**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas noach 5776**

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**A Lesson from the Chofetz Chaim:**

**Can One Ever Do**

**Too Much Chesed?**

**By David Bibi**

I often discussed with the Rabbi [Abittan] how he dealt with the burdens of an entire community. He treated every problem as his own. He was as empathic a person one could know. And he stayed with a person day in and day out until the problem was solved or the burden had eased. He rarely complained though. He looked at everything he did as doing his job. Not in the sense of a job at work, but the job mankind has of emulating G-d while on this world.

To the Rabbi everything appeared as an opportunity to do the right thing, to do the misvah. He once mentioned a story that serves as a lesson to those wishing to throw in the towel. When the Chofetz Chaim was in Vienna, an important person came to the house where he was staying to ask a pressing question. The Chofetz Chaim was in the middle of a meal, so the owner of the house invited the visitor to join everyone at the table, assuring him that when the meal was finished he would gladly introduce him to the Chofetz Chaim so that he could ask his question.

Meanwhile the Chofetz Chaim was reciting the Psalm, "Mizmor LeDavid Hashem Ro'i," as he usually did at mealtimes. When he finished the last verse, "May goodness and chesed follow me all the days of my life," he turned to the guest, whom he did not know, and asked, "Isn't it wondrous that King David says that goodness and chesed shall chase me; for usually murderers and robbers are what chase a person, but when do goodness and chesed chase him? "

We can learn from this that it may seem to a person who is occupying himself with acts of kindness and charity that the 'goodness and chesed' indeed chase him. Since he is losing money or taking time from his work, his yetzer attempts to convince him to stop doing chesed. What should he do?

**The Wisdom of King David**

King David tells him that in such a case he should pray to Hashem that goodness and chesed should continue to chase him for the rest of his life, since he is continuing to do acts of kindness and charity. He should know that if he does so G-d will allow him to fulfill that which is promised at the end of the verse, 'And I shall sit in the house of Hashem all the days of my life."'

When the guest heard these words, he got up to leave, thanked his host and said goodbye. The host was astonished. Why would he want to leave before he had even asked his question?

The guest then explained, "The Chofetz Chaim has answered me without my asking. You see, several years ago I established a gemach in my town. Recently, my wife has been complaining that my chesed is causing me losses in business, and it is taking up too much of my time. She wants me to hand over the gemach to someone else, but I refuse to do so, and we decided to ask the Chofetz Chaim.

**“Not an Excuse to Stop”**

“But now the Chofetz Chaim has answered our question, saying that even if goodness and chesed already have been done by a person, this is not an excuse to stop. He should continue to be occupied with them. And so now I am hurrying home to tell this to my wife." (CHOFETZ CHAIM AL HATORAH, p. 260)

Rabbi Feinhandler comments that doing chesed should be our constant goal, and there is never "enough" chesed done. So rather than throw in the towel we should also look at the work we do as an opportunity rather than a challenge. This was Rabbi Abittan every day of his life. I guess it was my dad too!

*Reprinted from last week’s (Parshas Beraishit) email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**L’Maaseh… A Tale to Remember**

**The Ponevezher Rav’s**

**Friend in Miami Beach**

For many years until his death in 1969, the Ponevezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kaheneman, zt”l, would annually visit Miami Beach, Florida, in order to raise funds for his Yeshivah. Rabbi Berel Wein, who was a Rav in a Miami Shul during that period, developed a close relationship with the Ponovezher Rav, and on many occasions, he would drive him around to the homes of wealthy members of his congregation to collect money.

The Ponovezher Rav had a magnetic personality, and his love for every single Jew was clear and apparent at all times. As a result, these wealthy individuals enjoyed the time spent in their homes with the Rav, and looked forward to his visits while the Rav was in town.

**A Widower with No Children**

Rabbi Wein recalls that there was one man in his congregation, a widower with no children, who had retired years earlier and moved to Miami from New York City. This man had been a successful attorney until a number of medical issues stopped him from working.

