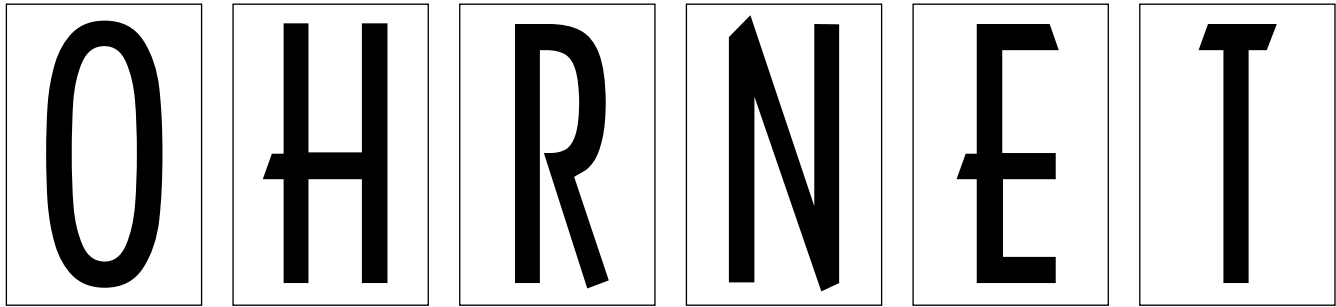




SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEMOT · 23 TEVET 5773 - JAN. 5, 2013 · VOL. 20 NO. 13

A Time To Cry (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

OUR SON'S BAR MITZVAH WITHOUT RAV WEINBACH, ZATZAL

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Over thirty years ago I was privileged to find myself in a shiur given by the Rosh Yeshivah of Ohr Somayach, Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Rav Mendel Weinbach, zatzal. It was a shiur on the Parsha and there was one week – it was Parshat Noach – that I actually asked a question. I do not remember the question at all but the reaction of the Rosh Yeshivah is indelibly etched on my soul. The most enormous smile appeared on his face and he danced a few steps of joy and told me that he didn't know the answer. I was a little confused at the time (being rather young and inexperienced) and I couldn't understand what there was to be so happy about. But the Rosh Yeshivah was filled with a spiritual thrill since he now needed to seek an answer and reveal more layers of Torah understanding.

The Rosh Yeshivah was one of the most focused people I ever had the privilege to be exposed to. His passion was to be able to reach out further and further to the affiliated and the unaffiliated alike and to show them the beauty and the majesty of the Torah and of Judaism. But he was also one of the most multi-faceted and talented people that I knew. He was a man of intense passion – when he spoke his audience was swept up and transported to spiritual realms that would have remained inaccessible to them otherwise. But despite his passionate approach to anything Jewish he was nearly always in control of his emotions. I, personally, can remember the Rosh Yeshivah crying tears only twice. The first time was at the Bar Mitzvah of one of my sons. My thirteen year old son made a Siyum on the entire six Orders of the Mishnah, and the Rosh Yeshivah was so overwhelmed with such pure joy at his achievement that he cried. The second time that I witnessed him crying was in my home when another family member made his first Siyum on the whole Babylonian Talmud and, again, he cried tears – tears of such happiness because of the spiritual achievements of others.

At the funeral I also cried and I am still crying.

Not — to my intense sorrow — tears of joy, but bitter tears because I will never again witness that look of absolute joy when he heard a Torah thought that he approved of. I am crying because I am no longer able to speak with one of the preeminent educa-

tors of our generation. So many times over the years that I was privileged to have almost daily access to the Rosh Yeshivah, I would often take a thorny and seemingly impossible problem to him after having invested much time in trying to solve it myself, and within a few moments he would touch on the very essence of the problem. More often than not, by identifying the real core of the issue he would come up with the solution in a seemingly effortless fashion. I am crying because that intense clarity that was his is no longer. But, most of all, I am crying because I will no longer merit to see the tears of the Rosh Yeshivah – the tears of untarnished joy as more and more Torah is learnt throughout the world.

This Shabbat is my dear son's Bar Mitzvah. Throughout the last nine years (since our last Bar Mitzvah) it has been one of my greatest hopes that the Rosh Yeshivah would be able to join together with us as he did in the past – to inspire my children and all of us with his fiery words of Torah and to inspire us with his tears as my son joins his older brothers and makes a Siyum on the entire Mishnah in honor of his Bar Mitzvah. The Rosh Yeshivah's invitation is still sitting forlornly on my desk and I cannot bring myself to put it away.

