

The Jewish Weekly

The Orphanage Lied

By Rabbi Zalman Levertov

I had a good friend by the name of Yisrael who lived in the city of Bnei Brak. He was a very simple, hardworking, genuine person and we had a deep brotherly connection.

He held the same janitorial job for the last thirty-some years of his life and never really was able to read Hebrew.

He told me that he had a difficult childhood. When he was nine years old his father passed away and his mother, thinking that he would hamper her chances of remarrying, put him into a Jewish orphanage.

The orphanage advertised that they were strictly religious and promised her that her child would not transgress the Shabbat. But they lied. They sensed that she wouldn't check up on him and soon poor little Yisrael found himself working seven days a week.

He felt that something was wrong, but because he was young, really hadn't received much of a Jewish education and was quiet by nature, he didn't make any problems. So, he suffered silently.

He prayed for some sort of miracle and it happened; one day when he was eleven or twelve he saw a very impressive photo of a rabbi in a newspaper and below it, was an article. He was called Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, and he was the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He had been in communist prison, and now lived in Brooklyn, he loved to help people and made miracles.

Yisrael said to himself, 'He will understand me' and decided to write him a letter.

It took him a few days to get up the courage and, because he wasn't such a good writer, a few more to actually write it. Then there were the problems of getting a stamp and envelope and putting the letter in a mailbox without being noticed. But his simple determination prevailed and finally he proudly managed to sneak it off in the post.

The letter began with his sad story and ended with a request for a blessing to not work on Shabbat or even better yet, to get out of the place completely. But after three weeks of no reply he just gave a sigh, said to himself, 'Looks like I won't get an answer' and forgot about the entire incident.

Then one morning there it was! A letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.... TO HIM!! A miracle letter!!

First, it was the first letter he ever received in his life! Second, it was the first time anyone paid attention to him. Third, this great, holy Rabbi actually noticed him! And two more miracles, that no one intercepted and destroyed the letter he sent and another that the same thing didn't happen to this letter he received.

He took the envelope to his room, closed the door, sat down opened it and read.

The Rebbe wrote that he was happy to hear from him; that Jews must always be strong and proud to be G-d's people and that he shouldn't worry. Then he wished him Mazal Tov on his upcoming Bar-Mitzva (thirteenth birthday when Jewish males begin to do the Commandments) and assured him that when he began putting on Tefillin (phylacteries) things would get better.

Sure enough, when Yisrael turned thirteen his mother got him a pair of Tefillin, a few weeks later the orphanage miraculously decided to find him a job 'outside' and again miraculously his new boss did not require him to work on Shabbat.

The Rebbe's blessings all came true and when he reached the age of fifteen he saved enough to move out of the orphanage completely.

But he didn't forget the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak. As time passed he became more attached to him and his Chassidim and by 1950 when the Rebbe passed away and was replaced by his dynamic son-in-law Rabbi Menachem Mendel, Yisrael despite his handicaps, considered himself to be a full-fledged Chabad Chassid.

But the new Chabad Rebbe was more demanding. He explained often and at great length very deep existential and kabbalistic concepts, such as how G-d creates all beings constantly, the eternal uniqueness of the Jewish people and how the Torah is the blueprint of it all. But he always managed to put these ideas in a simple inspiring way.

For instance how we can learn to serve G-d, from electrical appliances.

We are surrounded by electrical appliances; lights, ovens, telephones, computers etc. that are activated by a completely invisible power; electricity. These appliances provide powerful and positive things as light, warmth, motion, communication to benefit man. But only if we push the right button to turn them on.

Similarly, in each Jew (and each human) is an invisible power called the soul. This power, like electricity, is invisible but it has the ability to illuminate, warm up and bring blessing and meaning to the world.

We only have to push the proper button; find a way to motivate each Jew. And when we do, we find that a little light and good, pushes away much darkness and bad. We can stop the pain, suffering, war and ignorance in the world.

Yisrael took this idea seriously as did all the other Chassidim. Soon young men and newlywed couples began traveling throughout the world to spread the ideas of Chassidut but Yisrael didn't know what to do.

He was very shy, spoke with a bit of a stutter, didn't have any talent for writing or teaching or much of anything else. He couldn't give charity because he didn't have any money. He tried to learn Torah but couldn't really concentrate for long.... all he could do was be honest, nice and pray.

It Once Happened...

So he prayed for another miracle and again it worked. He got a brainstorm!!

