

# The Jewish Weekly

## 'Hashem Helped Me Survive'

By Mordechai Lightstone

When Bernard (Baruch) Haller enlisted in the United States Marines in 1941, he had two goals: to serve his country and to survive. To accomplish these goals, he knew that he'd need the help of a Higher Power. And so, Haller, known to friends as Bernie, vowed then and there never to eat non-kosher meat and never to miss a day of tefillah.

So important was this commitment that before Haller passed away on June 29, 2009, he chose the words to be inscribed on his tombstone: "I served in the U.S. Marine Corp. in WWII as a Staff Sgt. I managed to put on tefillah every day even during combat in the Pacific and refrained from eating meat the entire time. The Almighty helped me to survive."

The epitaph, complete with the Eagle, Globe and Anchor insignia of the U.S. Marine Corps, is one that has gone viral in recent years. Each year, usually around Memorial Day, photos of the moving inscription are tweeted and forwarded on WhatsApp countless times.

"In many ways, I don't know what my father would think about the attention," said his son, Leibe Haller, "He always tried to stay out of the public eye."

Yet in his father's story lies a powerful message of Jewish tenacity in the face of all obstacles.

Bernie Haller was born on March 10, 1919, in Manhattan's Lower East Side, one of second-generation immigrants Wolf and Yetta Haller's four children. Wolf, a tailor by profession, bucked the overwhelming tide of American assimilation and fought hard to keep Shabbat.

"The situation was such that if my grandfather had a job on Friday," Leibe Haller relates, "they'd fire him when they realized he wouldn't work over Shabbat, and he'd need to find a new job for the next week to come."

Money was tight for the Hallers, and as a result, young Bernie couldn't afford yeshiva tuition. Instead, Bernie used to head over to a local yeshiva after school and sit outside the window to catch whatever bits and pieces of the Torah lessons he could.

Despite the struggles, Bernie likewise remained committed to Judaism. When, in 1941, he enlisted in the Armed Forces along with 11 of his cousins, he took the Marine motto, *Semper fidelis*, Latin for "always faithful," to heart, both in regards to his country and to his Jewish faith.

Shortly before he was deployed, Haller married his sweetheart, Tziporah Malka

Fried. Haller shipped out to the Pacific Theater in 1942, fighting in the Battles of Saipan and Guam.

Later, he was stationed in the Philippines.

At one point, taking cover in a foxhole during the heat of battle, Haller counted 10 tracers flashing towards him. Tracers, used to assist in aiming, came on every tenth round of machine-gun fire, which meant that in total, some 100 rounds of fire had passed in the narrow space between his helmet and that of the Marine hunkered next to him.

Haller seldom spoke about his experience during the war, but his son recalls a time when, years later in the Bronx, his father awakened from a traumatic dream in the night and screamed for his rifle.

Haller's religious commitment in the Marines didn't come easy. When one cook found out that the Jewish staff sergeant was avoiding meat, he began adding lard to the vegetables he served out of spite. When Haller found out, he switched to eating only raw vegetables.

Harassment came in other ways as well. To avoid attracting undue attention from his fellow Marines, Haller would put on tefillah when no one else was around. Still, they taunted him with slurs, referring to him as "Benny the Heeb." One evening, a group held him down and began to ruffle his hair.

"What are you doing?" Haller asked in confusion. "We're looking for your horns," came the retort. "Jews hide them during the day, but they come out at night." But as time went by and they saw Haller's courage under fire, the harassment faded.

Haller remained ever committed to G-d, recognizing His works and assistance in the many ways he survived. Like the time his platoon was to be sent to Iwo Jima in the winter of 1945. On the eve of the difficult, bloody battle - nearly 7,000 Americans lost their lives on the island - Haller's entire platoon developed yellow eyes, a sure sign of yellow fever. Their commanding officer held the platoon back, only for it to later be discovered that the change in eye color was caused by something the platoon had eaten. Because of that, their lives were spared.

After the war, Haller returned to New York. He and Tziporah Malka settled first in the West Bronx, followed by the Pelham Parkway neighborhood and then Riverdale, all in the Bronx. The couple had three children (Leibe Haller attended Chabad-Lubavitch's Yeshivas Achei Temimim in the Bronx under the auspices of Rabbi Mordechai Altein) and Bernie worked hard to earn a living, first selling confectionery products and later detergent.

