**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayigash 5773**

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**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Not Just Any Pair of Boots**

**By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn**

 The following amazing true story illustrates how one Jew did not forget his Torah.

 Our story took place a number of years ago in Flatbush, New York. A very private, soft spoken gentleman, who always sat near the back of the shul, told his rav (rabbi) one day that he wanted to donate a Sefer Torah. The gentleman, Mr. Shimshon Blau,(not his real name) said that he had commissioned a sofer (a scribe) to write a Sefer Torah for him and now the job was nearly complete.

 The rav was incredulous. Mr. Blau was not known to have substantial funds and the cost of a new Sefer Torah was more than $30,000. The rav spoke to the sofer and learned that Mr. Blau had indeed been paying small sums of money over the years and recently had made the last payment. The Sefer Torah would be finished in a few days.

**The Rav Announces the Good News**

 On Shabbos the rav announced the good news to his congregants and everyone went over to Mr. Blau to wish him mazel tov and thank him for his generous gift to the shul. Writing a Sefer Torah is a mitzvah of the highest order; it is a mitzvah, which unfortunately is never fulfilled by most Jews. Plans were made for the Hachnasas Sefer Torah (the dedication of the new Torah scroll.)

 A few weeks later on a bright Sunday afternoon, the community gathered at Mr. Blau's home and escorted him as he carried the Sefer Torah from his home to the street where he walked under a chupah to bring the Torah to the shul. Dancing and singing accompanied those who took turns carrying the Torah, and a special meal was tendered in the shul in honor of the occasion.

 A few days later, a neighbor asked Mr. Blau if there was a particular reason he decided to have the Sefer Torah written. At first he was hesitant to talk about it, but eventually he relented and told his heartbreaking story.

 Shimshon Blau was only 16 years old when the Germans took him, his parents and his sisters from Lodz, their hometown in Poland, to one of the notorious concentration camps. Shortly after their arrival the parents were separated from the children and Shimshon never heard from them again.

 He was placed in a slave labor barracks and suffered humiliation and heartache every day. One night as he was lying in bed, a German soldier came in to check on the prisoners. He walked from bed to bed - and then he saw Shimshon. Suddenly he lunged at Shimshon's feet, grabbed his leather boots and yelled, "Those boots are now mine."

**His Last Connection to His Beloved Parents**

 Shimshon was shocked. The leather boots had been given to him by his parents shortly before the family had been captured by the Germans. Shimshon treasured them because they were his last connection to his beloved parents. He had no pictures, no letters, no memento that he could hold onto in a private moment for strength and rejuvenation. The gift of the boots had become a precious memory. Shimshon cried uncontrollably. Eventually he fell asleep.

 The next morning he went out of his barracks barefoot and found the soldier who had taken his boots. In desperation he ran over to him and begged, "Please give me a pair of shoes. I have nothing to wear on my feet. I'll freeze to death."

**Dare Not Antagonize the German Soldier**

 He did not dare to antagonize the soldier by asking for his own boots back. Much to Shimshon's surprise, the soldier told him. "Wait here, I'll be back in five minutes with some shoes for you." Shimshon shuddered in the cold as he waited for the soldier to return. In a few minutes the Nazi came back with a pair of shoes and gave them to the startled but grateful teenager.

 Shimshon went back to his barracks and sat on his bed to put on his new shoes. He looked them over carefully. They were made of wood, but he knew he would have to wear them regardless of what they were made of or how uncomfortable they would be.

 As he was about to put his foot into the shoe, he looked into its instep and gasped. The instep was a piece of parchment from a Sefer Torah! Shimshon froze in terror. How could the Germans be so heartless? How could he step down on the words that Hashem Himself had told MosheRabbeinu to write for all generations?

 But he knew he had no choice. There was nothing else to wear on his feet and it was either these shoes or frostbite and death. Hesitant with guilt, he put them on uneasily.

 Now, years later, Shimshon said, "With every step I took, I felt I was trampling on Hashem's Sefer Torah. I promised to myself then that if I ever got out of the camps alive, no matter how rich or poor I was, someday I would have a Sefer Torah written and give back to Hashem the honor that I took from Him by trampling on His Torah. That's why I gave the shul a Sefer Torah." (Reflections of the Maggid, Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, page 41)

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

The Connecticut

School Shooting

**By** [**Sara Debbie Gutfreund**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48867522)

**Asking Why in the Aftermath of Tragedy**

 When I first heard the ambulances, I didn't even pause to think about what happened.

