

MANHATTAN  
HIGH SCHOOL  
FOR GIRLS  
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## *From the desk of the Editors*

A singular sense of joy and enthusiasm permeates the air as the *Chag* of *Simcha* approaches. With every passing day, our excitement escalates as girls continue to enrich our *Moadim* with their thoughtful *divrei Torah* and incredible artwork in honor of Purim. and as we prepare to celebrate with our families and friends.

This elevation in the level of joy is a mandate for the month of Adar. "משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה": "From the beginning of Adar, we increase our joy." (Taanit 29a). And yet, the story of Purim records one of the most frightening and threatening periods ever experienced by the Jewish people; one that had the potential to end terribly for us. In our own personal lives, we experience hardships even as we celebrate happy events in our lives. How can we trust that good will triumph over evil every time?

As highlighted by some of the *Divrei Torah* in this edition, *Megilat Esther* is an annual reminder that everything is concealed behind a master plan that we cannot see or understand until the entire story has played out. Whether our struggles are imposed upon us by external factors or stem from our internal conflicts or difficulties where being able to escape seems impossible to us, we can reflect on the miracle of Purim as a reminder that everything takes place under the watchful eye of Hashem and will turn out for the best if we are patient and follow His word.

In more recent times we have seen events of persecution similar to the events of Purim, like the Holocaust, where "Modern Day Mordechai" leaders have stepped into a role similar to Mordechai *Hatzaddik*. Just as Mordechai *Hatzaddik* understood this idea and led the Jewish people to salvation, these leaders have now stepped up in uniting *Klal Yisrael* to a point where just a few months ago, the *Siyum Hashas* took place with over 100,000 Jews attending. This edition of *Moadim* features these Modern day Mordechais and reflections of the *Siyum Hashas* in addition to the beautiful *Divrei Torah* and artwork.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of *Moadim*!

*Freilichen Purim,*  
**Moadim Crew**

## *Message from the Menahel*

The yom tov of Purim is an especially apropos time for a Jew to express his thanks to Hashem for the countless miracles he has wrought for Klal Yisrael, the proverbial "lone sheep among seventy wolves" (Esther Raba). It affords us the opportunity, especially at a time when antisemitism is on the rise, to reflect upon our miraculous survival among the nations of the world who constantly seek to destroy us. This added dimension of simcha can enhance an already joyous yom tov.

Our Moadim crew and the students of MHS have regaled us with a plethora of magnificent divrei Torah and thoughtful observations. Particularly noteworthy in the pages of this prestigious compilation is the Mordechai Hatazdik section, which highlights the illustrious individuals who with great sacrifice and a sense of love and duty for their brethren, saved countless number of lives. Truly regarding these three beloved and revered individuals, David Kestenbaum (great great grandfather of Sofia), Stephen Klein (great grandfather of Reggie), and Julius Kuhl (great great grandfather of Yvee Rosenthal) one can proclaim דרש טוב לעמו ודבר שלום לכל זרעו.

A special thank you to our superb editorial staff, Tamar Dan, Tova Schwartz, Ilana Katzenstein, Daniella Zlotnick, and Musia Kirschenbaum, who have compiled a spectacular edition replete with *divrei Torah*, artwork and articles, which are truly qualitative.

With great appreciation to Rebbetzin Peshi Neuberger, a brilliant and talented editor who is devoted לך ונפש to our students and to Mrs. Sara Tendler, beloved *Moadim* faculty advisor.

May our students continue to tap into their vast reservoirs of creativity to reach ever higher.

***Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky***

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***Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal***

parents of our beloved Yvee

l'iluy nishmas their grandfather, Dr. Julius Kuhl z"l

תהא נפשו צרורה בצרור החיים

# The Essence of Chodesh Adar

The *Mishnah* in *Taanis* states "When *Av* enters, joy is decreased." On this, Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Shmuel expounds "Just as when *Av* enters joy is decreased, so too when *Adar* enters joy is increased." Rashi notes that the days of *Chodesh Adar* - beginning with *Purim* and culminating in the ultimate *Geulah* of *Chodesh Nissan* - were days of miracles for *Klal Yisrael*. "ימי נסים היו לישראל - פורים ופסח". The *simchah* of *Purim* is unique: Unlike the other *Yomim Tovim* which are celebrated on specific dates, and for which there is no element of *simchah* outside of those dates, we are commanded to celebrate *b'simchah* during the entire month of *Adar*. The source for this can be found in the *Megillah* itself which states

והחדש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה .

Naturally, the *meforshim* discuss why *Adar* has this distinctive property of being suffused with *simchah* the whole month long.

*Chodesh Adar* is a fortuitous month for *Klal Yisrael*. The *Sfas Emes* explains that *Adar* is derived from the word "*adir*" meaning mighty and strong. This is an allusion to the *nissim* that occurred during the times of *Megillas Esther*, as well as a reference to *Chodesh Nissan*, immediately following *Adar* as the last month of *Galus Mitzrayim*. Furthermore, the *Yom Tov* of *Purim* is the only *chag* that will continue to be observed after *B'ias HaMashiach*. Rav Menachem Nochum Twersky, also known as the Chernobyler Rebbe, suggests that we can uncover the essence of *Adar* by examining its three letters, *aleph*, *daled*, and *reish*. *Aleph*, has the *gematria* of one, hinting to the singularity of Hashem. The *daled* and *reish* together form the word *dar*, to dwell. When you take the word *dar*, and reverse the letters, the word *reid*, to descend, is formed. The Chernobyler Rebbe suggests that encoded in the name of *Adar* is an implicit message that during this month the One and Only Hashem will descend to this world and will dwell among us. The *Sfas Emes* echoes this idea by saying that *Adar* should be pronounced *Edor*, I will dwell among you.

The Chernobyler Rebbe goes on to explain a fundamental *yesod*: a Jew's job is to bring the *shechinah* into the physical world that we inhabit and to imbue the regular mundane life with *kedushah*. A necessary precondition to this is *simchah*. As we learn from the well-known *midrashic* comment describing the return of *ruach hakodesh* to *Yaakov Avinu* once he learned that *Yosef* was alive, the *shechinah* does not rest upon a person who is not *b'simchah*. Hence, the unique aspect of *Adar* is the extended time during which we increase our *simchah*, thereby maximizing the entry of the *shechinah* into this world.

This is the spiritual purpose of *Adar*: in each generation, to be a catalyst whereby the lofty *kedushah* of the *Ribono Shel Olam* is imbued into the material world. *Al pi kabbalah*, it is at the beginning of the month of *Adar* that Hashem begins to descend and dwell in our world. As this process of imbuing the corporeal world with ethereal holiness continues for the entire month, and is accomplished via the device of *simcha*, it is appropriate that the entire month of *Adar* is a *zman simcha*, highlighting the heightened level of closeness to Hashem we experience in this singular month.

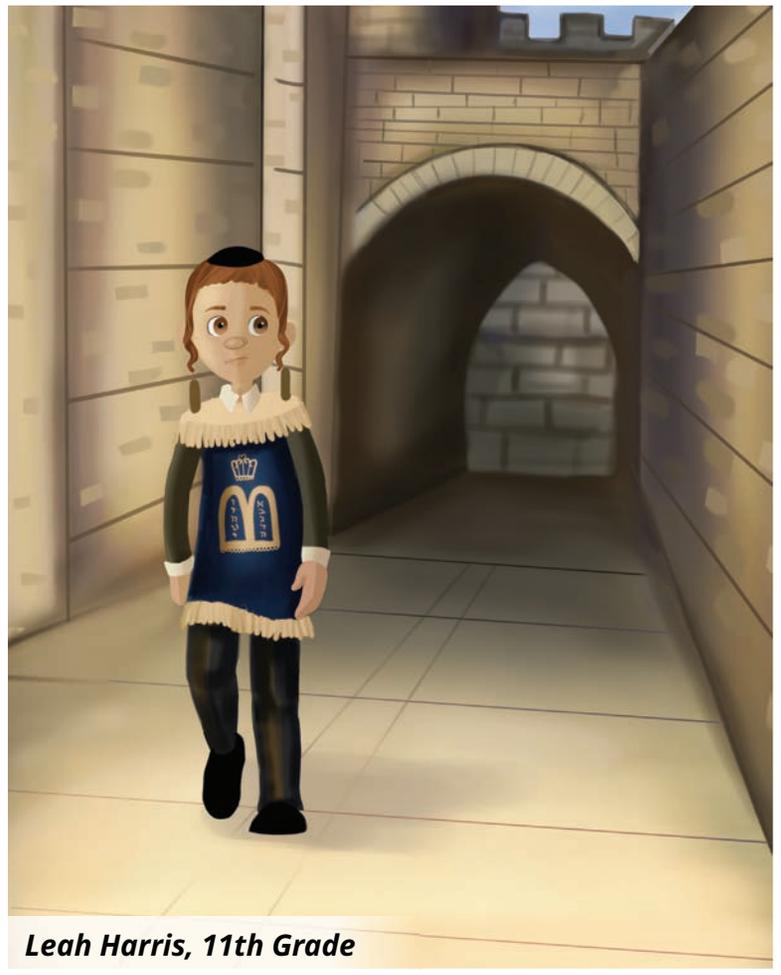
Elky Schwartz

# Fasting for Faith

The origin of *Ta'anis Esther* is unclear. It is not one of the four fasts mentioned by *Zechariah HaNavi*, nor is it mentioned in the Talmud. The first written record of *Ta'anis Esther* as we now observe it is that of *Rav Achai Gaon*, in his ninth century work "*She'iltot*". As no lasting calamity befell the Jewish people, it is not a fast of mourning. What is the motivation behind this fast?

Esther proclaimed a three day fast in the month of *Nissan* as a form of *teshuvah* prior to visiting King Achashveirosh. Connecting that three day fast to a one day fast in *Adar* is difficult. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that an additional fast took place during the story of Purim. When the Jews assembled on *yud gimmel Adar* to fight their enemies, they needed to request Hashem's mercy to emerge victorious from battle. They therefore fasted on the 13th while battling the Persians. Our Rabbis explain that Moshe fasted when Yehoshua led the charge against *Amalek*. Mordechai and the rest of the Jewish nation learned from Moshe's behavior that they, too, should fast. (The fast is called *Ta'anis Esther* to incorporate, as well, the lesson learned from Esther's fast many months before, that Hashem sees and hears each person in their time of distress if they fast and do *teshuvah* with all their heart.)

