

The Jewish Weekly

CROSSROAD PUZZLE

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

One Friday, the famed Chassidic master, the 'Seer' of Lublin, was traveling with some of his disciples when they arrived at a crossroads. The wagon driver asked which way to turn. Surprisingly, the 'Seer' didn't seem to know what to answer. Shrugging, he said, "Loosen the reins, let the horses go in whichever direction they will."

After a while, they arrived at a town. After several enquiries, they soon realized that not only was this not the place they were seeking, they weren't even on the right road.

"It's late. We'll stay here for Shabbat," the 'Seer' announced. Then he added, "But don't reveal my identity to anyone or tell them that I am a Rebbe."

His followers were shocked. They had no money because the 'Seer' never allowed any to be kept overnight. However much he had in his possession would be distributed to poor people before nightfall. If his identity were to be kept secret, how would they be able to provide for themselves for Shabbat?

When they asked him, he replied, "We'll do like all Jewish travelers. We'll go to the local shul tonight, and people will invite us when they see we have no place to go."

And so they did. They prayed at the back of the shul, and afterwards, all of the Rebbe's students and attendants were invited individually to different homes. The 'Seer', however, was left in the shul. He always took a long time for the Shabbat Evening prayers and this week was no exception. By the time he finished, everyone was gone.

In fact, there was just one other person in the shul, an old man of at least eighty years. He saw that the stranger was sitting and reciting "Tikunei Shabbat" (selected passages usually recited during the course of the meal on Friday night).

"Where are you going for your Shabbat meal?" he asked the 'Seer'.

"I don't know."

"Why don't you eat at the inn where you are staying?" questioned the elderly man, concerned. "If it is a problem of money, after Shabbat I'll collect some money to pay your bill."

"I saw they didn't light Shabbat candles, so I presume that I cannot trust the kashrut of the food they serve there."

"I'm sorry," murmured the older man, "but at my house my wife and I will have only bread and wine."

"I'm neither a glutton nor a guzzler."

"Come along then," said the apprehensive host. The 'Seer' followed meekly.

After kiddush and hamotzie, while they were sitting calmly at the table, the elderly man asked him where he was from. Upon hearing his answer, he next asked him if he knew the Rebbe of Lublin.

"I am always with him," was the 'Seer's' response.

"That's wonderful," said his host. "Please tell me something about him."

"Why do you want to know about him?" queried the 'Seer'.

"Because," said the man, "I was his teacher in cheder (traditional elementary school, teaching basics of Judaism) when he was a young boy, and he was not noticeably exceptional in his studies. Now I hear that he is a great rabbi and does miracles."

"Did you notice anything unusual about him when he was a child?" the 'Seer' asked.

"Only one thing," the retired teacher replied. "Each morning, when it would be his turn to read from the siddur, I could never find him. He vanished! Later, when he would re-appear, I would punish him for his unauthorized absence. One day, I decided, 'Enough already! I ought to find out where he disappears to.' I watched him closely out of the corner of my eye. When he exited the room I slipped out after him, keeping a good distance between us so he wouldn't sense my presence. He went into the forest. I followed. I peered through the trees and there he was, sitting next to a hive, being stung, and crying out, 'Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!'"

"After that, I never punished him again. Now, after all these years, I would like very much to be able to see him in his glory, but I don't know how it can be. I'm very poor and I've become weak in my old age, so it is impossible for me to make the journey to Lublin. Nevertheless, my desire is so strong, I fast one day a week that I should have the merit to see him with my own eyes."

Finally, the 'Seer' understood why events had been directed to bring him to this particular town. Looking fondly at his host, he acknowledged gently, "I am he, the Rebbe of Lublin."

The old man fainted instantly. His wife and special guest were able to revive him only after great difficulty.

That Saturday night the 'Seer' and his entourage departed the town and continued their journey. The elderly man escorted them briefly and then returned home. They stopped at the 'Seer's' request at a not-too-distant village, in order to enjoy the Melaveh Malka repast of Saturday night. After the meal, the 'Seer' said, "Now let us return to that town to attend my childhood teacher's funeral and to deliver an appropriate eulogy."