 I was cooking for Shabbos as my boys ran in and out of the kitchen. When we lived in Israel, I was used to checking the news anytime I heard more than one or two ambulances, but here in quiet, suburban Connecticut, I had stopped doing that.

**Beginning to Wonder What Was Going On**

 After the sixth echo of ambulance sirens, I began to wonder what was going on. I picked up my phone to check the news and just kept shaking my head in horror and disbelief as I read about the shooting in a nearby elementary school that left 20 small children and six teachers dead. I was so shocked that I didn't notice my six-year-old standing next to me and peering over my shoulder.

 "What happened?" he asked me.

 I closed the news story and tried to think how and if to [explain the shooting](http://www.aish.com/f/p/48901167.html). "Nothing, it's okay," I said, heading back to the kitchen as the helicopters and ambulances echoed in the distance. A couple of minutes later, I noticed that it was eerily quiet in the living room. I peeked through the doorway and saw both my sons with their noses pressed to the window, listening to the sirens rolling through the mid-morning winter light.

 Then I heard my son say to his little brother, "Something bad happened, but I don't know what. *Shhh*, Ima doesn't want to say." And as they stood there, stiller than I had seen them stand for a long time, the questions began to run through my mind.

**Why Did He Do It?**

 *Why did he do it?* Minutes after the tragedy, everyone wanted to know what the killer's motive was. What could possibly be a reason for killing 20 children? Police still haven't figured it out, but people are trying to guess. He was angry. Depressed. Was he on drugs? Insane? People want to pinpoint a motive so that they can somehow understand what happened. But evil needs no motive. It randomly destroys. It fills the world with hatred. It is the opposite of light.

 But I have seen senseless, random goodness too. Like the elderly woman who I used to see on my morning runs in the Judean hills, picking up each piece of garbage on the street at dawn and putting it into a huge, plastic bag that she dragged along with her. Each morning I wondered what she was doing.

**Cleaning the World – “One Piece at a Time”**

 One day I finally asked her and she said, "I'm cleaning the world. One piece at a time." At first I thought she was a little crazy but gradually I began to admire her random goodness. She was making the world better even if no one else saw it. Even if no one thanked her. Even if no one understood why she was doing it.

 *Why did G-d let this happen?* [We ask this question after most tragedies](http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/48951221.html). Why didn't G-d cause the gunman's car break down? Or have the kids somehow not be in the classroom? Or have his guns get stuck? G-d could have saved those children so why didn't He?

 I don't know any strong answers to this question, but something that Avivit Shaer said after she lost her husband and five children in a freak fire last year still stays with me whenever I hear myself ask this question. She said that she has many questions for G-d, but she has begun to understand that G-d does not give us answers in this world. "It's not that there are no answers. But we humans are not equipped to handle the complexity or wholeness of God's answers. He has eternal considerations."

 When I hear someone who has lost her entire family in one night say these words, I can stop my own whys. I can accept that there are answers even though I don't know what they are.

 *Why is this story in my life?* Sometimes we hear about an event and forget about it soon afterwards. Or we dismiss it as too far away to be relevant. But every news story that we read and every event that crosses our paths is meant to teach us something. So what is the message in the wake of this [tragedy](http://www.aish.com/h/9av/aas/48952246.html)? Maybe it's that we should appreciate each day with our own children. Maybe it's that we should realize that human suffering is never far away, happening to someone else. It should and does impact everyone that hears about it. Or maybe the message is that we should be sending our kids off to school not only with a sandwich but with a prayer for their safety.

**Hit by the Most Crucial Hit Me**

 But for me, the most crucial message hit me when I explained to my son what happened.

 The ambulances were still blaring when I walked back into the living room and found the boys racing matchbox cars on the floor. I sat down next to them and watched them play before telling my six year old vaguely what had happened in words that hopefully wouldn't terrify him. I asked him if he wanted to say a prayer for the children who were 'hurt' and their parents.