The previous Rebbe had written three small booklets translated into English. Each contained forty-some pages of simple explanations on such Chassidic ideas about G-d, the Jews and Torah and other interesting things.

Yisrael bought three pamphlets, bound them together with a piece of cardboard, wrote on the cover: "Chassidut Chabad-Lubavitch", tucked it in his coat pocket and went to the Brooklyn Library, he walked to the 'Judaism' section, took a book from the shelf, pretended to be reading it and then, when he was sure that no one was watching, put the book back on the shelf WITH his Chassidic creation next to it ... and left. (Something like how he secretly mailed that letter to the Rebbe).

He calmly left the library, looking straight ahead, feeling as though he had just completed a mission-impossible espionage job! He had spread Judaism in the world!! There is more.

One night, years later Yisrael was riding the subway home from work in an almost empty subway car. Only one other person was sitting there reading his newspaper. Yisrael looked his way just as the other fellow also looked up from his paper and a conversation ensued.

Yisrael told him he lived in Crown Heights and was a Lubavitcher. The other fellow, also a Jew, replied that he lived in Monsey and although he wasn't a Chassid, Lubavitch made him religious.

His story was like this. He was not from an observant family and until about five years ago knew almost nothing about Judaism. But then, one day he happened to be in the Brooklyn library looking for a book on Judaism when he noticed a strange booklet in the bookcase that seemed out of place. He took it out, saw it had a makeshift cardboard cover with a crudely handwritten title about Chassidut, opened it up from curiosity and, although he didn't really understand anything, he couldn't put it down!

It was something about Chassidic Judaism and had a completely different angle on G-d, the Jewish people and the Torah. For the first time he saw that Judaism was something very deep and alive. That really got him interested and eventually made him an observant Jew.

It was the book Yisrael planted there! Yisrael actually saw the fruits of his labors!!!

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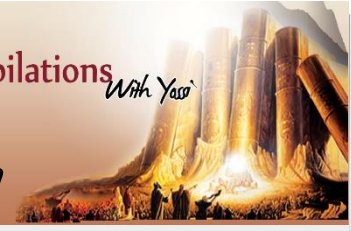
Editor's Note: the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson ז"ל's 72nd Yahrzeit and the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's inauguration 5711 (1951) was Wednesday, 10th Shevat – January 12th of this year.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Beshalach

Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:21	5:37
Tel Aviv	4:35	5:38
Haifa	4:25	5:36
Be'er Sheva	4:40	5:40



An Angel of One Thousand

By Rafoel Nachman Cohen

In the early 5700's (1940's), Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary of blessed memory, who was married to the eldest of the three daughters of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (Rayatz), was sent by his father-in-law on a mission to Toronto along with Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky. They arrived to find the city completely paralyzed by a blizzard. Deep snow had buried practically everything and storm winds blasted through the streets. Since no transportation of any sort was available, they were forced to take refuge in a nearby hotel.

A number of chassidim and admirers of Lubavitch found their way to the place where they were staying in order to pay their respects to their city's distinguished guests. Among them was a prestigious local rabbi, a leading Torah scholar in the city, who expressed great respect for the Rebbe Rayatz and explained why with an amazing story.

"Not so long ago, one of the members of my shul, Reuven, a wealthy man, fell seriously ill. It actually happened in shul, on a Shabbat. He was called for an aliyah, and on his way to the platform he suffered a stroke! An ambulance was summoned, and he was taken quickly to the hospital.

"As soon as possible after Shabbat, I went to visit him. When I arrived at his floor, I encountered the members of the family who had stationed themselves in the room next to the patient's. They told me the frightening details of his condition: in addition to one of his legs being paralyzed, he was also barely able to speak.

"Their mood was gloomy. The unpleasant situation of the head of the family would have been reason enough. In addition, his son was supposed to be getting married but had postponed his wedding because of the sudden tragic development.

"They warned me not to go in the room. However, the patient heard my voice while I was speaking to them and asked his nurse to call me in. I entered.

"As soon as he saw me, he managed to say: 'I heard that the Lubavitcher Rebbe now lives in the United States.'

"That's true," I replied. He came in 5700 (1940)."

"Please!' he implored, gasping the words. 'Write to him on my behalf and ask him what I can do to save myself from this ghastly illness and regain my health.'

