

Parshas Naso 80 – Pirkei Avos Chapter One - 2nd Round 6 6 20

*We are living in tough times. Covid-19, riots, isolation, kids out of school, many people either out of work or furloughed, clearly not much to smile about these days. Yet, the Mishna teaches us that no matter what comes our way, **we must receive everyone with a cheerful face.***

Why is this so significant? Must I always be in a good mood?

Where does this stem from, and how powerful is a smile?

Read on and discover the mystical power of a smile.

I have added two articles to the essay. One is a real-life story about the far-reaching effect of a smile. The second, an article discussing a fascinating scientific experiment that was done in 1975, that reveals just how critical it is for parents to smile.

Enjoy!

To Smile is Divine

As Yaakov is about to bless Yosef's children, he contemplates the irony of the moment by exclaiming, *"I dared not accept the thought that I would see your face, and here God has shown me even your offspring!"* (בראשית מח יא)

Why does Yaakov emphasize his good fortune in having been able to once again see the 'face' of Yosef? Was Yaakov so enamored with Yosef's handsome *shaina punim* that he longed to view it again? It was certainly his thrill in seeing 'Yosef' himself and his illustrious character and great spiritual accomplishments, not simply his face that brought Yaakov such joy. Why then does Yaakov focus his sentiment on the 'face' of Yosef?

The Targum Yonoson translates the word פניך, *your face*, as סבר אפך, which literally translates as the *'brightness of your face'*. There was clearly more to Yosef's face than the perfect features of this extraordinarily handsome man, and that is what Yaakov sought, but what exactly is the nature of this 'brightness' that Yaakov was longing so for?

The final detail in the blessing that Yaakov bestowed upon Yehuda, the mighty son from whom eternal Jewish royalty and leadership would descend, Yaakov describes how Yehuda will be, חכלילי עינים מיין ולבן שנים מחלב (שם מט יב), *Red eyed from wine, and white toothed from milk.*

The simple reading of this verse would seemingly be intimating the conferring of robust health that is evident in Yehuda's sparkling eyes and healthy teeth that is attributed to the special quality of the wine and milk that was produced in his land.

Yet the Talmud after elaborating on this very understanding of the verse asks innocently, פשטיה דקרא במאי כתיב, *regarding what is the **plain** meaning of the verse written?*

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It goes on to state in the name of Rav Dimi that this verse is actually an expression of an appeal of the congregation of Israel to G-d:

רמוז בעיניך דבסיים מחמרא, רבונו של עולם, *Master of the Universe!, Hint to me with Your eyes (that You are happy with me) which is sweeter to me than wine*, ואחוי לי שיניך דבסיים מחלבא, *and show me Your teeth (smile upon me) which is sweeter to me than milk.* (כתובות קיא.)

Rashi elucidates that the word in the verse referring to G-d's 'red' eyes, חכלילי, is actually a contraction of the words חוך, which means *smile*, and לי לי, expressing *to me to me*, in essence asking of G-d to smile upon us favorably. This we are told is the 'plain' meaning of the verse!

Rav Yochanon goes on to apply this idea to man himself in man's quest to emulate G-d.

On the second half of the verse which plainly describes the whitened teeth from milk, he interprets it as referring to the imperative to display our white teeth through the agency of a smile, conveying positivity and joy towards all whom we encounter.

לבן שנים, *the whitening of our teeth (i.e. a smile)*, מחלב, *is more nourishing to a friend than (serving him) milk!*

The eye represents our perception. Do we view the world as an opportunity to contribute and give or as one where we can take selfishly? Do we possess a עין טובה, a good and generous eye, or a עין רעה, a stingy and evil eye?

Our teeth which are utilized for consumption, crushing and pulverizing all that which we ingest, is symbolic of indulgence and power. Animals threateningly bare their teeth towards their enemy in assertion of their ability to overpower and consume their adversary.

