

The Jewish Weekly

When 'Reader's Digest' Proved the Existence of G-d

By Batya Schochet Lisker

My tall broad-shouldered father in his long black coat, felt hat, and salt-and-pepper beard was heading towards his car, parked near the entrance of the Chabad-Lubavitch Community Center. As he fit the key into the lock of his green Pontiac, a voice startled him: "Rabbi Schochet, stop! I need to speak to you."

My father looked up to see a man hurriedly approaching him, his short sleeved T-shirt and faded jeans no match for the frigid Canadian late fall weather. He shivered as the Arctic wind whipped at his arms and strands of dark unruly curly hair blew across his face.

"Rabbi," the man said, scowling. "You have 10 minutes to prove to me that there is a G-d." My father rested a sturdy hand on his shoulder and peered at him, his eyes filled with tender compassion and sagely wisdom. In a quiet voice, he told him that it would be more comfortable to have even a very short conversation indoors.

As the man settled into the leather chair on the other side of my father's desk, he explained that he was engaged to be married to the woman of his dreams, his soulmate on every level. His family strongly opposed the marriage because she was not Jewish, and G-d does not condone such a union.

"I am going to marry her anyway," he insisted in a confrontational and contentious manner. "The wedding is set to take place next week. I told everyone that I don't care what they say or think. But somehow, this morning I woke up apprehensive. I decided that I must speak to a rabbi to overcome my angst. If you can prove to me categorically that there is a G-d, I will not go through with my plans. If you can't, I will continue on my path."

My father regarded him silently for a minute, noticing that he was clutching the latest edition of Reader's Digest in one hand and had placed a shiny green apple he had brought on the desk in front of him.

"You will prove G-d's existence to yourself," my father said.

Taking a pocket knife from a desk drawer, my father sliced the apple in half lengthwise. Disregarding the juice dripping down his fingers, he pointed out the five stars and 10 dots inside it. "Every apple reminds us that G-d created the world - Ki bey-ah Hashem tzur olamim (Isaiah 26:4)," he said. "'Y-ah is the name of G-d with which He created the world.' It's made up of two letters - yud whose numerical value is 10, and hei whose numerical value is 5."

"That's certainly interesting, rabbi," the man conceded. But then he steeled himself and continued, "however, I am talking about

changing my entire life and therefore your proof is not definitive enough to convince me of G-d's existence."

My father smiled and said, "Understandably. Open the Reader's Digest you are holding to a page and read it to me."

Doubtful, the man raised his eyebrows, but nevertheless did as he was told. Shaking, he read the words on the page in a trembling voice, "Shema Yisrael Ad-nai Elokeinu Ad-nai Echad - Listen, dear Jews, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One."

He had "chanced upon" an article written by a Jewish woman comparing childhood prayers in various countries and religions. She had included the iconic Jewish prayer, six words that have been the battle cry of the Jewish people for more than 25 centuries, that her beloved grandmother had taught her.

Dumbfounded, he turned to my father with tear-filled eyes, "Our meeting today is clearly providential. There is a G-d. Thank you, Rabbi Schochet."

I recalled my reaction when I first heard the story. "Daddy," I said excitedly. "Wow. You performed a miracle! There is no other explanation for it."

My father laughed and told me that I reminded him of the Chassidim's reaction to an incident that occurred with the Tzemach Tzedek, the third Chabad Rebbe.

Two tea merchants lived in the city of Vitebsk, both named Hoisha. Big Hoisha was wealthy and ran a large, well-established, successful business. Little Hoisha's operation was precarious at best.

One day, Little Hoisha received a message that his tea shipment had been confiscated by customs officials. He immediately collapsed to the ground in a dead faint. Every time he was revived, he remembered that he was financially ruined and passed out again.

When the Tzemach Tzedek was advised of the situation, he instructed that the next time Little Hoisha was revived, he should be told that the message was intended for Big Hoisha, not for him. And indeed, upon verification, that was exactly the case. Big Hoisha would hardly feel the loss of revenue.

