

It Once Happened...

Unexpected Success

By Mayer Zeiler

I am a businessman, and an industrialist. And the story I have to tell here is how my family – despite the indisputable logic of the naysayers and despite our own finely-honed business sense – invested in a textile business in Israel, thinking it would be a losing proposition. We thought of it as a charitable donation, a short-term loss, because there was no way this business was going to survive long-term.

Why did we do it even when we knew we shouldn't?

We did it because the Lubavitcher Rebbe said to do it, and we were followers of the Rebbe. And despite all the predictions to the contrary, despite our own worst expectations, the business succeeded. It succeeded not just modestly, but hugely – not just in Israeli terms, but in American terms, in global terms thank G-d.

And the only explanation that I have why it succeeded, where logically it should have failed, is that the Land of Israel is especially blessed by G-d (something which the Rebbe understood better than any businessman), and that – in addition – this particular venture was directed and blessed by the Rebbe himself.

The story begins with the passing of my mother in 1951, when I was four years old. My widowed father, a Holocaust survivor, a Bobover chasid – who was then coping with three small children, while living in the Bushwick section of Williamsburg – went to get a blessing, at the urging of a friend, from the new Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe tried to give him fifty dollars, which he refused because he was too proud to take the money, but the Rebbe also blessed him and that blessing has followed our family to this day.

I myself married into a Chabad family. My father-in-law, Reb Dovid Deitsch, was especially close to the Rebbe, and he had a plastics business which I joined.

After the devastating Yom Kippur War of 1973, my father-in-law asked the Rebbe what he should do to help Israel. He was sure that the Rebbe would tell him write a check to some Chabad organization doing good works in the Holy Land, but the Rebbe's answer proved starkly different. "Open up a business in Israel," he said. "The new immigrants need jobs. Build a factory there – you will be very successful and it will benefit many families."

My father-in-law didn't think such a venture made business sense, and he didn't do anything about it at first. But the Rebbe persisted. Each time we went for a blessing, the Rebbe would ask, "Reb Dovid, what's happening with the business in Israel?"

Truth be told, none of us – not my father-in-law, not his children, not his sons-in-law – were interested in this project. Our advisors told us it would be a total loss. So the explanation that my father-in-law gave the Rebbe was that we were trying – and we did actually try – but that we were having problems with the Israeli bureaucracy (we still are).

To start a business in Israel, we faced one stumbling block after another – we needed permits from the government, approvals from the ministries, etc. It was a very hard project, and I had been put in charge of it. I was flying back and forth, and I was weary of it. So, I tried very hard to convince my father-in-law to convince the Rebbe that we should walk away from it.

In fact, I myself discussed these issues with the Rebbe during an audience in the summer of 1976. But instead of accepting my argument that we should give up, the Rebbe said, "How do you expect to run a business if you're not there on the spot?"

That was not – by any means – the response I was anticipating. But the Rebbe pointed out that, since it was summer, this was the ideal time to move to Israel for the year, as the kids could begin school in September.

This was a very tough thing for me to accept. I thought of living in Israel as a jail sentence, but my wife took the news well. So following the Rebbe's recommendation, we made the move into an apartment in Nachlat Har Chabad in Kiryat Malachi which was a quarter of the size of our home in Crown Heights.

After a year there, I told the Rebbe that I couldn't take it because of all the frustrations I constantly faced, and I tried to convince him that we should return home. In response, the Rebbe said to me, "The hard times are behind you now; from now on, it will be easier."

And it was.

Suddenly, doors which were shut before started opening up – with the ministry officials, with the customs officials, with the banks. I was making many new friends. At one point, I was introduced to Prime Minister Menachem Begin who amazed me by saying, "When I last visited the Rebbe, he spoke to me about you. I hope you won't have any more problems from now on."

And that's how our factory – Floctex Industries in Nachlat Har Chabad, later the producers of the famed Impala fabrics – started running in the late 1970s.

