

The Jewish Weekly

The Delayed Delivery

by Yisroel Yaakov Klapholz,
as translated by Sheindel Weinbach

Once, during his travels, the Baal Shem Tov stayed at the inn of one of his followers in a village near the city Brody.

The innkeeper, wishing to honor his distinguished guest and those accompanying him, prepared a huge feast on their behalf and accorded all the respect due them.

As the Baal Shem Tov took leave of his gracious host he said: "Ask of me what you wish."

"Thank G-d, I lack nothing and have no request to make, other than that my heart be strengthened to continue serving and fearing my Maker," said the righteous innkeeper.

"If so, than I have one small favor to request of you. Please do not refuse me," asked the 'Baal Shem Tov.'

The good man replied readily, "I am prepared to serve you with my whole body and soul and with all my might."

The Baal Shem Tov went over to a desk and sat down to write a letter, sealing it with his personal seal and addressing it to two specific people by name, and also referring to them as the "Trustees for the Congregation of the City of Brody." He handed the letter to the innkeeper saying: "I wish you to deliver this letter yourself, not by messenger. Give this to the people I have addressed it to."

"I shall do as you instructed," said the man and placed it in the outer pocket of his jacket.

As the Baal Shem Tov prepared to go he asked his host, "You intend to accompany me part of the way, do you not?"

The innkeeper rushed to the stable and proceeded to take out the harness from its box in order to hitch up the horses. As he bent over to extract the equipment from the chest, the letter fell out of his pocket without his noticing it. He hurriedly harnessed his horses to the wagon and went to accompany his departing guest.

When he returned he had already forgotten all about the letter. Even when he later visited the Baal Shem Tov he did not remember it, nor did the Baal Shem Tov inquire whether he had delivered it.

Years passed. In 1760, the Baal Shem Tov ascended to his Heavenly reward. Some time after, the wheel of fortune turned against the innkeeper, to the extent that he was eventually forced to sell all he owned in order to provide for his family. By then it was seventeen years since the Baal Shem Tov had visited him.

One day the innkeeper went to look for something in the chest where he kept his harnesses. All of a sudden, he happened to notice the letter. Picking it up, he recognized the Baal Shem Tov's handwriting upon the envelope and remembered the incident of seventeen years before.

The innkeeper was very distressed and wept bitterly, blaming his misfortune on his oversight concerning the letter. He dared not open the letter for it was still sealed with the Baal Shem Tov's seal and the people for whom it was intended might still be alive. He decided to deliver it to the addresses, convinced that a letter written by the Baal Shem Tov would be dear to its recipient even if it had been written seventeen years ago. He picked himself up and walked to Brody, being too poor even to afford the fare for transportation.

After a taxing journey, he finally reached his destination. Immediately he began inquiring in the different study-halls and synagogues about the trustees named on the letter. To his great consternation he learned from reliable people who had lived in the city for over twenty years that no such trustees had ever served in Brody. When these men heard the innkeeper's story they were surprised too, for the Baal Shem Tov had been well known in Brody.

During the course of the conversation one man said in jest: "Are you aware that today elections are being held in the main synagogue for the new trustees? Who knows? Maybe those men will be chosen today!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than some young boys rushed into the Beit Midrash (study hall).

"Mazel tov! Mazel tov!" they shouted. Mr. so and so and Mr. so and so were just elected as the new trustees for the community."

The innkeeper looked at the envelope in his hand in astonishment. Those were the very names that appeared on the letter! He rushed to the synagogue to find the two men and tell them his strange story.

He approached the new trustees, men in their early thirties, and greeted them: "Blessed be you unto G-d. I have here a letter addressed to you both from The Baal Shem Tov."

They looked at the letter he handed them and thought that it was a joke, for the Baal Shem Tov had passed away many years ago. The old man who had accompanied the innkeeper knew the Baal Shem Tov in person from the Baal Shem Tov's occasional visits to Brody. Now he spoke up.

"It is quite possible that the Baal Shem Tov sent this letter to you; his holy vision was capable of spanning time as well as distance. In fact, I am sure it was intended for you," he said with conviction.

It Once Happened...

They opened up the letter and read the following message:

"To the new trustees of the city of Brody" - addressing them by name.

"You have received this letter from a destitute innkeeper. I beg of you, do what is in your power for his sake, for he is a decent man who has been accustomed to wealth all of his life until his recent poverty. His strained circumstances are such that he has no means to feed his family. Therefore, do your best for him, for I, the Baal Shem Tov, ask it of you.

