**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas ki Tzeitzei 5775**

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**Story #925**

**Defying the Mayor**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1439992950&cf=SP2&randid=1176978334)

One day during the month of ELUL, Rabbi Meir Abuhatzeira [son of the *Baba Sali]*, arrived in one of the main cities of Morocco, intending to remain there for a few days to breathe fresh life into the community which had invited him to strengthen its spiritual state.



**Baba Meir**

The first night of his stay, Rabbeinu Meir, wishing to recite the*Selichot*, asked his host what time the people gathered in the synagogue. The host responded that the mayor forbade them to recite*Selichot* (the pre-*Rosh Hashana* prayers for forgiveness) because, he claimed, it disturbed the sleep of the Muslim neighbors.

It was clear that Rabbeinu Meir was not happy with the situation, yet the people could not defy a decision signed and sealed by the mayor himself. Rabbeinu Meir, however, did not hesitate and asked his assistant to summon all the communal leaders immediately.

He asked them if it was true that their fear of the mayor was preventing them from reciting *Selichot*. They admitted that it was, to their chagrin. Rabbeinu Meir instructed them to assemble all the Jews of the city that night in the local synagogue for the recitation of *Selichot*. The midnight hour was fast approaching.

Slightly after two o'clock in the morning hundred of Jews gathered in the synagogue with their prayer books in hand, in a mood of anticipation. Rabbeinu Meir himself was to serve as Prayer Leader. Before *Selichot* he spoke encouragingly, asking them to pour their hearts out to the Al-mighty and urging them to make up for all they had missed until that day. He then began to pray out loud, with the congregation following. The sounds of prayer emanated from the synagogue, to the surprise of the non-Jewish neighbors who immediately summoned the police.

The police officers, hearing about the Jewish prayer service led by Rabbeinu Meir, made haste to the mayor's house for orders. With rings of sleep clearly visible under his eyes, the mayor listened intently to the police commissioner's report. Fuming, he ordered the police to halt recitation of the *Selichot* immediately. One of the officers reported to him that Rabenu Meir, son of the Baba Sali, had organized the group and was even serving as Prayer Leader. The mayor, now furious sneered: "Who is the Baba Meir and who appointed him to so brazenly disobey the law?"

As soon as the words were spoken, the mayor suddenly found himself unable to continue. His body became paralyzed and his face became contorted. He sank helplessly into his armchair while his racing eyes shouted that which he was unable to speak.

It was obvious that his trouble was caused by his disdain for the honor of the*tzadik*. A messenger was dispatched to the synagogue to appeal to Rabbeinu Meir. As the messenger entered the sanctuary, the worshippers held their breath. There was utter silence as he hastily made his way to the raised platform at the center of the synagogue. Rabbeinu Meir, however, motioned that he was unable to interrupt even for the emissary of the mayor. To the congregation he signaled that they should continue praying with still more fervor.

At the end of the *Selichot*, Rabenu Meir turned to the messenger to hear what he had to say. With some trepidation the man unfolded before him to story of the mayor in his mansion, lying like a stone. Rabenu Meir said to him: "Go and tell him that he will return to full strength only if he promises not to persecute the Jewish people and permits them to practice their religious beliefs."

When the messenger told this to the mayor, he agreed by blinking his eyes to accept these conditions. In a matter of minutes his strength returned as if nothing had happened.

The mayor trembled as he waited for Rabbeinu Meir at his host's house. The door opened and he fell at the Baba's feet, begging his forgiveness. Taking advantage of the moment, Rabbeinu Meir demanded that the mayor sign an explicit commitment not to hamper his Jewish citizens in observing Jewish tradition down to its finest detail.

From that day on, the Jewish residents of the city encountered no more troubles in leading a Jewish life.

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**Source:** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Abir Yaakob: The Lives & Times of the Saintly Grand Rabbis of the Abichazira Dynasty*(vol 2.) by Chaonch Regal. Photo credit: //Geni.com

**Connection:** seasonal - the Month of Elul - Elul 2 is when Jews of Sephardic tradion begin reciting the *Selichot*/Forgiveness prayers.