What is the connection between *Amalek* and fasting? *Amalek* symbolizes randomness. They believe that everything happens by chance and not by design. *Amalek* is defeated by any demonstration that there is *hashgachah pratis*, Hashem's constant, intimate involvement in every aspect of the universe. The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Ta'anis* (Chapter 1, Laws 2-4) "For when a trouble comes and they yell out about it and sound [trumpets], everyone will know that it was because of their evil deeds that this bad was done to them... But if they do not cry out and sound [trumpets], but rather say, 'What has happened to us is the way of the world, and this trouble is merely happenstance' - it is surely the way of cruelty, and it causes them to stick to their bad deeds... And it is [a *mitzvah*] from the words of the Scribes to fast for each trouble that comes upon the community until they are granted mercy from the Heavens (*Sefaria* translation)." Rambam states clearly that fasting and crying out to Hashem is the exact opposite of thinking that something is mere happenstance. Fasting arouses the strong faith that everything is from Hashem, the perfect antidote to *Amalek's* poisonous beliefs.



**Leah Harris, 11th Grade**

✍️ *Rivka Notkin,*

*Based on Dirshu Mishna Berura laws of Taanis Esther and Rambam Hilchos Taanis.*

# Ta'anis Esther: Why fast before the happiest day of the year?

*Purim* is almost here! We have all been planning costumes, our themed *mishloach manos*, and preparing for a *seudah*, but just before we begin 24 hours of feasting and celebrating we spend the day fasting.

Why do we observe *Ta'anis Esther*? The contrast between the happiest day of the year and the somber day that precedes it seems so jarring! Additionally, fasting doesn't exactly help us get into the *Purim* spirit. It's not so easy to pack *mishloach manos* while you're fasting; or to stay focused on the *megillah* reading when all you can think about is what to eat once *shul* is over. So why do we fast on this day? Is *Ta'anis Esther* just a burden we need to bear before all the fun begins, or is there something more to it?

It all began with the decree to wipe out the Jews in the Persian kingdom. The nation responded with collective fasting: In every country under the king's command, there was intense mourning among *Bnei Yisrael* – וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמְסָפָד וְשָׂקָ וְאֵפֶר, יָצַע לְרַבִּים – they were fasting, weeping, and wailing – everybody dressed in sackcloth and ashes. To this day, we read these verses in a sad tune. It was a moment of unprecedented sadness in *B'nei Yisrael's* history. Just a few years earlier, the first *Beis Hamikdash* had been destroyed resulting in the majority of our nation being kicked out of *Eretz Yisrael*. This was the first national *galus* since *galus Mitzrayim*. Now, *B'nei Yisrael* found themselves in a foreign land, under a ruler who decreed that they all be killed. The situation seemed completely hopeless, and they turned to Hashem in the hopes of being saved.

All of *Bnei Yisrael* took to the streets fasting and wearing sackcloth and ashes... all, except for Esther. She sat inside the palace, seemingly oblivious to the death sentence looming over her people's heads. She was decked out in royal clothing, and pampered by staff who attended to her every need. Mordechai came to the palace to plead with Esther to intervene on behalf of *B'nei Yisrael*. She hesitated to speak to Achashverosh, and Mordechai delivered a chilling wake up call: אֵל-תִּדְמִי בְּכִשְׁמֶךָ, לְהַמְלִיט בַּיַּת-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-הַיְהוּדִים. "Right now, Esther, you're sitting in the palace while your people are suffering in the streets. כִּי אִם-הַחֲרַשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רוּחַ וְהִצֵּלָה יַעֲמוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר, וְאַתְּ וּבֵית-אֲבִיךָ תִּאֲבְדוּ. *B'nei Yisrael* – they'll be alright. One way or another, Hashem will save them. The question is, Esther, will you be part of it? Will you join your people in their time of need, or are you going to hide behind the palace doors? If you don't speak up now, then mark my words, you won't be around to join in their salvation either. The choice is yours."

We all know what happened next. Esther responded to Mordechai's words. She decided to take her chances and confront Achashveirosh. This decision changed the fate of *B'nei Yisrael*. Rather than being a bystander, she became the vehicle for her people's redemption.

But how did she do this? Her first step was to declare a fast. This fast was Esther's moment of transformation. Initially Mordechai told her she couldn't escape the fate of all the Jewish people. She responded by saying : לֵךְ כְּנוּס אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים : go and gather all of the Jewish people. I won't remain separate from my people anymore.

Until now, the fasting had only been happening outside the palace. Now Esther brought it inside the palace, as well. She requested צוּמוּ עָלַי – fast on my behalf – וְגַם אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּמוּ כֵן – I and my handmaidens will do the same. וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֲבַדְתִּי, אֲבַדְתִּי – and if I am going to be lost, then let me be lost. Esther's fast was much more than a show of unity. At that moment, she took on the burden of her people. צוּמוּ עָלַי – 'It's on me now.' Esther now faced potential death, her life was hanging in the balance, and her salvation would be her people's salvation too.

The Jewish people continued to fast for three more days. From the outside it appeared that nothing had changed. But this second fast – Esther's fast – transformed their mourning and despair into a hopeful cry. The decree still loomed, but the seeds of redemption had already been planted.

Esther's fast is what made her into the heroine that we admire to this day. But why do we need to fast, just because Esther did? There are lots of significant moments of achievement in *Tanach* that we don't reenact each year. The truth is, if *Purim* was just about celebrating a happy ending to a terrible story of threat and persecution, these would be valid questions. It wouldn't make sense to commemorate the fast anymore, after the amazing victory. But *Purim* is not just a celebration of what happened after the long journey from tragedy to joy. The *Megillah* describes it as a time - אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ - לְהֵם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֲבֵל לְיוֹם טוֹב. The situation totally turned upside down. The threat of annihilation was transformed into a holiday of redemption.

In order to truly tap into the joy of Purim, it's not enough to just celebrate the end of the story. We need to feel the contrast between the two, we need to connect with the pain and fear that came before the salvation. So on *Ta'anis Esther*, we remember the terror and panic the Jews felt as they awaited their execution. We fast and *daven* on this day as we remember these events. We come to the reading of the *Megillah* still fasting, and we leave it and step into a day of celebration, so that we too, can taste the joy of being saved from *tza'ar*.

*Chazal* established *Ta'anis Esther* on the 13th of *Adar*, even though it didn't take place then, to preserve the חֵזוֹן וְנִהְפּוֹךְ - topsy turvy - experience of this holiday. In truth, *Ta'anis Esther* isn't a contrast to the joy of Purim - it's the perfect way to enter into it. Have an easy and meaningful fast!



**Tamar Dan, 12th Grade**

✿ Mia Lubetski  
 Inspired by a Dvar Torah  
 by Rabbi I. Shalev

## *Insights from Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*

Although the purpose of *Megillas Esther* is to publicize the miracles *Hashem* performed for *Bnei Yisroel*, the very first word of the *Megillah* hints to tragedy and grief: "וַיְהִי". The first syllable of וַיְהִי is וַי, literally meaning "alas" or "woe." There is a rabbinic teaching that whenever a story in *Tanach* is introduced with the word וַיְהִי, it indicates the start of trouble. But what was the devastation of *Purim*? The *Me'am Lo'ez* explains that when *Bnei Yisroel* were in *Galus Bavel*, throughout the 70 years of torture they always yearned for redemption. However, when the time finally came, they were not redeemed because they were not worthy. Instead of anticipating redemption and returning to *Yerushalayim*, *Bnei Yisroel* were celebrating at Achashveirosh's party. As a punishment for this, rather than giving *Bnei Yisroel* their long awaited redemption, *Hashem* caused them to face Haman's persecution. This punishment is the distress alluded to by the וַיְהִי at the beginning of the *Megillah*.

✿ Becky Bral

# Purim Meshulash

Next year, *b'ezras Hashem*, a great many of us seniors will be lucky enough to be spending *Purim* in *Yerushalayim*, where we will experience a unique phenomenon - a *Purim meshulash*, or a three-day *Purim*. While *Purim* can never fall out on *Shabbos* in an unwalled city (think *lo badu Pesach* and the *at bash* rules), *Shushan Purim* can, and does, whenever *Purim* is observed on a Friday. Because of several *halachic* considerations, the observances and *mitzvos* of *Purim* are observed over a three-day festive period.

One cannot *lein* the *megillah* on *Shabbos*, due to the concern that one may mistakenly carry without an *eruv* in search of someone who can *lein* for him. But instead of postponing the *leining* to Sunday, we push it back and read the *megillah* on Friday. This practice is based on the phrase in the *megillah*, ולא יעבור, which states that we shouldn't let the day of *Purim* (or *Shushan Purim*) pass without having read the *megillah*. Since we cannot do so on *Shushan Purim* itself, we *lein* the day before.

The *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos la'evyonim* are also not fulfilled on *Shabbos*, again because of the concern of carrying without an *eruv*. *Matanos la'evyonim* are distributed on Friday so that the poor should not have to wait for their gifts until Sunday. *Mishloach manos* is pushed off until Sunday, although there is a *minhag* to send some *mishloach manos* on Friday as well. While the *mitzvah* of the *seudah*, the meal, can technically be fulfilled on *Shabbos*, it is delayed until Sunday due to the principle of אין מערבין שמחה בשמחה; we don't want to mix the joy of *Shabbos* with the joy of *Purim*.



Thus, those who find themselves in *Yerushalayim* or *Shushan* next *Purim* will celebrate in the following way. On Friday, they will hear the *megillah* and distribute *matanos la'evyonim*. On *Shabbos*, the day of *Shushan Purim*, a second *sefer Torah* will be opened, from which they will read about *milchemes Amalek* in *Parshas Beshalach*. They will also recite *Al Hanissim* on *Shabbos*. It is customary, as well, to have a more elaborate meal in honor of *Shushan Purim*. On Sunday, the three-day festival will culminate with *mishloach manos* and the *Purim seudah*. May we all be *zocheh* to experience this *Purim meshulash* in *Yerushalayim* with the coming of *Mashiach*, *bimhera b'yameinu*.

☺ Sara Nordlicht

Adapted from *The Book of Our Heritage*  
(translation of *Sefer Hatoda'ah*) by R' Eliyahu Kitov

# The Genetics of *נפש מסירת* in *כּלל ישראל*

As recorded in *פרשת מקץ*, when *יעקב אבינו* agrees to let *בנימין* go down to *מצרים*, he utters the famous words, "וכאשר שכלתי שכלתי" (בראשית מג:יד), indicating that *יעקב אבינו* believed that *בנימין* might die in *מצרים*, but sent him down anyway. In *מגילת אסתר*, a similar *pasuk* records the moment when *אסתר המלכה* agrees to go to *אחשוורוש* without invitation. She says, "וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי" (אסתר ד:טז). In this analagous phrase, *אסתר המלכה*, a descendant of *בנימין*, also implied that she believed she might be killed. Nevertheless, she risked her life to save the *צבור*. When the *בעל קריאה* reads this *פסוק*, the tune switches to that of *מגילת איכה*, which is read on *תשעה באב*. This slow, sad tune stands in sharp contrast to the one which is typically used for *אסתר*, and seems a bit strange, as we know that the end of the story is a happy one. *אסתר* succeeds in saving *המון בני ישראל*, is hanged, and a *יום טוב* is established for all generations. So why use the somber melody here?

