

# The Jewish Weekly



In Loving memory of  
**Mendy Klein**  
 ר' מנחם משה ז"ל  
 בן ר' נפתלי הירצקא  
 נפטר ל"ג בעומר  
 י"ח אייר תשע"ח  
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

## The Year of Wonders By Mrs. Rochel Goldman

Growing up in the 1960s, I would travel to the Rebbe with my family every Simchat Torah. We lived in Cleveland, where I attended the Hebrew Academy. It wasn't a Chabad school, but we grew up in a very chasidic home, with a real appreciation for the Rebbe. My father, Rabbi Zalman Kazen, would teach us Chasidut – he loved studying the Rebbe's talks with us – and we learned chasidic melodies. But this was all nothing compared to actually experiencing the Rebbe's farbrengens.

Every year on Sukkot, we would travel to New York, a twelve-hour train ride, to spend the second half of the holiday there. Two nights before Simchat Torah, on Hoshana Rabbah, we received lekach – traditional honey cake – from the Rebbe. Then, on Simchat Torah, there was a late-night farbrengen, where the Rebbe taught everyone a new song; we would all crowd inside and listen intently as the Rebbe sang, and then the chasidim all sang after him. It was all a very inspirational experience.

But it wasn't until after finishing school, when I went to study in a seminary, that I developed a deeper, more personal appreciation for the Rebbe. It started with the yechidus, my first personal audience, that I had before going abroad.

I had written a letter to the Rebbe beforehand asking whether I should go to a seminary in New York or in Israel, and in the audience, the Rebbe replied that I should either go to New York – or to France. So I had my answer right away: If the Rebbe brought up France on his own, he probably wanted me to go there.

At the Beth Rivkah seminary in Yerres, a suburb of Paris, for the first time in my life, I started to seriously learn Chasidut, and it transformed me. I had done well in school and had studied a lot of Torah, along with various biblical commentaries, but now I realized how little I knew and how much there was to grow. Learning the Rebbe's talks, and what he was telling the world, gave me a strong sense of faith and of selflessness – and it developed in me the feeling that I wanted to help. In 1976, after seminary and after getting married, I ended up doing just that, together with my husband, Rabbi Yossy Goldman.

We had two children and were living in New York when my husband asked the Rebbe where we should go on shlichut, as emissaries of the Rebbe. We had quite a few positions offered to us and we wrote about going to California, Missouri, and Johannesburg, South Africa, where my husband's friend

from his yeshivah days, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, had moved two years earlier and had invited us to join him.

Not everyone was told directly where to go on shlichut in those days, but the Rebbe underlined "Johannesburg," giving us a clear answer that this was our mission in life – our soul mission.

The Rebbe also indicated that I had to be on the same page as my husband. The Rebbe cared so much about the couples he sent – not only the men, but also the women. And so, the Rebbe wanted to know that we were both in agreement and that we would work as partners in bringing his message, the teachings of Chasidism, and G-d's Torah to the world. The answer, of course, was that I was totally on board. I grew up with a lot of faith, which was further strengthened by being around the Rebbe, so I wanted to be part of his incredible vision for the world.

When we moved to South Africa, it was during the dark years of apartheid, when the government didn't really want rabbis coming to the country to speak about morality. It was also difficult personally; I didn't know anyone, and kashrut facilities were so limited that I had to bake my own bread. But the Rebbe's blessings throughout were always encouraging, and the growth of the Chabad community there over the past fifty years has been unbelievable.

Over the years, our family also grew. When I was getting ready to deliver my tenth child, in 1991, my doctor told me that the baby was lying transverse (sideways) instead of being head down, and I would have to have a C-section. This was something I absolutely did not want to accept.

"I've had nine natural births, and I'm not going to get cut open now!" I protested.

"In forty years, I've never called in a second opinion," he said, "but for you I'll call in another doctor."

The second doctor took a look and confirmed that the baby was transverse. They tried repeatedly to turn the baby, but he wasn't budging. "There's no way you can give birth like this. We're going to have to do a C-section," he confirmed.

Now, earlier that year, the Rebbe had declared 1991 – the year 5751 according to the Hebrew calendar – a "year of miracles." The Hebrew letters used to spell 5751 were an acronym for "Tehei Shnat Arenu Nifla'ot," which translates as "May it be a year of showing wonders," and during the Gulf War earlier that year, the Iraqis had fired 39 missiles on Israel without killing a single person. If the Rebbe said that this would be a year of miracles, I was convinced that here was going to be another miracle.

## It Once Happened...

The second doctor who, like the first doctor, was Jewish, looked at my husband, the rabbi. "Why don't you call New York?" Clearly, he meant the Rebbe, and he obviously had some experience with the Rebbe's interventions in medical matters.

