

The Jewish Weekly

A Rebbe's Preposterous Advice

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

She was Jewish; he was not. She was white; he was black. He was sophisticated, an assistant professor at a local college - a rare accomplishment for a black person in 1952; she was impressed by his academic credentials. Her parents were ultra-religious Chassidic Jews in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, and they were extremely unhappy. How could their daughter be making such a tragic mistake!

They made the rounds of the various Chassidic Rebbes and great Torah scholars in their area. All were sympathetic; all offered their blessings. Nothing helped. The date for the "wedding" was fast approaching, the daughter ignored their emotional pleas and any other Jewish intervention and, as you might imagine, the poor parents were becoming extremely agitated and distressed.

They visited again the Chassidic Rebbe they were closest to, who again blessed them that all should work out for the best. "Rebbe," they rejoined in desperation, "we already have blessings; we need good advice. Although, it seems what we really need is a miracle!"

"Ah, good advice," the Rebbe repeated softly, stroking his beard, "a miracle, even. For that perhaps you should go to the new Lubavitcher Rebbe. He knows about these matters."

To the new Lubavitch Rebbe! Could he really help? All they had heard about him since his ascension in 1950 was that he was quite young, in his forties. 'But so what?' they said to each other; 'What choice do we have,' and off they went to Crown Heights.

They were directed to the Rebbe's secretaries, and soon found themselves in a narrow office in 770 Eastern Parkway. When they told one of the rabbis that they wished an audience with the Rebbe, he politely took their names and their mothers' names and said he would be happy to give them an appointment, and that the next available date was in a few months.

After a few moments of shocked silence - whoever heard of having to wait months to see a Rabbi! - the man began to protest vigorously. The secretary tried to explain that there was a huge number of people already waiting anxiously, and the Rebbe received people in private audience only three times a week [in those years], but that only caused the distraught chassid from Williamsburg to raise his voice even louder. Finally he succeeded in convincing the secretary of the urgency of the matter, and a time slot was squeezed in on a mutually agreeable date.

At the appointed hour, they anxiously entered the Lubavitcher Rebbe's office and told their whole sad story. The Rebbe smiled. They were taken aback. All the others they had gone to had groaned in empathy, and some had shed tears. How can this one be smiling?

The Rebbe asked them for the intended wedding date. They answered, throwing in numerous 'G-d forbid's. The Rebbe continued to question them. He asked about the daughter's preparations. Had she acquired a wedding gown? What about furniture? Did she already purchase dishes and all the other things a newly married needs to set up house? They were shocked. 'Woe to the ears that hear such

matters.' Why did he want to discuss such unpleasant topics? Nevertheless, there they were, so they answered briefly, saying that she had not yet purchased any of these things.

The Rebbe then expressed interest in where she was intending to obtain her set of china and other dishes. They began to feel that his questions were driving them crazy. Or was he, the Lubavitcher, crazy? Shrugging, they named a well known large department store in downtown Brooklyn, where she planned to shop for nearly all of her bridal needs.

"Good," remarked the Rebbe. He smiled again. "The owner of the store is a Jew. I know him. This is what you should do. The day before her shopping expedition, you go to see him and tell him I sent you. Confide in him the whole story. Then tell him I suggest that when all her purchases are at the register, someone smuggle among them a very valuable item from the store's merchandise. Then, when all her purchases are wrapped and put in bags and boxes, and she is about to leave the store, an employee should scream out that something valuable has been stolen. The security personnel should then lock all the exits, and management should apologetically explain to the customers that a search would have to be conducted because the missing item is of such great value. When they find it among her parcels, they should confront her, ignore her protests of innocence and call the police.

"Let her be arrested! She will call you, of course. You, her parents, should go down to the police station to scream and proclaim her innocence, but nevertheless let it happen that she has to stay in detention overnight. And may G-d bless you with good news."

As might be expected, the couple absolutely could not believe the words they had just heard. They froze in their places. What was going on here? They returned home, thoroughly confused. Could it be that he is still too young?

The date quickly approached. What to do? What to do? Did they really have no alternative other than the preposterous idea of the Lubavitcher Rebbe? It seemed not. In desperation, they called the store owner and made an appointment. They told him their plight, then, with reluctance and a good measure of embarrassment, they related to him the Rebbe's plan.

He too was astounded. But after a few moments of reflection, his face brightened. "We'll do it," he said, "if the Lubavitcher Rebbe said so, something good will come out of it."

After making the commitment, he became enthusiastic. He called in a number of people from his staff, and told them that tomorrow they would be doing a "drama" performance. He went over with them all the details of the plot, and said that he expected a carefully orchestrated matinee performance the next day.

Everything went as planned. Despite her horror and protestations of innocence, and despite her parents' appearance and efforts at the police station in response to her phone call, the daughter found herself in a prison cell.

The parents, who had returned home, were even more miserable than before. Their daughter was in jail! The only consolation was that now they had someone to blame for whatever happened: The Lubavitcher Rebbe. They were sitting in silence, depressed, when the doorbell rang. It was the "fiancee", the last person in the world either of them wanted to see.

