

# The Jewish Weekly

## The Queen of early NYC Jewry

Translated by R C.R. Benami

She was a familiar figure in the alleyways of the Batei Hungarim neighborhood in the Meah Shaarim section of Jerusalem. An aged widow who lived alone for many years, known for her righteousness. Every morning she would rise early in order to open the doors of the Chassidic shul (synagogue) where she would daven (pray) the dawn morning service from her place in the women's section. She would be careful to also pray the afternoon and evening services.

Her acts of kindness were known to all, though her amazing personal story was known to a few.

Her name was Devorah Miriam Queen. She was born in the year 1873 in Dvinsk, Latvia. She was orphaned from her father as a young child and her mother was left alone with her small children. The mother's brother-in-law, her late husband's brother, took them into his house and took care of all their needs.

Devorah Miriam was brought up in an atmosphere of piety and positive habits. When she grew up she wanted to marry a Torah scholar. Her uncle though wanted her to marry his son, so Devorah Miriam's dream stayed hidden and in the year 1893 she married her cousin.

The years went by. The couple maintained a religious household, but their childlessness caused them great worry. After ten years of marriage and disappointments the family started thinking that maybe Devorah Miriam and her husband should divorce.

After prolonged deliberations the two decided to present their dilemma for consideration to the Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosen, who was the chief rabbi of the Chassidic residents of Dvinsk where they lived, and was considered one of the greatest Torah scholars of the century.

He listened to their story and replied: "If your question is, if you are allowed to divorce, the answer is yes; but whether you should do so is not a question for a Rabbi but for a Rebbe."

Devorah Miriam's family belonged to Chabad. So from the house of the Gaon the couple traveled to the town of Lubavitch, to Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, the Rebbe Rashab. They related their troubles to the Rebbe's gabbai (attendant). They asked him to arrange a yechidut (private meeting) for them with the Rebbe. To their regret the gabbai couldn't help them, as there was already a long line of people requesting audience with the Rebbe.

The couple's disappointment and sorrow was obvious on their faces. Moved, the gabbai advised them to wait next to the Rebbe's door. "When the Rebbe will come out of his room he will see you and will listen to your trouble."

Indeed, when the Rebbe left his room he noticed them waiting outside his office and invited them to enter. Before they even had a chance to say a word, the Rebbe said "The advice you were given to divorce is incorrect. My advice is that you fulfill the saying of our Sages 'He who

changes his place changes his mazal (fortune) for good and blessing.' Go to America and there you will have children and many blessings."

They left the Rebbe's presence in great emotional turmoil and amazement, because of the Divine Spirit that the Rebbe revealed and because of the unexpected advice he gave them. America in those days was a spiritual desert, almost without the availability of a suitable Jewish life.

But they followed the instruction of the Rebbe and the next day they started the arrangements for their immigration. The news of their intended departure spread quickly throughout Dvinsk, for a trip to America was not a usual thing in those days.

Equipped with the blessings of the Rogatchover Gaon and the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the husband and wife set out on their travels. The next year they were in America, trying to get used to the strange new reality. Both made the decision not to be drawn after American culture and to keep their Jewish values come what may.

Very soon they became the mainstays of the establishment of Jewish life and the world of Torah in New York. Among other things they founded a Talmud Torah (Torah exclusive elementary school) so that the children would be brought up on Torah values alone. In time this became the famous yeshiva "Torah VeDa'at". They also instituted kosher slaughter and other religious institutions.

Indeed, the blessing of the Rebbe Rashab was fulfilled. The couple had eight children and all merited long lives. They lived in Williamsburg in Brooklyn and davened in the Tzemach Tzedek shul. When for various reasons this shul was sold, the money was transferred to the Chabad shul in Jerusalem of the same name.

The couple merited that their descendants remained Jews faithful to the ways of their ancestors.

Devorah Miriam was widowed in the year 1926. She remained in the USA until reaching the age of eighty when she decided to move to Israel. Her firm decision and strong character eased the difficulties of the change. She went to live in Jerusalem.

Devorah Miriam merited great longevity and all the while didn't cease from prayer and acts of kindness. Once, one of her sons came to visit her, and brought her an expensive present, an electric refrigerator, something that was a rarity at that time. When next year he visited her again he was taken aback to find the refrigerator gone. "I gave it to hachnasat Kallah (assistance to a new bride)," she explained. Her son felt compelled to buy her a new one. But this time he made a condition: she is not allowed to give it away; the refrigerator stays in his possession and he is just allowing her to use it!

