

The Jewish Weekly

The Helpful Gentle Woman on the Airplane

By Rabbi Shmuel Butman

One man stood out among all those present at the Melaveh Malka (the Saturday night meal after the conclusion of Shabbat) of the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam. As was usual at festive occasions like this, all those in attendance wore the traditional chasidic shtreimel, (round flat fur hat). Only he, Reb Pinchas Valston, wore a Chabad-style hat.

Reb Pinchas is, of course, a Chabad chasid. He lives in Sidney, Australia, yet from time to time he used to travel to New York to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

On this trip, he met a friend, a Bobover chasid, who asked Reb Pinchas to join him in a visit to his Rebbe.

In the course of the meal, the Bobover Rebbe turned to Reb Pinchas, who had been introduced to him as a Chabad chasid, with a request.

"I want to make you a messenger for a dvar mitzvah (a sacred deed). A little while ago it became apparent that a young couple in our community here in Boro Park (a strongly Torah-observant Jewish section of Brooklyn) was having problems. Not long after the wedding, the woman made it clear that she was unwilling to continue living with her husband. For several months her parents negotiated between husband and wife, trying to influence their daughter to reconcile, but without success.

"It became clear that the parents were incapable of accepting the fact that their daughter would not budge from her desire to divorce. They pressured her as much as possible to stay and try to make the marriage work.

"As a result, the life of the woman became a hell. In her marital home she felt out of place, while in her parents' house she received no support. It got to a point where she could bear it no longer, and she ran away without letting anyone know where she was going.

"Her parents were beside themselves with worry. Her husband, who now was willing to give her a get (document of divorce) so he could move on with his life, was also distraught.

"I would be glad," continued the Rebbe, "to get advice from your great Rebbe in this matter. Would you be willing to serve as my emissary and forward my request to him?"



Rabbi Shlomo (ben BenZion) Halberstam of Bobov

Reb Pinchas was happy to agree. A few days later he was able to fulfill his mission, when those who were from overseas were admitted to private audience with the Rebbe for a departing blessing. When Reb Pinchas's turn came to enter, he told the Rebbe what Reb Shlomo of Bobov had requested.

The Rebbe listened attentively. After, he answered with a short sentence: "When you land in Sidney [22 hour flight], continue to fly to the city of Brisbane [1.5 hr]."

The Rebbe didn't elaborate, but for Reb Pinchas that was not necessary. Being a chasid, he followed the Rebbe's instructions exactly. Just a few hours after having arrived in Sidney International Airport, he was on a plane to Brisbane. Where he should go when he arrived, and what he was supposed to do there, he had no idea.

During the flight a woman who occupied a nearby seat addressed him. "Excuse me sir. I see by your appearance that you are a Jew. May I ask you something?"

Reb Pinchas answered warmly, "Of course you may"

"Tell me, what is the attitude among Jews about those who distance themselves from their religion?"

Reb Pinchas scrutinized her face trying to decide if she was referring to herself. He decided not. She was obviously a gentile.

"I am the manager of a chain of women's clothing stores in Brisbane," she continued. "I am asking, because some time ago a Jewish woman applied for a job in one of the branches. I hired her and with time we became close. I learned that she comes from a religious family, but because of certain circumstances she ran away from home and eventually distanced herself from her religion entirely. That is why I am curious to know what your attitude is toward a woman like that."

A red light immediately lit up for Reb Pinchas. He had a strong hunch that the woman in question was the one he was going to Brisbane for. How extraordinary that this woman was sitting near him...and that she decided to speak to him, he thought.

"Well," he told the woman next to him, "Judaism teaches us to relate kindly to anyone who stumbles,

whatever the reason, and to help him or her to return to the way of their fathers.

"From the tone of your question," he added, "I understand that the young woman you're talking about is rather lonely."

"True," she answered. "She doesn't have many friends, to put it mildly."

"If so, maybe I can help her," Reb Pinchas said. "Specially to assist her, if she is willing, to reconnect with the world she separated from. Would you mind to give me her name and address?"

She agreed and gave him the information he requested. The name was a non-Jewish name and gave no clue to who she was. But Reb Pinchas's heart told him that 'Someone' is pulling the strings and leading him to the person he was sent to help.

As soon as he left the plane he hurried to the address he was given. His first encounter with the woman was not easy. She was shocked to see a religious Jew in front of her and refused to interact with him.

Reb Pinchas didn't give up. He related the miracle of his finding her through the Bobover Rebbe sending him to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the Rebbe instructing him to fly further, specifically to Brisbane. Despite all that, however, he assured her, he had no intention of forcing her to do anything.

Slowly she started to mellow, although she made it clear that returning to the neighborhood of her parents was out of the question.

She did say that if she will receive a get from her husband, she then would be willing to return to Israel and make a new start.

And that is what happened. Reb Pinchas was able to obtain the get for her. After she received it she moved back to Israel, where she became involved in the study of chasidut Chabad. Eventually she married a Chabad chasid, all with the help of Reb Pinchas.

