**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas bo 5776**

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**The Unexpected Reward of a Grandmother’s Good Name**

**By David Bibi**

 One of the most repeated phrases my father drummed into us was the first half of the first verse of the seventh chapter of Kohelet. "Tov shem, mishemen tov ..." meaning, “better a good name or reputation than expensive oil”.

 My dad would explain that the greatest asset we had was our good name and if we honored it, that name would serve us better than money ever could. My dad, as usual, was right. So often in my life, my name opened doors and brought lots of payback to those who came before me. It is experiencing in real time what we call zechut avot or being rewarded in the merit of our ancestors.

 Last Wednesday on the Yahrzeit of my grandmother Esther Bibi, I gave a class and closed it by relating a story from 1989 on the value of a good name. It was July 4th weekend, and we had just moved into our house in Atlantic Beach. On one of our regular trips to Europe, Chantelle had bought a mini bed for Jonah who was going to be two.

 When we moved into the house and the bed was delivered, we realized that there were no standard mattresses for this bed. With the dimensions in hand, I drove to a mattress store on Rockaway Turnpike and met an elderly man. I explained the dilemma and he told me that this was going to be a very expensive venture.

 He then asked me my name. When I told him, he asked if I was related to an Esther Bibi from Bensonhurst. “She was my grandmother and she just passed away in December”, I replied. He took of his glasses, rubbed his eyes and a bit choked up; he told me the following.

 “It was 1933 and I was 19 years old and working as a delivery person. It was the depression and I was lucky to have a job, though the hard work especially in the summer often left me exhausted. The boxes were heavy and everyone was demanding and unappreciative. It’s hard for you to imagine how tough things were. People really didn’t even have enough to eat. We could go all day, from house to house and we were lucky to get a glass of water. Tips were almost unheard of.

 “I remember the day. It was late Thursday afternoon, almost evening and unusually hot for May. There were two of us making deliveries that afternoon. We came to a big house. It was right off Bay Parkway on 21st Avenue and the house spanned the entire block between 62nd and 63rd Street. The house was filled with kids and there were six or seven of them having dinner.

 We thought that Mrs. Bibi was an older sister and we were shocked when they all called her mom. She couldn’t have been thirty. After we brought in all the boxes, she asked us if we wanted something to drink. We told her that would be great as we hadn’t stopped for anything since 8 in the morning. She invited us to sit for a moment at the table as the younger kids vacated their spots.

 It was good to take a load off our feet. A moment later she set two plates of food in front of us. We were embarrassed because we thought she would be simply giving us water. But our empty stomachs were not too embarrassed to eat. We were starved and so appreciative.

 “We were speaking with a couple of the older kids and Mrs. Bibi asked where we lived and how our families were managing during these difficult times. I told her that we lived in the neighborhood and we were OK, but I was worried as I was getting married on Sunday. We were going to live in a small apartment in the basement of my bride’s parent’s home. My folks had given us linens and towels and she had a set of dishes and silverware from her grandmother. My bride really wanted a set of pots and pans and I felt badly as I really couldn’t afford them and would have loved to give them to her.

 “Mrs. Bibi told me to have faith, continue to work hard and everything would fall into place. She was sure that things would get better. She asked me where we were getting married and she wished me the best of luck.

 “We walked out of there commenting on what a lovely lady she was and what a nice family she has.

 “On Sunday, I arrived at the wedding hall. There were some boxes that had arrived earlier in the morning with a note. The boxes had a new set of pots and pans. And the note was from Esther and Reuben Bibi wishing us the best of luck and telling us to always have a positive attitude and to be there for each other and to always have faith as everything always works out for the best.

 “That was 56 years ago this May. I am still married to my wonderful wife. We were blessed with a beautiful family and I will never forget your grandmother and what joy she brought to a real stranger.