This amazing woman passed away in 1984 at the age of 111. Today, her great grandchild, Rabbi Daniel Cohen, is the highly successful shaliach (emissary) of Chabad in Hebron. A few years ago Rabbi Cohen initiated the restoration of Beit Romanov that the Rebbe Rashab had bought and turned it into a lighthouse for the spreading of Chassidic values. He saw this as a closing of a circle.

Reprinted from *KabbalaOnline.org*.

## It Once Happened...

### A Rebbe's Prayers

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

The great R' Chaim Meir of Vishnitz, the Imrei Chaim, once traveled to Tzfas. As he would walk through the city with his entourage of chassidim and visit the shuls in the area, he became a familiar sight in the neighborhood.

One day a deeply distressed couple came to see him about their only daughter. Despite all the love and affection they had showered her with over the years, their daughter had become disaffected from Yiddishkeit. Recently she had informed them that she would like to marry out of the faith. They were understandably grief-stricken and brokenhearted. They wanted to know if the Rebbe could suggest any way they could prevent this from materializing.

The Rebbe spent a long time with the parents, reassuring them and trying to lift their spirits. He spoke of the power of teshuvah, citing R' Shimon Bar Yochai that "nothing in the world can stand in the face of teshuvah." The Rebbe forbade their being despondent or giving up hope, and encouraged them to prepare to accept her with great love when she returned to the ways of Torah.

When they left and the door closed behind them, the Rebbe broke out in bitter tears. He cried inconsolably, and the gabbai was unable to calm him down. After a long time, his tears subsided, and the gabbai asked, "If this affected you so greatly, how did you calmly encourage the parents, and only begin to cry after they left?"

The Rebbe explained, "I could not allow them to lose hope. Therefore I expended much self-control to withhold my tears. Only after they left did I allow the tears to come so I could pour out my heart to Hashem, and pray that the girl should repent completely.

The Vishnitzer Rebbe kept the girl and her family in his thoughts constantly and prayed for them continually. As he was returning to Bnei Brak, deeply sunk in thought, the Rebbe suddenly mentioned the situation again and noted that it was foolish for people to envy the honor he commanded and his retinue of admirers and followers, for they did not perceive the sorrow and pain that he bore.

Eventually the prayers and tears of the Imrei Chaim and the girl's parents were productive. The girl did teshuvah and returned to the fold.

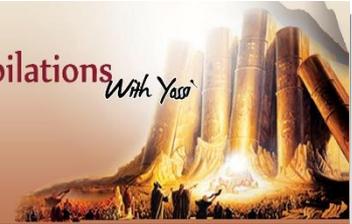
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**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times - Parshat Toldot

|             | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat | Motzei Shabbat ר"ת |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Jerusalem   | 4:11            | 5:24           | 6:03               |
| Tel Aviv    | 4:25            | 5:25           |                    |
| Haifa       | 4:15            | 5:23           |                    |
| Be'er Sheva | 4:29            | 5:26           |                    |



## The Broken Engagement

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

was once betrothed to me in my youth and deserted me!"

He turned to see a woman dressed in the richest fabrics and wearing beautiful jewels. He approached her, whereupon she said, "Don't you remember me? I am the one you were engaged to so many years ago. Did you marry? Have you any children?"

He immediately poured out the entire story, telling her that he had come only to find her and beseech her to forgive him. He begged her to ask of him anything to atone for the terrible pain he had caused her.

"I lack nothing, for G-d has provided me with everything, but I have a brother who is in desperate need. Go to him and give him 200 gold coins with which he can marry off his daughter, and I will forgive you. In the merit of marrying off a poor bride you will be blessed with children, as the tzadik told you."

"Amen!" responded the chassid heartily. "But please, won't you give your brother this money yourself?" I have travelled many months and I'm very anxious to return home."

"No," the woman adamantly refused. "I am not able to travel now, and it is not feasible to send by post such a sum of money. No, you must go yourself." With that, she turned, left the store and proceeded down the street.

The chassid ventured on yet another journey to a distant city where he was able to locate the woman's brother. He introduced himself, but before he could explain why he had come, the brother, who was in a terrible state of agitation, spoke first: "My daughter is betrothed to a wealthy young man, but I have suddenly become penniless and unless I can find the dowry money, the marriage is off."

The chassid listened to the heart-rending tale and then said: "I will give you two hundred gold coins which will be more than enough for all your expenses."

