

The Jewish Weekly

Another Purim 26 Days Before Purim

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

In the city of Saragossa, Spain, a large Jewish community lived peacefully and securely. The Jews were allowed to observe the commandments of the Torah and conduct their lives freely. The king was beloved and admired by all Jews and non-Jews alike - because of his kindness, and the Jews greatly honored him. How so?

Whenever the king appeared in the streets accompanied by his royal entourage, the leaders of the Jewish community would go out to greet him, carrying the beautiful and ornate Torah cases made of gold and decorated with precious gems, with silver bells on top. However, before doing so, they would remove the Torah scrolls from the cases and leave them in the synagogue's ark, as it was forbidden to carry Torah scrolls unnecessarily.

The king was unaware of this custom and was not supposed to know. He believed that the Jews were greeting him with their most precious and sacred possession - the holy Torah scrolls.

This royal reception could have continued successfully for many years had it not been for one of the king's ministers, a high - ranking official who despised the Jews and was deeply disturbed by the king's fondness for them. This wicked man, named Marcus, was constantly looking for ways to harm the Jews while also seeking to elevate his own status in the king's eyes.

At some point, Marcus discovered that the cases the Jews carried were empty, with the Torah scrolls left in the synagogue. Overjoyed by this revelation, he eagerly awaited an opportunity to expose the "deception" and take revenge on the Jews.

That opportunity arrived at a royal banquet. The king, sitting among his ministers and friends, praised the honor shown to him by the Jews.

"Whenever I appear in the streets, the Jews welcome me with great respect. Their leaders march at the front, carrying their sacred and beautiful Torah scrolls."

Before the king could finish speaking, Marcus rose and addressed him.

"Your Majesty, know that the Jews who come out to greet you are great deceivers! The cases they carry are empty! The actual Torah scrolls are left in the synagogue. They are mocking and deceiving you!"

The king was shocked and upset upon hearing this. Marcus seized the moment and suggested that the king personally inspect the cases the next time he paraded through the city. If they were indeed empty, he should order the execution of the "treacherous" Jews.

The king in his rage agreed, but being also suspicious, he added, "If your words are proven false, Marcus, you will suffer the fate you wished upon them."

Confident of his scheme's success, Marcus eagerly anticipated the upcoming royal procession, believing it would mark the downfall of the Jews and his own rise in the royal court.

That night, the synagogue's caretaker could not sleep. A heavy unease filled his heart. The next morning, the king would march through the city, and something felt terribly wrong. Finally, he drifted into an uneasy sleep, and in his dream, he saw an old man with a glowing white beard, whose face radiated Divine Light.

The old man spoke: "Dear caretaker, rise quickly! Do not waste time. Run to the synagogue and place the Torah scrolls back into their cases. Tell no one."

Before the caretaker could respond, the old man vanished.

Terrified and trembling, the caretaker sprang from his bed, completely convinced that the intense dream was real and that he must act. He washed his hands, dressed, and ran to the synagogue. With shaky hands, he replaced all the Torah scrolls into their cases, just as instructed. Only then did he finally feel at ease in his heart.

The next day, trumpets blared through the streets of Saragossa, announcing the king's arrival with his royal entourage. As always, the Jewish community gathered in large numbers to welcome him, with their leaders at the forefront, holding the ornate Torah cases.

As the leaders approached the royal carriage, the king halted the procession. Marcus, seated beside the king, smirked and declared, "Your Majesty would surely like to see what lies inside these cases the Jews carry in his honor."

"Certainly," replied the king. "Open the cases."

A great fear gripped the Jewish leaders, for the caretaker had revealed nothing to them, as he had been instructed. They knew that the scrolls were usually removed before the procession, and if the cases were found empty, the king's wrath could be catastrophic. With trembling hands and whispered prayers, they obeyed the order.

To their astonishment and immense relief, every case contained a Torah scroll.

The king immediately realized that Marcus had slandered the Jews. Burning with anger, he shouted, "How dare you falsely accuse my most loyal subjects, who truly honor me?"

Marcus turned pale.

"You wanted me to execute them," the king continued, "but it is you who will be punished instead, exactly as I warned you!"

The king ordered his soldiers to seize Marcus and execute him immediately. The royal command was swiftly carried out, and thus the treacherous Marcus met his end.

The king, now even more impressed by the Jews' devotion, praised them greatly and, as a gesture of gratitude, exempted them from paying taxes for three years.

That day, the Jewish quarter of Saragossa erupted in joy and celebration. Their hearts overflowed with gratitude to G-d for the great miracle that had saved them from certain death.

