**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayikra 5771**

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**Chassidic Story #693**

**Baseball to Boston**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

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*The Bostoner Rebbe of blessed memory was quoted on a childhood experience from the 1930s:*

Towards the end of our first year at Mesivta (yeshiva high school) Torah Vadaat, Rabbi Shrage Feivel Mendlowitz (the founder, in 1926), invited our class to go to Camp Mesivta, a yeshiva-oriented summer camp he had started in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. This was a radically new idea in those days, and most of us had no idea what the experience entailed. The camp had actually opened on a smaller scale one or two years before, but ours was the first year of a full-scale, fully organized operation.

Unlike some modern American camps, Camp Mesivta usually had comparatively little time for sports. There were, however, some notable exceptions, one of which was particularly memorable for me.

One day the administration announced, Today we are going to play baseball. Not having the vaguest idea what this was all about, I decided to just watch quietly from the sidelines. Unfortunately the teams were exactlyone man short; and soon I was surrounded by eager classmates.

“Come on, we need you.”

“But I don't know how to play.”

“Don't worry, you'll learn fast.”

I soon found myself in the outfield waiting for a ball to catch. It occurred to me, however, that once hit, baseballs travel at great velocity, are quite hard, and could cause considerable pain to a young, inexperienced yeshiva student without a mitt. So my first and only baseball game passed more in a state of high anxiety than fun. I couldn't help but wonder, “What did I need this for?”

Later I found out.

Thirteen or so years passed and we were spending the summer in Nantasker, a beach resort near Boston. One day the non-religious son-in-law of a chasid of ours offered me a ride into town. I hadn't really spoken to him before, and my attempts at conversation during the ride were painful failures. We simply had nothing in common to talk about. Finally I gave up trying to reach him and our non-conversation lapsed into complete silence. Then he turned on his car radio to listen to the Sunday baseball game.

A few minutes went by and then I commented on a play. His mouth dropped open. It was as if the steering wheel had suddenly started speaking. He couldn't believe that a chasidic rabbi in full chasidic garb could know anything about baseball.

So we talked baseball most of the way to Boston, and soon began to talk about other subjects as well. He started coming by, became religious and eventually became a chasid of ours.

In fact, he later became an important local Jewish leader, both within our own New England Chasidic Center and within the broader Boston Jewish community. Then I understood how one can retrieve stray souls even with baseball: A home run can become a run home.

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from “And the Angels Laughed: Biography of the Bostoner Rebbe”[Mesorah Publications].

Connection: ?

Biographical Note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe (1921 - 18 Kislev 2009), a direct descendent of Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke of Nicholsburg, led two communities: in Boston and in the Har Nof district of Jerusalem. He was known for the vast help he has extended to people in medical emergency situations, and his open, friendly nature made him beloved to Jews of every type.

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**Speak Clearly, Please”**

**By Shoshannah Brombacher**

 A chassid decided to visit his rebbe. It was a long trip to the town where his rebbe lived, and he had to spend a night at an inn. Fortunately many guesthouses in Eastern Europe were run by Jews, so Jewish travelers could always get kosher food and hear the latest news.

The chassid arrived early at the inn, and he ate his supper with the other travelers. They discussed matters of Torah, and they were happy that such a learned chassid had joined them. They also talked about what was going on in the towns they came from; they spoke about trade and about their families, as travelers love to do.

The next morning the chassid got up and prayed the morning prayers together with the other guests. But to the chassid’s ear their prayers sounded mumbled, unclear and incomprehensible, like water rushing over pebbles in a very swift brook. So after the prayers were finished, he went over to one of the guests and said very quickly in a soft, murmuring voice: “Werurygoigtdy?”

“Excuse me, what did you just ask?” answered the puzzled man. The chassid repeated: “Wurarygongtdayisd?” The man looked at him. “I am sorry, but I still do not understand your question!” “Of course you don’t!” retorted the chassid. “I said, ‘Where are you going today?’ but I said it just as quickly and as garbled as you mumbled the words of your prayers . . .

