

# The Jewish Weekly

## A DRUNKARD'S LAST REQUEST

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In 5714 (1954), an important wedding took place in Jerusalem. The son of Rabbi Chaim Chaikl Miletzky, head of the famous Chayei Olam Yeshiva, was marrying a girl from a respected family, and most of the leading Torah scholars of the Holy City were in attendance. Unfortunately, the father of the chatan had to be carried in on a bed. For many years he suffered from severe problems with his feet. Sometimes it would get so bad that he would be unable to stand and would have to remain in bed. The doctors were now saying that one foot definitely had to be amputated, and perhaps the other one as well.

With his entrance, the noisy din of celebration died down. All eyes turned towards the poor man who couldn't dance at his son's wedding. R. Chaim Chaikl indicated that he wanted to speak. He asked that everyone be extra quiet; otherwise, in his weakened state, he wouldn't be able to make himself heard. He wanted to tell of the events that led up to his present condition.

"When I was young and healthy, I learned in the Stutchin Yeshiva. There were about thirty of us young unmarried men, and we used to study day and night in one of the local shuls.

"In this town lived a man who was known to all as 'Itche der shiker.' Every day he would drink until he passed out. When he awoke he would immediately drink more, until he lost consciousness again. His favorite sleeping place was the same shul that we studied in, and there he spent most of each day. Where he lived, no one had any idea. Nor did anyone care. The only ones in town who paid attention to him were the children. They would follow him around and tease him, as children are prone to do. In the shul he never bothered us, and we, for the most part, ignored him.

"One winter night, we were sitting and learning while Itche was sleeping on a bench near the stove, as usual. Unexpectedly, the door burst open and a wagon-driver came in, very upset. He told us that his wagon with its heavy load had flipped over, and that his horse was trapped underneath and was being choked by the reins. If it wasn't released soon it would die. He implored us to come help him lift the wagon, which one person couldn't do alone, before the struggling horse choked to death.

"We students began to discuss among ourselves whether it was permissible to interrupt our Torah studies for such a task. Finally we decided we shouldn't, because the wagon lifting could be done by anyone, but only we were learning Torah.

"At that moment, much to our amazement, Itche opened his eyes and called out, 'Young men! You should go!' We ignored him and sent the dismayed wagoner on his way to search for more appropriate helpers.

"But we hadn't heard the last from Itche der shiker. 'Immediately go and help that Jew save his horse,' he demanded.

"We laughed at his authoritative tone. Then, he really surprised us by his audacity. He said, 'If you don't go to help that poor Jew right now, there will come a time, G-d forbid, when you will not be able to go!'

"For a moment there was shocked silence. Then I said to him jokingly, 'Itche, since when did you become a posek, a rabbinical judge?'

"He didn't answer.

"About half an hour later, the wagon driver came running back, frantic. He hadn't been able to find anyone to help him. He pleaded with us to come. We discussed it again, and this time decided it was permitted for us to go. But when we got there, the horse was already dead.

"The next morning, I was a little late for the morning session. When I entered, my friends told me that Itche der shiker had been looking for me. I went over to him and asked him what he wanted. He said that he needed me to do him a favor.

"What?' I asked.

"I request that you come to my house this evening,' he replied calmly, 'because tonight I am going to die and I want you to be there when my soul departs.'

"I could barely believe my ears. 'Come on, Itche,' I chuckled, 'no man can know when he will die.'

"But he asked me again, and I thought to myself, 'What does it matter? What will I do tonight, anyway? Learn. So I can learn there too. I'll bring a sefer.'

"I asked Itche where he lived. He told me to walk to the very end of the town, where I would see a broken-down hovel. That was his dwelling.

"When I got there that evening, he was sleeping on a board that was lying on the floor. I sat down gingerly on a broken crate and opened my Talmud. I studied there for several hours. Then I thought, 'What do I need this aggravation for? Why did I let him confuse me? I'm going home.'

"But the moment I stood up to leave, Itche called out from his prone position, 'Chaim Chaikl! Don't leave! At 4:00 AM sharp I will die. After, go to the Chevreh Kadisha (Burial Society) and tell them to bury me next to the great scholar, Rabbi X.'

"Itche!' I replied, irked. 'You don't even put on tefillin, and now you want to be buried next to a tzadik, the greatest man in this town's history?'

"I don't put on tefillin?' he repeated wonderingly. 'See that box in the corner? Go open it and you will see my tefillin.'

"I hesitated and then did what he said. Inside was the most strikingly outstanding pair of tefillin I had ever seen! I was very impressed.

"But Itche,' I said, this time more gently, 'even if I tell them to do so, there is no possibility that the Chevreh Kadisha will listen to me to bury you next to him.'

"Itche's answer came promptly. 'If you look under the box where you saw my tefillin, you will find another, smaller box. Open it.'

"I did so. This time without hesitation. Inside was a thick pile of manuscripts. I began to glance through them. Then I stopped short and began to read more closely. The pages were filled with deep thoughts of Kabbalah and other esoteric subjects! I could barely understand any of it! Finally the realization sunk in the man we knew as Itche der shiker was really one of the hidden righteous ones!

