

# Shabbos Stories for Parshas Nasso 5782

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## When I Was the Hole of the Bagel

By Rabbi Hanoach Teller



I heard a story, which I have every reason to believe is true, that once Reb Moshe Feinstein was being driven on the highway and a child in the back seat of a passing station wagon waved at him. Without any inhibitions the *Gaon* waved back, which brought the passengers in Reb Moshe's car to inquire, "Do you know the boy?"

Reb Moshe sheepishly shook his head and commented, "*A Yiddishe ponim!*" (looks like the features of a Jewish face).

This is an endearing story for often we meet strangers or even people who look vaguely familiar and a wave will usually elicit a response, except from the most hardened individuals. Allow me to share some of my own experiences of encountering *Yiddishe ponims*.

### **The Urban Dictionary's Definition of "Bageling"**

Because I travel a lot, and many people know who I am, I am very "*bageled*." Yes, there is actually an expression to portray one Jew acknowledging another. The term is *bageling* and it is defined by the Urban Dictionary as, "You are Jewish, and you want other people around you to know that, so you say or do something Jewish in nature in order to drop the hint so they know you're one of the tribe."

I was in the Narita Airport (as in Tokyo, Japan, for those not familiar) and, as always, I selected what I thought was the most unobtrusive location to *daven Mincha*. And sure enough, by the time I stepped out of *Shemonah Esrai* and opened my eyes there were two upper-middle-aged Hadassah ladies waiting to say hello. I guess *bageling* in Japan is at a premium.

Perhaps my most unique *bagel* (if I may convert this gerund into a noun) was when I stepped into a supermarket in Omaha, Nebraska. Suddenly a teenage girl turned and, cupping her hands, called out, "Ima." The woman she was addressing was no more than two feet away. "What time is candle-lighting?" the teenager wished to know, critical information for a Tuesday afternoon.

### **A Ride in a Yellow Cab in New York City**

Before I get to my clincher story, which is what prompted me to write this column, I will share one more anecdote roughly, even if not technically, connected. Years ago, I was in a yellow cab in New York City (and fortunately two of my daughters were with me, so I have definitive proof of the veracity of this story) and, as is my policy, I engaged the driver in a conversation. The driver, as is so common in New York City, was not an American native but an immigrant. But this driver, instead of coming from somewhere in East Africa or Pakistan, was from Romania. He commented that it was unusual for passengers to speak to the driver and he was appreciative of my inquiries and conversation.

I noted that I had actually written a book ("*Hey, Taxi!*") about tales told in taxies and recounted by cabbies. The driver, quite remarkably, nodded his head in recognition and told me that he had read the book. I assumed, as did my daughters, that he was just trying to be polite, as the odds were infinitesimal that this non-Jewish Romanian immigrant of limited English skills could have actually read my book.

I guess my nonplussed reaction was very obvious and the driver blurted out, "I assume you are referring to "*Hey, Taxi!*" It's a good thing that the Tellers in the car were not at the driving wheel for we surely would have braked short or performed

some other incredulity-prompted driving hazard. As one, we rolled our eyes in an involuntary expression of deep shock.

And as if knowing the title of the book was not enough, the cabbie began relating some of the book's stories. Accurately. I have family members not as expert as he was in the book's content.

### **The Mystery of the Cabbie's Intimate Knowledge of the Rabbi' Book**

Factually, "*Hey Taxi!*" is one of my best-sellers, but that still cannot explain how this gentleman came across the book and actually read it. His familiarity would be akin to me reading a book on quantum mechanics in Nepalese and remembering the scales of the subatomic particles.

My most flattering fantasies of book distribution could not explain this anomaly – until the cabbie himself explained it. His job behind the wheel does not cover all of his expenses, so he moonlights for the Jewish Institute for the Blind typing books that are rendered into Braille. "*Hey, Taxi!*" was one of the books that he converted, and because of his daytime job he paid extra attention to what he was inputting.

One more tale. Because I have been teaching and lecturing for decades, a lot of people have seen and heard me, making me a likely subject for *bageling*. Often the gesture is less discreet and takes the form of frontal gawking and waving. Invariably, if a stranger approaches me, I can guess that they heard me speak somewhere or that I taught their daughter in seminary. Of course, there are exceptions, but they are usually easily explained.