From that time on, the 17th and 18th of Shvat were observed by the Jews of Saragossa as their own "Purim," days of prayer and thanksgiving to G-d [and feasting!] for saving them from the "Haman" of their generation.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org

It Once Happened..

Flying to Miami on a Private Plane

By Rabbi David Ashear

During the Covid pandemic, Yissachar, a young man from Brooklyn, was given information about a potential shidduch in Miami. After the investigative process was completed, it was determined that they might very well be a great shidduch.

Yissachar was ready to fly south to meet the girl – but there was a hitch. "Oh, there's one thing you should know," said the rabbi from Miami with whom he was communicating. "You will not be allowed into any shul unless you first quarantine for two weeks in Miami."

Yissachar had recently lost his father and was careful never to miss saying Kaddish. "Please, I have antibodies," he pleaded, but the rabbi held firm. "Sorry. You're still not going to be allowed in."


It seemed they had hit a brick wall, as Yissachar refused to go to Florida unless he had a minyan. The rabbi joked, "Well, maybe if you come by private plane I'll let you into my shul."

Obviously, that would be impossible. Or would it? After he hung up the phone, Yissachar called an acquaintance. "By any chance, do you know of anyone with a private plane who might be going to Miami in the near future, who would allow me to fly with them?"

"You won't believe it," the acquaintance replied, "but I do know some people. I'll call them now and find out." He called back a few minutes later. "It just so happens that these people I know are flying on Sunday to Miami and returning on Thursday. When I told them you needed to say Kaddish, they happily agreed to offer you a seat on their plane."

Yissachar is singing the praises of Hashem. He needed the impossible, and within a few minutes, Hashem arranged it for him. And the shidduch was arranged as well, and concluded with an engagement!

Reprinted from an email of The Weekly Vort.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Vayakhel

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:16	6:29	7:09
Tel Aviv	5:31	6:31	7:06
Haifa	5:22	6:30	7:08
Be'er Sheva	5:33	6:31	7:09



The Death of Shraga's Two Horses

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Shraga was a simple wagon driver. He eked out a meager living by taking people from one town to another. When the weather was nice, his two horses were trotting along without mishap, and he had a customer, it was easy for him to be happy. If not, Shraga would look for something to be happy about.

But today he was miserable.

It all started about six months earlier, in the beginning of the winter. When he had set out that morning, the sky was clear and the cool autumn air was fresh and crisp; but when he was about an hour from home the temperature suddenly dropped, clouds blackened the sky, and in no time the pouring rain and freezing winds cut through his clothes and made it almost impossible to move.

He whipped the horses. He was freezing and drenched to the bone. It looked like it would rain forever, and the horses were barely making progress. In a few hours it would be night. Who knows if he would make it home alive?

Then, suddenly, through the wind and rain he noticed someone standing at the side of the road up to his ankles in mud, waving furiously and trying to shout through the howling wind. He stopped and yelled to the man to get in the wagon.

It was a Jew! What was he doing on the road in the middle of nowhere? They huddled together, and two hours later they had miraculously reached Shraga's home, put on dry clothes, and were sitting by the stove sipping hot soup.

The traveler turned out to be none other than the famous Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, the holy Sassover Rebbe. He too had set off in the morning to visit his elderly parents and got caught in the storm.

"Well," the Rebbe said, "now that you saved my life, I want to give you a blessing of riches and fame. What do you own? Do you have anything of value?"

"Riches? Blessing? Thank you, Rabbi! Wow! Thank you!! Err, anything of value? Not much," Shraga shrugged his shoulders. "Except for, maybe, my horses. I mean, no one would buy my wagon or my house or anything else. I guess the only things worth anything are my horses."

"Nu," answered the Rebbe matter-of-factly, "one will be for Purim and one for Passover. Now I must be gone. Thank you again and G-d bless you!"

He shook Shraga's hand and left, closing the door behind him and leaving poor Shraga more confused than happy. "Wonder what he meant by that?" he said to his wife.

A few months later, just before Purim, one of Shraga's horses suddenly died. Well, dead is dead, and the only

thing left to do was to sell the meat to the local gentile butcher and the hide to the tanner, leaving the wagon driver with enough money to celebrate the holiday in style and even to invite a few guests.

Then, a week before Passover, another tragedy struck - the second horse died as well! Again Shraga had no choice but to mournfully sell its carcass, which yielded enough money to prepare a Passover holiday fit for a king. Now he understood what the Rebbe meant "One for Purim and one for Passover." But he wished the Rebbe hadn't said it. The holidays were wonderful, but now he was left with no horses and no source of income. What would he do?

He asked around in the streets and in the synagogue if anyone knew how he could make a few kopeks to feed his family - with no luck. There was simply no work.