The doctors were not very optimistic about his recovery, and the man decided to retire and move to Miami. He purchased an annuity (a financial product that pays out income, a reliable means of securing a steady cash flow for an individual during his retirement years, and to alleviate fears of outliving one’s assets) that would last until the age of ninety, bought a beautiful home and awaited the inevitable, living in comfort.

Fortunately for this man, the inevitable was very long in coming, and at the age of eighty-eight, he was still energetic, and sharp. He was also an outstanding member and donor to the Miami community. The Ponovezher Rav developed an attachment to this gentleman, and the two would engage in hours of conversation. Rabbi Wein would drive the Rav to the man’s home at least two or three times each winter, and the wealthy retiree would always conclude their meetings with a check of no less than $5,000 each and every time.

However, Rabbi Wein became aware of a change in the man when he turned ninety and his annuity ran out. Now, he had no more income and aside from his home, he had very few assets. Rabbi Wein wasn’t even sure if the man had any cash available for necessary staples. So when the Ponovezher Rav came to town and asked him one morning if they can go visit his elderly friend, Rabbi Wein was uncharacteristically hesitant.

**Unable to Dissuade the**

**Rav from Making a Visit**

He explained to the Rav that the man’s situation had changed and he barely had enough money to live. He didn’t feel it was appropriate to visit him at this time and expect a donation, but the Ponovezher Rav wouldn’t hear of it. “Of course, we must go visit him! Now, especially, he would want us to come see him!”

The two got in the car and drove out to the man’s home. They rang the bell and the man opened the door. When he saw who was standing there, his face immediately fell and turned white. He began to stammer that perhaps it was not a good time for visitors, but the Ponovezher Rav just smiled, shook his hand warmly and kissed him on the cheek.

They sat down together inside and the man began telling the Rav how his income had dried up and he was sadly unable to write out even a small check to the Yeshivah. The Ponovezher Rav stopped him in mid-sentence and said, “My dear friend, you don’t need to worry. For so many years, you took care of the Ponovezher Yeshivah. Now, the Ponovezher Yeshivah is happy to take care of you!”

The Rav asked how much the annuity had paid him for all the years, and then assured the elderly man that as long as he lived, the Yeshivah would continue making payments in that exact amount! The man ended up living until the age of ninety-six, and for the final six years of his life, he indeed received a check every quarter in the amount he was used to.

Rabbi Wein later learned that the bulk of the money came from the Ponovezher Rav’s personal bank account and allowed the man to live out his years in comfort, peace of mind, and with dignity. When the man passed away, he made his final donation— he left his beautiful home to the Ponovezher Yeshivah!

*Reprinted from last week’s (Parshas Bereishis) email of Torah U’Tefillah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The Siddur Speaks & Middos**

**The Importance**

**Of Hakarat Hatov**

Modim Anachnu Lach! We thank You, Hashem!

Rabbi Label Lam teaches about Parashas Bereishis that the Pasuk says, “Adom said, ‘The woman that You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate” (3:12).

Rashi points out that this indicates that Adom had a lack of gratitude. The Pasuk later states, “So Hashem banished Adom from the Garden of Eden to work the soil from which he was taken” (3:23).

Rabbi Lam asks, how was this an appropriate punishment for Adom’s misdeed? Does the punishment fit the crime in a manner of ‘measure for measure’? Also, what sometimes seems like a retributive reaction is really a mechanical effect caused by the action.

For example, if a person puts his hand in fire he is automatically burnt. Perhaps being sent from Gan Eden was just the reaction for what Adom did? Why was expulsion considered a punishment? Rabbi Lam answers with a mashal.

A wealthy family raised an orphan in their home from infancy until early adulthood. His treatment and style of living was absolutely equal to the other siblings in the family. He wore the same elegant clothing and ate the same gourmet food as they did.