### **Being Greeted Personally by the Border Agent**

The week I am writing this column was a major exception. I had just landed from Israel and was making my way past border control when I saw a scene that intrigued even not-very-curious me. Someone was trying to get into the country with a passport that was of dubious *kashrus* and the border agent was having none of it. Basically, she was conducting a bust when she looked up and saw me.

"Rabbi Teller, Rabbi Teller!" she beckoned, while simultaneously having her colleagues subdue and lead away the suspect. Something was definitely wrong with this picture until the border agent explained, to my best poker face, that she had been a student of mine in Michlelet Esther many years ago.

I felt as if I was reliving the theme song of *Candid Camera*: "When you least expect it, you're elected..."

*Reprinted from the May 19, 2022 website of The Jewish Press.*

## Story #1176

# The Lubavitcher Rebbe And Gen. Moshe Dayan

*From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles*

*editor@ascentofsafed.com*



**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, General Moshe Dayan and Journalist Gershon Jacobson**

It was 1968. As a reporter, I (*Gershon-Ber Jacobson*) travelled to many places. This time I went to Israel, still flush with victory after the Six Day War, in order to meet with defense minister and famed general Moshe Dayan. I was especially eager to congratulate the general for his military exploits and heroism the previous year that rescued the little nation from savage destruction.

We arranged a meeting at Ammunition Hill, in Jerusalem. The defense minister tried to be friendly, but clearly, he was struggling with physical discomfort. I knew he was still recovering from a recent car accident, which made me doubly grateful that he took out the time for me.

We shook hands, and I saw him wince. I asked, “Mr. Dayan, how are you feeling?”

He grimaced. “I am not feeling totally better from the crash. I still feel pain from time to time.”

“If you want,” I ventured, “you could write a *pidyon nefesh* to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.”

“A *pidyon nefesh*?”

“A *pidyon nefesh* [soul-redemption] is a note that chasidim submit to their Rebbe when they want to ask for a blessing.”

Moshe Dayan, ever the secular Israeli, shrugged. “I don’t know about these things. Writing a *pidyon nefesh*? I’ve never really done it.”

Although hesitant, I managed to press further. I’m flying back soon to New York. Why don’t you try it? If you’re interested, give me a bottle of liquor. When I get to the Rebbe’s *farbrengen* (chasidic gathering), I’ll place it on the Rebbe’s table. Then surely, he will bless you.”

Diffidently, Moshe Dayan removed some Israeli bills from his pocket. “Here. Go buy a bottle of liquor and place it on the Rebbe’s table in my merit.”

Back in New York, I sat among hundreds in the cavernous hall of 770, hearing the voice of the Rebbe at the *farbrengen*. Somehow, I made my way through the sea of bodies and placed the liquor bottle on the Rebbe’s table.

“This is from Moshe Dayan,” I said. “He is still in pain from a car accident.”

The Rebbe turned to me and asked, “Reb Moshe son of whom?”

I was at a loss of words. I had forgotten to get the mother’s name an indispensable element of a *pidyon nefesh*!

“I don’t know,” I stammered.

A *yeshiva* student saved the day. A young Israeli, seated not far, approached me and whispered to me the mother’s name. Apparently, he knew a lot about this famous general, a hero and patriot to so many of his countrymen. Well, this young man was definitely *my* personal hero that someone was within earshot of the Rebbe and me conversing was clearly Divine providence.

The Rebbe then raised his cup and said, “*L’chaim*, Moshe ben Devorah Leah. May he have a *refuah shaleimah*, a complete recovery!”

Afterwards, the Rebbe returned the bottle of liquor to me and asked that I make sure it got back to its rightful owner, the defense minister.

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*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an email of the Avner Institute: [RebbeBook@gmail.com](mailto:RebbeBook@gmail.com).

*Connection:* This week is the anniversary of the Six-Day War (and it culminates in ~Jerusalem Day).

