



The Telegram That Saved a Life

By Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

On Yud-Beis (12th) Tammuz 5687 (1927), the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Yosef Yitzchak (HaRayatz) Schneersohn, was released from prison in Stalinist Russia. Ever since then, the date has been celebrated as a major holiday among Chabad-Lubavitch chasidim.

Rabbi Berel Baumgarten always cherished this occasion. He himself was very close to the Rebbe Rayatz, and in the 1940's completed many missions according to the Rebbe's directives.

In 1955 the son-in-law and successor of the Rebbe Rayatz, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, sent R. Baumgarten to be the first Chabad representative in Argentina. During his 23 years there, he often made the long journey to the USA specifically to spend 12-13 Tammuz at 770 [Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, Lubavitch World Headquarters]. The highlight always was being part of the packed congregation of thousands, participating in the Rebbe's special farbrengen for Yud-Beis Tammuz. In those years that he was unable to fly, he used the holiday as an opportunity to spread awareness of chasidism and the Rebbe to his fellow Jews in Argentina.

One year, however, he was forced to travel from Argentina to Brazil, and realized that on Yud-Beis Tammuz he would be in the middle of his trip. Disturbed at the prospect of spending this auspicious date far from anyone with whom he could share his feelings, he sent a telegram to the office at 770 before he left home, asking to be remembered by the Rebbe on that date.

While in Brazil, in order to reach his destination Rabbi Baumgarten had to cross the Iguacu River by ferry - a boat with an open deck covered by an awning, with several heavy-duty rafts tied together to carry cars and cargo. Together with several others, the rabbi followed instructions and drove his car onto the raft.

As soon as the cars were parked, he and the others left their vehicles and enjoyed the fresh air beneath the awning. He was happy to find that two of his fellow passengers were Jews. But his joy soon turned to consternation when he discovered that the two were totally alienated from their heritage, and had no desire to hear about Jewish practice or ideas. One of them brazenly flaunted a ham sandwich before him, making it clear how little Judaism meant to him.

Feeling that further conversation would be futile, and offended by their actions, Rabbi B. returned to his car and opened his books to study.

Suddenly, there was a powerful jolt - a banana boat had slammed into the raft! Huge beams that had been piled in a corner of the raft began tumbling down, pushing cars off the raft and into the Iguacu River. To his shock, his own car also began to move. He slammed his foot on the

brake, but was powerless to stop the car's forward motion. It too crashed into the waves and started to sink!

R. Berel Baumgarten was a big man, over six feet tall and more than 250 pounds. Yet, as large and strong as he was, he couldn't open the car door; the water pressure was simply too great. Suddenly the door opened - how? He never understood - and he found himself out of the car and in the water, slowly rising upward.

His troubles, however, were far from over. Yes, he had escaped the sinking vehicle, but R. Baumgarten had never learned to swim! Frantically kicking and flailing his arms for what seemed like hours, he was at the end of his strength when his head suddenly broke through to the surface.

Exhausted, he could only bob helplessly up and down; he couldn't figure out what was keeping him afloat, but there he was. Between waves, he could see the raft close by, but was powerless to move towards it.

To make matters even worse, he could hear a rumbling thunder in the distance, and realized with horror that the river's powerful current was beginning to pull him away from the raft, and towards a waterfall!

As the white water crashed over him and he was unsure if he would survive, he pictured the Rebbe's face before his eyes. Then he looked up towards shore and B"H, he saw a man there about to heave a life-preserver in his direction. It splashed into the river just within reach.

He grabbed the life-preserver and drew it close. He tried to put it over his upper body, but was unable to. He simply was too broad. Though his strength was giving out, he realized there was no alternative; he would have to hold on by hand.

After he had been hauled into the raft and was able to regain his composure, the two Jews whom he had met previously approached him, overcome with remorse. They acknowledged it was because of them that the rabbi had returned to his car. They apologized for their previous conduct. Not only that, the man who had flaunted the sandwich even promised to keep kosher from that time onward!

After Rabbi Baumgarten reached the far shore, he began to contemplate his situation. He had no explanation for the life-saving miracles that had occurred.

Days later, he was able to gain clarity. Someone told him that during that year's Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen, the Rebbe had turned to Berel's brother, Rabbi Mendel Baumgarten, and asked "Where is Berel?" He also instructed him to toast l'chaim.

When Reb Berel heard this, he sped to his brother to ask what time this occurred. Calculating the difference in time-zones, he realized that the Rebbe must have been reading the telegram at precisely the time that his car had been dislodged from the raft and he had been under water!