 He nodded without looking up from his cars, and then he started singing a song he had recently learned in school. "Esau was coming with 400 men but Yaakov was *davening* to *Hashem*." I sat there confused for a moment until my son said, "This is my song for the mommies and daddies. I'm sending them Yaakov's prayer so they shouldn't be scared. So that they should know how to pray for their children. Should I sing it again?"

**Evil is Loud and Senseless**

 I nodded as I thought about the words my child was saying. Evil is loud and senseless and comes in an army of 400 men. It comes in the deafening gun shots in a kindergarten classroom. Goodness is quiet. It comes in a prayer that no one else can hear. It’s in the almost invisible steps of an elderly woman cleaning the streets at dawn.

 And goodness sits behind the scenes in a life like Avivit Shaer's who could have given up and crawled into a hole of grief after losing her family in the fire but instead continued teaching and inspiring her high school students with her rock solid faith and perseverance.

 Even though goodness is quieter and humbler than evil, it is far more powerful. Perhaps this is the message we need to hear in the face of such a senseless tragedy: the power of goodness is far stronger than evil. We don't have complete answers to the whys that run through our minds in the aftermath of the second-deadliest school shooting in U.S. history. But we have hope. If every single kind deed that we do is far more powerful than any evil act, then we can at least wake up each morning with determination like the elderly woman who cleans up the world, street by street.

 My son's song soon drowned out the sirens in the distance, and I hoped somehow that it reached the parents a half hour away outside the school. I stood by the living room window as he sang and pressed my own face against the glass, remembering the words of Avivit Shaer: "It's about bringing light into the world even when it looks dark." Piece by piece. Song by song. Word by word. Let's rebuild.

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**You Can’t Take**

**Them with You**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

 In preparation for leaving this world a wealthy Orthodox philanthropist who spent his last years in Jerusalem prepared his last will and testament in two sealed envelopes, which he entrusted to his children. His instructions were to open one of the envelopes immediately after his passing and the other after the *shiva* mourning week.

 When the first envelope was opened his survivors were astounded to read, among all the other details, a request that he be buried in his stockings. But when they conveyed this request to the local Chevra Kadisha burial society they were firmly told that there was no way that they could accommodate this wish since it was contrary to custom.

 When the *shiva* was over the second envelope was opened. In it was a letter to the deceased’s children that stated that he was well aware that the Chevra Kadisha would not bury him with his stockings on.

 He had only made the request to dramatically drive home to his children that when a man leaves this world he cannot even take his stockings with him. What he did take with him was the merit of all the good he had done with his money for Torah study and the needy.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**A Slice of Life**

**Tefilin in Dachau**

**By Rabbi Yosef Wallis**

 While he was in Dachau, a Jew who was being taken to his death suddenly flung a small bag at Judah Wallis. He caught it, thinking it might contain a piece of bread. Upon opening it, however, he was disturbed to discover a pair of tefilin. Judah was very frightened because he knew that were he to be caught carrying tefilin, he would be put to death instantly. So he hid the tefilin under his shirt and headed for his bunkhouse.

 In the morning, just before the roll call, while still in his bunkhouse, he put on the tefilin. Unexpectedly, a German officer appeared. He ordered him to remove the tefilin, noted the number on Judah's arm, and ordered him to go straight to the roll call.

**Sentenced to Death by Public Hanging**

 At the roll call, in front of thousands of silent Jews, the officer called out Judah's number and he had no choice but to step forward. The German officer waved the tefilin in the air and screamed, "Dog! I sentence you to death by public hanging for wearing these!"

 Judah was placed on a stool and a noose was placed around his neck. Before he was hanged, the officer said in a mocking tone, "Dog, what is your last wish?" "To wear my tefilin one last time," Judah replied.

**German Was Dumbfounded**

**By the Jew’s Last Request**

 The officer was dumbfounded. He handed Judah the tefilin. As Judah put them on, he recited the verse that many say while winding the tefilin around the fingers: "I will betroth you to me forever and I will betroth you to me with righteousness, and with justice, and with kindness, and with mercy, and I will betroth you to me with fidelity, and you shall know G-d."

 In silence, the entire camped looked on at the Jew with a noose around his neck, and tefilin on his head and arm, awaiting his death for the "crime" of observing this mitzva. Even women from the adjoining camp were lined up at the barbed wire fence that separated them from the men's camp, compelled to watch this ominous sight.