It Once Happened...

He asked to see his bride-to-be. They responded that she wasn't home. Seeing their agitation, he insisted, presuming they were lying in order to keep them apart. They reiterated. He demanded. They denied. Finally he said, "Well, if she's not here, then where is she?"

"In jail."

"What! She? In jail? Why?"

"She has been arrested for stealing bridal goods from a department store."

"Can this be true? Are you playing with my mind?"

"Yes, it is true. Could we possibly make up something so terrible?"

"I can't believe it!" he exploded. "A thief!"

He continued shouting. "I cannot tolerate this. I'm a respectable man, a professor. I've worked hard to get to where I am. I will not be associated with a woman of such low moral standards. I'm not a ghetto person. Tell your criminal daughter I never want to see her again!" And he stormed away in righteous anger.

As soon as he was out of sight, they closed the door and burst into joyful smiles. But they soon sobered up. What if she would be able to convince him of her innocence and affect a reconciliation? They couldn't wait for the morning to be able to tell their daughter what had just happened.

Meanwhile, the daughter was sitting on a hard cot in a cold dank cell, confused and frightened. How could such a thing be happening to her? She wasn't a thief! She was so embarrassed. And her poor parents, how devastated they must be. She thought about how they had tried to help her but hadn't succeeded. She knew they would arrange her release in the morning, but would there be a trial? Would she really have to serve a prison term?

Then the thought struck her - as bright, as sharp, and as painful as a lightning bolt. Even if she were to be sentenced to jail, that would not be the ultimate embarrassment for her parents. Much worse in their eyes, much much worse, was her impending marriage. Maybe, just maybe, she should rethink her plans and priorities. Certainly she had plenty of time for contemplation in her present situation!

Before the night ended, she had acquired paper and pen, written a letter to her parents, and arranged for it to be delivered to them at the front desk as soon as they arrived in the morning. In it she poured forth her heart, apologizing for all the aggravation she had caused them, and promised she would break off her engagement and never again date a non-Jew.

Need I say more? You can imagine the tearful joyous reunion yourself. The parents quickly revealed the plot. All three were infinitely grateful to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Today, the daughter is the mother and grandmother of a respectable observant family in Boro Park, Brooklyn. All that is left is for you, dear reader, to decide whether what the Rebbe provided them, was "good advice" or a "miracle."

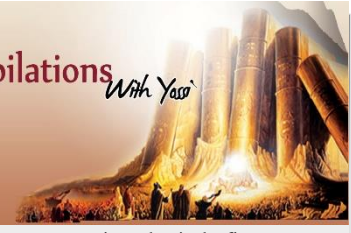
Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayigash

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:09	5:25	6:03
Tel Aviv	4:23	5:27	5:59
Haifa	4:13	5:24	5:59
Be'er Sheva	4:28	5:29	6:04



The Team of Story and Prayer By Rabbi Shlomo Landau

In 1977 there was a movement in the Israeli Knesset to try to pass a bill that would legalize abortion. Spearheading the campaign was the Minister of Justice [under PM Menachem Begin from 1977-1980], Shmuel Tamir.

When the rabbis and most all Torah-observant Jews in Israel and throughout the world heard that Israel was trying to legalize killing fetuses in the womb, there was tremendous consternation and concern. Leading rabbinical authorities and leaders in Israel decided to send a delegation of prestigious rabbis to speak with Shmuel Tamir, to try to dissuade him from going ahead with this terrible idea.

Included in this delegation were Rabbi Michael Stern, the highly respected rabbinical authority of Ezrat Torah [a district in Jerusalem], and Rabbi Raphael Levin, the son of one of the most beloved rabbis in 20th century Israel, Rabbi Aryeh Levin.

The thinking behind the selection of R. Raphael Levin was because many of the members of Etzel [Irgun] and Lechi ['Stern Gang'] had great respect for R. Aryeh Levin. The hope was that Shmuel Tamir, a prominent Israeli independence fighter for the Irgun, would at least listen to Reb Raphael Levin, the son of Reb Aryeh.

Two days before the meeting, R. Raphael got on the phone and called each of the rabbis in the delegation and begged and pleaded with them that they should storm the gates of heaven with prayer; they should supplicate and pray before the Heavenly Throne that they should somehow be successful in their incredibly important mission of dissuading the minister from this terrible destructive idea.

Two days later the delegation sat with Shmuel Tamir in his office. At one point, R. Raphael spoke up. "I am the son of R. Aryeh Levin."

The eyes of Shmuel Tamir lit up in delight. Facing everyone in the delegation, he exclaimed: "Ah, he was our beloved rabbi." Then, turning his gaze towards R. Raphael, he said, "What do you want to say? Please. Go ahead."

R. Raphael spoke up, saying, "I would like to share with you a short story. When I was much younger, a secular couple knocked on our door one day. They wanted to speak to the great man,

my father, HaRav Aryeh Levin. My father invited them in and sat them down, whereupon a large argument ensued between the husband and the wife.

It turned out that the wife was expecting a child, and the husband, who was in medical school, didn't want to bring the child into the world. He felt it would impede his studies, and anyway, in general he didn't want a child at this time.