One day a poor man came to the door of this wealthy man. A deep feeling of sympathy struck the wealthy man, so he gave the poor individual one hundred gold coins. The poor fellow was shocked. He had never been given such a huge sum. The generosity of the rich man uncorked a fountain of appreciation. The man started to praise the rich man with every benevolent phrase. He continually showered blessings and good wishes even as he exited and walked away.

The wife turned to her husband and remarked on what a stunning display of gratitude they had just witnessed. She then addressed the phenomena that this fellow with a single donation could not stop saying thanks, and is probably still singing praises as he sits in his home. In contrast, the orphan, who has been the beneficiary of their kindness worth much more than that donation of one hundred gold coins, has never once offered even a hint of thankfulness to them!

The husband called over the orphan boy who had been a member of their household for so many years, and pointed him to the door, and said that it was time he left. The boy held his head low and walked out. The next few days were bitter for this young man. Without food and shelter he was forced to take the lowest job he could find. He worked hard from day till late at night, and slept on the floor when he finished his job.

The first few days of work earned him enough just to pay his rent for sleeping there, and only then could he afford to buy a drop of food. For weeks he struggled and suffered just barely surviving, and all the while looking longingly back at the beautiful and elegant life he left behind.

At a later time, calculated by the wealthy man, he sent for the boy to come back to their home and be returned to his former status within the family. However, now, having gone through the difficult ordeal that he had endured, he thanked his host constantly for every bit of goodness that he received, and continuously remained with the joy of genuine appreciation.

Rabbi Lam explains that the key to holding onto a blessing is appreciation. Without that attitude of gratitude to Hashem for all that He gives us, we come to forget the goodness that surrounds us and are pushed into exile, like Adom was, until we are ready to come back to Hashem with thanks and joy of gratefulness for everything He does!

*Reprinted from last week’s (Parshas Bereishis) email of Torah U’Tefillah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**Getting an Aliyah to the Sefer Torah Once a Month**

(Editor’s Note: The following inspiring story was emailed last week by a dedicated and enthusiastic reader who prefers to remain anonymous.)

It is written in seforim that a person should try to have an aliyah to the reading of the Sefer Torah once a month. Baruch Hashem, for over 40 years I never missed having an aliyah at least once a month.

On Friday the August 28th of this year, I was taken ill to hospital and the next day - Shabbat was third week that month that I did not have an aliyah to the Sefer Torah, although I went to the shul in the hospitali. I said “Ribono shel Olam I can’t help it if the chain will be broken.”

I spent another Shabbat in the hospital for the fourth week [in the Jewish month of Elul] and I said “Ribono shel Olam ani mistaher meod (I am very sad) that I will break the over 40 years chain of getting an aliya at least once a month.

At Mincha I went to shul and sat on the back row often seats wearing the hospital pajamas. In front of me about in another 50 seats were men all wearing Hassidic,shreimels or big hats. I couldn’t see in front of me.

Nevertheless, miraculously the gabai came to me and asked my name. I was in tears of joy. When a person honestly worries for a mitsvah Hashem helps him.

A gezunter vinter

Kol tuv!

**It Once Happened**

**The True Majority**

One day while Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha was learning Torah with his students, a gentile entered the Beit Medrash and listened to the discussion that was taking place. His interest, however, was far from sincere. In fact, his only reason for coming was in order to glean some bits of Torah wisdom which he could then twist and use to the detriment of the Jewish people.

He understood Hebrew well, and stood quietly in the back, listening and waiting for just the right moment to spring. His plan was to put a question to Rabbi Yehoshua, and then use his own arguments to prove the rabbi wrong in front of his students. If he played his cards right, he might even succeed in sowing doubts in the minds of the young students and win them over to the ways of idolatry.

The moment came and the gentile confronted the sage. "I have a question for you. How is it that although you Jews sit all day and night and study your Torah, you still don't fulfill its precepts properly?"

Rabbi Yehoshua had seen these types before, and he turned to him with a calm demeanor and answered, "What exactly do you mean? What have you seen us do to cause you to think that we have transgressed the laws of our Torah?"

