

The Jewish Weekly

Fringe Benefits

by Rabbi A.D. Halperin

In 1965 Yaakov Greenberg had to travel to Houston, to accompany his father-in-law who had flown in from Israel for treatment at the famous hospital there. Before leaving his home in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn, he asked his friends and acquaintances for advice about how to survive Jewishly in the heart of Texas. How would they be able to find kosher food, a minyan to pray with, and so forth?

No one was able to help him precisely, but they all said that his best hope was to investigate whether there was a Lubavitch representative in the city. Until then, Yaakov had never had any contact with Chabad. Not that he was opposed to the outgoing Chassidic movement, but the opportunity had never thrust itself upon him and he himself was not interested. So although he lived close to Lubavitch World Headquarters and the Rebbe's home and shul in Brooklyn, ever since he and his wife had moved from Israel to the USA, he had never gone to see the Rebbe.

Now, however, he realized Chabad was his best hope. He obtained the telephone number of Rabbi Shimon Lazerov, the original Lubavitch representative in the state of Texas, who lived in Houston, called him and explained his situation. Rabbi Lazerov immediately extended a warm invitation.

Yaakov and his father-in-law were grateful for the offer, but as they said afterward, they couldn't possibly have anticipated the extent to which Rabbi Lazerov would succeed in helping them. He even managed to arrange kosher food for the hospital stay.

What flabbergasted them even more than his enthusiasm to help them and the generous bestowal of his time and resources, was all that Rabbi Lazerov had accomplished in his relatively short time in Houston. Who could ever imagine that in a Jewish wasteland such as Texas in the 60's, there could be a Chassidic synagogue with a growing community, never mind a mikveh!

As amazed as Yaakov felt, it was only a fraction of the astonishment of his father-in-law, who kept exclaiming over and over how extraordinary it was to be able to feel so comfortable and at home in such a faraway place as Houston. After the completion of his medical treatment, before he left to return to Israel, he asked Yaakov to please go and personally convey in his name to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, his appreciation and wonderment over such an impressive accomplishment.

Yaakov agreed to his request, of course, but without thinking too much about what it entailed. When

he found out through a preliminary phone call to the Rebbe's secretariat that it wasn't so simple as just a short drive to the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn and strolling into "770," the Rebbe's shul, he began to have second thoughts. After a few frustrations - the many procedures involved, including making an appointment far in advance, long waiting lists, and post-midnight meetings - he decided that he could just as well fulfill his obligation by writing a letter. This he did, in it expressing his and his father-in-law's feelings of gratitude and how impressed they were with all that the Rebbe's representative in Texas had accomplished there.

Although writing a note instead of delivering the message personally did not seem such a big deal to Yaakov, it turned out to be so for his father-in-law. When he visited him the next year in Israel, and in response to his eager query told him he had written because it was too complicated to arrange a visit, his father-in-law was visibly upset. He asked him to please make another effort to speak to the Rebbe in person.

When Yaakov returned to New York, he was immediately swallowed up by the demands of his business and his everyday affairs. Once again, he did not give a strong priority to his promise to go see the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as his life quickly fell back into its regular patterns.

Two more years went by. A phone call came from the Holy Land: his father-in-law had passed away. He and his wife quickly made arrangements to fly to Israel as soon as possible in order to be there for the funeral and the week of mourning.

When they returned to Brooklyn, Yaakov found in his mailbox a letter from his father-in-law! From the date inscribed at the top, it was clear that he had written it on the last night of his life. It was like all the letters he sent them approximately once every two weeks, except for the P.S. he had added at the bottom.

There he wrote, "I am reminding you of the request I made while we were still in Houston, and which I repeated when last you came to visit two years ago: please go to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and express in person my gratitude and appreciation for all that Chabad has accomplished in Texas and for the great kindness shown to us there."

This time Yaakov took the mission with the utmost seriousness. It was almost as if it were a deathbed request, which in Jewish Law is binding. And certainly it was his father-in-law's final words to him.

That same day he went to 770 Eastern Parkway, Lubavitch World Headquarters, for the first time in his life. He spoke to one of the Rebbe's

It Once Happened...

secretaries and told him that he must be allowed to see the Rebbe, "because my father-in-law gave me a mission to do so on the last night of his life."