It Once Happened...

All these calculations, however, came later; at the moment, alive but stranded, he had more immediate concerns. His personal belongings had all been lost with the car, and he was far from any Jewish community. Where would he find a tallis and tefillin with which to pray?

In Brazil [and in all of the southern hemisphere], the Jewish month of Tammuz falls in the winter and the days are short. R. Baumgarten found that there was a small airport nearby, but no flights were scheduled until late afternoon; he would not be able to reach another city before sunset. He did not know what to do, being unable to conceive of letting the day pass without putting on tefillin.

He inquired about hiring a private plane. Although the cost was exorbitant, he was able to find a pilot who could fly him to another city before sunset. He sent a telegram to the leaders of the Jewish community there, asking them to meet him at the airport with tefillin.

There was a mix-up in communications, however, and no one greeted the desperate rabbi at the airport. With less than an hour left before nightfall, he grabbed a cab and told him to hurry to the nearest synagogue. Unfortunately, night fell before he could get there. Broken-hearted, he stopped the cab, sat down on a nearby park bench and cried.

At his next yechidus (private meeting), he asked the Rebbe how he could atone for not putting on tefillin that day. Before answering his question, the Rebbe looked up at him and asked: "Well, did I think about you? Yes or no?"

He then instructed Rabbi Baumgarten to study the laws of tefillin in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, and the discourses in chasidic thought that speak about the subjugation of heart and mind, the spiritual message associated with the mitzvah of tefillin.

Rabbi Baumgarten lamented that a pocket-sized Siddur and Tanya which he had been given by the Rebbe were now at the bottom of the Iguacu River. "Could the Rebbe please replace them?" he asked.

"Why? Is it my fault?" replied the Rebbe with a soft smile.

"And am I to blame?" replied Reb Berel.

To this the Rebbe smiled broadly, removed from a drawer in his desk a Siddur and a Tanya, and handed them to Rabbi Baumgarten.

Reprinted from an adaption by Rabbi Yechiel Tilles on "To Know and to Care".



YF GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Pinchas

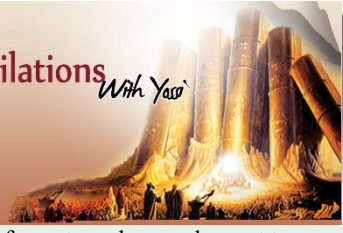
Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:09	8:25
Tel Aviv	7:24	8:28
Haifa	7:17	8:29
Be'er Sheva	7:25	8:26

9:01

8:59

9:02

9:00



The Business of Charity

By Shalom Ber Goldshmid

I was born in 1925 in Belarus to a Chabad family – in fact, my father had come from Yekaterinoslav, the town where the Rebbe's father served as rabbi and where the Rebbe lived as a boy.

When I say the Rebbe, I am speaking about Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the last Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. But during my youth, "the Rebbe" meant the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, who, in 1927, sent our family to Hebron, Israel, where my father went to work as a specialized kosher butcher in charge of deveining.

In August of 1929, the Previous Rebbe visited Jerusalem and, naturally, my father was thrilled to go there to greet him. After a meaningful audience, he asked the Rebbe to bless him that "m'zol zach vider zeh" – we should meet again" – and the Rebbe did as he asked.

Upon leaving, my father realized that he had left something behind, so he went back in to get it and, of course, saw the Rebbe again. Realizing this, he asked the Rebbe for a second time to bless him that they should meet again. But the Rebbe declined. Instead, he said, "we are seeing each other now." My father repeated his request a third time, but the Rebbe declined once more.

The Rebbe must have sensed that they would not see each other again. Indeed, my father returned to Hebron only to be murdered by the Arabs two days later. On August 24, 1929, which was Shabbat, they rampaged through the city, killing some 67 Jews, my father among them.

Thus, I was left fatherless at age four. My mother took me and my two sisters to Jerusalem, where I studied until the Lubavitcher yeshivah opened in Tel Aviv. From there, I transferred to the Lubavitcher yeshivah in New York. That was in 1947.

A year after I arrived, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who was the Previous Rebbe's son-in-law – who would later become the Rebbe – called me in and suggested that I take a class in kosher slaughter. At first, I was not interested, but then he said, "I knew your whole family in Yekaterinoslav, and they were all kosher butchers, so you have to learn this too."

I did as he instructed, and then he advised me to start a small business, of slaughtering chickens on Thursdays and delivering them to Jewish homes in time for Shabbat cooking. But the reason he told me to do this was most unusual – he said, "It will give you the opportunity to hear many words of Torah."