A 19th century French neurologist, Guillaume Duchenne, identified two distinct types of smiles. A 'Duchenne' smile involves contraction of both the zygomatic major muscle (which raises the corners of the mouth) and the orbicularis oculi muscle (which raises the cheeks and forms crow's feet around the eyes). A 'non-Duchenne' smile involves only the zygomatic major muscle. Duchenne discovered that only a smile that engages both muscles affecting not only the corners of our mouth but the eyes as well is evidence of true emotion and genuine joy. One simply can't fake a Duchenne smile, it stems from authenticity.

When our eyes narrow in a genuine smile allowing us to generously focus our emotions towards the focus of our vision, another individual, we express a עין טובה, a 'good eye', that provides warmth and encouragement.

When the tips of our mouths move upward as a result of the contraction of the muscles, symbolizing a willingness to minimize of ourselves and engage devotedly to others, and

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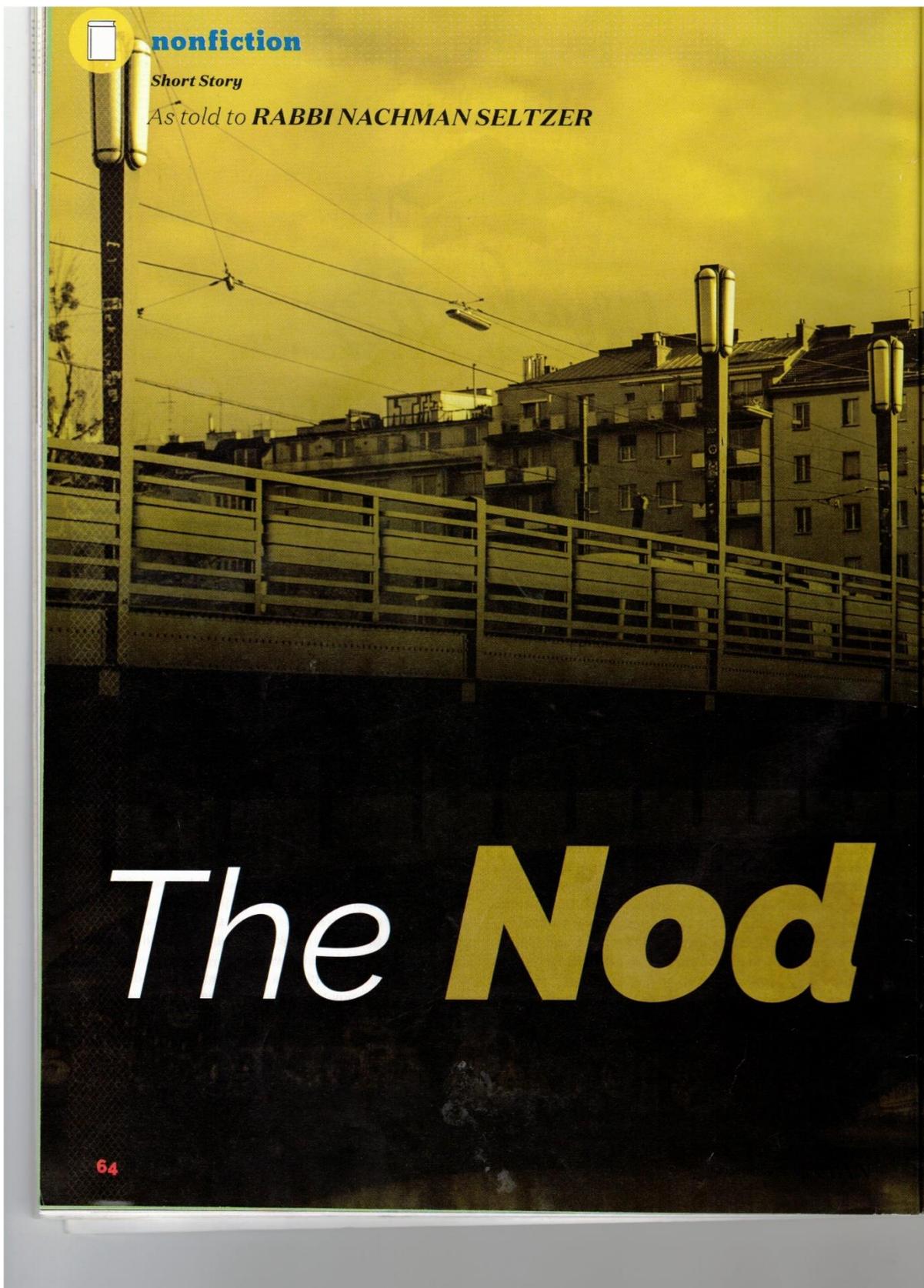
displaying the shinningly white teeth of friendship, not that of fear and threat, we have then succeeded in emulating the Creator Himself!