"If you doubt that I have sent this letter to you, let me give you a sign. Your wives are both pregnant. You will soon be informed that the wife of one (whom he named) will give birth to a boy while the other woman (and he named her as well) will give birth to a girl. Let this, then, be the sign that I have really sent this letter and that I implore you to help the good man before you to the best of your ability."

As they were finishing reading the letter, some people came in and announced the births, precisely as the letter had predicted.

The two young men told and retold this amazing occurrence to everyone they encountered that day, their astonishment growing all the while. As for the innkeeper, they did their best for him and, with Heaven's grace, he soon became wealthy again.

* * *

The source of this story is the holy Rebbe of Apta, Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heshel, who once related this wondrous episode to a large assembly of chassidim in Berditchev. After concluding, he commented:

"Does this story seem strange to you? To me it is not extraordinary at all. The Baal Shem Tov was able to see what would be seventeen years hence, because he was endowed with a spiritual vision which transcended past, present and future simultaneously. Plus, he had the necessary infinite wisdom to distinguish between them.

"What I do find extraordinary is the deep love for his fellow Jew that constantly burned within him and caused him to penetrate into the person's future, and his deep concern to help and support that unfortunate man even after he himself had gone to the World Beyond. It is this boundless love that I extract as the lesson from this story."

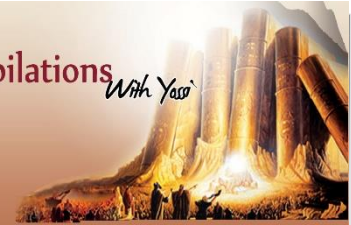
Reprinted from Tales of the Baal Shem Tov, vol. 2



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayechi

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:14	5:30	6:08
Tel Aviv	4:28	5:32	6:04
Haifa	4:18	5:29	6:04
Be'er Sheva	4:33	5:34	6:09



Not a Simple Request By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In the 1980's, a young man in Bnei Brak, R. Yisrael Zussman, was compelled by his circumstances to leave yeshiva and go into business after his wedding. As Reb. Yisrael was a scholar of note and a serious individual; it always irked him that he had been unable to pursue his true goal of continuing his advanced Torah studies, despite meeting with great success in his business endeavors.

One of his acquaintances, aware of his inner turmoil, suggested to him that perhaps he would feel more satisfaction if he would enter an age-old Yissachar-Zevulun pact; he should support a young scholar who is dedicating his life to learning Torah, and he would thus have a share in that scholar's Torah learning.

R. Yisrael liked the idea very much, and after consulting with Rabbi Aharon Shteinman, the head of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, decided to accept it. The Rosh Yeshiva even suggested a "Yissachar" that he undertake to support - a serious scholar in Bnei Brak by the name of Rabbi S. Yudaikin, a descendent of the Vilna Gaon, who was dedicating his life to learning Torah and serving G-d.

Rabbi Yudaikin, when approached about the proposition, refused to accept more than his most meager requirements, just enough to get by, and these were sent to him by R' Zussman on a regular basis. The partnership was very satisfying to both of them. Years passed by, with this arrangement continuing to be maintained.

One day, R. Yisrael was travelling to New York on a business trip. Before he left, he received a sudden frantic phone call from a relative. She told him that she had heard that he was travelling to New York, and she had an important request to make of him. He said he would be glad to help her, whereupon she asked him to promise that he would fulfill her request. Cautious (realizing that this would be no simple request) and curious, he assured her that he would, and went over to her house to hear from her what it was that she desired.

When he arrived, his relative, who was expecting, informed him tearfully that she had just been diagnosed with a malignant tumor the previous day, and the doctors ordered immediate treatment of chemotherapy.

However, the issue of her pregnancy complicated matters. The doctors felt that it was crucial for her to abort. They told her that if she didn't terminate her pregnancy, then either the baby would be severely damaged in any case, or it would be an orphan.

Her doctor empathized with her about the difficult decision that she had to make. However, he said to her: "If you were my daughter, I would unhesitatingly tell you to abort".

The desperate woman now tearfully beseeched her cousin, "Please, when you are in NY, use the opportunity to approach the Lubavitcher Rebbe on my behalf. He is known for the wonders that he has performed, and I will follow whatever he advises.

Rabbi Zussman could not refuse her desperate plea, and Sunday found him in "770" (Lubavitch International

Headquarters), waiting his turn in line to receive a dollar from the Rebbe.

The date was 26 Adar 1 5752. It was one minute before 7 p.m., during the last hour of the dollar distribution of that day (and the last hour of the dollar distribution to date). The Rebbe's attendants and their helpers were focusing all of their energies on rushing things along as fast as possible in order to finish as soon as possible.

