

The Jewish Weekly

The Farmer's Unmarried Daughter

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Yankel the peasant was a farmer by choice, and a wealthy one at that. Although he did not know how to read and write, he did, however, know almost everything there was to know about farming. That is how he had been able to work his fields to yield their maximum and enrich their master.

Yankel did not want his sons to grow up ignorant like he was, unable to read the simplest prayers. He tried to hire a tutor to come to his home but could not find one. Instead, he sent the two boys to a nearby town which boasted a good cheder (elementary-school level) and yeshiva. Shimon and Levi dedicated supreme efforts to becoming true Torah scholars and soon won a name for themselves as the iluyim-geniuses of their yeshiva. When the boys chanced once to hear the Baal Shem Tov speak, they became ardent admirers of him and traveled frequently to hear more from him and bask in his holy aura.

"Why are you always going to Mezibuz?" the father would ask the boys, not understanding what could draw his sons to that distant city.

"We want to visit the wise man who lives there, the famous Baal Shem Tov."

"Why is he considered so wise?" their farmer father would insist on knowing. "Can he plow? Does he know anything about planting? About crops? Weather?"

The sons tried to relate to their father in a language that he was familiar with "Yes Father," they would reassure him. "The Baal Shem Tov knows about everything under the sun, including farming." This answer would usually satisfy Yankel and he let his sons visit the Tzadik of Mezibuz.

One time, however, his curiosity overcame him. "This time," he announced, "I am going to Mezibuz myself. Why should I not see this wise man with my own eyes?"

Yankel prepared for the trip, taking along many gifts for the rabbi. He arrived at his destination and was admitted into the Tzadik's presence. "My sons tell me that you are a wise man. That you know everything there is to know about farming. Is this true?"

The Baal Shem Tov launched into a detailed account of all the fields the farmer owned and their exact boundaries. He then described exactly what Yankel had planted the past season in each of these fields. The peasant could not help being impressed with the detailed knowledge.

He decided that his sons were correct; this rabbi was indeed a learned and wise man. But if so, he thought to himself, then shouldn't the Baal Shem Tov also be able to advise him on

what to plant in the coming season? That requires a special expertise.

The Baal Shem Tov obliged, giving him precise information about what he should plant, where and in what amounts. He then dismissed the peasant with a friendly nod of his head.

Yankel returned home and, recalling what the Baal Shem Tov had advised, followed his instructions to the letter, planting wheat where the Tzadik had said and oats where the Tzadik had advised. Summer came and with it the harvest. When Yankel had gathered in all his grain and fruit he found that the same fields had yielded many times their former amount. He could not help being impressed with the Baal Shem Tov's vast knowledge and foresight.

Yankel became a staunch admirer of the Baal Shem Tov, traveling to Mezibuz whenever he had any questions. Of course his interest lay in a different area altogether from that of his sons, but still, they all shared a mutual admiration for the Tzadik.

Years passed and the peasant's daughter became of age. He had many offers for her hand - was she not the daughter of a wealthy man and the sister of two noted scholars?

Yankel felt that he could not take such a major step without consulting the wise man of Mezibuz. He listed the names of each prospective suitor and when he had accumulated many names, decided it was time to consult the Rebbe.

"Tell me, honored rabbi, who on this list do you consider the most eligible suitor for my daughter? Many of these young men have wealth or family to recommend them, but I dare not make the decision alone."

The Baal Shem Tov took the list from his hand and pored over it. Then he shook his head and gave it back to Yankel.

"None of these men are destined for your daughter," he declared. "Return home and send me your two sons. I will find a suitable match for your daughter and he will accompany the boys home."

Yankel did as he had been told. He returned home and sent his boys instead.

When Shimon and Levi arrived, the Baal Shem Tov took the youths with him and the three traveled to a distant city. The word spread about the Baal Shem Tov's presence, and the townspeople prepared a lavish reception. Everyone came to pay his respects, from the trustees to the simplest cobbler.

