

The Jewish Weekly

KEEP THE CHANGE!

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Meir "the Elder" of Premishlan was a merchant. The non-Jews that used to do business with him called him "Meirke sparvidliwy" - "honest Meir." Whenever they had something to sell they would come to him rather than any other, because they knew he would never deceive them.

One day, R. Meir said to himself, "Why should I spend so much time everyday in the marketplace selling, and not in Torah-study and serving G-d? What a waste! My faith in G-d is greater than that. I am sure that He is able to provide for me and my family even if I spend all my time in study and prayer."

So he decided to do, and so he did. He spent all his time in the Beit Midrash (study-hall) and devoted himself day and night to study and prayer. He relied totally on the Creator of all, Who provides for the needs of all of His creations, great and small, to provide for him too.

He lived in this manner for several years. The economic situation at home deteriorated sharply. He and his family survived, but barely. Finally, they came to the point when they had nothing to relieve their sharp pangs of hunger.

It seemed they could no longer go on. But then, a non-Jewish peasant arrived at the marketplace with a large abandoned beehive to sell. Many of the merchants and shopkeepers offered to buy it, but he refused. He stated he would only sell to "honest Meir." Everyone laughed at him, telling him R. Meir was no longer in business, but he remained determined, not really believing them, and proclaimed that he would wait as long as necessary.

The sun had nearly set before he acknowledged that R. Meir was not going to come. Still, he refused to sell it to anyone else, and instead carried it back home.

His wife questioned him as to why he hadn't sold the hive. He told her because he waited the whole day for "honest Meir, who never came, and he didn't want to sell it to any of the others because he didn't trust them: "They are all cheats!" he declared hotly.

"Well, if that's the case," wondered his wife, "why didn't you go to his house? Maybe the reason he didn't show up is because he wasn't feeling well enough."

"You are right," admitted her husband. "Next time, if I don't find him in the marketplace, I'll follow your advice and go look for him at his house."

A few days later, he went again to town with the beehive. As before, many people wanted to buy it but he insisted he would sell only to "honest Meir." After many hours, he at last accepted that R. Meir was not going to come, and he went to

call upon him at his house. Much to his surprise, R. Meir was not there either.

The Rabbi's wife told him that her husband was not available now because he was studying Torah, but would probably come home soon. The peasant explained to her how he had twice now brought this huge beehive to town to sell, but he didn't want to sell it to anyone else, because they were all dishonest - only to her husband.

She said that if that is the case, she would go to call her husband. She asked the surprise visitor to please wait.

R. Meir's wife hurried over to the Beit Midrash. "Please have mercy on your children and come home," she pleaded. "A non-Jew has shown up who has a very large beehive that he refuses to sell to anyone but you. Come, buy it from him, sell the honey to someone else. Whether the profit is great or small, at least we will be able to buy some food."

"All right," her husband said, "I've almost finished this lesson anyway. Go back home and tell him I'll come as soon as I am done here."

When R. Meir arrived, he asked the peasant to show him the hive. The latter replied that he had left it in town because it was so heavy, but if R. Meir was interested to buy it, he would drive it over.

"How much do you want for it?" R. Meir asked. "However much you say," answered the non-Jew. I trust your integrity and that you will not try to take advantage of me."

When the man returned with the beehive, R. Meir calculated that if it were filled with honey, the honey would be worth about twenty gold coins. He told the peasant he would pay twenty gold coins, because that is how much he estimated the hive was worth, if indeed it was full of honey.

The man agreed readily. Now there was only one problem. R. Meir hadn't the faintest idea how to pay him. He didn't even have one little zloty in ready cash. Was there anyone he could possibly borrow the money from for a few days, until he sold the beehive?

Just at that moment, as they were still speaking, a neighbor walked in to borrow something from R. Meir's wife. She overheard the discussion, and promptly volunteered a short-term loan to the couple to enable them to complete the deal. She went home and shortly returned with twenty gold coins.

As soon as he paid the peasant and escorted him out, R. Meir returned to the Beit Midrash to resume his studies and meditation. Meanwhile, his wife prepared to cut open the hive and extract all the honey.

She took a large knife and sliced into one side of the hive. Right away she saw, to her horror, that the inner walls were very thick, there was not much empty space, and not a drop of honey was to be seen!

It Once Happened...

Her eager anticipation crushed, she ran to the Beit Midrash and called out her husband in disappointment and frustration. "There is no honey in it. Not a trace! Why didn't you check first? How are we ever going to be able to pay back the loan that my friend so trustingly gave us?"

