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PARSHA INSIGHTS

Bereishet

SJF SEEKS SIMILAR FOR BNBY

“And the L-rd, G-d, said, ‘It is not good that that man be alone, I will make a helper corresponding to him.’” (2:18)

Getting married can be a frightening thing. Is this the one? Maybe I could do better? Maybe I could find someone prettier/richer/taller/cleverer/shorter/quieter/louder?

Maybe I could find someone nicer?

By choosing a partner, necessarily we close ourselves off from every other possibility. That’s a frightening prospect, all that potential gone forever. At a time like this, the greatest blessing a prospective couple can have is the knowledge that their choice is the result of Divine Providence rather than their own wish list.

During the marriage service, and at the subsequent seven-day marriage festivities, we recite the blessing, *“Gladden the beloved companions (the bride and the groom) as You gladdened Your creation (Adam) in the Garden of Eden in the past.”*

Adam and Chava (Eve) needed no “speed-dating” to find each other. They didn’t require a dating service; there were no cryptic classifieds in the Jewish News: *“SJF seeks beshert for BNBY”* (Single Jewish Female seeks her appointed partner for a true Jewish home).

No one saw G-d’s work in their *shidduch* more than Adam and Chava. There was no else; there was no one better, taller, prettier, etc. etc. Our blessing to the bride and groom at their wedding is that they should see the Divine Hand in their marriage as clearly as the beloved partners in that first marriage.

• Heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller

Noach

ON BEING A G-D NEIGHBOR

“And he will dwell in the tents of Shem” (9:27)

Most of us have dreamed, at one time or another, of living a life of rustic isolation; an idyllic existence in a solitary cottage, the birds chirping uninterrupted by the drone of the freeway traffic — or of our neighbors.

This is not, however, a particularly Jewish view of the world. Apart from the halachic needs of a *minyán* with whom to pray, and a *mikve* to protect family life, the Jewish idea of a home is inextricably bound up with neighbors.

The Hebrew root of the word “to dwell” — *lishcon* — is the same as the word for “neighbor” — *shochen*. In other words, the essence of dwelling is to be a neighbor. There is no true dwelling without neighbors.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel once described the defining lesson of the Holocaust thus: In the horror of the camps, when only one out of every six inmates was given a blanket to ward off the crippling cold, rather than hog that blanket to ourselves, we shared it with five other people.

The power of the human spirit is never more manifest than in our thoughts for the well being of others.

That same Hebrew word, *shochen*, is also the name for the Divine Presence in this world – the *Shechina*. The *Shechina* is man’s “Neighbor.” She dwells alongside man. She is a Neighbor because she allows him his own ‘space’ — his ability to exercise that most precious human gift, the freedom of choice.

It is this worldview that has protected the Jewish People from the fanaticism that plagues other religions. Without a concept of a dwelling together with G-d in this world, the religious seeker can easily fall into a gushing absorption in the Divine so total that he loses his sense of self; the result being that his will and G-d’s Will become one and the same – meaning what I want is what G-d wants. If I kill you, it is because G-d wants you dead. A person can become so entranced in his own vision of THE TRUTH, that he believes that everything he does is, by definition, G-d’s Will.

The Hebrew name for the nation that surrounds our small but Holy Land is Yishmael, which means “G-d will hear.” Whatever I say, G-d will hear. This is the essence of fatalism and fanaticism. G-d agrees, de facto, with whatever I do.

The Jewish people are called Yisrael, which means “G-d is Straight.” Whatever He does is Straight and I have the choice to align myself with that Reality.

That’s what it means to be a good neighbor.

Bereishet

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noah. After the death of Sheith, mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noah, finds favor with G-d.

Noach

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam’s descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth’s inhabitants

except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world’s climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach’s sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach’s three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

A TALE OF TWO ERAS

“There were ten generations from Adam to Noach... ten generations from Noach to Avraham.” (*Pirkei Avot* 5:2)

This is the encapsulated description our Talmudic Sages have given us of the first two millennia of human history which are discussed in detail in the first two chapters of the Torah that are read in synagogues on the Shabbatot following the Simchat Torah celebration of completing a yearly cycle of Torah reading.

But each of these two eras provides us with a different lesson. Although idol worship already began in the third gen-

eration of man, and violence and corruption were rampant in most of the generations, Heavenly patience provided them a long stay of execution till the Great Deluge. While this is an expression of the long-suffering attribute of G-d, the second era teaches us that despite its sinfulness the world was saved through the righteousness of the Patriarch Avraham.

