**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayeishev 5775**

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**The Baal HaTanya’s Advice to a Chassid on**

**How to Become Wealthy**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The first Rebbe of Chabad [Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi also known as the Baal HaTanya] was imprisoned because of his teachings. All the time the Rebbe was in prison his followers mourned and fasted every day. But when he was freed on the 19th of the Jewish month of Kislev they rejoiced and danced in the streets.

[](http://mjcc.ru/UserFiles/AlterRebbe.jpg) *The Baal HaTanya*

One simple, poor Jew in Liozne, the Rebbe's home town, when he heard of the Rebbe's release, his joy was so unbounded that he participated a bit to freely in the festivities and by the time the Rebbe actually entered the town this poor fellow was laying in the road, unconscious from drink and exhaustion.

When the Rebbe's carriage passed him the Rebbe commented, "Aha, the wealthy Jew of Liozne is snoring!"

Everyone present thought the Rebbe was joking…. But he wasn't.

A while later the Rebbe said he would like to see that poor fellow privately. When he arrived the Rebbe asked him how he earned a living. "I sell rags and needles in the streets" was the answer. The Rebbe replied;

"Well, you'll never get rich that way. You probably buy your merchandise from the peddler that comes into town, right? Listen, take a loan from me and instead of buying cheap things from the peddler go directly to the nearest city and buy better things, things you think people might need. When you have sold it all come back to me."

The Rebbe gave him a few rubles and the poor Chassid did as he was told. A few weeks later he was back in the Rebbe's room to pay the Rebbe his loan back.

"Not yet", said the Rebbe. "Now, instead of buying in the local city, go to Moscow and buy from the original suppliers. Then sell in the local city where you used to buy, and of course I want to see you again as soon as you've sold everything."

Sure enough in two week's time the Chassid was back.

"Now this time" continued the Rebbe. "Instead of buying from the supplier in Moscow go buy directly from the factories in Germany and France. And instead of selling in the nearby town, sell in Moscow!"

The Chassid dutifully wrote down all the Rebbe told him and was just about to leave when the Rebbe called him back.

"One more thing! When you are in France ask someone to show you to a theater. Yes, that's right, a theater where there are plays. And don't forget to bring a Tanya there with you. Then, when you have sold all your merchandise in Moscow come and tell me what happened."

The Chassid did as he was told. By now he was a man of means, but he would never dream of entering a theater if the Rebbe hadn't told him. After he bought his goods from the factory in Paris he asked the owner if he could get him a ticket to the theater. That night he was ushered to his plush seat in the massive ornate hall.

It was wonderful! The comfortable seat, the dark warm surrounding, his weary bones and the boring play almost immediately put him into a deep, blissful slumber.

Suddenly someone was shaking him. He opened his eyes to see one of the janitors standing over him. "Excuse me Rabbi" He said in Yiddish. "The play is over. Had a good sleep? Tell me, where are you from? What's a Jew like you doing in a place like this?" The Chassid told him that the Rebbe Schneur Zalman had sent him and, remembering his orders to bring a Tanya, took out the book and said, "See, the Rebbe who wrote this book."

The janitor took it, opened and began reading. He stood for several moments and finally looked up and said, "This is a very important book. Very important!"

When the Chassid returned to the Rebbe and told him what had happened and got to the part about the janitor the Rebbe smiled broadly and said "Good, now I have approval from him as well!"

Some say that the janitor was one of the 36 hidden Tzadikim and some say that it was one of the forces of evil (something like the angel that fought with Yaakov).

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**L’Maaseh… A Tale to Remember**

**The Ponovezher Rav’s Quick Thinking on a NYC Subway Train**

Last week’s parshah describes how when Eisav told Yaakov he would travel with him, Yaakov told him to go ahead and not wait, because the large crowd of small children and animals will slow Eisav down. Instead, Yaakov said they would meet again later at a certain destination.

Once, the Ponovezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, was collecting money in New York on behalf of his yeshivah in Bnei Brak. He was riding the subway, on his way to meet with a potential donor, when a group of unruly teenagers decided to have fun with the elderly Rabbi. They came over and began pestering and disturbing him, and he was afraid that they might follow him to his destination or even attack him, and he didn’t know how he could possibly escape them in an unfamiliar city.

He then remembered that the Medrash relates (Bereishis Rabbah 78:15) that in the times of the Gemara, whenever the Sages had to meet with the Roman government to lobby against its oppressive decrees, they would first review Parashas Vayishlach, which teaches the rules for interacting with Edom while we are in exile.