The use of the tune of *איכה* for this *פסוק* highlights the similarity between the dilemmas of *אסתר המלכה* and *יעקב אבינו*. By using a mournful tune, we recognize that *אסתר* was yet another person from *בנימין* who placed herself into a life-threatening situation for the good of *כּלל ישראל*. When *בנימין* went down to *יעקב* to *מצרים*, truly thought that he might not return, but still allowed him to go in order to insure that the other *שבטים* would receive food for their families, and thereby survive the *רעב* in *ארץ כנען*. Although both the stories of *אסתר* and *בנימין* end happily, we use a sad tune in *מגילת אסתר* to understand the *נפש מסירת* that *אסתר* extended to save *כּלל ישראל*. She herself might have been killed, but she dared to go to *אחשוורוש* to ensure their survival.

However, *אסתר* didn't save *בני ישראל* alone. Her partner, a man from *בנימין*, was none other than *מרדכי*, about whom the *פסוק* says, "איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש איש ימיני". One may ask how *מרדכי* can be described as both an *איש יהודי* from *שבט יהודה*, and an *איש ימיני* from *שבט בנימין*. As we all know, leadership in *כּלל ישראל* is entrusted to *שבט יהודה*, in accordance with *יעקב אבינו*'s instructions in his *berachah*, "לא יסור שבט מיהודה", *the scepter of rulership will never leave יהודה*. Before the days of the *מלכים*, however, the leaders of *בני ישראל* were the *שופטים*, who could be from any *שבט*. To maintain *יהודה*'s position as the leaders in *בני ישראל*, the first *shofeit*, *ענתניאל בן קנו*, was a member of *שבט יהודה*. He was the one to fight singlehandedly against the people in *דביר* after the death of *יהושע*, which was a tremendous risk.

All the *shoftim*, whether from *שבט יהודה* or not, followed *ענתניאל*'s example of leadership. The very next *shofeit*, *אהוד בן גרא*, from *שבט בנימין*, is described by the *pasuk* as "אטר יד ימינו" (שופטים ג:טז). Although he was from *שבט בנימין*, the *פסוק* makes a point of mentioning that his "ימין" wasn't dominant, alluding to the fact that he was able to put aside the *בנימין* part of him to follow in the ways of *יהודה*. Additionally, the very name *אהוד* is so similar to the name *יהודה*, suggesting that *אהוד* followed *ענתניאל*'s example of rulership. Therefore, when *אהוד* risks his life to kill *מלך מואב*, we can infer that he is following in the ways of *יהודה*, by demonstrating outstanding *נפש מסירת*, similar to *ענתניאל* in *דביר*. Similarly, when the *פסוק* describes *מרדכי הצדיק* as an *איש יהודי*, it shows that he is following the leadership example set by *יהודה*.

*חזקוני*, a *תלמיד* of the *סופר*, explains that when *מרדכי* convinces *אסתר* to go to *אחשוורוש*, he says, "אם החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת" (אסתר ד:יד), explaining to *אסתר* that although she descends from *בנימין*, a quieter *שבט*, she must tap into the *נפש מסירת* of *שבט יהודה*, the quintessential leaders of *כּלל ישראל*, in order to save her nation. It is then that she agrees to go, and says "וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי".

But if *יעקב* was the one who allowed *בנימין* to go down to *מצרים*, then why does it seem that only *יהודה* inherited this trait, and that the other brothers had to learn it from him? Perhaps the answer to this question is, that although it appears that *יהודה* inherited this gene in the most dominant fashion, all the *שבטים* received it, if not dominantly, then recessively. The *נפש מסירת* portrayed in the *פורים* story reflects a long chain of *נפש מסירת*, not just on the part of *יהודה*, but from the entire family of *יעקב אבינו* as well. *יעקב אבינו* is the one who says, "כאשר שכלתי שכלתי", imparting this trait to all of the *שבטים*. Intrinsic in each member of *כּלל ישראל* is this *מידה* to be *נפש מסירת*, to sacrifice a part of ourselves, to benefit the *כּלל*.

Bruria Schwartz and Tova Berger

# The Battle of Shevet Binyamin against Amalek

When we delve into the story of Purim and the fight against *Amalek*, it is interesting to note that it is the children of *Rachel Imeinu* who are tasked with destroying *Amalek*. Whereas Yehoshua initiated the first battle after *Krias Yam Suf*, it seems that Binyamin was the main agent for the war against *Amalek*. Thus, it is Shaul *Hamelech*, the son of Kish from *Shevet Binyamin*, who was instructed to wage war against, and destroy, *Amalek* and their king, *Agag*. Shaul failed in his mission, but fast forward several hundred years, and *Mordechai*, a descendant of Kish, took the fight to *Haman*. *Haman*, of course, descended from *Agag*, the king whom Shaul had spared. It was therefore Shaul's relatives, *Mordechai* and his niece *Esther*, who rectified Shaul's mistake.

What is it about Binyamin that makes him uniquely qualified to destroy *Amalek*? The answer may be found in what *Amalek* represents. The *Maharal* notes that the numerical value of the Hebrew name "Amalek" (240) is equivalent to that of the word "*safek*", which means doubt. Indeed, *Amalek's* dastardly attack immediately after *Krias Yam Suf*, resulted in doubt. As *Rashi* notes, *Amalek's* offensive 'cooled the boiling bathtub.' *Yehoshua* won that battle but did not defeat *Amalek*. *Amalek's* attack thereby eroded some of the gains in *emunah* made in *Mitzrayim* and at *Krias Yam Suf*. *Amalek's* war was, therefore, not so much a war against *Klal Yisrael*, but rather, against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Hence, the *pasuk* describes the war against *Amalek* as Hashem's war: מלחמה לה' בעמלק.

Binyamin, in contrast, is viewed by *Chazal* as pure. He is the only one that did not participate in the kidnapping and sale of *Yosef Hatzadik*. In addition, he is one of the four people that died without any *aveiros*. He was so special that the *Beis Hamikdash* was placed on Binyamin's portion by taking a small strip of land from *Shevet Yehudah's* portion and extending it to Binyamin's land. Binyamin thus represents purity and *giluy Shechinah*. Accordingly, it makes sense that Binyamin, who represented *kedushah*, would be given the job of eradicating *Amalek*, who waged war against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

But there is something deeper in Binyamin's essence that makes him perfectly suited to fight *Amalek*. The Torah relates that *Rachel Imeinu*, suffering terrible pain and dying as she gave birth to Binyamin, called him "*Ben-Oni*" - ותקרא שמו בן אוני - "son of my pain". Yet, ואביו קרא לו בנימין - "and his father called him Binyamin," literally, "son of my right hand". Despite her having given her life for her son, the Torah bypassed the name *Rachel Imeinu* gave him and chose the one given by *Yaakov Avinu* instead.

The *Ramban* has a beautiful explanation for the name change that highlights Binyamin's uniqueness and role in Jewish history. At the same time, his approach may also provide guidance and instruction for our own daily lives. *Ramban* notes that the word "*oni*", connoting "pain" or "suffering", actually has another meaning - "strength". For example, *Yaakov* calls his first-born son *Reuven*, "*reishit oni*" - his "initial strength". The *Ramban* points out that *Yaakov Avinu* did not so much "change" the name given by *Rachel*, as reinterpret it. By translating the word "*oni*" as the positive "strength" rather than the negative "pain," he totally reversed the meaning of the name. "*Yemin*", the right hand, symbolizes strength, as in ימין ה' עושה חיל. "*Ben-Oni*" is thus transformed to the name "Binyamin". As pained and emotionally distressed as he was to see his wife die, *Yaakov Avinu* converted the tragic name into one that connotes positivity.

*Yaakov Avinu* relayed an important message with this name change. Hashem's will and decisions, as profoundly complex and beyond our grasp as they may be, are always done with a positive purpose that we, with our limited vision, might not be able to discern. We all experience difficult moments in our lives; they may be physical, emotional, financial or otherwise, but they pose challenges that seem insurmountable. They may lead to despair and "doubting" *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, or our relationship with *Him*, and we might complain, even as we *daven* for help from *Shamayim*. But from *Yaakov Avinu's* perch, there was no "doubt" regarding the goodness and mercy of Hashem's actions. Even as he suffered one of the greatest tragedies of his life, he witnessed his son's birth and knew that there was a purpose for that child. Ironically, it is often

precisely in those difficult moments that people shine and surprise themselves with their own fortitude and faith. It is in those moments that we often find our “strength”.

“And his father called him, Binyamin.” Binyamin is born at the threshold of “doubt”. He had every reason to be despondent, and perhaps to question *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. He even suffered additional pain when his brother Yosef was taken from him before his teenage years. Yet his name stands in opposition to a defeatist worldview. His name reminds us that Hashem is always present, and has a purpose for each of us, even when we might perceive Him to be absent. The *Megillah* does not contain Hashem’s name because it describes a period of doubt; a time of utter despair and potential tragedy. Purim commemorates a time that was fraught with doubt and uncertainty, and teaches us that Hashem controls the levers of history. The essence of Binyamin, pure and steadfast in his *Emunah*, is contained in his name, which denotes converting the negative to positive, pessimism to optimism. It is, therefore, he who rises to the challenge and casts away the skepticism about Hashem’s presence during that period. Mordechai in particular employs his progenitor’s approach when, firm in this belief he proclaims: רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר. And together, he and Esther flipped the script on Haman and *Amalek*, transforming a time of despair to a time of joy, ונהפוך הוא.

*Rachel Imeinu*’s death precisely at the moment of Binyamin’s birth stands as a unique tragedy in Jewish history. Nonetheless, it is at this juncture that “his father called him Binyamin,” a son derived from, and intended for, strength and fortitude. This message may be difficult to digest, especially when one is, *chas v’shalom*, facing challenges in his or her life, not to mention tragic moments. Yet we can, and we must, derive perspective from Yaakov *Avinu* if we are to fight *Amalek*, the doubt which afflicts us individually and collectively. We must heed this lesson and proceed with the conviction and certainty that Hashem is always with us and that, irrespective of how dire a situation may appear, each of us and each generation must never cave in to despair. With that sentiment, we can persevere and draw nearer to Hashem, thereby meriting His presence and help in fighting our various struggles, whatever and wherever they may be. And in so doing, our war transforms into a מדור דור, במלחמה לה’ בעמלק.