"It is not just to one particular law that I refer, but rather to the whole spirit of the Torah, for isn't it written in your Torah that 'the minority should follow the majority'? That seems to mean that if one holds a certain view while all of the others differ from him, he should follow the view of the majority. So why is it that there are many more idol-worshippers in the world than there are Jews, and yet you stubbornly insist upon following your own religion. So, you are transgressing your own laws by refusing to worship idols."

Rabbi Yehoshua had heard this foolish argument before, and he realized that the gentile had completely misunderstood the meaning of the verse he was quoting. The verse actually referred to decisions made by the Sanhedrin [the Supreme Court] while judging a case which demanded the death penalty. Then, only by a majority of two or more judges is it possible to decide for capital punishment.

Rabbi Yehoshua understood that the motives of the gentile were corrupt, and he decided not to explain the true meaning of the words to him. The idol-worshipper might distort his words and try to harm the Jews in some way. Now, what he would do was to answer him in such a way that he would never try such a trick again.

Rabbi Yehoshua turned to the man and asked, "Do you have any sons?"

The man's expression changed in an instant from one of haughtiness to one of profound sadness. "How did you know? I have many sons, but they give me only trouble. Every night when the family sits down to dine, each of my sons blesses his own idol. Then the arguments begin. One son says that his idol is the true one, the next son screams, 'That's a lie--only mine is true!' And these arguments go on and on until everyone is too upset to eat. Sometimes, actual fist-fights break out and blood flows."

"How terrible!" said Rabbi Yehoshua. "I don't understand why you are unable to make peace between your children. Surely you must side with one or the other, and you can bring the others into agreement with you."

"That's not true at all! They are all mistaken; only my idol is the true one, and I can't convince them of it. There will never be peace in my home."

Rabbi Yehoshua faced the idol-worshipper and reprimanded him sharply, saying, "If you can't even make peace between your own children, how dare you come here with your phony questions!" The idol-worshipper turned on his heels and left, and was never seen there again.

Rabbi Yehoshua's students surrounded their teacher, praising him for his clever answer. "Master," they said, "it is explicitly written in the Torah in so many places that it is forbidden to worship idols. How could he have imagined that G-d would want us to follow a majority of idol-worshippers? But, tell, us, please, is his question mentioned anywhere in the Torah?"

Rabbi Yehoshua replied to them: "It may have seemed to you that I was just joking with that man, but that is not the case. My answer was serious. This man was suggesting that we must always follow the majority, even if they are evil, and that is why he asserts that we must worship idols, G-d forbid. But in truth, the gentiles are not a majority, for they are descended from Esau and have no unity amongst themselves. Since each of them has his own opinion, they consist of many individuals, rather than a unified group.

"The Jewish people, on the contrary, are descended from Yakov, and are united in service to G-d. The Torah refers to Esau, saying 'all the souls in his house'--souls in the plural, since they are divided in their opinions.

"Describing Yakov, it is written, 'all the people were seventy soul'--soul, in the singular, for all of them worshipped only the One G-d. From this we can see how exact are all the words of Torah. Nothing is extra, and each letter has deep meaning."

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim Weekly,” (Parshas Noach 5753/1992), a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

[**When the Muslim Lady Called For the Rabbi**](http://matzav.com/when-the-muslim-lady-called-for-the-rabbi/)

In his work with sick patients over the past 30 years, Rabbi Avraham Lider has witnessed some extraordinary moments and literal miracles in his position as Director of the Ahavas Chesed organizationbased in Crown Heights.

Ten days ago, a social worker from a New York hospital urgently called Rabbi Lider at home.

“There is a lady here who needs to speak to you right away,” the person said. “Her husband is in the ICU, she is sitting by his bedside. His condition is extremely critical, and he is not expected to make it. Can you come to speak with her?”

Rabbi Lider dropped what he was doing, and immediately came to the intensive care unit where he found the patient attached to life support machines. The anguished wife was waiting to speak to the rabbi.

