

# The Jewish Weekly

## The Baal Shen Tov and the Errant Son-in-Law

By Rabbi Shalom Dovber Avtzon

There was a wealthy Jew, whose only daughter was becoming of marriageable age. While there were many promising young Torah scholars in his own town, he desired to have an exceptional Torah scholar as a son-in-law. After much effort, he indeed found one such young man. The couple were married, settled down and were extremely happy. The young man learned in the yeshiva study hall and grew in his learning and Torah knowledge. Everything was going as desired.

Some years passed, and the wealthy father-in-law began noticing small changes in his son-in-law's conduct and observance of mitzvot. At first, he tried to dismiss them as insignificant changes, and perhaps his learned son-in-law has reasons to conduct himself in this new manner. After all he knows much more than I do, so who am I to question him!

But as the weeks and months passed, he began noticing that his son-in-law was taking off much more time from his learning and was seen in the company of others who were known to be completely non-observant. This was a situation that he was no longer able to ignore and pretend all is well.

So, one day, he sat down with his son-in-law and asked him, "What caused this drastic change. Are you perhaps unhappy about something or is something or someone bothering you?"

The son-in-law replied, "I am extremely happy and fortunate. Your daughter is an excellent and kind hearted person. She is the perfect wife, and you are very gracious to us. A man couldn't ask for more.

"But you want to know if everything is perfect, what caused these changes? I began having some questions about Hashem's ability to do certain things that our sages stated had happened. I noticed that some of the great commentators also wrote that these things are exaggerations. So, I no longer knew what is real and what is being said as a way of a parable or metaphor.

"Whoever I asked either replied that those are dangerous questions, that one is not allowed to ask, or gave me such weak answers and explanations, that they themselves admitted weren't complete answers, they weren't satisfactory. So now I have my doubts about many things, such as, does Hashem really care about such minute details, for example, when you wash your hands for bread, does it have to go until the wrist and a drop off makes it invalid or it isn't so important. And therefore, I decided not to do it all."

The father-in-law was torn with grief. This is the son-in-law that he had hand-picked for his wonderful daughter, who is so proper in her observance of every mitzvah. Is everything lost Heaven forbid?

"No! It can't be," he told himself. "I must find a way to correct this." Turning to his son-in-law

he said, "My dear son-in-law, you are much more learned than I, and if the great Torah scholars of the town couldn't answer your questions satisfactorily, I for sure don't have the ability. However, I am asking you one thing, please come with me to a great sage and allow him to answer and clarify everything."

Wanting to please his father-in-law, especially as he always has the ability to say that the answer this sage gave was not a convincing or even good answer, he agreed. The father-in-law didn't waste any time, but immediately set out with his son-in-law to see the Baal Shem Tov. They arrived in Mezibuzh on a bright sunny day and the father-in-law poured out his troubled heart to the Baal Shem Tov and pleaded with him that he does whatever is in his ability to bring the son-in-law back to the ways of Hashem.

The Baal Shem Tov asked them to join him on a small journey. With the father-in-law sitting on his right and the son-in-law sitting on his left, they left Mezibuzh. Once they were out of the city and on the road in the midst of an open field, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the son-in-law and said, "Young man, can it rain now?"

Looking at the clear blue sky, the young man replied, "No, there isn't a cloud in sight."

The Baal Shem Tov said, "And I say it can rain!"

Looking up once again, the young man peered in all directions to make sure that he saw correctly and indeed there wasn't a cloud in sight. So, he smugly retorted and said, "It is impossible! No way in the world can it rain here at this very moment."

The Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, "And I say it will rain momentarily!" A few seconds later the skies opened and a deluge of rain came pouring down. The young man was bewildered at this happening.

Not only is it pouring from a cloudless sky, but the Baal Shem Tov's wagon is remaining completely dry. This is truly miraculous and beyond human comprehension. Being an extremely intelligent person, he realized why the Baal Shem Tov showed him this and didn't try to answer his questions verbally. Far be it that the Baal Shem Tov was merely showing off to him his miraculous powers. It was much more than that; he had clearly demonstrated that stories of our sages that are beyond human comprehension, doesn't mean that they never occurred or are not real.

There are many happenings that the human intellect says one way, but in actuality they happened the opposite way – the way he thought was impossible. Once this question was answered, he realized that all of his other questions and doubts were based on this premise. And therefore, if this was resolved they all have nothing to stand on. Full of remorse he turned to the Baal Shem Tov and beseeched him, to guide him back to the way of Hashem.

