

The Jewish Weekly

The Astonished Bedouin

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Yosef Chaim, the great Torah sage of Baghdad, was commonly referred to by the name of his most popular book, "The Ben Ish Chai." Even though he was not the chief rabbi of the city, he served as a leading rabbi there for 50 years until his passing in 1909, and was respected by all. His sermons attracted thousands, for he was followed by the great and the simple. What's more, his house was always wide open to the needy and any petitioner.

One day, a loud argument between two angry men within the walls of his Beit Din (rabbinical court) disturbed the quiet of the morning. Whoever might have entered would have been surprised at what he saw. The appearance of the litigants who stood opposite each other was most unusual. One was a poor member of the local Jewish community; the other, an Arab, who was also a local, but of shady reputation.

The Arab was the plaintiff, the Jew the defendant. Standing before the Ben Ish Chai to present his claim, the Arab claimed that the Jew had stolen his money and refused to return it to him.

"We went to the Iraqi court," he said, "there the Jew denied the existence of any loan. The judge ruled in his favor, as I had no proof for my claim. That's why I asked him to come to the Beit Din of the Rav. I hoped that maybe here he will admit his guilt."

The Ben Ish Chai listened attentively, observing both men carefully. After hearing the testimony of the Arab, he requested to speak to the Jew privately. Meeting his eyes, he asked, "Is the money of the Arab in your possession?"

The Jew was incapable of impudence while facing the Ben Ish Chai. He lowered his eyes and admitted, "Yes. That is, it was. I wanted to return his money but I am a pauper, I have no idea from where to get the money to give him. That's why I denied the debt in the court; I knew that if I admitted but didn't return the money immediately, I would be thrown in prison."

The Rav then summoned the Arab. The room was quiet, the Rav was deep in thought. He knew he had to find a way for the money to be returned to the plaintiff.

Finally, he opened a drawer in his desk, took out a bundle of bills, held them out to the Arab and said, "Since all Israel are guarantors one for the other, I will pay the debt of this Jew. When his situation will improve he will return the money to me."



Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Hai

This noble gesture of the Ben Ish Chai greatly impressed the Arab. Aware of the state of the finances of the poor Jew, it was obvious to him that the money would not be returned in the near future, if ever. The Arab expressed his admiration for the righteousness of Jewish rabbinical judges and returned home joyous and satisfied.

Years went by. The Ben Ish Chai became still more famous and was now the foremost of all the rabbis in Babylon. From countries far and wide, questions in Jewish law were sent to him.

Despite his prestigious situation though, he yearned to leave his birth country and move to the beloved Holy Land. An example of his longing was his habit of scrupulously sending all the manuscripts of his many books to Jerusalem, to have them printed there exclusively.

Eventually, on the 25th of Nisan in the year 1868, he decided to make his wish a reality, leaving Baghdad with his brother and a few wealthy families to travel to the Holy Land.

The way, which led through deserts, was beset with dangers. The greatest threat was from gangs of robbers who used to waylay travelers. No one would cross the desert on his own, but instead waited for the gathering of large caravans. These would set out accompanied by guards.

When the Ben Ish Chai and his fellow travelers joined a caravan, they discovered that this caravan travelled also on Shabbat. The Ben Ish Chai decided to forgo traveling with them or any other caravan, and looked for a Bedouin who, for a respectable amount of money would guide them, halting on Friday till after Shabbat. He managed to find a suitable person who agreed to the conditions - even though not very readily - and they set out into the desert.

Friday afternoon, in the middle of the desert, the Ben Ish Chai announced that they would rest and spend the Shabbat there. He asked the Bedouin to stop, but the latter wouldn't hear of it. He started yelling that it was a very dangerous place, full of robber gangs. He refused to stay there for a full 24-hour period.

Without a word, the Ben Ish Chai and his companions dismounted their camels, arranged their luggage for the coming Shabbat, and lit the Shabbat candles before sunset.

It Once Happened...