☺ Yael Yaish

*This Dvar Torah is taken from Ramban, the notes on the bottom of the Mahara!l, and other divrei Chazal.*

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## *The Hand of Hashem*

One of the most commonly asked questions about the *megillah* is ‘why is Hashem’s name not mentioned, even once, within its pages?’ The entire scroll revolves around one central story: the Jews were sentenced to death and Hashem saved us. Why, then, is He hidden from view? Why are we trying to veil the strength and kindness of Hashem?

Perhaps the concealment of Hashem’s involvement in the *yeshuah* teaches us a lesson about realizing the *hashgachas Hashem* in our own lives. Sometimes, the hand of Hashem is not as clear to us as it is in supernatural events like *Krias Yam Suf*. Some miracles are smaller, and while they are of great significance, they are not as easily recognizable. Just as it is abundantly clear from a reading of the *megillah* that Hashem orchestrated the entire *Purim* story, even though it is not explicitly pointed out, we should view our own lives in the same way. Each of our lives is an intricate web of events, carefully arranged by Hashem and tailored to each person individually. It is our responsibility to notice the *yad Hashem* in these everyday moments, which will cause us to appreciate everything we have. The *Megillah* is there to train us to have an eye out for Hashem, and to see him not only in the ‘grand scale saving the entire Jewish nation’ miracles but in the ‘not missing your bus and making it to school on time’ miracles as well.

☺ Ariella Bennet

# The Avodah of Purim

How can we utilize this special day in the best way possible?

The *Avodah* of Purim is *Ahavah*. Although both *Ahava* and *Yirah* are required in order to serve Hashem, *Ahavah* is the higher level. When one serves with *Ahavah*, his *teshuvah* is more easily accepted. As *Shlomo HaMelech* wrote in *Mishlei*: “על כל פשעים תכסה אהבה”- *love covers all sins*.

All the *nissim* that Hashem performs for us are revelations of His love. At the same time, however, Hashem orchestrates the world using His *Middas HaDin*, justice. How is it possible, though, that all of the *nissim* that Hashem has brought about for us are associated with His *Middas HaDin*? The answer is that all of these miracles were Hashem’s way of showing His love, and since there is a rule within His system of justice that “love covers all sins,” the very act of showing love to *Am Yisroel* through the performance of *nissim* is also an act of justice.

*Chazal* tell us that פרק כב' of *Tehillim*, “למנצח על אילת השחר מוזמור לדוד” was the prayer that *Esther HaMalka* offered as she entered *Achashveirosh’s* chamber. The *Beis Avraham* teaches that when Esther said “קלי קלי”, she meant to invoke the first two of the thirteen *Middos of Rachamim*, ‘Hashem, Hashem’. The *Gemara* explains that the first ‘Hashem’ refers to the *rachamim* Hashem extends to a person who is innocent, before he has sinned, while the second ‘Hashem’ is associated with the *rachamim* He offers after a person sins. Esther’s repetition of קלי was her way of appealing to both of these *Middos* of Hashem. She was “reminding” Hashem that He has *rachamim* at all times. Because Esther had full *Emunah* in Hashem, she was able to ask, “למה לעזבתי”- *why have You left me?* How can it be that the *Shechinah* left me just because I reached a place of *avodah zarah*? If you are my Hashem in all situations, then you are even there when there are idols!

Esther possessed a tremendous amount of *bitachon*, which had been instilled in her by *Mordechai HaTzadik*. Now, *Mordechai* warned Esther that if she didn’t speak to אחשוורוש the consequence would be “רוח והצלה” (4:14-) *Help and salvation will come to Klal Yisroel from another place, and you and your father’s household will perish. And who even knows if this is the moment for which you have become Queen?!*

*Mordechai* did not believe that *Haman’s* decree would actually happen. He knew that Hashem’s infinite love for the Jewish people would result in salvation; that “רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים” . But he also knew that it would be up to Esther to decide if she wanted to be a part of the process. Otherwise it would come from elsewhere, “ממקום אחר”.

On a deeper level, *Mordechai* instructed Esther that she could choose to serve Hashem through *Ahavah* or through *Yirah*. The *Rambam* tells us in *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* that when a person thinks of all of Hashem’s creations, he will realize how great Hashem’s wisdom is, following which, he will want to know Hashem’s great name.

Appreciating *Am Yisroel’s* current status, Esther realized that they could no longer do *teshuvah* from a place of *Yirah*. It took *Mordechai* to point out to her that although *Bnei Yisroel* had committed *aveiros* by partaking of the food at *Achashveirosh’s* party, and by bowing down to *avoda zarah* in *Nevuchadnezzar’s* time, they still had the opportunity to do *teshuvah* in a different way, namely, through the *middah* of *Ahavah*. *Mordechai* knew that despite the sins of the generation, Hashem’s love for *Bnei Yisroel* would effect their *Yeshuah*, because love covers all sins. He agreed that when one has descended to such a low state, he will never finish doing *teshuvah* for all of his actions one by one. A person in this situation must turn the other way around and do his *Avodas Hashem* out of *Ahavah*. Then, love will “cover all sins,” and even a decree that has been signed by Hashem can be cancelled.

This adds a new dimension to Esther’s repetition of “קלי קלי,” the Hashem *before* one sins and the Hashem *after* one sins. If one serves Hashem purely out of *Yirah* then he can only beseech “Hashem before a per-

son sins". Once a person has sinned, the *middah* of *Din*, which is connected to *Yirah*, doesn't allow him to stand before Hashem. In order to petition Hashem after one sins, one needs *rachamim*, which can only be invoked by standing before Hashem with *Ahavah*. In *Sefer Tehillim* (121:5), *David HaMelech* encourages us with the words "ה' צלך עד יד ימינך," "Hashem is your shadow at your right hand side." In the same way that a person's shadow exactly replicates the motions that he makes, the way in which Hashem acts towards us is an exact imitation of the way in which we behave with Him. When we display true love for Hashem, then Hashem will follow suit, and this high level of love will "cover all sins."

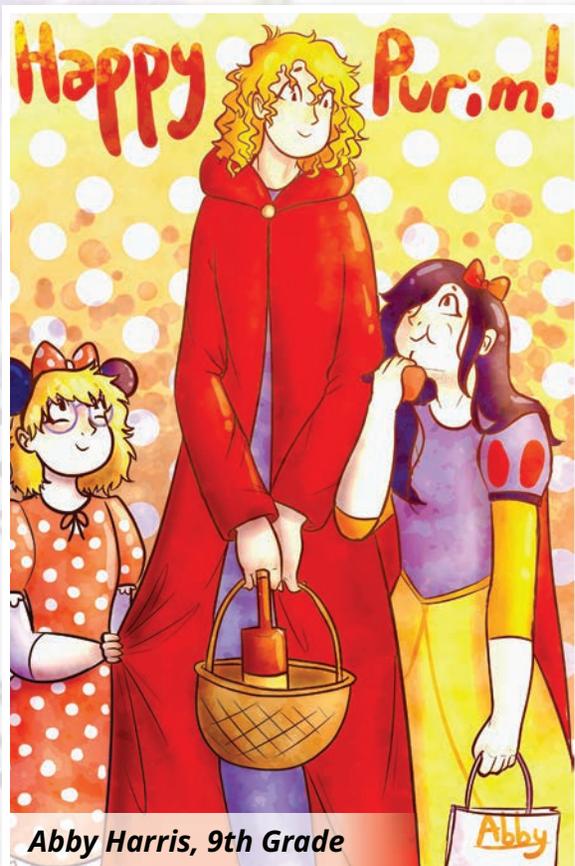
This was precisely Mordechai's message to Esther. When one serves with *Ahavah*, his sins are completely ignored. *Am Yisroel's* sins at that time, though significant, were disregarded because Hashem reflected their love for Him back at them. As *Shlomo HaMelech* proclaims in *Shir HaShirim*, (5:8), "אם תמצאו את דודי מה תגידו לו" – *when you see my beloved, tell Him that I am lovesick!*

If we are lovesick for Hashem, He will act accordingly with us, and "cover all our sins." Moreover, our sins may even be turned into merits. *Chazal* tell us (*Yuma* 86b) that the intentional sins of a person who does *teshuvah* out of love will be transformed into *zechuyos*.

For this reason, Purim is an auspicious time for *teshuvah*. When Hashem shows love to us, our hearts open up to Him and enable us to do *teshuvah mei'ahava*. Let us use this special day to once again connect with our Creator in the form of *Ahavah*; to show Him our love. We can do this by taking time to reflect on the kindness that Hashem's has shown us recently, and through such reflection to approach Him with love. Ultimately, we pray that Hashem will respond to us in kind.

Adielle Rosenblum

Adapted from *Pearls by the Nesivos Shalom*



Abby Harris, 9th Grade



Sarah Sash, 11th Grade

# The Essence of Simchas Purim

Every *Yom Tov* has many elements of *simchah*. *Chazal* explain that one of the reasons for the tremendous *simchah* of *Purim* is that it contains not only its own joy, but it also incorporates the happiness of all of the other *Chagim* of the year. On *Pesach* we were removed from the mortal dangers of *Mitzrayim* and experienced *geulah*, and on *Purim*, we were redeemed from the decree of death and given the blessing of life. On *Shavuos* we accepted the *Torah*, and on *Purim*, we did *teshuvah* and accepted the *Torah* anew (Gemara 88a). On *Rosh Hashanah* we are judged for life and death, and on *Purim* we were judged as to whether *Haman's* decree would stand and we would die, or would fall, and we would be saved and live. On *Yom Kippur* Hashem forgives our sins, and on *Purim*, Hashem forgave the sins of the Jews at Achashverosh's party. On *Sukkos* we were protected by *Kanfei Hashechina* in the desert, and on *Purim* the miracle was so great that many non-Jews entered under the *Kanfei Hashechinah* because of the great *kiddush* Hashem which took place. This is why the *Yom Tov* of *Purim* places such an extraordinary emphasis on *simchah*. It is particularly noteworthy that the letters of the word *Purim* form a mnemonic which includes all the *Chagim*!