But each morning throughout his long life, he'd rise, put on his tallit and tefillah, and pray to the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — dedicated to the end to his family, his people, his country and to the Almighty, who sustained him through it all.

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

## It Once Happened...

### The Professor of Anipoli

By Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

One who knows the power of tefillah, will turn to Hashem in prayer whenever he faces any challenge. He won't place his faith in any patron or doctor. Rather, he will rely solely on Hashem and will ask Him for whatever he needs, as he will know that Hashem is merciful and compassionate and He helps all those who daven to Him.

Sefer Sipurei Tzadikim relates the story of a certain chasid who was very sick. He went to many doctors but they were unable to help him. Finally, he went to see Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz zy"ta to ask for his blessing. The Rebbe told him, "My advice to you is to go see the professor who lives in the city of Anipoli.

He will provide you with your cure." The sick man wasted no time in setting off on the journey to Anipoli. There were no trains yet at that time, so he hired a wagon to take him on the long trip. After many days, he reached Anipoli and asked around where he could find the professor. Whoever he asked looked at him strangely and said that no professor lived in their city. He then asked, "Perhaps there is a doctor here?"

Again, he was told that there was no doctor in the city and no medical expert. The man couldn't understand it. Why would the Rebbe of Neshchiz send him on a wild goose chase? He was very upset that he had wasted so much time. He went right back to Neshchiz and told the Rebbe that there was no professor or doctor in Anipoli.


The Rebbe asked him, "If that's true, what do the people there do when they get sick?"

The sick man replied, "What should they do? Since they have no other choice, they place their trust in Hashem to help them."

The Rebbe then said, "That is the professor of Anipoli that I was referring to. You must rely on the same professor that the residents of that city rely on when they get sick. You must put your trust in Hashem."

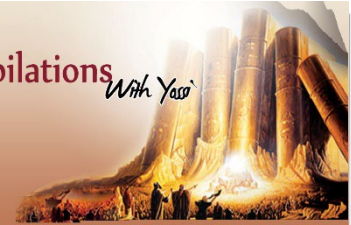
Immediately after the man left the Rebbe and began trusting in Hashem, he started to feel better, and he eventually was fully cured.

*Reprinted from an email of The Way of Emunah.*



**Shabbat Times - Parshat Va'eira**

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:31	5:46	6:24
Tel Aviv	4:45	5:47	6:21
Haifa	4:35	5:45	6:21
Be'er Sheva	4:49	5:49	6:25



## Hey Yo!

By Rabbi Chaim Mentz

What's a scooter cruisin,' cartoon scribblin,' joke crackin,' Southern drawlin,' Chasidic student making chicken soup with matzo balls in a crock pot doing on her parents' 300-acre farm in south-eastern Ohio's Appalachian country?

Yochana Coleman is a cliché buster. From an early age, she was pushing boundaries. Her mother remembers her as a serious child, asking questions one just didn't ask, of her parents, Sunday school teachers and ministers.

Yo's Jewish mother and non-Jewish father didn't hide Yo's Jewish origins, but mentioned it insultingly. Her parents raised her as a Southern Baptist, being missionaries themselves. She recalls "just knowing in her DNA" that something was not right. Throughout Yo's childhood of active church training, those feelings remained.

Yo enrolled in Columbia Bible College, among the top in the world. "The church taught that Judaism is totally false, and if you believe or follow it you'll burn in Hell." That fearful teaching kept her cognitive dissonance more or less at bay. Even with the Southern Baptist veneer, however, "growing up Jewish meant I was different. Inside I knew that something was expected of me, though I wasn't sure what."

Mentors helped Yo keep her Jewish spark alive. "Throughout my journey, people from whom you'd never expect it would appear and say, 'Go for it!' There was a woman in the church who heard my questioning - she encouraged me to challenge and never give up.

"I wanted to learn Hebrew since I was a kid. My gentile Hebrew teacher at the college had a PhD from Hebrew Union College. When he saw my passion for Hebrew he told me to check out a nearby Temple." I spent my first Rosh Hashana at a synagogue and it clicked! It was amazing! I decided that I had to continue going there, but the school forbade it."

Another surprising advocate appeared, a teacher named Ginny Hoyt, who nudged Yo into kosher. She had invited a group of students over for dinner and then apologized to Yo for having prepared ham.

"No problem,' I assured her, 'I was raised on the stuff.'