I have no doubts whatsoever that we will all be thrilled and inspired when my son makes his Siyum and I am sure that many tears of true happiness will be shed. But I also know that my tears will be tinted with an intense sorrow that one of the most important personalities in my life is no longer together with us in this physical world. My source of solace is that the Rosh Yeshivah's part in what my children have achieved and what they continue to achieve is immeasurable.

It is my greatest hope and desire that I will be able to cry many, many tears in the future – tears of pure, unadulterated spiritual joy. Tears that reflect the intense yearning that was the Rosh Yeshivah's – to reveal more and more of G-d's Majesty in the world until we are all able to greet the Mashiach together in Jerusalem. May his memory be blessed.

THE OHR SOMAYACH FAMILY

wishes Mazel Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. REUVEN LAUFFER & Family

on the Bar Mitzvah of their son DOVID SIMCHA

THE BIG LEAGUE

"Moshe replied to G-d, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Yisrael out of Egypt?' " (3:11)

The lights of Chanuka have faded into darkness. The dreidel lies motionless in the glass-fronted cabinet in the living room. What have we taken with us from those Chanuka lights?

Surely one of the most important lessons that we can learn from Chanuka is that we are capable of rising to great heights if we really believe in what we are doing. Even the might of an empire cannot stand in the way of someone who is prepared to give up his life for what he believes.

About sixty years ago in a dark horse stable in Auschwitz, a handful of girls gathered around some hastily-prepared Chanuka candles. Soon the group grew in size, and the light spread over the entire barracks. In a few minutes several hundred Jewish women were singing the immortal song of contempt for all the tyrants of history: "*Moaz Tzur Yeshuati...*" After they had finished the song, they listened quietly to words of Torah filled with trust in the ultimate vindication of G-d's actions.

Who were the girls that organized that Chanuka in hell? They were pupils of a school in Tarnow founded by an unassuming seamstress named Sarah Schenirer.

Sarah Schenirer was born in 1883 in Krakow, Poland, which was then part of the Austrian Empire. At that time there was no formal system of education for Jewish girls and Sarah was educated in a Polish public school.

Sarah saw all around her the ravages of the so-called "Enlightenment" on the Jewish woman. Jewish girls were well versed in the latest in Polish poetry, but disdained their own traditions and religion. Yiddish was an embarrassment to them. A question in Yiddish would be answered in Polish. Sarah Schenirer saw a terrible lacuna in the education of Jewish girls. Their brothers were shielded by their immersion in Torah, but for the girls, there was little or nothing to fend off the blandishments of secularism.

Meanwhile, World War I broke out, and Sarah, together with a stream of refugees, left for Vienna. On Shabbat Chanuka, Sarah went to the Shtumper Street Synagogue and heard an address by Rabbi Dr. Plesh that summoned her to her life's task.

Rabbi Dr. Plesh spoke of Mattityahu and the Chashmonaim; of Chana and her seven sons; of Yehudit. A history of dedication and self-sacrifice.

She returned to Krakow full of enthusiasm. With nothing more than faith in G-d and a burning desire to serve Him as best she could, Sarah opened a school for little girls. She rented two rooms; one served as a "tailor shop," where she "sewed clothes for the body," and in the other she set up a new kind of "shop" where she began to "sew clothes for young souls." Secular studies might beguile the mind, but only Torah and *mitzvot* can nourish the Jewish soul.

She wrote to her brother, a Belzer Chassid living in Czechoslovakia, about her undertaking. At first he ridiculed her.

However, when she insisted that nothing would stop her, he invited her to come to Marienbad. He wrote, "*The Belzer Rebbe is here and we shall ask him.*" She invested her last pennies in the trip. Her brother wrote a note to the Rebbe: "*My sister wants to educate B'not Yisrael in the spirit of Judaism and Torah.*" The Rebbe replied with two very important words: "*Beracha Ve'hatzlachah!*" (Blessing and Success!) Those two words gave her all the impetus she needed. And one might add that, at the time, this was the only help she received.

Thus, with twenty-five children whom she had prevailed upon her customers to entrust to her, the Beth Jacob Movement was born.

At first, Sarah's school provoked contemptuous dismissal as the "undertaking of the seamstress." However, the educational results of her new school very soon spoke for themselves. The parents of Sarah Schenirer's pupils saw a new spirit in the hearts of their children. Sarah Schenirer's pupils spoke differently from the pupils of the Polish schools. They did not speak with arrogance and defiance. They showed respect to their parents. They wanted to go to *shul* with their parents. They asked what *beracha* (blessing) to recite for this or that. They were keen to hear stories about the Tzaddikim and the pious.