The Ponovezher Rav quickly reviewed the parshah, and he developed a brilliant plan based on advice given by the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 25b). Pretending to be ignorant of where he was, he asked the unruly teens for directions to a certain part of town. Excited at their “good fortune”, they were more than happy to “help”, and they offered to personally escort him there. They told him he should get off with them at the next stop, and when the doors opened,

the youths told the Rav to hurry up and exit.

Rav Kahaneman, pretending to be even older than he was, took laborious and slow steps, and “honored” them with exiting first, which they were more than happy to do. A few seconds later, the Rav was still walking toward the doors when they closed and the train took off – leaving his tormentors behind! The Ponovezher Rav later explained that just when Yaakov thought he was finally free of his wicked brother because his gifts were accepted and Eisav’s anger had quieted down, Eisav offered to accompany him on his journey. Yaakov, fearing the spiritual influence of his evil brother, commented that because of his need to travel slowly, he wouldn’t be able to keep up with Eisav’s pace. He therefore proposed that Eisav proceed ahead and he would eventually catch up, something that he never got around to doing, and thereby teaching his descendants an eternal and invaluable lesson!

Reprinted from last week’s email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.

**Honoring One’s Father and Mother**

**By** [**Rabbi Sholom Klass**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbisholomklass/)

There are certain mitzvos that all civilized people can understand and appreciate. One such mitzvah is that of honoring one’s parents. While there are certain specific particulars that are distinctly Jewish, the general concept is one accepted by non-Jews as well. Indeed, when the Talmud sought to find an example of one who observed this mitzvah in its proper form, it selected a non-Jew by the name of Dama ben Nesina.

**The Abuse**

Dama ben Nesina was a noble man greatly admired for his wisdom and prowess. It so happened that the elders of his city gathered together for an important meeting and asked him to come and advise them.

When he arrived they immediately seated him at the front of the table and the discussion began. Unknown to Dama, however, his mother — unfortunately a demented woman who was not responsible for her actions — had followed him and burst into the chamber room.

Before the startled eyes of the people, she rushed at her son and began to beat and slap him. The noble Dama, with perfect respect, never raised his hand against his mother, merely pleaded: “Mother, have pity and allow me to take you home.”

When Chazal heard of his remarkable self-restraint and of the honor he afforded his mother, they proclaimed to all:

“If you wish to understand how far the mitzvah of honoring one’s parents extends, come learn from Dama ben Nesina.”

**The Precious Stone**

Chazal had yet another occasion to admire the respect Dama ben Nesina had for his parents. It was during the time of the second Bais HaMikdashand theKohen Gadol was garbed in his holy garments as specified in the Torah. There arose a need for a precious stone to be placed in his breast-plate and it was said that Dama owned such a gem.

They hurried to his home and said, “Noble Dama, we have need of a precious gem for the Kohen Gadol and we understand that it is in your possession. We are prepared to give you 1,000 gold shekels for it.”

“I will gladly sell you the gem,” replied Dama. “Allow me to get it from the next room.”

Entering the next room, Dama saw that his father was fast asleep on the couch and one of his feet was resting on top of the chest in which the gem was contained. Dama was faced with the choice of awakening his father or losing the opportunity to sell the gem.

Making sure he did not awaken his father, he returned to the room where the Sages sat and said:

“Learned leaders, I am afraid that I cannot sell you the gem.”

Thinking that he wished to get a higher price for the gem, they replied: “We must have the gem and we are prepared to offer you 10 times what we offered you before. Here are 10,000 gold shekels if you will let us have the gem immediately.”

“No, no,” protested Dama. “You do not understand. I cannot give you that gem because my father is sleeping on the chest in which it lies. I would not awaken him if you were to give me an entire household of gold and silver.”

**Father Awakens**

At that moment, his father awoke from his sleep and entered the room.

“Father,” cried Dama, “you are up. Now I can get the gem.”

Going into the other room, Dama got the gem and handed it to the men.

“We thank you for the gem,” they said. “Here are 10,000 gold shekels.”

“Take back 9,000 of the money,” said Dama. “I originally agreed to sell it for 1,000 shekels. The reason why you added the rest was because I would not awaken my father. Heaven forbid that I should sell the honor and respect of my father for 9,000 shekels.”

**The Red Cow**

The Almighty allowed Dama to go unrewarded. Next year, he was blessed with the birth of a perfect parah adumah among his cattle. The sages heard and hastened to buy it, for it was vital in the days of the Bais HaMikdash when the laws of purity were daily matters of practice.

