

The Jewish Weekly

A Determination to Pass Hashem's Test and Get 100%

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

Rabbanit Linda Tawil was reading a book written by Nachman Seltzer for Artscroll in January of this year. The story told in the book dates back to the 90's. The story is told through Rabbanit Nava Ben Moshe, and Rabbi Krohn called Mrs. Ben Moshe to verify all the details. Here is a little background, Nava started a Kiruv organization called Maor focusing on the women of the Los Angeles area community. Her husband is Yair, a local businessman.

One day Yair suggests to Nava that he take off from work and they spend the day together. He suggests that they go to a restaurant and explains to her delight that he has pre-arranged everything with regard to the children, the car pools and has cleared her day in advance.

Yair comes back home at 11am to pick her up. She joins him in the car and they drive off. As he is passing a market, he pulls over and asks Nava if she wouldn't mind running in and picking up a couple of cold drinks. She is puzzled and asks why, aren't they going for lunch? He explains that its early and maybe they can take a walk first before lunch.

She runs into the store and two minutes later walks out, but neither the car nor her husband are there. Where's Yair?

Now this is before cell phones, so there is not much one can do. At first, she assumes he was parked in a red zone and a police officer may have sent him around the corner. But a couple of minutes later and still there was no Yair. Now one starts to worry. Did he get car jacked? Or, Heaven Forb-d, was there an accident? Where could he be? And anger builds! Didn't he say he wanted to spend time with me today? And now he disappears.

I can just imagine saying, I pray he's not dead, but if he isn't, then I am going to kill him. Exasperation and worry take over and five minutes is like forever when you're standing there and don't know.

At that moment Nava caught herself and said aloud, Nava, you know everything in life is a test. So, she looked up and she exclaims, "Hashem, if this is a test then I'm going to pass it and get 100%". And as she stood there waiting she kept repeating, "If this is a test Hashem, I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100. No matter when he shows up, whatever it is I'm going to be thankful that he's OK and I'm not going to be angry."

Another five minutes go by which felt like hours and finally Yair returns. Nava opens the passenger door. She hands her husband the drinks which aren't too cold anymore and she sits down with a big smile. Yair starts to apologize. He realized that he forgot something at his office so he drove the two blocks and asked someone to send the secretary down. She took too long and then he got stuck in a traffic

jam trying to get back around the corner. He felt so terrible and he was so sorry because he should've been back in a couple of minutes. She continues to smile and tells him not to worry and they go have lunch, they have a wonderful day and that's the end of the story.

The next day while talking to the women in a class for her kiruv organization, she shares the story of her fight to maintain control and not get angry along with the realization that verbalizing the statement made the tool so much more powerful.

One of the ladies in her class was considering koshering her kitchen and she came to the decision to go forward with taking everything to the mikveh a month later. So, on mikveh day for her dishes, this woman is committed to take everything. She pulls the ladder into her kitchen to pull down piece by piece and suddenly one of the rungs gives way and she finds herself sprawled out on the tile floor not knowing if her leg is sprained or broken. At that point she's the woman who has fallen and can't get up. As she crawls towards the phone to call for help, she is very upset.

She turned to G-d and she said, "I'm going out of my way trying to kosher my kitchen and this is what You do to me? Maybe I shouldn't bother to do this. Maybe it's not meant to be." And as she reaches out for the phone and lifts the receiver, she remembers Nava's story and reverses her position with G-d. Instead of complaining, she exclaims, OK Hashem if this is a test so be it I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100.

She reaches her husband. Later at the hospital, they braced her leg and she returns to her house to dishes on the counter in a job partially done. Instead of giving up, she's going to move forward. She decided to call a few of her friends and ask them to help with the trip to the Mikveh. And they all agreed. The friends joined her in the house. They pulled everything down and together they went to the Mikveh. After toveling everything, they brought everything back to the house and that was the end of the story.

Fast forward 25 or 30 years later and Rabbanit Tawil is reading the story from a book written so long ago and it has a tremendous impact on her. She was so inspired by the idea of verbalizing the statement, "HaShem if this is a test then I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100."

Rabbanit Tawil was scheduled to go on a speaking tour for 12 days in Argentina where she would speak at various Synagogues, schools and clubs to a large cross section of the Jewish women and girls.

Arriving in Buenos Aires. She gave her first lecture on Wednesday morning discussing the tests of life, and concluded with the stories from the book suggesting how helpful it might be to verbalize the plea, just as Nava and her student did when confronted with a difficult situation and how this could help a person pass the test.

