

The Jewish Weekly

Two Inspired Gifts

Translated by Asharon Baltazar

A wealthy man invited a wandering pauper to join his family for a Shabbat meal. Over the course of the evening the host, his family, and the other guests shared Torah insights. Some were lengthy and complex, others just a simple thought or idea. But everyone contributed.

When it was the pauper's turn, however, he excused himself apologetically. "I don't know anything," he said simply. All eyes turned toward the host for a reaction, but he continued the program without comment.

At the end, following Grace After Meals, the guests prepared to leave. Exhausted, the pauper turned to go. Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was the magnate's son-in-law, wearing a mocking expression. And he didn't hold back. He called the pauper a simpleton and an ignoramus, and then yelled at him that he should be ashamed of himself for not having any Torah thoughts to share.

In the middle of the tirade, the poor man found his voice and retorted, "You're one to talk! You're going to be a small town rabbi, living off a weekly salary of two coins. Is that something to be smug about?"

The son-in-law fell silent, thrown off by the unexpected response. Comfortably ensconced in his wife's family, the thought of leaving the supportive fold and becoming a small town rabbi had never entered his mind.

Incensed by the jab, the son-in-law renewed his rant, which had now become personal.

Meanwhile, the wealthy host was in his room, preparing to unwind from the long week. When he heard the shouts, he went to investigate and found the curious scene in his dining room. "What happened?" he asked.

In a self-assured manner, the son-in-law explained. The wealthy host turned to his guest and asked about the strange insinuation.

"Have a seat and I will tell you my story," replied the pauper, gesturing to some chairs.

"I am a simple tailor and live rather modestly in a small village. For years my livelihood depended on the residents from the surrounding villages, and on occasion I visited the nobleman's estate to sew for him. When he decided he wanted to introduce a consistent uniform for all his employees, he asked me to provide an estimate. I gave it some thought and finally determined a price.

"Knowing me to be an honest man, the nobleman agreed and handed over the entire sum up front. Money in hand, I set out for the city to purchase the required material.

"When I arrived, I discovered that the city was in the throes of a distressing scandal: a family-father, mother, and children had been jailed, thrown in a pit for not paying the rent they owed.

"Seeing the family's pain sparked a compulsion to help. I remembered the vast fortune sitting in my pocket. When I heard how much they owed, I couldn't believe my ears! It was the same amount I carried, down to the last coin. I presented the money and strode past the disbelieving onlookers to welcome the family I had freed.

"I hope Hashem forgives me for what I did next. With nary a yarn on my wagon, I returned to the nobleman and claimed that I had been the victim of a robbery and therefore unable to acquire the materials I needed for his uniforms. The nobleman believed me and replenished the missing sum without a second thought. This time, I acquired the material and finished sewing his entire order.

"Because our village did not have enough Jews for a prayer quorum, for many years my wife and I traveled to a neighboring town for the month of Tishrei. The year after I freed that family, we arrived at the town as usual. On Yom Kippur eve I headed to the synagogue rather early for Kol Nidrei. After all, I reasoned, if I didn't go to shul the rest of the year, I could at least show up early for Yom Kippur.

"I chose to stand next to the entrance. Tallit (prayer shawl) covering my head, I opened to the first page of Psalms and began to recite the holy words. While reading, I noticed a figure approaching me. I looked up and recognized the man I had freed just months before. Except - I don't know how I realized it then - he was after death; the man had come from beyond his grave.

"He explained that he was no ordinary person; he had been one of the 36 righteous men that hide among us. He had no means of repaying my kindness in this world, but promised that now I would be rewarded as well as in the World to Come.

"I have come to return the favor," he said. "Allow me to teach you how the holy day of Yom Kippur is experienced in the spiritual worlds above. He then stood at my side for a while, describing something I couldn't quite understand.

"The man paused, 'All I've said until now,' he announced, 'pertains to the spiritual world of Asiyah. In the next higher spiritual world of Yetzirah, however, it goes like this:'

"He then talked about Yom Kippur in Yetzirah and also moved on to explain the even higher spiritual world of Beriah.

"As I said, I didn't understand a word. Everything was foreign to me the concepts, the terms, the indefinable descriptions. Nothing clicked. But whatever he was saying warmed my heart to tears. I sobbed the entire time as though wrapped in an emotional vortex.

"Suddenly, I felt pushing. I realized I was blocking the doorway and people were trying to pass. It was late; people must be cramming in for Kol Nidrei. I took a step back, to make space for the latecomers.

"As though I had been suddenly doused in cold water, I awoke to someone screaming at me: 'Just because I'm the gabbai (beadle) doesn't mean I'm not hungry!'