When the people had all gathered in the large hall, the Baal Shem Tov revealed the purpose of his visit. "I want all your cooperation, my good people," he announced. "I am looking for a certain young man, Shmerel the son of Velvel Itzik and Sarah Beila. If he is here today, let him step forward."

Hundreds of eyes scanned the crowd but no one moved. The Baal Shem Tov continued, "Is there anyone here who knows where this young man lives?"

It Once Happened...

Again all eyes roved around the hall but no one spoke up. "I will be remaining here for several days. If anyone can trace Shmerel and bring him to me, I would be most grateful."

Everyone wanted to be helpful but no one could recall such a name of a person living in their town. Several days went by but not a single clue turned up.

Meanwhile Rosh Chodesh came, which gave the happy townspeople another occasion to gather under one roof for a New Moon festive meal, and host the eminent Baal Shem Tov who had obliged them by gracing their city. A large meal was prepared in his honor and rows of tables were laid with snowy tablecloths. Fresh white challahs were put at each place.

Just as the people were about to wash and take their places, a wild youth with unkempt hair, dressed in dirty smelly rags, ran in and grabbed one of the dainty challahs. He ran out before people realized what was happening.

"Hey Shmerel!" someone shouted. "You, son of Velvel Itzik and Sora Baila, you come right back and return that roll."


Suddenly everyone froze. That was the name they were to be on the lookout for! Could this really be? What could the Baal Shem Tov possibly want with such an uncouth and vulgar young man? He and his family enjoyed a reputation of being slothful, dirty, coarse and low.

They decided that this was a matter they would leave for the Baal Shem Tov to decide for himself. "Fine!" the Baal Shem Tov exclaimed. "Grab the boy. Wash him well and have him dressed up. Then bring him here to me."

When Shmerel saw he was being pursued, he ran away as fast as he could. But his pursuers did not give up easily. They soon had him between two strong men who led him to the bathhouse. Before long he was being presented to the Baal Shem Tov.

The Baal Shem Tov made Shmerel sit next to him throughout the meal. In the middle of the meal the Baal Shem Tov suddenly took his handkerchief and passed it over Shmerel's face. "Say some dvar Torah!" he commanded the youth.

Shmerel opened his mouth and began to expound on a complex Torah topic. His discourse continued for a few hours. Even the two brothers, who were geniuses in their own right and students of the Baal Shem Tov, couldn't themselves understand all he said. When he had finished, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the brothers and asked,



Y-GRAPHICS
Shabbat Times - Parshat Eikev

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:43	7:56	8:35
Tel Aviv	6:58	7:58	
Haifa	6:51	7:59	
Be'er Sheva	7:00	7:58	



... Continued from previous side

"Nu, does this youth please you?" The reply was enthusiastically affirmative. "Very well, then take him home with you and prepare the chupah immediately."

They did exactly that. They took Shmerel along with them and when they arrived home, began to praise him to the skies. They told their father that the Baal Shem Tov had instructed them to make a chupah right away. He gave his consent and the preparations were made for an immediate wedding.

Throughout the sheva brachos week following the wedding, Shmerel expounded Torah thoughts so deep that no one could fully understand them. People could not help being impressed by his deep knowledge. The brothers itched to sit down with him once the sheva brachos were over and delve deeply into the Gemara (Talmud) together with their new brother in law.

As talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov, the two brothers were accustomed to wake at midnight to recite the Tikun Chatzot (midnight rectifications' prayer service), and then continuing with study until morning. They dared not wake him up, thinking that he must surely have studied until midnight. How he served the Creator was his business. But when it grew even later and the final time for reciting the Shema Yisroel prayer had arrived, they felt it their duty to wake him. They went over discreetly and knocked on the door of his room.

"My husband is still sleeping," their sister answered their knock. She stepped aside and they entered the room.

With one look, they felt instinctively that the sleeping man was not a genuine Torah scholar, but felt it not proper to make hasty judgments based on such sketchy impression. Nevertheless, it was late, so they shook him gently and told him to get up.

"Oh leave me alone," he yawned and stretched. "What's the rush?" Something was basically wrong. A Torah scholar rises with the speed of a lion to do the will of his Creator.

