, a disheveled, long-haired beggar appeared in the town of Lubavitch, chose a seat in the main shul, opened a book of Psalms and didn't leave.

Someone got the idea of asking him if perhaps he knew the Poritz and what happened to him. The beggar answered that in fact he did know, and then revealed that he was none other than the evil Poritz himself! He told his story:

He had been born into a Jewish family but somewhere down the line had fallen into the hands of the Church, and once in their clutches he not only changed his religion but transformed into a sworn anti-Semite. In time he rose in power and riches until he was virtually a king.

But when he heard the message the chassid gave him, it somehow awakened his Jewish soul and he changed totally, like a man awakening from a dream.

When the elder chassidim saw what happened they discussed it with the other followers of the Rebbe and decided to appear as a group before the Rebbe and demand that he do the same miracle for them.

"If the Rebbe has the ability to completely change the stone-heart of someone such as the Poritz, then please do the same with us. Open our hearts as well so we can have true love and fear of the Creator!"

The Rebbe smiled. "When a shepherd tends his flocks he can't personally run after every animal that strays a bit. That would deplete all his energy. Rather he whistles and throws small stones or sends his dogs so they will return on their own. But if occasionally one sheep happens to fall into a deep pit then the shepherd has no other choice than to do the job himself. That is why I did what I did with the Poritz."

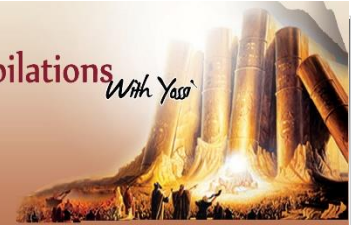
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Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Ki Tavo

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:33	7:46	8:25
Tel Aviv	6:49	7:48	
Haifa	6:41	7:48	
Be'er Sheva	6:51	7:47	



The Rusty Penny

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812, founder of Chabad Chassidism) was raising money to ransom Jewish prisoners.

He went first to a city that was famous for its miser. It seems that this stingy man, despite his considerable wealth, was loath to share his blessings, no matter how worthy or urgent the cause. Rabbis and beggars alike avoided his home. Anyone who did unwittingly end up on his doorstep was offered a single rusty copper coin, which even the most desperate pauper would promptly refuse.

When Rabbi Schneur Zalman arrived in the town, the elders of the community graciously received him. But when he announced that he wanted to visit the house of the miser and wanted two rabbis to accompany him, he was met with serious resistance. The Rebbe was adamant, however, and they finally acquiesced and gave him the escort he requested.

The next afternoon the three of them were standing in front of the miser's mansion. Before knocking on the door, the Rebbe turned to his companions and requested that they not utter a word, no matter what they hear or see. Several moments later they were sitting in the luxurious front room, and the owner was returning from his safe with a small velvet money pouch.

"Yes," said the rich man. "A touching story indeed! Widows and orphans in captivity. Ah, the suffering of the Jewish people! When will it all end? Here, Rabbi, take my humble donation."

To the miser's surprise, the Rebbe seemed pleased by the gift. He was actually smiling at him warmly as he put the coin into his pocket and said, "Thank you, Mr. Solomons. May G-d bless and protect you always." The Rebbe then proceeded to write him a receipt, adding all sorts of blessings in a most beautiful script.

"Thank you again, my friend," said the Rebbe as he stood and warmly shook the man's hand, looking him deeply in the eyes with admiration. "And now," he added, turning to his two companions, "we must be on our way. We have a lot of collecting to do tonight."

As the three rabbis walked to the door, the Rebbe turned and bade his host yet another warm farewell. "You should have thrown it back in his face," hissed one of the rabbis after they heard the door close behind them.

"Don't turn around and don't say a word," whispered the Rebbe as they walked down the path to the front gate.

Suddenly they heard the door opening behind them and the miser calling: "Rabbis, rabbis, please come back for a minute. Hello, hello, please, I must speak to you, please . . . please come back in."

In a few minutes they were again sitting in the warm, plush drawing room, but this time the rich man was pacing back and forth restlessly. He stopped for an instant and turned to the Rebbe. "Exactly how much money do you need to ransom these prisoners?"

"About five thousand rubles," the Rebbe replied.

"Well, here is one thousand . . . I have decided to give one thousand rubles; you may count it if you want," said the miser as he took a tightly bound stack of bills from his jacket pocket and laid it on the table. The other rabbis were astounded. They stared at the money and were even afraid to look up at the miser, lest he change his mind.

But the Rebbe again shook Mr. Solomons' hand, warmly thanking him, and wrote him a beautiful receipt replete with blessings and praises, exactly like the first time.

"That was a miracle!" whispered one of the rabbis to the Rebbe as they left the house and were again walking toward the gate. Once more the Rebbe signaled him to be still. Suddenly the door of the house again opened behind them. "Rabbis, please, I have changed my mind. Please come in once more. I want to speak with you," Mr. Solomons called out.

They entered the house for a third time as the miser turned to them and said, "I have decided to give the entire sum needed for the ransom. Here it is; please count it to see that I have not made a mistake."

"What is the meaning of this?" wondered the Rebbe's astonished companions after they had left the rich man's home for the third time that evening. "How did you get that notorious miser to give 5,000 rubles?"

"That man is no miser," said Rabbi Schneur Zalman. "No Jewish soul truly is. But how could he desire to give, if he never in his life experienced the joy of giving? Everyone to whom he gave that rusty penny of his threw it back in his face."

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In this week's Parasha of Ki Tavo: the long list of the קללות, the curses, of the Tochecha is presented to us. The Torah gives a reason why these awful things might occur: 'תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוהיך בשמחה', 'on account of the fact that you did not serve the Lord, your G-d, with happiness'.

I heard from The Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, that usually we explain this to mean that in the event, G-d forbid, that there is מחלוקת, serious division, let's say within a community, a lot of tension. And as a result, the community cannot function in a happy and joyous way, the impact of what we are doing is limited and so, as a people we don't function as we really should.

That's a good message, but can we really justify so many קללות, so many curses, happening?

I love the commentary of the Kotsker Rebbe on this verse. You see, he reads this as follows: 'תחת אשר לא עבדת', it's when your 'לא עבדת', when the absence of your serving of Hashem is carried out 'בשמחה', 'with joy'.

Says the Kotzker Rebbe, here we are talking about a phenomenon, where people have no shame whatsoever with regard to what they are doing and in a brazen way, they are flaunting their rebelliousness and encouraging, thereby, others, to follow them. That's when we as a nation have a problem.

You know, I'm sure in some Shuls on some Shabbatot, people have a mobile phone in their pocket, and they turn it off and you know, they will be exceptionally embarrassed if anybody knew about it. But I've known in a few instances, in a Bar Mitzvah, somebody taking out a phone to take photos while the boy is singing his Haftarah, without any embarrassment, any shame. You see, if you know that it's wrong, then there is some hope, there is some recognition of respect for the law. But if the 'לא עבדת' is carried out with 'שמחה', and people flaunt what they are doing, and more than that, they might even encourage others to be just like them, then as a nation we are in trouble.

So, the message therefore from our Parsha is, of course, do what is right. In the event that you are ever going to stray from that path, if you are embarrassed or ashamed about it, that actually is a good thing. It's good for you and it's also good for us.

Let's join together and 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 and sweet Shabbat.

@Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6
MITZVOT ASEH: 3
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 3

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 122
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1747
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6811

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 60:1- 22 (קומוי אורי) (this is the sixth of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapters 3 and 4 of Pirkei Avot