They were so overjoyed that they paid Dama 10,000 shekels for it. When the people heard they said:

“The duty of honoring one’s parents is truly great in the eyes of the Almighty. There did He bless Dama ben Nesina.”

*Reprinted from the August 13, 2013 edition of The Jewish Press*

**It Once Happened**

**The Rebbe and the**

**Scholar from Berlin**

Life in Czarist Russia wasn't easy, but in spite of everything, the couple would have been very happy if only G-d had granted them a child.

They prayed for years and even made the long trip to the Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, for a blessing. Finally, their prayers bore fruit, and they became the parents of a charming little boy. Not only was he an attractive and appealing child; he was possessed of an intellect that was rare. He learned with true dedication, and his mind and soul delighted in every word of Torah he studied.

The boy soon outstripped all his teachers, and so he sat alone every day in his room at home studying and making great progress in his studies. His parents were as happy as could be.

One evening the father entered his son's room and gazed down upon the page he was studying. To his shock and dismay, the boy was reading one of the books of the "Enlightenment" movement which disparaged Torah and Jewish tradition. Although his heart was racing, the father spoke to his son calmly, in a voice filled with warmth and love, "What are you reading, my son?" he asked.

"Father, don't think that I'm reading this because I'm interested in their arguments. I just feel that I need to know how to refute them when they speak." The father patted his son's arm and said nothing.

The next time the father found his son reading similar literature, his rebuke was stronger. Little by little the parents noticed a change in their brilliant son. His behavior, his carriage and his dress all bespoke the influence of the "enlightened." The words of his broken-hearted parents seemed to make no impression on the boy.

One day the boy entered the kitchen and made an announcement: "I'm going to the university in Berlin to study." His parents were so shocked and broken that they could not utter a word.

When he arrived in Berlin, the boy was greeted as a wunderkind, so brightly did his intellect shine among the other students. He excelled in his studies, and after several years he had written two original treatises which were about to the published. In addition to all this distinction, he found a woman whom he wished to marry.

Suddenly, he remembered his aged-parents, and had an urge to obtain their blessing on his proposed marriage. He also wanted to show them his scholarly manuscripts and prove to them that he had indeed succeeded in his chosen endeavors, despite their disapproval.

But then he reflected: How could his parents, totally uneducated in secular ways, begin to fathom the depth of his brilliant studies? Suddenly he had an idea. He would stop in Liozhna on his way home. There he would show his manuscripts to Rabbi Shneur Zalman, a man of great erudition who would certainly appreciate the depth and insight of his works. Then, his parents would hear about him from a source that was more familiar to their shtetl-world view.

The young man made his way to Liozhna and presented himself at the Rebbe's court - an unusual sight in his waxed moustache and Berlin garb.

Reb Moshe Meizlish, a well-known Chasid, approached him, inquiring what the young man was seeking, but he replied that he wanted only a private audience with the Alter Rebbe. When the request was presented to the Rebbe, he agreed, and the young scholar was ushered into the Rebbe's room.

He entered with his two manuscripts clutched tightly in his hands. The Rebbe and the young man were closeted in the study for several hours. The scholar finally left the room, his face flushed red, his hands shaking. He still held the manuscripts, but paced nervously, looking at one and then the other. Then he took the papers and threw them all into the fire which burned in the central room.

Reb Moshe had been watching the whole scene, and now he approached the young man and asked him, "What happened in the Rebbe's chamber?"

"I showed the Rebbe my manuscripts - scholarly concepts which I was on the verge of publishing. They had been very well received in Berlin. He looked at the first page of the first manuscript, made some notations, and quickly flipped through the remaining pages. Then he did the same with the second work. When he had finished, he looked up at me with his penetrating eyes and said, `Young man, your book is very well-written, except that it is fallacious, for your basic premises are wrong.'

"I was shocked to my core. I had spent years perfecting these works. All of my professors were highly impressed by them. I listened to the Rebbe, and then I started to argue my point of view. But I was forced to stop. For try though I may, I simply couldn't refute his conclusions. I left the room completely embarrassed, and I continued turning over in my mind the Rebbe's critique. I sorely wished to justify myself, but I realized that I simply couldn't. That is when I threw my precious manuscripts into the fire."