 As Judah turned to the silent crowd, he saw tears in many people's eyes. Even at that moment, as he was about to be hanged, he was shocked: Jews were crying! How was it possible that they still had tears left to shed? And for a stranger? Where were those tears coming from? Impulsively, in Yiddish, he called out, "Yidden (Jews) , don't cry. With tefilin on, I am the victor! Don't you understand? The victory is mine!"

**Incensed by Victim’s Thinking**

**That He was the Victor**

 The German officer understood the Yiddish and was infuriated. He said to Judah, "You dog!, you think you are the victor? Hanging is too good for you. You are going to get another kind of death."

 Judah, my father, was taken from the stool, and the noose was removed from his neck. He was forced into a squatting position and two large rocks were placed under his armpits. Then he was told that he would be receiving 25 lashes to his head-the head on which he had dared to place tefilin.

 The officer told him that if he dropped even one of the rocks from his armpits, he would be shot immediately. In fact, because this was such an extremely painful form of death, the officer advised him, "Drop the rocks now. You will never survive the 25 lashes to the head. Nobody ever does." "No," Judah responded, "I won't give you the pleasure."

**Lost Consciousness and Left for Dead**

 At the 25th lash, Judah lost consciousness and was left for dead. He was about to be dragged to a pile of corpses, and then burned in a ditch, when another Jew saw him, shoved him to the side, and covered his head with a rag, so people wouldn't realize he was alive. Eventually, after he recovered consciousness, he crawled to the nearest bunkhouse that was on raised piles, and hid under it until he was strong enough to come out under his own power. Two months later he was liberated.

 During the hanging and beating episode, a 17-year-old girl had been watching from the women's side of the fence. After the liberation, she made her way to the men's camp and found Judah. She walked over to him and said, "I've lost everyone. I don't want to be alone any more. I saw what you did that day when the officer wanted to hang you. Will you marry me?"

 The rest is history. The couple walked over to the Klausenberger Rebbe and requested that he perform the marriage ceremony. The Klausenberger Rebbe, whose own kiddush Hashem is legendary, wrote out a ketuba (marriage contract) by hand from memory and married them. I, Rabbi Yosef Wallis, their son, keep and cherish that ketuba to this day.

 After the above story appeared in "Sichat Hashavua," L'Chaim's sister publication in Israel, a subscriber to the publication, called the Sichat Hashavua office. Mr. Lasky, a 95-year-old man, asked for the phone number of Judah Wallis's son, Rabbi Yosef Wallis, Director of Arachim.

**A Fellow Inmate from Dachau**

 When asked why he wanted the number, Mr. Lasky stated, "I was in Dachau, together with this Judah Wallis. However, I never knew that he survived the beating. I always wanted to thank him for letting me put on his tefilin in Dachau. Now, at least, I can thank his son."

 After receiving the phone call, Rabbi Wallis visited Mr. Lasky. Mr. Lasky then thanked him for the tefilin his father had lent him.

**The Tefilin Had Saved Mr. Lasky**

 "I am certain," said Mr. Lasky, "that the tefilin that I wore in Dachau protected me in the camp and gave me long life and health."

 Rabbi Wallis commented, "Until now, I never found anyone to validate my father's story. Now I have an eye witness. The circle of history has now come full circle."

 *Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. It is Reprinted with permission from the forthcoming book by Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin, edited by Matthew Brown.*

**Love of the Land**

**Where the Beit Hamikdash Stones Landed**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

 What happened to the stones of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem when it was destroyed? There are various legends connected with them.

 In the Talmud there is a mention of a synagogue in the Babylonian community of Nehardoa whose foundation was formed from stones of the Beit Hamikdash that the Jews took along with them when they went into exile. This took place in regard to the first Beit Hamikdash.

 In regard to the destruction of the second one there is a legend that Heaven scattered those stones all over the world and wherever one of them landed a synagogue was eventually built on that site.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**It Once Happened**

**Reb Shabsai the Bookbinder**

 One Friday night the Baal Shem Tov was about to make Kiddush on the wine when he suddenly laughed out loud. In the middle of the Shabbat meal he laughed again, and a few minutes later he laughed a third time. No one dared inquire why, but immediately after Shabbat his disciples approached Reb Zev Kitzes and begged him to find out what was going on. (Reb Zev Kitzes used to sit with the Baal Shem Tov on Saturday nights while he smoked his pipe.)