“Rabbi,” began to tell him a startling story.

“I’m a Muslim,” she said. “My husband, however, is Jewish and he is dying. We have been married for 27 years, but it is his wish that even though he didn’t live like a Jew, he wants to be buried as a Jew.”

Rabbi Lider nodded in understanding. Before he was able to respond, the woman continued.

“Rabbi, listen to me,” she said. “I have pressing family matters to take care of, and I need to travel back to Turkey tomorrow. When my husband dies, please make sure to bury him as a Jew. I think he will want to have a Jewish burial. Can you help, please?”

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Rabbi Lider with “Yitzchak”

Rabbi Lider was astounded and managed to tell her that we Jews plan Bris Milah ceremonies, Bar-Mitzvahs and weddings. “We don’t really pre-plan funerals!” she noted.

She insisted, “If my husband dies in the meantime I want to give you a letter giving you full authority in writing to bury him and be in charge, in case I am not around.”

Rabbi Lider could not persuade her against this, so he agreed to accept the note giving him authority.

The rabbi went to the man in the ICU, and prayed for him by his bedside. He came to that bedside every single day, said a Misheberach for him and talked to the unconscious man.

Meanwhile, the man’s wife left for Turkey, torn between her husband and her family obligations.

Astonishingly, the man got better, and after 4 days he opened his eyes. Gradually, his tubes and wires were disconnected, and he was transferred to a regular room.

Now that he was awake and alert, Rabbi Lider was able to chat with him, and asked his name.

“My Hebrew name is Yitzchak,” replied the patient.

The rabbi grinned. “Tell me, do you like kosher chicken soup?” he asked the sick man.

“I love it,” said the patient.

He asked the man if he would like to put on tefillin.

“Last time I put on tefillin was at my bar mitzvah. I’m now 84 years old,” he replied.

The next morning Rabbi Lider came by again, bearing a pot of delicious chicken soup. After enjoying the chicken soup, the patient then put on tefillin, for the first time in 70 years.

With tears in his eyes, he said “Shema Yisrael” with the Chabad rabbi.

Rabbi Lider reassured Yitzchak that he would always be there for him “until he was 120,” and that he would always look out for him with whatever he needed.

*Reprinted from the August 28, 2015 website of Matzav.com The feature originally appeared on COLLIVE.COM*

**Honor My Mother?!**

**By Rabbi Aron Moss**

***Question:***

I know that the Ten Commandments require us to respect our parents. But not all parents are worthy of respect. I am disgusted by the things my mother has done. She is old now and needs me, but there is nothing in her life that deserves respect. How can I respect my mother without losing my dignity?

***Answer:***

Respecting your mother doesn't mean that you think she is all good. But surely she can't be all bad. Surely you can think of some redeeming feature, something good your mother has done. There must be something for which you can say that she is a worthwhile person. Can't you think of one good thing she has achieved?

I can. You.

**Respect for parents is a base for self-respect**

Like it or not, you are a product of your parents. No matter how different you are from them, no matter how far you go to avoid repeating their mistakes, you will never be able to change the simple fact that they are your parents. Whether they were good parents or horrible parents, whether they built you up or put you down, they are where you come from.

Your mother brought you into the world. If you honestly think your mother is all bad, without a good bone in her body, then on some level you will see yourself as another one of her failures. Your existence stems from her. Respect for parents is a base for self-respect.

The fact that she mothered a child who has a clear sense of right and wrong, and is aware of her wrongdoing, means she must not be all bad. She may not get the credit for your moral sensitivity, but she does get some credit for your existence. If nothing else, you can at least respect her for that. Far from compromising your dignity, respecting your mother forms the basis for your dignity, because she, along with your father and G-d, was a partner in your birth.

Respect does not mean accepting her failings or excusing her misdeeds. It means that if your mother needs help, you should be there for her. When she speaks, you need not agree, but you must listen respectfully. You have to treat her as a mother. Failing that, your self-respect has shaky foundations.

