

The Jewish Weekly

Words of Wisdom for Acquiring Wisdom

by Rabbi Aharon Schmidt

Upon the passing of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chassidut, his son, Rabbi Dov Ber, the "Mitteler Rebbe", assumed the mantle of leadership. He instituted many innovations which led to the wider dissemination of Chassidic teachings. One of his requirements for newly married men, was that while they still lived in the home of their parents-in-law, they devote three hours daily to study Chassidut.

With this system in place, the number of young men who were knowledgeable of Chassidut grew, and their influence also spread as they matured as teachers and mentors. As time passed, the general Jewish public become more widely exposed to the new teachings, which took hold in many towns and villages throughout the region.

There was in the town of Liepli, a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe named Reb Yekutiel. He was a salt dealer and although he was widely admired for his piety, his knowledge of Torah, and particularly of Chassidut, was meager.

Once, one of the Mitteler Rebbe's young Chassidim came to Liepli and remained there for a week, reviewing with the villagers one discourse of the Rebbe each day. The topics discussed in these brilliant discourses dealt with the most elevated and lofty concepts, things normally closed to the human intellect, but illuminated by Chassidic thought. The young teacher was very adept at explaining these subjects, so that his audience was spellbound by his words.

Poor Reb Yekutiel was among the throng of listeners, but to his utter dismay, he couldn't understand even one word. He couldn't reconcile himself to the thought that here was a man many years his junior who had so much knowledge in his grasp, while he, an elder Chassid, understood nothing.

Many years later Reb Yekutiel described this incident and the terrible inner turmoil he experienced, to friends. "Here was I, a 40-year-old Chassid, having gone to the Alter Rebbe for some 15 years. One day, this young man, a mere babe, comes to the town and gives over the Rebbe's teachings with such burning fervor, while I couldn't understand a word he uttered.

"Every day I went to hear this young man and every day I grew more dispirited over my lack of understanding. I was missing out on so many profound spiritual insights, I couldn't bear the pain.

"Finally, I decided to ask the young teacher to sit with me privately and review the material. I stopped working in my business and devoted all my time to studying for three weeks, but even with all this effort, I failed to reach my goal. The teachings remained closed to me.

When, after three weeks the young man left, I was totally devastated. I wept and fasted for many days, all the while praying and begging G-d to open my eyes to these precious teachings, but all to no avail. Finally, one day, I saddled my horse and rode off to Lubavitch to ask the Rebbe what to do."

It had been almost a year since Reb Yekutiel had been to Lubavitch and many changes had taken place. Now, 60 young scholars sat and learned the Rebbe's words, reviewing them constantly with one another. The Shabbat after Reb Yekutiel arrived, the Mitteler Rebbe said two Chassidic discourses, and although Reb Yekutiel understood a bit of the first, the second was completely unintelligible to him. To the young men surrounding him, however, it was all perfectly clear! He returned to his room and wept bitterly.

When he was granted a private audience with the Mitteler Rebbe, Reb Yekutiel recounted in great detail his entire trial. How the young teacher came to Liepli and how he struggled to understand his words, but failed in every attempt.

The Rebbe replied, "There is nothing that can stand in the way of a person's will. Although a person's will is not his essence, nevertheless it contains the power to sway the soul in the desired direction." The Rebbe explained that true desire is the key that opens the soul's faculties and powers, particularly the faculties of thought and understanding. "If you truly desire it," the Rebbe concluded, "you have the ability to broaden your understanding."

Those words had a deep impact on Reb Yekutiel. He decided right then that he would remain in Lubavitch as long as necessary to achieve his goal. He sent a message to his family, informing them of his decision, and set to work.

For four months he struggled in his studies, often meditating on one thought for many hours, and he would review his topic of study many times. As the months went by, Reb Yekutiel felt a transformation taking place within himself. As he later told his friends, "I felt as if I had been created anew. Thank G-d, I succeeded in scouring the old pot. I had become a new, clean vessel."