פ - פסח  
ו - וסוכות  
ר - ראש השנה  
י - יום כיפור  
ם - מתן תורה

🕊️ Tzirel Shteierman  
Adapted from "Inside Purim"  
by Rabbi Pinchas Aryeh Strickoff

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## The Amalek in Haman

Haman returns home embarrassed and filthy after leading his enemy Mordechai on the horse. He relays to his wife and family all of the events that happened to him that day, to which Zeresh and Haman's wise men respond, "אם מזרע היהודים מרדכי...לא תוכל לו כי נפול תפול לפניו." The *Vilna Gaon* explains that Zeresh and the *advisors* understood that what had happened to Haman was from *Shamayim*, and that there are no *mazalos* for *Klal Yisrael* - the stars do not determine the destiny of the Jewish people. They told Haman that he would not be successful because *Klal Yisrael* are above the *mazalos* and have the power to overturn and flip them. They advised him to hide and cut down the tree on which he had prepared to hang Mordechai, and just make peace with him, because he possesses this special attribute of *Klal Yisrael*. They were concerned that somehow Haman would flip the *mazal* and bring the terrible plan onto himself. Nevertheless, explains the *Gra*, Haman stubbornly refused to believe in Hashem in any way, and insisted that since everything happened by chance, he would have the opportunity to hang Mordechai on the tree at a later time. We see how deeply rooted Haman was in the *Amalek* mindset of "אשר קרך בדרך" - that everything was completely happenstance- *מקרה*. This mindset is the essence of what we are fighting, and what we are commanded to uproot and erase completely. We must strengthen ourselves to recognize how antithetical this mentality is to our fundamental and strong *emunah* in Hashem.

🕊️ Zahava Giloni  
(*Vilna Gaon/Sefer Aderes Eliyahu*)



Almost any school-age child can repeat a version of the Purim story and it will always include Mordechai HaTzaddik. Mordechai is most loved and revered for his attention to the plight of the Jewish people and his willingness to risk everything in order to save his nation from persecution and destruction. Time and again, and in every generation, there have been, and continue to be, people who try to destroy the Jewish people. But each time, there appears at least one Mordechai HaTzaddik. These Mordechais are individuals who put aside their entire lives in order to save even one Jewish life. This work often entails great sacrifice and little, if any, recognition, but it is a sense of duty, responsibility, and a love for all Yidden that fuels their efforts.

**Our grandfathers were those modern day  
"Mordechai HaTzaddik"s.**

SOFIA KESTENBAUM

— YVEE ROSENTHAL

— REGGIE KLEIN



David Kestenbaum



Julius Kuhl



Stephen Klein



# My Great-Great Grandfather David Kestenbaum, z"l

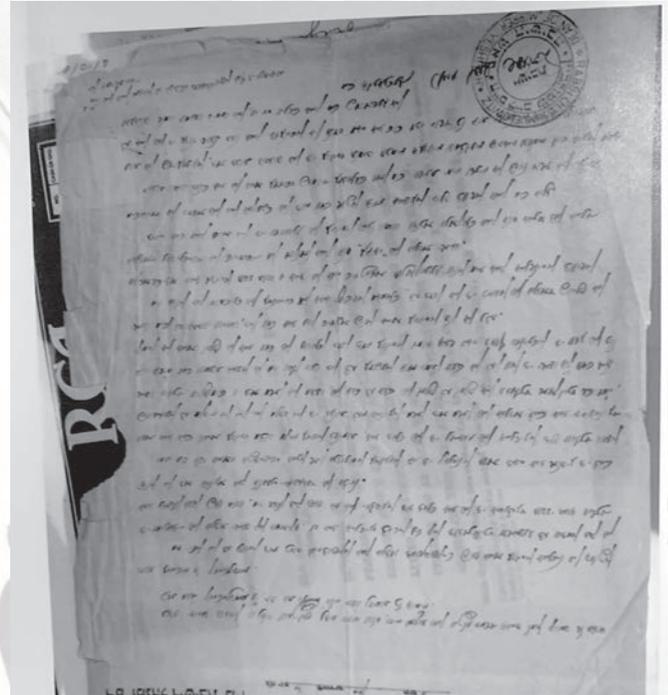
My great-great-grandfather, David Kestenbaum, was a Mordechai HaTzaddik of his day.

David Kestenbaum, for whom my own father is named, was born in 1895 in Tarnow, Poland, where he lived until 1914 when his family moved to Leipzig, Germany. Four years later, at the age of 23, he married Gisela Goldman and together they had seven sons. David joined his family's fur business and was active in many community affairs. When the Nazis came to power, the Kestenbaums left Leipzig, because they realized that they were being targeted. They moved first to their summer home in Holland,

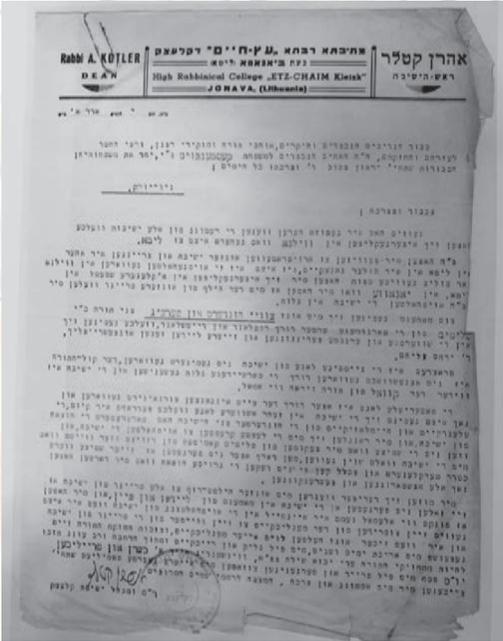
then to Paris in 1934, and finally, in 1936, they were granted visas to travel to America.

David did much work on behalf of the *klal*. First, he helped support local *Torah* institutions in order to establish a thriving *frum* environment for American Jews. Second, he used his fur business as an opportunity to employ people. These employment opportunities enabled him to be a sponsor on visas for countless European Jews, saving them from almost certain death. In fact, the Kestenbaum name was known for helping to provide visas and, when the requests became too numerous for them to handle alone, David Kestenbaum and his brother Jacob hired a secretary to work in conjunction with the State Department to issue the paperwork as quickly as possible. Among the many people saved by my great-great-grandfather were the hundreds of students of the *Mirrer Yeshivah* and their families. When the *yeshivah* realized that it was going to be impossible to stay in Europe, David and his brother were contacted by the *Va'ad Hatzalah*, Rav Avraham Kalmanowitz, and R' Irving Bunim, who were all working to provide visas for the *yeshivah* to move to Shanghai. With the help of the Kestenbaum brothers, this plan famously became a reality.

David also helped the *Mirrer Yeshivah* in New York, working to fight harsh immigration laws and to secure visas for *talmidim* to come here. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Mirrer Yeshivah*, wrote a letter to the brothers declaring them *gab-baim* of the *yeshiva* in gratitude for everything they had done on its behalf. The *Kletzk Yeshivah* also benefited from the generosity of David. In 1940, Rav Ahron Kotler *zt"l* wrote to the brothers, detailing the financial struggles facing the *yeshivah* and turning to them because all other avenues had proven inadequate. Somehow, the brothers found a way to offer substantial financial support. In a letter written to



Letter from Rav Chaim Shmulevitz  
to David Kestenbaum



Letter from Rav Aharon Kotler to David Kestenbaum



Kestenbaum Family at Ellis Island

them by Rav Ahron Kotler, he thanks them for the food, clothing and money that made its way not only to the *Kletzk Yeshivah* but also to needy Jews in the Tarnow Ghetto. At David's funeral, Rav Aharon rose, overcome with emotion, and could only say: "He was a great *tzaddik*." He was unable to continue further and sat down. The list of Jews saved by the efforts of David and Jacob include many *tzaddikim* and *rebbeim* such as the *Gerrer Rebbe*- Rav Aharon Mordechai Alter (who in the end didn't use the visas), and the *Prezemyslaner Rebbe*- Rav Yisroel Leib Margulies. The effort to ensure even one visa or affidavit is considerable; the effort required to bring about hundreds, indeed close to thousands, of visas is unimaginable. Yet David and Jacob did not allow the challenge to deter them.

David paralleled *Mordechai HaTzaddik* in these ways. He was also a pillar of his community and people knew they could turn to him and his brother if they needed assistance. Above all, though, David, just like *Mordechai HaTzaddik*, understood the Jewish community's pressing need to have a leader who was willing to serve as a liaison between themselves and the government. He, like *Mordechai*, prioritized saving Jewish lives above all else and, therefore, spent a significant portion of his life working closely with the government, pushing for more and more visas for his "cousins", because each life was as precious as family to the Kestenbaums.

🕊️ *Sofia Kestenbaum*  
Based on the 12th grade genealogy project of Daniela Kestenbaum



# My Great Grandfather Dr. Julius Kuhl, z"l

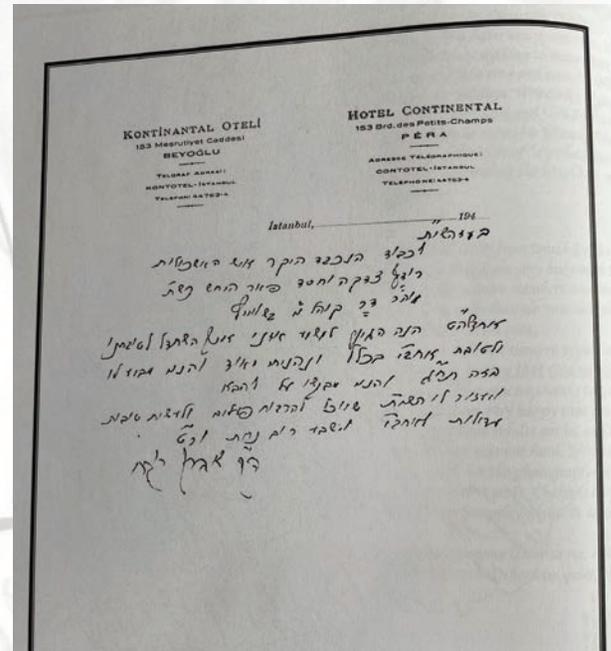
I often sit and read through the letters you wrote to your children, my grandparents, and as your *yahrzeit* is fast approaching I want to take a moment to share the pride I feel for what you did for the nation of Israel. Being a direct descendant of yours, and the namesake of your beloved wife, Yvonne Kuhl, gives me such pride. Both you and Oma were amazing people who are exemplary role models not only for our family, but for all of Klal Yisroel.

