**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Beshallach 5773**

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**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Recollections From**

**A Siberian Interlude**

 ...One day, all of the inmates [in a Soviet Siberian prison camp] were summoned to the dining hall for an emergency meeting. The tables were filling up quickly, and at the front of the room, sitting alone at a long table, was the camp commander. The room, although filled to capacity, was dead silent.

 The men looked tensely at the floor, at the ceiling, at each other. No one wanted to meet the commander's eyes, for it could never be good to be noticed.

 "Yitzchok Zilber, come to the front," the commander's somber voice announced.

**Accused of Being a Lazy Traitor**

 Reb Yitzchok sat frozen in place. He could not imagine what he had done to draw this terrifying attention to himself. One of the camp officers rose to his feet and delivered the withering accusation. "Everyone is this camp is treated equally," he proclaimed. "We all work as hard as we can for our country. We all share in a common goal. However, you ..." and the officer pointed a finger at the rabbi, "think you are different. You think we are fools, and that we don't know that you never work on Saturdays. You are a lazy traitor!"

 The word caught like a wildfire. The inmates began chanting "Traitor, traitor," and threatening to kill the man who dared beat the system.

 Reb Yitzchok feared that the enraged mob of inmates would get him before the authorities even had their chance. Either way, it was in Hashem's hands; he whispered a prayer. A small commotion broke out in the crowd as two big Ukrainians inmates rose from their seats.

 These two were known as hard-core anti-Semites, but it wasn't only the Jews who needed to fear them. They were tough, sadistic men whose eyes seemed more animal than human. "Listen, everyone!" they shouted. "No one had better dare to touch the Kaziner (the name by which Reb Yitzchok was known in camp). If they do, then we will kill them. Do you hear me? We are here for life, so trust me when I say this. I have nothing to lose.

**Never Enough Water Until Now**

 "I have been in this camp for 15 years and there has never been enough water to drink. But ever since the Kaziner has come, we have had enough water." Their point made, the men sat down. Reb Yitzchok sat in his seat in shock; the most unexpected of saviors had come to his rescue. The inmates, including Reb Yitzchok, were all dismissed.

 Reb Yitzchok spent many long, hard years in that camp. One day, he was informed that he would be transferred to a new location. The news was unwelcome, for although life was extremely difficult where he was, he had succeeded in obtaining what he considered the necessities of life. Nevertheless, he was given no choice, and he would have to go where they took him.

**Guards Inspect Items of Departing Inmates**

 As the inmates stood in line to leave, each was told to empty his belongings onto the snow. There, the guards would inspect the items, searching for contraband and valuables. Reb Yitzchok knew that if they found his religious articles, he would be shot right there. He had hidden them under a plate, spoon and cup that he had taken with him to avoid eating from the camp's treife dishes.

 However, if the guard chose to make a more aggressive search, the tefillin and sefarim would easily be found. Fortunately, the guard found the tableware enough of a subject of mockery that he no longer feel the urge to look further. "Look!" he shouted to his fellow guard. "Our plates aren't good enough for the Rabbi! He came with his own!" His taunting smile turned to a ferocious scowl as he slammed the suitcase shut. He lifted it up high and brought it crashing down on Reb Yitzchok's head.

 "Here's your plate and spoon. Get out of here!" he sneered, and walked on to the next inmate.

 Reb Yitzchok's head was stinging from the blow, but his heart was laughing. He thanked Hashem for saving him once again. It seemed certain that just as he would never give up on Hashem, Hashem would never give up on Reb Yitzchok, either. Eventually Reb Yitzchok merited living in Eretz Yisroel where he founded the organization [Toldos Yeshurin](http://toldot.ru/eng_index.php) which helps to educate Russian Jews [who have immigrated to the Holy Land.]

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Wrong Class**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, zt”l**

 When a new student arrived at Ohr Somayach with the intention of doing some Torah study before beginning his residency for being licensed as a physician in the U.S., he was assigned to one of the Ulpan classes for beginners with limited knowledge of Hebrew.

 He walked into the Ulpan class taught by Rabbi Avraham Zuroff and soon realized that he had wandered into the wrong class. It turned out, however, to be the right class in another sense when Rabbi Zuroff asked him his name. Upon hearing the family name Rabbi Zuroff commented that his child’s pediatrician in Kiryat Sefer had the same name.

**Turned Pale on Hearing Full Name of the Doctor**

 The student turned pale upon hearing the full name of the doctor and then explained why. About 20 years ago this young man’s parents were divorced in Russia. He went to the U.S. with his mother and heard rumors that his father eventually came to Israel.

