

## Children in Dreams and Wheelchairs

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzzeira, the 19th century kabbalist, was a direct descendant of a great tzaddik, Rabbi Shmuel Elbaz - a pupil in the 17th century of Rabbi Chaim Vital, the main student of the holy Ari of Tsfat - who was given a new surname, Abuhatzzeira ("father of the mat"), because of the famous story told about him when, denied passage on a ship, he tossed his mat into the sea and rode on it to the country where he needed to fulfill his mitzvah mission.

A few generations later, his descendant Rabbi Massud Abuhatzzeira, the chief Rabbi of Tafilalet, Morocco, would have an amazing story to tell:

A couple came to the Rabbi seeking a divorce, which he granted. The man left, but the woman had wanted to stay a little longer in order to talk to the Rabbi's wife. Night fell, and fearing for her guest's life, the Rabbanit suggested she stay with them for the night.

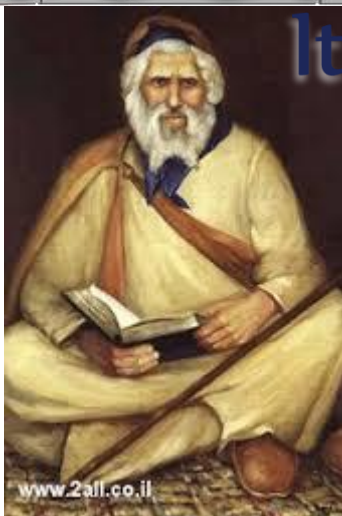
That evening, Rabbi Massud had a dream. In it he was told that the woman staying over was destined to give birth to a very great soul. However, it had to emanate from a special holy union...between the Rabbi and her! He was instructed to marry her three months later.

Rabbi Massud had no idea how he was going to tell his wife about this mysterious dream. Upon returning from shul that morning, the Rabbanit approached her husband and, before he had time to relate his own dream, she told him of the dream she herself had - it was the exact same dream! Further, the Rabbanit (clearly a holy woman herself) said that she whole-heartedly accepted this heavenly decree. Not only that, she had already spoken to the woman about the importance of becoming a second wife to her husband!

The woman accepted and three months later (the minimum time for a new widow or divorcee to wait before remarriage), the two married. About a year later, a son was born to the couple - Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzzeira - who would become the renowned Abir Yaakov.

Rabbi Yaakov's piety was outstanding and his Torah learning was on an extraordinary high level. He wrote twelve masterpiece books, considered a must for anyone pursuing the study of the mystical kabbalistic tradition - and also for those wishing to understand Jewish Law and Scripture appropriately.

Rabbi Yaakov's days were filled with the study and teaching of Torah from day to night. He slept very little, as he would awaken shortly before midnight to begin the



Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzzeira

prayers of Tikkun Chatzot - mourning for the Temple - followed by intense Torah study until dawn. After the Sunrise Minyan he would continue to study. He ate very little throughout the day, spending much of his time in the distribution of charity to those in need. All of this combined resulted in him becoming an outstanding tzaddik and true kabbalist.

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Rabbi Yaakov performed many wonders and miracles for the Jews of Morocco. Childless couples were blessed with children, many sick were healed and many who were depressed left his presence filled with new life and happiness. For example:

In the city of Paranda once lived a depressed, bitter and disheartened woman who had a son of 16 years of age. He had been stricken with polio and was paralyzed in both legs, leaving him in a wheelchair for life. So depressed was the woman that she prayed that the child - her own child! - should die.

One day, Rabbi Yaakov was visiting Paranda. When the ruler witnessed the commotion taking place with the Jews singing and dancing at the happy occasion of seeing the Rabbi, he wondered about it all. He ran to find out what the commotion was all about, and upon being told about the great Rabbi that had been accorded such honor he became intensely jealous. He decided to levy a heavy tax upon all the Jews for their "rebellious" behavior.

Later, after a short rest, Rabbi Yaakov began to accept the public for blessings and offer advice. Among the people who came was this bitter woman. She entered and told Rabbi Yaakov's host that she wished for the Rabbi to pray that her son should die! He asked her to explain herself, and then he related the entire sad story to Rabbi Yaakov.

Rabbi Yaakov listened to the request and told the host that he would not pray for the son to die, but rather to be completely healed. He

## It Once Happened...

explained to the host that he should tell the woman to bathe her son, dress him in clean garments and bring him to see him.

