

# The Jewish Weekly

## The Baal Shem Tov and The Robber Band Leader

By Rabbi Shmuel Butman

The Baal Shem Tov loved the hours and days he spent wandering alone through the beautiful and isolated forests and hills of the Carpathian Mountains. There, in solitude, he could think, learn and meditate on the greatness and the revealed wonders of the Creator.

This beautiful corner of the world was lush with the bounties of nature, but virtually empty of humanity. However, it was the haunt of a cruel and vicious band of robbers and murderers who attacked any hapless soul who happened to be passing through the countryside. This robber band had been preying on travelers for many years, and they and their terrifying chief had become a frightening legend.

The chief's name was Dabash - and he was, strangely enough, a Jew, albeit one who had descended to the lowest levels of humanity. The very mention of his name struck fear into the hearts of the villagers who lived in the settlements dotting the mountains, for no one who had fallen into his clutches had ever escaped alive.

Dabash had gotten word of a strange individual who dared to wander the mountain passes of his private domain. Summoning his most loyal followers, Dabash cried, "Find this arrogant fool who dares invade my province, and bring him to me!"

The robbers quickly set out to capture the Baal Shem Tov. But try as they might, they could not find him. Whenever they were sure that he must be right around the next bend, he eluded their grasp. "It's downright spooky," remarked one of the robbers, and they all nodded in agreement. This man was definitely something out of the ordinary.

Finally, after scouring the surroundings for miles around, they were forced to report back to Dabash that they had failed in their mission. He was furious, for never had his will been thwarted. "I'll have your heads for this!" he screamed at the shaking men. Slowly they managed to calm the robber chief.

Finally, at the end of their tale, Dabash was curious enough to set out himself to try to capture the elusive Jew. Dabash led the way scaling rocky precipices and bounding over swift running streams. Suddenly, a man appeared before them emerging from the distant trees.

"That's him," they said in awe.

Dabash was happy at the opportunity for confrontation at long last, but the Baal Shem Tov spoke first: "I have come to save you the trouble of looking for me." "Do you know who I am?" queried Dabash boldly.

"Of course. I see it written all over your face! And not only that, but I know that you have regrets very often for the terrible sins you have committed. Is it not true that after you drink you always cry?"

"That's true," Dabash answered, "but it's not unusual. Lots of people do the same, although I don't understand why I cry when I do."

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "I will explain it to you. When a person is drunk, his essence, his innermost feelings that are normally hidden, can be revealed. Even inside you, a man who has abandoned the most basic human rules of life, burns a tiny spark. That spark is called the 'pintele Yid,' and it is the cause of your regrets. Why, even now, you feel bad that you have approached me with violent intentions."

When Dabash heard this he felt a stab of recognition deep inside.

"Whoever harms this holy man will feel my sword!" he barked at his men. "Just one question, said Dabash. "I and my men roam these mountain in search of victims to rob, but you? Why are you wandering about in these hills?"

"Let me explain it to you in this way: "Once a king announced that he would grant any request his subjects made. Two of the king's subjects wanted the same thing - to visit the royal palace. The king granted them both their requests. "They were allowed to enter the palace for only one hour.

"But the men had different reasons for desiring to enter the palace. One wanted to take as many treasures as he could fit into his pockets. The other wanted only to be near his beloved king.

"G-d fills the entire world, but here, surrounded by the wonders and beauties of nature we can feel the closeness of G-d. You see, Dabash, you and I are both here in the 'royal palace,' but our reasons are quite different."

With those words, the Baal Shem Tov turned and disappeared among the dense trees. Dabash was confused. He felt a surge of shame, but at the same time, he cried to his men to pursue the Jew.

Again, there was no trace of him. In his rage, Dabash massacred a score of his men. Legend has it that afterward Dabash fled far away and became a penitent. In any case, the people of the Carpathian Mountains never heard of him or his robber band again.