“Yesterday,” the chassid continued his admonishment, “when we all sat around the table talking about what’s going on in the world, I was able to understand every word of the conversation. But this morning, all I heard were incomprehensible sounds. Is this how you talk to the King of Kings, to G‑d, the Ruler of the World?”

The man understood what the chassid meant to say; he hung his head and he apologized. All the travelers stood in a circle around the chassid, they heard his words, and they promised from then on to pray in a different way, to pay attention, and to pronounce the words clearly and with the right intentions, even if they didn’t always understand all the Hebrew words, because not everybody is a scholar. They assured the chassid that they would do their best, and they thanked him for his simple but profound lesson. Then they ate breakfast and left the inn, each to his destination.

The chassid made a meaningful visit to his rebbe. On his way home his heart was light. He was happy because he would soon see his dear wife and his little son, whom he had missed.

When he opened the door of his house, he greeted his wife warmly and went straight to the crib of his son. The baby stretched out his pudgy little arms and gurgled: “Gooaaghhgoogoo.” “Ah, my little boy,” said the chassid’s wife, “you want some milk! Come!” And she took him on her arm and went to the kitchen.

The chassid was amazed. “How did you know what he wanted? Those ‘goohgahgooh’ sounds are all the same to me!” “But not to me,” said the mother of the little boy with a smile. “I am with him day and night, so I know exactly what he means with his different *gooh*s and *gaah*s and what he wants.”

“You know,” she continued to muse aloud, “I thought about this when I was praying. G‑d knows what we, His children, want from Him, even if our speech is not perfect, or we do not know Hebrew well enough, or we do not always understand what we pray, as long as we pray sincerely.”

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

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**Chabad Celebrates**

**20 Years in Congo**

**By Elad Benari and Chana Ya’ar**

The top leadership of Congo and the World Chabad-Lubavitch movement gathered Tuesday night (March 3rd) in Kinshasa to celebrate two decades of friendship. President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Kabila, called to congratulate Rabbi Schlomo Bentolila, Chabad's emissary to the region and director of Chabad of Central Africa.

Kabila was unable to personally attend a gala celebration held at the Grand Hotel to mark the occasion. His roving Ambassador, Antoine Ghonda, addressed the audience in his stead. (All Israel news photos: Israel Bardugo)



Numerous dignitaries attended the event, noted Rabbi Bentolila, including the U.S. ambassador and 12 others from the American embassy. Despite an attack earlier in the week at a military base in Kinshasa and another at the presidential residence, hundreds were present for the event. Among the guests were government officials, foreign ambassadors, business owners and rabbinic colleagues of the rabbi who arrived from numerous countries.



*Echoes of the classic 1951 film “The African Queen.”*

Although the event was held to mark Chabad's 20-year anniversary in Congo, it was the announcement by Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, vice chairman of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, the worldwide educational outreach arm of the movement, that drew the most applause. Chabad of Central Africa, he said, will appoint full-time permanent representatives to Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria. The rabbis will work under Rabbi Bentolila's direction in conjunction with the local Jewish communities.

Up to this point, Rabbi Bentolila has provided Jewish outreach, educational and social service programs to Jewish communities in 14 countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the Jews are living in the region for business reasons, although in some cases, Israeli tourists comprise a part of the population as well. “After being 20 years in Africa, I assure you that the majority of sub-Saharan Africa is anti-Semitic-free,” Rabbi Bentolila said in a telephone interview with Israel National News.

“There is only reverence and respect for the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.” Congolese officials, the rabbi said, are very happy to have Chabad in their country. “They were dancing.”

*Reprinted from the March 4th email of Arutz Sheva (Israel National News.com)*

**Giving Away One’s Heavenly Reward to Make G-d Happy**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

This week's section begins the third and central book of the Five Books of Moses. While the first two were mainly filled with stories, here we have only commandments.

Some Chassidim say that this is G-d's way of telling us that the only way to properly fulfill the commandments is by first learning stories about Tzadikim.

