

The Jewish Weekly

A Promise to Always Protect His Daughter

by Rabbi David Bibi

There was a young man in Israel who had a wife and daughter. The wife got cancer, and during the time when she went through treatments, this good man took care of his wife, worked extra jobs to pay for the treatments and at the same time, brought up their daughter. He survived the juggling, until things got really serious with his wife. Then, his wife begged him that if she dies, he will always protect their daughter, Shlomit. When she passed, this man became not only the father of this girl, he also became the mother.

Of course, a man can never replace a mother, and by the time that Shlomit reached high school age, she suddenly was taken over by the teenage syndrome. Teenagers, from the age 15 till the age 25 can go through changes of growth in their prefrontal cortex, as the body and brain mature. This can cause teens to lack competency in three main executive areas in the brain. Long Term Perspective, Justice, and Consequence.

The only thing parents can do when their teens rebel, is give unconditional love and affection, and pray their hearts out, when they say in the Amidah for the children to have a relationship with G-d, for generation after generation, we will thank You, and we will speak your praise!

Well, Shlomit, who grew up without a mother, with only a father who tried his hardest, looked for other places of love and acceptance that she might have felt lacking. Her father warned her to stay away from bad friends, from getting close to boys, from dressing in ways that can attract the wrong type of people and from coming back extremely late at nights.

But she told her father, "Dad. It's my life... They are just friends... It is just clothing..." "But Shlomit dear, I promised your Mom, before she died that I would protect you. I can't choose your friends for you, but please realize: the person you will be are the friends you have, and the clothing you wear."

Shlomit said, "Dad! You can't force your values on me. It is my life. Let me learn from my own mistakes."

This went back and forth for a while. Until one day, Shlomit said to her father, that she is flying with her Israeli friends to India, with a one-way ticket, not sure when she is coming back. Her father told her, "Shlomit, you are going to dangerous places. You are hurting your soul and your future. I never stopped you. But this is too far. Shlomit, you are not flying! It is out of the question!"

Well, with all the emotions involved, his only daughter and family member, and his promise to his wife, Shlomit's father forgot the first rule of power. Never try to overpower the one who has more power. This is what our Rabbis call, "When you are with the fox in his fox hole, bow to him".

Our teens have the power of choice of their own lives, more power than we. Shlomit's father met her at the airport with her suitcases and friend-hippies. He watched in dismay as Shlomit was actually walking through security. This was for real. This was not a joke. With shock, and tears in his eyes, he called to Shlomit and begged her to come over to him before she walked through security towards the gate, with her passport in hand.

My daughter! Why are you doing this to me? I am begging you! Shlomit, if you walk past that gate, if you board that plane, you are walking out on me. I am putting down my foot now, because I love you, and I gave a promise to your Mom that I will always protect you. If you go now, you are going against all of your father and mother's values. You may never come back, and I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU. If you walk on now, I am cutting off all connection with you.

Shlomit turned around, and with tears in her eyes, said to her father what she was saying all along. "Dad, its hard on me, too. It's my life. I can choose my friends, how I want to dress and the values that I believe in. Your path - Mom's path - does not work for me. I am not holding by where you want me to hold. I don't want what you want. You have to accept me as I am, and this is who I am. Don't force me to live my life your way."

With that, he said, "If so, I am breaking off all connection with you." He turned around and walked away, in tears. Shlomit walked back to her friends and walked passed security.

She had a great time in India... for the first few days. Parties, freedom, drugs, alcohol, music, discos, living like a gentile or, more precisely, like an animal... It was hard, though, to get out of the cycle of guilt and lack of happiness. But at least, she was free, and no one could stop her from trying to find the love and happiness she thought she had missed, because she grew up without a mother. But, of course, she never found that love and happiness that she was looking for. This is because when a person feels like they are not complete, when they feel a lack, they need to connect to G-d to fill that lack.

Three years later, a friend from Israel showed up in India and met Shlomit. She surprised Shlomit and gave her a hug, telling her she is so sorry about her father, and that she could not make it. "What?? Why are you sorry for him? What are you talking about?" The friend turned white. "Your father passed away a few months ago. You did not know?"

Shlomit went into shock. She told her friend, that she did not know, and how her father was so disappointed with her, he cut off all contact. She got on the next plane back from India to Israel and ran straight from the plane towards the cemetery, looking for her father's grave, near her mother's. She read the inscription of her father on his grave, and she fell on his grave, bawling. She looked up to the sky and said, "Dad, I am sorry!!" But the clear-blue sky was quiet, as if her father's soul was repeating the last words he told her. SHLOMIT, I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU.

It Once Happened...

Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. That is all Shlomit could hear in her head. She turned to G-d and said, "G-d!!! I want to do Teshuva! I want to come back to You! I know that You always accept Teshuva, and that You always forgive, EVEN IF MY FATHER WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME! But this voice in my head is not letting me come back!!! Father in Heaven, HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS!!!" She called a cab, and she went straight to the Kotel, to pray her heart out.

She stood up front, crying, like a daughter who is leaning on her father; she leaned on the Wailing Wall, right near the Mehitzta. As she cried her soul out, she looked up to the sky again, and saw the letters in the Wall. She decided to write a letter, and push it into the cracks between the stones in the Wall. She wrote, Father in Heaven, send me a sign of forgiveness. Send me a sign of acceptance. Send me a sign that what I have done to my father will not stop me from coming back!!! Send me a sign that my father forgives me!

She folded this letter and looked for a crevice to put her note in, but there was none. She tried to find a spot, but she could not find one. She felt that maybe G-d was just telling her, Shlomit, I will never forgive you.

But Shlomit did not give up hope. Any woman who attended a Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel knows there is some sort of step, on the Mechitzta. She stood on the step and looked over the Mechitzta for a spot on the Wall: maybe she could reach a spot in the men's section. The Kotel was empty, as it was midday, and she noticed that nobody was paying attention to her, when she leaned over the Mechitzta. So, she pushed in her note... and another note fell out, into her hand. She was about to put that other note back, but then she saw that written on that note, was the same name as hers. Shlomit.

Out of curiosity, she opened it up to see what was written on it. She started to shake. "Master of the Universe! My daughter is in India. Please bring her back; make her repent! Her name is Shlomit bat Rivkah! If I could speak to her, I would tell her, I forgive you for everything, just go in the right path in life!!!"

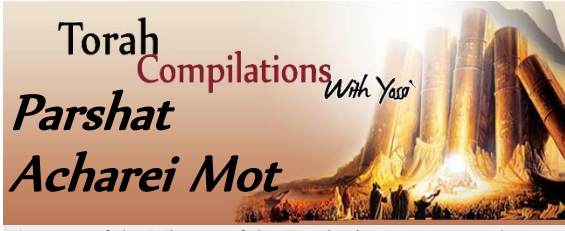
She cries out her thanks to G-d, and she repents completely. A father of flesh and blood can forgive his daughter, no matter what she has done. G-d, who can do the impossible, who is א-ל טוב וסלה, the Almighty of Forgiveness, He for sure can forgive!

Reprinted from Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Acharei Mot

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	6:45	8:01	8:39
Tel Aviv	7:01	8:04	8:36
Haifa	6:53	8:04	8:39
Be'er Sheva	7:02	8:02	8:38



My Walking Partner By Rabbi Sheldon Rudoff

The story I am about to tell happened in the early 1950s, not long after the Lubavitcher Rebbe took over the leadership of Chabad Lubavitch. At the time, I was in high school and living in Crown Heights on Carroll Street, which is around the corner from President Street where the Rebbe lived.

I used to see him on Shabbat mornings, walking from his home to Chabad Headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. He was not yet as well known then, and he was very approachable, as he walked alone without an entourage.

He'd greet me with "Gut Shabbos," and we'd walk together, while he inquired about my Torah learning and about my teachers. We would part ways when we reached Eastern Parkway - he'd go right to Chabad, and I'd go left to Young Israel, where I served as a youth group leader.

We were just two people walking to their synagogues - a teenager and the Rebbe. Being so young, I did not realize the import of these encounters. I only learned to appreciate them later. Then there came a time when my Young Israel youth group was invited for a private audience with the Rebbe. We were all Torah observant boys, studying at such storied Orthodox institutions as the Brooklyn Talmudical Academy, Yeshiva Chaim Berlin, and the Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva, which had a branch in Brooklyn back then.

From our Modern Orthodox perspective, Chabad was an anomaly, because the other chassidic sects that we were familiar with were very insular, but Chabad was open and doing a great deal of Jewish outreach. For instance, on Sukkot, Chabad chassidim would stand outside the subway stations offering the lulav to Jews, so they could fulfill that commandment. This was strange to us, and yet it also made an impact on us. And I do recall that some of the kids became enraptured by Chabad as a result.

So, knowing all that, we were excited to have a chance to talk with the Rebbe, and about a dozen of us went to the meeting, which took place at 770, and lasted for at least a half hour. We were invited to sit at a table, and the Rebbe greeted us warmly. He asked us - one by one - to tell him about ourselves, and then he encouraged us to pose questions.

As I recall, we got into a discussion about the State of Israel, which was still in its infancy, having been founded in 1948. Because it was a secular state, the opinion within the Orthodox community was very divided - people were either for it, against it, or neutral. Many chassidic Rebbes refused to recognize it, so my group wanted to know where the Lubavitcher Rebbe stood. And somebody had the courage to ask him outright.