Sarah Schenirer almost single-handed revolutionized the education of a generation. And all this by a seamstress whose formal education ceased at the age of 13. When she passed away, more than 200 schools had been established attended by some 25,000 students all over Eastern and Central Europe. The Beit Yaakov network of schools has grown exponentially, and is today the backbone of Torah education for girls.

Very often we are our own greatest enemies. How often do we hear the little voice that says, "You belong in the little league." "You can't do it." "Who do think you are?" "You're way out of your league!"

In truth, we possess enormous untapped resources. Every one of us is a gold mine that goes down to the depths, but we don't see it. We see the virtues of others, but because we see ourselves from close up, sometimes we suffer from myopia when it comes to our own virtues.

When G-d told Moshe to take the Jewish People out of Egypt, he said "*Who am I?*" Rashi explains Moshe meant "*Am I important enough to speak with kings?*" The negative drive in our heart says "*Who are you? Who are you fooling?*"

We must know that if we sincerely desire to do something, then, with the help of G-d, the sky's the limit. Apart from our hidden resources, apart from the qualities that we possess and of which we are ignorant, we should always remember that G-d runs the world. If G-d decides that He wants us to achieve something, however far above our capabilities, we can raise ourselves above not only what we believe we can do, but even what we actually *can* do.

Only G-d decides who gets into the big league.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

With the death of Yosef, the Book of Bereishet (Genesis) comes to an end. The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov. At the beginning of this week's parsha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males. Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role. Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian. Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage. On Chorev (Mt. Sinai) Moshe wit-

nesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land promised to their ancestors. Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker, G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman. Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews. Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies. The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and *Eretz Yisrael*

IN PURSUIT OF AN APPLE

Many legends of the land are connected to the *Shemita* year when observant Jews faithfully obey the restrictions imposed by halacha on agricultural efforts and consumption of agricultural produce.

One of these legends of our own generation is about an apple and a Romanian gentile housemaid.

After helping out for a period in the home of a rabbi in *Eretz Yisrael*, this woman one day informed the rabbi's wife that she was forced to immediately return to her homeland and would no longer be able to work for her. The rebbetzin looked around for something to give her as a parting gift and found only an apple, a fruit highly valued in Romania.

No sooner had this Romanian left the house than the rabbi entered and heard from his wife about the gift of the apple. "But this is a *Shemita* apple," cried the rabbi, "and it is forbid-

den to share *Shemita* fruit with a non-Jew!"

His startled wife rushed out of the house in desperate pursuit of the Romanian and the apple. She caught up with her at the bus stop just as she was about to get on and signaled to her that she has something which must be returned. The Romanian made believe she did not hear or see her and entered the bus. Intent on retrieving the apple, the rebbetzin also entered the bus, paid her fare and approached her quarry. Upon seeing her former employer coming towards her, the Romanian bowed her head and said, "Please don't do anything to me. I'll return everything!" She then put her hand into her purse and pulled out all of the rebbetzin's jewelry, including some precious heirlooms. Despite the shock of this turn of events, the rebbetzin maintained her composure and managed to retrieve the apple as well.