 During several trips to Israel he made unsuccessful attempts to locate his father, even enlisting the services of a friend in Army Intelligence. Only now, by coming to Ohr Somayach and entering the wrong Ulpan class did he finally succeed in being reunited with his long-lost father.

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

**When Life Seems**

**Truly Hopeless**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 It was a beautiful autumn day. The fallen forest leaves covered the dirt road and crunched musically under the wheels of Reb Shlomo's carriage. The song of birds rang out from overhead foliage in the colorful Ukraine forest. But Reb Shlomo was angry and miserable.

 He mumbled madly to himself, and occasionally when he couldn't take it any longer, he pounded with his fist on the bench he was sitting like a madman, and shouted "Aaaachhhh! Whyyy!? Why meeeeeee!!? Why? Why!!??" into the empty woods around him

**Had Plans to be a Famous Rabbi**

 He once had such great plans. He was going to be a famous Rabbi or head of a Talmudic academy (Rosh Yeshiva). Everyone said that he was a genius (g'oan) in Torah learning. He could have been famous!

 But it all dissolved before his eyes when his daughter went into some crazy trance and stayed there. She had been a normal intelligent girl of fifteen when suddenly five years ago she became unexplainably withdrawn, crawled behind the stove and refused to talk or even move.

 Now she had to be fed, washed and cared for constantly, and to make matters worse his wife forced him to take care of her half of the day every day. She didn't trust anyone else.

**They Went to See the Best Doctors**

 Then they began seeing doctors. Rab Shlomo had money, so they spared no expenses. They traveled from town to town, country to country, took her to the greatest specialists in the world. But it didn't help. After wasting a lot of time, energy and money they realized that it was hopeless; only G-d could help, and it didn't look like He was going to do it soon.

 Rab Shlomo became depressed. He couldn't concentrate enough to learn Torah, he was ashamed to be seen in public and he hated to be at home. But just as he thought that it could be no worse, one day a guest arrived at their house, noticed the girl, and innocently suggested that they take her to a great holy Jew that did great miracles called The Baal Shem Tov.

 When Rab Shlomo heard that name he just winced, and tried to force a smile. But as soon as the guest left, he began nervously pacing the room and mumbling bitterly.

**Heard About the Baal Shem Tov**

 His wife didn't notice all this, she was lost in thought, and when she finally came out of her reverie and said, "What do you think Shlomo? Do you think it might help? I mean we've tried everything. I know what you think of him but I've heard the Baal Shem Tov is a true miracle ....".

 "THIS IS THE END!!" he screamed. He stood still and pounded on the dining room table. "I will not have that name mentioned in my home! NOT, NOT!"

 His wife looked at him blankly as he paused briefly, looked about like a trapped animal, then stared at her wildly and continued.

 "The man is a charlatan! A pure soothsayer and idolater! Do you hear!? All those miracle stories are lies! I have it from the most impeccable sources. Who does he think he is, Elijah the prophet?! NO! I will NOT GIVE MY DAUGHTER TO IDOLATRY!" He pounded on the table with each of the last six words.

**“It Is Our Only Chance”**

 But his wife thought otherwise; "Well… I heard that all those stories are not true. That’s what my sources say. And anyway…..it is our only chance. There simply is no alternative. At least gave it a try!" Finally when she pressed him to bring some proof for his words and then threatened him with divorce he had no choice but to bundle his daughter up, carry her into the carriage, hitch up the horses, and of course take a large sum of money for the "Tzadik" and set off.

 And now here he was; driving through the miserable Ukrainian forest to Mezibuz TOTALLY against his will …… yelling to himself like a lunatic.

 After what seemed to be infinity, the town was finally in sight.

 He stopped in the marketplace to ask directions and he noticed the joy and reverence in people's eyes when they mentioned the Baal Shem's name, but he ignored it and finally found the address.

 He parked outside the window, left his daughter in the carriage, took his bag of money, went around to the front door and knocked. "Nu, so I'll lose a few thousand guilder" he thought to himself, "at least my wife will get this insane idea out of her head".

 The door opened and he was invited in. He told one of the Chassidim there what he wanted, and was told to have a seat in the waiting room.

**Wasn’t Impressed by the Besht**

 He considered just walking back outside and going home. He shuddered at the idea of speaking with this faker. He would lie to his wife, he would tell her that the Besh't tried and failed. But minutes later was summoned enter and he found himself closing the door behind him standing before this legend. He wasn’t impressed.

 The Baal Shem Tov didn't look so special. His eyes had a certain unusual deepness, but certainly nothing to get exited about.

