

The Jewish Weekly

The Child Who Had to Disappear

By Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak Zaltzman

I was born in 1956 in a city called Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, 1,500 miles from the Lubavitcher communities in Tashkent and Samarkand, in Uzbekistan. In order to immerse in a mikveh, my mother had to take a thirty-six-hour train ride, each way, to Samarkand.

My parents had only come to Dushanbe for a business opportunity, so we didn't stay for long, and I grew up between Samarkand and Moscow, where my grandparents lived. My parents had six children in Russia, which was such an achievement that the government gave my mother a medal. She was called a "Heroic Mother," and received eleven rubles every month to buy additional milk.

Every child in the Soviet Union had to go to a government school. It was mandatory. If parents were caught not giving their child a communist education, it was three years of jail, and up to twenty-five years if they decided to take it to court. During that time, their child belonged to the government, and would be sent to grow up in government institutions.

So, when I came of age, my parents told me, "We want you to continue in yeshivah and we don't want you to go to the Russian school."

"Sure," I said. "that's fine."

"Well," they continued, "for that, you will have to disappear."

What does it mean to disappear? It meant that, starting from September until mid-June, when children are in school, you cannot go outside or near the window. Nobody can know that you exist.

And that is what I did.

In 1971, my father's application to leave the country was finally accepted, and we were able to go to Israel. On the way out, at the border, they found my mother's medal.

"You have to leave that here," the guards said. "This medal belongs to Russia."

"Okay," she said, "take the medal. But I'm taking my kids."

I went to the Chabad yeshivah in Lod for three weeks, but when I heard that my father was traveling to the Rebbe for the High Holidays, I made up my mind that my parents needed to buy me a ticket too. "I am also going to the Rebbe," I informed them.

I flew with my father, and for the first few days I was overwhelmed by what I was seeing: The Rebbe, 770, the chassidim. It was something we had longed for as little children; our dream was to see the Rebbe. At

every chassidic gathering in Russia, the other chassidim used to wish my father: "May you leave Russia, so your children will see the Rebbe and attend his schools!"

That year, in addition to attending the prayers and gatherings in 770, I was able to meet the Rebbe, in his room, three times.

The first was the day after Yom Kippur. When I came before the Rebbe, my heart was racing. He took the note I had prepared in advance and read it quickly, while making marks on it with his pencil.

"Because your parents made such sacrifices for your education," the Rebbe told me, "may you be successful in learning Torah, and in performing mitzvot in the most complete way."

Later that same month, I was standing in 770 when suddenly there was an announcement: The Rebbe wanted to see everyone who had just came out of Russia.

We gathered in front of the Rebbe's room, and Rabbi Hodakov, the Rebbe's secretary, let us in. The Rebbe was sitting at his desk, with his glasses on, peering into a book. "Is everybody here?" he asked. There were about thirty of us, so it took a few minutes for everyone to come.

When Rabbi Hodakov confirmed that everyone was present, the Rebbe took off his glasses, closed the book, and looked up at us. "I want you to go and see Reb Moshe Feinstein."

Reb Moshe was the greatest Halachic authority of his time, but coming from Russia, I had never even heard of him before. "Go, and tell him the way it was," the Rebbe instructed. "And don't be humble about it. I want him to know how the chassidim survived in Russia."

We left the Rebbe's room, and went straight into a few cars that were waiting outside. One of them was the Rebbe's car, which is where I sat, in the back seat.

We arrived at Reb Moshe's home and sat with him on a few couches. First he spoke with the adults and then moved on to us younger boys: Myself, Yosef Yitzchok Mishulovin, and Shmuel Notik.

"What have you been studying?" he asked us.

We had been learning the chapter Ha'omer, from Tractate Kiddushin of the Talmud, and he began by asking us a few questions about the Mishnah there. When I answered, I saw that he took out a handkerchief and began wiping his eyes. My first thought was that I had offended him somehow.

Somebody told him that Reb Yankel Notik, Shmuel's father, knew the entire Talmud.

"Is it true?" he queried, turning to him.

"Not all of Shas," he replied. "Maybe half."

It Once Happened..

"It's only half," somebody interjected, "but whatever you'll ask him will turn out to be in the half that he knows." Reb Moshe smiled.

He then posed a question to the group. "How did you do it?"

Reb Moshe was himself from Russia, and he knew what it meant to be religious there.