**Biographical note:** Rabbi Meir Abuhatzira, popularly called *"Baba Meir"* (10 Tevet 1917 - 17 Nissan 1983), was the oldest son and designated spiritual successor of the Baba Sali. The Lubavitcher Rebbe indicated in private conversation that he was one of the pillars of the world. However, he pre-deceased his illustrious father by less than a year. Born and educated in Morocco where he became one of the most important rabbis there, as well as an accomplished Kabbalist. In 1966(?), he made *aliyah* and moved to Ashdod, where, after turning down an offer to be chief rabbi of Jerusalem, he lived reclusively for the rest of his life. Today, one of his five sons, Rabbi David, chief rabbi of Nahariya, is considered the scion of the Abuhatzeira clan

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org., a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com)[*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](mailto:ascent@ascentofsafed.com)

**Serving Hashem Even When It is Extremely Difficult**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The previous night had been another sleepless one for Yankel. He could hardly keep his eyes open as he walked through the bleak, cold snow-covered streets of Vitebsk to work. Was there any solution? When would it end? Five months of constant fear was unbearable.

For almost a half a year now, it was as though the angel of death was flapping his wings over poor Yankel's roof. His wife was going mad. "Let them pray somewhere else!" she pleaded, "Why our house? Let them pray alone in their houses! Why do you keep inviting them?"

The year was 1926 in Russia; Stalin was in power, and death was everywhere. No one dared to even THINK against "Father" Stalin, "the Luminary of Mankind".

Any gathering of three or more was interrogated by secret police. One day half a million people simply disappeared from the streets! Chassidim used to carry their Tefillin with them at all times, for fear that they would be suddenly taken to exile or worse. Some estimate that Stalin (of cursed memory) killed as many as 50 million of his own people! The list of frightening atrocities went on and on.

In this hell-on-earth, Yankel the simple Jewish factory worker, was engaged in one of the most subversive of activities; holding a "minyan" (a prayer group of ten Jews) in his house!

And he kept doing it just because he was a Chabad Chassid and the Rebbe (Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Shneerson 1880 -1950) said not to pay attention to the Yevsektzia, the Jewish, anti-Semitic arm of Stalin’s secret police.

Not only that, but he didn't send his child to the State school either (the Rebbe said that it would be better to throw oneself in a burning furnace than to let the communists educate Jewish children). And to top it off, once a week secret "underground" Torah classes for children were held in his basement.  If they caught him for any of this he would be off to Siberia for life….which probably would not be so long.

It was too much, too much. "Why can't we just keep to ourselves like the other religious Jews?!" his wife's pleading voice kept ringing in his mind.

For a while Yankel thought that it's just tension, and that she'll get over it. But after a few weeks he started to agree, and after a few more weeks he decided she was right and it was time to do something about it.  
The Rebbe was in Leningrad. Yankel would simply travel there and ask The Rebbe to find someone else.

On the ten hour train ride, he had a lot of time to think, and the further he got from Vitebsk and the pressure of home, the more he began to realize how right his wife was.

"How did I ever begin this crazy thing in the first place?" He though to himself. "True, the Rebbe wants it, but I should have stopped after a few weeks... I've been doing it for five months. It's insane!! Suicide!! Even one day was suicide! It's a miracle that I’m still alive!!!”

As the train chugged on his thoughts became even clearer. "After all, where does it say in the Torah you have to risk your life to teach children, or to make a minyan?! And if they would have caught me withholding my son from school I'd be in Siberia today, and he would be in an orphanage. What good would that do?! Better he should go to their school and I'll teach him Torah in the evening."

By the time he reached his destination, he'd never been so sure of anything in his life. He was going to the Rebbe's house to request early retirement. He arranged with the Rebbe's secretary, and luckily that very evening he was given permission to enter for a private audience.