It Once Happened...

"Reality dawned on me: Yom Kippur was over. I had slept through everything. The pushing was from all the congregants rushing home for the meal. The gabbai, unable to lock the synagogue because of me, had become impatient.

"The tzaddik (righteous person) I had freed, turned to me, saying, 'This is only the beginning. Now travel to the Seer of Lublin, where you will receive the rest.' And just like that, he disappeared.

"Gripped by confusion, I wondered about what I had merited to experience. In truth, I was a simple man, elevated to eligibility because of a single good deed. I wasn't spiritually equipped to assimilate such holy things.

"I arrived at the inn where my wife and I were staying to find a table set with food and drink, but nothing mattered anymore. The only thing on my mind was Lublin.

"I have to get to Lublin," I said.

"At least have something to eat or drink!" protested my wife nervously.

"I didn't care. 'No! Lublin!'

"When I arrived, the Seer greeted me by saying, 'I'm well aware that you're not ready. For me to help you become spiritually attuned, you must stay here for a whole year. We will pray together every day from the same siddur (prayerbook).'

"Of course, I stayed and accompanied the Seer for a year, crowding around his yellowed siddur whenever we prayed. When the year was up, the Seer told me to roam the countryside alone for three years, in a self-prescribed exile.

"Before I left, he gave me a parting gift. 'Whenever you chance upon someone,' he said, 'nothing about them will be hidden from you. From their day of birth till their last breath, you will know everything about the person.'

"So here I am," finished the pauper, "still wandering about. But I know that you" - the pauper pointed to the son-in-law - "will eventually be the rabbi of a small town, living off two coins per week."

Time passed and the wealthy man's fortune took a dip, and indeed, his son-in-law was forced to search for a rabbinical position. He had two offers: one town would pay a salary of three coins per week, the other town two coins.

The son-in-law chose the latter!

His reason?

"I heard from a holy man we hosted for Shabbat, that I am destined for just two."

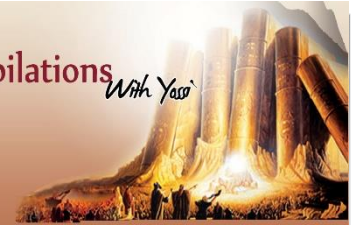
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Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Ki Tisa

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:08	6:21	7:01
Tel Aviv	5:23	6:22	6:58
Haifa	5:13	6:22	7:00
Be'er Sheva	5:25	6:23	7:01



A Second Chance in Life

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

One afternoon I received a call to assist a family who was arriving from Eretz Yisrael. Their teenage girl, Ronit, was in desperate need of a kidney transplant, and they had no insurance, no funds, and no extended family whatsoever.

As we sat around the table a few days later, I noticed that the family, while being polite, maintained a distance and I surmised that it was because of all the emotional upheaval they were currently dealing with. Ronit herself always looked down towards the floor. She seemed to be a very special young lady. Her downcast expression, as everyone sat around discussing her life situation, spoke of a depth of neshama that she possessed.

An hour or so later, with a plan in place, we concluded our meeting. I assured the family that I would work together with them, and they agreed to call me again in a few days.

A few days passed and I didn't receive any phone calls. I assumed that they were extremely busy acclimating themselves, finding accommodations, and making all the necessary arrangements. When two weeks passed and I still hadn't heard from them, I began to wonder why they were not calling. Unfortunately, I had no telephone number for them or an address, and no way to contact them. I didn't even remember the name of the person who had made the initial introduction.

Another week or two went by and I became worried. Had they been unable to make any arrangements? Was Ronit okay? With no further contact, all I could do was to continue to be mispallel for the well-being of Ronit bas Miriam, whose name I had taken down when I met the family.

A number of weeks went by, and I had long given up hope of ever hearing from them again. Out of the blue, I received a phone call from the same man who had originally contacted me about this family so many months ago. I anxiously anticipated hearing a progress report, but before I could say anything he quickly requested that I meet the family again.

I agreed to the suggested day and time, and once again we were all sitting together at the table. The family, looking even more downcast than the first time, informed me that they had not made much progress since our last meeting.

Incredulous, I asked, "Why haven't you called back all this time?"

Looking embarrassed, the mother replied, "The first time we came to meet you, we had no idea that we would be meeting with a dati (religious) person. After we saw how religious you are, we knew that you could not help irreligious people like us. So, we didn't bother you anymore. Just two days ago we called the person in Israel, who had initially suggested that we come to you, and we were bemoaning our plight. He was surprised to hear of our lack of progress and asked me if we had met with you. I explained that we felt we had come to the wrong address.