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

Food for Thought

By Rabbi S. Y. Zevin

A serious-minded chassid once came to visit Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzhinsk, who sensed that his guest had not yet learned to refine and elevate his appetite for food. He decided therefore to invite him to join him at breakfast.

The chassid felt honored indeed. The table was set with rye bread, salt, and a bread knife, and they washed their hands and pronounced HaMotzi, the blessing over bread.

The Rebbe bit off a little from his slice, and had barely swallowed it when he began to complain to himself, addressing himself by the diminutive Yiddish form of his name: "Melech, Melech! Just look how you're eating, and with what ugly desire you're chewing the bread. Why, you want to swallow up all the bread at once! You really are worse than an animal."

But then he answered himself as follows: "No, I don't eat out of animal desire, but simply to satisfy my hunger, for if I don't eat I won't be able to study Torah and serve my Maker."

He cut himself another morsel of bread, and again, this time before swallowing it, chided himself in a harsh undertone: "Melech, Melech! Whom do you think you're fooling? Whom are you trying to convince that your only intention in eating is to keep your soul alive so that you can serve your Maker?"

It's all a bunch of lies! Just look - every part of you is fraught with animal desire, and if you could, you would swallow your whole meal in one gulp. How could you bring yourself to lie, and say that you eat for the sake of heaven?"

After a thoughtful pause he again answered himself in a sober whisper: "No, in fact it is not an animal urge that impels me to eat. But what is there to be done? I am fashioned of physical matter, a creature of flesh and blood, and I am obliged to pay this material body its due, otherwise it won't want to serve me.


So I do have to eat bread, but simply because of the necessity of keeping myself alive."

And with that he gave himself another slice.

Overhearing the muttered monologue, the guest's heart was humbled within him. He would make a fresh start!

Rebbe Elimelech thereupon rounded off his breakfast by reciting the Grace after Meals, confident that his novel prescription had accomplished its purpose.

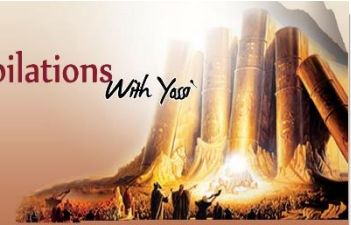
Reprinted from "A Treasury of Chassidic Tales" (Artsroll).



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayakhel

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:58	6:11	6:52
Tel Aviv	5:13	6:13	
Haifa	5:03	6:12	
Be'er Sheva	5:16	6:14	



The Forty Day Challenge

By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

There was once a young man who excelled in his learning and was known as a Talmid Chacham, with a great deal of Torah knowledge under his belt. On one occasion, while the young scholar was engrossed in his learning, he came across an idea found in the seforim hakedoshim (holy books) that if a person fasts for forty consecutive days, he will attain the highest form of spirituality and merit Ruach Hakodesh (Divine Inspiration), just as Moshe Rabbeinu did, when he was on Har Sinai.

Excited about the prospect of attaining such an elevated plateau and confident that he was worthy of this lofty achievement, that very day he began his quest and refrained from eating for the next forty days straight.

He was weak and haggard, however, when he completed the allotted time, no matter how hard he tried, he could not feel any inspiration, divine or otherwise, and he was thoroughly disappointed. He decided to go to his local Rebbe and discuss the matter.

The Rebbe, seeing the seriousness and earnestness of his young chassid, listened fastidiously as the man put forth his complaint that he had pushed himself and fasted for forty consecutive days, and according to the reading he had done, this should have merited him Divine Inspiration. However, he felt no different than before. How can this be so?

The Rebbe stroked his beard thoughtfully and then began to illustrate the chassid's pitiful error. "It is well-known that the holy Baal Shem Tov zt"l traveled at miraculous speeds. A trip that should have taken days was completed in hours or even minutes. This was due to the greatness of the Baal Shem Tov who experienced what only the greatest men in our history achieved: Kefitzas Haderech - the ground literally folding underneath his wagon to make the trip go faster.

"Now, as we all know, it is the practice of people who travel by horse and buggy to stop at every inn to feed and water the horses. This is extremely necessary in order that the horses

will not tire out during the trip and in order to care for and maintain the wagon.

