

The Jewish Weekly

Celebrating Our 300TH ISSUE

Where, Oh Where, is Exit 5?

By Rabbi David Pinto

Renowned as much for his scholarship as for his holiness, the leader and spiritual head of tens of thousands of Jews in the United States, Israel, and around the world, the Sanzer Rebbe, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, was a unique figure in his generation. People from around the world came to him for advice and blessings, which always proved effective.

I am not a Sanzer chasid. I simply believe in each Tzadik who has worked for Judaism. Even if a regular individual helps people to do teshuvah by showing them the true and right path to follow, he has my respect and admiration.

Yet if truth be known, I am attached to the Sanzer Tzadik, and this has to do with what happened to me in 1984 in New York City.

It was a Tuesday during the winter. On that day I was supposed to meet the Sanzer Rebbe at his office in Union City, New Jersey, at 9 pm, after the evening prayer. However, during the afternoon, I was told that a famous singer, Bob Dylan, wanted to see me at around 8 pm, just before his scheduled departure for Germany, where thousands of fans awaited him at a concert. He had heard of me from an important figure who often came to see me.

I had been planning on leaving to see the Sanzer Rebbe at around 7:30 pm (taking into account the distance from where I was staying and also the traffic), hence my dilemma and uncertainty over this turn of events. If I missed my meeting with the Sanzer Rebbe, who knew when another such occasion would arise?

On the other hand, if I refused to meet Bob Dylan, a [non-observant] Jewish singer capable of attracting hundreds of thousands of people by his music, he would feel offended. Instead of doing teshuvah, he would be angry with a rabbi who had brushed him aside. After thinking it over carefully, I decided to forgo my meeting with the Sanzer Rebbe.

Thus, on that night I met Bob Dylan, followed by a crowd of curious onlookers. They were in disbelief at the thought that a rabbi and a singer such as Bob Dylan could have a private talk. We spoke about Judaism for about two hours, and since that time, thank G-d, we have remained good friends and in close contact. In fact during his next trip to Paris, he paid a visit to our yeshiva.

Bob Dylan left at around 10 pm. At that point I wondered if I was going to completely miss meeting with the Sanzer Rebbe or perhaps, seeing that I had not yet arrived, the Tzadik was still waiting for me.

I said to my four friends who were with me at the time, "Let's go to Union City where the Sanzer Rebbe lives. If we manage to see him, so much the better. If not, the Al-mighty will remember the journey we undertook in honor of the Tzadik. As for the Tzadik himself, I think he won't be upset at us or offended when his secretary tells him that we were late because of special circumstances."

We got into a car and left. The shortest way to Union City was to get off the Jersey Turnpike at Exit 5. We saw Exit 1, then Exit 2, Exit 3, and finally Exit 4. But then we saw Exit 6!

At first we thought that this was just a simple mistake, so we hastily turned back. I told the driver to drive slowly this time and to pay special attention to the exits.

Yet, as if G-d had decided to test us by enclosing us on this highway, the same thing happened once again: We could not find Exit 5! We asked for directions from someone working in a tollbooth, and he said sharply, "Are you blind or what? Exit 5 is written in huge letters!"

After the third unsuccessful try, I said to the driver: "We'll try a last attempt to make it to Union City. If, out of respect for the Sanzer Rebbe, the holy One opens our eyes and we manage to find Exit 5, good. If not, this will mean that the Tzadik is upset at us and G-d does not want such a meeting to take place. In that case, we won't have the merit of seeing the face of the Tzadik or taking hold of his saintly hands and kissing them," as we Sephardim do when in the presence of a Rebbe or Tzadik.

Once again we turned back and began counting each exit, with the hope of spotting Exit 5. After having passed Exit 4, I said to my friends: "Now let's all say aloud: 'May Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, the Sanz-Klausenberg Rebbe, forgive us and open our eyes - all five of us - so we can see Exit 5!'"

At that exact moment, a miracle happened there; from afar we saw the sign indicating Exit 5! As soon as we saw it, we gave free reign to our joy - as if blind men had regained their sight - and we began to sing with all our hearts.

From then on, it did not take long to reach the great Sanz Synagogue in Union City. We were welcomed at the entrance by the Rebbe's special secretary, who informed us that the Rebbe was waiting for us in his office, at which point our joy multiplied immensely! Thank G-d, the Rebbe was not upset with us in the least for being three and a half hours late.

It Once Happened...

We quickly ascended to the second floor, where hundreds of Chassidim were awaiting our arrival, intrigued and curious to know why their Rebbe was waiting in his office for so long.