The young man remained in the court of the Rebbe, who himself taught this extraordinary young man. Not too long after, the young man passed away. The Rebbe explained that his soul was a reincarnation of Rabbi Elazer ben Durdaya who had lived in the times of the Talmud. Elazer ben Durdaya had lapsed into a very immoral lifestyle but eventually returned to G-d with all his heart. His sincere repentance earned him the title "rabbi." He had had several reincarnations, and this most recent incarnation completed his repentance. His soul was prepared to enter the highest realms.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Deaf Rabbi Busier Than**

**Ever With Chanukah Plans**

**Events to take place in three East Coast**

**cities, led by Rabbi Yehoshua Soudakoff**

**By**[**Menachem Posner**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm)

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Chabad Rabbi Yehoshua Soudakoff has a full plate right now. As one of just a handful of Deaf rabbis in the world, the 23-year-old plans to shuttle between three East Coast cities, where he will be hosting hundreds of Deaf and hard-of-hearing Jews at Chanukah celebrations tailor-made for their community’s culture and needs.

The biggest celebration is set to take place in Lower Manhattan at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, where Soudakoff expects approximately 200 people. The party will include a grand menorah-lighting ceremony with a 9-foot-highmenorah designed by Ellen Mansfield, a Deaf Jewish artist from Frederick, Md.; a guest appearance by Douglas Ridloff, an American Sign Language (ASL) actor; and, of course, Torah thoughts from Soudakoff himself.

The other two events will be held in Rochester, N.Y., and in Washington D.C.—each of which is home to a university for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people, in addition to a sizeable Deaf community.



An invitation to Soudakoff's Chanukah event for

the Deaf this month in Rochester, N.Y.

Soudakoff even has his own logo to go with the celebrations: the ASL word for Chanukah, formed by two raised hands each with four fingers extended upward, topped by eight flames.

Last year’s first-ever public menorah-lighting ceremony on the campus of Gallaudet University—the Washington, D.C.-based liberal-arts university where all programs and services are geared for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students—was something that Steve Brenner, past president of the Washington Society of Jewish Deaf, calls “one of the most unique happening among the Jewish Deaf community in the Greater Washington area for the past 50 years.”

In the presence of approximately 100 students, faculty and community members, Soudakoff explained that the Jewish struggle in the Chanukah story has many parallels to the Deaf story. “The Jews were a minority,” he signed from the podium, “battling against a foreign culture that attempted to assimilate them. And yet, in the end, the Jews won the battle to retain their Jewish identity.

Deaf people can relate to this, as we have struggled for years to strike the right balance between functioning in a hearing world, while being comfortable and even proud of our Deaf identity. Jewish Deaf people, of course, are a minority among minorities. And yet, we are here today, celebrating our Jewish Deaf identity as never before.”

He was assisted in the lighting of a 9-foot-high menorah by Gallaudet University President Dr. Alan Hurwitz and Provost Dr. Steve Weiner.

“It was thrilling for the audience to recite our Chanukah blessings in ASL with Rabbi Soudakoff,” says Brenner.

Like last year’s Washington event, the New York City celebration will be streamed live over the Internet with simultaneous voice translation and captions.

The invitation to Soudakoff’s New York Chanukah event for the Deaf features the Statue of Liberty signing "Chanukah" in ASL, with each finger topped by an orange flame.

**A Unique Culture**

Although his message is often similar to that of his hearing counterparts, Soudakoff notes that being Deaf gives him an important “in” with the Deaf community, which has a unique culture that is often misunderstood or overlooked by others. Through his organization—The Jewish Deaf Foundation—he has founded an overnight camp for Jewish deaf boys; led a group of Deaf young adults from Russia on a trip to Israel; and hosts regular online Torah classes in ASL on the [Jewish Deaf Multimedia](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=1289042) website and on [Chabad.org’s Jewish.TV](http://www.chabad.org/multimedia/media_cdo/aid/1013709/jewish/Jewish-Videos-for-the-Deaf-Community.htm).

And he says there’s always more to do.

As Brenner quips: “We need 20 clones of Rabbi Soudakoff to send to many big cities where there are large groups of Deaf people.”

But for the short term, Chanukah calls. The rabbi has menorahs to assemble, reservations to tally, speeches to prepare, and, of course, lots of latkes and doughnuts to order.

For more information, visit the [Jewish Deaf Foundation](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=2777515) website or email[rabbi@jewishdeaffoundation.org](mailto:rabbi@jewishdeaffoundation.org).