We were the first manufacturers in the world making a velvet-type fabric for curtains, a

special dense fabric that would not admit light and did not require a lining. Not only that, it was a soft fabric, a unique product which became very much in demand in England and the world over.

At first, England proved to be a hard-sell because they required that upholstery fabrics be flame-retardant. Applying the flame-retardant chemical made the fabric stiff, but we figured out a way around it. We conducted tests in our laboratory, and we were sure our fabric passed all standards, but these customers were not satisfied. They wanted a certificate from an English laboratory, which failed us repeatedly.

I asked the Rebbe for his blessing three times before the English laboratory finally approved our product. When I asked him for the third blessing and saw how puzzled he was by the request, I realized that the English test was not being done properly, for whatever reason. So I sent our head chemist over there to stand and watch, and then we passed.

As the global demand grew, we built a second and then a third plant, increasing production all the while. Today, although – as a privately-owned enterprise – we are not the largest company in Israel, we are one of the country's most successful textile producers – our velvet is considered the best velvet in terms of quality control, the latest in design, and this has built our reputation the world over.

Would any of this have happened without the Rebbe's insistence?

For sure not.

Our financial advisors told us this venture would not work. They said, "Go back to your Rebbe and explain to him that he doesn't understand industry and he doesn't understand financing. You can't make money in Israel. You can't have a successful industry in Israel. What he is telling you doesn't make any sense."

I thank G-d that, even though we all thought that we were going to be a failure in Israel, we followed the Rebbe's advice. Because we did, we are here today running a business that provides a livelihood for over one-hundred families. And for this the Rebbe gets all the credit.

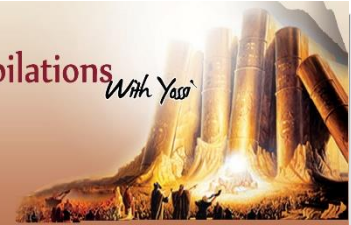
Reprinted from an email from Here's My Story.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Toldot

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:00	5:15	5:53
Tel Aviv	4:15	5:16	5:49
Haifa	4:04	5:14	5:50
Be'er Sheva	4:19	5:18	5:54



No Peyot Allowed By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi and Mrs. Landau were concerned about their daughter's growing frustration in meeting her intended match. Miriam was a successful teacher in a school in Jerusalem, and very popular amongst her circle of friends in the neighborhood of Bayit Vegan.

When Rabbi Landau mentioned the latest suggestion of a young man proposed by a neighbor, Miriam did not right away agree to meet the young man. Not that she wasn't interested in getting married; she just wanted to make sure that the young man was "in the ball park" of what she was looking for in a future mate. She did not want to experience yet another evening of disappointment and frustration.

Miriam did not turn down their neighbor's suggestion; she just asked her father if he could informally meet the young man first.

"You already know in your sleep what kind of boy I am looking for," Miriam said. "Meet him first, and if you think it's worthwhile for me to meet him, then I will date him. But... please don't forget to make sure that he doesn't have peyot ('sidelocks') hiding behind his ears!"

Rabbi Landau smiled. He indeed did know his daughter's likes and dislikes well. He felt Miriam's suggestion was fair, and called their neighbor to arrange to meet the young man at his yeshiva.

First, however, Rabbi Landau asked for information about the boy - Yehoshua Mandel - and found that "on paper" all the facts seemed to fit perfectly into the prototype of whom Miriam wanted to marry.

Rabbi Landau met Yehoshua in the yeshiva dining room, and the two went outside for a walk. They spoke about a variety of topics, and after twenty minutes, parted ways, as Yehoshua left to attend his afternoon study sessions. Rabbi Landau waited on the sidewalk as Yehoshua turned to enter the yeshiva. Perfect, he thought to

himself, as he scrutinized the boy's head - no peyot streaming down or tucked behind his ears or stuck under his yarmulke (kippah, 'skullcap')!

A week later, Miriam and Yehoshua met. She was far from disappointed....