I was already at an advanced stage of labor at that point, and the only reason my husband hadn't already called the Rebbe was because it was 1:00 AM in South Africa and the hospital switchboard had long closed; cellphones had not yet been invented.

The doctor, however, used his connections to arrange for the switchboard to be opened so that my husband could make an international call to New York. My husband contacted his father, Reb Shimon Goldman, who lived in Crown Heights and who then immediately ran over to 770.

At that time, the Rebbe was on his way back from visiting the Previous Rebbe's resting place, and so my father-in-law gave the message to Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary. Soon, the Rebbe replied: "Seeing as the doctor suggested to call me, I hope he will not bear a grudge against me if I advise that we should listen to the woman giving birth and we should wait."


When my husband came back with this message, the second doctor was nearby. "Your doctor's out, and the nurses are out too, so let me check you," he offered. He checked – and the baby had turned by himself! It was absolutely miraculous. At that stage of labor, the baby never turns. The doctor had never seen anything like it. In short order, our son was born naturally.

Two years later, a friend told me that as a result of this story, that second doctor went on to become fully Shabbat observant.

As for my son, before the birth, we had been thinking of naming him after my husband's late uncle Nissen, but I wasn't sure. After this nes – the Hebrew word for miracle, which is also related to the name Nissen – we knew. It was an amazing miracle, and he became an amazing boy, who is now a very special rabbi, serving as a shliach for Chabad on Campus at the University of Cape Town.

Reprinted from Here's My Story, [www.myencounterblog.com](http://www.myencounterblog.com).

*Editor's Note: Mrs. Rochel Goldman and her husband, Rabbi Yossy Goldman, have served as Chabad emissaries in South Africa for fifty years, since 1976, and have led the Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation in Johannesburg since 1986. She was interviewed in February 2026.*

Shabbat Times – Parshat Behar - Bechukotai			
	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	6:49	8:05	8:42
Tel Aviv	7:04	8:07	8:40
Haifa	6:56	8:08	8:43
Be'er Sheva	7:05	8:06	8:41



## Rating One's Own Quality of Life By Rabbi Hanoch Teller

It is not easy to find an English lecturer in Bnei Brak and it is harder yet to find a good one. Rabbi Aharon Levin is both. Once, he totally wowed the students of Yeshivat HaKotel in Jerusalem's Old City with his presentation, and then again at the end of his captivating talk when he threw in the following personal story.

Shimon, a student of Sephardic ancestry, learned together with him in the prestigious Slabodka Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Years later, Shimon was diagnosed with cancer, and Rabbi Elimelech Firer, the renowned medical referral expert, felt that his best chance of recovery would be at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Shimon turned to his old friend and asked if he would accompany him to Mayo to serve as a translator.

[Mayo is such a world-class medical center that among its teams of everything-medical are also translators of every language, but they are not always available, and one who is in pain does not wish to wait hours to explain how they are suffering.]

When you are requested a favor of this magnitude and under such circumstances, there really aren't a variety of options, so off the two flew to the Mayo Clinic in July 2006. The Mayo Clinic, and the city of Rochester, Minnesota, in which it is located, is a world away in terms of an environment where Torah scholars would feel at home. One evening, the loneliness of Shimon and Rabbi Aharon somewhat dissipated when they were invited for supper to the home of Mayo's sole Orthodox physician, Dr. Axel Pflueger. On that occasion Dr. Pflueger related the following incident.

One day while doing his rounds in Mayo, he saw written at the foot of the bed - and unable to be viewed by the bed's paraplegic occupant - "Because of Bob's poor quality of life, his social worker should encourage the family to declare DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) and medications should also not be administered."

Dr Pflueger was appalled at the audacity of the doctor who penned this note, one who was clearly endowed with an acute case of 'Doctor-thinking-he-is-G-d-Syndrome.' Accordingly, Dr. Pflueger lodged a complaint against the note's author, Dr. O'Neill, with the Mayo Clinic ethics committee.

Bob (real name) was a 46-year-old who was involved in an automobile accident when he was six. Like most suffering from spinal cord injury, he had increased risk for respiratory tract infections like pneumonia due to the weakened muscles in the chest and abdomen, which cannot breathe robustly or cough.

When Bob would contract pneumonia, which he invariably did on a yearly basis, he had no recourse but to travel to Mayo to be healed. It is not unlikely that many people might conclude that a paraplegic suffering annually from pneumonia and a host of other issues has a very low quality of life.

The ethics committee, like everything else at Mayo, is the gold standard. The head of the ethics committee invited Dr. Pflueger and Dr. O'Neill (not his real name) into his office to resolve the complaint. As is standard, the accuser is given the floor first.

Dr. Pflueger began by asking Dr. O'Neill to rate his own quality of life on a scale of 1-10. (At the Mayo Clinic, everything is done on a scale of 1-10. "How is your pain 1-10?; how much relief do you feel 1-10?; describe your immobility 1-10.")