לע"נ
הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why does the verse say "And Yosef was in Egypt"?
2. "...And they will go up out of the land." Who said this and what did he mean?
3. Why did Pharaoh specifically choose water as the means of killing the Jewish boys? (Two reasons.)
4. "She saw that he was good." What did she see "good" about Moshe that was unique?
5. Which Hebrew men were fighting each other?
6. Moshe was afraid that the Jewish People were not fit to be redeemed because some among them committed a certain sin. What sin?
7. Why did the Midianites drive Yitro's daughters away from the well?
8. How did Yitro know that Moshe was Yaakov's descendant?
9. What lesson was Moshe to learn from the fact that the burning bush was not consumed?
10. What merit did the Jewish People have that warranted G-d's promise to redeem them?
11. Which expression of redemption would assure the people that Moshe was the true redeemer?
12. What did the staff turning into a snake symbolize?
13. Why didn't Moshe want to be the leader?
14. "And G-d was angry with Moshe..." What did Moshe lose as a result of this anger?
15. What was special about Moshe's donkey?
16. About which plague was Pharaoh warned first?
17. Why didn't the elders accompany Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh? How were they punished?
18. Which tribe did not work as slaves?
19. Who were the: a) *nogsim* b) *shotrim*?
20. How were the *shotrim* rewarded for accepting the beatings on behalf of their fellow Jews?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:5 - This verse adds that, despite being in Egypt as a ruler, Yosef maintained his righteousness.
2. 1:10 - Pharaoh said it, meaning that the Egyptians would be forced to leave Egypt.
3. 1:10,22 - He hoped to escape Divine retribution, as G-d promised never to flood the entire world. Also, his astrologers saw that the Jewish redeemer's downfall would be through water.
4. 2:2 - When he was born, the house was filled with light.
5. 2:13 - Datan and Aviram.
6. 2:14 - *Lashon hara* (evil speech).
7. 2:17 - Because a ban had been placed on Yitro for abandoning idol worship.
8. 2:20 - The well water rose towards Moshe.
9. 3:12 - Just as the bush was not consumed, so too Moshe would be protected by G-d.
10. 3:12 - That they were destined to receive the Torah.
11. 3:16,18 - "I surely remembered (*pakod pakadeti*)."
12. 4:3 - It symbolized that Moshe spoke ill of the Jews by saying that they wouldn't listen to him, just as the original snake sinned through speech.
13. 4:10 - He didn't want to take a position above that of his older brother Aharon.
14. 4:14 - Moshe lost the privilege of being a *kohen*.
15. 4:20 - It was used by Avraham for *akeidat Yitzchak* and will be used in the future by *mashiach*.
16. 4:23 - Death of the firstborn.
17. 5:1 - The elders were accompanying Moshe and Aharon, but they were afraid and one by one they slipped away. Hence, at the giving of the Torah, the elders weren't allowed to ascend with Moshe.
18. 5:5 - The tribe of Levi.
19. 5:6 - a) Egyptian taskmasters; b) Jewish officers.
20. 5:14 - They were chosen to be on the Sanhedrin.

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SHABBAT 93 - 99

“One who suspects an innocent person will be punished with an affliction to his body.”

The source for this is the leprosy which attacked the hand of Moshe (*Shemot* 4:6) as punishment for his complaint to G-d Who had charged him with informing the people of their liberation: “But they will not believe me.” (4:1) G-d, of course, knew that the people would believe him and were being unjustly suspected.

• *Shabbat* 97a

“So important is ‘kavod habriot’ (respect for human dignity) that it can override a rabbinical prohibition.”

The case in the *gemara* where this principle is applied was the need on Shabbat to remove a dead body in the town of Drukru from a public place where it lay. Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak ordered it moved to a *carmelit* – a private area – which was forbidden only by rabbinical law.

• *Shabbat* 94b

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION

“Are you satisfied with your life?” This challenging question was recently put to people in Israel by researchers from the Central Bureau of Statistics studying volunteering among citizens of the country.

Among the volunteers 41% stated that they were “very satisfied” with their lives as compared to only 26% expressing such satisfaction among the non-volunteers.

There were two other interesting facts emerging from the study. Jews were ahead of all other ethnic groups with 17% of the Jewish population from age 20 and upwards

involved in volunteer activity, compared with 14% among the Druze and 9% of the Christian and Muslim populations.

Concerning the breakdown within the Jewish population, 36% of the volunteers were very Orthodox, 27% were religiously observant, 14% traditional and 13% secular.

A powerful reminder that helping others goes hand in hand with a religious way of life.

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THE YESHIVA

From: Stacey Roth in Boston, MA

*Dear Rabbi,
Recently I have become interested in Judaism and have made a lot of progress by reading on my own and talking to religious people. Someone suggested that I learn in a yeshiva for women. How important is this?*

Dear Stacey,

It sounds like you're off to a wonderful start. It's very important to benefit from a yeshiva experience for whatever time you can manage, for a number of reasons. I'll mention just a few of them here.

Yeshivot and seminaries offer the opportunity for total immersion in a Torah way of life, in an environment where everyone is striving to improve their knowledge and observance of Torah together. In a secular environment, ba'alei teshuvah and many observant Jews feel like outsiders, and may be defensive regarding religious issues. It is healthy to live in surroundings that are congruent with one's lifestyle and beliefs; a yeshiva provides a community where being an observant Jew is mainstream and perhaps even trendy. This type of experience can have an impact on even a short-term visitor to the yeshiva or seminary, and give one a needed injection of enthusiasm and confidence.