"Say Modeh Ani (the first two words of a brief sentence of gratitude recited immediately upon waking)," they had to remind him. The brothers said to each other as soon as they left the room, "This strange behavior requires an explanation and there is no one who knows better than the Baal Shem Tov. He is the one who suggested this match to begin with".

The brothers left for Mezibuz immediately. They were ushered into the Rebbe's presence, whereupon

they reviewed the events of the past week, ever since they had left together with Shmerel until this morning. The Baal Shem Tov listened to their story and nodded.

"Let me explain what is really going on," he said, and again nodded in understanding. "You see, there are matchmakers above in Heaven just as there are matchmakers here below. It was clear in Heaven that Shmerel is your sister's true intended husband. The question that was proposed was how to bring about such a match. A young girl whose father was such a wealthy man and whose brothers were such excellent scholars would never be willing to marry a young man of such questionable manners, of such low intelligence and such disreputable family.

"A plan was formulated to have the girl born handicapped. But that was not the answer either, for as long as she had a rich father, she could still make a better match than this Shmerel, even if she was deformed.

"The shadchanim (matchmakers) above argued the possibilities back and forth. 'What if her father were to die and she was deformed. The combination of these two faults might bring about the match on earth,' one of them argued.

"I entered the discussion myself," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "I refused to let this young girl or her father be touched in any way. I took it upon myself to open before him the gates of the Torah, both revealed and mystic. This would surely capture your hearts and ensure your consent.

"Had this Shmerel been a worthy receptacle for the Torah I filled him with, it would have remained with him in the future. But his gross coarseness overcame whatever I was able to squeeze from his potential after it had lasted for the seven days of sheva brochos.

"And now, my dear friends, there is nothing for you to do but return home. Tell your sister that this Shmerel is truly her intended husband. Let her continue to live with him and I will guarantee her fine children. And you, as Shmerel's brothers-in-law, must constantly work on him. Teach him to davven (pray) and to learn, as much as his abilities permit. He will slowly improve and reach a decent level of Torah knowledge. Go, and good luck to you."

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.

המולד יהיה ביום שבת, ביום שבת, 16 דקות ו5 חלקים אחרי 8 בבקר

ראש חדש אלול יהיה ביום שבת קודש ויום ראשון Rosh Elul will be Shabbat and Sunday, Aug 27 & 28

We begin to recite **אורי לידוד** on the 2nd day Rosh Chodesh until Shmini Atzeret, some hold until Simchat Torah and some hold Hoshanah Rabbah inclusive. Some begin on the first day of Rosh Chodesh.

We begin to blow Shofar every week day at the conclusion of Shacharit until the day before Erev Rosh Hashanah where we don't blow at all.

Hashem demands that we should all fear Him. But is it possible then, for us to have a healthy relationship with Him?

In Parshat Eikev, Moshe brings the word of Hashem to the people: "מה ה' אלוהיך שואל מעמך - What is it that the Lord your G-d wants of you?" "כי אם ליראה את יהוה - But always to fear the Lord your G-d."

What do we mean here by fearing Hashem? The Maharsha in his commentary on the Gemara Masechet Berachot 33b differentiates between two types of 'יראה', two types of fear. The first he calls 'יראת העונש' - fear of punishment.' This type of fear, he said, is not the healthiest. That is to say, when I'm in a state of dread, I don't want to do what is wrong because I fear the possible repercussions. The Maharsha however says that there is a different type of 'יראה'. It is 'יראת ה'הרוממות', in which we have a sense of awe, of reverence for Hashem. We recognize His greatness and His place in our life as a result of which we cleave to Him with love and as a result of our passion for Him and what He represents, we want to do the right thing for our own sake, and for the sake of others.

It is for this reason that in Hebrew, the words for fearing and seeing come from the same root. And that's because by 'seeing' Hashem's role in this world, by 'seeing' that He's there to help us through and His love for us - as a result we have enormous reverence for Him. And that, therefore, provides for an exceptionally healthy relationship through which we are motivated to follow the word of Hashem, not because we fear punishment but rather because we delight in the incredible opportunities that a life of Torah and mitzvot provides for us.