 When Reb Zev Kitzes asked the Baal Shem Tov why he had laughed, the tzadik (righteous person) replied that he would show him. He ordered his driver to ready the horses and wagon, and the entire group of disciples piled in for the ride. Throughout the night they traveled, without knowing their destination. When dawn broke they saw that they had arrived in the city of Kozhnitz.

 After the morning service, the Baal Shem Tov asked that Reb Shabsai the bookbinder be summoned before him. The head of the Jewish community was very surprised by the tzadik's interest in this particular individual. "What I mean to say," he explained, "is that I'm sure he's a fine and honest man, but he's not exactly what one might call a Torah scholar. In fact, he's a very simple person." Nonetheless, the Baal Shem Tov was adamant about speaking to him. Reb Shabsai the bookbinder was summoned, together with his wife.

**Baal Shem Tov Inquires as to**

**What Reb Shabsai Did on Shabbos**

 When the two of them were standing before him the Baal Shem Tov said, "I want you to tell me what you did on Shabbat. Tell me the truth, and do not leave out any details."

 "I will tell you everything," Reb Shabsai replied, "and if I've done something wrong, I beg you to show me how to make amends. I am a simple bookbinder," he began, "When I was younger and stronger I worked long hours. My livelihood was plentiful, especially since - sad to say - we were childless and did not have the expenses of raising a family. Every Thursday I would buy the necessities for Shabbat, and on Friday mornings close up shop at ten o'clock, in order to go to the synagogue to prepare myself for the holy day. Now that I am older, however," he continued, "I find that I cannot work so hard, and we have become quite poor. But I refuse to relinquish my former habit.

**Better to Suffer in Silence**

**Than Ask Others for Charity**

 "This past week, Friday morning rolled around and I did not even have enough money to buy flour. But I decided that it would be better to suffer in silence than ask for charity. I asked my wife to promise me that even if the neighbors noticed we had no food, she would refuse to take any gifts. Rather, we would willingly accept whatever had been decreed from Above. Not having any other way to honor the Shabbat, my wife set about sweeping our humble home with a broom, removing the dust from every nook and cranny.

 "That Friday night, instead of going home right after the evening service, I remained in the synagogue until everyone was gone. I was afraid someone might ask me why there weren't any candles burning in the window.

 "Unbeknownst to me, while cleaning the house my wife had found an old dress with silver buttons on the sleeves. Overjoyed at her find, she had immediately sold them for enough money to provide a very sumptuous Sabbath meal. When I came home and saw the house brightly lit and the table fit for a king, I was very disappointed, assuming that she had been unable to withstand the temptation of accepting charity. Nevertheless, I decided to say nothing that would disturb the sanctity of the Sabbath.

**His Anger Turns into Happiness**

 "I made Kiddush and we washed our hands for the challah, but after the fish I couldn't control myself any longer. Very gently I chided her for having accepted our neighbors' generosity, but before I could even finish she told me what had happened. My eyes filled with tears of happiness, and without even thinking I grabbed her arm and began to dance with her around the table.

 “After the soup I was again overcome with joy, and we danced for a second time, and for a third time after dessert. All in all, three times I was overwhelmed with gratefulness that G-d had allowed me to rejoice in the Sabbath directly from His holy hand. But Rebbe," he added worriedly, "If I've committed any sin, please tell me how to correct it."

**All of the Heavenly Angels Were Inspired**

 At that the Baal Shem Tov turned to his disciples and said, "I want you to know that the entire entourage of heavenly angels was dancing and rejoicing with Reb Shabsai and his wife. That is why I laughed aloud those three times."

 He then offered the couple a choice: Either they could live out their days in honor and wealth, or they could be blessed with a son in their old age . Reb Shabsai's wife immediately chose to have a child, whereupon the Baal Shem promised she would give birth the following year, to a boy they should name Yisrael (the Baal Shem Tov's own name). He also asked to be invited to the brit, so he could serve as sandek and hold the baby.

 Indeed, the child grew up to be one of the greatest sages of his generation, known as the Kozhnitzer Maggid.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Why is Hashem in Hiding?**

ANSWER: Otherwise it wouldn't pay to live. If *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would come out in the open and He would show His presence, then all the Italians would become loyal servants of *Hashem*. And all the Hispanics. Everybody would become good and frum, and it wouldn’t pay to live in this world. Because if you see *Hashem*, who is going to be such a lunatic and disobey?