In response, the Rebbe said that his view of the State of Israel was similar to his view regarding any Jewish enterprise. For example, if Jewish people were to form an insurance company, he would want that company to function legally and ethically, and in accordance with the precepts of the Torah.

As for the State of Israel, he had a similar view - that it should be a place where Torah would flourish and Jewish law was respected. He did not specify if he recognized "the State." Neither did he say that he didn't. He did not take a political position. And I thought that his was a fine answer. That was how he explained his position early on, and as the years went on, he promoted this view more intensely.

The other vivid recollection that I have of the Rebbe took place one Rosh Hashanah. As is customary, Jews walk on that day to a body of water to symbolically cast off their sins, while reciting the Tashlich prayer. In the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, there is a lovely pond which is a perfect place for Tashlich.

I remember seeing the Rebbe walking down toward the Botanic Garden. He was walking alone, but about a quarter of a block behind him a huge phalanx of chassidim followed. Everyone marched together, accompanied by two policemen on horseback who were escorting the Rebbe and this Tashlich procession.

It was another Chabad anomaly - another very public mitzvah. And that was typical of the Rebbe. He came to America in 1941 with a college degree, and for a while he worked as an engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. One could not have predicted then, what course his life would take. But when he became the Rebbe, he showed himself to be a great spiritual leader, and he put Chabad on the map - literally. Today, wherever you go there is a Chabad House, which is a haven for Jewish travelers. What the Rebbe did to inspire this flowering of the Chabad Movement is nothing short of historic, and I only hope it is appreciated by the Jewish public as it should be.

Rabbi Sheldon Rudoff (1933-2011) was an attorney who held leadership positions in a number of Jewish organizations including the OU, UJA-Federation, Yeshiva University and others.

Reprinted from Here's My Story, a project of the JEM Foundation.

המוֹלַד יֵהיָה בְּיוֹם רְבִיעִי, 41 דְּקוֹת וְ8 חֲלָקִים אַחֲרֵי 11 בְּבוֹקֵר

ראש חודש אייר יהיה ביום רביעי ובוים חמישי
Rosh Chodesh Iyar will be Wednesday and Thursday

Don't Forget! Sefirat Haomer

Are any of the Mitzvot of the Torah given to us to make us suffer?

You might think that's the case in Parshat Acharei Mot, where the Torah gives us the laws of Yom Kippur: we are told 'תענו את נפשתיכם' - you must afflict your souls'.

I heard from Rabbi Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth that the Rambam, in his Mishneh Torah, gives us his explanation. He quotes this verse and explains it by saying, 'והיא לשבות לו מאכילה ושתיה' - you must 'rest' on this day from eating and drinking'. It's the soft tone of 'resting' from something in order to provide an uplifting experience. So this 'affliction' is not there to make us suffer - rather it is providing us with the rules of a wonderful game without which we wouldn't be able to play.

It's for this reason, that this whole section of law is called 'שבייתך עשור' - the 'resting' that we do on this day. It's a positive statement rather than a punitive one.

The same can be applied to all other areas of Jewish law which might seem to be unfairly restrictive. Let's take Kashrut - the laws relating to kosher food or Taharat Hamishpacha - laws relating to family purity. They actually serve to enhance our lives, to give us meaning and added happiness and joy.

Perhaps the finest example of this is Shabbat. In the Ten Commandments presented in the Book of Devarim, the term used there by Hashem is 'שמור' - 'guard the Sabbath day' meaning that we must separate ourselves from certain things that we do during the week. But in the Book of Shemot, the term used by Hashem is, 'זכור' - 'Remember the Sabbath day' through positive action. And in the Lecha Dodi prayer that we recite on Friday night, we declare, "שמור וזכור בדיבור אחד" - Hashem issued these two statements in one single utterance - indicating that the 'שמור' is there for the sake of the 'זכור'. We relate to Shabbat not as being an unfair day of restriction, but rather, as a most beautiful experience through which our lives can be shaped and enhanced immeasurably.

So, are there mitzvot of the Torah which are intended to cause us suffering? Absolutely not! Quite the contrary! It's thanks to all the mitzvot of the Torah that we can live a life of meaning, of spirituality and of deep happiness.

So let's pray for the recovery of all the sick, for the release of the hostages, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, 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, sweet, and happy Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 28
MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 26

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 80
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1170
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4294

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

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Iyar which falls on Wednesday and Thursday, May 8, and 9.

We do not say Kail Maleh, however, we do say Av Harachamim that was composed for the martyrs of the Crusade period most of whom were slain during the period of Sefirat Haomer.

This Shabbat afternoon we begin the weekly study of a Chapter of Pirkei Avot every Shabbat until Rosh Hashana. This week we study Chapter 1.

פרשת אחרי מות

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