Let us, therefore, motivate our children and grandchildren to follow the word of Hashem not because they're in dread of anything but rather because they have the privilege of a life filled with that incredible gift of Torah and mitzvot. One way is by praying, so let's join together and pray with all our hearts, 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: 8
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 111
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1747
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6865

HAFTORA:
Yeshayah 49:14- 51:3 (ותאמר ציון) (this is the second of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Elul
Rosh Chodesh - Shabbat Parshat Reeh & Sunday - August 27 & 28.

This week in Israel, we study Chapter 5 of Pirkei Avot (outside Israel one studies Chapter 4).

פרשת עקב

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Laws & Customs: Month of Elul (Up to Erev Rosh Hashanah)

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For the year 5782

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Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachah Sheets

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Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel in memory of his grandparents

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🕊 MONTH OF ELUL

On Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, people give extra Tzedakah.

It is a Yerushalmi Minhag to go to Kivrei Tzadikim on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, there are some who specially go to Mearat Hamachpela and Kever Rachel.

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai to receive the second set of Luchot. He returned with them on Yom Kippur, with Hashem having granted complete forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. These forty days are an especially auspicious time for Teshuvah.

The Arizal taught that the thirteen attributes of Divine Mercy are revealed in the month of Elul, assisting in one's efforts to do Teshuvah. The Baal Hatanya explained this idea with the famous parable of Melech B'Sadeh – the King in the field. The month of Elul is thus known as the Chodesh Horachamim (month of mercy), and the gates of mercy are open to all who wish to come close to Hashem through Teshuvah, Tefillah and Torah. These ideas should be publicized as much as possible.

Elul is the month of preparation to usher in a new year replete with good and blessing, both physically and spiritually.

The word Elul is an acronym for a number of Pesukim alluding to the ideas of Torah, Tefillah, Tzedakah, Teshuvah and Geulah. The month of Elul is an appropriate time to increase in all of these matters.

One should increase learning, particularly those topics applicable to the Avodah of the month of Elul.

One should also increase in Ahavat Yisrael and Gemilat-Chessed.

Elul is the "month of reckoning". During this month, one should make an accurate assessment of all one's thoughts, words and deeds, and reflect on all the experiences that occurred during the course of the year. One should improve and strengthen one's qualities, and at the same time, regret and correct one's deficiencies – both the errors and wrongs that were committed, as well as those things which were not performed as well as they could have been. One should resolve for the future to fulfil Mitzvot in the best possible manner; to be more diligent with regards to Torah and Tefillah; and to correct one's negative Middot as well as acquire positive Middot.

During the month of Elul, according to the Sephardic communities, Selichot is recited daily. (The Ashkenazi communities start Selichot this year, Motzei Shabbat, August 28th.)

During Elul, one should be enthused with much Simcha, in recognition of the special closeness that Hashem shows us – "The King is in the field".

Even though Elul is a time to arouse others to Teshuvah, this should be done in a pleasant and

humble way, and not by G-d forbid saying harsh things about others.

🕊 L'DAVID HASHEM ORI

We begin reciting L'David Hashem Ori on Rosh Chodesh. Chabad and some other Chassidim start on the **first** day whilst everyone else starts on the **second** day. During Shacharit, some recite it after Aleinu and some, including Chabad, recite it after Shir Shel Yom (or after Borchy Nafshi on Rosh Chodesh). Chabad and some others recite it during Mincha before Aleinu. Some communities recite L'David Hashem Ori at Mincha after Aleinu, and some only after Ma'ariv. When davening Mincha with a Minyan who says it after Ma'ariv, one must still recite Aleinu together with them. If one needs to defer L'David Hashem Ori as a result, he should recite it after Aleinu and before Al Tirah.

🕊 SHOFAR

Shofar is blown during the month of Elul, most have the custom to begin on Monday, the second day of Rosh Chodesh and some on the first day. The purpose of hearing the Shofar is to arouse feelings of Teshuvah.