Where Are Your Hands Going to Be?

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 Let's say suppose you have a policeman pointing a gun at you, and the policeman says, “Hands up or I'll shoot!” Where will your hands be, in your pocket?

 Therefore if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would show Himself, will you deserve any credit? And if you won't earn anything with your free will, your *bechira*, what's the use of living?

**No More Free Will in the Next World**

 In the next world when it's all over and there's no more free will, then *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* shows Himself in all His glory, and *tzadikim yoshvim, v'atroseihem b'rosheihem, v'nehenim meiziv hashechina*. The *tzadikim* gaze at the splendor of the *shechina* and that's they're happiness, but in this world it would be the worst thing for us if *Hakadosh Baruch* was seen openly.

 Our job is to discover Him from the places where He's hiding.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l that is transcribed from answers to questions posed by those who attended Rabbi Miller’s classic Thursday night lectures in his Flatbush shul (circa 1970s – 2001.)*

**Yosef and the Lesson of Knowing When to Back Down**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

 The parashah [for the coming week] begins by telling us about the dialogue which Yosef, the ruler of Egypt, was having with his brother, Yehudah, about whether to release Binyamin or not. The Midrash tells us that the debate was very heated and Yehudah threatened to destroy Egypt and all of its inhabitants.

**A Time to Reveal One’s Identity**

 When Yosef saw that Yehudah had reached the limit of his patience, he revealed his identity thereby diffusing the entire drama. The Midrash calls Yosef a wise man who can appease people. It seems that it would be obvious to anyone that this is what Yosef should have done in this situation. What great wisdom is seen from Yosef’s actions?

 The lesson that can be learned from here is that there is usually a point during an argument when it is wise to back down and retreat. When one is involved in a dispute, it often escalates to levels far beyond the original issues.

**Knowing When to Cut the Argument Short**

 One needs to look at it with a clear head, and know when to cut it short. Otherwise it reaches another level which can bring pain and destruction. Although it takes wisdom and foresight to be able to concede to someone else, especially during the heat of "battle," one who can muster inner strength like Yosef will diffuse the tension bringing peace and harmony among all parties involved.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**Weekly Chasidic Story #786**

**Leaving London Late**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 On the evening of Wednesday, December 21, 1988, a group of chasidim from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, was preparing to return home from London. Before going to the airport, at about 8:00 P.M., they stopped off at the home of Rabbi Yidele Horowitz, *the Dzikover Rebbe*, to receive his blessing.

 "We're on our way back home to New York, and we'd like to see the rebbe before we go. Would that be possible?" they asked the Rebbe's personal *gabbai*.

**The Rebbe Agrees to See the Group**

 "Let me check," the Rebbe's attendant responded, and entered the rebbe's room. "The rebbe can see you in about a quarter of an hour," he said as he emerged.

 Fifteen minutes passed, and the *gabbai* asked the rebbe whether he could usher in the chasidim. But the rebbe, who rarely spoke, motioned that they should wait a little longer.

 The chasidim were not too happy about the delay, as their time was limited and they feared they would miss their ten o'clock flight. On the other hand, they did not want to lose the opportunity to meet with the famed *tzadik*. They decided to wait.

**Another Twenty Minute Delay**

 It was another twenty minutes before they were finally allowed into the rebbe's chamber. They handed him their notes with personal requests, and he shook everybody's hand.

 The audience over, the chasidim quickly left for the airport, but heavy traffic delayed their progress. When they finally got out of the traffic jam they checked their watches and realized that without speeding they would not get to the airport on time. Accordingly, they sped to the airport and arrived five minutes before departure. But they were too late to board the plane.

 At ten o'clock the plane left, leaving the group of chassidim standing forlornly in Heathrow Airport's waiting area. "Maybe we shouldn't have waited at the rebbe's house," one said. "If not for those twenty minutes, we definitely would have made it."

 "What does it help to talk about it?" his friend responded. "The bottom line is, we missed our flight."

 The men went to the ticket counter and made the necessary arrangements for a flight the next day.