But Shraga did not lose hope. He talked it over with his wife and decided to take to the road. G-d would certainly help. One thing for sure, he would starve sitting at home. He packed his tallit and tefillin, a loaf of bread and a change of clothes, and set off early the next morning to wherever his feet would carry him.

A few days later he was in an inn resting his weary bones, when he heard two fellows sitting in the corner talking in loud tones.

"What are we going to do?" said one of them, slapping the table in frustration. "Every manager we bring, he fires. The man is insane! This makes the fifth manager in two months. Next thing we'll be out in the street. What are we going to do?" The other fellow just kept letting out moans and grunts, shrugging his shoulders and throwing up his hands in despair.

Shraga immediately stood up and walked over to them. "Excuse me. I just came in from the road and, well, I couldn't help overhearing what you were saying. What type of manager are you looking for?"

The two men looked at Shraga, then at one another in disbelief, and one of them answered.

"The poritz (noble landowner) needs a manager for his lands," the first man said. "We are two of his tenants," the other interrupted, and then the first one resumed: "He owns all the farmland in these parts, and for some reason, he assigned us the task of finding him a manager. Were you ever a manager...that is...could you do such a thing?"

Shraga agreed, they took him to meet the poritz, and for some reason, the cruel maniac took a liking to him and gave him the job immediately.

Shraga succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. He seemed to always be making the right decisions and saying the right things at the right time. And most importantly, the poritz loved him! The landowner kept on transferring to him more and more responsibility over his affairs, until our horseless wagon driver became a wealthy and influential benefactor, providing a livelihood for hundreds of families in the area and helping many of his needy brethren. Even the poritz became more charitable and easygoing.

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, www.ohrtmimim.org.



Parashat Vayakhel commences with an extraordinary statement 'ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל' - 'Moshe congregated the entire assembly of the children of Israel'. Now we have in the Torah two different terms which are used for a group of people; 'קהילה' which is a congregation, and 'עדה' which is an assembly, and here both terms are used in the same verse. We are told 'ויקהל משה את כל עדת' - 'Moshe congregated the whole assembly'. But why did he congregate the assembly and not assemble the congregation? What is the difference between these two terms?

You see, 'עדה' is a group of people who happen to be together in one place, at one time, for one purpose. It comes from the root 'עד' - a witness - indicating that they're there for a particular purpose; that they might never have come together before and they might not ever come together again.

The word 'קהילה' is something very different. It's a group of like-minded individuals who bond together out of a deep sense of commitment. They enjoy each other's company and they have a shared vision for life. When the Israelites left Egypt - we were an עדה, a loosely connected entity of families who happened to have been enslaved together. But once the Torah was given to us, the greatness of Moshe was 'ויקהל משה את כל עדת' - he congregated the assembly! Out of an עדה he created that wonderful קהילה. Thanks to Torah and Mitzvot, we could exist as a bonded and connected nation.

Then, in the very next verse, the Torah yet again gives us the mitzvah of Shabbat! 'ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה' - 'On six days you shall perform creative activity and on the seventh you shall rest'. Why is this mitzvah mentioned again? This is because the Torah wants us to know that Shabbat is crucial to the life and success of the קהילה. It is primarily through Shabbat that we can bond together and appreciate the shared vision we have for life.

Remarkably the power of Shabbat goes beyond the physical קהילה of a particular area. The Torah wants us to know that there is a global congregation. If I am alone in some remote area on Shabbat, and I am keeping Shabbat, I know that I am in touch, I feel a connection with my entire people and it's not only with those people around the world keeping Shabbat at that moment, it's all those in previous times and in future times who are engaging with Shabbat. This is why Shabbat is so crucial and so central to every Jewish community and also to every Jewish soul.

So let's enjoy Shabbat and let's 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

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 1
MITZVOT ASEH: 0
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 122
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1558
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6181

This year, (5785 / 2025) Parshat Vayakhel is a special Shabbat.

The Shabbat immediately following Purim is called Shabbat Parshat Parah. The Maftir, from Bamidbar, Parshat Chukat, (19:1-22), describes the preparation of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer), whose ashes were used in the spiritual purification process during the time of the Bait Hamikdash. This purification was carried out at this time of the year, to ensure that everyone would be able to partake in the Korban Pesach (Pascal Lamb) to be offered on the 14th day of Nisan.

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Yechezkel 36:16-38
Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel 36:16-36

ויקהל - פרה

This week is sponsored in memory of
מרת דבורה חנה ע"ה
בת הרב מנחם מענדל שליט"א
Who's Neshama returned
to it's Maker three years ago,
כ' אדר ב' תשפ"ב