 “For the grandson of Mrs. Esther Bibi, the custom mattress will be on the house. It’s my gift to you and your child. Although I am meeting you for the first time I am so sure that the kindness she and her family showed me that day, you as her grandchild and the baby, her great-grandchild, who will get this mattress will continue to show to others. I am only sorry that she passed away as I would have loved to see her and thank her in person.”

 I was speechless.

 Later I realized that If he only knew that the story he just told me would be more valuable than any mattress could ever be.

 These are the names; this is the reputation, of the children of Israel who came to Egypt. Better a good name than good oil. This is a lesson my father taught us again and again. And it’s a lesson which we must repeat to our children, again and again.

*Reprinted from last week’s (Parashat Shemot 5776) email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**The Alter Rebbe’s Strange Instructions to His Chassid about Always Carrying Three Challahs**

(Special Note Two: Last Tuesday was the Yahrzeit of the Baal HaTanya (HaRav Shneur Zalman ben Reb Boruch, Z”tl). HaRav Shneur Zalman is also known as the Baal Shulchan Aruch HaRav and the Alter Rebbe. We once provide a remarkable story, as presented in an issue of the *Me’Oros HaTzaddikim*☺

 There was once a *chassid*of the Alter Rebbe who was a peddler of goods and made a living traveling from town to town selling his items. One time, the *Rebbe*asked him questions and after hearing the *chassid's*responses, the Alter Rebbe advised him that he should always carry with him three *challahs.*

 The chassid did not understand why the Rebbe would give him such a strange instruction, but the chassid did exactly as the Rebbe instructed, trusting that one day he would understand why he got such advice from the Rebbe.

 And so it happened, one day that the *chassid*was traveling before *Shabbos*and he lost his way. *Shabbos*was approaching soon so he quickly tried to find a place to stay. He knocked on a house and the owner came outwith a friendly smile. They exchanged greetings and the *chassid*explained to the man that he needed a place to stayforthe night.

 The man invited him in and led him to his room. Now, this man was a non-Jew, and when he opened thedoor to his room, the *chassid*realized that there was a friend that was going to be staying withhim that night--a huge dog that was almost the size of the *chassid*himself! He realized that his host was not as friendly as hefirst appeared to be and quickly turned around to exit. By this time the door was locked, and the non-Jew toldhim through the door that in this room ‘people go in but do not come out.’.

 The *chassid*started to daven to *Hashem*and said *vidui*. He then noticed that the dog was just sitting quietly in his comer. The *chassid*thenbegan to *daven Mincha.*Still, the dog was quiet. He then *davened Kabbalas Shabbos*and *Maariv.*

The *chassid*remembered that he had three *challahs*with him so he found some water in the room, washed and made *kiddush*on the bread. The dog listened to *kiddush,*so to speak, and afterwards was very excited. The *chassid* realized that the dog wanted some *challah,*so he ate a kezayis and gave the dog the rest of the loaf. Needless to say, the rest of the night he did not sleep, with such a friend in the room who would sleep?

 Morning came and the *chassid davened Shacharis*and the same scene repeated itself with the *challah.* After *Shabbos*the owner of the house opened the door to the room carrying a broom and bucket hoping to clean up the bones of the man. Lo and behold he found the *chassid*sitting in one comer and the dog in the other. He screamed at the dog, “Get that Jew, eat him!” But the dog wouldn't move.

 The *chassid*then said to the dog “Get that man!” and the dog jumped on the non-Jew, tore him apart and killed him. Then the dog took the Jew by his *kappota*and dragged him to the forest. There he took him to a place where the *chassid*found a great treasure, a chest filled with gold coins. The non-Jew acquired it all by killing and stealing it from his former guests.

 The dog grabbed the Jew again and took him outside the forest near his village. At that point the dog died. The Jew realized where he was and made his way home. Before going home he stopped by the Alter Rebbe to tell him all that had transpired.