"She gave me a stern look, 'But you're Jewish!'

"So, I'm a pagan Jew!' I said in exasperation.

"She said, 'G-d made you a Jew and expects you to live like it!'

"I pointedly ate the ham, took a second piece - and my body swelled up! Mrs. Hoyt gave me a clear 'I told you so!' look and I was so swollen that I was on crutches for three weeks!

"I was learning to keep kosher and working along with Chosen People Ministry when they told me 'We don't want you back - you're a freak; if you keep kosher you'll offend some of our gentile members!'

"When the Bible College where I worked as a librarian realized that I was really pursuing Judaism, they issued an ultimatum. 'Be like us or get out - we're not going to have a Jew working here!' They gave me a paper to sign, but I barely heard them, concentrating on my inner conversation in which a voice was asking, 'Will you deny My Oneness?'

My reply to the College came from the depth of my soul. I shredded the paper and proudly stated, 'I was born a Jew, I live as a Jew, and I'll die a Jew!'

'Sorry to hear that,' was the official's reply.

I grinned, and with an 'I'm not!' walked out. Though broke, Yo felt a new freedom, and began pursuing Judaism in earnest. She tried several shuls (synagogues). One Friday evening she appeared at one in her kipa, leather jacket, jeans and sneakers. Yo was directed to the women's section of this Orthodox shul. "Hey, I'm in the wrong shul,' I gulped. But then they started singing Lecha Dodi to welcome Shabbos - it was like all the angels came down, everything stopped!" she recalls.

After some learning, Yo bumped into Chabad while web-surfing one day in '96. "I spent 12 non-stop hours on the site. I found it! I cried at the keyboard." From then, everything fell into place. She connected with Chabad of Columbia to learn all she could.

Yo's next stop was Chabad's Machon Chana Women's Institute. She pursued her Torah studies in this yeshiva for women from diverse backgrounds, and fit into the warm and dynamic community. She began "buying books like an idiot, as though I am about to move somewhere where I won't have much access," her journal relates.

Yo's premonition was accurate, as the future brought this feisty gal a major life challenge and bump on the road. In 2002, Yo suffered three strokes and her MS came out in full force. For a while she was able to stay in New York, with the support of many friends - "if you ever saw a cute red scooter blasting down the streets or sidewalks... that was me!" New York's "interesting sidewalks" became too much of a maneuverability problem as Yo's MS symptoms increased, and eventually she moved back to the family farm.

Thanks to the Internet and one indomitable spirit, Yo spreads her wacky version of sunshine and humor to fans around this little globe. Her website, Yobee's Whacky World, is full of interesting and inspiring tidbits of wisdom spiced with a laugh. She sells her whimsical cartoons and cartoon-illustrated items at yobeeland! And she dispenses words of cheer, fortitude and poignant insight to a web-network of Machon Chana alumni scattered throughout the world.

*Reprinted from an email of chabadofbelair.org.*



A miracle within a miracle.

That is how Rashi describes the seventh of the ten plagues in Egypt.

The plague of hail.

And how was that the case? The Torah tells us ' ואש ואש' - מתלקחת בתוך הברד - there were sparks of fire within each and every hailstone.'

So, what was the miracle?

Well, it is obvious. Fire melts ice, and water puts out fire, so there was that miracle within the miracle.

And this made a deep impression on Pharaoh, the King of Egypt.

He declared 'הטאתי הפעם - on this occasion I have sinned'. 'ה' הצדיק' - Hashem Is right'. 'ואני ועמי הרשעים' - and I and my people are evil'.

Sadly, after that, he did change his mind.

But Pharaoh was taken by this extraordinary phenomenon of fire and water co-existing successfully.

Emerging from this is an exceptionally powerful and timely message for us.

In the midst of a dark and tragic war, we currently have internal Jewish unity.

Let us guarantee that this will be preserved well beyond this war.

In addition, sometimes when it comes to the pursuit of peace, it seems simply unachievable for opponents, for different sides, for enemies to eventually achieve peace between each other.

And, yet the message of hailstones in Egypt is, that it is possible, for a miracle within a miracle to transpire.

Let us pray that ultimately that will be achieved, and we will enjoy peace with one and all, and let us join together to pray with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

*Yossi*

**ווארא**  
תורה

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**PARSHA FACTS**

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 121  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1748  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6701

HAFTORA:  
Yechezkel 28:25 - 29:21