For instance, in this week's section we have a mysterious phrase describing the sacrifices;

"A pleasing smell to G-d". (1:9)

**G-d Get Pleasure**

**When His Will is Done**

Rashi explains that G-d is saying that HE gets PLEASURE when His Will is done.

What does this mean? G-d is supposed to be infinite and certainly lacks nothing. How can we give Him pleasure? How can He get anything from us?

To understand this here is a story I heard from Rabbi Mendel Glukoski some ten years ago:

**The Small Crowded**

**But Silent Room**

The small room was crowded but no one spoke. Only the difficult breathing of the old man on the bed broke the almost serene silence. Old Shlomo was dying. Several Rabbis of the Holy Society were standing around him silently reading Psalms, and behind them stood his family, but it was only a matter of minutes now.

For those of you that don't know, the "Holy Society" means the funeral staff. Traditionally in Judaism this task was (and still is) reserved for only the holiest and most spiritual of Jews, and here they were none other than the holy Tzadik Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Braditchev and nine of his pupils.

Suddenly the Rabbi broke the silence and leaning toward the dying man spoke forcefully.

"Reb Shlomo! Reb Shlomo! Why are you sad?"

Everyone had noticed that tears were streaming down Shlomo's cheeks but no one made much of it.

"You should be happy!" continued the Rabbi, "Everyone has to die sometime. You've lived a long fruitful life. Here, just look at your beautiful family! So why are you so sad? Why are you crying?"

**Expresses Fears of What Awaits Him**

"No no, not because of that!" the old man whispered. "Thank G-d, Thank G-d I'm not complaining. G-d forbid. It's just that, well...the Torah and the commandments...I never really cared. I always had other things on my mind. Who knows if I'll go to Heaven? Who knows? And even if I do, I'm pretty sure that it's not going to be very bright for me there." The tears kept running down his cheeks.

"Ahhh! That's your problem?" exclaimed Rav Levi Yitzchak. "How would you like my Heaven?"

"Ehhh!?" exclaimed the old man with all the surprise he could muster up.

"That's right, how would you like my Olom Ha Ba (world to come)?" repeated the rabbi.

"Ehhh?" Said Shlomo as his eyes widened and he raised his head slightly. "Ca..can you do that? Is such a thing possible? Are…. are you serious?"

**The Tzadik Confirms His Unbelievable Offer**

"Certainly!" said the Tzadik as he turned to one of his pupils and asked him to bring a pen and a piece of paper. In just minutes he was dictating; "write, 'I Levi Yitzchak ben (son of) Sarah do hereby give my entire place in Heaven to Shlomo ben ehh…' what is your mother's name?" Ahh yes! Shlomo ben Yenta, right?" Old Shlomo shook his head in astonished agreement as the Rabbi told his pupils to sign the deed. .

A warm smile of gratitude spread over his face as he took the precious document from the rabbi. If he had any energy left in his drained-out body he would have begun dancing. He gave one last loving glance at his benefactor, another at his family as though to say everything was all right, said the final "Shma Yisroel" prayer, closed his eyes and blissfully passed on to his now significantly increased heavenly reward.

Later that day, after the funeral, his pupils asked their master if he could explain. What type of merit did old Shlomo have that he deserved such a gift? Perhaps he did some unique deed or special mitzvah? It must have really been something unique, after all Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's afterlife was no small gift!!

"Maybe" answered the Tzadik, "But I don't know what it was."

"You don't know?" blurted out one of his pupils in disbelief, "Then why did you give him your entire heaven?!!"

**A Chance to Make G-d Happy**

"Well" answered Rav Levi Yitzchak "It's simple. I just reasoned that G-d loves the Jewish people. So to make a Jew happy, even for a few moments, was worth my entire world-to-come. That's why I gave it to him."

Of course this is a very strange idea. A great tzadik like the Rabbi of Braditchev certainly had a very clear idea of the infinite pleasures awaiting him in the afterlife. But he gladly lost it all in order to make….. G-d happy !

But really he wasn't the first to do so. The first was Abraham the founder of Judaism. He was willing to sacrifice his only son because he knew it would please G-d.