The next day, the woman arrived with her son - having prepared him as the Rabbi had requested. The Rabbi instructed that the son be brought on his wheelchair to a place in the room directly underneath a skylight where the sun would shine upon him. Rabbi Yaakov asked the boy his name, and then instructed him to get out of his wheelchair and come over to him. The boy somehow managed to rise and take the steps necessary to stand before the Rabbi, whereupon Rabbi Yaakov instructed him to walk back to his wheelchair. Then he told him to again get up and walk to him. After having him walk back and forth three times, he told the boy that he no longer needed the wheelchair and that he should return home with his mother. He blessed him with health and longevity.

The community was abuzz with excitement at the good news, for word of the revealed miracle that had taken place spread quickly. The mother brought the story to the attention of the ruler of the city. She sold jewelry to the people of the town and thus had been in touch with the ruler before. This time, however, she would be adding a new person to her staff and would have to introduce the teenage boy to the ruler. She would also have to explain why she had never presented the boy before.

The ruler, who knew how sad this woman had always been and now saw her glowing face, realized the great miracle that had taken place through the distinguished guest Rabbi. He regretted his previous decision to tax the Jews, and after nullifying his decree, welcomed the rabbi into his home. He invited many guests to his home that day and told them the story of the miracle rabbi who had healed a young boy who the best doctors were unable to help. Now, with just a few words, the rabbi had cured the boy completely!

Rabbi Yaakov rose at the meal and in humility told the guests how it was not he who had healed, but rather G-d, the Creator of the world, who had done the wonder. He explained that it was only because he himself fulfilled the words of G-d to the Jewish people that the Creator had allowed him to be the vessel through which the miracle would occur. G-d answers the prayers of those who study His Torah and fulfill His commandments, he explained.

May the merit of the Abir Yaakov, protect us all and bring blessing to each of us where we need it most in our lives.

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*



**Y-GRAPHICS**

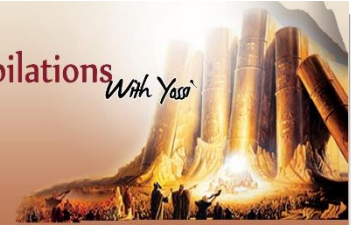
Shabbat Times - Parshat Shemot

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:20	5:36	6:14
Tel Aviv	4:34	5:37	6:10
Haifa	4:24	5:35	6:10
Be'er Sheva	4:39	5:39	6:15



# Torah Compilations With Yossi

## Parshat Shemot



### The Volper

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

When the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism) remained in Russia after Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok/Vitebsk went to Israel, the Rebbe began to spread his teachings over the vastness of Russia, sending rays of the light of Chasidic philosophy to every city and town. At first he had very few Chasidim, and the Chasidic movement was quite limited in scope, but day by day its light was revealed and people came to Liozna to investigate for themselves.

Here is the story of one who became an exceptional advocate of the Alter Rebbe:

He had shabby clothes and a persistent smell of vodka about him. He was tall and skinny, and had prominent cheekbones, but his most distinguished feature was the sparkle in his eyes. Very few people knew him. He was known as the Volper; nobody knew his first name.

The few who did know him also knew that the Volper was a prodigious Torah scholar who used to be a student of the Maggid of Mezritch. He had shared a bench with the great Chasidic luminaries, such as Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, Rabbi Zushe of Anipol and his brother Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, and even with the youngest of the group, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. Together they had absorbed Torah and Chasidic teachings from the great Maggid.

The Volper however, had unique qualities which set him apart from the others. After the Maggid finished speaking, the other students would go over to the Volper to hear him repeat the Maggid's teachings. When he spoke, everything was clear and his audience would be completely overcome.

Nobody knew what led to the Volper's downfall. At some point, he began drinking excessively. He even began to frequent bars. He did not speak about himself. Wherever he went on his wanderings, his mouth would spew forth pearls of Torah and wisdom, even the deepest secrets of Torah. The more he drank, the more the "secret came out," the secrets of Torah. People who did not understand him mocked him.

One day the Volper arrived in Liozna in White Russia, where he went to the local study hall. The Alter Rebbe was there with his Chasidim and outstanding students, and he was saying a deep Chasidic discourse. The Volper sat in a corner, and in a rare moment of seriousness and lucidity, he rested his head on his hands and listened closely to the Rebbe's teachings. Nobody paid him any attention at all.

When the Alter Rebbe had concluded, he left the study hall and went home. The Volper also left the study hall, backpack on his shoulders, to continue his wanderings. Before leaving though, he hiccupped loudly and proclaimed with a peculiar smile, maybe one of pain or longing, "Ah, we all ate from one bowl, but he got all the gedichte (the thick portion of the soup)."

Word got around, until the Alter Rebbe was told what had been said. "That was the Volper," the Rebbe said. "If I knew he was here, I would have tried to get him to stay with us so that he wouldn't wander anymore."

