

The Jewish Weekly

When A Rebbe Goes Shopping by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

On a number of occasions, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe (the Rebbe Rayatz) told about his three-month stay in Vienna until just before Pesach in 5663 (Jan. 6-Apr. 5, 1903) with his father and predecessor, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, known as the Rebbe Rashab, who required medical treatment. During that time, they studied together the laws of monetary claims from the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch. They also studied discourses of Chassidic teaching on the Weekly Torah Reading.

Because of his weakened condition, the doctors told the Rebbe Rashab not to engage in any strenuous physical activity, and even not to over-exert himself mentally.

The Rebbe Rashab's habit during that period was to take a brief rest on the couch after lunch. He didn't lie down exactly, but would sort of recline, with one leg up on the couch. Once, he remained for a considerable time in this position, much longer than usual.

The Rayatz wasn't sure what to do. It seemed as if the Rebbe Rashab wasn't even in this world; he was on his side, and his eyes were bulging in a strange way. He was afraid to wake his father up. But he was even more afraid to leave him be.

He began to walk loudly back and forth near the sofa, hoping his father would wake. When that didn't work, he started moving the table around, making even more noise, but that didn't help either. And by then the hour was getting quite late.

It wasn't until after nine straight hours that the Rebbe finally stirred. "What day is today?" he asked his son. "Which parsha [weekly Torah reading] is it?"

The Rayatz answered him that it was Wednesday, and told him which parsha it was. He thought his father seemed confused.

The Rebbe Rashab then prepared to pray the Evening Prayer, chanting the words in a melody of the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of the Chabad dynasty). He extended his prayer for a very long time, similar to the custom on the first night of Rosh Hashana.

The next morning, the Rebbe asked his son if they had some money (whenever they traveled together, the latter attended to the finances). Although they were really quite low in funds, he answered "Yes," so as to not disappoint his father. Shortly thereafter, he went and pawned his silver cane, and gave the money to his father. The Rebbe then announced that he would be going out,

put on his coat and left. The Rayatz, sensing that his father did not want him along, remained by himself in their hotel suite.

Some time later, there was a knock on the door. He opened to a delivery boy, who asked if he was "Schneersohn." Upon confirmation, he handed him the box he was carrying. Attached was a note that said, in the Rebbe's handwriting, "take this package and pay the man twenty-five crowns."

Over the next few hours, several more packages arrived with the same message, each from a different store. When the Rayatz looked over the names of the firms on the boxes, he realized that they were all of stores specializing in women's and girls' apparel. He presumed that his father had bought presents for his daughter-in-law and grand daughters, the Rayatz's wife and three daughters.

That evening, when the Rebbe Rashab returned, he told his son to prepare to travel. He said they would need to take along tallit and tefillin, but he didn't tell him their destination. The Rayatz had to borrow some money for traveling expenses.

The next day, the Rayatz bundled the packages, paid the hotel bill, and arranged a cab to the train station. Once there, the Rebbe told him to purchase tickets to Pressburg (a major center of Jewry in Central Europe, now Bratislava in Slovakia). When they got off the train, it was 9:30 at night, so they checked into a small inn.

In the morning, the Rebbe Rashab said, "We must go to pay a shiva call to the family of a pious Torah scholar who are in mourning. The Rayatz started to look for a carriage to take them into the city, but his father told him they would walk, which surprised him. He picked up the suitcase and they headed downtown.

On the street they encountered a hurrying yeshiva student. The Rebbe Rashab stopped him and asked for directions to a certain home. The young man responded impatiently, "I'm sorry, I don't have time; I'm in a rush to get back to the yeshiva. Just go straight and ask further on."

"Indeed," said the Rebbe. "Is that how you fulfill the mitzvah of hospitality? Can't you tell that we are strangers here?"

The young man calmed down and apologized. He explained to them carefully how to go, and then added that the family was sitting shiva. Upon further questioning, it turned out that the head of the family, Rabbi Avraham Bick, had passed away during the hours of the Rebbe's unusual long rest on the sofa.