The next morning Thursday, a girl came up to her after the lecture and explained that she had been at the lecture the previous morning. "I just need to

It Once Happened...

tell you. I was at your class yesterday and heard what you said and thought about it. This Saturday night in Buenos Aires there's going to be a concert by a very famous female singer and it's going to be the concert of the year but it's a very provocative and racy scene and the reality is, it's no place for a good Jewish girl. I realize that and I said to myself although I have a great ticket, I want to go, but I have to accept that this is a test from Hashem and if it is a test, I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100". And she continued, "therefore I'm committing myself not to go to this concert."

With this additional success story, on Thursday evening and Friday morning and on Shabbat, Rabbanit Tawil told Nava and her student's story and added this one about the concert. On Saturday afternoon a bunch, of girls came up to her and said, you know we also have tickets for tonight's show and it's really the concert of the year and everybody wanted to go but we realize that this really is not a place for us to be and we all said aloud, "if this is a test then I'm going to pass the test and I'm going to get 100."

And what was amazing, was that the class she gave Saturday night turned into an oneg Shabbat with so many girls who came whose original intention was to go to the concert. They all decided not to go. Paysach Krohn told me that we can only imagine the chizuk and strength it gave Rabbanit Tawil to hear the stories and to hear what these girls were able to do because they were able to verbalize the fact that they were facing the test.

And Rabbanit Tawil shared that in the weeks following she got letter after letter and note after note from person after person describing the situation they were in and how they said to themselves. That, if this is a test Hashem, they were going to pass it and they were going to get 100%.

Each letter, each text passage, each note, each DM, brought tears to her eyes when she read of the individual tests that each person faced and how they were able to overcome them. So, she called Rabbi Krohn and she asked him to tell the story on TorahAnytime and she asked that people write to her and tell her about the different tests they faced and how they were able to overcome them.

And even the rabbi said, that when he heard it, it was so powerful, realizing that we face tests every single day of our lives and every minute and he thought it could be so helpful for people to verbalize and push themselves to succeed. So, in South America, this really caught on; they made keychains, they made necklaces and they made bracelets as reminders. Some printed posters and they put them up all over the place, so they should remember to say, Hashem, if this is a test that I'm going to pass the test and I'm going to get 100%

Reprinted from an email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayeitzei

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	3:59	5:15	5:52
Tel Aviv	4:14	5:16	5:48
Haifa	4:03	5:14	5:49
Be'er Sheva	4:18	5:18	5:53



Advice for the Living and the Dead

By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg

In the days of the Maharsha, there was a famous Jew who was known to be a sinner. This man died and one of the disciples of the Maharsha publicly shamed him prior to his burial. That night, the dead man came to the disciple in a dream and said to him: "I summon you to a Torah trial before the Heavenly Court, for you shamed me." The young man woke up very disturbed and related his dream to his father. His father reassured him, telling him that "dreams are meaningless", and the young man calmed down.

The dream, however, repeated itself for three nights and the young man was terrified and became ill. The family decided to turn to the Maharsha and ask his advice. When they came to the Maharsha, he instructed the young man to remain for the night at his home, and he instructed his own family that when the young man would wake up in terror, to call for him. This indeed happened. In the middle of the night, the young man woke up terror-stricken and the family immediately called for the Maharsha to come.

The Maharsha approached the young man's bed and began talking to the dead man: "What do you want from this person?"

"He shamed me!" answered the dead man. The Maharsha said to him, "But surely you deserve to be shamed?!" The dead man replied, "I don't deserve it and I wasn't a completely evil person. Once I saw a Torah scholar fall into a river and almost drown. I endangered myself and saved his life. Since then, we became close friends. We made a Yissachar-Zebulun partnership between us. I supported him well throughout my life. When I passed on and came to Heaven, they received me with great honor, as if I had been a great Torah scholar. They made no mention of my sins, for anyone who saves a soul, it is as if he has saved the entire world. Furthermore, I have a great portion of the Torah learned by the scholar and I am thus considered a Torah scholar myself. So, I am summoning the young man to court, to be charged with shaming a Torah scholar...."

