

The Jewish Weekly

The Seven-Year-Old Philanthropist

By Mr Marty Jacobs

My father-in-law, Reb Yankel Katz, was an exceptional person, who enjoyed an exceptional relationship with the Rebbe. This relationship actually started with the Previous Rebbe, back when my father-in-law was just a boy, living in turn-of-the-century Chicago.

He told me that when he was seven years old, he did not like going to synagogue with his father. His father had Lubavitch roots, wore a long black coat and had a beard, but did not consider himself an adherent. In fact, he didn't very much like chassidim, or more accurately, he didn't like the chassidic school of thought. The synagogue he attended was filled with people who were similarly opposed to it. Young Yankel Katz, however, was very attracted to Chassidism, and didn't feel comfortable there.

So, one day he walked into a shul that prayed with the Nusach Ari liturgy – in accordance with Chabad custom – and he liked it. It was at that shul that he first heard about the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok, who had not yet come to America. By the age of eight, he was sending letters to the Rebbe in Europe, along with some change as a charitable donation, and the Rebbe himself would respond. It was then, he said, that he started getting very interested in Lubavitch.

It wasn't until 1929, however, that he finally had an opportunity to meet the Rebbe, who made a stop in Chicago while visiting the US that year. And after the Rebbe moved permanently to the US in 1940, his connection to him, and eventually to his successor Rabbi Menachem Mendel, grew even stronger.

Often, a Rebbe doesn't hear much good news; his followers turn to him when things are bad. The Rebbe himself once said as much to my father-in-law: "I am a tzaros Rebbe – a misfortune Rebbe. When someone has troubles, I hear about their troubles; when there is good news, sometimes I might hear about it." So one of the things my father-in-law thought he needed to do, was to cheer the Rebbe up with good things.

To him, they weren't just Rebbes; he saw them as his friends. The Previous Rebbe used to tell him the same: He had many Chassidim but very few friends, he said, and he viewed Yankel Katz as a friend – yedidi, in Hebrew.

He was also a very significant and early supporter of Lubavitch, not just as an eight-year-old boy sending change, but continuing throughout his life. After his passing, we learned that when the Previous Rebbe arrived in America, my father-in-law gave him a checkbook to use, with every check signed but with no amounts filled in. Even his family didn't know that he had done so – he simply would not talk about the charity he gave.

However, not long before his death, he revealed something that he wanted me to know. He said that in 1940, he received a call from the Previous Rebbe, asking him to donate a particular amount of money. Without even questioning what the money would be used for, he wired the entire sum.

The next Jewish holiday after that, he came to New York to spend the Yom Tov in the Rebbe's synagogue, which was in the newly purchased building at 770 Eastern Parkway. "This is your building," the Rebbe told him. "It's your donation!" I don't know what the amount was, but that wire funded at least part of the purchase of 770.

But other than that, my father-in-law did not discuss his charitable contributions. He wanted nothing in return for his donations. As he said, "No building names, no plaques, no dinners, no memorials." His tzedakah needed no special recognition; it stood on its own.

I had some interesting experiences of my own with the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, including one that also concerns tzedakah. I was in Japan on business and Reb Yankel must've mentioned to the Rebbe that I would be in Tokyo. Before Shabbat, I received a phone call at my hotel from Rabbi Berel Levy of OK, the kosher certification agency.

"This is Berel Levy," I heard as I picked up the phone. "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, I know," I replied. We had met very briefly years earlier.

"I'm in the Philippines on matters of kosher supervision, and will be here for Shabbat, but the Rebbe asked that I call you," he began, before getting straight to the point: "He is very concerned. The Tokyo Jewish community is planning on building a new synagogue and there is some disagreement among the members as to whether they will include a mikveh in the new building.

"The Rebbe knows you're in Tokyo and that you'll probably go to the synagogue for Shabbat. While you're there, you'll probably make a donation, and the Rebbe said he wants to partner with you in your tzedakah. He is asking you to make clear that your donation is for the new mikveh, and to write a letter to the community about the importance of mitzvah of mikveh, noting that your contribution is being made in partnership with the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

Of course, I did as he asked, and I wrote a letter about my donation for the Tokyo mikveh, in English. I asked that the letter be posted somewhere publicly in the building, and when I came back on Sunday or Monday, I saw that it was.

After I returned home, I didn't give much thought to the trip. A few months went by, and I got a call at my office in Washington, D.C., which was then located at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, just down the street from the White House, from someone who said he was in town. He explained that he had just attended a meeting in the White House and wanted to come and see me. "The Rebbe owes you money," he said.

When he arrived at the office, the man gave me a hundred-dollar bill and an explanation: "The Rebbe said that you donated some tzedakah in Tokyo, and this is his share."

That was how I once gave tzedakah in partnership with the Rebbe. I don't know what kind of impact my letter had, but my understanding is that there is a mikveh in Tokyo today.