The Rebbe thanked the student and continued with his son down the street. When they reached the house they entered, and there they saw a woman with her three daughters, sitting in the manner of mourners. After offering words of comfort to the widow and her daughters, the Rebbe then suggested to his son that they go out for a while. They walked, and came upon a large yeshiva with many students

It Once Happened..

who were sitting and studying. The Rebbe engaged a few of them in discussions about what they were learning. Among these was the young man who had given them directions. The Rebbe entered into a complex Talmudic analysis with one of the students, and afterwards praised him highly.

Upon returning to the house, the Rebbe spoke again to the bereaved. When they asked him who he was, he told them that he was a distant relative. When they asked if he knew the deceased, he responded that it didn't matter. He asked if it could be arranged for him to obtain kosher milk. He and his son stayed over two nights in Pressburg.

In a subsequent visit the next day, the Rebbe guided the conversation to the subject of the girls' future. The woman complained about her difficult situation, especially now that her husband had died. She couldn't afford to buy clothes for her two oldest daughters who were of marriageable age, nor was she being approached with appropriate matches for them.


The Rebbe recommended to her the yeshiva student whose analytical abilities he had praised as a match for her eldest daughter, and for her second daughter he suggested the young man they had first met in the street. "And don't worry about trousseaus for them," added the Rebbe. "I have everything they need!"


Eventually, both these matches were successful. Before each engagement became official, the young bride-to-be received a parcel of clothing from the purchases of the Rebbe Rashab, and everything fit perfectly! The total cost of all that he had brought was a few hundred rubles, a very large sum in those days. The first wedding took place while the Rebbe was still in Vienna, the second a few months later, a fortnight after Shavuot.

Nearly ten years later, the Rebbe Rayatz happened to be in the Pressburg area. He decided to look up the Bick daughters to see how things had worked out. He found the street but could not locate the house. There was now a large brick home where previously the cottage had stood.

A young woman came out and greeted him. She said she recognized him as having been present with his father at her two older sisters' engagements. She told him that she too was now married and happily so, thank G-d, but that both her sisters were living in much more fortunate and prestigious circumstances. Her older brother-in law was the chief rabbi of a prominent city and the other was the dean of a yeshiva. "I wish your father had arranged my match too!"

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.





Shabbat Times – Parshat Va'etchanan

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:50	8:04	8:42
Tel Aviv	7:06	8:06	
Haifa	6:58	8:07	
Be'er Sheva	7:07	8:05	

The Most Mysterious & Extraordinary Wedding Present

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In the city of Lizhensk, where the Rebbe Elimelech led his chassidim, there is a steep rocky hill with a cliff known as "Rebbe Elimelech's Table". Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, later to become the famous Seer of Lublin, used to climb up there in his younger years, when he was in the Rebbe's Beit Midrash. He would sit alone and meditate for hours on the meaning of true humility, and how the nullification of the ego could be achieved.

One day, while he was deep in his meditations, he came to the conclusion that the only way to give himself completely to G-d was to literally offer up his own life. So he went to the very brink of the ledge and looked down, intending to throw himself onto the rocks below.

But a friend named Zalke had secretly followed him up the trail from the village and was hiding in the bushes, watching. When he realized that Reb Yaakov was about to commit suicide, Zalke ran toward him, grabbed him by the belt, and pulled him back from the ledge to safety. Then Zalke remained there with his friend for a long time, comforting and encouraging him to remain in this world, until he had finally talked his soul out of its grim purpose.