As Jews living in today's world we have it pretty good--we have our Jewish schools, *shuls*, and communities. We can run across the street to the local kosher store, we debate about which *seforim* to purchase at our Judaica shops, we can walk a couple of blocks to enjoy a *Shabbos* meal at our friends, or go out to a kosher restaurant to celebrate a religious milestone. We can sit in a *Sukkah* in our backyard, light a *menorah* facing the street, and hang a *mezuzah* on our front door. And while, yes, recent events have triggered concern, forcing us to be more aware of our surroundings, we are still tremendously privileged to have the freedom to practice Judaism openly in America.

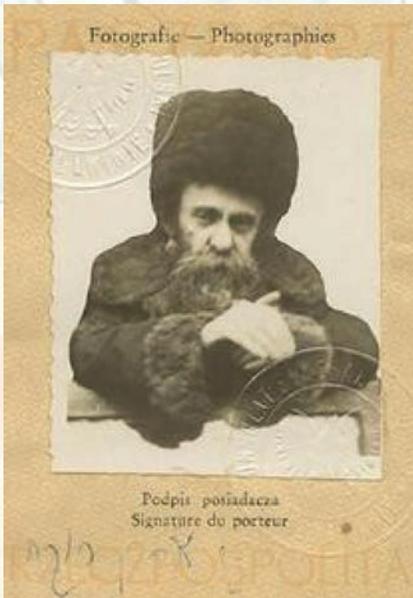
Throughout Jewish history, Jews have endured severe oppression; the Spanish Inquisition, pogroms under czarist Russia, and, most recently, the unspeakable Holocaust.

The Holocaust of World War II, a war in which European Jewry was targeted for the cruelest forms of torture and destruction under the ruthless direction of Hitler and the Nazis *yemach shemam*. Six million Jews. Gone, gassed, murdered. While many can, understandably, only focus on the suffering endured during the Holocaust, we must also recognize the heroes who emerged during these dark times. Proudly, I carry the legacy of my great grandfather Julius Kuhl, who was a hero of the Holocaust. He saved thousands of Jews, risking his own life. "Whoever saves one life [...] saves an entire world" (*Sanhedrin* 4:5).

In 1940, Dr. Julius Kuhl was appointed by the Polish legation to be deputy head in charge of helping Polish refugees. Without raising concern, Opa was able to successfully fulfill this job, and save Jews secretly through the creation of a passport smuggling operation. He did this by ordering thousands of blank passports from neutral countries during WWII, which he then filled out with the information of the Jews he was planning on saving, and sent to them. These passports not only allowed Jews to



Letter written by the Belzer Rebbe thanking Dr. Julius Kuhl for saving him



*Passport of the Belzer Rebbe*

escape from various European countries and survive, but additionally, prevented them from being sent to ghettos because passports from neutral countries exempted them from subjection to the punishments endured by the Jews without these passports. These neutral passports were funded mainly by American Jews who sent money to purchase them so that they could bring relief to their suffering family members who were struggling to survive under the tyranny of the Nazi regime.

A well known example of an individual whom Opa saved was the *Belzer Rebbe*, Rav Ahron Rokeach, *zt"l*, who was able to use the passport to escape to Israel where he rebuilt his *chassidic* dynasty.

Through the use of Opa's diplomatic pouch, which was not subject to customs inspection, Opa partnered with the Sternbuch network and worked closely with Polish ambassadors, in some cases losing weekly chess games so the ambassador would look favorably upon Jews, and allow more Polish passports to be issued.

To this day, families approach my great aunts Evelyn Singer and Janine Weinstock and my grandfather, George Kuhl, expressing appreciation towards my great grandfather Julius for his brave acts which saved their families' lives, and allowed for so many future generations of *Am Yisrael* to be born.

So now, when you do walk across the street to your local store, or light a *menorah* facing the street or walk over to your friends on *Shabbos* afternoon, stop and think about how you can help your fellow brothers and sisters. If during the most brutal years of the Holocaust survivors became heroes by fighting for each other, how much more so should we support each other today living freely as practicing Jews!

☺ Yvee Rosenthal



## *My Great Grandfather Stephen Klein, z"l*

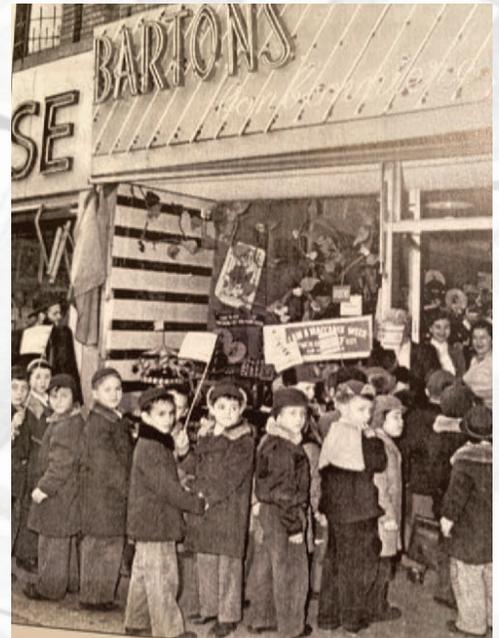
My great-grandfather, Stephen Klein z"l, was a hero during the years of the Holocaust. He saved thousands of Jews from Eastern Europe and was very involved in rebuilding Jewish communities after the War, both in the United States and in Israel.

Stephen Klein was born in 1907, in Krakow, Poland, to Reb Simcha Klein and his wife, Yachet z"l. In 1918, the family moved to Vienna, Austria, where the *Chofetz Chaim* visited in 1923. My great grandfather went to the *Chofetz Chaim* and received the following *brachah*, "may you be successful in all your endeavors and sanctify the name of Hashem." My great-grand-

father truly lived his life by these words.

In 1938, my great-grandfather realized that staying in Vienna would be too dangerous for his family. He traveled to Belgium to arrange visas for his wife and children to go to New York. He successfully rescued them, as well as his five brothers and two sisters. Unfortunately, he was unable to save his and his wife's parents and their extended families who were killed at the hands of the Nazis.

Living in Crown Heights, he decided to open a chocolate shop called Barton's Bonbonniere, modeled after the Viennese and Swiss chocolatiers. After working out of his home kitchen, he expanded his business not only for the Jewish community but to all New Yorkers. He soon found a partner by the name of Herbert Tenzer, who shared his vision. They expanded Barton's until they owned 35 stores all over New York, each and every one of which was closed on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. A chain of *shomer Shabbos* stores was unprecedented at that time in America. It enabled hundreds of Jews, many of whom were Holocaust refugees, to work for a *shomer Shabbos* company. Moreover, every box of chocolate contained an informational publication about *Shabbos* or an upcoming *Yom Tov*, which provided, in essence, a bit of Torah education to Jews in America who would never otherwise have been exposed to the Jewish religion. To this day, people still come over to my family and tell us how my great-grandfather and Barton's enabled them and/or inspired them to keep *Shabbos*.



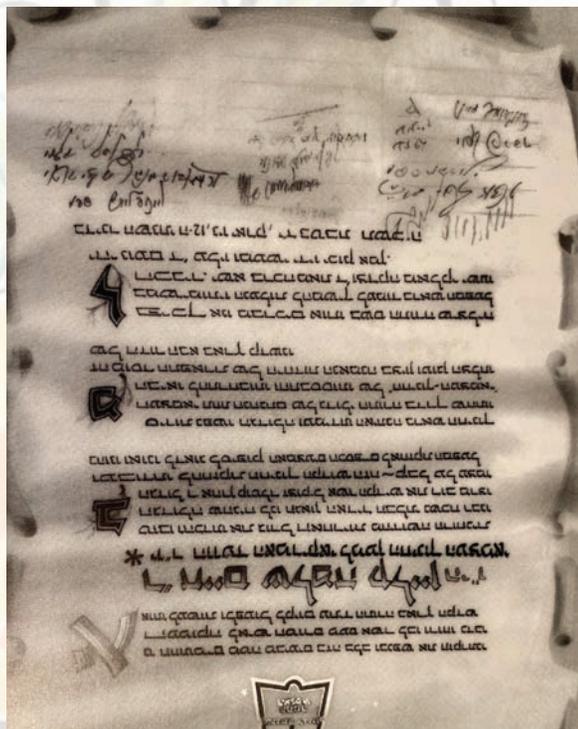
*Giving our Simchas Torah flags  
in front of Barton's store*



*Regina Klein, namesake  
of Reggie Klein*

My great-grandfather soon became a major leader of the *Va'ad Hatzolah* during and after the second World War. The *Va'ad Hatzolah* was an organization whose goal it was to save the Torah leaders and students of Eastern Europe. During the war, my great-grandfather helped host fundraising events, and also sent thousands of packages (which included Barton's chocolate) to European Jews. After the war, the *Va'ad Hatzola* was expanded to help survivors of the concentration camps, and the children who were in orphanages or living with non-Jewish families.

In 1946, Stephen Klein personally volunteered to go to Europe as an of-



Scroll signed by gedolei hador



Stephen Klein as an UNRAA caption with orphaned children in Europe

ficer to the UNRRA (United Nations Refugee and Rescue Authority). In those six months, he worked in DP camps, opened *yeshivos*, arranged visas, and supplied affidavits for thousands of Jews to be able to enter America. Usually, the refugees would have to wait months for rescue organizations to arrange for visas and affidavits, but my great-grandfather personally signed their papers, thereby enabling them to come to America faster.

When he returned to the States, my great-grandfather spoke publicly about the horrors he had witnessed and the urgency of helping the survivors. One of the major challenges was how to arrange for orphaned children to find new homes, since their immediate families had perished in the Holocaust. To aid in this effort, my great-grandfather founded an independent organization called Rescue Children Inc., which arranged for adoptions in America, and for orphanages and religious schools to service them in the DP camps.

My great-grandfather was also very involved with Jewish education. In 1948, Stephen Klein founded the Central Yeshiva High School for girls, which offered girls a Torah and secular education. He was also the founder of the Lakewood Yeshiva and was very close to the *Rosh HaYeshiva*, Rav Ahron Kotler, z"l. In 1951, Rav Ahron Kotler walked into my great-grandfather's office and said: "I have to inform you that you are now the chairman of the board of *Chinuch Atzma'i*." After the State of Israel was established, religious Jewish education became an imperative which was ultimately addressed by the organization known as *Chinuch Atzma'i*. The *Chinuch Atzma'i* educational network offered a religious Jewish education to over 70,000 children. In 1965, my great-grandfather received a historical parchment scroll honoring all of his achievements on behalf of *Chinuch Atzma'i* and its thousands of children. It was signed by over 15 *Gedolei Ha'dor* in America and in Israel, including *Roshei Yeshivos* and *Chassidic Rebbeim*.