 The *Rebbe*took him in and told him the following: The dog was a *gilgul*(reincarnation) of a Jew who did not properly fulfill the *mitzvah*of eating after making *kiddush.*His punishment was to be stuck in the body of this dog. When you made *kiddush*for him this was its rectification. The reason he took you to show the gold coins is because he wanted to repay you for helping him accomplish his *tikun* so he can go to *Gan Eden.*

The *Rebbe*told the *chassid*that he should open a business with the gold coins which the *chassid* did and became a rich man. Needless to say, the *chassid*realized why the *Rebbe*gave him the seemingly strange instruction to carry the three *challahs*with him at all times!

*Reprinted from the January 5, 2016 (24 Teves 5776) Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin.*

**What’s in a Name?**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

 The Ohr Gedalyahu writes that every person has his own set of strengths and character traits necessary for him to accomplish his task in this world. Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which has such deep meaning and hidden secrets, when configured in a certain pattern to comprise a person's name, has an impact on the strengths of that person. The Arizal writes that every parent is given Divine Inspiration when naming a child.

 Names are decided by Hashem. Just like in every other area, we do our hishtadlut (effort) and afterwards accept that Hashem's will came to fruition, so too when it comes to names. We can make suggestions and requests for certain names to be given, but after the name is given, no matter what was decided, we should be happy knowing that it was according to the will Hashem.

 A Rabbi told me that his daughter had a baby boy about a month and a half ago. A couple of days before the Berit she asked him if he had any good ideas for a name. He told her what the Arizal says, that she and her husband are going to be inspired to give the right name. However, he did mention that his illustrious grandfather's name was David Hai. He told her that name has a lot of meaning and might be a good option. The next day she told her father, we decided we like the name Natanel, which means a gift from Hashem. The Rabbi said, "That's a beautiful name, but it's not that common. Perhaps you should add a second name which is more common."

 At the Berit, the name given was Natanel Yaakov. Right after the name was given, a woman came over to them and said, "That was so beautiful what you just did. I'm so touched." They asked, "What do you mean?" This Berit took place on Sunday morning, November 15. The woman said, "You didn't hear? On Friday afternoon, November 13, just a day and a half ago, a father and son were tragically killed in a terrorist attack in Chevron, Rabbi Yaakov and Natanel Lipman. It is so sad, they have a wedding coming up in the family, and now you are naming your baby after them, Natanel Yaakov."

 The couple was very moved that Hashem had guided them to this name. They felt honored that their child has the zechut (merit) to carry the names of these kedoshim (martyrs). They decided to save all the newspaper articles related to their namesake to show their son when he grows up. In one of the articles, they noticed that the full names of these kedoshim were "Yaakov David" and "Natanel Hai". "David Hai" was also in their names, the original name that was suggested for this child. The Rabbi told me, "The hashgacha here was amazing. The boy carries the name of these two tzaddikim as well as his grandfather."

 Everything comes from Hashem. Sometimes we see it and sometimes we don't. Even something that seems so simple like a name, has so much involvement from Hashem. Nobody should ever fight or argue over names. We can make suggestions or put in our hishtadlut, but the final call is always Hashem's.

*Reprinted from Lesson #688 of Rabbi David Ashear’s Daily Emunah email of January 1, 2015.*

**Call Your Mother**

**By Rabbi Yakov Horowitz**

 I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many hundreds of you who called, emailed, texted, mailed cards, or posted condolence messages on social media. Due to the nature of the fifteen-hour shiva days, I haven't had the time to respond and don't know if I will honestly be able to. But rest assured that I read each and every one of them and they were an extraordinary source of comfort during this very challenging time.Thank you kindly and may we exchange greetings on happier occasions in the future.

 Yesterday, we concluded the shiva mourning period for our beloved mother Beile Nutovic who passed away last week at the age of 86.

 So many thoughts go through the minds of children when they bury their parents; so many beautiful memories, so many things we wish we had done differently.

 One area where I don't have the slightest regret is staying in touch with her over the years. I called her every single day for the past 35 years, most days twice.