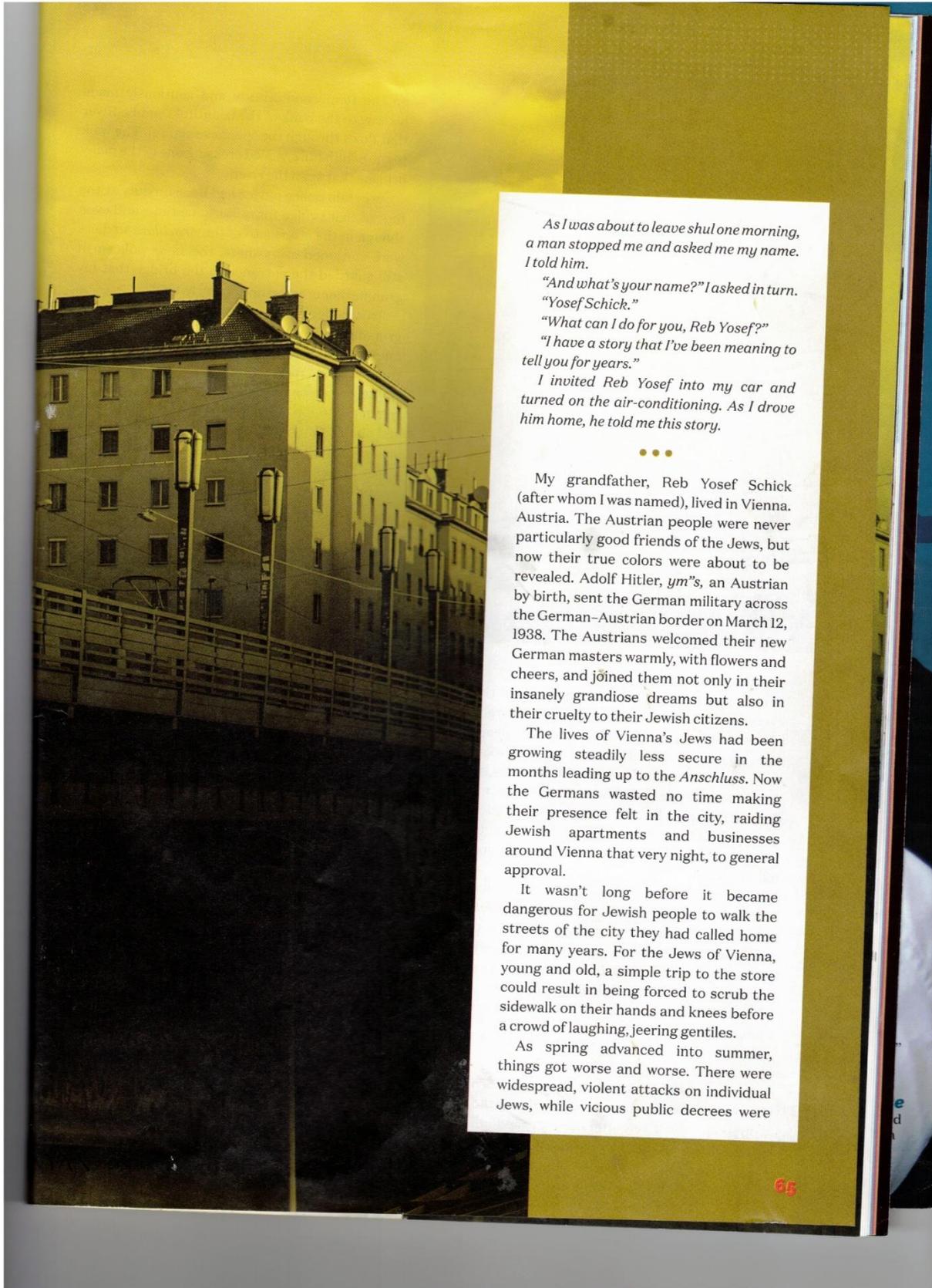
The great Tanna, Shammai taught (אבות א טו) **בסבר פנים יפות** *that we must receive everyone with a cheerful face.*