"The man answered, 'You were not at the wrong address. He will help you. It doesn't matter to him whether you are dati or not.' He ordered us to go back to you, and so here we are."

I could not believe my ears. I felt bad that Ronit had waited half a year in pain because of a misperception.

We again mapped out a strategy and immediately began working on several fronts to help Ronit and the family. Ronit was placed on a waiting list for a kidney transplant and necessary treatments were begun at a local health facility. Askanim in the community provided the family with food and clothing, and living quarters were arranged at a very low rent. The chesed on any given day was awe-inspiring, and an entire team of Beit Yaakov students became involved with the family on a regular basis. There was no shortage of volunteers willing to drive Ronit to and from her treatments, which took a couple of hours.

As the weeks went by, Ronit developed a friendship with some of the students. They talked about everything – including life, Torah, mitzvos – and the girls were making an impact on Ronit and her family. Ronit's father began to attend the small shul in the neighborhood every Shabbat. The groceries that were provided each week also included Shabbat candles, and Ronit's mother began to light the Shabbat candles.

As the entire family progressed in their spiritual development, word had begun to spread in the community, of this family's predicament. Tefillos increased, and the name Ronit bas Miriam appeared on shenders and siddurim throughout the world. It wasn't long before a donor was miraculously found for Ronit. Her transplant was a success and after weeks of recuperation, Ronit and her family returned to Eretz Yisrael, renewed in body and soul.

With a new kidney, not only had Ronit been granted a new lease on life, but all of the family had been spiritually inspired with a second chance in life.

Reprinted from an email of The Jewish Press.



We don't just learn from the content of the Torah. We also learn so much from the way in which it is presented. One fine example of this is palindromes, which I love to research and speak about. Looking at this week's Parsha of Ki Tisa, we find within it what many presume to be the longest palindrome in the Torah. It's the word "וּתְנוּנוּ - and they shall give," and it conveys a beautiful message.

In the same way, as the palindrome is the same forwards and backwards, so too when you give, you receive in turn.

One of the finest ways to gain fulfillment and satisfaction in life is through giving selflessly to others. However, there is actually a longer palindrome in the Torah although it's not in one word – it's in two words. It's in Parshat Toldot immediately after Yaakov had deceived his father, Eisav arrived with food to give to his father, and the Torah describes this as "וּבָא לְאָבִיו - he brought it for his father." Here we have nine letters the same forwards and backwards and again it's all about giving of ourselves to others.

Fascinatingly in modern Hebrew, there is a nine letter palindrome in one single word – it's the word "וּלְכַשְׁתֶּשְׁכֵּילוּ" (velichsheteshakeilu) meaning 'and when they shall become bereaved'. Of course, this is a very sad phenomenon and the message here as well is exceptionally powerful. When people endure grief, the regular notion is that the world should come to them to offer their support, but so often people say to me, "בָּאוּ לְחוּק וְיִצְאוּ מִחוּקִים - We came to comfort and we emerged comforted."

Those who were enduring pain were the ones who gave selflessly of their support and encouragement and comfort to all others.

One of the greatest sources of comfort and encouragement for us is סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים, the Book of Psalms, and isn't it extraordinary that the author of so many of the Psalms was דָּוִד בֶּן יִשָּׁי (David Ben Yishai), palindrome son of palindrome? Indeed King David lived for 70 short years during which he suffered so much in so many ways and yet to this day he remains one of the greatest sources of encouragement and inspiration for us.

Let us, therefore, take a leaf out of his book and ensure always that regardless of circumstances we can be an inspiration to everyone around us especially by joining together to pray with all our hearts, for our soldiers who go out to protect us, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah, and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, happy, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 9
MITZVOT ASEH: 4
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 5

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 139
NUMBER OF WORDS: 2002
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7424

This year, (5783 / 2023) Parshat Ki Tisa is a special Shabbat.

The Shabbat immediately following Purim is called Shabbat Parshat Parah. The Mafkir, from Bamidbar, Parshat Chukat, (19:1-22), describes the preparation of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer), whose ashes were used in the spiritual purification process during the time of the Bait Hamikdash. This purification was carried out at this time of the year, to ensure that everyone would be able to partake in the Korban Pesach (Pascal Lamb) to be offered on the 14th day of Nisan.

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Yechezkel 36:16-38
Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel 36:16-36

פרשת פרה - תשא

This week is sponsored in memory of

מרת דבורה חנה ע"ה
בת הרב מנחם מענדל שליט"א
Who's Neshama returned to it's Maker last year,
כ' אדר ב' תשפ"ב