The practical lesson to be learned from this is that the security of a nation and the world depends on those who follow the righteous ways of Avraham. Only they are capable of securing Israel forever.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

BEREISHET

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced. Therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

PARSHA Q&A ?

NOACH

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Noach’s Questions!

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

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amot.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Ham. And because Ham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Ham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

- Hallel and sacrifice consumption on Shmini Atzeret
- What to do if the succah is needed on the eighth day
- The water libation throughout Succot and the *simcha* accompanying it
- How much water and how many days
- The *shittin* ducts into which the libations were poured
- The *kohen* who was stoned for failing to properly pour
- What happened to the wine poured into those ducts
- Water prepared before Shabbat and water that became disqualified
- *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva* – the musical accompaniment to the water drawing
- Whether this music was played on Shabbat or Yom Tov
- What was the main element of Levite song – instruments or voices
- Who played those instruments
- The bright lights, the singing and dancing of the *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*
- The beauty of Yerushalayim and *Beit Hamikdash*; the glory of the synagogue in Alexandria
- Accommodating the women at the *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*
- The weeping at the eulogy of the hereafter
- Insights regarding the evil inclination
- Four artisans, seven shepherds and eight princes
- The nature of songs and dances of the *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva* celebrations
- The fifteen steps in the *Beit Hamikdash* and what they represent
- The number of shofar blasts in *Beit Hamikdash*

SIMCHAT BEIT HASHAEIVA

During all the days of Succot there was a special dimension of *simcha* in the *Beit Hamikdash* beyond the joy of the other Festivals. This was the *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*, the singing and dancing which accompanied the special water libation that took place on Succot in addition to the regular wine libation throughout the year.

Neither the water libation nor the celebration accompanying it is explicitly mentioned in the Torah. The water libation was commanded to Moshe at Sinai and only hinted at in three extra letters that appear in the Torah's directives for the wine libations on Succot (*Bamidbar* 29:17-33).

As regards the singing and dancing, a *simcha* which our Talmudic Sages describe as being greater than any *simcha* ever seen, Rambam finds a source for this in the words of the Torah (*Vayikra* 23:40) that on Succot "You shall celebrate

before the L-rd your G-d for seven days." Although the literal meaning of this passage is the mitzvah of taking the four species every day of Succot in the *Beit Hamikdash*, it may be interpreted as signaling this *simcha* as well.

There is an interesting connection between the explicit mitzvah of the four species and the subtle reference to *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*. In the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* the four species were taken there for all seven days while outside only on the first day. After the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted the taking of these species all seven days everywhere as a *zecher lamikdash*, a way of remembering the *Beit Hamikdash* (*Succah* 41a). Although no such decree was made in regard to *Simchat Beit Hashaeiva*, it has become customary, especially in Eretz Yisrael, to remember the *Beit Hamikdash* with the singing and dancing which characterized that event.

• *Succah* 50a

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"*Gemilut chassadim* (acts of kindness) are greater than *tzedakah* (charity) in three ways. *Tzedakah* can only be extended with money, only to the poor and only to the living. *Gemilut chassadim* can be extended with money and with the body, to the rich as well as to the poor, and to the dead as well as the living."

• *Beraita - Succah* 49b

"Bilgah, the father of Miriam, was penalized for the disrespect he showed to the *Beit Hamikdash* altar because there is a folk saying that the language used by a child in the street was learned from either its mother or father."

• *The Sage Abaye - Succah* 56b

- The Psalms that were sung by Levites in *Beit Hamikdash*
- Division of the Succot sacrifices between the *kohanim*
- Festival arrangement of *kohanim* rights
- Order of the kiddush blessings on Succot
- Division of the *lechem hapanim* showbreads
- Why the Bilgah family was penalized
- The egg laid on Yom Tov and the nature of the mother hen
- The concepts of *muktza* and *hachana*
- Comparing the egg to fruit from a tree or to juice from fruit
- The forbidden egg that got mixed up with permitted ones
- When the law of *bitul* does not apply
- When Shabbat and Yom Tov follow each other
- Branches that fall off the tree into the oven on Yom Tov
- Two days of Yom Tov outside Eretz Yisrael and two days of Rosh Hashana everywhere
- When can a rabbinical decree be annulled
- Return to family life at Sinai and Rabbi Eliezer's vineyard
- Burial on Yom Tov and on Rosh Hashana
- The chick and the calf born on Yom Tov
- When a chick is capable of hatching others

PRAYING FOR MANKIND

“**W**oe to the nations of the world who lost something and are unaware of what they lost. In the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* the altar helped achieve atonement for them but now who will atone for them?”

