

The Jewish Weekly

It Once Happened...

On the Way from the Pawnshop

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In the early 1800's (late 5500s), there lived in Tunis a worthy Jew named Matzliach. He was a great lover of Torah, though not an outstanding Torah scholar. He was not very rich, but generous in his charity donations, and he was a G-d fearing man.

Matzliach the Antique Dealer, as he was known, for he was a dealer in old wares and antiques, was well respected in the community. He was particularly praised for his special custom in connection with Shavuot, the Festival of Mattan Torah. Every year he would invite ten Torah scholars to his home on the first night of Shavuot, for whom he prepared a fine feast. After the feast they would all read the "Tikkun Leil Shavuot" and study Torah all night, in honor of the great festival of Receiving the Torah.

Matzliach and his guests certainly observed this custom in a fine way, which impressed and inspired the entire community. There was not a Jew in Tunis who did not stay up that night. Old and young gathered in the synagogues for the Tikkun and to learn Torah all night as is the custom, and special refreshments were served to help keep them awake.

There came a time, however, when Shavuot approached and Matzliach found himself in a difficult situation. Business had not been good, and Matzliach simply had no money, not only for his usual feast, but not even for the needs of his own family in the way of food and wine for Yom Tov. Sadly, he told his wife Mazal about his predicament, and she was greatly distressed.

"It is not so much our own need that distresses me," the good woman explained, "but the fact that you cannot keep your fine custom. It is sad to think about it."

"But what can we do?"

"Well, I still have my precious earrings," Mazal said, taking them off from her ears. "Here, take them to the pawnbroker and get a loan till things will improve. You should be able to get enough for Yom Tov and for your usual feast."

Matzliach thanked and praised his special wife heartily, and he took the earrings to the pawnbroker and obtained a tidy sum of money against them.



Rabbi Chai Taieb's grave (courtesy of www.hevratpinto.org)

As he was walking home cheerfully, Matzliach met the venerable Rabbi Chai Taieb, chief rabbi of Tunisia. Matzliach greeted the Rabbi respectfully, and the Rabbi returned the greeting, obviously pleased to have met him in the street. "You saved me a trip," the Rabbi said. "I'm going around collecting for our poor, so they, too, can celebrate the Festival of Mattan Torah with joy."

Without hesitation, Matzliach put his hand in his pocket and gave the Rabbi the money he had just received from the pawnbroker. The smile with which Matzliach gave the money pleased the Rabbi no less than the donation itself. "G-d bless you," the saintly Rabbi said, as they parted.

Matzliach slowly continued his way homeward. "What am I going to tell my wife?" he wondered.

Suddenly he heard his name called. "Ya, Matzliach! You're just the man I want!" The caller was one of the royal servants of the Bey of Tunis. "His Majesty sent me out to buy a set of antique coffee-cups. I have no idea where to get them. But you are an antique dealer. Get them for me, and you will be amply rewarded," the courtier said.

"I will try my best," Matzliach promised. If there were such cups, Matzliach knew where to find them, and find them he did. The dealer Matzliach went to was pleased to get rid of them; he had had them too long and despaired of ever selling them. Now he was pleased to sell them to Matzliach on credit, for he knew the Jewish antique dealer as a trustworthy man.

Walking through the market place, Matzliach met the courtier again, for he was there shopping for other things also. "Did you manage to find the right cups for me?" the courtier asked eagerly.

"Thanks to the One Above, I did."

The courtier took Matzliach with the cups to the Royal court and introduced him to the Bey. The king was very pleased with the cups.

"Just what I wanted," he said. "I know that the Jews are now busy with preparations for their festival. I am pleased that you took time out to find me these lovely cups. By the way, how are you doing with your preparations for the Festival?"

"The truth to tell, your Majesty, I have not yet bought a thing for the holiday."

The king immediately ordered one of his servants to send to Matzliach's house two sacks of fine flour, a jug of olive oil, and two choice live lambs. Then he asked Matzliach what he owed him for the cups.

Matzliach told the king what he paid for them and his usual commission.

"What? That's all you paid for these precious cups?" the Bey said, much surprised. "Well, the ruler of Tunisia is not looking for bargains. You shall be paid their full value!"


Matzliach left the king's palace with a very large sum of money. Walking briskly home, whom should he meet if not the Chief Rabbi, again. "I can now afford to double my donation, "Rabbi, your blessing was fulfilled." Matzliach said happily, as he handed the Rabbi an amount equal to his first generous donation. Matzliach then told him all that had happened with the courtier and the Bey, and how G-D was so kind to him.

"Thank G-d, we both did very well today," the Rabbi exclaimed. "Chag Samayah!" ("Have a happy holiday.")

And so it was for Matzliach, who rejoiced mightily with his family at the festive evening meal, and was overjoyed to sponsor generously the Shavuot night tikun, as he did every year.

And, of course, in the morning directly following the festival, he sped to the pawnbroker and redeemed his wife's precious earrings.

Reprinted from an email of Sichat HaShavuah.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Behaalotecha

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:09	8:27	9:02
Tel Aviv	7:24	8:30	
Haifa	7:17	8:31	
Be'er Sheva	7:25	8:28	



The Chief Rabbi of Israel And Napoleon's Throne by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

In the early 2000's, Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, the Rishon L'Tzion (Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel), received an official invitation from the President of France, Jacques Chirac, to visit his country.

Mr. Chirac, before ascending to the office of President in 1995, had previously served two terms as Prime Minister and nearly 20 years as the Mayor of Paris. Throughout his career he was known as a hard line, pro-Arab leader who constantly pushed Israel to cede territories to the Palestinians, thus bringing French-Israeli relations to an all time low.