"I imagine that when the Baal Shem Tov's horses flew by the first inn at great speed, they were surprised and thought to themselves, 'Horses need to take a break to rest. We didn't do so, so maybe we are not really horses after all! Maybe we are really human beings, who only stop to eat every few hours.' Indeed, a horse's logic!"

The Rebbe gazed at the frail young man and smiled. "As they continued to pass more and more inns at breakneck speed, without stopping for food and water, these thoughts escalated. 'Well, even human beings would have stopped to eat by now. Since we are still not being fed at all, maybe we horses are actually angels, who require no food and water at all!' These were, after all, the horses of the Baal Shem Tov," said the Rebbe to the wide-eyed chassid with a wink.

"Of course, one would expect them to be smarter and more spiritual than the average mare." The chassid nodded in agreement. "Now, when the Baal Shem Tov finally arrived at his destination, the horses instinctively pounced on the hay that they were given with animal relish. They traveled a great distance and hadn't eaten in some time. At that point, all their wild thoughts of being human or angels vanished as they realized, 'In the end, we must be horses after all.'"

Looking at the young chassid pitifully, the master concluded his words instructively. "Forty days of fasting cannot earn you Divine Inspiration if after all that you've done, you go back to eating like a horse - with the same level of indulgence you maintained before. The idea of attaining Ruach Hakodesh is that you must work tirelessly and never stop working. Never stop attempting to reach the unattainable."

The Rebbe took the young man's hand in his own and concluded, "I do not know if you'll ever reach that lofty height, but I do know that unless you strive ceaselessly and never stop working toward your ultimate goal, you will not reach the pinnacle that you so strive for, and the inspiration you seek to attain. Fasting for forty days and nights and then going back to your normal routine is not the way to gain Ruach Hakodesh."

Reprinted from an email of Torah Tavlin.



When talking about the building of the Mishkan, the Torah tells us "every man whose heart inspired him" would donate to the Mishkan. The Ramban tells us that there were many things that they had to sew and build for the Mishkan, crafted in very specific ways, yet none of these people were professionally trained in any of this work. They just found the ability in themselves to do it. Every single Jew has endless potential to do great things. With just a little inspiration to do something for the sake of Hashem, all of a sudden they get the Divine Help from Hashem to unlock this greatness, that others never imagined they could attain.

I heard a thought about this from Rabbi Yaakov Bender, who besides for being the Rosh Yeshiva at Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, he was also one of the founders of the Flatbush division of Hatzalah. He would often say "I heard a few times about a man named R' Hershel Webber, who once witnessed a Jew collapse on the street in Williamsburg and die waiting for the slow response of the city ambulances. R' Hershel was so alarmed by this, it inspired him to take a CPR course, and convinced his friends to do the same. Next they bought some oxygen tanks, and that is how Hatzalah, today an internationally recognized organization, was formed.

Friends, we need to seize the moment and commit to wonderful things, when we have a little strength we will be amazed at what that commitment can lead to. All it takes is a little inspiration to give us the fuel we need to accomplish our dreams. Let us dream great things, and be inspired to accomplish our dreams, with great fire like never before.

So let's commit to pray with all our hearts, for the recovery of all the sick, as well as 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: 1
MITZVOT ASEH: 0
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 122
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1558
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6181

This year, Parshat Vayakel is a special Shabbat. The Shabbat preceding Rosh Chodesh Adar (II), is Shabbat Parshat Shekalim.

We take out two Sifrei Torah; Seven Aliyot in the first Sefer Torah from the weekly Parshah - Vayakhel; Half Kaddish;

The Maftir, reads from Shemot, Parshat Ki Tisa, (30:11-16), which describes the census or counting of every Jew and the obligation to give a Half-Shekel Terumah during the month of Adar to pay for the public Korbanot in the Beit Hamikdash.

HAFTORA
Ashkenazim: Melachim II 12:1-17
Chabad & Sephardim: Melachim II 11:17-12-17

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Adar II
Rosh Chodesh - Thursday & Friday, March 3 & 4

ויקהל - שקלים

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