This statement of Rabbi Yochanan was a follow-up to what Rabbi Elazar said about the seventy bullocks offered as sacrifices in the *Beit Hamikdash* throughout Succot relating to the seventy nations of the world. Since Succot is the time when Heaven determines how much rain will fall during the year, the sacrifices offered by the Jewish People achieved atonement for the sins of the seventy nations to make them deserving of sufficient rainfall.

This idea of the *Beit Hamikdash* serving as a source of blessing for the non-Jewish world is also mentioned in the dialogue between Shimon Hatzadik and Alexander the Great (*Yoma 69a*). This *kohen gadol* countered the slander perpetuated by the Kuttites that the Temple in Jerusalem was the source of rebellion against the Macedonian Empire and deserved to be destroyed by pointing out that it was in that Temple that Jews prayed for the welfare of the king and his kingdom.

Maharsha writes that this is a reference to the prayer of King Shlomo (*Melachim I 8:40-43*) at the inauguration of the *Beit Hamikdash* that G-d accepts the prayers of the gentile who directs his prayers toward His House. Perhaps Shimon Hatzadik was, in some manner, also referring to the sacrifices brought on their behalf on Succot.

• *Succah 55b*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE SHOFAR SHOWS UP

There was no shofar blowing on the first day of Rosh Hashana this year because of the rabbinical injunction against doing so on Shabbat.

Back in Moscow under oppressive Czarist rule, the community was faced with an entirely different situation preventing it from fulfilling this mitzvah on a weekday Rosh Hashana – there was no kosher shofar to be found. A disqualifying crack had been discovered in the only shofar it had, and bringing one from outside the city meant risking death at the hands of the anti-Semitic authorities.

The rav of the community, Rabbi Chaim Berlin, was greatly pained by this situation and decided to do something symbolic. He stayed up all night reviewing the laws of shofar and then set out early in the morning to the syn-

agogue for the services that would be marred with the sadness of missing the shofar blowing.

On his way he came across a gentile wagon driver who had decorated his wagon with all sorts of horns. Amongst them he was surprised to see a beautiful kosher shofar and he approached the driver to ask him where he had gotten such a shofar. He was even more surprised when the fellow came running towards him with this shofar and begged him to take it.

It turned out that this driver had stolen the shofar from a local synagogue and was afraid that this was its rabbi who would report him to the police.

Never was the sound of the shofar so appreciated in that town as on that Rosh Hashana.

OCCIDENTAL ORIENTATION

From: I. Frankel

Dear Rabbi,

Our shul faces east, whereas Jerusalem is southeast from our city. Almost everyone faces east except for one or two people who face southeast. Is it more important to face a bit more in the right direction, or not to be different from (and maybe disrespectful to) the vast majority of the worshippers?

Dear I. Frankel,

During prayer one should face towards the Land of Israel; in Israel towards Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem towards the Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount.

However, even if the people in the congregation are facing the wrong direction — although they're "out of line" — one shouldn't differ from them but rather should face the same way they do. So in your case where the synagogue and the congregation face east, one should stand with his body facing east together with the rest of the congregation. However, he should indiscreetly tilt his face southeast towards Jerusalem.

As a point of interest, for this reason someone praying at the Western Wall should turn his face somewhat to the left so that he will be facing the place of the Holy of Holies.

Despite the importance of our physical orientation in prayer, let us not forget to point our hearts in the right direction as well.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 94:1,2*
- *Ibid. Mishneh Berurah 10*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RISK

Question: I am sometimes approached by people to sign as a guarantor on a loan they wish to take from a free loan fund. Aware of the desperate situation they are in I am moved to help them but my awareness of the extreme difficulty they face in repaying the loan arouses a fear that I will be stuck with paying it. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: It is certainly a great *chessed* to lend money to someone in need and to help someone secure a loan by acting as guarantor. You must, however, take into account that

though the borrower may have every intention of paying back the loan, he may be relying on an entirely unrealistic plan for doing so. It would therefore be prudent if you followed these two guidelines:

1. Ascertain that the borrower has a realistic plan for paying back the loan. (It might even be a good idea to ask for references from people who have loaned him money in the past.)
2. Guarantee only as much money as you are ready to lose in order to help a needy person.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

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

“GREAT IS THE TORAH WHICH ENDOWS ONE WHO DOES ITS TEACHINGS WITH LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND THE WORLD TO COME.” — (AVOT 6:7)

“Does its teachings” is used rather than “learns” to remind us that the principal goal of learning is in order to do the *mitzvot* of G-d's Torah.

It also communicates the idea that one who learns Torah is considered as if he created that Torah knowledge and it is his own possession. This



thought is expressed by King David in the first psalm of Tehillim, when he speaks of it being “G-d's Torah” before one learns it, and “his own Torah” after he has learned it. “One who does its teaching” then means one who has made those teachings his own creation and possession.