Rabbi Eliahu, on the other hand, was a very outspoken individual with little patience for the formalities that are the essence of French culture. So the members of the Israeli embassy there were understandably very tense and apprehensive that the Rabbi might say or do something that would make things even worse than they were.

However, when the Rabbi arrived they soon calmed down. His outgoing and friendly demeanor put everyone at ease, and it seemed obvious to the embassy staff that the meeting would be nothing other than formalities and smiles.

But they were wrong. For instance, at the first leg of the official tour when they visited the French National Museum, the Rabbi demonstrated what seemed to be a shameful ignorance and insensitivity to French heritage.

When he was shown the throne of Napoleon he asked if it was for sale; and if so, for how much; and how long ago did Napoleon live! Then when shown one of the rooms of King Louis the Fourteenth he asked if this King was a moral person, which caused everyone to blush and even laugh behind the Rabbi's back.

The tour guide explained that the chair of Napoleon was of great historical and national importance and was certainly not for sale and regarding King Louis; although he was not known to be a particularly moral person, nevertheless France is proud of him as part of their heritage.

Afterwards they returned to the office of the president for an official ceremony where, after many introductions and formalities, Rabbi Eliahu was invited to say a few words that would be simultaneously translated into French.

Rabbi Eliahu began by describing in detail his tour of the museum and his questions that caused everyone to laugh.

At this point Rabbinit Tzivia realized that the translator was not paying attention to every word her husband was saying and, realizing that her husband was making some sort of point, requested that the chief Rabbi of France, who was also present, should take over the task.

Rabbi Eliahu continued, "In my visit to the Museum I learned that the chair of Napoleon was not for sale because of its historical importance and that King Louis, although not a man of pure character is nevertheless revered and honored as a French hero.

"I noticed that you expected me to honor these men also and were surprised when I did not do so, even though I am not French and do not even live in France.

"If so, my dear friends, I ask the same thing from you: We Jews also have our founders: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob but not of two or three hundred years ago and of questionable character like yours but of three and four thousand years ago and of impeccable integrity and selflessness.

"Is it too much to ask that just as you expect us to respect your founders and kings, so you should in turn respect ours?"

"For instance, over three thousand years ago Moses brought us to the Promised Land and some four hundred years afterwards our King David and King Solomon secured the city of Jerusalem.

"That is our history.

"Does it not make simple sense that just as you expect us to honor your heritage so you should honor ours? If the chair of Napoleon is not for sale then how can you expect us to sell parts of Israel and Jerusalem?"

The members of the Israeli embassy were in panic: this was exactly what they were afraid of! In the moment of silence that followed they were certain that Chirac would simply storm out of the room in a fury.

But they were in for a big surprise. All of the French officials present, including the President himself, stood and applauded!

Then Chirac warmly shook the Rabbi's hand, and immediately called one of his assistants and whispered something in his ear. The man left the room hurriedly and returned in just seconds with a small, velvet box.

Chirac asked for silence and then announced, "This medallion is usually reserved for visiting heads of state, but I have never heard anyone speak such clever words like these. They so impressed me that I am presenting this to you." And when he finished speaking, the crowd gave the rabbi another standing ovation.

Can one be truly humble and also be the greatest of them all?

I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, that that is exactly what happened in the life and times of Moshe Rabbeinu. Our Parasha, of Behaalotecha, describes him as being, "עני יותר מכל האדם" – He was more humble than any other person." This is referring to the past, present and the future.

At the end of the Torah, accolades are given to Moshe. He is described as being the greatest of all the prophets and he had the privilege of speaking "פנים אל פנים" – Face to Face" with The Almighty.

In the Mishna, Masechet Sanhedrin our Rabbis taught that when Adam was created, the entire world existed just for him. And since each and every one of us are as unique as Adam was, we should all declare "בשבילי נברא העולם" – This world was created for me."

This statement, however, sounds quite arrogant. Rather, the Mishna is encouraging us to appreciate the potential each and every one of us has and that our ability and our talent comes from Hashem.

It should not be a case of "כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה" – That it is my power, my might and my ability that has brought this all about. But rather, when one is paid a compliment, one should respond "Baruch Hashem – It is not me, it is thanks to Hashem, Who has enabled me to achieve all of these goals."

The great rabbinic master of the nineteenth century, Reb Simcha Bunim of Pshischa, would always carry with him two pieces of paper, one in each pocket. On one piece was written the words "בשבילי נברא העולם" – This world was created for me." On the other piece of paper were the words of Avraham to Hashem, "אנכי עפר ואפר" – I am just dust and ashes." He would always be mindful of these two messages. First of all to recognize his own, incredible potential and at the same time to know that he was just dust and ashes.

That was the secret to the success of Moshe Rabbeinu. He was indeed more humble than any other person but he knew he had talents, he knew he had ability. However, when he achieved much, indeed more than all others, he ascribed that success to Hashem.

Similarly, let each and every one of us recognize the talents and potential we possess, in order to make the maximum impact on the world around us. However, at the same time we should recognize, it is not thanks to our greatness, it is all Baruch Hashem, thanks to the gifts, the Almighty has given us.

So let's try to recognize all of Hashem's gifts and let's 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 and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 5
MITZVOT ASEH: 3
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 136
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1840
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7055

HAFTORA: Zechariah 2:14 - 4:7

This week in Israel, we study Chapter 2 of Pirkei Avot (outside Israel one studies Chapter 1).

בהעלותך
נשא

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