*Reprinted from an email of L'Chaim weekly.*

## It Once Happened...

### The Tenth Man

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum relates the following story. In a resort hotel in Eretz Yisroel outside Yerushalayim, the Mashgiach, the Kosher supervisor, would see to it that there was a daily Minyan for Minchah. It happened that one day he had a very difficult time completing the Minyan, and he decided to go outside to search for a tenth man.

He soon met a Jew who neither had a clue about what a Minyan was, nor about what the Mashgiach wanted from him. After the Mashgiach explained the significance of Minyan and the incredible reward in store for those who participate in a Minyan, the stranger agreed to join them as the tenth person. He went with the Mashgiach into the building and began walking up the stairs to the dining hall, where the Minyan took place.

Suddenly, someone told the Mashgiach that the son of one of the regular people at the Minyan had arrived, and they now had a Minyan. The Mashgiach turned to the Jew who had only walked up the steps, and told him that their Minyan problem had just been solved. He thanked him for his good intentions and wished him a good day.

Ten years went by. One night, when the Mashgiach was sleeping, he had a dream. In the dream, the man whom he had called in to be the tenth man appeared before him, and his face was shining brilliantly. The man related to him that he had passed away from this world during the previous month.

He said, "I have come to thank you for attempting to include me in your Minyan. You have no idea of the incredible spiritual reward I have received because of the few steps I walked up, in order to complete the Minyan."

He added, "I have one favor to ask of you. I have one son who lives in Yerushalayim. He is non-observant. In fact, he is very estranged from a life of Torah and Mitzvos. Please go to him and ask him to recite Kaddish for me. It will mean so much."

The Mashgiach, of course, met with the son of this man, and was successful in convincing him to say Kaddish for his father. Rav Scheinbaum commented, "This man got great reward, and it was all a result of him going a few steps out of his way. Can we even begin to imagine the reward for actually completing a Mitzvah? The S'char (reward) must be astounding!"

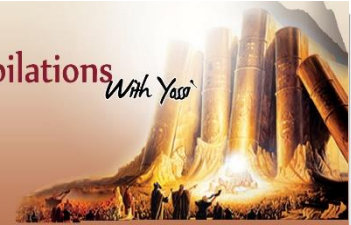
*Reprinted from an email of Torah U'Tefilah.*



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times - Parshat Yitro

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:28	5:43	6:21
Tel Aviv	4:42	5:44	
Haifa	4:31	5:42	
Be'er Sheva	4:46	5:46	



### R' Chaim Soloveitchik's Act of Chessed to a Distraught Mother

By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

There are some misguided souls who feel that doing acts of chessed and helping another Jew is not as important as devoting oneself all day and all night to learning Torah.

In truth, some of the greatest Torah scholars with the most legendary intellects also spent time worrying about and helping the less fortunate. This pairing of Torah excellence and chessed was personified by R' Chaim Soloveitchik (Brisker) zt"l.

He was one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation, a visionary and possibly the most innovative thinker in several generations, but nevertheless, his house was open to all, to the extent that it became a public thoroughfare where notices and advertisements were posted. Food was doled out in the kitchen almost on a non-stop basis, while R' Chaim could often be found in a side room talking in learning with other Rabbis or conducting a din Torah (Rabbinical court case), with groups of people.

It should not be surprising then, that he also spoke about the topic of chessed at the expense of Torah study with trademark clarity and wit. His grandson R' Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik zt"l recounts how R' Chaim once told a group of Rabbis, "A rabbi that doesn't close his Gemara to do tzedaka and chessed – even when the Gemara is open in front of him, it's as if it's closed.

"However, the converse is also true – a rabbi that does close his Gemara to do tzedaka and chessed, even when it's closed, it's as if it's open!"

One morning, R' Chaim was sitting with a few Talmidei Chachamim (Talmudic Scholars) in his home and conducting a Din Torah, involving a great deal of money and a number of colorful personalities. For hours, the case dragged on, when suddenly, a commotion could be heard outside R' Chaim's door.

A woman came running into the house and began screaming uncontrollably that she must speak to the Rabbi immediately. It was a matter of life and death, so to speak, and she refused to budge until she got her way.

