

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

י"ט כסלו תשפ"ה

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### Suicides and Smiles

A man in his thirties once jumped off from the Golden Gate Bridge to commit suicide. They later found a note in his back home that read: "I'm going to walk to the bridge. If at least one person smiles at me on the way,<sup>1</sup> I will not jump."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand there is also a story of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who was once contemplating suicide during a particularly dark period. While he was lost in his despair, he was dissuaded from committing suicide by a smile from a total stranger.<sup>3</sup>

The first day Rebbetzin Jungreis arrived at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp,<sup>4</sup> her father turned to her and said, "Here you have a great mission." She replied "Here? I'm just a little girl? What can I do here?" Her father answered, "Here you can give a smile to someone."



Let us conclude with the following saying: "Let your smile change the world but don't let the world change your smile."

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### Moshiach and the Rope

<sup>1</sup> There is a saying, "Give what you want to receive." For example, if you want a smile then give a smile to others.

<sup>2</sup> It says (Avos 1:15) והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות, receive everyone with a cheerful face. The Meiri (Avos 1:15) says that even if you are not happy to see him, make it appear as if you are happy to see him to the extent that he thinks you are happy to see him. (According to this explanation, the word סבר goes on the recipient, that he should think you are happy to see him.)

<sup>3</sup> Someone once said, "Cheerfulness is contagious, but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier!"

<sup>4</sup> The Midrash (Tanchuma in Toldos) links the tears that Hashem "has made us drink in great measure" (Tehillim 80:6) to the three tears that Esav shed when he learned that Yaakov had stolen his brachos. R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz commented: Imagine, if Esav has been so compensated for three tears, how much more so will Hashem compensate us for all our suffering? The Holocaust only deepened his faith in that eventual compensation.

Many have said that we are currently living in the Chevlei Moshiach, pangs of Moshiach,<sup>5</sup> referring to the extremely difficult times preceding the era of Moshiach.

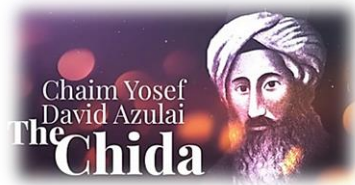
The following explanation has been said in the name of the Noam Elimelech. The term **חבל** (of **חבלי משיח**) can also mean a rope.<sup>6</sup> Prior to the arrival of Moshiach, Hashem will be holding a rope from on top and will be shaking the rope. Our job is to hold on tight. May we all merit to hold on until the coming of Moshiach!

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### [Telz Stone in the Torah](#)

Just outside Yerushalayim, the small town of Kiryat Yearim, known as Telz Stone, quietly resides. The pesukim inform us of the interesting fact that the Aron was kept in Kiryat Yearim for twenty years.<sup>7</sup>

Less known, however, is a fascinating story that unfolded in the year 1764 in the nearby village of Abu Ghosh. Recorded in the



detailed diary of the Chida, called Maagal Tov,<sup>8</sup> this incident occurred in the month of Shevat. As the Chida and his

companions were journeying from Yerushalayim to Egypt, they encountered a perilous situation near Telz Stone,<sup>9</sup> in Abu Ghosh,<sup>10</sup> when they were confronted by a notorious bandit leader along with his cohorts, 250 of them. The Chida writes that the group was facing immediate danger, and consequently, he had no choice but "to invoke a holy name for protection on the roads, and praise Hashem, they didn't come within four amos."<sup>11</sup>

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### [Partial Picture](#)

In the command not to covet it says **לא תאָ** **לרעדן**, תחמד בית רעדן...וכל אשר לרעדן, do not covet your friend's house, his wife, his servants, ox, donkey, nor anything that belongs to him.<sup>12</sup> The pasuk seems problematic as it details that which you shouldn't

be jealous of and then it concludes **וכל אשר לרעדן**, don't be jealous of anything that belongs to him. What are these last three words adding?

The Satmar Rebbe offers the following interpretation. People get jealous of others but they don't see the problems that person has in life. They just see that which they are jealous of. See the entire picture. This is what the words **וכל אשר לרעדן** are telling us. You want his nice house and nice car, but do you also want his health problems and the issues he has with his children?

In today's world, many times people see the pictures of their friends with their families (on social media or elsewhere) or their businesses. From the picture, all seems perfect, while you may be struggling with your children, marriage, business and the like. If you see such a picture ask yourself, "Is this the picture or is it a picture?" It has been said that on social media, they are just showing you what is going well and hiding what they don't want to tell. Realize that behind the perfect pictures that people post on social media are their financial struggles, problems with their children and their marital issues.



A sign once read, "The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes everyone else's highlight reel."

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written close to 2,000 articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of nine books including the recently released "Exhilarating Torah Insights on Recreation and Vacation." His writings, many of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, lectures, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance

<sup>5</sup> See Shabbos 118a, Rashi s.v. *chevlei*, Hoshea 13:13.

<sup>6</sup> As in Devarim 32:9.

<sup>7</sup> Shmuel 1, 7:1,2.

<sup>8</sup> In the course of his extensive travels the Chida diligently documented a wide range of observations, including noteworthy information, unfamiliar sights and encounters with diverse individuals. His Maagal Tov provides detailed accounts of customs of communities, shuls he visited, ancient sefarim he saw, educational methods he observed and his general observations about the people and societies he encountered. Maagal Tov includes the political situations and events that took place and it carefully assesses the social and economic forces in the regions he visited. He writes about commerce and wars and their influence on business and

culture. He also writes about schools, universities, libraries, hospitals, manners and mannerisms and discussions and debates he held with ministers of other religions.

<sup>9</sup> This has personal significance to me as I am writing these words while I am in a Beis Midrash in Telz Stone.

<sup>10</sup> The Abu Ghosh family controlled the region around the contemporary village of Abu Ghosh and collected tolls from travelers and pilgrims passing through the area, as it lay on the primary route to Yerushalayim.

<sup>11</sup> Maagal Tov, p. 47. The bandits did however inflict wounds on the agricultural workers with them but they reached a compromise by handing them 100 zlotas.

<sup>12</sup> Shemos 20:14.