Mr. Marty Jacobs is an attorney who resides in Bal Harbour, Florida. He was interviewed in June of 2012.

Reprinted from an email of "Here's my Story".

It Once Happened...

The Final Word

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

It was with heavy hearts that a group of senior chassidim assembled in the home of their master, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, the "Bnei Yissaschar". Their Rebbe had fallen ill, and it was understood that his moments were numbered. They joined his children and grandchildren to be with him in his closing hours of physical life, and perhaps hear some final instruction from their mentor and guide.

The Rebbe's eyes were closed, and a medley of awe and ecstasy played upon his holy face. "Our master is spending his last minutes in communion with his Maker," they all thought; "how selfish of us to assume that he would have something to say to us at this time!"

Suddenly, the Rebbe's eyes opened and began to search the small crowd. Finally his glance rested on a man who was standing to one side. The chassidim made way for this man, and gently propelled him toward the Rebbe's bedside.

"Reb Shmuel," the chassidim heard the Rebbe inquire, "what is it that you wanted to ask?"

"Rebbe," said the man, whom no one recalled ever having seen before, "the wool that I purchased . . . what shall I do?"

"Don't worry, Reb Shmuel," said Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech. "Wait until next winter. The price will rise, and you will make a handsome profit."

The Rebbe's eyes closed. Soon after, his soul departed to its heavenly abode.

In the days that followed, the chassidim hotly debated the significance of their Rebbe's final words. The mysterious "wool merchant" had disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared; certainly, he must be one of the thirty-six "hidden tzadikim," or perhaps Elijah the Prophet? Various theories were offered on the Kabbalistic meanings of "wool," "winter" and "handsome profit."

Word of these deliberations reached the ears of Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech's son, Rabbi Dovid. "You are mistaken," he said. "There is no mystery here, no hidden meaning, only a profound expression of my saintly father's love for every Jew."

"Reb Shmuel is a simple merchant, who would often come to seek Father's counsel and blessings regarding his business affairs. Recently he had bought a large quantity of wool, after which its price had dropped sharply; the poor man faced the loss of all his assets, as well as huge debts for the sums he had borrowed to make the purchase. He rushed to Dinov to seek my father's advice.

"Upon his arrival, he followed the crowd into Father's room, unaware of why we had assembled. Father, although in his final moments, sensed the presence of a Jew in need and considered it his highest priority to assure him that all would be well."

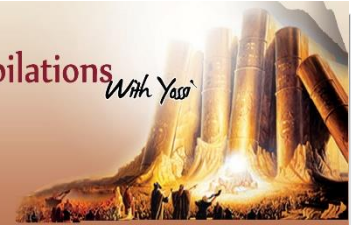
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Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Shemot

| | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat | Motzei Shabbat ר"ת |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Jerusalem | 4:06 | 5:22 | 5:59 |
| Tel Aviv | 4:20 | 5:23 | |
| Haifa | 4:09 | 5:21 | |
| Be'er Sheva | 4:24 | 5:25 | |



The Gold Ring By Rabbi Lazer Brody

There was a family living in Israel whose mother, unfortunately, came down with a severe sickness, which led to her passing. She left four children behind, the youngest being four years old, the eldest, a seventeen-and-a-half year old girl in eleventh grade, a fifteen-year-old boy and a twelve-year-old boy just months away from his bar mitzvah.

While the father worked long hours, the girl would work very hard, studying in school all day, after which she'd come home and do housework, including cooking, cleaning and doing no less than raising her brothers and sisters who were still at home.

The twelve-year-old brother watched with awe how she was a sister and a mother who was so dedicated and would do everything for her siblings, from laundering to baking challah for Shabbos to preparing food for them all week long. One day, the twelve-year-old boy heard her sigh, as she was working hard in the kitchen, "Hashem, I wish I had a nice gold ring."

The twelve-year-old boy heard this and it went right to his heart. He began saving his money, from birthdays to holidays, and filled up all the money that he could in a jar. Finally, the jar was full, and it was three months before his bar mitzvah. He went to a jewelry store and approached the proprietor, proud of the coins he had accrued and yet timid.

"Do you sell gold rings?" asked the boy.

"Yes, I do," replied the owner. "Who do you want to buy a gold ring for?"

"I want to buy a gold ring... for my sister," the boy softly answered, his voice quivering and eyes beginning to moist.

Struck by the boy's behavior, the owner softened himself. "Son, why are you crying?"

"Sir, my mother passed away a year and a half ago, and my sister is seventeen-and-a-half and she acts just like a mother and sister. She works so, so hard. She helps my father and she cooks for us and cleans for us and she wants a gold ring, and I've been saving up all my money."

With that, the boy poured the money in the jar onto the counter. He then looked up to the owner, and with a twinkle in his eye, asked, "Is this enough money to buy a gold ring?"