 Truth be told, she made it very easy to stay in touch. Her upbeat personality, great sense of humor, and the resiliency that carried her through the very challenging parts of her life[1] made every phone call with her an enjoyable adventure.

 When I was preparing my eulogy for her funeral last week, I asked our children for one-word descriptions of their grandmother. Along with wise, courageous, and irreplaceable, they used words like, spunky and hilarious. What a legacy to leave.

 Many times over the past decade or so, I would whisper to my wife, "Boy; am I going to miss her," when we would leave her home or when she would leave ours. It was never said in a morbid sense, but it was rather an expression of my gratitude for her presence, tempered with the realization that it was a gift that would not last forever.

 The many hundreds of shiva guests that came to our mother's home have left and her five children have returned to our own homes and lives.

 It's quiet in my study now, and my keyboard is blurry as I think about welcoming Shabbos tomorrow without having the opportunity to call my mother.

 Boy, do I miss her.

 Life is short, my friends. Far too short.

 Call your mother.

*Reprinted from a December 31, 2015 email sent by Rabbi Yakov Horowitxz, director of PROJECT YES.*

[**We Are ALL Baalei Teshuva**](http://www.mayanyisroel.net/templates/blog/post.asp?aid=2792698&PostID=58379&p=1)

**Rabbi Yoseph Vigler**

1. 

 At a recent Shabbos table of ours we hosted a young lady. She wanted to convert to Judaism and had looked us up online. At the table also were some frum guests. I knew some of them had real questions on Emunah and Yiddishkeit, so I used the opportunity to develop a conversation.

 "Why do you want to convert?” I asked her. She explained that she has Jewish relatives and having been exposed to the beauty of Yiddishkeit, her heart was aching to become Jewish.  She would do whatever was required and go to the ends of earth to become a member of Am Yisroel.

 These were not words the other guests were used to hearing.  “Why on earth would you want to become Jewish?” They continued pressing. “Why would you want to be bogged down by so many rules and regulations and a sense of guilt every time you want to do something juicy? And you can't use your phone nor text on Shabbos!”

 “I know what you're trying to do,”  she said.  “The Torah requires you to turn away a convert, so you're trying to push me away by saying this.  Pretty smart, but I won't fall for it.”

 Not quite, they explained. “We REALLY think you should stay where you are.”

 You have to love us Frum people.  Sometimes I think the best way to UN-inspire a Baal Teshuva is by putting them in a Frum community.

At the end of the conversation though, she had the upper hand and had them seriously thinking:

  If a Non-Jew is willing to go to such troubles to become a Jew, isn't it worthwhile to check out what it is that she wants, that many converts and Baalei Teshuva want; that Boruch Hashem We Already Have!

 That WE Already Have.

 You see, today I got the most unbelievable Nachas from a good friend.

I met him 16 years ago when I was in Kollel in Melbourne, Australia when we were a kvutza of Kollel couples that had been there to learn for a couple of years.

One fine day, this young 40 year old guy walks into Kollel. He had grown up in the USA to an assimilated American family and had spent 20 years living in Adelaide,  in the middle of nowhere in Australia. He had gradually become frum there and now he wanted to learn. He persisted.  He sat and learned.  He arranged Shiurim and Chavrusos and filled his entire day.

 One day my mother in South Africa asks me on the phone if I know of a Shidduch for a South African girl.  It fit perfect and through a stroke of incredible Hashgacha Pratis he flew to South Africa and got married.  They are now a lovely family living in Monsey and he runs a successful chiropractic practice.

 But his zeal for learning only intensified. And at every free moment he sits down and learns Torah, both Nigleh and Chassidus.  The last few years he took an online Smicha course. But the real deal. I mean, I'm getting Shailos from him as he tries to understand the Sugya of חתיכה נעשית נבלה and טיפת חלב שנפלה על הקרדה and the intricacies of every Shach and Taz in Yoreh Deah. No jokes,  he toiled laboriously.