In the course of time Reb Yekutiel became one of the greatest authorities on Chassidic philosophy. In fact, the Mitteler Rebbe's work, *Imrei Bina*, was written especially for him.

Reb Yekutiel lived to the age of 100, having been blessed by the Alter Rebbe with longevity. In his later years he was a Chassid of the Mitteler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek (third Chabad Rebbe) and the Rebbe Maharash (fourth Chabad Rebbe).

Indeed, the Tzemach Tzedek said of him, "Reb Yekutiel is a living example of our Sages' words: If someone says he has expended effort and found what he was looking for, you can believe him!"

Reb Yekutiel returned home with his mission accomplished. Many years later the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe said in reference to this story: "One can see from this story the attitude that prevailed amongst the Chassidim of yesteryear.

When a Chassid heard in his private meeting with the Rebbe, that his desire, his will, is a crucial tool for his personal transformation...he disregarded any discomforts or difficulties, and never flagged in his efforts until the desired end was achieved."

Reprinted from an email of The Living Jewish.

Editor's Note: The 9th of Kislev is the anniversary of the birth & yearzeit of the Mitteler Rebbe and the 10th of Kislev is the anniversary of the liberation of the Mitteler Rebbe.

It Once Happened...

The Jewish Baby who Grew Up to Become a Priest – And Then Returned to Judaism

On a winter night in 1943, a young, frightened woman knocked on the window of the Vashkinel home in a small town not far from Vilna.

The woman quickly handed Amelia Vashkinel a small, tightly wrapped bundle containing a baby, who was just a few days old. That night was preceded by several secret meetings held between Amelia and Batya, the baby's mother, who knew she had been sentenced to death and wanted to save her son.

With the Holocaust at its peak, Amelia was afraid to take in a Jewish baby and raise him. She explained to the mother that if it became known that he was Jewish she would be put to death. But Batya, determined to save her son at all cost, told Amelia: "You are a Christian. When he grows up he'll be a priest and a teacher."

Amelia hesitated, weighing the pros and cons of taking in the baby, and in the end decided to give life to the helpless baby in her arms.

Batya whispered the child's name and disappeared into the darkness. "You had a very Jewish family name," the adoptive mother told her son, when she revealed the secret to him 35 years later. "But I very quickly forgot it. I was afraid it would be a death sentence. And so I didn't want to remember anything from that night."

This is the story of that child, Yaakov, whose life has taken many turns. He discovered conclusively that he was a Jew when he was a senior priest in Poland. In recent years, however, his life has come full circle.

Yad L'Achim has been at Yaakov's side during this process, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. It provided him with sacred Jewish objects, and more. Recently, an extraordinary meeting was held between Yaakov and Rabbi Chanoch Gechtman, head of Yad L'Achim's counter missionary department.

At the meeting, Yaakov was moved by the sound of the shofar, which he compared to the deep cry of a long-lost son returning to his father.


"This is my story, the baby that was taken captive," Yaakov responded with great emotion.

Everyone in the room was moved by the sight of an 81-year-old Jew who had lost his Jewish identity as a baby during the Holocaust, returning to his people.

Yaakov added: "Look at how amazing things turned out. Hashgacha [Divine Providence] arranged things such that from a young age I was a teacher and then a priest. I never married, which means I never married a non-Jew, and I never had non-Jewish children. I imagine that had things worked out differently, it would have been much more difficult for me to leave everything and return to the religion of my fathers."

Yaakov now lives in Jerusalem and works for Yad Vashem. He continues to enjoy a warm connection with Yad L'Achim.

Reprinted from an email of Arutz Sheva.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Vayeitzei

Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:06	5:19
Tel Aviv	4:20	5:21
Haifa	4:10	5:19
Be'er Sheva	4:24	5:22



Wedding Hardships

By Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Shore

My wedding day - the happiest day of my life, my long awaited dream come true, the blessing for which I prayed daily...

At least, that is what it was supposed to be.