In other words, this phenomenon is the foundation of the Jewish people. And it makes sense as well.

**The Essence of Judaism**

The essence of Judaism is that G-d and His Torah (and the Jewish people) are alive.

NOT that G-d just created the world 5000 plus years ago, gave the Torah 3000 plus years ago and since then occasionally gets involved. But rather, that He creates EVERYTHING (including the spiritual worlds) CONSTANTLY. And His inner true reason for doing so is the Torah.

In other words, G-d has a living personality (the mystics call it His ten "spherot"), the deepest aspect of it is HIS pleasure, and ONLY the Jews (and those attached to them through the seven Noahide commandments) can arrouse it.

That is why the Torah cannot be fulfilled properly without first reading the stories of the forefathers. Because without these stories we can think that G-d is infinately distant from us and the best we can do is to receive pleasure in the world to come (like the other religions believe).

But the Forefathers teach us that G-d is infinitely CLOSE as well. And everything we do should be in order to give pleasure to our Creator.

With this we can also understand why, according to one version, the Baal Shem Tov was born because of such a deed.

Some three hundred years ago in the Ukraine there lived a hidden Tzadik called Rabbi Eliezer. This man was so righteous that he was frequently visited by Elijah the prophet (who left this world some 2500 years earlier).

**A Prophetic Promise**

**With One Condition**

One day the prophet came to Rabbi Eliezer and announced that he was willing to reveal ANY secrets he so desired, including the date of the arrival of Moshiach. This, to a great mystic like him, was the greatest of all presents. His only desire in life was to increase knowledge in order to serve G-d more completely, and this was like a dream come true.

"There is only one condition, however" added Elijah. "You must tell me what you did on your thirteenth birthday.

"Don't worry, I guarantee it will not detract from you portion in heaven. You should know that whatever it was you did made a very great stir in even the highest spiritual worlds but it is not known what it was. Now I have been given permission to reveal all secrets to you if you tell me, and I will reveal it to no one."

**Rabbi Eliezer Refuses**

**The Incredible Offer**

But Rabbi Eliezer, without even thinking refused. "I'm sorry" he apologized, what I did was between me and G-d, I want no rewards."

Because of this he was denied the knowledge he so desired, but instead it was decreed that he would have a son that would teach the world how to do what he did; think, speak and act only in order to please the Creator.

And that is why we pray (in the Musaf prayers), for Moshiach to build the third Temple so we can again offer the sacrifices and REALLY do G-d's will.

Not to say that the sacrifices in the first two Temples weren't G-d's will, but rather that then the JEWS didn't sacrifice them with the proper attitude of wanting to give G-d pleasure.

But now we are praying that due to the teachings of the Baal Shem and his followers, we will merit to bring Moshiach and serve G-d with joy and complete surrender in the Third Temple.

It is all in our hands. One more good deed, word or even thought can bring…**Moshiach NOW!!**

*Reprinted from this week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Just in Time**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

An American youngster who spent a couple of years studying in a Jerusalem yeshiva for foreign students returned home to get married. Neither his family nor that of his *kalla* had sufficient funds to make a respectable wedding or to get the couple started with basic necessities.

The community to which they belonged pitched in to help them. The local synagogue offered free use of its social hall and a caterer agreed to provide the meal at cost. But with so many startup expenses looming in the very near future there was room for concern.

Two days before the wedding the *chatan* received the good news that the ticket he bought in the raffle sponsored by his former yeshiva as a fundraising effort won the first prize of ten thousand dollars.

Not a bad wedding gift after all!

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Ohr Somayach International (edu.ohr) in Yerushalayim.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Sacrifice Yourself**

The primary discussion in this week's Torah portion Vayikra is regarding the Korbanos - sacrifices which we brought in the Mishkan - tabernacle and later in the Beis HaMikdash - Holy Temple, in Jerusalem.  The root of the word Korban is "Karov" meaning closer.  Today we do not have the sacrifices to grow closer, but often times, when we make personal "sacrifices" we grow closer to Hashem.