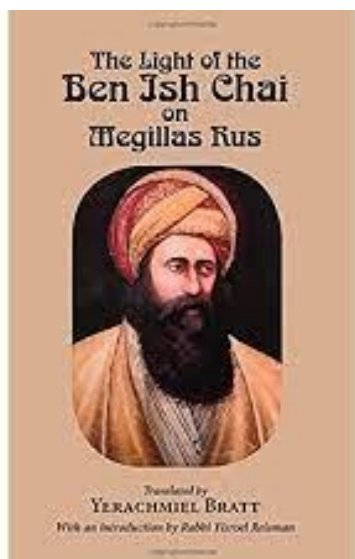
*Biographical note* (excerpted from the obituary in *The Forward*): **Gershon Jacobson** (1933 - 2005) was born in Moscow in 1933. In the early 1950s, he moved to Paris and then to Toronto, and then to New York City where he studied at

Columbia University's School of Journalism. His biggest scoop came in 1960 when connections at the Israeli consulate in New York helped him break the story of Adolf Eichmann's capture by Mossad agents in Argentina. In 1972 he launched the *Algemeiner Journal*, which became the largest-circulation Yiddish weekly in the USA. He remained its publisher and editor-in-chief until his death, often receiving important advice from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Currently it is still published by his sons, and has a 4-page English supplement.

Reprinted from the Parshat Bechukotai 5782 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.

# In the Merit of a Mitzvah

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser



The Ben Ish Chai relates the story of two friends in Baghdad who sold used clothing. They would pay a small sum of money for used garments to people who no longer had any use for them, and then sell the garments in the market at a discounted price. At times they would acquire unique items that fetched a higher price and supplemented their income nicely.

## Tip of Potential Merchandise In Nearby Village

One day the merchants were informed that someone in the next village was selling an extensive wardrobe of clothing.

They immediately set out on the road. When they arrived at the gates of the village they were met by an old man who called out, “*Mincha, mincha*. Please come in to join the *minyan*; I have to say *Kaddish*. “

The first merchant said, “I’m busy right now. I must first take care of my business in the village.”

## The Second Merchant Agreed to Join the Minyan

The second merchant agreed to take off a few minutes to pray and joined the *minyan* in the *bais medrash*. When the merchant exited the *bais medrash*, an elderly woman approached with a worn-out coat in her hand that she wished to sell him.

The merchant took the coat and returned home. There he looked more closely at the coat to see whether it had any resale value. He was struck by the five large decorative buttons down the front of the coat, although they looked like they were copper.

### **The Buttons Were Not Copper**

Upon closer examination, though, after shining the buttons, the answered in the Half-*Kaddish* preceding *Mincha* he had merited five gold buttons. The second merchant, who had continued into the village to pursue the business lead, returned home empty-handed and dejected, because the clothing had already been sold to another buyer.

merchant was shocked to discover that the buttons were in fact made of pure gold.

He immediately ran to the Rav and related the day's events in order to verify who owned the valuable buttons. The Rav determined that the buttons belonged to the merchant. In the merit of the five *Amens* that he had

*Reprinted from the May 19<sup>th</sup> website of the Jewish Press.*

## **The Reward for a Special Mitzvah**



**Rabbi Aryeh Levine**

THE TREASURER OF THE BIKUR CHOLIM HOSPITAL IN Jerusalem, Reb Avrohom Cohen had a heart attack. When he was in the hospital, R' Aryeh Levine came to visit him. During his visit, Reb Avrohom had another sudden heart attack. R' Aryeh rushed to call for help.

After two hours they were Baruch Hashem ה"ב successful in reviving him. The doctor saw R' Aryeh was still there and told R' Aryeh that if he wanted, he could go in to visit Reb Avrohom. R' Aryeh entered the room and Reb Avrohom told R' Aryeh that he had a very interesting story to tell him. He had just been in the Bais Din shel mailah, the heavenly court מעלה של דין בית .

### **The Good Angels Created By the Sick Man's Mitzvos**

They announced that all of the good angels מלאכים created by his mitzvos מצוות should come in. The door opened, and hundreds and hundreds of white angels מלאכים came in and went on one side of the scale.

Then they announced that all of the bad angels מלאכים created from עביר his sins should come in. The door opened and again many many bad angels מלאכים started coming in. The scale was basically getting equal. It was an extremely frightening moment, but there was a knock on the door.