But when he actually entered the Rebbe's study late that night, everything suddenly changed

The Rebbe was looking at some papers on his desk, the room was deafeningly quiet, and the Rebbe looked....infinite. It was almost frightening. Yankel's first thought was "I've stumbled into the Holy of Holies". He wanted to turn and leave, but at the same time he knew that he was where he belonged. He couldn't explain it, but as the Rebbe looked up at him and he saw the Rebbe's eyes it was obvious that this man felt the pain of every Jew in the world.

Yankel wanted to open his mouth to say something about his impossible situation at home but he couldn't. He gazed into the Rebbe's eyes, and suddenly felt happy and indescribably sad at once. The Rebbe spoke.

"In the area where you live, there is no Mikva (purification pool) for women. It will be difficult. You will have to gather money, buy the materials, find workers, and build the Mikva all without anyone noticing. Then of course, will be the problem of convincing the women to come and escorting them. But I'm depending on you."

Yankel was speechless, he wanted to complain, to protest, but all he could manage was to squeak out the words "But Rebbe!" and then he fell silent.

The Rebbe continued; "One of the high points of the Yom HaKipurim (Day of Atonement) service in the Holy Temple, was the casting of a goat off a high mountain (Azazel) in order to remove the sins of the Jewish people. There is a legend that says that the one who did this service (Eish Eiti) each year did not live out that year, he would die before the next Day of Atonement. But nevertheless there was great competition for the job of casting this goat because whoever did it would purify the Jewish people."

When Yankel saw that the Rebbe's eyes were filled with tears, he wept also. After a few minutes he dried his eyes, and returned home to begin building the Mikva.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5775 email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**A Non-Jew’s Take**

**On Jewish Achievement**

**By Steve Lipman**

**Steven Pease, a venture capitalist and CEO from Sonoma, Calif., has come out with his second book, 'The Debate over Jewish Achievement.'**

In 2009, Steven Pease, a venture capitalist and CEO from Sonoma, Calif., who specializes in turnarounds, wrote his first book, “The Golden Age of Jewish Achievements” (Deucalion), a thorough compendium of Jewish accomplishments in a wide variety of areas. Pease, a Protestant who came of age during the era of the Holocaust and the birth of Israel, “grew up sympathetic to Jews,” he wrote.

Now, he’s come out with his second book, on a similar theme,  “The Debate over Jewish Achievement,” which seeks to explain what he had previously documented. The Jewish Week interviewed Pease by email; this is an edited transcript.

**Q: Why does a non-Jew — a self-described “Presbyterian by upbringing, of Scots-Irish, English, and German heritage” — develop such a strong interest in documenting Jewish achievement? In your book, you spend 620 pages citing every conceivable Jewish achievement over the last 200 years.**

A: It began with simple curiosity. I have probably had more Jews in my life for longer than most gentiles. From kindergarten through college I had lots of Jewish friends and acquaintances. In 1972, I moved to Miami and spent six years as executive vice president working for a Jewish boss in what was then a Jewish industry (real estate information) with Jewish direct reports and competitors. As a turnaround CEO and venture capitalist I had Jewish board members, employees and CEOs of companies in which I invested.



**Author Stephen Pease: Probes Jews’ cultural accomplishments in new book.**

From all this, my experience was that Jews were disproportionately accomplished. I thought I could probably prove it but I had neither the time, nor the tools (the Internet).

In roughly 2003, I began to track down the data. What I found out was astonishing. The range and breadth of the achievements exceeded my expectations many times over and yet this phenomenon was little known and rarely discussed or written about. So I attempted to write the most comprehensive book on the subject ever published.

**Why another book, another 299 pages, on the subject?**

“The Golden Age” devoted one chapter (of 26) to a tentative answer to the question: “Why are Jews such high achievers?” If the first book was the definitive answer to the “What?” question, I thought it was time to provide a definitive answer to the “Why?”

**Standing on one leg, what’s your explanation of Jewish success — nature or nurture?**

Mostly nurture, and by that I mean Jewish culture.

Jews are the highest achievers of the last 200 years, but they are not the only ones. In the ’70s and ’80s the offshore Chinese were remarkable high achievers. More recently, many Asian cultures are becoming high achievers. The Mormons have been very successful as were the 18th- and 19th-century Scotts, the 17th-century Dutch, and many others. What seems clear are the common cultural threads many of them have shared. Most placed a huge premium on education.