 "Nu!" Rav Shlomo said with disdain as he took the moneybag out of his pocket, put it on the Baal Shem's table and opened the string revealing the golden coins. "Here's money. Here, take it! Now let’s see if you can heal my daughter. She's in the carriage and she's really sick. Paralyzed, mute Let's see what you can do."

**Tossed the Man’s Money Bag out the Open Window**

 The Baal Shem Tov took the bag, lifted it with all the money in it, looked Rab Shlomo in the eyes and said casually, "I don't need your money" as he turned in his seat and casually tossed the bag out the open window behind him into the street.

 Rav Shlomo was astounded. Ten thousand guilder! Out the window! He was frozen.

 Suddenly he heard the unmistakable voice of his daughter yelling, "Daddy! Daddy, come quick! There are golden coins in the street!"

 Rav Shlomo ran to the window and saw the most astounding sight: his daughter had jumped out of the carriage and was gathering up the coins in her hat. "Daddy! Look at the money!" She yelled out again gleefully.

 Without even saying a word of parting he dashed out the door then outside, around to the back of the house, and began helping his daughter.

 "Hurry! Hurry!" He whispered to her aloud. "Pick up the coins and let's get out of here before that Baal Shem Tov says that it was a miracle and he wants the money back!"

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

**Rabbi Moshe Feller**

**And Sandy Koufax**

**By Daniel Keren**

 I am writing this article on Sunday night, Yud Shevat, the 63rd anniversary of the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, zt”l, (1880-1950) the Sixth Rebbe in the Lubavitch Chabad dynasty. It is also obviously the anniversary of when his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l, took over the mantle of leading the world-wide Chassidic movement.

Special Farbrengen In Flatbush

 Traditionally, Chabad Chassidim celebrate the yahrtzeit of a tzaddik, righteous man and the elevation of another tzaddik with a farbrengen, a Chassidic gathering. So I was not surprised when on the Friday before Yud Shevat, I saw a couple of flyers posted on Coney Island Avenue announcing that on Sunday night a farbrengen was going to be celebrated at the Beis Menachem Mendel shul on Avenue J in the heart of “Downtown” Jewish Flatbush.



Recent Photo of Rabbi Moshe Feller

 Beis Menachem Mendel is guided by Rabbi Yochanon Marosow and the flyer also noted that the well known Chabad shaliach from Minnesota – Rabbi Moshe Feller was going to be the Guest of Honor leading this year’s. The flyer showed separate photos of Rabbi Feller with former President George Bush and former President Gerald Ford.

Opening Day of The World Series

 But, the mention of Rabbi Feller’s name reminded me of perhaps more importantly one of the most defining moments in the history of modern American Judaism. It was the opening day of the 1965 World Series in Minnesota’s Metropolitan Stadium.

 Brooklyn-born Sandy Koufax who had the month before become only the sixth player in modern baseball history to pitch a perfect game in the Major Leagues was gaining headlines around the world for deciding not to pitch on the opening game of the World Series on October 6, 1965 because it coincided with Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

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| 200px-Sandy_Koufax |

Brooklyn-born Sandy Koufax, one of the world’s greatest baseball pitcher

**A Role Model for Jewish Youngsters**

 With perhaps the exception of Hank Greenberg, Sandy was the greatest Jewish baseball player to make it to the Major Leagues and as he would tell others, he realized that he was a role model for Jewish youngsters across the country and what he decided to do with regards to playing on Yom Kippur would have major reverberations in Jewish communities around the United States, even though he was not himself religiously observant.

 Indeed if you google “Sandy Koufax and Yom Kippur,” you will come across numerous articles and essays dealing with the great significance of Mr. Koufax’s decision to place his Jewish obligations before that of his professional responsibilities.

**A Young Bearded Rabbi Visits Koufax**

 The day after that Yom Kippur Kiddush Hashem, a young bearded rabbi who lived in Minnesota named Moshe Feller went to visit that young ball player and present him with a pair of tefillin. Even though he did not agree to let the rabbi help him put on the tefillin that day, Sandy Koufax gratefully accepted the pair of tefillin as a present and thanked Rabbi Feller for coming by to visit him.

 Two weeks later, according to a story written by Dovid Zaklilkowski titled “A Pair of Tefillin for Sandy Koufax,” the writer noted that two weeks after the Yom Kippur Event, Rabbi Schneeson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke of this significant episode.

**Gives a Pair of Tefillin**

 “There was a young man [Rabbi Feller], and in fact he had a beard and he went to see the pitcher [Sandy Koufax] that wouldn’t pitch on Yom Kippur and he told him that he does not play baseball on Rosh Hashanah either. The young man told the pitcher that he would like to give him a present. He gave him a pair of tefillin.

