

The Jewish Weekly

Contrary Couples

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

The two women from adjacent villages were friends, even though they held opposite positions in a particular matter. One of them believed in the powers of the genuine holy Rebbes, while the other didn't at all. To confuse matters further, the woman who believed, was married to a man who was completely skeptical about the Rebbes, while the husband of the woman who didn't believe was a fervent follower of Rabbi Yisrael of Rhyzhin.

One time, the man who believed, became so sick he was confined to bed. Doctors were summoned and various treatments applied, but nothing helped. He asked his wife to travel to the Rebbe to request a prayer and a blessing for a complete, speedy healing. She thought the idea senseless, but since her husband couldn't go for himself, she agreed to do so on his behalf.

She hired a carriage and set off. The way passed through the village of her friend, the woman who believed. It turned out that she too was about to head for the Rhyzhiner. Her husband was in a serious financial situation. He had no money at all, yet he was in arrears to his landlord for the large annual lease payment for his tavern, and now the nobleman was threatening him with mayhem as well as immediate eviction if he didn't pay the whole debt within a week. When her cynical husband wouldn't accept her advice to travel to the Tzaddik for advice and blessing, she announced she would go herself.

The two women decided to make the journey together.

When they reached their destination and entered the Rebbe's anteroom, the Rebbe's secretary, as was the custom in the Rhyzhin court, wrote for each of them a kvittel, a note with each petitioner's name and mother's name, and the details of their individual requests. Afterwards, somehow each woman mistakenly took from the secretary's hand the note of her friend, and then unwittingly sent on to the Tzaddik the wrong note. The woman whose husband was sick presented the Rebbe a note asking advice and relief from dire financial straits, and received the answer, "May the Almighty provide you salvation." The woman whose husband had no money handed in to the Rebbe a note asking for healing, and received a reply, "Do benkess" (a painful medical treatment utilizing leeches and heated glass cups to drain blood, which was a popular and trusted remedy in that era).

The woman was quite startled by this answer - her husband was not sick; he has money problems! - but in her innocence and absolute faith she did not consider the possibility of a mix-up.

When she arrived home and her husband asked what had the Rebbe said, she replied that the Rebbe had advised a segula (propitious, good-luck maneuver), and he should prepare himself to do "the leeches and the cups."

Her husband was astonished, of course. What a bizarre idea! He laughingly dismissed the suggestion, although he did admit after some prodding from his wife, that at least it was an idea, while he himself had no ideas at all about how to help himself.

Shortly thereafter came the day that the debt to the landlord was due. Still having no money at all, he decided that he might as well follow the Rebbe's suggestion; it was better than complete passivity and couldn't be any worse than what the landlord and his henchmen would do to him, and maybe it would stave them off for a while.

He lay on his bed, and applied the blood-sucking leeches and the heated glass cups to many different places on his body. As a result, blood began to stream out from all over him.

At that moment one of the guards from the landlord's mansion rudely barged into the house with the warning that if he didn't deliver the lease money that same day, he and his family would be forcibly expelled. The innkeeper simply lay on his bed and didn't respond.

The surprised guard reported back to the landlord that the Jew was in his sickbed - perhaps even his death bed! - wallowing in blood. The nobleman couldn't believe it. Hadn't he seen him just the previous morning, seemingly in perfect health? He ordered that the Jew be brought to him. When the guard expressed doubt whether the Jew could walk or not, the landlord told him to take a few others along and carry the Jew in his bed. They followed orders, and soon returned and deposited the Jew in his bed, still gushing blood, outside the front door of the mansion. The bearers returned to their regular tasks while the original messenger went inside to summon the landlord, leaving the innkeeper alone.

Just then, the nobleman's wife emerged from the house. When she saw her husband's tenant lying near his doorstep, bleeding profusely from "injuries" all over his body, she clasped her hands and shrieked. "My poor man! What happened to you?"

It Once Happened...

At that moment he was struck with inspiration, and launched into a story.

"I was under so much pressure from our lord, your husband, to pay off my debt to him today that yesterday I decided to go to town and try to borrow the money. It was very hard. I had to go from door to door to all my acquaintances. It took all day and all my energy until I managed to collect the required sum. By then it was too late to hire a wagon to return home. None were available. I had no choice; I was forced to walk home alone in the dark.

"With my bad mazal, I was set upon by a vicious band of robbers. They took all the money I had collected with such difficulty, leaving me penniless again and with a whole pile of new debts. And they beat me to within an inch of my life, as you see. It is only thanks to G-d's mercy that I am still alive."

The noblewoman was shocked. When her husband appeared a few minutes later, she spoke firmly to him. "Do you see this poor man? He is practically dying and we are responsible. It is all because you put so much pressure on him for the lease money. You must forgive his debt immediately."

The landlord could see that he would have problems if he didn't comply. So he did. He told his tenant that he no longer owed him anything and that he, the lord, would be responsible for all medical costs.

"That's not enough," his wife insisted. Now he has incurred a new set of debts because of us too. Therefore, you must let him have the tavern rent-free for three years.

The nobleman gulped, but he agreed to this too.

When the Rhyzhiner Rebbe told this story to the Rebbe of Karlin, his relative by marriage, he emphasized that when he received the note about the innkeeper's debts, he didn't see any opening in Heaven to allow him to help. Only the woman's great faith enabled her family's salvation.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Yisrael Friedmann of Rhyzhin zt"l's 172nd Yahrzeit was Yesterday Friday, 3rd Cheshvan - October 28th of this year



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Noach

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:18	6:30	7:10
Tel Aviv	5:32	6:32	
Haifa	5:23	6:30	
Be'er Sheva	5:36	6:33	



The Decorative Sefer Found in the Chinese Cosmetic Store
By Rabbi Shimon Freundlich

In spring 2021, I and my wife arrived in Chengdu from Beijing. We were very warmly received by the local shluchim (emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe), Rabbi Dovi and Sara Henig. They were celebrating the Opshernish [traditional first haircut and 'peyot-leaving'] of their three-year-old son Mendel the next day, and we had come to spend this special occasion with them.