My great-grandfather accomplished so much in his life. He rescued thousands of Jews, opened a *shomer Shabbos* business, and was very involved in the community. I am so inspired by him, and learned that one can do so much in one's lifetime to help others in need.

Reggie Klein

# קימו וקבלו

There are two *ma'amarei Chazal* that expound upon the words "*kiymu vkiblu*" in *Megillas Esther* in two entirely different ways.

The first, recorded in *Shabbos 88a*, states that *B'nei Yisrael* did not willingly accept the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. Rather, "*Kaffah aleihem har kigigis*," Hashem held the mountain over them like a cover and warned that if they would not accept the *Torah*, "*sham tihei kevuraschem*," they would be buried there. In other words, at *Har Sinai*, *B'nei Yisrael* were essentially frightened into receiving the *Torah*. Years later, however, during the times of Mordechai and Esther, *B'nei Yisrael* embraced the *Torah* out of love. *K'dichsiv, kiymu v'kiblu, kiymu mah shekiblu kvar*; they validated what they had previously accepted. Thus, at this point, they accepted the *Torah* out of love.

The other statement of *Chazal* can be found in *Megillah 7a*, where the *gemara* records the proofs offered by various *Tanaim* to show that *Megillas Esther* was written with *ruach hakodesh*. Shmuel, an *amora*, says that "had I been there with these *tanaim*, I would have given them a proof that can't be contradicted, which is, *shenemar*, that it says, *kiymu v'kiblu*, they accepted in *shamayim* what had been validated *ba'aretz*. Clearly, this could only have been said with *ruach hakodesh*; how else could we have known what was accepted in *shamayim*?

Rav Druk *shlita* brings up the question presented by *Tosafos*: how could Shmuel in *Megillah* be so certain that his proof from *kiymu v'kiblu* could not be refuted, when we know that there is a different *ma'amar Chazal* in *Shabbos* on the same *pasuk* with a different *pshat*?

Rav Druk explains that the difference between these two *chazals* can be inferred from the words "*dichsiv*" and "*sheneemar*." The *pasuk* of *kiymu v'kiblu* has a *kri* and a *ksiv*. The *ksiv* is *kibel*, in singular form, and the *kri* is *kiblu*, in plural form. Therefore, the 2 *peshatim*, in *Shabbos* and *Megillah*, do not contradict each other; they are two separate *drashos*- one *drasha* on the *kri* and one on the *ksiv*.

The words of *Chazal* in *Megillah* are expounding on the *Kri*. Therefore, the wording of *she'ne'emar* (as it says) is used: "*she'ne'emar, kiymu vkiblu - kiymu lemaalah ma shekiblu lematah*."

In contrast, in *Gemarah Shabbos*, the focus is on the *ksiv-kibel*. We are told that "*Moshe kibel Torah mi'Sinai*." However, at that point, only Moshe had been *mekabel* the *Torah* with *ratzon*, while *B'nei Yisrael* had only been *mekabel* the *Torah* out of fear. In Shushan, however, *B'nei Yisrael* were *mikabel* the *Torah* out of love also, just as *Moshe Rabbeinu* had so many years before. According to the *ksiv*, we can read *Chazal's* words as *kiymu mah shekibel kvar*, that they accepted out of love that which he (*Moshe Rabbeinu*) had already lovingly accepted.

I, and many other girls, were *zochos* to attend the *Siyum Hashas*, which really captured what it means to be *mikabel* *Torah* out of pure *ahavah*. 90,000 Jews all gathered and danced in celebration of the *Torah*. Every day we say *va'ya'aminu Ba'shem uv'Moshe avdo*. Just as Moshe was *mekabel* *Torah mi'ahavah*, so too, it felt as if all those present at the *siyum* were *mekabel* *Torah* out of love. The *Siyum Hashas* has been an inspiration for more *Torah* study and spiritual growth for so many people.

🕊️ Tova Schwartz



❧ הדרן עלך תלמוד בבלי והדרן עלן ❧

*Mazel Tov to the fathers of*

- Chani Shulman
- Ahuva Mermelstein
- Elana Spearman
- Noa Klein
- Chava and Freida Bamberger
- Ayelet Reichman
- Emma Cohen
- Michal Englander
- Ita Schechter
- Adi Hacker
- Tehilla Spira
- Michal Englander
- Faigy Eisen

*On completing all of Talmud Bavli at this year's Siyum Hashas.*

**אשריכם תלמידי חכמים שדברי תורה חביבין עליכם!**



*"Don't let the perfect  
be the enemy  
of the good"*

*Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

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At the *Siyum Hashas*, I was fortunate to hear the wise words of Rabbi Yissocher Frand. He said, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." I think that this advice is so applicable to high school girls as we are always striving for perfection academically, socially, religiously, etc. From personal experience (and I think I speak for many,) when I work for something and don't see the outcome that I had hoped for, I get easily discouraged and sometimes even slack off in that area. If perfection can't be achieved, why bother at all? As Rabbi Frand put it, it is so important to see past perfection and just try for good. Reflecting back on the times I worked for something and the outcome was disappointing, I can say with confidence that although the results were not to my liking, I gained so much from the experience. It is so important to persevere even when we know perfection is unlikely, because many times the experience is more important than the outcome.

☛ *Sara Lamstein*

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On January 1, 2020, over 90,000 Jews gathered in MetLife Stadium for the 13th *Siyum HaShas*. Every seven years another *Siyum HaShas* takes place, inspiring many Jews to start learning *Talmud*, with the goal of being active participants in the next such a momentous occasion. Despite all the recent tragedies that had been sustained by the Jewish people just a few weeks before, people did not hold back from joining in a truly once-in-a-lifetime occasion. If anything, the sobering events of the preceding weeks were precisely what propelled 90,000 Jews to gather under one roof, and celebrate. Torah is the source of light for the Jewish nation; it kept them alive during the Holocaust, even when they did not eat for weeks. *Shas* not only guides us through everyday life, it inspires so many to follow in the footsteps of giants. Rabbi Ahron Feldman addressed the Jewish people at the *Siyum HaShas*, and when he said that Torah is the blueprint of life, I truly felt full of *kedushah* and inspired.

☛ *Ariella Bennett*



*"Shas is the blueprint  
of Jewish life," he  
said. "This gathering...  
is a recognition  
of what Torah means  
to the Jewish People."*

*Rav Ahron Feldman*

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“ימים טובים” warmly resonates with us, as we associate it with family time and happy unity. Whether it be as we conduct our *Pesach sederim*, light the *Chanukah* candles, or dance on *Simchas Torah*, the common denominator is undisturbed and undistracted שמחה and אחדות. Everyone’s there for the same reason and celebrating one collective heritage. The *Siyum HaShas* was unlike anything I’ve ever experienced before. This was family unity but to a whole new level. When you get to that top step as you enter and you are able see nearly the entire expanse of the stadium, you’re taken aback. You have a panoramic view, before your own eyes, of thousands of people. About a second later you process that these are all Jews, and for me, it became one of the most meaningful moments I’ve ever had. Fast forward to the dancing and try to envision this: live Jewish music blasting, you look down from thousands of feet above, and what do you see? An entire stadium of Jewish people. Some are dancing, some are jumping, and many are singing! Together! It is irrelevant whether or not they know the people with whom they are dancing. It is irrelevant whether their hands are locked with elderly holocaust survivors or young little boys. From thousands of feet high, you just see one nation בשמחה and באחדות. A microcosm of *Matan Torah*? It definitely felt that way. And perhaps that is what the Novominsker Rebbe meant. On ‘ט טבת תשפ”א, January 1, 2020, I was fortunate enough to experience “a great Yom Tov for Klal Yisroel.”



“This is a great  
Yom Tov for  
Klal Yisroel”

*The Novominsker Rebbe*

☞ Mindy Weiss



“A journey of a thousand miles  
begins with just one step”

Popular aphorism  
quoted by  
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

This thought is perhaps the most comforting one can read before embarking on a long journey- it is *chizuk*, a reminder that nothing happens all at once. The most poignant example of this truth is the seven-year *Shas* program. The journey of *Shas* is 2,711 pages. Each footstep is one page, and over time, footstep by footstep, learning one page a day, over 90,000 men around the world are able to complete this journey. Our journeys may not be as drastic or daunting as completing the entire *Shas* but are, nonetheless, best taken one step at a time. In a journey of physical miles, the destination gets closer with each step. In a journey to a life full of *mitzvos*, the journey begins with one extra *mitzvah* each day. May we, *b’ezras Hashem*, be able to complete our journeys and succeed at each step we take.

☞ Musia Kirschenbaum

## Inspiring Fathers

Recently, I had the privilege of sitting in on my dad's personal *siyum hashas*. Even though he is a busy lawyer, he always manages to find time for his daily *daf*, whether that be on the NJ Transit bus, on the NYC subway, or in our living room, late at night.

My great-grandfather, Rav Moshe Yitzchok Shulman, once shared with my grandfather that many see a *matmid* as someone who learns Torah all the time, but this is not the case: *matmid* (from which the word *matmid* is derived) means "regular," not "always." According to my great-grandfather, a *matmid* is someone who reserves a set time every day to learn Torah. He then noted that his good friend, Rav Kaminetsky, exemplified this interpretation. When my great-grandfather was hospitalized at Israel Zion (later Maimonides Hospital) for a minor illness, Rav Yaakov was simultaneously admitted for a serious operation. In order to communicate with each other, they had my grandfather carry messages from one to the other. When my grandfather was sent to check on Rav Kaminetsky's condition after the operation, he was surprised to see Rav Kaminetsky wheeled out of the operating room three hours late. When my grandfather asked why there had been a delay, the doctor answered: "The rabbi prevailed upon me to postpone the operation, and I was able to accommodate him because the later slot was open. The rabbi had not yet finished his quota of study for today, and wanted to do so before the operation." My grandfather reflected that this is a *matmid*: one who doesn't deviate from his designated Torah study time.

When I first heard this story, I immediately thought of my father. No matter the day, he sets aside time to learn, embodying his grandfather's description of a *matmid*. I am so proud of his many accomplishments in learning and look forward to sharing many future achievements with him as well.

☞ Chani Shulman

After my father went to the first *siyum hashas* celebration at MetLife stadium, which was the largest *siyum* up until that point, he was very inspired to learn the daily *daf yomi* and complete it at the end of the next seven and a half years. His style of learning, however, is to have greater clarity and a deeper understanding than is possible when he has a very limited time frame in which to finish the daily. In addition, he is a perfectionist, and when he would miss a day it was hard to catch up, and he was beginning to fall behind. As a result, the daily *daf yomi* learning was discontinued.