The Jews made education mandatory after the Roman Conquest. Most placed a premium on rationality. They believe they can influence their own destiny. They tend to defer gratification and see that as mature behavior. They treasure family, believe in the importance of work, treasure merit, and on and on. In essence what we can learn, promote and emulate are the cultural values shared by all these groups.

**You cite stats and stories in all sorts of areas — academia, arts and entertainment, the Olympics, science, etc. — where Jews have excelled. What’s your favorite example?**

“The Jazz Singer.” It is my introduction to “The Golden Age” chapter on Hollywood and it describes the making of the first important “talking motion picture” and the Jewish role in inventing the movie industry.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) Update. The article was originally published in the August 4, 2015 edition of the Jewish Week (New York.)*

**Intensive Care**

**By Meital Yasour Beit, Israel Hayom**

**and JNS.org**

**Heading the ICU, Prof. Sorkin treated PM Menachem Begin, was with PM Yitzhak Rabin on the day of his assassination, and cried with victims of terror.**



When Professor Patrick Sorkin, 67, walks the halls of the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, he gets asked questions mainly having to do with religion. He is asked about the kashrut of the food at the hospital, where the synagogue is, about circumcision procedures, and so on. The veteran doctor's physical features are impressive – he has a long beard and wears a black kippah. His appearance makes it difficult for most people to comprehend that he is actually the head of the intensive care unit at the Tel Aviv hospital – a secular institution if ever there was one.

"One patient's wife asked for the head of the department. I arrived, and she took one look at me and said, 'I didn't ask to speak to the rabbi.' I explained to her that I was in fact the head of the department, so she said, 'Never mind. Give me a blessing,'" he provides one example of the confusion that he elicits among his patients. "It doesn't make sense for people that a haredi person can be a doctor, not to mention the head of a department."

This month, Sorkin will retire from his demanding job, but he is not going to rest. He plans to establish an intensive care unit at the Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center in Bnei Brak. He refuses to rest. "The Lubavitcher rebbe said that a Jew is never allowed to retire. As long as a person is alive, he has to work. I don't really see myself going fishing in Acre."

Alongside treating victims of car accidents, violence and drugs, he also treated victims of terrorist attacks, and those stick out in his memory most. Especially the young victims of the 2001 attack outside the [Dolphinarium nightclub](http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48882897.html) in Tel Aviv, in which 21 teenagers and four adults were killed.

"When a person is ill, it is easier to accept than when you see a person get hurt while simply going to work, or going to get money from an ATM. It's very hard, because you put your emotions aside," he explains. "We treated seven or eight girls from the Dolphinarium attack, which involved mostly young people. You see the parents carrying pictures of their daughters, to show you how pretty they were, and you cry with them. You can't stand it.

"I remember going up to the roof of the hospital one time, raising my hands up and asking, 'What do you want from me? You can't see these things either.' Those were difficult years."

**Q: What does it do to you?**

"I live other people's hell. I hope I get a discount for that when I get upstairs," he laughs. "The job here is to see the most difficult things there can possibly be in life, but you get used to it, at the surface level.

"At first, when I was 18 and I saw someone seriously hurt I almost fainted. With time you get used to it, ostensibly. But even if you forget a little, it still stays inside you."

**Q: How do you stay sane in this hell?**

"Who says I'm sane?" he asks, laughing. "To work in this kind of environment for so many years you don't need to be sane. Many people who work in intensive care in Europe or the U.S. take a lot of breaks. When you live in the reality of the Holy Land, you don't get breaks, not even for a minute or two. You're in it all the time, and it affects your personality."

**Q: How much does it affect you?**

"Your attitude toward things that are important to other people is different. If someone complains that they are distressed over a financial problem or a personal problem you look at them and smile and think to yourself, 'What are they even talking about? That's a crisis? There is no reason to complain about that.' That is why I say that the most important thing is not your health, it's your life."