"Don't worry," her husband tried to calm her. "If necessary I'll even sell the house to make sure we have the money to pay her back. We won't remain in debt."

R. Meir accompanied his wife home to examine the hive for himself. He took the knife and pierced the inside lining, and then attempted to peel it back. As soon as he did, gold coins began pouring out! The thick inside walls of the beehive were packed with them! Hundreds of gold pieces were rolling on the bare floor of their sparse room.

His wife began to gather them and stuff them in her pockets. "No!" cried out her husband. "It is forbidden to personally benefit from such a great miracle. We may only use these coins for tzedakah, to distribute to the poor."


True to his pure intentions, R. Meir gave away the entire fortune to the poor people of Premishlan. His wife, however, had managed to squirrel away a certain amount of coins in the initial excitement without her husband realizing it, and from this she was able to provide for the family for many years.

A long time afterwards, that same non-Jewish peasant came to their house again, to sell something. R. Meir's wife was, of course, very curious to ask him where he had gotten the beehive. He told her that it had happened when once he had driven his wagon into the forest to cut wood to store for the winter. While he was chopping the wood to size in order to load it on the wagon, he had unharnessed the oxen to allow them to graze. When he finished and was ready to start home, he couldn't find the oxen. They had disappeared! It was very unusual.

He began to search for them and had to go deep into the forest. Finally he found them. They were standing next to a very large, hollow tree. He could see that there were all sorts of bees buzzing around inside the hollow. He took the ax that was girded on his waist and split open the tree. Inside was a huge beehive. Clearly it was ownerless and he was entitled to take it and try to profit from it. A few days later, he brought it to town to sell it "to 'honest Meir,' your husband. He gave me a very good price. I was quite satisfied at the time, and still am. If you found a treasure inside, it must be that you deserve it for being such honest and good people."

With that, he ate and drank the refreshments she provided, made "l'chaim," and departed.

Reprinted from Otzar Hamasiyot.



Shabbat Times – Acharei-Kedoshim

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:41	7:56	8:35
Tel Aviv	6:57	7:59	8:32
Haifa	6:49	7:59	8:35
Be'er Sheva	6:58	7:58	8:34



To Russia with Love

By Eliezer Danziger

I am from Canada originally, and never had any connection to Russia growing up. When I look back at what brought me here, it's almost amusing. I was in yeshiva in Israel, and my roommate was planning on spending his summer, volunteering at a camp in Russia. At first, I had no interest in going - I already had my plans in place to spend my summer in California. But after much cajoling on my roommate's end, I gave in and agreed to join him.

It was 1998. We landed in Crimea - and neither of us spoke even a word of Russian. Just two 18-year-old boys, planning to run a camp for kids with whom we couldn't even communicate.

We had a bit of a rocky start, but eventually we found our groove. I remember a week into camp, a young boy came to me and asked for a brit mila (circumcision ceremony). Naturally, I was taken aback.

"Go... play some basketball," I said. "Your friends are all on the court."

A couple of days later, he came back with the same request. Again, I panicked. "There's candy, over there in the dining room!" I told him. "Go get some before it's all gone!"

But when he came back a third time, I realized this was something I couldn't ignore. So, later that night, I brought up the issue at a staff meeting. The head counselor wasn't surprised.

"We have a mohel (a trained circumciser) come every year," he said. "Whoever wants a brit mila gets one on the last day of camp."

I was shocked. I couldn't imagine what that would look like. Groups of young boys, most of whom have never even heard of matzah or menorahs, all getting circumcised? I couldn't imagine someone developing such a strong connection to something they barely understood. But, lo and behold, on one of the last days of camp, the Mohel arrived and performed a brit mila on many of the boys right there in camp.

That summer was my first real experience with shlichut (Chabad missions). I watched young men completely abandon the lives they came from, for a much more spiritual one. I felt attached to these kids. I felt responsible for them. I called them up every week before Shabbat to ask about their journeys. I felt I was their only connection to Torah Judaism, and I couldn't imagine walking away.

I tried to return to my life in Canada, but I found that those boys were always on my mind. It was then that I made the decision to return the following year. But, somehow, that still didn't feel like enough. I was watching them turn their backs on 70 years of

communism; on their parents' and their grandparents' lives. I watched them learn about Torah and Tanach (the 24 books of Jewish scripture) with such joy - it was inspirational.

These kids were gaining so much, after only getting a little jumpstart from camp. I wondered what things would be like if we made them a camp similar to the caliber of Jewish camps in the States. It was this thought that inspired me to start Camp Yeka.

