



# THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

20 – 21 May, 2005

12 IYAR, 5765

Parashat Behar (Leviticus 25:1-26:2)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz  
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

## D'var Torah from Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

A story about Rabbi Heschel of Apt, better known as the 'Ohev Yisrael': 'The Lover of the People of Israel.' (This story is traditional, adapted by Rabbi Eugene and Dr. Annette Labovitz.):

"Rebbe, did you hear what happened?" "Chanale, the woman who was barren for so many years gave birth to a baby girl last week. She says that Yankele Kretchmer, the innkeeper, blessed her last year."

A few days later: "Rebbe, I heard that Berel the impoverished tailor received a big order from the owner of a large clothing store. He says Yankele Kretchmer blessed him."

The following month, the Apter Rebbe heard that a very sick man had fully recovered. Again, the innkeeper had blessed him.

The Rebbe decided to discover the source of Yankele Kretchmer's newfound ability to bestow blessings, and he went to visit the innkeeper.

"Rebbe," he said modestly, "indeed I am flattered by your visit, but I have no secret, no special powers." The Apter Rebbe persisted.

"I will tell you what happened. First of all, know that I believe that everything that happens in this world happens because the Almighty decrees it. I have always placed my trust in Him. Many months ago, I received an urgent message from the landowner of this shtetl to come to his mansion immediately. I could not ignore the summons although I owed him money and could not repay him. On the way, I thought to borrow the money from the bank. However, as I walked along I thought, "Why should I borrow money from a total stranger? Why should I make a total stranger my partner?" I prayed to the Almighty and said: "Master of the World, if you give me what I need now, I promise You that I will make You my partner."

No sooner had I finished praying than a horse-drawn carriage appeared and stopped at my side. Two fashionably dressed men alighted. One spoke: "Are you Yankele Kretchmer? We've been looking for you. We heard that you are an honest businessman. We have a business that requires us to travel overseas, and we don't want to take this gold with us that we earned on our last trip. We would like to commission you to hold it for us until our return. Use any part of it on the condition that you return the original sum to us afterwards." I agreed. They gave me the bag of gold, climbed into their carriage, and disappeared in the distance.

Rebbe, do you know what? I knew that my partner was working already.

After paying my debt I returned home and divided the money into two boxes. Each business day I keep an exact accounting of the money I earn. Every night, I enter the empty room and put half of the money in one box and half in the other box. I use the money that I put into my box to sustain my family. I use the money that I put into my partner's box to sustain the needy of this shtetl. Ever since I have contracted this partnership, I have prospered."

May we all remember at all times that we are God's partner in running our world.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Michael

*19<sup>th</sup> May, 2005*