Yaakov desired to see that cheerful countenance of Yosef. He knew all that Yosef endured and wondered whether the lingering resentment of all that travail would taint his beautiful and selfless smile. Yaakov basks in the joy of seeing **אפך 'סבר**, the genuine brightness that never waned in all its glorious radiance.

Yehuda's greatest strength would be evident in his ability to display the literal **צלם אלקים**, the Divine Image of G-d Himself in a true and gallant smile that would uplift, inspire and bring joy to all those whom would be illuminated by his sincere and selfless devotion, the sign of genuine nobility. Indeed the signature smile of greatness.

May we emulate this magnificent attribute of the Almighty in bringing authentic concern and happiness to others with our smiles, in that merit G-d will turn His **הארת פנים**, the light of His countenance upon us!





As I was about to leave shul one morning, a man stopped me and asked me my name. I told him.

"And what's your name?" I asked in turn.

"Yosef Schick."

"What can I do for you, Reb Yosef?"

"I have a story that I've been meaning to tell you for years."

I invited Reb Yosef into my car and turned on the air-conditioning. As I drove him home, he told me this story.

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My grandfather, Reb Yosef Schick (after whom I was named), lived in Vienna, Austria. The Austrian people were never particularly good friends of the Jews, but now their true colors were about to be revealed. Adolf Hitler, *ym"n*, an Austrian by birth, sent the German military across the German-Austrian border on March 12, 1938. The Austrians welcomed their new German masters warmly, with flowers and cheers, and joined them not only in their insanely grandiose dreams but also in their cruelty to their Jewish citizens.

The lives of Vienna's Jews had been growing steadily less secure in the months leading up to the *Anschluss*. Now the Germans wasted no time making their presence felt in the city, raiding Jewish apartments and businesses around Vienna that very night, to general approval.

It wasn't long before it became dangerous for Jewish people to walk the streets of the city they had called home for many years. For the Jews of Vienna, young and old, a simple trip to the store could result in being forced to scrub the sidewalk on their hands and knees before a crowd of laughing, jeering gentiles.

As spring advanced into summer, things got worse and worse. There were widespread, violent attacks on individual Jews, while vicious public decrees were



promulgated one after another.

Large posters in the streets announced that every Jewish male must take the name “Israel,” and every woman, “Sarah”.... Jewish people were no longer allowed into the public parks.... Jewish government workers were fired.... Jewish-owned stores were closed down or “sold” to non-Jews (confiscated).... Roundups, deportations to the Dachau concentration camp, and the introduction of the Nuremberg racial laws soon followed.

Vienna had become a minefield, and the more “Jewish” the area, the greater the risks. The main Jewish enclave was the neighborhood of the world-famous Schiffshul, the center of Jewish life in Vienna since 1858. *B’chasdei Hashem*, my grandfather and his family lived a good 12-minute walk away from there. This helped them to keep a low profile.

...

Even in that trying time, the Jews of Vienna didn’t stop keeping the *mitzvos*. And they didn’t stop going to shul. Day after day my grandfather, often with his young son Shmiel, left his home

on the Rembrandtstrasse and cautiously made his way to the bank of the beautiful Danube River that flows through the Viennese capital. The walk to the Schiffshul entailed crossing one of the many bridges that span the river.