A righteous Jew צדיק from a previous generation walked in and said, "I'm here to say that although Reb Avrohom was the treasurer for Bikur Cholim he was always completely honest! He never took any money that wasn't his." The heavenly court ה"ב said that since this Tzadik צדיק gave testimony, he will have a chance to go back to Olam Hazeh (the world on earth) עוה"ז and fix up his sins עבירות .

Immediately afterwards he found himself in an open area with mountains and valleys, and he had no idea where he was. The only person in sight was a man standing on a mountain. Reb Avrohom went over to him and the man asked him if he knew who he was!

He said, "No!"

### **The Man's Most Interesting Story**

The man went on to explain "When I was young, I was a guest in your town for Shabbos. After davening, all the guests and the poor people in the town עניים would line up and people would take them home for a meal one by one. The problem was that I was 6 feet tall and 400 pounds, so not one person wanted to take me home".

The man continued to relate, "I was the only one left in shul with you and your father. Your father took one look at me and told you, "We can't take him." And you left the shul. My heart was broken. I felt rejected and all alone. I sat down and cried. 10 minutes later Avrohom, you came back into the shul. You told me that you persuaded your father to let me come and that I was invited. You told me that you told your father that if he wouldn't invite me then you were not going to eat for the entire Shabbos!



The man continued, “I came to you for the entire שבת. After שבת I told you that one day I would repay you. I left the town and I never saw you again. Now I want to repay you, so how can I repay you?”

Reb Avrohom looked at the man and said, “I want you to tell me how I can get back to the world.” The man told him to continue walking straight, and then to turn by a specific mountain, then he would wake up wherever he was in the world. This was in the zchus of ONE MITZVAH.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Kedoshim 5782 email o the Eitz Hachayim parsha sheet.*

## **The Siddur Speaks**

# **The Irreligious Jew’s Plea To the Spinka Rebbe**



An irreligious Jew once came to Reb Yosef Meir of Spinka, zt”l, to ask for the Rebbe’s Brachah. “I was falsely accused of a terrible crime,” he wept, “and my enemies have bribed people to testify against me in court. Rebbe, I am innocent. Please give me your Brachach that I will be acquitted!”

The Rebbe asked, “Do you keep Shabbos?”

The man replied, “No. Shabbos is my most profitable day!”

The Rebbe continued, “What about Kashrus? Are you careful with the laws of meat and milk?”

The man said, “Honestly, Rebbe! I’m far too busy to spend my time with such complex laws.”

The Rebbe asked, “Do you put on Tefilin? Do you Daven?”

The man sighed. “No, Rebbe. I told you. I don’t have time for such things.”

The Rebbe said, “I will give you a pair of Tefilin. If you put them on for a short while every day, I can guarantee you an acquittal.”

The man reluctantly agreed. One year later, this man returned to the Rebbe, but he now looked entirely different. He had become completely observant, and he wanted to ask the Rebbe to help him do Teshuvah for his past Aveiros.

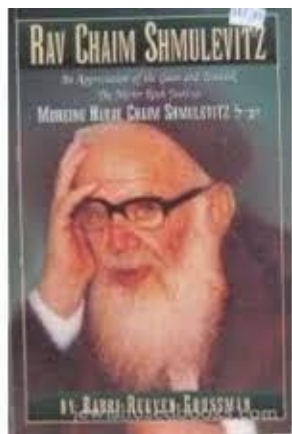
The Rebbe asked him what had happened.

The man replied, “I began wearing the Tefilin for a few minutes every day, and I was indeed acquitted, just as the Rebbe had promised. It occurred to me that since I was already putting on the Tefilin, it might be appropriate for me to say a few words of thanks to Hashem for having helped me out with my problem.

