

The Jewish Weekly

Coma

By Rabbi Chaim Mentz

After sustaining a severe heart attack in 1973, my grandmother sank into a deep coma and was placed on life support systems in the hospital. Her EEG was totally flat, indicating zero brain activity. She was hooked up both to a pacemaker that made her heart beat artificially and a respirator that made her lungs breathe artificially. But technically, as the doctors told me privately, she was basically as good as dead. "She'll never come out of the coma," they said, "and she's better off this way. If she did, her life would be meaningless. She'd exist in a purely vegetative state.

Even though she was in her mid-seventies and had lived a full life, I refused to believe that my beloved grandmother could simply slip away like this. She was too feisty, too vital to just disappear into a coma. My instincts told me to start talking to her and keep chatting away. I stayed at her bedside day and night, and that's precisely what I did. I spoke to her all the time about my husband and our two small children, about other relatives, about her own life. I told her all the news that was circulating in Australia at the time. Anything and everything was grist for the mill. I also kept urging her to keep clinging to life, not to give up. "Don't you dare leave us!" I exhorted. "I need you, Mom needs you, your grandchildren need you. They're just beginning to get to know you. It's too soon for you to go!"

It was hard for me to do battle for my grandmother's life, alone as I was. During the time that she fell ill, I was her only relative in Sydney. Her daughter (my mother) was away overseas on a trip, and my only sibling - a brother - lived in Israel. My husband was home caring for our children so that I could take my post at her bedside. I stood a solitary vigil, but that was not what placed such tremendous pressure on me. What was enormously difficult was being asked to make decisions alone. The emotional burden was huge.

When four days passed with no signs of life flickering in either my grandmother's eyes or her hands, and no change recorded by the EEG, the doctors advised me to authorize the papers that would turn off the life support systems. I trembled to think that I held the power of consigning my grandmother to an early grave. "But she's really already dead," the doctors argued. "She's just being kept artificially alive by the pacemaker and the respirator. Keeping her hooked up to these machines is just a waste."

"Well, listen," I said. "It's Thursday afternoon, and in the Jewish religion we bury people right away. My parents are overseas - practically two days away - and they would certainly want to be here for the funeral. But we don't do funerals on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The earliest we could do the funeral would be on Sunday. So let me call my parents to get ready to fly home, and I'll sign the papers on Sunday." It was all very cold and calculating, but deep inside, my heart was aching.

Meanwhile, I didn't let up. I kept talking up a storm, discussing weighty matters, babbling about the mundane. "Guess what, Grandma?" I gossiped. "You won't believe who ended up being your roommate here in the hospital! Stringfellow! Your next door neighbor at home, Mrs. Stringfellow, was just brought in with a serious condition. Isn't that a coincidence? She lives next door to you in Sydney and now she's your roommate here in the hospital!"

On Saturday, I was at my usual post at my grandmother's bedside, getting ready to start a round of tearful goodbyes, when I thought I noticed her eyes blinking. I called a nurse and told her what I had seen. "It's just your imagination, dearie," the nurse said compassionately. "Why don't you go downstairs for some coffee, and I'll stay with her until you come back?"

But when I returned, the nurse was brimming over with excitement herself. "You know," she said, "I think you may be right. I've been sitting here watching your grandmother, and I could swear I saw her blinking, too."

A few hours later, my grandmother's eyelids flew open. She stared at me and then craned her neck to look at the empty bed on the other side of the room. "Hey," she yelled, "what happened to Stringfellow?"

By the time my mother arrived at the hospital the next day, my grandmother was sitting up in bed, conversing cheerfully with the hospital staff, and looking perfectly normal. My mother glared at me, annoyed, sure I had exaggerated my grandmother's condition. "For this, I had to schlep all the way home?" she asked.

Later, my grandmother told me that while she was in the "coma" she had heard every single word that was said to her and about her. She repeated all the conversations to me, and her retention was remarkable.

"I kept shouting to you," she said, "but somehow you didn't hear me. I kept on trying to tell you, 'Don't bury me yet.'"

After she was discharged from the hospital, my grandmother's quality of life remained excellent. She lived on her own as a self-sufficient, independent, and high-spirited lady and continued to live in this manner until her death sixteen years after I almost pulled the plug.

Reprinted from an email of <https://www.chabadofbelair.org>.

It Once Happened..

This Boy Was Shocked to Discover What Was Inside His "Pillow"

By Rabbi Meir Kaplan



Blue holding his tallit bag.

Blue is a 12-year-old boy whose family recently moved here from Ottawa.

Growing up, Blue always had a small, nicely decorated cushion in his bedroom. Told it had belonged to his grandmother's grandfather, he kept it very close. Sometimes, he even kept it under his pillow.

A few weeks ago, when he came to our shul for the first time, he realized that the folded blanket inside the pillow was actually a tallit...

Amazed by the discovery, Blue brought it to his first bar mitzvah lesson. He can't wait to wear it soon at his own bar mitzvah celebration!

The original owner of the tallit immigrated from Russia in 1905; the tallit was passed to his grandmother from her mother, and now to Blue.

Many people have the custom for bar mitzvah boys to wear a tallit, and five generations later and 120 years later, it will once again be worn at a bar mitzvah - here in British Columbia.