A number of family members tried to calm her down and offered her a seat where she can

wait until the Rav was ready to see her, but she absolutely refused to sit down or be assuaged. Her voice rose again and again, mingling with heart-rending cries and wails, until finally, R' Chaim himself opened the door and came out.

"What is going on here?" he asked softly, as was his way. "What is all the commotion?"

Instantly, the woman sprang forward and addressed the venerable rabbi. "Rebbi, please, I must speak to you right now. It cannot wait even another second."

R' Chaim found a quiet corner somewhere, as an empty room was out of the question, and he softly asked her how he can help.

"Rebbi," she began, in a strong and brave voice "tonight is my daughter's wedding. I should be happy in the midst of such a wonderful celebration, and yet, I am scared of her future. Last night, I dreamed that my daughter suddenly went crazy! From a fine and refined Kallah (bride), all of a sudden, she began acting crazy and it appeared to me in my dream that she lost her mind! What can this mean?"

"I feel like canceling the entire wedding right now, for how can I allow my daughter to go forth in marriage, when she will become sick and crazy in her head?"

Her bravery cracked and a fresh burst of tears and wails emanated from the hapless mother of the bride.

R' Chaim stood next to her quietly, as she cried. Then, he smiled and whispered something that only she was able to hear. Instantly, she stopped crying and wiped away her tears. She smiled and nodded her head, and thanked the Rabbi emotionally before hurriedly heading out the door.

R' Chaim shrugged and went back to the Din Torah. Later in the day, some family members questioned R' Chaim about what he whispered to the hysterical woman, that made her calm down and even smile happily as she left the house.

This time, R' Chaim smiled broadly. "I told her that from the story of Yosef HaTzaddik in Mitzrayim, we learn that all dreams follow the interpretation. This means that however the dream is explained, that is how it will turn out.

"So, I said that I am qualified to interpret her dream and I am of the opinion that her daughter will become exceedingly rich. Not just wealthy or comfortable - rich beyond her wildest imagination. The reason is because most super rich people have quirks and 'meshugasin (craziness)' that they live with, so when she saw that her daughter was going to go crazy, it meant that she too, will become very rich and have a lot of 'meshugasin'!"

Reprinted from an email of Torah Tavlin.

In this week's Parsha, we spoke about Yitro coming to join the Jewish Nation. Yitro converted after hearing about the great things that were happening to the Jewish People, especially the receiving of the Torah.

The Midrash, in this week's Parsha, tells us that G-d told Moshe, "I am the One Who created the world. I am the One Who brings people close, and I am the One Who distances people. I am the One that is bringing Yitro close and not keeping him in the distance, because this man, who is coming to Me, is not coming for anything other than for the sake of Hashem, and he is only coming to join the nation. You should also bring him close and don't distance him."

Right away Moshe went out to greet his father-in-law, Yitro.

Many times, in life, there are people who come our way, and they really and sincerely want our help or our guidance to bring them closer to Hashem. Sometimes, we are too busy for them, sometimes we are scared of getting a bad reaction if we say the wrong thing. We ourselves may be scared of saying the wrong thing. Friends, when that person is relying on you to bring him closer to his Creator, it makes no difference what you say, it matters how you say it. If Hashem is bringing this soul closer to people, it is because Hashem is bringing him closer, because Hashem feels he is sincere, so how dare we send him away?

Let us all grab every opportunity to help ourselves and those around us get and stay closer to the One Above, and not, G-d forbid, the opposite, by praying 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: 17  
MITZVOT ASEH: 3  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 14

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 75  
Many Chumashim print the number of pesukim at the end of the Parsha. In Parshat Yitro, the number is ט"ב or 72 pesukim. The discrepancy is due to different ways of counting the Aseret HaDibrot. The Aseret HaDibrot consists of 13 pesukim. However, when they are read as Statements, rather than pesukim, there are only 10.

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1104  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4022

HAFTORA:  
Ashkenazim: Yeshaya 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6  
Chabad & Sephardim: Yeshaya 6:1-13

**י ת ר ו**  
**פ ר ש ת**

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