A certain police officer had been on duty at the foot of that bridge for quite some time; and even though in the aftermath of the *Anschluss* soldiers were stationed everywhere, the same policeman still guarded the entrance to the bridge that my grandfather crossed on his way to shul.

This policeman had never said a word to my grandfather in all the time they had “known” one another. He coldly ignored him, as if he simply did not exist. Yet my grandfather always nodded politely when he reached the officer and said “*Ein guten tag*” (Good day). He even doffed his hat. He did the same on the way home. And so it went, my grandfather nodding to the policeman and greeting him, while the policeman pretended that no one was there.

When Shmiel asked his father why he persisted, he answered simply, “The Torah tells us to greet every person we meet *b’sever panim yafos*.”



Winter rolled around again, the sky a dismal gray covered with a patchwork of heavy clouds. Bundled up against the frigid Alpine winds, my grandfather left his home for the Schiffshul. On the wide boulevards he walked in the shadows of the imposing brick houses standing four or five stories high, passing the ubiquitous coffee shops, the heart and soul of the city; through their large windows fronting the avenue he could see the regular clientele sitting at the tables, sipping coffee and eating Viennese *torte* while reading their newspapers.

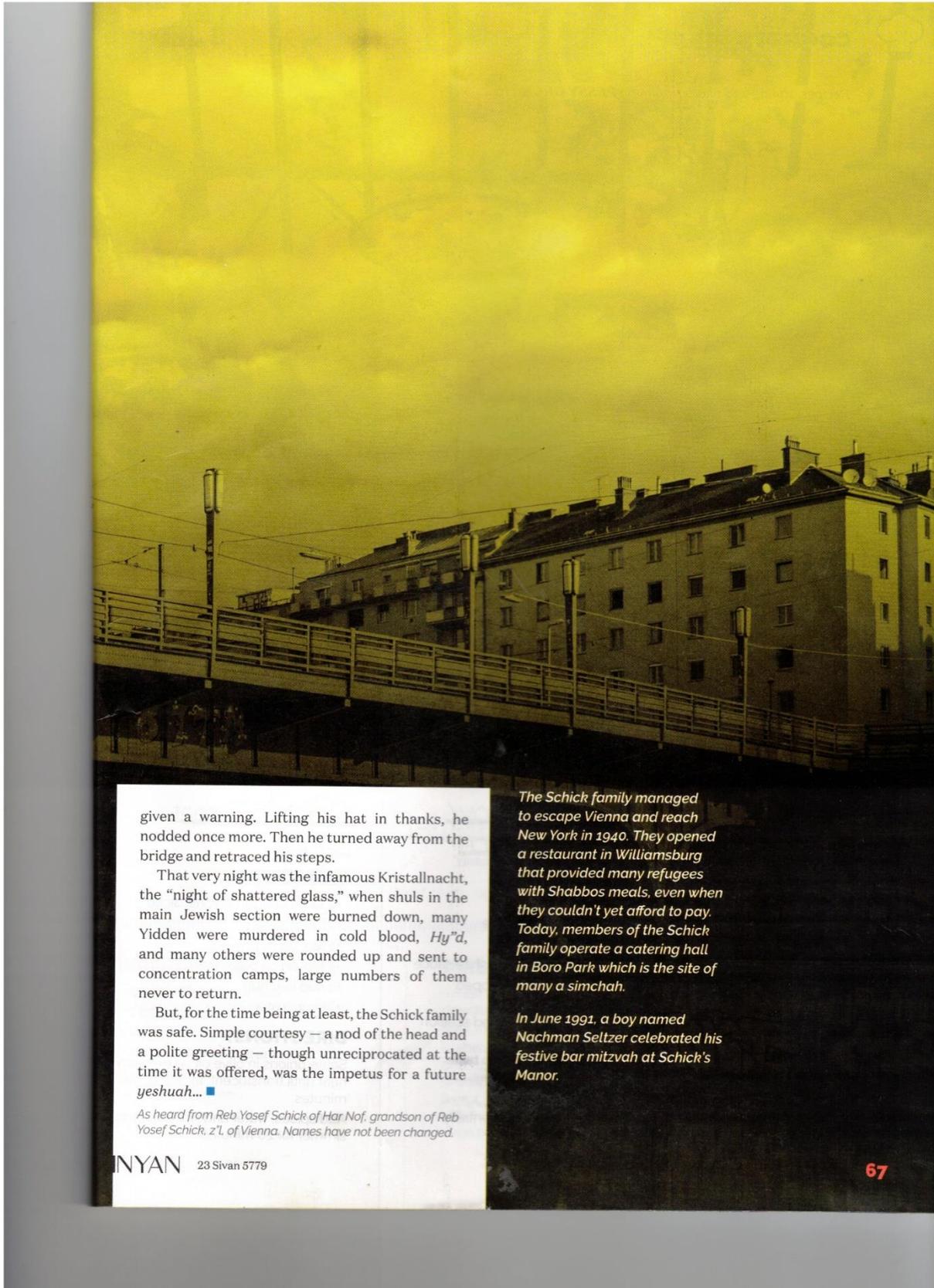
He shook his head to clear it. Could life still be normal? Maybe for the non-Jews...