You don't have to respect the life your mother has led. But, for your own sake, you do have to respect that she is your mother.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Irreplaceable: The Heart of the Entire Jewish People is Broken**

**By Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

Commenting on the tragedy of the Holocaust, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach once said, *“It’s not just the number six million. We lost so many holy people.”*

These words kept circling in my mind the last few days… it’s not just the number – we lost so many holy people.

The media reported: “4 people murdered in two terrorist attacks”. It’s not just the number. We lost magnificent people.

Many may have read about Rabbi Eitam Henkin, of blessed memory, who was shot together with his wife in front of their little children. He was a first class scholar of Torah and history. He was following in the illustrious footsteps of his grandfather, father, and mother. Eitam, just 30 years old, had already established himself as a rare talent and a highly respected rabbinic personality.



Photos of Rabbi Eitam, Hy”d and Naama Henkin, Hy”d

His talented and creative wife Naama, of blessed memory, also killed at point blank range, was a highly regarded graphic artist who was described as being wise beyond her years. Together they were parents, raising their beloved children in a community devoted to Torah learning and to kindness. They were raising their children to be Jews filled with immense pride in our people and to be the next builders and leaders of our nation.

A second terrorist attack two nights later in Jerusalem. [Rabbi Nechemia Lavi](http://www.aish.com/jw/id/The-Murder-of-a-Hero.html) heard the commotion -- someone was being attacked. A father of seven, Rabbi Nechemia quickly ran to help – putting his own life in danger. The terrorist turned and attacked him. He saved a woman and her baby – his life was taken. Rabbi Lavi served as an officer in the Israeli Army. He considered this a mitzvah, a religious duty and an honor. He taught Torah each day in the Old City of Jerusalem.



Photos of Aharon Banita-Bennet, Hy”d and

Rabbi Nechemia Lavi, Hy”d

The picture published in the media of the other murdered victim of the stabbing that night shows a man in traditional Chassidic garb. Aharon Banita-Bennet, of blessed memory, was a member of the Breslov Chassidic community. He also served in the Israel Defense Force. He was a Jew devoted to prayer and Torah study. A Jew devoted to his people and fulfilling his duty to the State of Israel.

We lost people of nobility. We lost people of exemplary kindness and piety in the way they lived their lives. We lost precious people who gave of their enormous talents each day to increase wisdom and goodness in Israel and in the world. Each one was special. They were Jews of exceptional devotion to the land of Israel and to the people of Israel. They represent the very best of our nation.

Our team, the Jewish People, is no longer at full strength. Our light has been diminished.

It’s not just the number – we lost extraordinary people.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik said that when a Jew sits shiva we mourn the irreplaceable person that has been taken from us. Each person is unique. There is no person that can ever take the place of another person’s presence in this world. For this we are heartbroken and filled with pain.

Four children have lost their parents. Nine children have lost their father.

Four sets of parents lost their children.

I stood together with thousands of others at the funeral of Eitam and Naama Henkin. Every person present experienced that morning in his or her own way. I experienced the funeral as a parent who has also lost a child. The pain is overwhelming. Life is never the same again. Unlike any other experience of death – when a child dies a parent feels unbearable pain because only a parent knows how much their child was meant to bring to the world.

The joy and love they were meant to give and receive has been brutally ripped away. Their life was a world that can never be replaced. Why should they not have had the opportunity to live their lives? No one feels this excruciating sense of loss as painfully as a parent. No one is as hopeful and optimistic as a parent is for his or her child. When a parent loses a child, a parent is struck with the notion that a soul is irreplaceable.

The joyous holiday season has come to a close. The families of the victims enter the week of mourning; parents, siblings, children and wives sit shiva. They will spend the days ahead talking about their loved ones. They will be at a loss for words trying to describe the unique and extraordinary people they were; and what they could have been, if not for these acts of evil.

The heart of the entire Jewish people is broken. As Jews we know that it is not just the number – it is not “four people murdered.” Each person we lost is irreplaceable.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*