Somehow the mysteriousness of his statement had an effect on the famously imperturbable secretaries, and they agreed to give him an appointment that same week, on Thursday night.

When he arrived, he was asked if he had written a kvittel, the Yiddish term for a note. When he replied he had no idea what note was being referred to, the secretary he had become acquainted with, instructed him to write on a piece of unlined paper his name, mother's name, and the message or a brief outline of it that he wanted to deliver from his deceased father-in-law.


After writing the note he sat and waited. It took three hours until he was admitted into the Rebbe's room. At first he was struck speechless. Of course he had seen photographs of the Rebbe before that night, but seeing him face to face was immeasurably different.

The Rebbe shook hands with him and took the note. He gave it one quick glance and remarked, "But you already wrote to me about this. Indeed, I'm the one that has to thank you for the pleasure you gave me through such positive feedback about the activities of our representative there. I would have written you to that effect, but frankly, I expected to see you in person here. One has to presume that an agent will fulfill his mission, especially if it is from his father-in-law, because then it is also tied in somewhat with the mitzvah of 'Honor your father'."


Yaakov felt as if he were dreaming. All he could manage to say was that at least he was fulfilling it now while it was still within the thirty days of mourning for his father-in-law.

The Rebbe thereupon said to him, although not in these exact words, "The numerical equivalent of lev [heart] is 32. The total number of tzitzit strands on a four-cornered garment is also 32. The main theme of tzitzit, as we proclaim everyday when we read the Shema Yisroel prayer, is "You shall look upon them and you shall remember G-d's commandments. Just as it is forbidden for the heart to cease working for even a moment, Heaven forefend, so it is forbidden for a Jew to be even for a moment without this "You shall remember." A Jew must never lose awareness

Continued on the other side...



Shabbat Times - Parshat Korach

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	7:13	8:31	9:06
Tel Aviv	7:28	8:34	
Haifa	7:21	8:35	
Be'er Sheva	7:29	8:32	



... Continued from previous side

of G-d, His Torah and the commandments for even a single moment, no matter what situation he finds himself in. Whether day or night, whether awake or asleep, he must always have this consciousness. That is the explanation why we Chassidim wear our tzitzit garment even when we sleep."

Yaakov had no idea why the Rebbe was telling him all this, but before he could concentrate his thoughts, the Rebbe had already returned to their original discussion, just as if he had never digressed.

"Your father-in-law was a patient at that major hospital in Houston where they have a number of excellent doctors with well-deserved reputations. But that is not the only place with excellent doctors. Nor is New York. The true doctor, the primary healer is G-d Almighty, for it is He who empowers physicians to heal. And He is present in every place and He can accomplish whatever He wishes. He is not just a specialist in one particular heart problem or another; even if the heart stops working, what is called today "cardiac arrest," we know that people can be saved. Is that not a return from death? Nevertheless, we are not intimidated. Three times each day we pray, "You enliven the dead, You are powerful to save."

The Rebbe then showered a big smile upon Yaakov, blessed him and his family, thanked him for coming, and shook hands with him in farewell.

Yaakov was very positively affected by his personal encounter with the Rebbe, even though there was much he didn't understand. He had enjoyed the Rebbe's words of Torah, connecting tzitzit to the heart, but why had the Rebbe said it to him? And what was all this about heart specialists being everywhere and rescue from cardiac arrests?

Yaakov was known to say afterwards that if he had been a chassid perhaps he would have realized there must be personal significance for him in the Rebbe's words, but as a descendent of a long line of non-chassidim he never had a clue.

Three more years passed. Yaakov was in Hong Kong on business, and was sitting in his hotel lobby chatting with another Jew from New York who was also there for business reasons. They were talking about how it seemed they would have to stay in Hong Kong longer than planned

because heavy snow storms in New York had caused cancellation of all airline flights to there.

His next memory was two days later, when he woke up in the emergency room of the local hospital, surrounded by doctors, nurses and his wife! She had found a way to fly in immediately after receiving the emergency phone call. After he had recovered his senses a bit, they told him that he had suffered a cardiac arrest. The doctors were referring to his recovery as a resurrection!

At that moment Yaakov suddenly recalled with striking clarity his audience with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the "strange" things the Rebbe had said to him then. For a moment he was emotionally overwhelmed by the memory. Then, he insisted that his wife immediately telephone to the Rebbe's office in Brooklyn and ask them to relay to the Rebbe what had happened to him, and his request for a blessing for a complete recovery.