“As time went on, my Tefilos grew a bit longer each day, until I was Davening like a good Jew every morning. Soon I was Davening three times a day. At that point, I began to feel very uncomfortable. How could I Daven with such devotion when I didn’t even keep Shabbos or eat Kosher? It wasn’t long after that when I began observing all the Mitzvos!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

## Reasons for Being Grateful

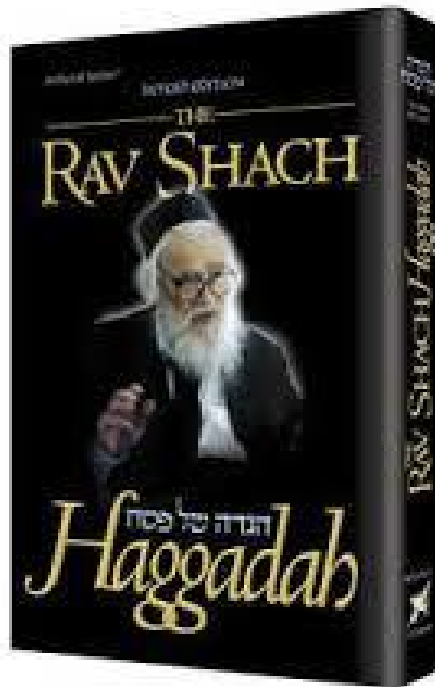
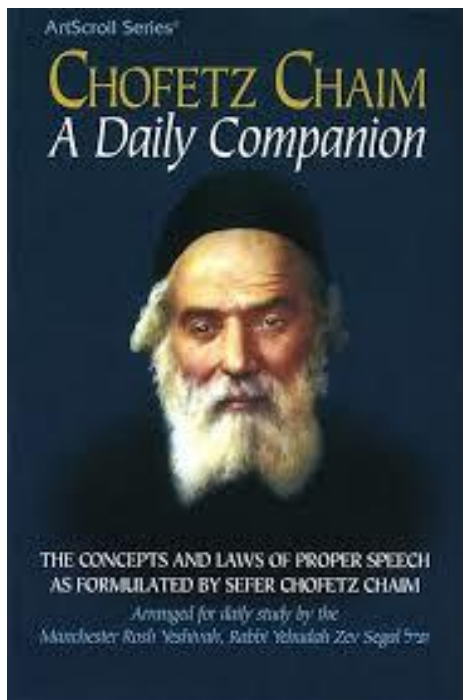


When Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, zt”l, arrived in Shanghai, having escaped the war in Europe, the city was so crowded with refugees that it was almost impossible to find any lodging. Eventually, Rav Chaim was able to

rent a room from a fellow Jew who was totally removed from anything Jewish, but who wanted to help other Jews, even though it meant he had to crowd his own family into the remaining space in his house.

While Rav Chaim stayed in that man’s home, they would often spend time talking about various matters, many of which seemed to be of a trivial nature. Rav Chaim’s students, who knew that each minute was precious to him and that he never wasted time when he could be learning Torah, were surprised that their Rebbe would spend so much time talking to this man.

When Rav Chaim was asked about this, he replied, “I am deeply indebted to this man for taking me into his home, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for doing so. If he wants to talk to me, I owe it to him to spend some time with him.”



Once, when the Chofetz Chaim was in the local bathhouse, he fainted due to some illness he had contracted. The bathhouse supervisor rushed in and revived him. For the rest of his life, the Chofetz Chaim was grateful to that man. He had the man sit next to him in Shul, drank a ‘L’Chaim’ with him on Simchas Torah, and Bentched him repeatedly that he should live to a ripe old age. Indeed, the man lived to be over ninety years old, passing away a few months after the Chofetz Chaim did!

When he was already at an advanced age, Rav Elazar Shach, zt”l, once attended a Levaya.

A torrential rain was falling, and he was not carrying an umbrella. When one of those present offered him an umbrella, he said, “The man whose Levaya we are attending today once gave me a coat when we were in the subzero temperatures of a Siberian winter. Now, I want to relive some of the distress I felt before receiving the coat, so I can more fully appreciate what he did for me!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

# The Fundraiser Who Couldn't Understand English

Rabbi [Elimelech] Biderman published the following story about Hashem's blessings. When Reb Avraham Moshe Pachter *shlita*, *Rosh Kollel* of several *kollelim* in Israel, first started his fundraising, he didn't know much English. At one address, a wealthy patron wanted to write out a check for a thousand dollars.

## Reb Pachter's Language Barrier

Due to the language barrier, Reb Pachter thought he said that he would give one hundred dollars. Reb Pachter explained to him in Hebrew that he has many students, and that amount wasn't enough.