The Volper continued his wanderings. Eventually he arrived in Vilna, a large city full of Torah scholars. Nobody paid him any attention. He entered a hostel where he got a warm meal. Then he removed a bottle of vodka from his worn satchel and poured himself a big glass.

The scholarly drunkard settled down in his place and went to sleep by the warm oven, while mumbling secrets of Torah. He quoted from works of Kabbala and concepts from the innermost teachings of Torah, and every so often he burst into drunken laughter.

Reb Yudel stood nearby and listened closely to the drunk. Reb Yudel was a highly esteemed Torah scholar. He was a close student of the Vilna Gaon, and merited a seat of honor in the study hall. At first he thought his ears were deceiving him, but then his amazement continued to grow. He realized that the drunkard was an outstanding scholar, conversant in all aspects of the Torah.

Reb Yudel stood there and listened until the drunkard let forth a snore and nearly fell asleep. Reb Yudel shook him by the shoulder. "Tell me, dear brother," he said in his ear, "where did you get all this from?"

The Volper cocked an eye at him, and Yudel suddenly saw the mysterious sparkle in his eyes. It scared him a bit and he edged away. "Ah, ah... You want to know where I got this from?"

Reb Yudel nodded his head silently. He was too shocked to utter a word.

"N-n-no!" whispered the drunk. "I can't tell you now. But if you want Torah such as this, go to Liozna where you will find peace for your soul."

Reb Yudel reeled backward in dismay. He knew very well who was in Liozna, for he was one of the greatest opponents of Chasidism and its proponents. Yet the drunkard's words entered his heart, and a fierce battle was waged therein. "If this drunk knows so much, what does the Rebbe himself know?!" he wondered. A few days passed until he resolved to travel to Liozna to hear Torah from the Alter Rebbe. He knew he had a lot to learn.

Like other great Torah scholars, Reb Yudel finally arrived in Liozna, where he became an outstanding Chasid of the Alter Rebbe, and a great scholar in Chasidism. The Rebbe eventually sent him to Liepelei in order to serve as rabbi of the city and to bring the light of Chasidism to the people living there.

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org*

*Editor's Note: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liozna, known as the "Baal HaTanya and the Alter Rebbe (in Chabad circles)" ז"ל's 209th Yahrzeit was Tuesday, 24th Tevet - January 17th of this year*

Picture the scene. You're at a Simcha, and the host stands up, as hosts do, welcomes this one and that one, mentions this relative and the other – so and so who's come from afar and then, of course, those who are unfortunately not with us. Name after name after name. You're not a member of the family, you're not familiar with these names. Do you find them boring?

Actually no. And that's because you appreciate that some people must be mentioned because it's thanks to them that this Simcha is actually taking place. It's because of what they have invested, either recently or way back in the past, to enable those who are celebrating to come together for a most wonderful occasion.

This Shabbat we will read Parshat Shemot, and it comes at the beginning of Sefer Shemot, the book of Shemot. There are so many lists of names in the Torah. Sometimes the names are familiar, often they are not. What's particularly intriguing is that this list of names at the beginning of our Parsha are very familiar. They're the children of Yaakov Avinu, those who came originally into Egypt. We already know these names and we know these details. Why is it mentioned right at the beginning of the book?

So the Midrash explains that the Torah here wants us to appreciate the contribution of these tzaddikim. Each and every one of them, says the Midrash, had a pure soul and was a great person.

Rashi adds that these names were mentioned at the end of the book of Bereishit in order to provide praise for what people did in their lifetime. Now, these names are mentioned at the beginning of Shemot, to praise them once they had passed away because their impact continues to be with us.

So the Torah, therefore, mentions names in order to show appreciation. If not for these great, wonderful people, we wouldn't be here as a nation to this day.

So what is the takeaway for us all? I believe we should be asking ourselves the question, "What does our name mean to others?" Not that we want our name to be on lists that are read out or engraved on buildings but rather, what is the impact we are making? To what degree are we influencing events and people now, and to what extent are we investing in the future of the world?

Let us ensure that through our deeds, through our words, and through everything that we do, we will provide a great blessing for those around us. In appreciation of what King Solomon taught, "טוב שם משמן טוב" – A good name is more important than the finest of oils."

And the Mishnah teaches, "וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן" – The crown of a good name supersedes all."

So let's hope that through our good deeds our prayers get answered, so let's pray with all our hearts for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra 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 and sweet Shabbat.

*Yossi*

# שמות פרשת

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## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 124  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1763  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6762

HAFTORA:  
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23  
Sephardim: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

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