The Chassidim thought they had caught the Tzemach Tzedek in the act of performing miracles. "You are mistaken," he said. "Our sages tell us that whenever G-d gives a person a challenge in his life, He always provides him with the fortitude to withstand it. When I saw that there was no way Little Hoisha could deal with this disaster, I immediately understood that the message was not meant for him."

"Batya'le," my father continued. "The man was facing a tremendous challenge. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that G-d had already provided the means he needed to overcome it positively, it was just up to me to assist him in discovering them."

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

It Once Happened...

Our Greatness

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky and the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky was arrested in 5689 (1929) by the communists and sentenced to five years of hard labor in Siberia. Baruch Hashem he was saved two years later and settled in England. Then in 5694 (1934) he served as the Av Beit Din of England for 17 years. He then moved to Israel, where he taught for another 25 years.

Once when he met the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, he discussed his years in Siberia. Among the points he mentioned, he related the following incident.

"One morning when I awoke and was saying Modeh Ani (a thanksgiving prayer said on waking), I began to ponder. In my present situation which might cause me to pass on, what am I thanking Hashem for? I don't have a siddur to daven from, I can daven only what I know by heart. I can't put on tefillin as it was taken away from me. I can't learn Torah as I have to work throughout the day and I have no sefarim to learn from. Is this the life of a Jew?"

But then I came to a realization; I am connected to Hashem and Hashem loves me just for the fact that I am a Jew. So yes, I have what to be thankful and indeed joyful about."

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe said, "Reb Yechezkel, the entire ordeal of Siberia was worth it, to come to that realization."

Years later when Reb Yechezkel related this encounter to his students, he gave the following preface, "My students you should know that only a tzaddik like the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe who was imprisoned by the Communists and faced the death penalty for his activities on behalf of keeping the flame of Judaism alive, could say that answer."

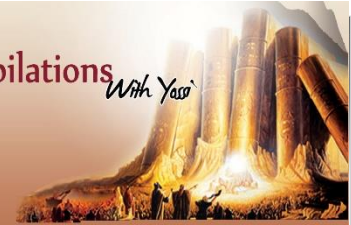
Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Avtzon's Weekly Story.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Bereishit

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:48	6:59	7:40
Tel Aviv	6:03	7:01	
Haifa	5:54	7:00	
Be'er Sheva	6:06	7:02	



The Unexpected Spark of Judaism

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

In Russia in 1919, the followers of the Bolshevik Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin, may Hashem erase his name and memory, struggled against the group known as the Petlyureftzas, led by the vicious Anti-Semite Simon Petlyura, may Hashem erase his name and memory also. Each group struggled to establish its sole rulership, particularly in the Ukraine. First the Bolsheviks would storm into a town, killing and injuring people with abandon as they sought to take over the local government.

Then the Petlyureftzas would battle with the Bolsheviks and try to oust them from power. If they were successful, they, in turn, made sure to execute all those who had resisted them. This vicious cycle of fighting and killing continued, and the Jews were always caught in the middle. If the Bolsheviks were the ones in control, they would seek out some Jews of the town, blame them for the existing problems in the city, and put them to death.

Then, when the Petlyureftzas overpowered the Bolsheviks, they too made the Jews the culprits, claiming that they had sided with the opposition. So regardless of which faction ruled, the Jews stood to lose as they were tortured and killed by whoever was in power. It happened one time that the Petlyureftzas stormed a particular city and took control. They laid waste to building after building, after which they rounded up the people in the city to announce new ordinances and decrees.

Among their decrees was one ordering that the Jews of the area were to be brought at once to the center of the town - where they would be shot in full view of the townsfolk. Protest as they did, the Jews were helpless, for the rest of the townsfolk knew that if they didn't bring the Jews to be killed, they themselves would be shot instead. As quickly as they could be found, the Jews were dragged to an open square outside a courthouse, where a Petlyureftza revolutionary leader was shouting about the importance of being loyal to the incoming government.

The local Russian peasants and townspeople gathered in the square to watch the public execution. As he continued to rant and rave, the police lined up the Jews who had been forcefully brought there. Soldiers with rifles took their positions opposite them. The crowd of locals

grew larger as the revolutionary leader announced that the Jews were about to be killed for treason. "We are making an example of these people for all of you to see, so that you will not follow in their ways," the leader said.