The Maharsha minced no words in his reply to the dead man: "The truth is that despite all you have said, you carry a great burden of sins, but it is impossible to prosecute you because your good deeds created a strong partition between you and the prosecuting angel and all the other prosecutors. But you should know that your transgressions were not erased. You are only protected from them by your good deed. To bypass your protection, the prosecuting angel wants to ensnare you by convincing you to persecute this young man until he dies and then he will prosecute you measure for measure. While it is true that you saved a Torah scholar, you now wish to kill a Torah scholar. If you do

so, it will remove the partition that is protecting you and you will be held liable for all your sins. Hence, I advise you not to take this foolish step and destroy yourself. Forgive him and all will be good for you as well."

The dead man accepted the Maharsha's advice, and the young man returned to good health.

Sometimes, it is tempting to defame someone who seems to be on a lower level than we are. But in our story, we see that what meets the eye is not necessarily the entire story and believing it can lead to huge mistakes. In the story, people believe that the deceased Jew was an evil person during his lifetime and was therefore deserving of shame. But then it turned out that he had strong merits to his name, even having endangered himself to save the life of a Torah scholar. At the same time, this same individual, although he merited to dwell in the Garden of Eden does not really understand his position. Outside the partition he had labored to build, the prosecutors lie in wait for even a slight misstep. They even continuously transmit thoughts of bitterness and revenge to him, which they hope he will act upon, thereby losing his protection from further prosecution.

Our story highlights the opinion of the sages that God only "bears sin" and distances it from the sinner, but does not completely erase it. Hence, we learn that surprisingly, the sinner in the afterlife is still facing the same challenges he faced during his lifetime. Even there, the Divinely guided twists and turns of life continue to test him, and it is not easy to merit full, unconditional entrance into the Garden of Eden. Our image of the Garden of Eden is that it is a state in which the sins of the past are no longer lurking. But for the soul that has not yet truly entered the Garden of Eden, the Divine scales continue to tip up and down, with no simple end in sight.

A person of the Maharsha's stature could perceive this. The Ba'al Shem Tov said about the Maharsha that "if people knew the Maharsha's greatness, they would lick the dust of his grave." In his wisdom, the Maharsha managed to calm the dead man and convince him to forgo his foolish plan, which could have catapulted him into the depths.

The lesson of this story in one word is: "lowliness" (שפלות). If the young man had been aware of the limits of his own perceptions, and in particular regarding a fellow Jew, he would not have shamed even a person known to be a sinner. If the dead man had been aware that his heavenly reward was a total gift from God, he would not have done anything that could tip the Divine scales against him.

In this world—and even in the next—you never know....

Reprinted from an email of Wonders.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Idels known as the Maharsha ז"ל's 415th Yahrzeit was Tuesday, 5th Kislev – November 29th of this year

How do we respond to extraordinary experiences? If I were to give a subtitle to Sefer Bereishit, it would be the Book of Dreams. Not only does this book of the Torah present us with details of the dreams themselves, but more importantly we're told how the dreamer reacted.

In Parshat Vayeitzei we are given a description of Yaakov's famous dream of the ladder, which spanned the distance from earth up to the heavens. How did Yaakov react when he woke up? The Torah tells us (Bereishit 28:16), "ויקץ יעקב משנתו ויאמר" - Yaakov woke up from his sleep and he declared," "אכן יש ה' - במקום הזה - Behold the presence of Hashem is in this place."

That was how he responded. He recognized the presence of Hashem, and he continued to do so for the rest of his life; indeed we speak about it to this day.

Let's now have a look at a dream of Pharaoh King of Egypt, as described in Parshat Mikeitz (Bereishit 41:4, Bereishit 41:5). There the same term 'ויקץ' is used.

It says, "ויקץ פרעה" - Pharaoh woke up," "ויישן" - and he went back to sleep," "ויחלם" - and he had another dream."

What a remarkable dream Pharaoh had just had! In the course of time, he would discover that it would provide for him and his people a secret to their survival! Yet his reaction was that he turned over and he went back to sleep.

Herein lies a very powerful message for us all. So often it's not just in dreams that we might see something remarkable. More than that, we actually have exceptionally powerful experiences in our lives. Hashem is trying to say something to us.

What will our response be? Will it be just to turn over and ignore it, or will we respond in an appropriate way?

Let's always see to it that when it comes to those unusual and extraordinary moments of our lives, our response should be the response of Yaakov, and not the response of Pharaoh.

Let's join together, let's realize the presence of Hashem as did 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: 148
NUMBER OF WORDS: 2021
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7512

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Hoshea 12:13-14:10
Sephardim: Hoshea 11:7-13:5
Chabad: Hoshea 11:7-12:14



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