 And today he got his Smicha after a 16 gruelling farher!  My dear friend,  RABBI Dr. Avraham Strauss, you are an inspiration. More importantly,  your wife Elle is the real inspiration.

 Rabbi Dr. Strauss believed it was worth it to check out what We Already Have.  Will you? Pick something in your life to awaken, to learn, to grow, to build on the jewish neshama that WE already have.  Utilize this precious gift!  Go to the ends of the earth! Be’h the convert will keep her persistence, will stay the course, just like Rabbi Dr. Strauss has.

 Like I say, if you want to be inspired, hang around Baalei Teshuva and become one yourself!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Mayan Center in Flatbush.*

**Learning to Appreciate the Value Of a “Simple” Mincha Minyan**

 The Siddur Speaks Rav Yechiel Spero once related an inspiring story that took place in the Otis Federal Penitentiary in upstate New York.

 For years, Sholom Rubashkin, who was convicted in a controversial trial, was serving his sentence in the prison. A special Sefer Torah had been written in honor of Mr. Rubashkin and permission was obtained for a group of slightly more than 10 Yidden to come into the federal prison with the Sefer Torah, and hold a Hachnosas Sefer Torah celebration for a few hours with Sholom Rubashkin. The group was told that the affair had to end exactly at 3:30 P.M., and all those visiting the prisoner had to leave at that time with their Sefer Torah.

 For a couple of hours, everyone, including Sholom Rubashkin, were dancing ecstatically, rejoicing over the new Sefer Torah, as if they were in Shul on Simchas Torah, and not in a prison. The guest of honor occasionally looked at his watch as he continued to dance, as though he was a Chossan at his own wedding.

 All of a sudden at 3:15 P.M., he called out for everyone to please stop dancing. The group called back that they had permission to dance until 3:30, and that was in another 15 minutes!

 R’ Sholom Rubashkin answered, “This is the first time in all of the years I have been incarcerated at the Otis Prison, that I have a Minyan of Frum Jews who could daven Minchah!” It was such a precious opportunity that he didn’t want to lose it, and he begged them to stop the dancing, as at 3:30 P.M. the prison officials would force them out, and who knew when he would again have a chance to daven with a Minyan.

 The dancing stopped and Sholom Rubashkin led the davening with tremendous Kavanah. As you can imagine, nobody talked during that special and unforgettable Minchah Minyan! Rabbi Spero said, “Perhaps the inspiration of that unique Minyan might inspire all of us not to take our Davening for granted, and to try and utilize the great potential it offers us to change our lives and those around us for the better!”

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

**Why the Rabbi Closed His Shul on Shabbos One Time**

 Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum, a Rav in Kew Gardens Hills, Queens, has a certain viewpoint when it comes to Davening (praying), and that is: you have to enjoy the Davening from the very beginning until the end. If there were issues to deal with, he refused to accept “that’s the way it is” as an explanation.

 Rabbi Oelbaum would say, “If you’re coming home from Shul on Shabbos in a bad mood, feeling that the experience of Tefilah has been frustrating, rather than pleasant and uplifting, something is wrong.”

 Many years ago when his Shul was just a few years old, Rabbi Oelbaum wished to address the issue of talking during Davening, because he saw that it had become a habit, and he no longer felt comfortable with the way things were going. One Shabbos he rose to address his congregants, and announced that for the next coming Shabbos he was officially closing the Shul, and the Shul would be locked. He would reopen the Shul the following Shabbos, however, he told them that only those who were committed to not talk during Davening could attend. His Shul would be open only for those who were interested in following a different path of not talking in Shul.