During the first year after his passing, the students of the Baal Shem Tov gathered and many of them said a miraculous story of the Baal Shem Tov that they were privy to. That night the Baal Shem Tov came to one of his students in a dream and said, "My greatness is not my ability to do miracles, it is my awe of Heaven for even the smallest detail of a mitzva.

*Reprinted from an email of L'Chaim weekly.*

## It Once Happened...

### A Friend In Need

By Rabbi Chaim Arye Zev Ginsberg

There are some acts of chessed (good deeds) that provoke such a tumult in Heaven that you can practically hear the footsteps of Moshiach around the bend... One such act of chessed happened to a member of my family a while back. My eldest daughter, Shoshana, was on her way to her special-ed teaching job in Brooklyn one winter morning and turned onto the road leading from the Nassau Expressway to the Belt Parkway.

Apparently, a large pothole had developed, and it caused one of her tires to be sliced in half. After her incident, another six or seven cars hit the same pothole with the same results. Stranded on the side of the road in an unsafe place, she called me for help. But being far from the area (and, truthfully, not knowing how to change a tire, either), I did not know what to do.

I decided to try Chaverim (a voluntary organization who deals with roadside assistance and non medical emergency help). Within minutes, they called back and said that one of their members was driving in the area, and he would attempt to help. About half an hour later, my daughter called me with the most uplifting story.

A member of Chaverim named Binyamin stopped and quickly changed the tire on my daughter's car. The other stranded motorists expressed out loud to my daughter that "you Jews are always available to help each other out."

Then, Binyamin did a most incredible thing. He proceeded to change the tires on all the other stranded cars in that spot, and that included people from a wide range of races and nationalities. When they wanted to pay him, he refused. My daughter explained to her new friends that he belongs to an organization called Chaverim, whose members volunteer their time and expertise to help people, for free.

Then — to underscore the message — the following occurred: As the various folks were getting back into their cars to return to their own little worlds, they turned to my daughter and said, "You Jews are such special people. It's surprising that with people like Benjamin, your Messiah still has not appeared. You truly do deserve his coming."

Let's not underestimate the great power and influence that a little chessed can have in arousing Hashem's mercy and bringing an end to all our suffering. After all, it may truly be said one day that saving Klal Yisrael is as easy as changing a flat tire.

*Reprinted from "Rays of Hope" - Artsroll.com.*

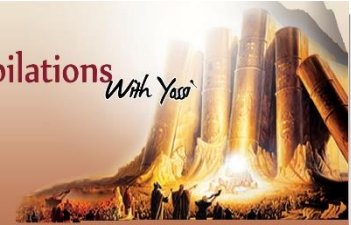


**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times – Parshat Toldot

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:03	5:17	5:56
Tel Aviv	4:18	5:19	5:52
Haifa	4:07	5:17	5:53
Be'er Sheva	4:22	5:20	5:57





### Sons of Fatima

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Although the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are entombed in Ma'arat HaMachpela (the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron), for 700 hundred years [1267-1967], the Muslims did not permit entry to the Jews, claiming that Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov belonged exclusively to them. They gave permission for Jews to ascend only until the seventh step of the outside Eastern stairway leading up to the tomb markers, and no further.

When Israeli forces liberated Hebron, Jerusalem, and other important Jewish sites in the Six-Day War, Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim sent Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, then aged 38, to visit and inspect the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Rachel's Tomb in Beit Lechem (Bethlehem), and the Kotel HaMa'aravi (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.

When they were at the cave, a large group of soldiers entered. This was the first time anyone had been inside after the battles.

There were many high-ranking army commanders and numerous soldiers there, among them Yitzhak Rabin, Haim Bar-Lev, and Uzi Narkiss. A number of prominent rabbis were also present.

Some of the soldiers were injured, some were hungry, and most of them were exhausted after days of fighting. They saw the rugs in the cave and lay down, soon falling asleep. Suddenly, the sheik in charge of the cave, a man named Jibri, came out and started shouting at the commanders and soldiers.

"Get out of this cave!" he yelled. "You have no respect for it! We Muslims wash our hands five times when we come here. We take off our shoes and honor this place. But you show no respect whatsoever! Your soldiers are eating here, sleeping here, walking on the rugs with their dirty boots. You have no respect for this place - leave!"

Apparently, he was right. What he said made sense. Everyone was silent... except one.

Rabbi Eliyahu, who understood Arabic, as did most of the senior commanders, responded, "Listen to me, Sheik. You know that if a servant comes before the king in soiled clothes, or serves him food on a filthy tray in front of all the king's ministers and servants, he will surely be put to death.