Grinding his teeth in dismay, the Bedouin also stayed. However, out of fear of a possible attack by robbers, he moved away from the group and hid behind some rocks from where he watched the Ben Ish Chai and his group.

The Ben Ish Chai prayed the "Welcoming the Shabbat" prayer with great devotion after which he recited the Kiddush (Shabbat sanctification prayer recited over a cup of wine) with a pleasant melody. During the meal he sang the zemirot (special Shabbat songs).

Suddenly the Bedouin heard a stealthy sound. Turning his head towards that direction, he saw a gang of Muslim bandits making their way quietly towards the Jews.

The blood froze in his veins. He didn't doubt what was going to happen next in front of his eyes. Holding his breath he watched the leader of the gang step ahead and move closer to the unsuspecting group.

A few minutes later, he noticed the leader of the robbers suddenly turn on his heels and signal to the rest to retreat also. They obeyed grudgingly, annoyed that he was denying them the easy prey they had chanced upon.

The surprised Bedouin heard the man explain to his followers that the leader of the Jewish travelers was a great and holy rabbi, who had supported him in a difficult financial situation by paying him from his personal funds the money owed him by another Jew. Under no circumstance would he allow any of them to harm him.


After the robbers disappeared, the Bedouin ran from his hiding place in great excitement. He fell at the feet of the Ben Ish Chai and begged for forgiveness, for now he realized even more what an exceptional person he was.

After Shabbat they continued on their way, soon reaching the Holy Land. The Ben Ish Chai visited the burial site of the holy patriarchs and other holy places. During this time, he was offered the position of Rishon LeZion (Sephardic Chief Rabbi), but he decided not to accept.

At the end of the month of Elul that year he returned in peace to his home in Baghdad, where he lived until his passing at age 75 on the 13th of Elul, in the Jewish year 5669.

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Chai ז"ל's, 113th Yahrzeit was yesterday Friday, 13th Elul - September 9th of this year.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Ki Teitzei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:17	7:29	8:09
Tel Aviv	6:33	7:31	
Haifa	6:24	7:31	
Be'er Sheva	6:35	7:31	



"Reb Pinchas's Different Approach" By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Once Rebbe Yechiel Michel of Zlotshov sent Rabbi Leib the Maggid of Polna'ah a very important disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov, to a town near Koritz. Rabbi Leib was a gifted preacher who reprimanded his listeners for their iniquities. During that era, many such preachers, known as Maggidim, would go from town to town, gathering the townsmen, teaching Torah, and reprimanding them for their misdeeds. Although the Ba'al Shem Tov did not approve of this style of harsh reproof and even strongly opposed it, some of his disciples were Maggidim. Of course, their reproof was not harsh and when they did mention sins, it was from a place of love within them and hence it affected their listeners lovingly.

Rebbe Yechiel Michel asked Rabbi Leib to go to the town near Koritz, for apparently, something had taken place there that needed to be addressed. He asked Rabbi Leib to reprimand the townspeople and urge them to repent. When Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz heard that Rabbi Leib was on his way, he sent him a message: "In my area, we do not reprove anybody. That includes you, my beloved friend, Rabbi Leib. I veto your intention to come here to reprove the townspeople. Here we don't reprove chassidim or those opposed to Chassidut. If you wish to reprove somebody, reprove God for not bringing Mashiah. But do not reprimand the people!"

Rabbi Leib returned to Rebbe Michel of Zlotshov and relayed Rebbe Pinchas' words. "I am very surprised," responded Rebbe Yechiel Michel. "After all, all the prayers of the Jewish People come through me before they ascend to heaven. Why have I never received the prayers of Rebbe Pinchas?"

Rabbi Leib returned to Rebbe Pinchas and related Rebbe Yechiel Michel's question. "You should know," responded Rebbe Pinchas, "that the prayers of a person who prays for the Jewish People with true self-sacrifice ascend directly to God's essence, with no intermediary on the way."