 As the next Shabbos approached and the people realized that he was serious about closing the Shul, the Rav started to get phone calls. People said that closing their Shul was tough for them. They asked if they could borrow a Sefer Torah to make a private Minyan, so that they didn’t have to undergo the humiliation of having to Daven somewhere else and answer questions about why they were there. Rabbi Oelbaum refused. He said he wanted it to be serious, and for them to face difficult questions. That week Rabbi Oelbaum went to Boro Park for Shabbos. When the Shul reopened the next week, people thought there wouldn’t be enough people to make a Minyan, but many people came, including the regulars ready to begin anew! Rabbi Oelbaum said that a Rav needs to enjoy Davening in his own Shul, and he got encouragement for his efforts from Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l, who was fully supportive of his idea, and said that he wished all Rabbanim would do the same!

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

**The Shpala Zaide and the Anti-Semitic Ukrainian Army Officer**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 About two hundred and fifty years ago In the city of Shpala, in the heart of the Ukraine, lived a simple Jew who we will call Avraham who was a Chassid (follower) of the great Tzadik the Shpala Zaide (the Grandfather from Shpala).

 This simple Jew made his living by selling small trinkets in the marketplace; needles, buttons or anything that he thought might sell that didn't cost him too much to buy.

 One day a large troop of some two hundred huge Ukrainian soldiers on leave spread out through marketplace and one of them approached Abraham's stand. He began looking at his trinkets, casually reached behind the counter, grabbed the small cashbox, put it in his pocket and calmly walked away.

 It took Avraham a few seconds to realize what had happened but by then the soldier was gone into the crowd.

 Avraham didn't know what to do. He had heard that such things occurred but never dreamed it would happen to him. Now that it did he was confused.

 When his neighbor in the stall next to his saw his distress he asked what happened. And when he heard the answer, he told poor Avraham that in his opinion he had two choices: (1) pray to G-d for the money or (2) go to the commander of the soldiers, complain - and then pray to G-d for the money.

 Avraham decided on the second option; It was all the money he had for the next month! He had to get it back as soon as possible!

 He told his neighbor to watch his counter and went looking for the commander; asking soldiers for directions. Meanwhile from the remarks the soldiers made he understood that this commander was as cruel as they come and a rabid anti-Semite to boot.

 He was just considering forgetting the whole thing when suddenly he heard a booming voice behind him. "You! Jew! You look for me?!" the commander came out of a tavern. Someone must have told him.

 He looked at Avraham as he would a rotten piece of meat and scornfully sneered "Talk, Jew!"

 Avraham was really scared now. He blurted out, "One of your soldiers took my money and I want it back. I sell here in the market and it's all I have for the next month. Food, rent, wood for the oven, I have children to feed. Please I need my money back." Avraham was trembling.

 "One of my men? Ha!! Stole from you? A measly Jew? Heh! Feh!! Who would even touch your filthy few coins. Not my men! That's for sure!! My men are soldiers!! Listen Jew! If you are so sure then tell me which of my men did it! What's your name anyway? Let me see some documents."

 Avraham showed him his papers and the commander had someone write them down.

 "Okay Jew. You point out the thief and if he really is the thief, I'll return your money. But if not, then I'll have you beaten!" He took out a cigar, bit off a piece from the end and spit it on the ground. And as he was putting it in his mouth and preparing to light it said menacingly, "You have till tomorrow. Tomorrow morning at five all the soldiers will be here….. you better be here too or……. I burn your house!!"

 Now Avraham was really in trouble. He would never recognize the soldier, all of them looked the same and he really hadn't taken notice at the time of the thievery. He would be beaten to death! What would be with his wife and children?! His only recourse was the Rebbe; the Shpala Zaide.

 Avraham wasted no time. He ran straight to the Rebbe's house and in just moments he was standing before the holy man explaining the frightening series of events.

 "Nothing to be worried about" explained the Tzadik calmly. "Just tell the commander in the morning when all the men line up for roll call that you want to look each soldier in the face. Don't tell the commander this but I'm telling you that the soldier that glares at you with hatred in his eyes and grits his teeth … is the thief."