The next morning, before leaving for the hospital to visit her husband, Yaakov's wife received a phone call at the hotel from one of the Rebbe's secretaries. He read her the Rebbe's response: "I mentioned the request for his complete and immediate salvation and recovery at the place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe. Certainly he remembers what was said to him about wearing a tzitzit garment also at night and even when sleeping. At the very least he should do so from now on. May he have good news."

His wife couldn't understand at all what had happened. When Yaakov filled in the details of his nocturnal interview with the Rebbe, she practically shouted at him: "How can it be that the Rebbe told you to sleep with a tallit katan and you haven't done so!"

Right then and there in the hospital Yaakov began to keep his tzitzit on even while he slept. He committed himself to doing so every night without exception.

One day the next summer, when they were vacationing in their summer bungalow, he suddenly felt chest pains. He told his wife, who made arrangements for him to be taken to the local hospital. It was only on the way there that he remembered that the night before he hadn't worn his tzitzit to sleep.

After that he didn't miss a night. Nor did he have any further health problems.

Reprinted from a translation of V'Rabim Hashiv M'avon, vol. 1.

Editor's Note: the Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the 7th Chabad Rebbe z"l's, 28th Yahrzeit is next Shabbat, 3rd Tammuz - July 2nd of this year

המוולד יהיה ביום רביעי, 48 דקות ו 31 חלקים אחרי 6 בבוקר

ראש חדש תמוז יהיה ביום רביעי וחמישי Rosh Chodesh will be Wednesday and Thursday

What made Korach do something so crazy?

Even the most egotistically minded person would have realized that his revolt against people who had been appointed by Hashem to lead the people, would certainly not succeed.

Rashi explains that Korach had some Divine insight. Prophetically, he could see that in future generations, there would be household names descended from him – well known to the people, who would be great individuals – like Samuel the Prophet, and many Levites who led services in the Temple.

Korach could contemplate on what we read in Psalm 99, which we recite in Shul on Friday night, 'משה ואהרן בכהניו', 'ושמואל בקוראי שמו', Moshe and Aharon were amongst those who were the Priests of Hashem and Shmuel amongst those who called on his name'.

And notice, say Chazal in the Talmud, Shmuel in his generation, is considered to be as great as Moshe and Aharon were in their generation. And notice as well, that Shmuel by himself, is compared to Moshe and Aharon combined. And this is the type of impression that Korach had, as a result of which he thought that he was greater than Moshe and Aharon combined.

I believe that Korach's mistake was rooted in the wrong definition that he gave to greatness. Korach thought that to be great means, you've got to be famous. No. He made a terrible, fatal error.

In our tradition of course, the truly great people are those who live selflessly for the sake of others, enriching our society through their piety. That's why the Talmud talks about the 'לו צדיקים', the 36 pious people, through whose merit the world continues to exist.

To be great, means being a mensch, being there for the sake of others, whether the world knows about you or not. Korach wanted us to remember him to this day because of his fame. Sadly, for him, we recall his name for the wrong reasons. And from him we can learn a lesson for us all, and that is, each and every one of us can be truly great.

Another Torah I heard from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, Rashi explains why Hashem sent the snakes as a punishment, because they talked against the Manna, the snake was punished for talking bad, another reason is because the snake tastes in everything a taste of earth, they talked against a heavenly food that tastes like everything they could imagine, the truth is that its all one meaning, the deepest depth is when one walks around talking bad on another person, seeing only bad in everything, then he tastes a "taste of earth" in everything, in all his life, but when someone has the holiest privilege to see only good in everyone, he can taste "the taste of all tastes", his life is so sweet.

So let's try to see only the best in everyone 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: 9
MITZVOT ASEH: 5
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 95
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1409
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5325

HAFTORA: Shmuel I 11:14 -12:22

Rosh Chodesh - Wednesday & Thursday, June 29 & 30, 2022

קרח
שלה לך

If you would like to help keep The Jewish Weekly being published, or to subscribe or dedicate an issue please email editor@thejweekly.org to help continue our weekly publication.

To subscribe to THE JEWISH WEEKLY or to dedicate a single issue, please contact us by email: editor@thejweekly.org or www.thejweekly.org