A married couple recently revealed how they turned their backs on their violent neo-Nazi past – after discovering they were both Jewish. The one-time skinheads grew up as part of a hate-filled white power gang in Warsaw, the capital of Poland and once the site of the largest Jewish ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe. But now they are devout members of an Orthodox Jewish synagogue.

The truth about their roots had been buried by their parents to escape persecution from first the Germans and then the Soviet-controlled post-war government. Even when the couple started spewing anti-Semitic slogans and attacking Jews, their parents still kept silent about their heritage. Pawel and Ola Bromson met at school when they were twelve and married at eighteen.

By then they were heavily involved in the neo-Nazi movement that was rife in Warsaw’s concrete jungle housing estates. Just 350,000 Jews remained in Poland after the war, a tenth of the population from before the Holocaust, and many fled in the quarter of a century that followed. For those that remained, parents often decided it better to keep their true faith a secret.

But Ola remembered something her mother once let slip about her Jewish heritage. And when she checked at Poland’s Jewish Historical Institute she learned the truth – that not only was she a Jew, but so was her husband. She was in shock.

‘Something told me to do it. It was unbelievable. ‘It turned out that we had Jewish roots. It was a shock. I didn’t expect to find out that I had a Jewish husband.’ She said she did not know how to tell Pawel the truth. ‘I didn’t know how to tell him. I loved him even if he was a punk or skinhead, if he beat people up or not.’

When she did, a disbelieving Pawel confronted his parents. He said he had been a skinhead and a nationalist ‘100 per cent’. ‘It was all about white power and I believed Poland was only for Poles. That Jews were the biggest plague and the worst evil of this world,’ he said.

It was difficult to describe the emotions he felt at learning he was Jewish, he said. ‘My first thought was what am I going to tell people? What am I going to tell the boys? Should I admit it or not? I was angry, sad, scared, unsure.’ He was unable to look in the mirror, he said, because he hated what he saw – a Jew. But as he came to terms with his identity he approached Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, who became a mentor to the couple.

Pawel (now Pinchas) added that he does have regrets – ‘but it’s not something that I walk around and lash myself over’. ‘I feel sorry for those that I beat up but I don’t hold a grudge against myself,’ he explained. ‘The people who I hurt can hold a grudge against me.’

Today, the couple are active members of the Jewish community in Warsaw. Pinchas is studying to work in a slaughterhouse killing animals according to the Jewish Kosher requirement and Ola is working in the synagogue’s kitchen as a kosher supervisor.

Rabbi Shudrich paid tribute to them for having the courage to turn their lives around. ‘The fact that they were skinheads actually increased the amount of respect I have for them,’ he said. ‘That they could’ve been where they were, understood that that was not the right way, then embraced rather than run away the fact that they were part of the people who they used to hate. ‘I think also it says on a personal level, never write somebody off. Where they may be 10 years ago doesn’t have to be where they are today. And the human being has this unlimited capability of changing and sometimes even for the better,’ he added.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

***A Blast from the Past***

**A Slice of Life**

**From Crown Heights to the Golan Heights via Alaska**

**From a speech by Rabbi Yisrael Haber**

My schooling and maturation took place in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, yet I had no contact with the Rebbe and Chabad during those years.

Soon after our marriage, my wife Miriam and I flew from Dallas to Alaska to be responsible for Alaska's Jewish military personnel and general Jewish population. I was the only Rabbi for the state and we were the only Orthodox couple. Alaska's U.S. Senator was determined that his Jewish constituency not be deprived of a Rabbi, and he informed the Pentagon that whatever it would take to secure a Rabbi/Chaplain, the government was to provide. Not knowing this, I was surprised when, upon telling the Pentagon that we would not go to Alaska unless there was a mikva, we were told that they would help us immediately.

On our way to Alaska, we traveled to Minnesota to visit relatives. They told us that even though they kept a kosher home, we might feel more comfortable eating at the recently opened Chabad House in S. Paul.

Off we went to the Chabad House where we were welcomed by two emissaries of the Rebbe, Rabbi Moshe Feller and Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum.