"Of course I agreed. As soon as I got home, I dispatched an urgent telegram. The Rebbe's answer arrived very quickly, also by express. He

instructed me to tell the stricken man that a branch of Lubavitch's Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva was being established in Montreal and that he should donate \$1000 to it, for 'tzedakah saves from death.' Specifically one thousand, because the angel of a hundred is incomparable to the angel of a thousand, as it says, 'If a man will have an interceding angel - one of a thousand...'. In this merit he will get well, and have full use of his legs, the Rebbe concluded.

"I hurried back to the hospital with the Rebbe's letter in hand. The relatives were all still there. When the patient's wife saw me, she said in surprise, 'What! Did you already get an answer from the Rebbe?'

"I told her what the Rebbe had said. Her brother, who had also come to visit, overheard. He remarked to her sarcastically, 'Ah! They've already started to try to squeeze money out of him. You know how these people are.'

"I didn't bother to respond. Instead, I went directly inside to the patient. I told him what I had written and that the Rebbe had answered right away. I then read to him the Rebbe's letter. When I finished, he turned to his son, who had been standing next to the bed the whole time. 'Son!' he said, as emphatically as he could manage; 'I want to live! Please take one thousand dollars and deliver it in person to Montreal, to whatever address that the Rabbi tells you.'

"The son, the one whose wedding was postponed, did exactly as his father requested, without hesitation. A few days later, a doctor in the hospital who was known to be a leading specialist for this particular problem, came to do an examination. The room was cleared for him, and he remained alone with the bedridden man for some time. When he came out, his face was contorted with fury. He went directly over to the relatives of the patient, who were still maintaining their faithful vigil.

"Who gave you permission to bring in an outside doctor and for him to initiate treatment?' he demanded. 'And without informing me, no less. This is outrageous!'

"The relatives looked at one another and then back at the doctor, thoroughly perplexed. 'Doctor, please, we don't know what you are talking about. We haven't consulted any other doctor, nor do we know what extra treatment you are talking about.'

"If that's so,' responded the doctor in a calmer tone, but with lingering overtones of suspicion, 'then a miracle has occurred here. The patient's condition has changed radically. There are no longer any internal signs of the disease. I can't understand it. Still,' he said, shaking his head, 'if this present situation persists, we will discharge him very soon.'

"And that's what happened. Shortly thereafter he was released, and although he needed crutches to help him walk, it wasn't too long before he was able to discard them. His condition continued to improve rapidly until he was completely better.

"The rescheduled wedding was celebrated with exceptional joy."

Translated by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles from the book *Shemuot v'Sipurim*.

The Jewish Nation arrives at the Yam Suf, Egyptians behind them, mountains to the right and left, and in front of them, the Yam Suf. They cry out to Moshe, "What did you bring us here for? Was there no place to bury us in Egypt, so you had to bring us here to die?" Moshe tells the people relax. "G-d will get us out of here." G-d says to Moshe, "What are they screaming for? Tell the nation to go!"

Rav Yissochar Frand, in his famous speech at the 12th Siyum Hashas of Daf Yomi at Metlife stadium, told what became a famous story. A man in his seventies once came to the Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Nossan Tzvi Finkel Zatzal. The Rosh Yeshiva told him he needed a plan to learn, so he came back and showed that he could finish Mesechet Shabbat, in a certain amount of time. The Rosh Yeshiva told him to go back, and make another plan, that this first one was not good enough. The man came back with a plan to finish Shas, and the Rosh Yeshiva said "now that is a plan!" The man said "Rosh Yeshiva, by the time this plan is going to finish, I will be 130! How can this be a good plan? I can never do it." The Rosh Yeshiva looked at him, and picked up the tablecloth to uncover the future plans for expanding the Yeshiva, and said to him "Do you think I could do what I am doing? Look at me! I'm sick and have every excuse in the book to stop, but am I going to let a few circumstances get in the way of my plan? nothing stands in the way of will power."

Friends, in life we find ourselves sometimes in impossible situations, and we say to ourselves, "How am I ever going to do this? How am I going to get out of this?" Is there something impossible for G-d? Who do you think put you in that situation in the first place?! G-d created every situation that you experience specifically for you. Don't think that details can completely sideline you! G-d must expect more than that from you.

So let's all seize every opportunity and 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.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

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

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 116
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1681
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6423

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Shoftim 4:4-5:31
Sephardim: Shoftim 5:1-31

The Shabbat on which Parshat Beshalach is read is called שבת שירה, because it contains Az Yashir. (15:1-18).

ט"ו בשבט is Monday, Jan. 17, 2022.

בשלה

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