 Avraham thanked the Rebbe profusely and returned home. But he was still very scared

 Sure enough the next morning when all the soldiers were standing at attention and Avraham and the commander were perusing each of them one soldier glared hatefully and began gritting his teeth menacingly. "This is the man!" Avraham yelled out pointing with his finger. "He stole my money!"

 The commander faced the soldier and ordered him point blank to give the money back. He was certain that the soldier would just deny the whole thing and he could give the order to have Avraham beaten. But instead the soldier answered indignantly.

 "But, General, Why?! A filthy Jew! Why should I return the money? He's only a Jew!"

 The commander became red with anger and ordered the man flogged with no mercy and, of course, to return the money.

 But now the commander was mad at Avraham! He wanted revenge; Avraham had bested and shamed him before all his soldiers.

 He turned and hissed at Avraham grabbing his lapels and putting his face into his, "How could you recognize a man you only saw for a few seconds? What, are you some sort of a witch or sorcerer?"

 Poor Avraham became so confused and frightened, especially with the screams of the thief receiving lashes in the background, that instead of just saying it was a lucky guess he just blurted out:

 "It was the Shpaleh Zeide" he sputtered in fear. "He's a holy Jew that can see everything - he told me how to recognize the thief."

 "Aha!" spouted the commander "A holy Jew ehh??" suddenly a sadistic smile spread across his face. "Bring him here! We'll see how holy he is!! If not I'll kill you and him as well. I'll give you till tonight."

 Poor Avraham wanted to slap himself on the forehead. Why didn't he just say he recognized the thief? Why did he have to tell the truth all time?! Now he got the Rebbe in trouble as well. All this was becoming too much for him.

 He ran to the Rebbe as fast as his legs would carry him and, trembling and weeping, told him what happened. But the Rebbe was not at all surprised or even the least bit worried. He calmed Avraham down and told him to return immediately and tell the commander two things: First, that the Rebbe refuses to come and second, that if he wants to know the real truth, he should check in his own pocket.

 Avraham left the Rebbe's house shaking. He thought he was going mad. He was like two people; when he thought of facing the commander again he became petrified with fear and wanted to run away, but when he thought of the Rebbe's face he was filled with bold confidence.

 Finally he made it to the commander and gave him the first part of the Rebbe's message; that he refused to come. The commander became red with anger and began shaking with fury. Soldiers gathered around until there was quite a crowd but Avraham continued,

 "And the Rebbe said if you want to know the real truth, check your pockets."

 At this point the commander went berserk with rage. He began screaming, "Who is your Rabbi!? I'll show you what's in my pocket, I'll shoot you and your Rabbi too!! You dirty..." and put his hand on his gun....

 But for some reason he hesitated, thought a moment, stuck his other hand in his pocket, pulled out an envelope that was there, looked at it and turned pale. He gave it another quick glance, looked furtively up and down, pulled the gun from its holster, put it to his head and shot himself!!

 The soldiers looked in horror as their commander fell to the ground and ran in all directions. Avraham was alone, it happened so brutally fast that he barely had time to think

 He ran to back to the Shpala Zedie and when he finished telling him what happened the Rebbe explained.

 "The commander was a truly evil man. He spilled a lot of innocent blood and was planning to spill more. He was conspiring with a group of revolutionaries to murder the king, usurp the throne and who knows what he would do to the Jews if he was in power. But he fell in his own trap

 This morning he had two letters in his pocket; one to the king pretending to be his loyal and faithful servant which he sent off earlier in the day and a second to his fellow conspirators with the details of their next step which he was planning to deliver personally to them this evening.

 But just now the letter he pulled from his pocket was not the one to the conspirators! It was the letter he should have sent to the king. So when he saw that the letter to the king was still in his pocket and that this morning he sent the wrong one, his world collapsed; the defeat, humiliation and torture awaiting him drove him crazy and he shot himself!

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

*(Adapted from Shmuot V'Sipurim from Rabbi R.N. HaCohen vol 1, pg. 250).*