Some have the custom to blow Shofar also after Mincha or Maariv. Those who blow Shofar after Maariv, should do so also on Motzei Shabbat

Some have the custom to blow just Tekiah-Shevarim-Teruah-Tekiah and others, including Chabad, blow ten sounds. [Tekiah-Shevarim-Teruah-Tekiah; Tekiah-Shevarim-Tekiah; Tekiah-Teruah-Tekiah.]

If one was unable to hear the Shofar with a Minyan, he should still endeavor to hear the Shofar.

During Elul, one does not need to repeat the sounds, if the Shofar was Passul (e.g. it had a crack or hole). Similarly, one does not need to repeat any sounds blown incorrectly (e.g. the Tekiah was too short). If the Ba'al-Tokeah chooses to fix his mistake, he certainly does not need to redo the entire section, as he would, were it Rosh Hashana.

🕊 OTHER CUSTOMS OF ELUL

There is a tradition to recite 10 extra chapters of Tehillim each day of Elul, which will equal the completion of Tehillim twice (300 chapters – numerically equivalent to כפר – atonement). Chabad have the custom to only recite three extra chapters of Tehillim each day. Ideally, these should be recited immediately after the Tehillim that is normally said at the end of Shacharit.

If one neglected to recite these chapters of Tehillim on the appropriate day, he should do so at the earliest opportunity.

Beginning on the first day of Rosh Chodesh, most, including Chabad, have the custom to wish (both in person as well as in writing): "Ketivah V'Chatima Tovah L'Shana Tova U'Metukah". [The Lubavitcher Rebbe included

these wishes at the end of his letters. From Rosh Chodesh onwards, he would write only "Ketivah V'Chatima Tovah", and would begin adding "L'Shana Tova U'Metukah" from around the 18th of Elul onwards.]

Although the basic requirement is to check Mezuzot and Tefillin twice every seven years, some have the custom of checking them every Elul (unless they were checked within the last 12 months).

🕊 DATES IN ELUL

7 Elul – Shabbat Parshat Shoftim. The sixth chapter of Pirkei Avot is recited.

14 Elul – Shabbat Parshat Ki Teitzei. When reading the last Passuk of the Parsha, the word Zeicher is read twice, first with a Tzeirei (Zeicher), and then again with a Segol (Zecher).

The first and second chapter of Pirkei Avot is recited. The opening Mishna ("Kol Yisrael") and concluding Mishna ("Rabbi Chananya") are recited only once.

15 Elul – Being thirty days before Sukkot, one begins learning its Halachot. This thirty-day period should also be utilized to ensure that the Chag needs of the poor are met, as well as planning Sukkot festivities.

18 Elul – The birthday of the Baal Shem Tov and the Baal Hatanya. On this day, the Chabad Rebbeim would wish one a "Chag Sameach".

The last 12 days of Elul (18-29 Elul) correspond to the 12 months of the year. On each of these days, one should make a reckoning of the corresponding month, and make all necessary corrections.

21 Elul – Shabbat Parshat Ki Tavo. The third and fourth chapter of Pirkei Avot is recited by all. The opening Mishna ("Kol Yisrael") and concluding Mishna ("Rabbi Chananya") are recited only once.

🕊 28TH ELUL "SHABBAT MEVARCHIM"

Shabbat Parshat Nitzavim. We don't bentsh the new month before Musaf, however Av Harachamim is recited. The Baal Shem Tov explains that Hashem Himself bentshes the month of Tishrei, and with this power, we bentsh the other months of the year.

Many make a kiddush after davening, in honor of "Shabbat Mevarchim".

Tzidkatecha is recited.

One learns the final two chapters of Pirkei Avot after Mincha. The opening Mishna ("Kol Yisrael") and concluding Mishna ("Rabbi Chananya") are recited only once.

Vi'hi Noam and V'atah Kaddosh are omitted on Motzei Shabbat.

🕊 SELICHOT

Due to the very varied customs on Selichot, we advise everyone to make themselves familiar with their own particular customs.



The Jewish
Weekly
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 Stories, Halachot and Minhagim