Six weeks later, they were engaged; the wedding took place two weeks before Pesach. Pesach was spent at the Landaus in Bayit Vegan, Shavuot at the Mandels, and Sukkos brought the young couple to the Landaus once again.

On the first night of Yom Tov, as Yehoshua left the house to learn in a local yeshiva, Rabbi Landau noticed thick tufts of hair growing behind his ears. He couldn't help but ask Miriam about this - after all, wasn't it so important to her NOT to marry a boy with peyot like that?

Miriam burst out laughing. Then she explained: "Yehoshua has had peyot behind his ears since he was a young boy. The day he was supposed to meet you for the first time, he needed a haircut. Normally, his roommate in the yeshiva gave him haircuts. But that day his roommate wasn't there, so Yehoshua had to go to a barbershop.

'Before he noticed what was happening, the barber had accidentally cut off one of his peyot! The barber apologized, but it was too late.

So, Yehoshua asked the barber to cut off the other one as well, as he was too embarrassed to meet you with only one. He kept the peyot short until after the wedding, as he would have looked unkempt trying to grow them back.

"After the wedding, when Yehoshua told me he was going to grow the peyot back again, I had to laugh. It was something that mattered so much to me before we met, but mattered so little to me after we were married. You see, I had always associated peyot with overly serious, somber personalities. Once I got to know Yehoshua, I realized how silly I'd been. And when Yehoshua explained to me how he'd 'accidentally' lost his peyot on the day he met you, we both just marveled at the hashgacha pratis (Divine supervision) involved!"

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

A missing letter provides a clue to the survival of the Jewish people. In Parshat Toldot, we read how Yaakov deceived his father Yitzchak into thinking that he was his twin brother Eisav. Yitzchak declared, "הקל קול יעקב" - The voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Eisav."

From here the Midrash teaches as follows. As long as the voice of Yaakov is heard in houses of prayer and halls of study, the hands of Eisav will not be able to destroy the Jewish people. Now, many of our commentators ask how the Midrash derives this lesson from our Passuk. After all, Yitzchak exclaimed, "הקל קול יעקב" - The voice is the voice of Yaakov," indicating that the voice was heard, "והידיים ידי עשיו" - and the hands are the hands of Eisav," indicating that his hands were there and they were powerful.

The Vilna Gaon brilliantly explains that this has everything to do with 'מלא וחסר'. What is 'מלא וחסר'? The term literally means 'complete and incomplete', and it refers to a phenomenon that we sometimes see in the Torah, wherein some of the words are missing a vowel. Each time this happens, "זה אומר דרשני" - the word cries out for an explanation.

I cannot think of a better example of this than in the verse that we have quoted. "הקל קול יעקב." The word 'קול' is mentioned twice. On the first occasion the 'קול', the voice, is spelled ק-ל which is 'חסר', missing the letter vav (ו). On the second occasion just one word later, it's spelled ק-ו-ל which is 'מלא' - complete - it has the letter vav (ו) in the middle of the word.

Thanks to the Vilna Gaon we can now understand the Midrash. Because the first word 'קול' is missing a vav, it is indicating that something is absent. The voice is not as loud as it might have been. Kol has become 'קל' - light. The power of the voice has gone. It is in such circumstances, Heaven forbid, that "הידיים ידי עשיו" - the hands of Eisav can be powerful.

What emerges from here is a timeless and powerful lesson for the Jewish people. Time and again we have needed to fight for our very survival on the battlefield, but in addition to doing that, there is another source of great Jewish strength. It lies in the "קול יעקב" - the sound of Yaakov, our voices in our shuls and in our halls of study. It is the authentic Jewish voice of tradition, and the more it is heard the stronger we, as a nation, are. The better our Jewish education, the more we have a capacity to guarantee our survival.

Yes indeed, a missing letter of the Torah provides us with the key to Jewish survival. So let's join together, let's sound the sound of Yaakov and let's pray 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.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 106

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1432

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5426

HAFTORA: Malachi 1:1-2:7

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