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

**Why I Want a Large Family:**

**The blessing of Growing Up**

**In a Home with Many Siblings**

**By**[**Eliana Cline**](http://www.aish.com/authors/169288906.html)

“So, do you have kids? How many do you have?”

Working in a waspy IT firm, this question was a common ice breaker. Coffee breaks were often spent sharing daily challenges of sleepless nights and debating how to achieve the mythical work-family balance. The three questions were predictable. How many kids do you have? How many do you want? And how many siblings do you have?

The answers, for the most part, were also predictable. Most people had one or two children, and didn’t want more. The director had three girls, but that was only because he wanted a son.

My answer to the third question never failed to raise eyebrows. “You have six siblings?!”

“Yes,” I said proudly. “And I want a [large family](http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/48894317.html). I want however many children G-d will bless us with and we can deal with.”

The US birth rate is the lowest it has ever been. Jewish demographics face the additional threat of exponentially rising assimilation. Assimilation rates of 58% in America put the continuity of the Jewish people at serious risk. So, on a personal, as well as religious, level I see the value of the family unit and having children.

But it was one conversation which moved me the most. “I am desperate for another child,” one colleague confided in me tearfully. “I have a son but my husband is adamant that one is all he wants. He thinks having another child is too expensive.”

My heart broke as she told me this. Growing up in a large family was far from easy. Financially, we were not well off at all. We never went without, but there were no overseas trips and new gadgets and my parents did that best to economize wherever possible. We fought endlessly, and my mother was exhausted for years. I am sure my parents doubted if we would ever grow out of our intense sibling rivalry. But somewhere along the way we matured and became very good friends. We speak almost every day, and will do anything for each other. I even love spending time with them. My siblings are the best people I know; I can’t imagine my life without any one of them.

As I raise my own children and look at the world with adult eyes, I am filled with gratitude for the gifts that growing up surrounded by siblings bestowed upon me. The lessons I learned are invaluable in marriage, parenting, relationships and the workplace:

**Appreciating Differences**

Each of us has radically different personalities. One sibling is emotional, passionate and outgoing. Another is introverted, level-headed and quiet. Some are musical, some technological and some are social butterflies. Some of us are messy and some of us are fastidiously tidy. We all have very different emotional temperaments and needs. The experience of having to navigate these variations enables me to respect the different psychological make-up of my husband, children, friends and colleagues.

As we gravitate towards people most similar to us, I probably would never have chosen friends like them. But having been given these people as my siblings, I have come to deeply appreciate each of them for their uniqueness, their talents and their quirks. My sister’s social activism inspires me to do my part for society while my brothers’ commitment to Torah learning is a role model.

**Resolving Conflict**

Being forced to interact with such different personalities can be a big challenge. These differences have tested our relationships; seeing an issue from the other’s point of view is never easy. In the end, we had no choice but to work through these issues, and forgive the misdemeanors and move on.

**Loyalty**

We still occasionally fight with each other. But at the end of the day, we are family. It is accepted that we can name each other’s’ shortcomings within the family, but in the outside world we will protect and stand up for each other no matter what. We are unconditionally accepted for who we are and don’t have to put on any pretenses around each other.

**Accepting Imperfection**

Sometimes a family member is not a morning person. Sometimes they come home after a bad day at work and are stressed, miserable and grumpy. They may snap at you, or slam the door in your face. Likewise, you are not always perfect, and are reactive and say hurtful things. But you learn what it means to be forgiving of family members’ shortcomings, just as they are forgiving of your imperfections. It means making allowances and tolerating imperfection, and not holding grudges.

**A Shared Jewish Identity**

My memories of Jewish life are synonymous with family life. Shabbat was spent debating current events for hours round the table and sharing words of Torah. Erev Pesach would find each of us working round the clock whether cleaning or cooking. The Passover Seder is never complete without our family jokes from decades back, and reminiscing about the Seders of past years. For me, Jewish holidays equal family time, fun and connection. These shared experiences connect each of us in a meaningful way, no matter where we are currently in the world.

These positive and joy-filled memories form a large part of my emotional connection to Judaism and ensure that our family is committed to being an integral part of Jewish identity. I yearn to create these same cherished memories for my children, and to inspire them carry on the meaningful and Torah-based traditions I was brought up with.

I walk back to my desk and glance at my flashing cell phone. Quips in our family WhatsApp group bring a smile to my face and immediately brighten my day. I return to my work, but not before offering a silent prayer of gratitude to my parents for sacrificing so much to raise us and giving me the gift of a large family.

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