Fifty years after he left, he was seeing people come out of Russia as if Communism didn't even exist. We were fully religious, speaking fluently about the Talmud, Rashi and Tosafot in Yiddish. He was overwhelmed.

Reb Yankel Notik responded: "How did we do it? Did we have a choice?" In other words, for us, being a Jew is not a choice; there are no alternatives.

My third audience with the Rebbe was a few months later. Although my parents wanted me to return to Israel with my father, I managed to get accepted to a yeshivah closer to the Rebbe, in Morristown, New Jersey, and eventually they let me stay there. So, I was able to come and see the Rebbe on the occasion of my birthday.


I had another audience with the Rebbe on the same date the next year, and then again a year after. About a month before one of those audiences, I had decided to study in the yeshivah on my own, without a partner, thinking it would be easier to stay focused that way. I had not mentioned anything about this decision to the Rebbe, so I was stunned when he told me, "In general, it's better to learn with someone else than on your own." Needless to say, when I got back to yeshivah, I found myself a study partner.

The Rebbe also told me to serve as a role model for others, but at one point I felt myself becoming a little too proud of my spiritual progress compared to that of my peers. I decided to ask the Rebbe what to do with those thoughts.

The Rebbe answered with two methods for dealing with thoughts of arrogance or superiority. First, to reflect on what it says in Tanya about how G-d stands over each person and examines his conduct. This way, the emphasis becomes whether one is serving G-d properly.

A second way is to say, "If I am so great, that means I have to perform much better!" Once these methods start to have a positive effect, you'll stop being bothered with such thoughts.

Reprinted from my encounter with the Rebbe, www.myencounterblog.com.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Tazria

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:23	7:36	8:16
Tel Aviv	6:38	7:38	
Haifa	6:30	7:38	
Be'er Sheva	6:40	7:38	



Transferring the Power of Blessing

By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

Before the Nazi invasion of Hungary in 1944, the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach zt"l, who was at the top of the Gestapo's wanted list, was miraculously smuggled from Poland into Budapest. His wife, children, grandchildren, and in-laws had been brutally set aflame by the Nazis - literally burned to death - and the Rebbe himself was marked for deportation to the death camps.

In a harrowing escape, a Hungarian counter-intelligence agent who was friendly to Jews whisked the Rebbe, his younger brother, and his gabbai, into Hungary. Their rabbinic beards and payos shaven, they were disguised as Russian generals who had been captured at the front and were being taken to Budapest for interrogation.

Throughout their 250-mile drive across German-occupied Poland to Hungary, they had one close call after another, but miraculously evaded detection. At one check point they were detained and almost exposed, but then, as if from nowhere, three high-ranking Hungarian officials appeared and ordered that their vehicle be let through.

When the news of the Rebbe's arrival in Budapest reached the Jewish community, there was great excitement. R' Avraham Jungreis zt"l, the chief rabbi of Szeged and a prominent leader of Hungarian Jewry, like many others, sought a meeting with him.

When it became known in the hamlet of Szeged, that R' Avraham was actually traveling to Budapest to see the holy Rebbe, countless Jews came to his home, not only from the community, but from a number of the outer provinces as well.

They all brought with them kvitlach - petitions - asking the Rebbe for his beracha. So it was that R' Avraham arrived at the Belzer Rebbe's dwelling with a suitcase that was literally filled to the brim with these kvitlach.

He was welcomed into the residence and with great respect and trepidation, he entered the Belzer Rebbe's inner room. The Rebbe greeted him warmly and spoke to him for a minute. But when the Rebbe beheld the suitcase and its contents, he said, "Szegediner Rav, gloibit mir, ich hub nisht kein koyach - Believe me, I simply have no strength, but I give over to you all the berachot, blessings. Whomever you bless, will be blessed."

R' Avraham's daughter, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis a"h, commented that looking back upon those years, she often thought that the Belzer Rebbe, with his piercing gaze, must have seen the great love that her father harbored in his heart for every person, and it was that which impelled him to transmit the power of blessing to him.

Her father accepted this trust with awe and trepidation. Indeed, he was imbued with a special ability to bless people, and his blessings were sought after for their effectiveness. He never tired of blessing people, and continued to do so till his dying day.

R' Avraham's grandsons, who spent Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at his side for many years, would relate that the very short walk from the Beis Medrash to his house would take well over an hour, for their grandfather would stop to greet everyone he met on the way and impart a blessing to them, regardless of who they were or what their level of religious commitment.