"The wife equally strongly wanted the child and they couldn't come to an agreement. They decided to consult my father - everyone respected Rabbi Aryeh Levin, even the secular.

"My father listened to both sides. He sat with them for over an hour, trying to persuade the husband that they should bring the child into the world. He emphasized that the child would only bring nachat [pleasure, satisfaction], and would have a major positive impact on the family.

"By the end of the hour the father was persuaded; he agreed to let the fetus live, that they would bring the child into the world and raise it with love."

Upon concluding the story, R. Raphael leaned across the desk toward Shmuel Tamir, looked him in the eyes intently, and said quietly, "Not long after this disagreement the couple had a baby boy. They called him Shmuel. He grew up to be the important person whose name is Shmuel Tamir. It was you!"

Shmuel Tamir was utterly shocked. "I never heard this story," He insisted.

R. Raphael quickly responded. "Call your mother, call her right now!"

On the spot, Shmuel Tamir picked up the phone and called his mother. At first, silence. Then his mother stuttered and then she mumbled, "You have to understand, times were different then... etc. etc."

Mr Tamir slammed the phone down, looked up at the silent rabbis, and said firmly, "You have nothing to worry about. This bill will never hit the Knesset floor as long as I am the Minister of Justice."

Amazing, yeshuat HaShem kehervay ayin.

On their way out, R. Michael Stern questioned R. Raphael. "I don't understand something. You knew this story two days ago, right?"

R. Raphael smiled. "Yes. I did."

"So why did you call each of us to insist that we daven (pray). It must already have been clear that the story would be a 'slam dunk'."

R. Raphael's powerful reply astonished the entire delegation, and made a lasting impression.

"Slam dunk ahin (there) slam dunk aher (here); story this way, story that way. Without tefilah (prayer) we are nothing. Ferkert (on the contrary), the reason that the story had impact is only because of our tefilah!"

Reprinted from an email of Lchaim.

If you were building a new town or city, what is the first structure that you would put up? You might be thinking, that my answer would be a synagogue, but it is not. We learn the answer from Parashat Vayigash.

A beautiful commentary I heard from the Chief Rabbi of England and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, is that Yaakov and his family, seventy souls in all, are on their way to Egypt, where Yaakov will be reunited with his son Yosef, whom he had not seen for twenty two long years. The Torah tells us, "ואת יהודה שלח לפניו אל יוסף להוראת לפניו גשנה" - Yaakov sent Yehuda, ahead of the family to Yosef, to show Yaakov the way to Goshen."

This does not seem to make sense, because if Yehuda was going to show Yaakov the way, he would surely need to be alongside him? If he is a few days journey ahead, how is he going to show him the way?

So the Midrash in Bereishit Rabba, as brought down by Rashi says, "לתקן לו בית-תלמוד, שמשם תצא הוראה" - Yaakov asked Yehuda to open a school, so that education should flow from it."

The term 'להוראת' means 'to show the way' but it also means 'to teach'. Yaakov wanted to guarantee, that on the very first day on which the family arrived in Goshen, the children would have a school to go to.

He knew that they would be arriving into an alien Egyptian environment, that in the course of time, the people would integrate into Egyptian society, but that it would always be crucially important, for them to retain their own independent identity. It was important for them to be rooted in their own faith, to be loyal to their own traditions, and to remember how central the land of Israel should always be in their lives.

The way to achieve all of this, was through solid and comprehensive education.

During this coming week, we will be fasting on Asara B'Tevet. A fast that records the beginning of all those tragedies, which led eventually, to the destruction of our Temple. In anticipation of that tragedy, Raban Yochanan Ben Zakkai famously met up with Vespasian, the Roman Governor, and he asked him, "תן לי יבנה" - Please guarantee that even as Jerusalem is destroyed, the Jewish people will have a school in Yavneh, in order to learn about their tradition. In the absence of Jewish education, there can be no Jewish future.

Every key term relating to the books that we learn, and those who teach them, all mean one thing - learning Torah. It is from that same word 'הוראה' which means 'to study'. 'משנה' means 'to learn'. 'תלמוד' means 'to learn' and 'גמרה' is the Aramic for 'learning'. A 'teacher' is 'מורה' and a 'parent' is 'הורה'. Everything is centered on the importance of learning.

With this in mind, the name that we give to our houses of prayer, is 'Shul', coming from the German, meaning 'school'. It is a place where we daven to Hashem, and a place that we congregate socially. But primarily it needs to be a 'shul' - 'a school' - a place of learning.

All those years ago, Yaakov Avinu taught us a crucial lesson for Jewish survival - successful Jewish communities, are those which establish successful institutes for Jewish education.

So may we continue to learn, and pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and pamasah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 106
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1480
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5680

HAFTORA:
Yechezkel 37:15 - 28

Tuesday, Jan. 3, is עשרה בטבת (the fast of Tenth Of Tevet).

פרשת ויגש

Sponsored in loving memory of
חיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה
Mena Rabinowitz ob"m
Who's Yahrzeit is
tomorrow
ח' טבת