Some people get married amid fanfare and grand excitement, with all the thunder and lightning of Mount Sinai. For others, meeting their life-partner is more like encountering a long-lost friend, and marriage like slipping on a pair of comfortable house shoes.

There are those, however, who fairly have to drag themselves to the chuppah - their cold feet weighing them down like icebergs. On the verse, "Hashem makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners b'koshorot (at the most opportune time)", Chazal comment, "Some people marry in bechi (tears) and some people marry in shir (song)". Sadly, I was among the former.

After ten frustrating years on the shidduch scene, having spoken to dozens of matchmakers, dated hundreds of girls and shed a thousand tears, I finally met the woman who was going to be my wife. We went out a total of seven times before becoming engaged, and a mere three months later, I was already donning my wedding suit and preparing for the ceremony.

My bride was excited, my friends overjoyed, and my parents relieved. Only I was terrified.

Looking back now, almost two decades later, I can admit that marriage had been for me a terrifying prospect one that became exponentially worse the older I grew. I was thirty-seven at the time, and all those years of hopeless dating had taken their toll on me, filling me with doubts and fears: Is she the right one? Am I making a mistake? Should I wait for someone better?

But, as I said, at that moment, straightening my tie and dusting off my new hat, these questions were no longer relevant. The wedding day was now upon us and it was far too late to back out (though the thought had crossed my mind). I recalled a famous quote, "Send not to know for whom the wedding bell tolls - it tolls for thee."

To make matters worse, I was alone in my doubts, with no one to share my fears but Hashem Himself, to whom I turned in constant, heartfelt prayers.

I spent the day of my wedding rushing around Jerusalem on last minute errands, praying Mincha at the Kotel, immersing in a mikvah.

My good friend Simcha accompanied me through all this. As my shomer ('protector'), I suspect that he saw his job more as preventing me from running away than getting me to the chuppah safely.

By the time we finished all the errands it was already late, and the time to set out for the hall had slipped past. I quickly changed into my wedding suit at Simcha's house, near the Bar-Ilan intersection in north Jerusalem, and prepared to set out for our destination: the wedding hall at the Diplomat Hotel in Talpilot - about a half-hour drive away. It was at that moment that Simcha dropped an unexpected bomb.

"Meir," he said, "We're running very late. Your chuppah is scheduled for an hour. I'm afraid that if I drive you there, then drive back here to pick up my family, and then drive to Talpilot again, I'll miss the chuppah. I know it's not so nice, but would you be willing to take a taxi there?"

"A taxi!?" my mind screamed. "No! No!" After waiting so many years to get married, after suffering so much doubt and turmoil during the engagement period, after

finally overcoming it all, at the very least, I wanted to travel to my wedding with a good friend.

But instead, I graciously replied, "Of course, Simcha, no problem..." for what else could I say? And so, we called the Bar-Ilan Taxi service and gave them the address. "Five minutes," they replied.

And so, five minutes passed... and another five minutes... and another five minutes...

"This is ridiculous!" I declared. "I'm going to be really late! This isn't fair!"

At last, we heard the horn of the taxi outside in the street. I bid Simcha farewell and ran down to the waiting cab. I sat down in the back seat and gave the driver the address. "The Diplomat Hotel in Talpilot," I told him.

"Sorry. I don't want to go there."

"WHAT!?" I responded.

"You heard me. This is my last call of the day, and I live around here. I don't want to drive to Talpilot."

I was almost speechless.

"But I ordered the taxi. I told them the destination!"

"Sorry," he repeated.

"Listen," I said, trying to appeal to his Jewish sensitivities. "I'm a chatan and I'm late for my own chuppah. Surely, you would take me to that."

"No," he replied. "I'm not interested. You can get out of the cab!"

By now I was livid. "Is this how you treat a customer? Is this how you treat a chatan!? What type of a Jew are you!?" I yelled at him, and stormed out of the cab.

I rushed back to Simcha's house. "Simcha! The taxi driver didn't want to take me. There isn't time to order another one. I'm running out to the street to see if I can hail one down."