• *Midrash Shmuel*

OF BOMBS AND BURIALS

BY RABBI ARYEH Z. GINZBERG

A Premature Farewell

The call came from one of my old *ba'alei battim*, whose son was serving in the Israeli army. Several years earlier, his son had gone to learn in *Eretz Yisrael* after high school, like many of our children do, and had fallen in love with *Eretz Yisrael*. He joined a *hesder yeshiva* and promptly entered into the army.

Quickly advancing in the army ranks, after just three years, he became an officer in charge of a large group of men. Last summer, exactly one year ago, he was assigned to lead a group of soldiers to evacuate one of the settlements in Gush Katif. He begged to be released from that assignment, as he was totally opposed to the government's decision to remove the settlers from their homes, but was ordered to do so anyway. On the morning of the evacuation, he entered into a small *moshav* and went directly to the shul, where everyone had gathered, including the rabbi of the *moshav*.

After davening and crying together, both the rav and the soldier spoke about the need to exit peacefully, so brother would not have to fight against brother. With tears, everyone exited the rear of the shul onto the buses, waiting to escort them from the only home that many of them had ever known. The rav and the officer exited together at the end of the line.

Before the soldier got onto the bus, he stopped in his tracts, reached back into his knapsack, and withdrew his personal *siddur* from it, opened it up and wrote in that day's date. He then got down on his knees, and with his bare hands started digging a hole in the ground. After a few minutes, he kissed the *siddur*, placed it into the ground, covered it up with the dirt, and then stood up.

The rav was watching him, and asked him why he was burying his *siddur* in the ground. He explained that he was confident that one day Jews will return to Gush Katif and to this *moshav*. He didn't know when – maybe in ten years, or twenty or fifty – but one day maybe a Jew will find his *siddur* and realize that Jews were here and left their hearts behind. With that being said, the soldier and rabbi embraced and then together, arm in arm, got onto the bus and left.

Eleven Months Later

The story continues some eleven months later. This soldier, now an officer in the Engineers Corps, received an order to enter Gaza with his men under the cover of darkness and set up a headquarters from which the soldiers would be sent for missions deep into Gaza.

He entered Gaza, proceeded to the designated spot, and set up the headquarters tent. When it began to get light, he looked around, and all he saw was total destruction. Mountains of debris and devastation abounded; he had no

idea exactly where he was. All of a sudden – he doesn't know what compelled him to do so – he dropped to his knees and began to dig furiously at the dirt with his hands. After several moments, he felt something. As he reached in further, he pulled out his own *siddur*, the very *siddur* that he had buried just eleven months earlier.

He was in shock. After several moments, his entire body began to shake uncontrollably. He cried out loud, “*Hashem*, why? What are you trying to tell me? What is the message that I am to get from coming back to the very spot where I buried my *siddur* only eleven months ago and finding it again?”

He called his father in New York and told him the story. He requested, “Please call Rabbi Ginzberg, tell him what happened to me and ask him for an explanation.”

The call touched me to the core of my *neshama*. I explained to the father that I am not on the level required to even begin to understand the meaning of this incident and what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* was telling His son. But I had a suggestion. “There is an *adam gadol* in Bnei Brak who lies in a world of *kulo Torah*. Maybe he can answer you.” I told him I would arrange a private visit for him on *Motzaei Shabbos*. He should go to Bnei Brak and tell his story to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*.

I called Rav Chaim's son, explained the matter, and arranged for him to meet Rav Chaim on *Motzaei Shabbos*. He was received with the utmost seriousness. Rav Chaim responded to his question immediately.

He asked him what he did to prevent the expulsion from Gaza. The soldier said, “I davened constantly, and pleaded with my superiors to ignore the government's directives, all to no avail.”

“And after the expulsion, what did you do?” asked Rav Chaim.

The soldier responded. “What could I do? It was all over.”

Rav Chaim said, “The power of *tefilla* is not to be underestimated. You should have taken your *siddur* in hand and continued davening. Who knows what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would have done, if we still stormed *Shamayim* with *tefillos*! You instead chose to bury your *siddur* in the ground. For you it was over. But *Hashem* says, ‘It's not over. Here is your *siddur*. Pour your heart out again for *Eretz Yisrael* and for *Klal Yisrael*.’”

What an inspiring and powerful response: Through continued *tefilla*, through inspired *tefilla*, anything is possible and everything is possible. Things change so quickly in *Eretz Yisrael*. Not in months or weeks, but in days and in hours. Our *tefillas* can be crucial.

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