The man couldn't believe his ears. "What, you don't even know me - why would you do such a thing for a total stranger?"

"I have been sent by your sister whom I met a few weeks ago in Balta. Many years ago I was once betrothed to her but I broke off the engagement. I recently sought her out; the help I'm offering to you is my promise to her and my tikun (soul-rectification)."

"What are you saying?" the man turned pale. "What kind of crazy tale are you spinning, and why? My sister has been dead for fifteen years. I should know - I buried her myself!"

Now it was time for the chassid to be shocked. He pondered the miracles G-d had wrought on his behalf so that he would be able to make amends to his former fiancée and merit to have a child of his own. He handed the man the golden coins and the man blessed him to be granted many sons and daughters and a long and happy life of joy from each and every one of his children and grandchildren to-be.

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*

This week's Parsha starts off "אלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם, אברהם הוליד את יצחק." The obvious question is why in the world all the repetitiveness? We know that the Torah is so careful, with every single letter, so why so elaborate?

Of course there is the Pshat that people were saying that Yitzchak was not the son of Avraham, because Avraham was too old etc... The next Pasuk tells us that Yitzchak was 40 years old at this time, by now there was no doubt as he looked exactly like Avraham, so what is going on here? What other possible understanding can we learn from these words.

We know the famous Gemarah of "אינה דומה תפילת צדיק בן רשע - There is no comparison to the prayer of a Tzaddik who is the son of a Tzaddik, to that of a Tzaddik whose father was an evil person." Rashi tells us that Hashem listened to Yitzchak's Prayer and not Rivka's for this reason.

The Klei Yakar explains, the reason it says "אברהם הוליד את יצחק" - Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak" is because it was in the merit of the fact that Avraham was a Tzaddik, that Yitzchak had children. "אברהם הוליד את יצחק" - Avraham "gave birth" to Yitzchak."

The Ohr Hachaim (I believe) writes, When Avraham was thrown into the furnace of fire, Hashem went to save him, The Malachim asked, "Why are you saving him? Look what will come out of him, Yishmael, Eisav, terrible news for all of generations." Hashem responded, I am saving him because of his grandson Yaakov, Yaakov who is going to be the best of fathers, for him and his children I am saving Avraham.

Friends, no matter who you are, the lesson that Hashem believes in you is something you must take into account, no matter what situation you are put in, if you made it till now, it is because Hashem believes in you.

So when we pray, let's 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.



## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 106

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1432

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5426

HAFTORA: Malachi 1:1-2:7

There was a chassid who travelled to his Rebbe, R. Yisrael of Koznitz, every month to take in the atmosphere of holiness which filled the very air of the Rebbe's court. Although in general he was happy with his lot in life, he knew he would only be completely content if he had a child.

Several times his wife had encouraged him to ask the Rebbe for a blessing to cure their childlessness, but to no avail. Yet, his wife wouldn't desist from her pleas. "This time," she insisted, "you must not leave the holy Rebbe until he answers our request."

The next time when the chassid came to Koznitz and was admitted into the Rebbe's chambers, he told the Rebbe of their longing for a child. The Rebbe listened and offered him the solution his spiritual vision afforded him: "If you are willing to become a pauper you will be granted the blessing you seek." The man agreed to discuss the condition with his wife and return with her answer.

The woman didn't think for a moment. "Of course. It's worth everything to me." The man returned to Koznitz and accepted the harsh prescription. But poverty was not the end of the Koznitzer's advice; the man was sent on a long arduous journey to visit the famous tzadik, the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin.

The Chozeh was known for his power to discern the state and provenance of a person's soul, and when he met the chassid he studied his visitor long and hard before he spoke.

"I will tell you the source of your childlessness and what you must do to correct the problem. Once, when you were very young, you promised to wed a certain woman, also quite young. When you matured, she didn't interest you any longer and you broke your promise. Because you hurt her feelings, you have not been able to have children. You must find her and beg her forgiveness. Go to the city of Balta (which was very distant); there you'll find the woman."

The chassid wasted no time in embarking on the journey. But when he arrived in Balta no one knew anything about the woman. He rented a room and waited to see how the words of the tzadik would materialize.

One day, he was walking down the street when he was caught in a sudden downpour. He ran to a nearby shop to escape from the rain and found himself standing near two women who were also seeking shelter. Suddenly, he was shocked to hear one say to the other, "Do you see that man? He

# תולדות

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