 “The pitcher told him that he still remembers tefillin, however, he did not want to put them on at that time. The young man left, and that day the pitcher lost the game…But at the end it turned out that he won the World Series, and on his table there were the tefillin. In the end, even ‘a distant individual will not be distanced’ and he will merit to put them on, and another Jew will be added to those who have donned tefillin.”

**Almost a Half Century Later**

 Forty-seven years have come and gone since that notable Yom Kippur when the opening day of the World Series did not trump the holiest day of the Jewish year for the greatest Jewish pitcher of all time.

 Koufax who came back after losing the second game of the Series to win two games, including the deciding Seventh to win the championship for the Los Angeles Dodger would not only be chosen Cy Young Award winner (best pitcher in the Major Leagues) in 1965, but also was elected by the sports writers as the Most Valuable Player of that year’s World Series.

 He would also in 1972 become the youngest ball player ever elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Correct Time for Celebrating Shabbat**

 The Rav (rabbi) of Yanov was a great scholar. As a young man he had been the friend of Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg, and their friendship had endured in spite of the young man's terrible obstinacy and inability to concede the correctness of anyone else's viewpoint.

 Once, the Rav of Yanov was traveling to his son's wedding together with a party of illustrious well-wishers. The Rav and his party stopped at a lovely site on the outskirts of a forest to say the afternoon prayers. The Rav chose a secluded spot under the trees some distance away from the others, and he lingered over his devotions.

**Assumed the Rav Accepted a Ride on another Carriage**

 The members of his traveling party waited patiently for him in the carriage, but when darkness descended, they began searching for him in the surrounding groves of trees. Their search proved unsuccessful and though they were a bit concerned, they assumed that he had accepted a ride from one of the many other carriages in the wedding party.

 Their anxiety was borne out when they arrived at the site of the wedding and the Rav was nowhere to seen. There were all kinds of speculation, but there was nothing to do other than to proceed with the wedding without him. The sad group returned to Yanov without the Rav and in fact, without a clue of what might have happened to him.

 Meanwhile, the Rav was wandering around in the depths of the forest unable to find a way out. He had unwittingly lost his way in the forest. As hours became days the Rav became more despondent and disoriented. He lost track of time and set about preparing for Shabbat a day early.

 Finally, with G-d's help, the Rav found his way home and rejoined his jubilant family which had begun to fear the worst. When Thursday arrived the Rav busily set about preparing for Shabbat. When his family explained that it was Thursday and not Friday, he argued hotly that they were all mistaken.

**Became More and More Infuriated**

 They tried patiently to explain that in the course of his wanderings he had somehow lost a day in his reckoning, but he just became more and more infuriated. His family invited many acquaintances to try to convince the Rav, but to no avail. What could they do, other than to allow him to celebrate the holy Shabbat on Friday. He celebrated with all the traditional foods and prayed the Shabbat prayers, and when Shabbat actually arrived he donned weekday garb and set about his usual weekday activities while his horrified family helplessly looked on.

 Many weeks passed while he persisted in his mistaken behavior in spite of the steady stream of visitors all endeavoring to convince him otherwise. One day word of his strange fixation reached his childhood friend, Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg. Reb Shmelke set off at once for Yanov, making sure that he would arrive on Thursday. The Rav was thrilled to see him, and hastened to invite him for Shabbat. Reb Shmelke accepted enthusiastically, eager to implement the plan he had devised.

**Explains His Plan to the Rav’s Family**

 Reb Shmelke quietly gathered the Rav's family and outlined his plan to them. Needless to say they were anxious to do anything to bring the Rav back to reason, and so, in addition to the usual bountiful Shabbat fare, they also prepared some bottles of strong aged wine and set them on the table. The masquerade was carried out as the whole family and their many guests gathered to celebrate a festive Shabbat meal.

 After each delicious course Reb Shmelke poured a generous cup of old wine into the Rav's cup. Now, this was a heavy, red wine known to induce a deep slumber in the drinker, and Reb Shmelke didn't stint on the "L'chaims." Toward the end of the meal, the Rav fell into a deep sleep.

 Reb Shmelke sat back and relaxed with his pipe, telling his fellow diners that they could now return to their normal activities without worry, for the situation was under control. He took a soft cushion and placed it under the head of the sleeping man and settled down to guard the Rav throughout the night and into the following day.

 On the next night, which was truly the Shabbat, the same guests returned and sat down at the table to enjoy the real Shabbat repast. When it was time to say the Blessings After the Meal, Reb Shmelke gently roused the Rav, who sat up and remarked, "It seems as if I've been sleeping for a long time."