"But if the king's son were absent from his mother and father's home for many years, and his father spent many nights worrying about him and his mother crying for him, if that son was to return home after many years, how do you think the king would receive him? What if he simply wandered in without making an appointment? What if he showed up with torn, dusty clothes, and interrupted the king's conference with his ministers, crying, 'Father, I came home?'"

"What if he approached his mother, the queen, calling, 'Mother, I'm here'? His mother and father would surely hug him, loving him, and thanking Hashem with all their heart for his homecoming, even with his ripped, dirty clothes - because he is their son."

Rabbi Eliyahu looked the sheik in the eyes and said, "Avraham is our father, Sarah is our mother. We behave here as though in our own home. You, however, are the 'sons of Fatima,' the children of the maidservant Hagar. You behave as is appropriate for a servant to behave, and we behave as is appropriate for children to behave!"

The sheik turned red with shame. Not only did he have no rejoinder for the rabbi, he had been called a "son of Fatima," son of the maidservant. He was insulted. He turned on the spot and stormed back into his room in a great rage.

The senior commanders there immediately turned to Rabbi Eliyahu, asking in horrified dismay, "Why did you do that? We want to live in peaceful coexistence with the Arabs. Why did you have to upset him? You may have ruined everything!"

Rabbi Eliyahu replied firmly, "You have to tell them the truth. That's the only thing they understand."

The argument continued for a few minutes, until the door of the sheik's room suddenly opened. The sheik exited his room with his head down, approaching Rabbi Eliyahu in deference. "Oh Wise One, oh Master; please forgive me!" he cried out.

Rabbi Eliyahu didn't turn to him or even respond. He simply looked at the commanders and said, "You see what language they understand? I grew up among the Arabs from when I was a young child in the Old City of Jerusalem. Tell the truth and they will understand!"

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*

A missing letter provides a clue to the survival of the Jewish people. In Parshat Toldot, we read how Yaakov deceived his father Yitzhak into thinking that he was his twin brother Eisav. Yitzhak declared, "הקל קול יעקב - The voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Eisav."

From here the Midrash teaches as follows. As long as the voice of Yaakov is heard in houses of prayer and halls of study, the hands of Eisav will not be able to destroy the Jewish people. Now, many of our commentators ask how the Midrash derives this lesson from our Passuk. After all, Yitzhak exclaimed, "הקל קול יעקב - The voice is the voice of Yaakov," indicating that the voice was heard, "והידיים די עשיו" - and the hands are the hands of Eisav," indicating that his hands were there and they were powerful.

The Vilna Gaon brilliantly explains that this has everything to do with 'מלא וחסר'. What is 'מלא וחסר'? The term literally means 'complete and incomplete', and it refers to a phenomenon that we sometimes see in the Torah, wherein some of the words are missing a vowel. Each time this happens, "זה אומר דרשני" - the word cries out for an explanation.

I cannot think of a better example of this than in the verse that we have quoted. "הקל קול יעקב." The word 'קול' is mentioned twice. On the first occasion the 'קול', the voice, is spelled ק-ל which is 'חסר', missing the letter vav (ו). On the second occasion just one word later, it's spelled ק-ו-ל which is 'מלא' - complete - it has the letter vav (ו) in the middle of the word.

Thanks to the Vilna Gaon we can now understand the Midrash. Because the first word 'קול' is missing a vav, it is indicating that something is absent. The voice is not as loud as it might have been. Kol has become 'קל' - light. The power of the voice has gone. It is in such circumstances, Heaven forbid, that "הידיים די עשיו" - the hands of Eisav can be powerful.

What emerges from here is a timeless and powerful lesson for the Jewish people. Time and again we have needed to fight for our very survival on the battlefield, but in addition to doing that, there is another source of great Jewish strength. It lies in the "קול יעקב" - the sound of Yaakov, our voices in our shuls and in our halls of study. It is the authentic Jewish voice of tradition, and the more it is heard the stronger we, as a nation, are. The better our Jewish education, the more we have a capacity to guarantee our survival.

Yes indeed, a missing letter of the Torah provides us with the key to Jewish survival. So let's join together, let's sound the sound of Yaakov and let's pray with all our hearts, for the soldiers, police and medical professionals protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or 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: 106

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1432

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5426

HAFTORA: Malachi 1:1-2:7

**The Jewish Weekly**

**Laws and Customs of Chanukah Coming Soon**

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