The crowd grew nervously silent as the Chief of Police barked at the soldiers to ready their rifles. He instructed them to fire at the count of three. "One!" he yelled. "Two!"

Just as he was about to yell "Three!" a man jumped from the crowd of onlookers and pierced the silence as he screamed out, "Wait! I too am a Jew! If you kill them, you have to kill me as well!" The crowd was shocked, for the man who had run out in front of the rifles was none other than the town pharmacist. He was loved and admired by all, and until then everyone had taken him to be a gentile. He had never given anyone even the slightest hint that he might be Jewish.

People knew that he never distinguished at all between kosher and non-kosher food; his drug store was always open, even on Yom Kippur; and not once was he ever seen in a shul. He was considered to be among the most prominent people of the community, a man whom almost everyone had depended on at one time or another for medical advice and reliable medications.

Quickly a tremendous argument broke out among the townspeople. Many argued that the pharmacist was too valuable a person to the community to be killed, while just as many turned on him and argued that if indeed he was a Jew, then he deserved to be put to death just like the rest of them. Pandemonium erupted as people screamed and shoved each other.

Within moments the arguments had turned into fisticuffs, and the Petlyureftzas saw that unless they risked their own lives there was no way they would be able to restore order that day. The soldiers and their leader, badly outnumbered, had no choice but to leave the courthouse area, vowing they would be back another day.

A few days later, however, the Bolsheviks took over and the Petlyureftzas themselves ran for their lives. But those Jews, so perilously close to death just a few days before, were spared. And only because the tiny spark of Yiddishkeit - der pintelet Yid - suddenly erupted in a man who, at the risk of losing his life, wanted more than anything else to be counted with his brothers.

This week's Parsha as we know, discusses the way Hashem formed this beautiful Universe. When the Torah tells us about the creation of man, it reads as follows "ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו" - and Hashem said, let us create man, in our image we will create him." This is odd, who was Hashem talking to? There is an understanding that Hashem was talking to the מלאכים - angels. I never liked this understanding, because why would Hashem need to discuss this with the angels, after all they don't understand us. Humans were created with free choice, angels don't have free choice, they simply carry out Hashem's will, there is no temptations, there is no laziness etc. So exactly how they had an opinion is beyond me. This year I merited to see a new understanding.

The Ohr HaChaim explains this as follows, we know as we read during Selichot, that there are 13 מידות - Attributes of Hashem, along with the Attribute of דין - Judgement, we have חסד - Kindness, רחמנות - Compassion, אמת - Truth, סולח - Forgiveness etc. All of these מידות - Attributes which make up the Essence of Hashem, came together and said "let's create man in our image" meaning, that we are going to create a man, by infusing him with our image, by infusing him with a bit of each of our energies. Yet this being, called a human, will have free will, "וירד" he can choose a path and go down very deep, like the fish at the bottom of the sea. At the same time he can fly high in the sky and reach heights like the birds. With that "ויפה באפיו נשמת חיים" He breathed into his nostrils the "Soul of Life".

Friends, we have all been created with tremendous talents and energy in this world, for the very mission each of us was brought into this world to accomplish. We all have this energy in our makeup, it is the raw ingredients of what makes us who we are. Let us all tap into that energy, and use it for what it was put there for, to help us soar to the highest of heights, fulfilling the purpose we were created to do, to live in the "image" of Hashem and strive to emulate His ways.

Through this we will strengthen our relationship with our Creator and pray with all our hearts, for the recovery of all the sick from this crazy pandemic, as well as praying 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 Shabbat and Chodesh Tov.

Yossi

Reprinted from an email of Good Shabbos Everyone.



בראשית

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The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 1
 MITZVOT ASEH: 1
 MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 146
 NUMBER OF WORDS: 1931
 NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7235

HAFTORA:
 Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 42:5 - 43:10
 Sephardim & Community of Frankfurt am Main: Yeshayahu 42:5 - 21

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh MarCheshvan
 Rosh Chodesh - Wednesday & Thursday - October 6 - 7