This year, after not attending the *siyum*, but watching bits and pieces of it online, my father decided to try again. After starting the *daf yomi* on a Sunday, and coming home after the *shiur*, he was still unsure about whether or not to add this to his daily learning schedule. Then he happened upon an advertisement for the eight minute *daf*, by R' Eli Stefansky (a shortened review that is sent out on Whatsapp daily, of that day's *daf*). This led him to the full 45 minute *shiur* given by R' Stefansky. Which ultimately gave him inspiration to try and complete the *daf yomi* throughout the next seven and a half years.

Each morning my father attends a 45-minute *shiur* in shul. Throughout his day he tries to squeeze in Rabbi Stefansky's 45-minute *shiur*, as well. He starts, pauses and then continues, scheduling it around his work schedule. He does this in the car, office, plane or simply just sitting around. Then, at night, he solidifies what he has learned that day by watching the shortened eight-minute version.

42 days down only 2,694 days to go!

☞ Daniella Zlotnick

# H A S H A S

I am so lucky to be the daughter of someone who is so dedicated to learning Torah. My father, Rabbi Zev Reichman, spent 7 and a half years learning and teaching a *Daf* of *Gemara* every day. When I sat at the *Siyum Hashas* with what seemed like every other Jewish person, I didn't just feel as if I was *watching* something incredible, but understood that I was *part* of it, celebrating something my father has been doing for years with so much happiness and excitement. My father is always determined to learn the *Daf* even if that means learning it on an airplane, late at night, in the car, or even right after a long fast. What inspires me the most is that my father doesn't mind if it's raining (pouring), snowing, or even if he slept only three hours the night before; every morning at 5:30 he is out the door ready to go teach the *Daf* with the biggest smile. For me personally, mornings are not the easiest, but when I think of my father jumping out of bed to go learn, it really is an inspiration and an example to try and follow. My father is continuing the *Daf* for the second time around, and *b'ezras Hashem* will be able to accomplish many more cycles!

🌸 Ayelet Reichman

As a daughter of a father who completed the *daf yomi* for the second time, there are numerous lessons I've learned. Every day no matter what event is going on, my father always makes time to learn the *daf*, and frequently attends a *shiur*, too, which adds others' views and opinions to the discussion. Despite my father's busy day and the various other *shiurim* he attends, my father unwaveringly studies the *daf* every day. Furthermore, my father will even plan ahead if he knows he has an event and make sure to learn extra the day before. This has instilled within me the sense of when to plan ahead, and that if you set your mind to a goal, step-by-step it can be accomplished. My family has been taught the lesson of always setting aside and making time for *Torah*. No matter where life goes, the lessons of persistence, dedication, and diligence will never be forgotten and can always be applied.

🌸 Ahuva Mermelstein

After seven years of anticipation,  
We gather to celebrate a momentous occasion.  
Jews from all backgrounds assemble in one place,  
To learn, sing, unify and embrace.  
By opening their Gemaras, often at dawn, men arise,  
And with one *Daf* a day they show us how to prioritize.  
Numerous children, including my very own brothers,  
Learn *Mishnayos* to the credit of their mothers and fathers.  
Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky recited the *hadran* on a DP camp edition,  
It shows the importance one has for the Torah and tradition.  
In this stadium, 95,000 are met with the true life,  
Of the Torah which transcends centuries of strife.

🌸 Adielle Rosenblum

# Reflections on the Siyum Hashas in MetLife

I was so fortunate to be able to attend the *Siyum Hashas* this year. Something I noticed, even before I entered the stadium, was that as I was driving, I looked to my left and right, and there was a Jew in each car. This never really happens in America and I thought that it was so special that we were all going to the same place for such a special event. A highlight of the actual *siyum* that I will remember for the rest of my life was the *Kaddish*. Saying *Amen Yehei Shmei Rabbah* with 90,000 other Jews made me feel so proud to be a part of the *Am Hanivchar*. Also, I felt that there were so many *Kiddush Hashem* moments at the *siyum*. I watched as each person walking through security said 'thank you,' and I don't think that this always happens. I think that the workers saw how special *Am Yisrael* is. My other favorite part of the *siyum* was the dancing. It was so festive and displayed a real *simchah* for Torah learning. All in all, this experience is one that deeply inspired me and will stay with me forever.

☺ Tova Schwartz

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When one strikes a match, a small flame emerges. That tiny flame alone is capable of making so much darkness vanish and providing warmth to those around it. However, if you add another flame to that fire, the fire becomes even larger, providing even more light and warmth. The more flames added to the fire, the more light and warmth the fire is capable of giving off, and the more intense the fire becomes.

The same is true of *tefillah*. The *tefillos* of one individual are very powerful. However, when another person's *tefillos* join with his or hers, the resulting *tefillah* is even more powerful. This is the value of *davening* with a *minyan*; it strengthens one's *tefillos* and they go up to the *kisei hakavod* along with everyone else's, in a huge, magnificent "bonfire." The *tefillos* said by 90,000 Jews at the *Siyum HaShas* went straight up to the *kisei hakavod* in an awesome "bonfire".

When one says "*Amein Yehei Shmei Raba...*", he/ she is saying that Hashem's name should be great and blessed from now until forever. The *Midrash* maintains that it would have been worthwhile for the world to have been created for just one person to say "*Amein Yehei Shmei Raba*" just one time. Just imagine how much *nachas* Hashem must have been *shepping* when 90,000 of His beloved children said this unbelievably powerful *passuk* in unison, like an enormous "bonfire"!

☺ Emma Cohen

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Being at the momentous *Siyum Hashas* was simply incredible. The 90,000 people who braved the cold to be there were a testament to the *chashivus haTorah* which is at the core of our people. It allowed me to feel the unity that the Jewish People experience through the Torah; how it brings us together and is our defining feature despite our differences. Many different stripes of Jews were at this *siyum*, yet they were all there to celebrate *limud haTorah*. As one of the speakers mentioned, אין אומתנו אומה אלא בתורתיה, our entire nationhood is contingent on the Torah.

One of the highlights of the *Siyum* was the *mincha* which 90,000 of us davened together, particularly the resounding *Amen Yehei Shmei Rabba* of each *kaddish*. Despite our differences and the huge size of the audience, we were all united in this *tefilla* and in our desire to sanctify the name of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It gave me a sense of being part of something much larger than myself.

I also enjoyed the many speakers. In particular, Rabbi Frand's speech, in which he cautioned us not to "let the perfect be the enemy of the good," resonated with me. We shouldn't be daunted by the difficulty of achieving perfection in our goals, because then we're scared to even try. Rather, we should go one step (or one *daf*) at a time, because even if we don't reach perfection, we will at least have achieved something. This idea is applicable not only in *Daf Yomi*, but in all areas in which we hope to grow in learning or self-improvement.

It was also a great plus that I got to spend the day with my fellow MHSers! Thank you for enabling me to attend this amazing event.

☺ Sara Nordlicht



# Reflections from Pinsk



When I first signed up for the Pinsk trip I wanted to go because I thought it would be a fun and unique experience, however once I got there everything changed. Over the course of the trip there were many moments that really put me in perspective. The one that stands out the most is when the MHS girls set up a clothing drive for the children, where we arranged our old clothes for the kids to choose from. The pure happiness that the children got from receiving an oversized hoodie that was probably three years old really made me realize how fortunate I am. Sometimes when life becomes a cycle of the same routine every day we start to take things for granted, or at least I do, but going to Pinsk and meeting the sweetest and kindest children in the world whose faces would light up from a chocolate bar is a reminder not to take anything for granted. The clothing drive is just one of the inspiring encounters I had during my amazon trip. Another inspiring aspect of the trip is how giving these kids are. Almost all of these kids have close to nothing, however whatever these kids do have they share with each other. For example, there was a seven year old girl who really had nothing, but one time she got a chocolate bar from the canteen and when I visited her in her room I saw her handing out pieces of the bar to her roommates. She is just one of the tens of kids there who inspired me over the trip. When I signed up for Pinsk I really did not know what I was getting myself in for because the trip was way better than anything I could have hoped for.

🌸 Ilana Brunner



My memories of our trip to Pinsk are ones that I will cherish forever. Even the first morning, walking into breakfast, we could feel the *ahavas yisrael* in the room as our music blasted and everyone immediately warmed to our presence. We had never met these children before, and yet hugs were shared all around and we felt that our presence was really welcome. Our shared Jewish blood connected us in a way that really cannot be encapsulated in words, it can only be understood by experiencing that silent connection between girls in completely contrasting worlds. One lesson that I learned from these amazing girls in Beis Aharon in Pinsk was radiating from every smile in the place and was apparent in every hug. No matter how much the girls wanted for, no matter how much they lacked, food, clothes, family, they recognized that Hashem was providing for them whatever they needed to live and they went above and beyond in their gratitude to Him for what they do have. Sometimes in our lives in America where we want for nothing and our every need is met beyond our wildest imaginations we can forget that Hashem is the one who provides for us and that He deserves our thanks for everything that He has granted us. On *shabbos* in the Fima's home, Rabbi Fima said something that really struck all of us who were listening. He said, "the only reason why these girls are here now and you are where you are is because of which side of the iron curtain our grandparents were after the war." This reminded me that we have to remember that we are privileged because of Hashem's gifts to us and thus Hashem wants us to use these gifts to help others and to share with others. That is really what Pinsk taught us. It taught us to be giving people and to recognize that Hashem is in charge of the world and wants us to use our skills and privileges to help others. We saw this very lesson in action whenever we gave to the girls and saw their smiles light up their faces. It's something that we will never forget and will continue to inspire us even now back in our lives filled with *bracha* from Hashem.



🕊️ Alicia Russo

One aspect of my trip to Pinsk that I found truly inspiring is the devotion and *mesiras nefesh* of the few frum Jewish families living in Pinsk. Some of the families, specifically the Fhimas, have been living in Pinsk for many many years, creating and developing the Jewish community in Pinsk that would not exist without them. These families give up so much to be able to keep *yiddishkeit* alive in Pinsk and to nurture and educate Jewish children to understand and be proud of who they are. Not only do they provide a *chinuch* for these children, but they prepare them for a successful future and help marry them off. We spent just one week of giving in Pinsk, but this is the life of these families, children included. Throughout our trip, we spent time in the Bais Yaakov with the daughters of these incredible families. We brought activities and spirit to their small school, with very few girls in each class, and bonded with the girls. We learned from them what it means to sacrifice for another Jew because these girls are living a life of pure *mesiras nefesh*.

🕊️ Zahava Giloni

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