After hearing that we were going to a new frontier, they wanted to know all the details. They asked us if the Rebbe knew all about this. We promised to write a letter to the Rebbe about our plans. Then they asked how they could help us in Alaska. I couldn't believe they were actually asking us; they themselves were also in a desert called Minnesota. I told them that our major problem was a mikva and Rabbi Grossbaum told me that there was no problem: he could build a mikva.

The door to Chabad opened slightly. I wondered who these people were and why would they want to help me? Once in Alaska, my wife flew monthly on a C-130 military transport to the closest mikva 1,800 miles each way until the mikva was finished. But a mikva was taking shape and on an Air Force base no less!

History was in the making as a young Lubavitcher Chasid left his family in Minnesota and came to Alaska to build the mikva at Elmendorf Alaska Air Force Base.

I asked many questions about Chasidut in general and Chabad in particular. How do they get so involved in so many things, and even in Alaska? I had never encountered this in all my years of Jewish life. A short while later, I got a two-page letter from the Rebbe in the mail. How did the Rebbe have time to write and encourage us all the way in Alaska?

A private audience with the Rebbe was arranged for us in 1978, while we were on a short visit to New York. Arriving at "770" at 11:00 p.m. on a cold winter night, someone met us and ushered us inside.

Before I had time to think, Rabbi Groner greeted us and told us that we were next. How should one act and what should one say? After all, our purpose was to ask the Rebbe for a blessing for children. Looking around in mild panic, I spied Reb Laibel Bistritsky right behind me; I knew Reb Laibel from my childhood. "Haber," he said, "you had to go all the way to Alaska to finally come to 770?"

With that, the door suddenly opened. When the Rebbe greeted us I became much more at ease. For twenty-seven minutes (which felt like one minute) the Rebbe outlined many programs and activities that he wished us to fulfill in Alaska.

He spoke of the important work that Miriam was doing in special education though no one had ever told the Rebbe that she was in that field. He asked Miriam to try to get all the older women there to go to the mikva, many of them for the first time ever. Finally the Rebbe blessed us that our sons should grow up to be not only chaplains, but Rabbis of great cities. We left the Rebbe's room and were unable to speak for many minutes.

Three-quarters of a year passed. Sitting in my office in Alaska the door of the office opened just as the telephone rang. I beheld two young Lubavitcher Chasidim in my doorway as I heard my wife on the phone telling me that we were expecting a baby. Not only had the Rebbe's blessing been fulfilled, but he had sent two emissaries to be there at the very moment of its fruition. The two young men became lifelong friends of mine and little by little we became Chasidim of the Rebbe.

Today, our sons serve as examples to their friends in the Golan and help many youngsters draw closer to Chabad. For more than thirteen years we have been "the" Chabad family in the Southern Golan. While working in education, [ed: Rabbi Haber was appointed by the Israeli Ministry of Education as a supervisor of its psychology department] we have provided Chabad activities on a part-time basis.

This past year, thoughts regarding my work and goals as an emissary of the Rebbe in the Golan crystallized. The special missions that the Rebbe has asked me to carry out, my being asked by many Chabad institutions to speak, my wife being a featured speaker regarding her work in Alaska and the Golan, and more, made me realize that I must provide a full-time Chabad House for the Golan. Our Chabad House has become a reality. It serves the entire southern Golan and is located just two kilometers from the Syrian border.

At the outset of the political cloud hanging over the Golan -- where 32 synagogues from the times of the Mishna and Talmud have been found, where more than 17,000 Jews in 32 communities have been living -- I wrote to the Rebbe relaying the worries of the residents of the Golan.

The Rebbe's response, received within hours, was not to be afraid and to stay put. The next day we merited another reply and a request to publicize the following: "The Lubavitcher Rebbe calls to all residents of the Golan to be strong and not to be afraid of the recent happenings, to remain in their places and to keep strong in the mission of settling the complete Holy Land, until the righteous Redeemer, Amen."

*[Ed. note: There is a flourishing Chabad House today in Anchorage Alaska headed by Rabbi and Rebitzen Greenberg]*

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