Reprinted from an email of LchaimWeekly.org.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Shlomo (ben BenZion) Halberstam of Bobov zt"l's, 23rd Yahrzeit was last Wednesday, 1st Av – July 19th of this year



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Va'etchanan

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:04	8:19	8:56
Tel Aviv	7:19	8:21	8:53
Haifa	7:11	8:22	8:56
Be'er Sheva	7:20	8:20	8:54

Opening the Gates of Shidduchim

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

A fascinating story about the power of forgiveness occurred in Israel. A 38-year-old man, who is hard of hearing, was a passenger on a bus in the city of Ashdod. He had recently gotten closer to Judaism, and he had decided to cover his head, but not with a Yarmulka. He wore a cap and he was also wearing his work clothes that day.

One of the passengers on the bus was a little tense about a recent wave of terror, and he noticed this man's dark complexion, and that his cap and clothing were a bit different than the norm. Not realizing that this man was hard of hearing, he also thought his behavior seemed strange, and he suspected that this man was an Arab about to carry out a terror attack.

He told other passengers about his suspicion, and a commotion resulted near this man, who didn't even notice the tumult due to his hearing impairment. The passengers then approached the driver and told him about the "suspicious" bus passenger.

The driver stopped the bus, approached the man, and after speaking with him briefly, it became clear that the passengers had made a mistake. Understandably, this man was very hurt and embarrassed by the incident, and he told the other passengers that he is not Mochel them, and will not forgive them for what they had done to him.

The passengers tried to apologize and appease him, but he remained agitated and upset, and he continued to repeat that he's not Mochel (forgiving) them. One of the passengers who was on the bus, later called Rav Chaim Feinstein,

Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivat Ateret Shlomo, and told him about what happened on the bus, and asked him what to do. The Rosh Yeshivah asked to speak with this man personally.

The passenger found this individual and told him that one of the big rabbis wished to speak with him. The man agreed to meet the Rosh Yeshivah the next day after Shacharit (morning prayers) at the Yeshivah. The next morning, Rav Chaim sat with this man for a long time and spoke with him, taking an interest in his life.

After finding out that he was still single and very much wanted to get married, the Rosh Yeshivah explained to him that if he removed his hard feelings that he had against other people, Hashem would remove any hard feelings that are against him, and the Gates of Shidduchim (matchmaking) will open up for him. The Rosh Yeshivah also added that when the Gates of Shidduchim in Heaven open up, things move quickly.

The man accepted the Rosh Yeshivah's words and said that he forgives the passengers on the bus who suspected him of being a terrorist. As he was on his way out of the Yeshivah, he met a young fellow who happened to be driving to Ashdod, and said he was happy to give him a ride home.

During their conversation on the ride together, it occurred to this young fellow that this man would be a perfect shidduch for his wife's sister, who was also an older single who recently became closer to Judaism. Additionally, she also suffered from a medical condition, and she wouldn't be put off by the man's hearing impairment. Just a few months later, the couple got engaged, and the engagement was celebrated at the Rosh Yeshivah's home in Bnei Brak!

Reprinted from an email from Torah U'Tefilah.

Is it fair to insist that a person should love someone or something?

I guess your instinctive reply will be absolutely not. But isn't that the important mitzvah which we have in Parshat Va'etchanan, which we are all familiar with? 'ואהבת את ה' - ואהבת את ה' בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך - You must love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might!

We don't have a love button that we can press as a result of which we begin loving G-d. So as important as it is to love the Almighty – surely it's unfair of Him to insist that we do so? There are those who explain that love is the culmination of knowledge and experience. I come to either love something or someone, or not, as a result of what I know about them, and also the experiences that I have had with them – and as a result I either have that sensation or feeling of love, or I don't.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to know Hashem, to study everything we can about Him, and also to purposefully have spiritually uplifting experiences through which we will come to love Him. So, as opposed to some mitzvot which can take just a few minutes to perform and then you've done it – loving Hashem is a lifelong aspiration.

The Rambam was perhaps sensitive to the question we are asking. That is why in his 'Sefer Ha'mitzvot' when he codifies the mitzvah of loving Hashem – he actually declares that there is no such precept to love G-d. He explains 'ואהבת' to be in the causative. Not 'you must love', but rather you must cause G-d 'to be loved' – with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.

The Rambam essentially is telling us that we are all the ambassadors of Hashem. Wherever we go and through whatever we do – people don't judge us and notice what we are doing, but through our deeds, they are judging our faith, our religion, our people and most of all Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu. Therefore it is appropriate that we should always strive to be 'מקדש שם שמים' – to sanctify the Name of G-d, and never to desecrate It.

Therefore, in our fulfillment of this all-important mitzvah, let us continually strive to gain knowledge of Hashem, and through our experiences of Him, grow to deeply appreciate His kindness, His benevolence, His greatness so that we will love Him with all our hearts, with all our soul and with all our might – and at the same time, let us always guarantee that we will be able and responsible representatives of the Almighty on earth, and let's pray for the soldiers protecting 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.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 12
MITZVOT ASEH: 8
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 4

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 118
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1878
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7343

HAFTORA:
Yeshayahu 40:1 - 26 (this is the first of seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

The Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, is called Shabbat Nachamu - The Shabbat of consolation or comfort. The Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu, for the Haftorah which begins with the words: "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami - Be comforted, be comforted, My people..." In this chapter, the Navi describes the Ultimate Redemption (Moshiach) which we have yet to experience. May it be speedily in our days.

This week, we study Chapter 4 of Pirkei Avot.

Yossi