**Realizing How the Rebbe Saved Their Lives**

 An hour and a half later, they were still in the car on their way back to their lodgings from the airport when tragic news was announced on the radio: "Pan Am Flight 103 has exploded over Scotland. All two hundred- fifty-eight aboard are feared to have perished…"

 The chasidim sat in stunned silence. Their extended wait at the rebbe's, the traffic jam….These delays had saved their lives! In the merit of their trust and faith in the Rebbe's holiness and their strong will to get his blessing, they had been spared a horrible fate.

 *Source:* From "Glimpses of Greatness" by Rabbi David Koppelman (Moznaim).

 *Connection:* Seasonal-this happened 24 years ago on 13 Tevet/Dec 21, 1988.

 *Biographical note:* Rabbi Yidele Horowitz, the *Dzikover Rebbe* (1905- 9 Cheshvan 1989), was raised by his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Yisrael Hager, Rebbe of Vizhnitz. After WWII, he moved to Tel Aviv, and then towards the end of his life, to London, for medical reasons. Although known as a formidable scholar and a man of exceptional character, he shunned the limelight and abhorred any reverence or treatment as a Rebbe. He lived a very frugal life. Absolutely all the monies forwarded to him by admirers and Chassidim were immediately distributed to orphans and widows.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalahOnline.com, a project of the Ascent Institute of Safad, Israel.*

**Yosef HaTzadik!**

**By Rabbi Label Lam**

 And Yosef could no longer hold himself back in front of all that were standing by him and so he called, “Go out all men from nearby me!” and no man stood near him when Yosef let his brothers know. And he gave a cry out with his weeping voice, and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh, and Yosef said to his brothers, “I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?” And his brothers were not able to answer him because they were confounded from him. (Breishis 45:1-3)

 Yosef took an awful risk by sending away the Egyptians and leaving himself unprotected before a desperate and dangerous audience. Why did he do it?

**Putting Himself in Mortal Danger**

 `The Midrash asks and answers: “Go out all men from nearby me!” Why did Yosef do this? Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachman said, “Yosef put himself in mortal danger, leaving himself without protection, that his brothers might kill him. After all, no one recognized him. So why did he say, ‘Go out all men from near by me!’? So said Yosef in his heart, “It is better that I should be killed, only that I should not embarrass my brothers in front of the Egyptians!

 Amazing! The most powerful instinct in a person is to remain alive and yet Yosef was willing to risk everything just so as not to embarrass his brothers. Any doubts we might have had about the purity of his motive for the torturous game of “cat and mouse” he played with his brothers were also clarified in those moments before he revealed his true identity.

**Behaving to His Brothers**

**Out of Love and Compassion**

 Not only was not it not done out of cruelty or callousness but it was certainly based on love and compassion. 1) He wanted to make sure they had done a complete Teshuva which can only be determined if they find themselves in the exact same situation and they react differently. 2) Since they had judged him to be a false prophet based upon the pronouncements of his dreams, he needed to see the fulfillment of at least one dream, eleven bundles bowing down to his, even if he had to manipulate the last percentage manually.

 How did Yosef do it? How did he muster the courage to hold his ocean of emotions from bursting forth just long enough till the Egyptians had left? How did he develop the instinct to not shame his brothers?

 When Reb Moshe Feinstein ztl. was already an elderly man he was asked as many sages of the Talmud were, “Why have you merited such a long life?” He answered, “I tried my whole life never to hurt another human being.”

**Escorting Reb Moshe to the Car**

 The following story illustrates to what extent this principal was installed into the very psyche of his being: A group of Yeshiva students were respectfully escorting the Reb Moshe to a car that was waiting curbside. As soon as he was in and the door was slammed shut, the driver started on his way.

 A few blocks away, Reb Moshe urged the driver to pull over to the side of the road and stop for a moment. Once the car halted Reb Moshe opened the car door and removed his fragile and aged hand from where it was crushed when the door was shut by one of the students.

**The Driver was Aghast**

 The driver was aghast and so he asked Reb Moshe, “Why didn't the Rabbi say something back there?” Reb Moshe replied, “If I would have reacted just then, the poor fellow that closed the door would never have forgiven himself.”

 Wow! How can one ever be prepared enough for such a test!? It's certainly a principled decision and the work of a lifetime! Yosef HaTzadik! -a stronger than the reactivity to his own physical pain, having sensitivity to the feelings of others.

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