In the afternoon, both of our families went to the famous and gigantic New Century Global Mall in the city, which has an Intercontinental Hotel and indoor beach along with a water park and many other different entertainment facilities for kids.

While walking in the mall, Rabbi Dovi mentioned to me that there is a French cosmetic store that has a single volume of Shulchan Aruch - "The Code of Jewish Law" authored by Rabbi Yosef Karo in Hebrew and French - as part of their display design since the mall opened in July 1, 2013.

He further told me that he had tried a number of times to persuade them to give it to him, but was unsuccessful. They very politely and respectfully told him that they have a retailer franchise from the international Kiehl's Cosmetics conglomerate and the store's display is sent to them from the main office in France, including the book.

Hearing this, I said to Dovi, "Please take me to the store. I would like to try."

We all entered the store and saw an extensive display with multiple books on Jewish literature (not holy books) and then the lonesome volume of Shulchan Aruch. My heart sank as I saw this holy book lying under a porcelain bowl of dried slices of lemons.

As I stared at the Shulchan Aruch, the woman at the counter walked over. I asked her in Chinese if she had a business card (thinking I would contact the boss to ask if I could have the book).

She responded, "We don't have a business card but if you want I can give you our story WeChat."

After scanning my code, she sent me a message in Chinese asking what I wanted. I explained that I am Jewish and the Rabbi of the Beijing Jewish community. "This book is one of our holiest books and it is very hard for me to see it as a

display piece and unused," I wrote. I added that I would be willing to pay for it.

She looked at me and said, "If I give it to you, what will you do with it?"

"I will learn and teach from it."

"Is it for you?" she asked.

"No, it is for the Jewish community in Beijing."

She then removed the sefer (book) from under the bowl and handed it to me.

"How much do you want for it?"

"Nothing," she replied, "it is a gift for your community."

I thanked her profusely and then suggested to my wife that we should buy something as a show of appreciation. The items were pricey but it was worth it. I think this is the most I ever "paid" for a single sefer, and it will be one of my enduring favorites.

After leaving the store I turned around to Rabbi Dovi and exclaimed, "What Hasegacha Pratit (Divine supervision)!"

He looked puzzled and asked me what I was referring to. I said that I had just remembered what happened on this date in Jewish history.

In 1509, Emperor Maximilian of Germany ordered that all Jewish books in the city of Cologne and Frankfurt-am-Main be destroyed, as a result of a claim by Pfefferkorn, a baptized Jew, that Jewish literature was insulting to Christianity.

The Jews appealed to the Emperor to reconsider this edict, and Maximilian agreed to investigate the matter. Appointed to conduct the investigation was Johann Reuchlin, a famed and highly respected German scholar.

His report was very positive. He demonstrated that the books openly insulting to Christianity were very few, and anyway viewed as worthless by most Jews themselves. The other books were needed for Jewish worship and contained much value in the areas of theology and science.

The Emperor rescinded his edict on the 14th of the Jewish month of Sivan, 1510.

From Tzfat (where the code of Jewish law was written), to France (where this volume was printed), to Chengdu (where it was sent as a display piece), the Shulchan Aruch was redeemed on the 14th of Sivan 5781 (2021: 511 years later), and found a home in Beijing, where it will be studied reverently.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org. Editor's Note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev ז"ל's 212th Yahrzeit was Thursday, 25th Tishrei - October 20th of this year



Is it possible that Noach bore some responsibility for the flood?

Such a seemingly preposterous suggestion arises out of the haftarah for Parshat Noach, Isaiah 54. There is a direct link between verse 9 of the haftarah and the parsha.

There, the prophet refers to the flood and reassuringly tells us that in the same way as Hashem has kept His word never again to destroy life on earth, so too He will keep His word not to be angry with us nor to rebuke us.

Now, both Abarbanel and Radak point out that this verse can be read in two different ways. In both ways there's a reference to the flood, but there's one significant difference between the two. The prophet says, "כי מי נח זאת לי" - For this is to Me [as] the waters of Noach."

If you read 'כי מי' as one word, it's "כימי נח" - Like in the days of Noach." This is a reference to a particular period in time. Hashem is saying, "As for Me, this is like in the days of Noach."

Alternatively 'כי מי' can be two different words. "כי מי נח" - Like the waters of Noach." Hashem is saying, "As for me, this is like the waters of Noach," as if to suggest that we can call the flood Noach's flood.

This possibility is preferred by us when singing around the Shabbat table, the song of 'יונה מצאה' (one of the zemirot some sing on Shabbat) we sing, "כאשר נשבעת" - Just as Hashem swore to us concerning the waters of Noach."

Referring to the flood in this way is an indication that Noach did bear some element of responsibility. And the reason is clear: he was charged by Hashem to build an ark over a long period of 120 years. What Hashem had in mind was the possibility that Noah would reshape the minds and the hearts of people, that he would influence and inspire them to turn in 'תשובה' - repentance', but he failed to do this with even a single person.

As a result, he did bear some element of responsibility for what ensued.

Let us, therefore, learn not to be like Noach in this respect. In the event that we are aware of a situation that is wrong and we are in a position to influence and to inspire others to change direction, let us never fail in our responsibility to change things for the better. One of these ways is by praying together for our soldiers and emergency service personnel who risk their lives to defend and help us, as well as those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual Shabbat.

פרשת נח
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Sephardim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 54:1-10
Tonight (Motzei Shabbat) don't forget to move your clocks back one hour to winter time (from 2am to 1am)