The yeshiva also provides much-needed support during the initially difficult period of the newly observant. "No man is an island entirely of itself, every man is a part of the continent, a piece of the main" (John Donne). Any change in the familiar patterns of life is difficult, especially when this change is accompanied by the acceptance of a vast and complex new system of living. Transition is made easier when one is "in transit" with others. People who have undergone similar experiences compare notes and learn from each other's successes and mistakes and can identify with each other's trials. "One who seeks advice, increases understanding" (Pirkei Avot 2:8).

Being part of a yeshiva or seminary also means being part of a community. Members of a community celebrate happy occasions together, and provide comfort and support in times of distress. Non-observant Jews are usually very impressed and moved by the extent to which religious people entertain the bride and groom at an Orthodox wedding. Stereotypes go crashing to the ground (and sometimes even the rabbis from the yeshiva) when the

men begin juggling, somersaulting, and performing handstands in order to contribute to the happiness of the occasion. These events enhance one's sense of belonging to a cohesive, caring community.

The yeshiva also helps one establish important contacts in the religious community. Visiting observant families on Shabbat and Festivals is an enjoyable way for the ba'al teshuvah to learn about Shabbat and family life, and to actually see much that he has learned put into practice. Do you want to spend Shabbat with a family from Atlanta, Georgia, or perhaps Georgia of the former Soviet Union? Do you like Sephardi food or macrobiotic? Would you like to be with a large family? Chassidic, Lithuanian, or Yemenite? Jerusalem, Tzefat, or Bnei Brak? Do you want to meet a religious artist, author, physicist, doctor, or investment banker? Someone in the yeshiva or seminary is able to direct any student to people who share his personal interests.

Finally, anyone interested in getting married will generally have more opportunities if he or she is part of a yeshiva. Rabbis, rebbetzins, and married couples associated with an institution of learning introduce people and help with shidduchim. Teachers and rabbis provide references for their students, and usually have the connections to be able to investigate the references of a prospective shidduch. Many yeshivot and seminaries not only help their students get married, they also assist the married couple in finding housing, financial assistance, and with any advice they might seek.

Most people cannot afford to spend long periods of time at yeshiva, and certainly cannot devote most of their life to the study of Torah. It is especially important for them to take time out to study so that they can improve their skills in the language and analysis of classical Hebrew and Aramaic texts. When they leave yeshiva they will be more independent in their studies, will have a wider choice of classes to attend, and will be more proficient in their prayers and blessings.

It is human nature to put off until tomorrow (or next month, year, or decade) anything that requires effort. Laziness has a surprising amount of strength for something so slow moving. "Hillel used to say...If not now, when?" (Pirkei Avot 1:14). "Do not say, 'When I have free time I will study,' for you may never have free time" (Pirkei Avot 2:5).

Sources:

- *Recommended reading: After the Return, Mordechai Becher & Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers.*

written by Shimon O'Heron

Michael Alan Sara
Philadelphia, PA
Temple University – Elementary School Teacher
Currently in Shoresh Program

Reform Sunday School was prison. It was no wonder that when Michael started university that the Coast Guard Reserves and not the local Hillel House was on his to-do list. Michael had no idea that G-d was about to “lift the veil” and propel him into discovering his roots along with the whole world’s.

On his walk home he witnessed a gang

assassination take place in broad daylight on a car driver.

Shocked, watching the crowds and police gather, Michael waited to be questioned about the incident. An elderly man (he now calls him “the angel”) came and comforted him. It

goes without saying that he was in a weekly class on Judaism with Rabbi Eli Kopel of Ohr Somayach for the following year and then on a JLE trip to Israel. Back at Temple University Michael began investigating Aryeh Kaplan’s and Abalafia’s works and developed a family learning program called “Tree of Life Yoga.” He plans to travel the country, inspiring disconnected Jews to discover Shabbat, effect change and help bring Mashiach.



WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

PASSING ON THE PAVEMENT

Question:

I realize that this question is very different from the ones you usually deal with. It may be “way out of left field” but it is one that has always bothered me. What happens when you are walking on the pavement and someone is walking in the opposite direction right towards you? How can you avoid a collision?

Answer:

When I was in elementary school our teacher taught us that you should walk to the right. This might have been a subconscious application of the Talmudic dictum that “every turn you make should be to the right”. No such application

is, however, made by our Sages and there is a built-in flaw because the fellow coming towards you may not have gone to the same school.

A general rule in human affairs which emerges from the ethical writings of our Torah scholars is that one should avoid being “pushy”. Applying this to the situation you describe, the best advice would be to pause for a moment and gracefully signal to the oncoming pedestrian to pass you on either your right or left.

Not only will you thus avoid a collision but you will make the other fellow feel good that someone showed him such deference.

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