It is not difficult to imagine the emotion that I felt when I finally found myself before the Tzadik. With his face like that of an angel, illuminated as it was by the Shechina [the Divine Presence], and the majesty that emanated from his persona, he completely radiated a sacred splendor.

When I kissed his sacred hands, the memory of my holy ancestors - with Rabbi Haim Pinto ["the Great" 1749-1845], at their head - came to mind, and I had the feeling that I was with my saintly grandfather Rabbi Chaim Pinto ["the Small" 1855 -1937].

The Sanzer Rebbe proceeded to ask me many questions about Rabbi Haim Pinto, which I answered by relating various stories concerning my holy ancestors. I quickly realized that the Sanzer Rebbe was perfectly familiar with the life and great deeds of the illustrious Rabbi Haim Pinto. In fact, one of the Sanzer Rebbe's disciples was originally from Morocco, specifically Mogador - the city of my great-great-grandfather, and each Shabbat he told his Rebbe of the miracles that Rabbi Haim Pinto had performed.

When it came time to leave, I once again kissed the sacred hands of the Rebbe, and then we left, as happy as if we had been at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah and gaze at the face of the Shechina.

Today, I still don't know why G-d blocked our way on that night, yet there is one thing I do know: the holy One has the power to close anyone's eyes, even if he has perfect sight.

To conclude, I can only highly recommend that all those traveling to Netanya should go and pray - dressed modestly of course, by the grave of the Tzadik of Sanz, may his merit protect us all. Amen.

Adapted and supplemented by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles from HevratPinto.org.

Editor's Note: the Sanz-Klausenberg Rebbe - Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam zt"l's, 29th Yahrzeit was Wednesday, 9th Tammuz - June 28th of this year



YE GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Pinchas

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	7:13	8:30	9:06
Tel Aviv	7:28	8:33	9:03
Haifa	7:21	8:34	9:07
Be'er Sheva	7:29	8:31	9:04



The Ohr Hachaim By Breslev Israel staff

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, the Rabbi of Salé spent the majority of his time engrossed in Torah study. His saintly way of life gained him the name Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (the holy one), and only on a temporary basis engaged in his profession, weaving threads of gold and silver into fancy garments.

Once, the governor of Salé, where the Ohr HaChaim lived, was marrying off his daughter. The entire family bought expensive clothing and sent them to the Or HaChaim to weave gold threads into the material. He said to them, "Every month I work enough for my livelihood, and the rest of the time I devote to Torah study. This month I have already earned enough money for my livelihood. Come back next month." They then told him that the wedding was taking place already that month.

The Ohr HaChaim still refused the job, and returned to his studies. When word got back to the governor about R' Chaim's refusal to perform the work for his daughter's wedding, he was incensed. He immediately ordered that the lions in his courtyard be starved and sent a warning to R' Chaim that if he doesn't accept the job at once he will be cast into the lion's den. He ignored the warning and continued learning.

The governor's men eventually came and took R' Chaim from his home and threw him into the lion's den. He sat in the middle of the lions, who formed a circle around him, and sang chapters of Tehillim in a sweet, pleasant voice, as all the lions watched and listened. It was quickly reported to the governor what was happening, and he came to see the amazing miracle with his own two eyes.

As soon as he looked into the den, he ordered that R' Chaim be lifted from the den, and begged the sacred rabbi for forgiveness, entreating him with gifts. Thus, through the great rabbi the verse was fulfilled – "And your fear and intimidation will be cast over all the beasts of the land." Chazal teach us that anyone within whom the image of God rests in totality instills fear upon the animals, "and no animal overcomes a person, unless he appears to the animal as another animal" (Shabbat 151b), that he has lost his "Tzelem Elokim," image of God.

R' Chaim's dream was to go to Israel. After receiving spiritual signs approving his desire, he went on his way. He stopped over in Livorno (Italy), where he raised large sums of money for publishing his books and establishing a yeshivah in Israel. With 30 followers he arrived in Israel, four days before Rosh HaShanah 5402(1742) and settled in Acco. R' Chaim and his students spent Yom Kippur in the cave of Elijah the Prophet on Mount Carmel (Haifa), where they all felt a great sense of holiness and witnessed seeing a great Light at the spot where according to tradition Elijah used to pray.