Through her outreach work in the Hineni Kiruv organization, Rebbetzin Jungreis had the zechus of bringing multitudes of people from every walk of life back to the fold. She would take them all to her father, who would bless them - and through those blessings, he became not only their Rebbe, but their zeida, as well.

Although he never mastered the English language, and these people did not speak Yiddish, with his blessings, R' Avraham transcended all language barriers.

A young man, a student at Columbia Law School who was ensnared in a cult, was literally dragged to a Hineni Torah seminar by his desperate mother. She forced him to come and he walked in looking obviously out of place.

R' Avraham was present at the seminar and spotted him immediately. He strode over to the boy and with great emotion, embraced him, wept over him, and lovingly said, "Du bist a tayere Yiddishe kind - You are a precious Jewish child."

As he warmly hugged him and his tears washed over the boy's cheeks, he invoked the blessings of our patriarchs - and those blessings worked like magic! In an instant, this lost, assimilated student took a leap that spanned the centuries and returned to his faith.

Reprinted from an email of Torah Tavlin parsha sheet.



This week's Parsha begins by speaking about the process of a woman giving birth. At the beginning, the Pesukim call the child by its gender, calling it either זכר - male, or נקבה - female. However, later on it refers to the child as a son or daughter. Why are we calling the child at first by its gender? Once we started with that, why change?

R' Gifter, zt"l, shares the following answer: A human is created in the image of Hashem, a being without any impurity. By doing aveirot, a person puts impurity in himself. Chazal in Mesechtat Erubin, 100b, tells us that Tumat HaNidah is a result of Chavah eating from the Eitz Hadat. We now understand that Tumah, in general, is a result of a person putting aside his spiritual responsibilities in order to follow his physical desires.

The words, "son" and "daughter", are used only in connection to human beings. When an animal gives birth, we do not consider the offspring to be a son or daughter, rather, we refer to it as male or female. When the Torah refers to the Tumah that comes after childbirth, it uses "male" and "female", because Tumah shows a person's animalistic qualities. However, when we are talking about animalistic Kedushah, we use the human terms of "son" and "daughter". Terms that show man's true essence - searching for Kedushah.

Friends, sometimes in life, we are faced with different challenges, tests from Hashem. How will we respond - as a human or as an animal? Let us always be prepared for these situations in advance. By constantly looking for Kedushah, we will be reminding ourselves of our humanistic essence.

Let's pray to always look at the positive in everything, and pray for those suffering from the current situation in Eastern Europe, as well as for the recovery of all the sick, 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, sweet Shabbat and Chodesh Tov.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 7
MITZVOT ASEH: 5
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 67
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1010
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3667

This year, (5782 / 2022) Parshat Tazria is a special Shabbat. The Shabbat preceding (or on) Rosh Chodesh Nissan is called Shabbat HaChodesh. The Mafkir, from Shemot, Parshat Bo, (12:1-20), starts with the first Mitzvah given to the Bnei Yisrael, while they were still in Egypt, even before the Mitzvot of the Chag of Pesach - the Mitzva of Kiddush HaChodesh. The reading begins with the declaration that the Hebrew month of Nissan, and not Tishrei, is to be considered the first month of the year. The passage then continues with some of the mitzvot of Pesach, which are certainly appropriate to be read and studied as the Chag approaches.

We take out three Sifrei Torah; six Aliyot in the first Sefer Torah from the weekly Parsha - Tazria, followed by putting the second Sefer Torah on the bima, then lifting and closing of the first Sefer Torah; in the second Sefer Torah we have one Aliyah in Parshat Pinchas - (Numbers 28:9-15) the two paragraphs "ובראשי חדשיכם" and "וביום השבת" (ויניחם השבת) is placed next to the second, and a Half-Kaddish is said over both of them; the second Sefer Torah is lifted and closed; the Mafkir is read in the third Sefer Torah from Parshat Bo (Exodus 12:1-20);

HAFTORA of Parshat HaChodesh is read in Yechezkel 45:16-46:18:

תזריע - החודש

This week is sponsored in memory of Mrs. Chani Philipson

מרת דבורה חנה פילפסון ע"ה
בת הרב מנחם מענדל גאטליב
שליט"א

Who's Neshama returned to it's maker last week, כ' אדר ב' תשפ"ב