The wealthy man agreed to give two thousand dollars. Reb Pachter thought he said two hundred dollars, so he explained to him once again that this is still not enough money. The wealthy man raised the bar again and again until he agreed to give five thousand dollars.

When he got back home, Reb Pachter said to his partner that he was still upset that he only received five hundred dollars from this wealthy man. His partner told him, "Look at the check. It says five thousand dollars..."

As it turned out, the rabbi's weakness in language became his best asset. He thought that because he didn't know English, he wouldn't be able to fundraise well, but as it turned out, his ignorance helped him earn much more money.

## The Power of Hashem's Blessing

This story once again reminds us that it isn't wisdom and talents that make one successful, only Hashem's blessing. Whomever Hashem chooses to give wealth to, is the one who will get it. If we follow Hashem's decrees, success will follow!!

*Reprinted from the Parashat Bechukotai 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

# A Most Special Sefer Torah For a Fallen IDF Soldier



**Erez Deri, hy”d and the celebration of the Sefer Torah written in his memory**

It was February of 2011 when Rabbi Yotav Eliach led a trip to Israel for a group of 50 American high school students. The last stop of the trip before they went to the airport was the cemetery in *Har Herzl*. As you can imagine, walking through the cemetery and looking at the graves of the young soldiers who gave up their lives and hearing their heroic stories can be a very emotional and moving experience. “The most difficult place to visit,” said Rabbi Eliach, “is *Har Herzl*. And that is because instead of the young burying the old, the old is burying the young.”

## **Noticed an Elderly Couple Crying Just a Few Feet Away**

As Rabbi Eliach explained to the students the sacrifice that these young soldiers and their families had made, he suddenly noticed an elderly couple standing just a few feet away crying over a grave. Rabbi Eliach noted, “Everything I had been saying about what it means to parents and families was right there. It was very clear that this was a mother and father visiting their child’s grave.”

The tombstone included a picture of a young Israeli soldier named Erez Deri. One of the students leaned over and gently asked the mother, “Could you tell us a little bit about your son?” Mrs. Deri began relating how Erez was a paratrooper in the Israeli army and was tragically killed in 2006. But then Mrs. Deri told the group of students something which left them speechless. “Last night I had a dream. Erez came to me and said, ‘You didn’t merit to lead me to my *chupah*. Instead, I would like you to dedicate a *Sefer Torah* in my name. If a Torah is written in my memory, it will be as if you are sending me to my *chupah*.’”

### **Tells His Mother to go to Har Herzl**

But that was not all Erez relayed to his mother. He had something even more surprising to say. “Go to *Har Herzl*. There you will find good people who will help you write a *Sefer Torah*.” Those ‘good people’ who Mrs. Deri would meet the next day were this group of students.

One student remarked, “Something about this woman just sparked a connection with us, and we decided to take on this project to fundraise for a *Sefer Torah* and dedicate it in memory of Erez. We told Mrs. Deri we would be back next year with a *Sefer Torah* to fulfill her dream.” This group was a mix of secular kids and religious kids, kids from both *yeshivot* and public schools. They all felt so passionate about taking on this momentous project.

### **One Year Later the American Students Return**

Exactly one year later, the same group of students returned with a brand-new Torah and headed to *Ma’ale Adumim* to write the final letters. They gathered in Erez’s room, noticing his uniform hanging pressed against the wall. On his desk, the *Sefer Torah* was laid down as the last few letters were written. “I was in tears,” Erez’s mother later said. “I was so emotionally moved. I felt as if all of *Am Yisrael* was with us.”

Everyone felt the excitement as they concluded adding the last letters and began parading down the street. All types of Jews from all walks of life were there, dancing and singing in unison. *Am Yisrael* was there.

A story like this ought to make us feel proud to be a part of the Jewish people. Jews can meet anywhere in the world, whether it be in a cemetery in Israel, or in an airport in Beijing. It makes no difference where, but there is an immediate feeling of connection, regardless of how different we look on the outside. Even if our homes are thousands of miles away, our hearts are so close. In order for *Mashiach* to come, the Jewish people will have to use the “vav” and become interconnected and inextricably bound to one another.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Bechukotai 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*