My grandfather walked on toward the bridge that would bring him to the other side of the river. Soon he was nearing the guardhouse where the policeman stood, silent and expressionless. Half a minute more, and he was standing before the policeman.

My grandfather nodded as usual, said “*Ein guten tag*,” and started to walk on, when suddenly the policeman spoke!

“Go back, Jew,” he said hoarsely, while staring straight ahead. “Go back.”

With the keenness born of constant fear, my grandfather understood that he had just been



given a warning. Lifting his hat in thanks, he nodded once more. Then he turned away from the bridge and retraced his steps.

That very night was the infamous Kristallnacht, the “night of shattered glass,” when shuls in the main Jewish section were burned down, many Yidden were murdered in cold blood, *Hy”d*, and many others were rounded up and sent to concentration camps, large numbers of them never to return.

But, for the time being at least, the Schick family was safe. Simple courtesy — a nod of the head and a polite greeting — though unreciprocated at the time it was offered, was the impetus for a future *yeshuah*... ■

As heard from Reb Yosef Schick of Har Nof, grandson of Reb Yosef Schick, z”l, of Vienna. Names have not been changed.

NYAN 23 Sivan 5779

The Schick family managed to escape Vienna and reach New York in 1940. They opened a restaurant in Williamsburg that provided many refugees with Shabbos meals, even when they couldn't yet afford to pay. Today, members of the Schick family operate a catering hall in Boro Park which is the site of many a simchah.

In June 1991, a boy named Nachman Seltzer celebrated his festive bar mitzvah at Schick's Manor.

What does the ‘still face’ experiment teach us about connection?

by Mary Gregory

Humans are born ready for connection. The way we are parented has long term and ongoing effects on our functioning. The effects of our early life can trigger a cascade of changes genetically, cognitively, socially, and physically which can have either positive or negative lifelong consequences. The ‘still face’ experiment is a powerful study which shows our need for connection from very early in life. This experiment was developed by Dr Ed Tronick in the 1970’s. The still face experiment gives an insight into how a parent’s reactions can affect the emotional development of a baby. Early in our lives we were learning about other people’s reactions and how our behaviour can affect others. This experiment gives us insight into what it is like when connection does not occur.

Baby’s reaction to the still face experiment.

This experiment involves a baby and parent (in this case the mother) sitting facing each other. The mother starts by playing with her baby, smiling at them, and talking to them. The mother then turns away. The next step is that the mother shows a still face or a lack of responsiveness to her baby for 2 mins. After the still face portion of the experiment there is a repair when the mother returns to normal and returns to playing with and talking to her baby. The interesting part of this experiment is not the actions of the mother but rather the reaction of her baby. You start by seeing a smiling happy baby who is engaging with her mother. The baby is making movements and sounds to communicate with her mother and responding to her mother’s interactions with her.