Rabbi Leib returned and relayed this to Rebbe Yechiel Michel, who although he had known Rebbe Pinchas for a long time, had not seen him in this light. He wanted a sign from Heaven that what Rebbe Pinchas had said was true.

What does one do when he wants to ask something of Heaven? He randomly opens a holy book and sees what is written there (as some do today with the books of letters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe). Rebbe Yechiel Michel went over to his bookcase and randomly removed a book. It was the Yalkut Shimoni, a book of midrash, homiletic analysis of Biblical text. He opened the book and randomly put his finger on a random page. It was the commentary of the sages on the verse, "And Pinchas got up and prayed" (וַיַּעֲמֵד פִּינְחָס וַיִּפְלֵל). The sages explain in the Yalkut Shimoni, "From here we learn that he did judgment with the Holy Blessed One." Rebbe Michel stretched out his arm and removed another book from the shelf, a Talmud, and his finger fell on the exact same teaching from the sages.

Reprinted from an email of Wonders.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Pinchas Shapira, known as Reb Pinchas of Koritz zt"l's, 231st Yahrzeit was Tuesday, 10th Elul – September 6th of this year.



We must always remember the Ammonites and the Moabites.

Why? Who were they? What's this all about?

In Parshat Ki Teitzei, the Torah tells us how when the Israelites were moving towards the promised land, they came to the territories of the Ammonites and the Moabites. However, the Torah says, "על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים" - these two nations "did not come out to greet us and to offer us bread to eat and water to drink."

Because of their inhospitable nature, the Torah says that they should be remembered always and should never be allowed to enter into the assembly of Hashem.

Now, we can well imagine that a nation that had been travelling for a long time desperately needed something to eat and to drink. However in the Midrash, we are told that Rabbi Shimon in the name of Rab Eliezer posed a great question:

At that time the Israelites were blessed. They were receiving manna from heaven, and water was coming miraculously out of a rock for them every day, so they really didn't need anything to eat or drink!

Nonetheless, we remember how inhospitable the Moabites and the Ammonites were!

Therefore, Rav Shimon taught that if the Moabites and Ammonites should be remembered for all time for being inhospitable towards people who didn't really need food or drink, how much more so is it a great mitzvah for us to show hospitality to those who really need it?

I believe this is so relevant to us right now. As, Thank G-d, we are gradually moving towards the post-Covid Era, for me, one of the most exciting elements of some regulations being removed is the opportunity we now have once again for "הכנסת אורחים" - to bring people into our homes, to have them around our tables, to offer them food and drink."

It's something which perhaps we took for granted in previous times and which we should never take for granted again - the beautiful opportunity to share what we have with others. And from Parshat Ki Teitzei, we learn that "הכנסת האורחים" - hospitality, is not just giving food and drink to people, because perhaps they have enough in their homes. Actually it's a mitzvah which goes well beyond that by forging a close connection between people and between families, something which enhances our lives.

Baruch Hashem we now have this opportunity - so let's never be like the Ammonites and the Moabites, and pray with all our hearts, for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevre Kadisha members worldwide, 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, loving and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's *Yossi* PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 74
MITZVOT ASEH: 27
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 47

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 110
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1582
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5856

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 54:1- 10 (רני עקרה) (this is the fifth of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapter 2 (Diaspora and some in Israel study chapters 1 and 2) of Pirkei Avot



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

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According to Nittai Gavriel, Mishna Berurah and Shulchan Aruch Harav

Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachah Sheets

Reviewed by Reb Elimelech Rabinowicz שליט"א, Rav of Tzeirei Kehal Chassidim, Shaarei Chesed

Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel in memory of his grandparents

ר' ראובן בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה והיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה ע"ה רבינוביץ

ר' יוסף בן ר' אורי ע"ה ומלכה בת ר' יצחק צבי הלוי ע"ה פרינקל

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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 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 fulfill 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 Parshat Ki Tavo, September 17th.)

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 Sunday, 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.

🕊 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.