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Mishpatim

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:55	6:09	6:49
Tel Aviv	5:10	6:10	6:46
Haifa	5:00	6:09	6:47
Be'er Sheva	5:13	6:11	6:49



The Miracle Worker's "Spiritual" Grandson

By Rabbi Shalom Ber Avtzon

One of the well-known stories about the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 1745-1812) is that once, when he was visiting the town of Homil, there was a fire that was being fueled by powerful winds and it was ravaging the houses and everything in its path; nothing was exempt from its fury. People were fearful that the entire town would burn, so the army dispatched soldiers with instructions to help the populace contain and extinguish the fire before it did any more damage. However, by the time they arrived it was burning out of control; there was nothing they could do.

One of the chassidim ran and informed the Alter Rebbe, who then went over to the fire and stared at it. The winds suddenly changed directions, now blowing towards the area that burned already, and the fire began extinguishing itself, until it died out completely.

The soldiers that were there couldn't believe their eyes. Either this person was a miracle worker, or a wizard. But, whatever it was, they were flabbergasted and returned to their base and excitedly told their general about it. Hearing this, the general asked that they go to the rabbi and ask him if he would be so kind to accept a visit from their general. He would like to meet the man whose eyes are stronger than legions of men and machinery. The Alter Rebbe replied in the affirmative and a time for the meeting was set.

When the general came and saw the Alter Rebbe, he asked in astonishment "Are you still alive?"

The Alter Rebbe replied, "You are mistaken, I am his spiritual grandson." Hearing this reply the general was satisfied and said, "Just as I thought," and their meeting concluded.

The Chassidim who overheard this exchange were mystified by the cryptic words of the question (and answer), so they asked the general to please explain.

He happily obliged and said, "Allow me to answer by relating a story I heard from my father."

"My father was a general in the Czar's army and was often away from home. However, my mother would always write to him. One time when my mother was pregnant, my father had to go to the town of Mezibuzh, which was quite a distant place from his city, for war maneuvers. Being that the country was then at war, they severely limited the delivery of any mail, and as the weeks and, indeed months, passed by without receiving any letter from her, he was becoming nervous and perhaps even distraught. He almost became paralyzed with fear."

"His men cared for him and informed him that there was a miracle worker in this town and perhaps the general should go visit him and ask him about his family. My father sent a message to the rabbi asking if either the rabbi can come to him or if he can come to the rabbi. The rabbi replied, 'If the general needs something, he will accept a visit from him.'"

"When he entered the rabbi's house, the rabbi gave my father a mirror and told him to look into it. My father was bewildered by this request, expecting to see his own reflection; however, he followed the instructions and looked into the mirror."

"How shocked he was when instead of seeing himself in this house, he saw himself leaving the town and then flying over forests and rivers, passing over the large city of Kiev and then arriving at his hometown of Homil. He then came to the outskirts of his large estate, entered the gardens and came to the gate of his courtyard. He then heard one servant inform the other that the general's wife just gave birth to a baby boy. Then the mirror became blank and all he saw was himself."

"The rabbi, whom you all know as the Baal Shem Tov, then said to my father, 'In a few days a messenger will arrive and inform you that your wife gave birth to a healthy son,' and I," concluded the general, "am that son. Seeing all this, my father thanked the Baal Shem Tov profusely and returned to the base."

"When I heard about this miracle, I thought, 'Is it possible that that great rabbi is still alive, as he is the only one that I thought had such a power.' Your rabbi replied that he is his spiritual grandson, but meeting a disciple's disciple, and seeing that he maintains that same greatness was inspiring and I was grateful to have the honor of meeting him."

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.



"I am not religious, but I try to be a very good person".

It is quite amazing how many people have given that sentiment to me about themselves.

But I have a message for them.

They might think that they are not religious and indeed they are not totally religious, but they are far more religious than they think.

And why do I say that?

Well, it all goes back to a single letter at the beginning of the portion of Mishpatim. 'ואלה המשפטים אשר תשים לפניך' – and these are the ordinances that you must place before the people.

That's what Moshe was commanded to do by Hashem. It is so unusual for a sentence to start with 'ו' – 'and'. Here an entire portion is starting with 'ו' – 'and'.

And why is that the case?

Rashi brings the words of our sages who explain last week's portion of Yitro, was all about our encounter with Hashem at Mount Sinai.

There we were given the Ten Commandments – and this week's portion of Mishpatim is all about our responsibility to our fellow human beings.

How to be upright, how to be honest, how to be a person of integrity – a decent human being.

The 'ו' – that 'and' – in the middle brings them all together to show, 'מה אלו מסיני אף אלו מסיני'. Just as in Yitro, our relationship with Hashem was given to us at Mount Sinai, so too, the expectations the Almighty has of us, with regard to our responsibility to others, that too was given at Mount Sinai.

Sometimes people say, 'oh there are two categories of Jewish Law' בין אדם למקום ובין אדם להברו' between ourselves and Hashem and between ourselves and others.

It's not really the case.

There is just one single code, because our responsibility towards others, the compassion we should have and our decency within society – that is an integral part of our relationship with Hashem.

So, if you are one of those people who says that you are not religious, but you try to be a very good person, there are two things I would like to say to you.

First of all, you are far more religious than you think you are.

And secondly, why not try the rest?

Be fully religious and I promise, you will discover that it will be absolutely life changing.

You will have a pathway towards happy, fulfilling, and meaningful living.

So join me to pray for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of the remaining 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: 53
MITZVOT ASEH: 23
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 30

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 118
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1462
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5313

HAFTORA:
Yirmiyahu 34:8-22; 33:25-26

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Adar
Rosh Chodesh will be Friday & Shabbat, February 28 & March 1, 2025

משפטים

This week is sponsored
In memory of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe's wife,
Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka
Schneerson
Who's Yahrzeit was
Thursday
כ"ב שבט
February 20th of this year