Once the still face portion of the experiment begins the baby at first looks confused. She attempts to use all of her abilities to initiate a response from her mother. Babies are limited in the types of sounds and movements they can do, and you see the baby in this video using a range of ways to try to get her mother’s attention. She looks around the room, she tries smiling, then pointing. As her attempts to connect continue to be ignored by her mother you see her start to show distress and frustration. She begins crying and then screeching. Babies in this experiment often lose postural control. Their central nervous system become so overwhelmed that they physically collapse. This baby also bites her own hand which may be an attempt at self-comfort. This baby dissolves emotionally and it can be uncomfortable to watch her distress. Towards the end of the experiment the baby becomes withdrawn and hopeless no longer attempting to get her mother’s attention.

After the still face portion of the experiment when the mother returns to interacting with the baby. You can see the joyfulness of the reunion and the relief is clear. The baby is

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quickly able to regulate its emotions once the mother is present again and play resumes easily. The still face is an example of the common everyday occurrences which all parents experience where they need to finish cooking dinner or attend to another child. Having a non-responsive parent is not a problem if it occurs in short doses, however if it occurs over longer periods it can have a detrimental impact on the baby's development.

Dads you are just as important

This video demonstrates that babies react just as strongly to their fathers 'still face'. Babies demonstrate the same behaviours seeking connection to their father as they do with their mothers. Fathers are often left out in this type of research and it is important that fathers understand how important they are in their child's life.

So, what does the 'still face' experiment show?

The 'still face' demonstrates how vulnerable we all are to the emotional or non-emotional reactions of the people they are close to. It demonstrates how babies who are just learning about their relational world try to achieve connection. Babies were once thought to be unable to understand emotions. However, in this experiment they have a clear reaction to a lack of emotional connection from their mothers and fathers. Even very young babies have demonstrated that they can respond to emotions of the adults who care for them. Not only are babies able to passively respond to adult interactions but babies are also actively engaging and shaping social interaction with the adults in their lives.

In this scenario, a pattern has been discerned with regard to a number of common stages and reactions. These occur in humans of all ages who are seeking emotional connection. The first stage is the reach which is generally a physical movement of arms out. The second stage the protest is an attempt to engage the other person with emotion to obtain a reaction. The third stage is the turn away when the baby is so overwhelmed trying to get a reaction, they will look around the room or turn away from the parent. The fourth stage involves a final effort to get a connection and usually involves visible distress. This occurs because the baby is so dysregulated and desperate for connection, they use the only means they have of communicating which usually involves crying. The final stage involves the baby ceasing to attempt to get an emotional reaction from the parent. In a healthy relationship there is a reconnection as shown in the videos and this leads to the ability to repair the hurt that has occurred in the relationship.

What if the 'still face' occurs over a long period?

There are many reasons a parent may struggle to be emotionally present with their children. Some parents have head injuries or illnesses which make it difficult to show appropriate emotional reactions. For parents in situations where there is domestic violence it can be difficult to show emotions. Drug and alcohol use can also impact emotional availability and both intoxication and the resulting hangover can blunt emotional expression. Parents experiencing severe depression or other mental illness may also struggle to engage with their child. Phones have also become a major part of our lives and it

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is not uncommon to see parents disconnecting from their children while using their phone. If you had a parent who was not responsive you may struggle yourself and repeat this behaviour with your own children. What is life like for babies whom experience the two minutes of still face for long periods of time? Research has shown that children who have parents who are not responsive to their needs have more trouble trusting others, relating to others, and regulating their emotions.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you struggle at times to show your emotions?
- Do you feel shut down?
- Do you have people in your life who tell you they want to see more of an emotional reaction from you?
- Were there emotions that were unacceptable to show in your household when you were a child?
- Do you find it challenging to understand your child's needs?
- Are you so exhausted or overwhelmed with life that you find it difficult to smile or talk to others?