## It Once Happened...

"Take my writings to the Chevreh Kadisha and the town Rabbi,' Itche said softly to me, 'and surely they will do as I requested.'

"At exactly four o'clock Itche passed away. I ran to the Rabbi and the Chevreh Kadisha and told them everything: the writings, the tefillin, the precise prophecy. They were amazed, of course, and convinced. But the Chevreh Kadisha declared that they couldn't do it anyway, because there were no empty plots anywhere in the vicinity of the great scholar. For many years already, all the deceased were being laid to rest in the new cemetery.

"They decided to go look anyway. When they got there, they found an empty area right next to the great scholar's grave. They couldn't believe what they were seeing; they knew there was no such place!

"The report of Itche der shiker's true identity and the miracle in the cemetery spread quickly. The entire populace turned out to participate in the funeral, and to mourn the loss of what they didn't know they had.

As he concluded his story, R. Chaim Chaikl burst into tears. "Surely it is that this suffering has come upon me as a result of the words of that holy man."

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One of those present at the wedding who heard this story was a Chabad chassid, R. Leib Friedman. As one who corresponded often with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he couldn't hold himself back. He wrote the whole matter to the Rebbe and requested him to pray for a complete healing for the rosh yeshiva.

He received an answer. The Rebbe wrote him to deliver the message to Rabbi Chaim Chaikl Miletzky that he should take upon himself the practice of learning the daily portions of Chumash-Tehillim-Tanya, known by their Hebrew initials as Chitat, as instituted by the Rebbe's father-in-law and predecessor. And not only should he do it himself, he should strongly recommend it to all those under his influence. Then, in the merit of his going in the way of the Previous Rebbe, G-d Al-mighty will bless him to be able to go on his own feet.

R. Friedman hurried to R. Chaim Chaikl to tell him about the Rebbe's answer. The rosh yeshiva read the letter excitedly, becoming more and more joyful. By time he finished he was so overwhelmed with emotion, he kissed the Rebbe's letter fervently. R. Friedman wanted to take the letter back, but at R. Chaim Chaikl's request, he agreed to let him hold on to it temporarily.

Six months later, R. Friedman visited him again. He found him sitting normally at his table. The doctors were no longer talking about amputations or any surgery, only about how to help him walk even better. Indeed, his condition continued to gradually improve.

It is said that he displayed his set of Chumash-Tehillim-Tanya prominently on his desk, and to everyone that entered his office, he requested that they begin to study the daily passages too. "Please do it for my sake," he would say; "it will help me get better!"

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*



### Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Bo

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:15	5:31	6:09
Tel Aviv	4:29	5:33	
Haifa	4:19	5:30	
Be'er Sheva	4:34	5:35	



## Wandering Jews in the 9th Arrondissement By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

The farbrengen (chassidic gathering) room in "770 Kfar Chabad" - a near replica of Lubavitch World Headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, NY - was more packed than usual, Old-timers and community members as well as yeshiva students crowded around the tables, hoping to clearly hear and imbibe wisdom and history from Rabbi Zalman Sudakevich (1915-2012), one of the founders and builders of the chassidic village.

For several consecutive hours they listened spellbound, with only a few brief pauses to toast "l'chaim" and perhaps sing in unison a stirring chassidic melody, as Rabbi Sudakevich described to them the enormous difficulties of living a chassidic life in Russia during the decades of Communist oppression, arrests, torture and executions, which he himself also suffered personally.

He also related fascinating episodes from the years of struggle for the Russian Chassidic immigrants to Israel to establish Kfar Chabad (located one train stop east from Tel Aviv, before Lod and Ramle), at the instigation of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (the "Rebbe HaRayatz"), and after the Rebbe passed away in 1950, with subsequent encouragement, instructions, advice and blessings of his son-in-law successor, Rabbi M.M. Schneerson, who also gave them specific instructions how to interact with government offices and the public.

At one point Rabbi Sudakevich digressed to tell about an unusual mission given to him by the Rebbe HaRayatz during an interval in his life between the two long periods in Russia and Israel. It happened after the immigrants arrived in Paris from Russia, and had to be there for many months before being able to continue on to Israel.

"In 1947, several months after I reached Paris, a most unusual message was received from the Rebbe HaRayatz. He sent his son-in-law (and future successor), who was in France at the time, to help with his mother's immigration to America, to instruct two senior chassidim, Rabbi Yehuda Hain and Rabbi Chayim Shreiber, to spend time walking through different streets of the city. I asked to accompany them.

"Why did the Rebbe require this? For what purpose? We had no idea. But the Rebbe had said that is what we should do, so, we did it."

The three rabbis set out the next morning. Not having the faintest clue where or what direction to go, they wandered aimlessly through the Paris metropolis, wherever their feet and impulses took them.

They turned into yet another side street, and before they had gone more than a few meters, they heard a call that halted them immediately.

It was a woman's voice. "Jewish rabbis! Can you please wait for me a few moments?"