R. Yisrael later related: "As I neared the place of the Rebbe, I noticed the great efforts in hurrying everyone along. The truth is, I understood them well. There were, after all, thousands of people in line, and if everyone would take just one extra moment, it would amount to additional hours. However, I felt that the issue about which I had come was a matter of pikuach nefesh - lives were at stake - and I determined to present my question. I decided that when I reached my turn I would grasp tightly the stand that the Rebbe was leaning on, so that no one could remove me until I was done.

"I reached the place and stood in front of the Rebbe. I felt hands grasping me to pull me along, and I noticed the Rebbe glance at them sharply, to indicate that they should allow me to say my piece. I quickly described the dilemma of my relative and her question.

"The Rebbe asked me for her name and the name of her mother, which I provided. Suddenly, the Rebbe closed his eyes for a moment, right in front of me, and then opened them. I had the sense that he took a quick trip to higher realms and then came back down to us.

"The Rebbe then turned to me and said: 'It's not the disease that you said, it's something else. The doctors should be told to look for something else.'"

R. Yisrael stood there in shock, not knowing how to react, but the Rebbe continued: "What she has is not that disease, so there is no place for her other question (about terminating the pregnancy). She will give birth, and it will be a very special child!"

Completely overwhelmed, R. Yisrael found himself outside, and immediately ran to a telephone to convey the exact words of the Rebbe to his relative. New tests were taken, and they showed no trace of cancer. She completed the pregnancy and gave birth to a healthy baby.

The professor who had been treating her was flabbergasted; the last tests completely contradicted all the earlier ones. She began to interrogate her patient, asking what special foods she ate or what treatments she had undergone to bring about this miraculous change.

R. Yisrael, upon his return to Israel, visited this professor, and personally shared with her the exact details of what had transpired. Visibly moved, she banged on the table with her hand and exclaimed emotionally; "Indeed, there is a G-d!"

R. Yisrael decided to share the story with his "business" partner. He related to Rabbi Yudaikin the entire story, saying: "Listen, I know that you and I are both from a Lithuanian background without any connection to the way of the chasidim at all, but this is a miracle that I have personally experienced!"

Rabbi Yudaikin responded: "It's a hard story to believe. I need to verify it before I can accept it. But if I can verify all the details, I promise to begin to study Chassidut."

True to his word, Rabbi Yudaikin (after verifying the story) began diligently learning Chassidut. It is said that he recently printed a 500 plus-page book of his notes on Tanya, the foundational work of Chabad Chassidut.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org

Every parsha starts at the beginning of a fresh paragraph. There's either a short gap or a longer gap before it. Parshat Vayechi, however, has no beginning. It flows directly on from the end of the previous week's parsha. So why is this the case?

Rav Meir Yechiel of Ostroff gives a beautiful commentary. He tells us that when the 70 souls of the family of Yaakov Avinu came down to Egypt, they didn't know at what point in their journey they were.

There was so much doubt, so much confusion. They knew they were going into exile. But how long would it last? Would it be happy? Would it be trying? When would their redemption come? When would they be going back to their land?

Because the beginning, the middle and the end of their journey was not known to them, that's why the beginning of the parsha is not clearly defined.

What was the response of Yaakov Avinu during those challenging times of uncertainty? His response was in one word: ברכות - Blessings.

Yaakov Avinu counted his blessings, and he wanted those around him to do likewise. In particular at that moment he appreciated his family. Coming right at the end of the book of Bereishit - the book of the dysfunctional family - Yaakov Avinu wanted to bring his divided family together, and he showed them how his grandchildren, Ephraim and Menashe, got on so well together - a model for future peaceful domestic coexistence.

The ברכות - blessings, are what Yaakov Avinu gave to his family. Vayechi is full of them: a blessing for each and every child, a blessing for his grandchildren, charging us to bless our children likewise for all time. Indeed, the blessings of Yaakov Avinu as presented in Vayechi continue to provide inspiration for us to this very day.

Just like Yaakov Avinu, we need to count our blessings. We need to step back and prioritize what is really important in life and like Yaakov Avinu, highlight how crucial our families must be for us all.

In addition we need to bless others, to let them know how much we appreciate them, to give them words of praise and also to invest in the future. These are trying times - people are dying, people are ill, people have lost their jobs, people are lonely and there is an increase of mental illness. But together with that, like Yaakov Avinu, let's invest now in our future. And through our actions, our deeds and our blessings, may we provide an inspiration now for all time to come.

So let's join together and give our blessings by praying 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



The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 85
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1158
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4448

HAFTORA:
Melachim I 2:1 - 12

ויחי

This week has been
sponsored by

Shmuel and Dina Halpern
In memory of his father

ר' שמעון צבי בן הרב דוד ז"ל
Whose Yahrzeit was טבת י"ג