Years later, after Reb Yaakov had become known as the Seer of Lublin, his old friend Zalke - now Rabbi Zalke - went to visit him. As he entered the room, the Seer went up to him, took both of his hands in his, and gazed deeply into his eyes. Then the Seer said "My dear, dear Zalke, my friend, my life - I truly love you like a brother. This is because, in my soul's first incarnation on this earth, you were my father. But when I think back to what you did to me in Lizhensk - how

you talked me into remaining in this sorrowful world - then I find I cannot love you as much." Nevertheless, the Seer of Lublin did remain in this world, until his tragic death at age 70. At the wedding of his grand-daughter, Hinda, when the time came for the gifts to be announced, the Seer, then in his late sixties, was sitting at the table with his head in his hands. He appeared to be asleep. Over and over the master of ceremonies kept announcing "And now for the wedding gifts from the bride's family...." and waited for the Seer to answer. But the Seer remained motionless and did not seem to hear. Then everyone became silent, and waited respectfully for him to wake up.

A half hour passed and the crowd was getting restless. So one of his four sons (father of the bride) leaned over and whispered in his ear "Father, wake up - they are calling for you to announce the gifts from the bride's family." The Seer looked up with a start and replied "Then I give myself. After thirteen years, the gift will be brought."

The wedding guests were puzzled by this strange announcement. What on earth could it mean? Of course, there were other generous gifts from the bride's side, and the Seer's family hastened to announce them. But the strange incident remained in the minds of the people. A few years later, the Seer of Lublin passed away (on Tisha b'Av 5575 / 1815).

Thirteen years after the wedding announcement, Hinda bore a son, whom she named Yaakov Yitzchak after her deceased grandfather. When the boy grew up, he looked exactly like his famous great-grandfather, right down to the fact that his right eye was a little bigger than his left. It is said that he was the very same soul, come back to fulfill the Seer's promise to "give himself" for a wedding present.

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: R. Yaakov Yitzchok Horowitz, known as 'the Chozeh' (Seer) of Lublin ז"ל's, 207th Yahrzeit was last Shabbat, 9th Av - August 6th of this year.

The words שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אהד from this week's Parsha of Parshat Va'etchanan comprise the pillar upon which Jewish faith stands; our absolute belief in the One True G-d. Now, when we recite the Shema in our prayer services, when we are in a Minyan, the Chazan concludes the three paragraphs of the Shema through reciting out loud: ה' אלקים אמת, The Lord G-d is True. These are the last two words of the third paragraph and the first word of the paragraph that follows.

Herein we have an echo of those words of ירמיהו הנביא in Chapter 10 Verse 10: ה' אלקים אמת, The Lord G-d is True. In the absence of a Minyan, before reciting the Shema some say the words אל מלך נאמן, G-d is a faithful King, and the first letters of these three words make up the word Amen, through which we affirm everything that follows in the Shema.

So why the additional three words? Here we have a rare example where numerology determines what the Halacha should be.

You see, altogether in the three paragraphs of the Shema, we have 245 words, but we want the total tally to be 248. That is because there are 248 positive precepts in the Torah and 248 limbs in the human body.

248 therefore represents action and so it is that Avraham, the founder of our faith, became absolutely dedicated to a life of fulfilling deeds - Avraham adds up to in Gematria 248. במדבר, in the wilderness, where we as a nation committed ourselves to embracing a life of Torah practice, that too has a Gematria of 248.

Emerging from this is a very important lesson for us. Shema Yisrael, to believe in G-d is so central and so crucial within our tradition. Yes, it is important to think, to intend and to have great dreams, but ultimately there is one thing that counts more than any other, and that is action. It is not what we think that counts, but what we achieve in life that really matters.

So let's join together and cry out שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אהד and let's ask from Hashem to get rid of all the trials and tribulations we are going through at this time and let's 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: 12
MITZVOT ASEH: 8
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 118
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1878
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7343

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 40:1 - 26 (this is the first of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

The Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, is called Shabbat Nachamu - The Shabbat of consolation or comfort. The Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu, for the Haftorah which begins with the words: "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami - Be comforted, be comforted, My people..." In this chapter, the Navi describes the Ultimate Redemption (Moshiach) which we have yet to experience. May it be speedily in our days.

This week in Israel, we study Chapter 4 of Pirkei Avot (outside Israel one studies Chapter 3).

Yossi