O'Neill thought for a moment and replied "6-7." This is not the kind of answer one would expect from a person who has climbed to the highest rung in the medical world, holding a prestigious job at Mayo. Why, 6-7 is barely passing!

Axel Pflueger then turned to the head of the committee, acknowledged to be one of the most celebrated medical ethicists in the world, and inquired, "What precisely are the criteria to determine one's quality of life?" The chairman articulated a well-rehearsed impromptu response, "A person, and only that individual, can determine their own quality of life."

To which Pflueger countered, "Then what, if I may ask, is your quality of life 1-10?" The chairman responded with a disappointing 7-8. Pflueger then proposed that they pose this question to Bob. So, all three traipsed over to Bob's room.

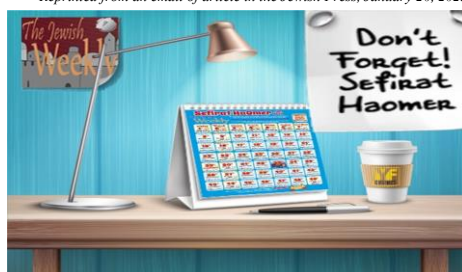
"Hey Bob," Pflueger asked in the company of his colleagues, "what would you say, on a scale of 1-10, is your quality of life?"

"9-10," Bob responded without any hesitancy. "And I'll tell you why. In the morning the sun's rays shine on my face and neck, radiating soothing warmth. Sometimes when the weather is good, my mother wheels me outside on my gurney and I am able to smell the perfume of the flowers and hear the singsong of the birds..."

Suddenly Bob got lost in his contemplations. "I am going to have to change my answer," the supine speaker corrected himself. "I am definitely a full-fledged 10." With a nostalgic appearance, he reminisced, "Sometimes my mother makes me oatmeal, and because of my condition the only oatmeal I can eat, like all other foods, is a watery gruel. Upon occasion she grates apples very finely and throws in cinnamon and the flavor is just out of this world!"

Bob continued to hold forth, justifying his top score, while the two doctors looked at each other in an apotheosis of remorse.

*Reprinted from an email of article in the Jewish Press, January 20, 2023.*



If we experience an uplifting, inspirational moment, we should take that experience with us through to the rest of our lives.

We learn this important lesson from the portion of Behar. Within this portion, the Torah introduces us to the concept of Yovel, the Jubilee celebrated once every fifty years. But what is the derivation of the term Yovel?

Rashi explains that it means the sounding of the shofar. There was a very special ceremony at the conclusion of the year when the shofar was blown and heard in an extraordinary manner by the people there.

The Ramban disagrees. He says that if Yovel means the sounding of shofar, you're not going to name the entire year preceding it after one brief moment.

Rather, says the Ramban, Yovel means taking something forward. And he learns it from the book of Yeshayahu, chapter 23, where the prophet says, "בלוה" enable your steps to take you forward. And we know that in modern Hebrew להוביל means to schlep, to take something with you. And if you're in Israel, and you see a van with the word הובלה written on it, that means it's a removals van, where you're taking items from one place to their next destination.

So, the Ramban says that the message of Yovel, therefore, is that when you experience that extraordinary moment of the sounding of the shofar, which takes place only once every fifty years, don't cast it into your past, but take it with you through to your future, so that it will continue to guide and inspire you always.

This is the context within which, in the havdalah ceremony at the end of every Shabbat, we smell the spices, the בשמים, to enable the spirituality of Shabbat to permeate through to the week that follows. It's also for this reason that we have the concept of אסרוהג, the day after a festival, to guarantee that the special flavor of the Chag will continue thereafter.

So therefore, from the concept of Yovel, let us always remember that if we are blessed to have a highly inspirational, and wonderful, memorable moment in our lives, let's not just leave it in our past.

Let's guarantee that the Yovel moment will accompany us through to the rest of our lives by joining together to thank and pray for our soldiers who go out to protect us and 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.

*The Jewish Weekly's Yossi*

## PARSHA FACTS

<p><b>Parshat Behar</b></p> <p>NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 24          MITZVOT ASEH: 7          MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 17          NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 57          NUMBER OF WORDS: 737          NUMBER OF LETTERS: 2817</p>	<p><b>Parshat Bechukotai</b></p> <p>NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 12          MITZVOT ASEH: 7          MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 5          NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 78          NUMBER OF WORDS: 1013          NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3992</p>
--	---

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 16:19 - 17:14

This Shabbat we study Chapter 5 of Pirkei Avot

יום ירושלים Yom Yerushalayim is Friday, May 15, 2026.

תורתנו - בחוקותי

This week is sponsored  
in honor of  
the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of  
אורי יצחק בן רבקה לאה