I ran down to the street, near the Shmuel Hanavi and Bar-Ilan intersection, and put my hand out to hail a taxi. The street was filled with cars.

About thirty seconds passed and a mini-van pulled up to the curb. The window rolled down. There, inside, sat four of my good friends from Tsfat!

"Meir! What are you doing here?" my friend, Aryeh Leib asked.

"I'm on the way to my wedding. What are you doing here?"

"We're on our way to your wedding, too!"

"Well, don't worry," I replied, "I promise that you're not late!"

Of course, they sat me in the front passenger seat and showed me the honor due a king. Wedding music blared on the car stereo and someone gave me a cell phone (still a rarity in those days) to call the hall and tell them that I was on the way. In the end, it all worked out better than if I had planned it myself.

Twenty years have passed since that day - good years and hard years, years of joy and years of challenges. But I'm still married, and I thank G-d every day for my wife and family. Over the years, when I've struggled with the inevitable difficulties that married life brings, the tremendous hashgacha pratit (Divine supervision) I saw on my wedding day helps me pull through.

I have no doubt that Elijah was involved, But if you ask me who he was in this story, that's harder to say. Was he embodied by my friends, who saved me in a moment of need, or perhaps he was the taxi driver, whose obstinacy proved to be a blessing in disguise, for which I thank him until today.

Reprinted from the book "Meeting Elijah" available from Amazon.

Torah Compilations With Yossi Parshat Vayeitzei

The Midrash asks, when Yaakov Avinu saw Rachel Imenu coming with her flock, how did he know it was Rachel? It says, "ורחל באה עם הצאן - Rachel came with the sheep." Have you ever seen a shepherd with his sheep? This animal goes one way, another the other. A shepherd always has to make sure that everything is in order, that all the animals are following him. Do you know what Yaakov saw about Rachel? All the sheep were so close to her, because they all wanted to be close to her.

"רחל- רחלה מכה על בניה - Rachel is crying over her children." Everybody knows that when Rachel starts crying, she will bring all the Jews back to Israel. So "ורחל באה עם הצאן - Rachel came with the sheep." Yaakov could see that Rachel would be the one who would bring back the "צאן קדושים" - the holy flock," Am Yisrael.

How many of us have ever felt that we were stuck between a rock and a hard place? Or shall I say how many of us never felt that way at one point in our lives? We have all been at one point or another in difficult situations each of us on our own levels, how do we move on? How do we pick ourselves up? What are we supposed to do in these situations?

The Pasuk tells us that when the sun set on his journey, Yaakov rested at a certain place, and he had a dream. The Meshech Chachmah points out that Yaakov was the only one of the Avot who had Ruach Hakodesh at night. It happened twice and both times happened as Yaakov was about to leave ארץ הקודש - the Holy Land, to go to another country. Hashem was reassuring Yaakov that because he had devoted himself totally to Avodat Hashem - living a G-dly life, living for the purpose of serving G-d, he merited that the שכינה - the Holy Spirit would be with him even in the darkest and most stressful times, even if he would not be physically in ארץ הקודש.

The Meshech Chochma points out that this is a message to Jews all over the world in גלות - exile. Wherever a Jew is, no matter how dark and scary the situation looks, he can merit that the שכינה - the Holy Spirit will be with him, if he stays strong in his belief and faith in Hashem and observance of the Mitzvot.

Friends, we all have times in our life where we feel so disconnected. It is like the fellow who has a new cell phone and calls the company and asks why he can't make any calls? Why is it not working? And the first question that customer service asks, did you turn on the phone? We can have the most beautiful connection with our Creator, if we connect with Him on a real deep level, the communication signals will start flowing, and we will hear the ultimate message from our dear Father in heaven who loves us dearly and is waiting for us to make that connection.

So let's connect 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.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 148
NUMBER OF WORDS: 2021
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7512

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Hoshea 12:13-14:10
Sephardim: Hoshea 11:7-13:5
Chabad: Hoshea 11:7-12:14

ויצא

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