"Wait one minute," said the proprietor, "and I will check." Coming back just minutes later with a box,

he displayed the different rings he had in stock before the boy and said, "Why don't you pick out a ring that you think your sister will like." Selecting one to his liking, he looked up to the owner and said, "Can I afford this ring? It's beautiful!"

The owner gathered together all the coins and put them in a box, without even counting them. "Yes, you can afford this ring." The owner then took the ring and placed it in a beautiful gift box, the type that someone would give to a fiancée for an engagement, and handed it to the boy. "Go home and give this to your sister," he said with a smile.

The little boy ran straight home to his sister, and handed her the elegantly wrapped box. "Racheli, look, I got this present for you!"

She was amazed. "It's gorgeous! Where did you get it from?"

"At the jewelry store, at the shopping center," the boy got out, tongue-tied amidst excitement. "The one close, right across the neighborhood."

"It's beautiful!" she gasped, admiring its beauty and elegance, the likes of which she had never held before. "But where did you get the money for this?"

"I saved up my birthday money, my chanukah money, the Purim money I collected and my chore money."

She kissed her brother and thanked him. She then went right to the jewelry store and approached the owner. "Did a young boy, who would be my brother, come to this store?"

The owner replied in the affirmative.

"How did my brother pay for this?"

"Your brother gave me the coins that were saved up in his jar.

"Well, that was five agurot and fifty agurot and one-shekel coins. How could he get enough money for this ring; it must cost hundreds of shekels."

The owner told her, "Young lady, I gave him the ring and that is fine. The ring is yours."

"But he didn't have nearly enough money to pay for it! How can I take this?" To this, the owner said something very profound. Don't ever forget this: "Young lady, there are some things which are purchased with money; and there are some things which are purchased with tears."

We can't buy everything with money, but many things we can purchase with our tears. The Midrash tells us that Hashem has a jar of tears, and when that jar fills up, Hashem will build the Beis Hamikdash and bring us Mashiach. When you pray to Hashem from your heart with sincerity and tears, you can believe that Hashem will hear your tears. And if they are not answered the first time, they will be answered the second time; and if not the second time, the third time. But no prayer ever goes to waste. Always remember that. "There are some things which are purchased with money, and there are some things which are purchased with tears."

Reprinted from an email of TorahAnyTimes.com.

This week's Parsha starts by naming the children of Yaakov. Rashi says that by counting the names of the shevatim (tribes) again after they died, the Torah shows us how precious they were. They are compared to the stars, which Hashem brings out and brings in by number and name.

Rav Gifter Z"l asks, if listing the Shevatim after their deaths tells us how precious they are, why did the Torah wait until Pasuk Vav to tell us that they died?

Let us first understand the comparison to stars. Our ability to see stars is limited to the nighttime, for when the sun shines it blinds us from their beauty. But the stars do not disappear, only our ability to see them does. The stars stay the same whether we can see them or not. The same is true with Tzadikim. Although after they leave this world we may not be able to see them, they are still here nonetheless. Their legacies live on in this world, while they themselves are in the next.

There are two reasons people count their belongings. After a loss, one pays attention to what he does not have any longer. However, a person can also count something he still has, like something he enjoys very much. Had the Torah first told us about the death of the Shevatim, and then named them, we might think that the Torah was counting a loss. This is not the case. The Torah is counting what it holds dear, despite the fact that we can not see them physically. The Tzadikim live on.

Let us count our blessings that our dear Father in Heaven blesses us with, and don't get blinded by the sun (the bright billboards) that the Satan shines, to try to lure us away from our main focus in life, to count our blessings and to thank Hashem everyday for those opportunities.

Last week, we finished the ספר האבות – The book of our fathers, as the Ramban refers to Sefer Bereishit. We now start Shemot, and our leader, until we reach Eretz Yisrael is Moshe. Moshe grew up in the lowest place on earth in a house filled and dripping in immorality, idolatry full of hate, in the house of Pharaoh, as a "son" to Batya the daughter of Pharaoh. The very first Pasuk that describes Moshe's character reads as follows: "Moshe grew up, he went out to his brothers, and he saw their pain. He saw an Egyptian man hitting one of his Jewish brothers. He looked and saw that there was nobody around and killed this Egyptian."

The Ramban explains, that somehow, Moshe did not know he was Jewish, until this point. When he was told that he was a Jew, he went out to find a Jew to find out more about his identity. What he saw, was their suffering and anguish, he was so empathetic and sympathetic to them he could not tolerate watching the brutal attack of a simple Jew by this Egyptian beast, so he killed him.

Friends, we need to look around us and even if the very least we see another Jew in pain, we should cry so much, the tears would flood the heavens. We need to be more understanding of peoples suffering and empathize more. We need to be there for people more. It should bother us, and we should take it to heart when we see another Jew suffering, and we should try to do something to alleviate that suffering.

So let's pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace 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 and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

שמות

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PARSHA FACTS
NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 124
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1763
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6762

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23
Sephardim: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3