**Rejoins the Others in Saying the Prayers**

 He then joined in saying the prayers and everything continued in the usual manner through to the conclusion of the Shabbat. The family and townspeople were overcome with happiness at the result of Reb Shmelke's visit and thanked him profusely. For his part, Reb Shmelke made them promise that they would never reveal the true happenings of that Shabbat.

 The Rav never had an inkling of what had transpired. In fact, he was very proud that everyone else had come to the enlightened conclusion that his calculations had been correct. He was however, careful to credit his old friend Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg for helping lead his mistaken congregants and family to the right conclusion, saying, "Thanks to my friend from Nikolsburg, they were able to comprehend the truth. Isn't it amazing how impossibly stubborn some people can be!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayechi 5773 edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

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

**A Question About Women’s Sheitels (Wigs)**

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| **QUESTION:** |

Can a woman wear a custom made sheitel?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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| sheitel1_lrg |

Let me explain something about sheitelach [wigs that married Jewish women wear.] I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. I want to make everybody happy.

 Wearing a sheitel is certainly a good thing, but you should know that some sheitlin look too natural. Therefore, long hair sheitlin I think should be avoided.

 I won't tell you exactly what to do, but you must know that there’s a responsibility on women to be able to come before the bais din shel maalo when the time is up and say, "She wasn't the cause of anybody who was looking at her too much".

 A woman should never be in a position to be able to be blamed that she caused men to look at her. It's not her fault that she's a woman, but she has to be careful not to misuse that privilege. Her husband is the one who has to look at her, others should not look. Therefore if you're too careful with your appearance...now I'm not saying you shouldn't look good.

 At home many people are slovenly, sloppy, the husband sees a sloppy wife. On the street she dresses up to kill. Just the opposite, at **home** you should dress up, make the best impression on your husband. On the street, just be plain.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of a “Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller” based on a transcription of Rabbi Miller’s response to a question asked at his famous Thursday night hashkafah lectures in Flatbush, circa 1970s – 2001.*

**Chassidic Story #199**

**Kabbalah Vs. the Communist Draft Board**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

*The frightened chassid came to R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, chief rabbi of Yekaterinoslav, to ask for his blessing that he should secure a deferment from the brutally anti-semitic Communist Russian army.*

 Mr. Ozar Wienikursky tells of the traumatic time when he was about to be drafted into the Russian army. For a religious Jew to go into the Communist Russian brutally anti-semitic army was a dangerous agonizing experience.

**Seeking A Blessing for a Draft Deferment**

 The young chassid came to R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, chief rabbi of Yekaterinoslav, to ask for his blessing that he should secure a deferment. But the Rabbi did not suffice simply with blessing him. Instead, he gave Ozar extremely detailed instructions; he specified the exact date and hour at which he should report to the draft office, which route to take on the way there, the particular chapters of Tehillim that he should say beforehand, and exactly how many coins he should give to tzedakah.

 He also prescribed that when Ozar stood at the entrance to the building, he should stop and envisage in his mind the holy four-letter name of G-d. The Rabbi then blessed him and promised that nothing bad would befall him. He concluded by requesting that the young man return afterwards with a detailed report of all that had transpired.

**Passing by Many Doctors**

 Wienikursky carefully followed all of the Rabbi's unusual instructions. When he arrived at the draft office, he was sent into a large room with many tables. At each table sat a doctor with a particular specialty who had the responsibility of examining each candidate that passed before him, but only in his area of expertise. Each draftee, in turn, had to go before every one of the doctors, in order to determine the true state of his health and eliminate any possibility of deception.

 "I passed along the row of tables and was examined by each doctor," related Ozar, "Each one recorded his opinion in turn. Finally, I reached the desk of the clerk who notified the draftees of the board's decision.

 The man looked at me pityingly and exclaimed, "What is going on with you? You poor man! Each doctor found something wrong with you and each one's diagnosis describes you as suffering from a different disease!"

 He left safely with a complete exemption from the army.

 *[Translated and adapted by Yrachmiel Tilles from Eim b'Yisrael (and also published in Kfar Chabad Magazine - English).]*

*Biographical note:*

 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson [1878-20 Av 1944], father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was considered by the *Rebbe Reshab* to be one of his three greatest chassidim. An outstanding scholar and a leading Kabbalist of his generation, he was the Chief Rabbi of the major Ukrainian city Yekaterinoslav (today called Dniepropetrovsk) until his arrest and exile.

*Reprinted from the archives of Kabbalaonline.com, a project of Ascent Institute of Safed (ascentofsafed.com)*