They looked up, seeking the source of the voice. In a fifth floor window they spotted a grey-haired older

woman, who again called down to them, begging that they wait for her until she can come down to join them.

"Can this be what the Rebbe intended?" They murmured to each other.

The woman walked briskly up to them. Although slightly out of breath, she spoke with strong emotion. She identified herself as a Jewish woman, and that her grandson was soon to turn thirteen. It was her deepest wish and concern that he learn the basics of Judaism, that he know what is tefillin and be trained how to put them on.

Her voice broke. "I want him to celebrate his bar-mitzvah properly, like a kosher Jew, but I have no idea where in Paris there is someone who can instruct him for this."

The three rabbis smiled broadly as they stared at each other in amazement. They felt certain this was why the Rebbe had insisted they wander around Paris.

They turned back to the woman and one of the older rabbis gave her directions to a synagogue not far from the apartment house of her daughter, whom she was then visiting. They knew that the rabbi there could teach the boy everything he needed, and in a warm manner.

Rabbi Sudakevich lifted his cup, proclaimed "l'chaim!" and concluded his recollection: "If we hadn't taken our 'stroll' at the Rebbe's orders, who knows if that boy crossing the threshold to the Jewish age of responsibility would ever have found out about the mitzvah of tefillin."

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Immediately, one of his listeners sprang to his feet. "Reb Zalman, do you know the name of the street in Paris where you met that woman, and which shul you directed her to?"

His tone of voice was one of curiosity, but those sitting near him saw that he was tense as a coiled spring.

Rabbi Sudakevich stared at his questioner, Rabbi David Lesselbaum, a devoted chassid who also was a resident of Kfar Chabad, and hesitated to reply. "Ah, this was many years ago, several decades, but if I remember correctly, it was in the Fifth District, on Fourth or Fifth Street." He paused again and scratched his forehead. "And the name of the shul was Rashi Synagogue."

"Unbelievable!" exploded Rabbi Lesselbaum. "According to your description, the woman that you three spoke to, was my grandmother of blessed memory who was visiting my aunt who lived in the Ninth Arrondissement (district), and the bar-mitzvah boy...was me!"

All those present stared at Lesselbaum in astonishment. He continued: "Indeed, 1947 was the year of my bar-mitzvah. I received from my parents an education totally devoid from Judaism, but somehow my grandmother managed to convince them that I deserved to be given a taste of authentic Judaism in preparation for my bar-mitzvah. My private lessons took place in the Rashi Shul, which I now understand my grandmother knew about, only because of her encounter with you three rabbis!"

Rabbi David Lesselbaum is a well-known figure among the French-speaking Jews in Israel. Over the years he has helped hundreds of them to grow in their observance of Torah and the commandments, all due to the mysterious demand of the Rebbe HaRayatz of his three chassidim, to wander aimlessly through the street and alleys of Paris.

*Reprinted from an email of Lchaimweekly.org. Editor's Note: the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson zt"l's 72nd Yahrzeit and the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's inauguration 5711 (1951) is Wednesday, 10th Shevat - January 12th of this year*



## Torah Compilations Parshat Bo

Something I heard from Rabbi Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth is that in Parshat Bo, after many years of persecution and slavery, Bnei Yisrael were ready to leave Egypt. And then Hashem tells them, ולא יחרץ כלב, לשינוי, I will guarantee, He said, 'that not a single dog will bark' as you emerge forth from Pharaoh's Egypt.

It's all very nice that no dogs will bark but what difference at all would that make to anyone? The Rashbam and Ibn Ezra both suggest, that Hashem wanted to guarantee that nothing whatsoever would mar the exhilarated feeling and experience of joy for the people.

In Sefer Orchot Tzaddikim, written in Spain in Medieval Times, the author tells us that sometimes you might be preparing a large dish of food, and let's say there are twenty ingredients, nineteen of which are absolutely perfect and wonderful, but with the twentieth, there is something wrong with it. It might even be a small spice but that twentieth ingredient could spoil the entire dish.

Similarly, let's say if somebody had a Simcha and there are 300 guests and 299 of them say such wonderful things and you know that it was such a special day in your life and everything was perfect. Then along comes one guest, the only one - and he or she, has got a complaint. Something or other was wrong for them. So what will then play on your mind afterwards? It will probably be the comment of that one single person, and that could spoil all your memories of that day.

Similarly, Hashem wanted to guarantee, that not even a dog would bark as the Bnei Yisrael were emerging from Egypt after so many years of sadness and bondage. He didn't want anything to spoil their great exhilarated experience.

The message for us is, that when it comes to happy times of others, let us not become the dog who barks, let's enhance their occasion for them and guarantee that it will be always in their minds, the most special day in their lives.

So let's only celebrate happy occasions 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: 20  
MITZVOT ASEH: 9  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 11

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 105  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1655  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6149

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 46:13-28

*Yossi*

**בא**

This week is sponsored  
In memory of the  
previous Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson zt"l  
Who's Yahrzeit is Wednesday  
י' שבט

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