

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** Anyone wishing to see proof of the existence of Hashem, need only look at the Jewish people. We are a nation that by all estimates, should have been destroyed long ago. We are small among the nations. However, after years of persecutions, banishments, burnings, gassings, torturing and exterminations, Am Yisroel is alive and well. We read about the indestructibility of the Jewish nation in our Torah portion this week Shemos. The Torah tells us about how Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) saw a prophetic vision in the form of a burning bush. The verse tells us "...*behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed.*" (Shemos 3:2) The Midrash tells us that the bush symbolizes Yisroel. Although the nations may try to destroy us, we are not consumed... we will never be consumed. (Midrash Rabbah, Shemos [Margolios] 2,14) We are the eternal nation.

The Sages teach us that there is wisdom among the Nations. (Eicha Rabba 2:13) In light of that, we bring this week the worlds of the American author and commentator Mark Twain, who spoke about the immortality of the Jewish nation in his short essay entitled: Concerning the Jews.

*"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.*

*His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.*

*The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"*

The Jewish Nation has ridden the storm of many generations of persecution. Unfortunately, some Jews have fallen away, by intermarrying and assimilating. However, no matter how far a Jew may stray, he still retains his membership in the eternal nation. The following amazing true story describes one Jewish couple's journey back home to the eternal Jewish Nation.

Andrew and Sharon were beaming as brightly as that morning's California sun. "We're getting married!" they announced. "Mazel tov!" exclaimed Rabbi Chaim Mentz. "Rabbi Mentz, will you officiate at our wedding on December fifth?"

"I'd be honored to," he reassured them. As the rabbi of Chabad House of Bel Air, California, Rabbi Mentz was delighted that Andrew and Sharon had chosen an Orthodox wedding.

"You just have to meet the three basic requirements of a Jewish wedding. If either of you was married before, you must have a kosher "get," divorce. Before the wedding you need to learn the rules of a Torah home. And the food at the wedding must be kosher." "No problem! We can agree to those conditions," they said.

The date was set for December 5, 2004. Wedding plans proceeded at a whirlwind pace. The hall was reserved, invitations chosen. Andrew and Sharon met with the caterer, the band, and the florist. Everything was falling into place.

In the midst of the arrangements, Sharon confided in Rabbi Mentz privately. "You know, Rabbi, I did get married once before to a Jewish guy. Big mistake. The marriage lasted about six

**A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."**

hours. Then we went back to the courts for an annulment."

Rabbi Mentz stared at her for a moment, shocked by the sudden revelation. Knots formed in his stomach as Sharon waited patiently for a response. He chose his words carefully. "Sharon, you may be surprised by what I'm going to tell you. But you need a get, a religious divorce, before you and Andrew can get married."

"But the courts annulled it immediately!" Sharon protested. "According to Jewish law, six hours or six years—it doesn't matter. It's still considered married." Said Rabbi Mentz.

"Rabbi Mentz, it was a mistake!" she wailed. The last thing Sharon wanted to do was revisit the past, let alone contact the man she had once married.

"I really want to do your wedding," Rabbi Mentz said firmly, "but we have to take care of this first."

"What if I can't find the 'mistake'? Am I doomed forever?"

"Let's not jump to any conclusions. I will be here for you," Rabbi Mentz reassured the tearful bride. "First we'll speak to the Jewish court in Los Angeles. They'll help us work through this dilemma."

The wedding preparations continued. Sharon refused to allow the "mistake" to affect her upcoming marriage. After a few weeks of consultation back and forth with the Los Angeles Beis Din, the matter was finally closed. Sharon was delighted—until she heard the beis din's final stipulation. "Now you must wait ninety-two days before you are free to marry the man of your choosing," the court declared.

Ninety-two days? Ninety-two days would not be up until the end of January! Andrew and Sharon frantically called Rabbi Mentz. "Are they crazy? Is this true? Does this mean that you won't do our wedding on December Fifth?"

Rabbi Mentz tried to reason with the couple. But Andrew and Sharon were beyond logic. To postpone the wedding, so carefully planned to the last detail? And what about the wonderful trip they had planned following the wedding?

The bride and groom could not make peace with the court's verdict. After a few days of rumination, a much more reasonable couple called Rabbi Mentz back. "We want to do our wedding right in G-d's eyes," Andrew and Sharon told him. "And if that means we have to reschedule everything for the end of January, so be it."

Andrew and Sharon called the hall, the printer, the band, the florist, and the caterer. The wedding would be pushed off until January 23. Still, neither Andrew nor Sharon could fathom why G-d wanted to delay their wedding.

Until December 26, 2004... On that date, Andrew and Sharon were supposed to be enjoying the last days of their three-week trip in the famous Kaafu Atoll Maldives on Lankanfushi Island.

Instead, their trip was postponed ... indefinitely. Early in the morning of December 26, an earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered a massive tsunami that flooded Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand and other countries with waves up to 100 feet high. Nearly 300,000 people were killed. The hotel room Andrew and Sharon had reserved was completely swept away.

Providentially, Andrew and Sharon were not there when the tsunami hit. As Andrew announced at the kiddush in honor of this turn of events, "It's the best advice the Rabbi ever gave us. Follow the rules of Hashem's Torah, and it will be a blessing for you in the end!" **Good**

**Shabbos Everyone.**