How would I hear these words of Torah? "When you deliver the chickens, the children will be home, and they will want to show off what they had learned in school."

Indeed, that is exactly what happened. Their simple insights were so inspirational to me that I started writing down what they said in a little notebook that I brought along. I would then report everything to the Rebbe.

From the time that he took over the leadership of Chabad in 1951, the Rebbe guided my every step – whether in my Torah learning, in developing my career, or in dating for marriage. I would update him every few days, and he always had a kind word and guidance to share with me. After one of these conversations, during which the Rebbe gave me invaluable advice in my search for a wife, I became so overwhelmed with gratitude to him that I burst out, "What did I do to merit the Rebbe's help?"

The Rebbe gave me a sharp look and responded, "A Rebbe or a father doesn't look for merits when it comes to his students or children; he does whatever has to be done for them. I did what I had to do."

I think the most important piece of advice that I received from him concerned ahavat Yisrael – how to love your fellow Jew.

On another occasion, he said to me, "The commandment of ahavat Yisrael – loving your fellow Jew – means that when a Jewish man or woman needs something, you try to give it. It doesn't matter if you know them or not; it doesn't matter who they are; you give them what they need. That's ahavat Yisrael."

This principle became paramount in my business – a butcher shop which I opened on Empire Boulevard in Crown Heights – because the Rebbe told me: "Everybody who comes in should come out with meat for Shabbat, whether they pay or they don't."

That was the Rebbe's decree, and I didn't ask any questions. I understood that if I lose money this way, I will get it back some other way. What was paramount to me was that the Rebbe said to do it like this, so that's the way it had to be done. And somehow it worked out well for everybody, just as the Rebbe promised.

Let me cite a couple of examples:

One day a young woman came into the shop, saying she had recently gotten married but her husband had no source of income. "What will we eat?" she wondered. I told her, "No problem. Whenever you come to me, you'll get what you need."

I had another customer – a woman with many children who was always buying a lot of meat. And then, all of a sudden, she started buying only chicken wings, the cheapest thing in the shop.

I called her and asked her what was going on. She told me that her husband had lost his job, and she had no money. "No problem," I said to her. "The Rebbe told me that ahavat Yisrael means I should give you whatever you need. When you have the money, you will pay."

And, in fact, many years later she sent me a check for what she owed.

But, long before she did, I knew that what the Rebbe said was absolutely right – it didn't cost me money if they didn't pay, because even if I didn't get it this way, I got it another way.

Reprinted from an email of chabad.org magazine.



What's the best way for us to make people want to come to Shul?

In Parshat Pinchas, the Torah reveals to us details of the major festivals and the term that is used for a festival is 'מקרא קודש'.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch translates this term as being a call to holiness, it's an invitation that Hashem extends to us, to engage with Him in a spiritual and meaningful way.

I'm sure that you're just like me, when an invitation arrives in the post, there is a sense of excitement.

You can see that the envelope suggests this must be an invitation, then you open it up and you reveal its content and indeed you are being invited to do something, to come along somewhere.

It is left up to you to send the RSVP and you're looking forward to the occasion, when you have decided that you want to take advantage of the opportunity, to benefit from that experience.

That is how the Torah presents our engagement with our Judaism.

It's not just the festivals, it's not just attending Shul on a weekly or daily basis, it's the performance of all our Torah and mitzvot, Hashem has sent us a personal invitation.

You know there was a time when people would do the right thing, out of a sense of loyalty, but today I think within our communities around the globe, most people will do the right thing because they've decided to of their own accord, not because they have been 'coerced', but because they find it appealing and it's their decision.

We are so blessed because we have the ultimate product, it is a system of life, it's a way of life authored by Hashem Himself, relevant to every single generation and all we need to do, is to answer that invitation in the affirmative – to pitch up, to engage.

And I promise you, it will give you phenomenal deep meaning and ongoing joy in life.

We're so lucky, because it's the best invitation you can ever get.

Let's send our RSVP now, by praying with all our hearts for all those who need a recovery from sickness, for the release of the hostages, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet, and happy Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 6
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 168
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1887
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7853

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3 Divrei Yirmiyahu (The three Haftorot of the three weeks preceding the Ninth of Av, are called the — שלש דפוענותא — the "Three (Haftorot) of Punishment").

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Menachem Av,
Rosh Chodesh - Shabbat, July 26, 2025.

This week, we study Chapter 1 of Pirkei Avot.

פנחס

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