The holiday of Purim was spent in Tzfat and Meron, where a great deal of time was spent studying the holy Zohar. They later moved to live in Peki'in for a few months. On the 15th of Ellul 5402(1742) R' Chaim finally arrived in Jerusalem with his group. He immediately established a yeshivah called 'Kneset Yisrael' and a second secretive yeshivah for the study of Kabbalah. One of his new students was Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulay (the Chida), who at that time was only 18 years old.

R' Chaim and his students were constantly going on many journeys (zia'rot) around the land of Israel, visiting grave sites of the tzaddikim. They used the opportunity to pray for the welfare of Jews all over the world, the success of their yeshivah and its financial supporters.

The founder of the Chassidic movement, The Baal Shem Tov, maintained that if he could join forces with Rabbi Chaim, together they could bring the Messiah. The Baal Shem Tov made several failed attempts to reach the Holy Land. In fact the Baal Shem Tov believed that R' Chaim was the Mashiach of that generation. On the day that R' Chaim came to Jerusalem, the Baal Shem Tov told his students: "Today Mashiach ben Yosef entered Yerushalayim".

R' Chaim departed the world at the time of Mincha of Shabbat Pinchas. At that exact moment the Baal Shem Tov was eating the 3rd meal of Shabbat and uttered out: "the Western candle has been extinguished". After Shabbat he explained: "The Tzaddik in the west, R' Chaim ben Attar, left the world. The proof for that is: there is one secret about the washing of the hands (netilat yadayim) which is revealed to only one person in each generation. This secret was known to R' Chaim. When I washed my hands for the 3rd meal, that secret was revealed to me, and that was my sign that the "Western candle" was extinguished."

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar was 47 when he departed the world. He was buried outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. Before the Six Day War in 1967, the Jordanians had control over the cemetery where R' Chaim was buried. They destroyed many tomb stones and paved a new road. When the tractor touched the grave site of R' Chaim, it turned upside down and the driver was killed. They tried a second time, and again the tractor turned upside down and the driver was killed. Someone tried to use a hammer, it turned on himself and he was killed too. The grave site was left intact.

R' Chaim had two wives. His first wife Patzonia was unable to bear children for him and encouraged him to marry a second wife. His second wife Esther gave birth to a few daughters. Both of his wives passed away within a few years after R' Chaim's death, and were buried next to him.

Reprinted from an email of breslev.com.

Editor's Note: the Ohr HaChaim - Rabbi Chaim ben Attar ז"ל's, 208th Yahrzeit was Tuesday, 15 th Tammuz – July 4th of this year

It's one of the best invitations you'll ever get.

Parshat Pinchas includes within it, details of our major festivals, and the Torah calls them by the term 'מקרא קדש' (e.g. Bamidbar 28:18). Indeed we include this term in the kiddush that we make on our festivals. But what does 'מקרא קדש' mean?

Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch translates the term as 'a call to holiness', an invitation to join Hashem on these festive days.

If we relate to our festivals as an opportunity to respond to a special invitation, I believe it can have a transformative impact on our attitude. Of course, why should we keep the Chagim? It's because Hashem has commanded us to. It is a 'מצוה דאורייתא' - an imperative from the Torah'. But in addition to that, it's a 'מקרא קדש'. Hashem extends an invitation to join Him on the special day.

When you receive an invitation in the mail I am sure that, like me, you recognize from the envelope that this is an invitation and you wonder: Who is it from? What is the occasion? You open it up full of anticipation, you read the details, and then as the days draw near to the event itself you're filled with excitement. That is how we need to relate to our Chagim. Each one of our festive days carries with it an opportunity to practice special mitzvot, and of course, there are various regulations regarding what we can and can't do on the day, but the most important element of the day's proceedings for us must be a spiritual opportunity. Hashem has invited us to join Him. He is the Host of the event, at which we can raise the levels of holiness for ourselves, within our homes, and in our lives in an extraordinary way.

It's only with a keen sense of excitement and enthusiasm that we can enable ourselves and members of our families to appreciate these red letter days on our calendar as being something extraordinary. Let's never forget the fact that they're called 'מקרא קדש', an invitation arrives from Hashem Himself in order to enable us to have a life-changing experience. It's probably the best invitation you'll ever get.

May our life-changing experiences be with ease and clarity and let's pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace 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

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 168
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1887
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7853

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3 Divrei Yirmiyahu (The three Haftorot of the three weeks preceding the Ninth of Av, are called the — שלש — דפונענותא - the "Three (Haftorot) of Punishment").

This week we study Chapter 1 of Pirkei Avot



The Three Weeks

פרשת פנחס
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