'Yeka' was modeled to enrich the lives of Jewish children, both spiritually as well as physically. We planned fun adventures, daytime trips, and overnights, as well as Torah lessons and prayer. I gathered the best staff I could and poured my soul into this project.

It was never easy, but I know it was worth it. Yeka changed the lives of these children. Every summer was spent planning new ways to inspire and enlighten these young minds.

I truly felt these children were my calling - however, when I got married, my wife didn't feel the same. She preferred to settle down somewhere a little more stable, with a Jewish community and plenty of kosher food.

My wife and I spent a few years in California, had a baby, and settled into our traditional lives. But I wasn't really happy. I knew there was more for me out there.

One day, I got a call that there was no Rabbi in Rostov and the Jewish community was looking for someone desperately. My wife and I discussed it and she agreed to go visit and see what it was like.

We spent Shabbat there and davened (prayed) in the community's 150-year-old shul. The shul was built by Cantonist soldiers who felt rejected by the Jewish community after returning from 25 years in military service that started when they were young boys. The community found them ignorant and disconnected, due to their large gap in Torah background and knowledge. But these men felt passionately about serving Hashem and decided to build a shul of their own. At one time Rostov had 12 synagogues but sadly they were all confiscated or destroyed. Interestingly, the Cantonist Shul is now the last one standing.

The few days we spent visiting Rostov were inspiring. We encountered countless individuals desperate for connection to Judaism. They felt so blessed to have us join them and begged us to stay long-term. When my wife and I eventually left for Israel (where we were continuing to after Russia) we both knew we had to go back.

"This is an incredible opportunity to really do something great," she said. "We need to go back to Russia. It is our calling."

That week, we sold our belongings in Pasadena, drove across the country to JFK, and boarded a plane to Russia. It's been 13 years since then - and we've never looked back.

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It's a record that relates to words. As is well known, the title of a Parsha comes from the first key word in that portion. Often it's the very first word, sometimes the second, third or fourth. But let's have a look at the beginning of parshat Kedoshim. "ידבר ה' אל משה לאמר. דבר, אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו" it's the 14th word! At this point the Torah tells us "You must be holy".

Why the long introduction leading up to 'קדשים תהיו'? It's in order that we should know that Moshe was to instruct 'כל עדת בני ישראל', the entire assembly of the Children of Israel about the content of this portion. Rashi explains that seeing as the majority of the primary principles of the Torah are included in this portion - that's why it was important for Moshe to impart it directly to the entire nation.

The Alshich Hakadosh adds a further insight. He says that there is a danger that some people might think that not all of the mitzvot relate to them - that they're only for 'frum' or holy people. Therefore the Torah says to every single individual 'קדשים תהיו', you have a responsibility to be holy yourself.

Furthermore, we recognize that there are some people who cannot easily relate to the concept of Kedusha, Holiness. They might feel that a holy person is an extraordinary spiritual lady or a Rabbi - they are the only ones who can be holy. However the Torah here wants every individual to know that we ourselves can and should be holy.

We are currently living in a world in which artificial intelligence is being developed in order to enhance human achievement, and we already know that some computers are more intelligent than human beings. But with all the artificial intelligence in the world, a computer will never have a 'neshama' - it doesn't have a soul. A computer cannot experience the presence of Hashem, it cannot achieve spirituality - that is something that only we can do! In this age of advanced technological prowess, we often find that our souls cry out for a channel through which to express their spirituality, and as a result there's an enormous need for Kedusha today.

There is an important part of our prayers which we call Kedusha. Its start depending on the Nussach 'נקדישך ונערייך' - We will sanctify You and adore You or 'נקדש את שמך' - let every single one of us sanctify the name of Hashem in this world. Let us take heed of the mitzvah of 'קדשים תהיו', the imperative of this week's Parsha, in order that every single one of us can become holy and can increase holiness in this world.

Let us become holy by asking Hashem to bless all those who are sick as well as praying for our soldiers who go out to protect us and 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, sweet and happy Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Acharei Mot
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 28
MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 26
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 80
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1170
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4294

Parshat Kedoshim
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 51
MITZVOT ASEH: 13
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 38
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 64
NUMBER OF WORDS: 868
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3229

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Amos 9:7 - 15
Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel 20:2 - 20

שני פסח - Pesach Sheni is next Friday, 14 Iyar - May 5, 2023.

This Shabbat we study Chapter 3 of Pirkei Avot

תורת אחרי מות - קדושים

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