To counterbalance the heavy psychological toll, Sorkin has had quite a few success stories throughout his career – patients who pulled through against the odds and got on with their lives. Sometimes the tiniest light at the end of the tunnel makes all the difference.

"One of the first terrorist attacks was at Dizengoff Center," Sorkin recalls the 1990s. "A suicide bomber killed a soldier, and his sister was seriously hurt. When I saw her in the emergency room, I saw only eyes. She had burns over 80% of her body. I didn't know what to do. She was placed in a medically induced coma and I removed three quarters of her leg, her kidney, her spleen, part of her liver, part of her intestine – there wasn't much left."

But the girl survived. "She was with us for a long time," he recalls. "She regained consciousness, and now we had to go and tell her that her brother was killed. It is impossible.

"When she was out of the woods, with only half of her left, she said, 'I thank you for not telling me that my brother died. I knew, but I didn't want to hear it.' From here she was transferred to Tel Hashomer, then she had all kinds of surgeries in the U.S., and today she is married with children," he says.

**A glimmer of hope**

Even after 34 years in Israel, Sorkin's accent gives away his French origins. He is the son of Holocaust survivors who raised him without any religious affiliation, far from the Jewish traditions. They even wanted to avoid circumcising him. Only when he was 12 years old and wanted to join a neighbor who was preparing for a Christian ritual, did his parents explain why he couldn't.

"My grandfather, who survived Nazi labor camps and a death march, revealed my Jewish identity to me. He told me about his experiences in the camp. I didn't hear bedtime stories about princesses marrying princes, I heard stories about people who saw a dead dog on a train track and asked the SS officers if they could eat it. That is how I was brought up, not belonging to the French people or to France, and when Israel is so far away you shut yourself off."

After he began studying medicine, he started becoming religious. "I was a senior physician at a very young age, and all options were open to me. I lived a simple life – a restaurant meal here, a vacation there, spent time with friends, and suddenly I woke up and asked myself, 'Is this life?' There was no value. Then the question marks came. You are Jewish, what does it mean to be Jewish? If you want to understand, you have to go to the Scriptures."

And thus, his challenging job and his religion became intertwined. He went to Friday prayer services with his phone always on him, ready to ring in the middle of a prayer and send him rushing back to the hospital. Sorkin does not let the minor clashes between religion and medicine undermine his decisions. For example, he refuses to declare brain death – he leaves that up to the other doctors. Unlike other doctors, he asks the families of patients to pray.

"The doctors and nurses treat the body, so I say that the family needs to treat the spiritual aspects. They have to pray for the well-being of the patient, and if they want I even tell them what to say. If they don't, each person says their own prayer," he says, and concedes that not everyone takes kindly to this suggestion. "I was told once by a relative, 'You are a doctor. I don't need you as a rabbi.'"

But religion only plays a part in the coping mechanism. The main aspect is, of course, the results of his lifesaving efforts. He has fought to save the lives of athletes hurt in the 1997 Maccabiah bridge collapse and has flown all the way to New Zealand to treat Israeli billionaire Ted Arison. He fondly mentions Arison's daughter, Shari Arison, who has since become one of the hospital's biggest donors.

He also remembers one of his most famous patients, former Prime Minister Menachem Begin. "He was astonishingly modest. He was hospitalized several times in our unit and he told me one time, 'Doctor, don't waste your precious time on me. I'm fine. Go treat other people.' Where do you see that sort of thing? His family – that is the kind of Israel I want to see. Just because you are who you are doesn't mean that you have to look down your nose at everybody."

And of course there is the most traumatic case, the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Sorkin was spending time with friends when he received the call on November 4, 1995. "A nurse named Mohammed called me from the intensive care unit and said, 'There was an attack on the prime minister.' I told him to stop with the nonsense. Then I took the car and drove at 140 kph [87 mph]."

When he arrived at the hospital, it was chaos. "I was interrogated by security personnel. And me, with my gall, I told one of them, 'Listen, if you had done your job I wouldn't be here.' And then I went into the operating room. I had never seen such gunshot wounds. All my surgeon friends were trying to save him, but I said, 'Listen, there is nothing we can do. There is simply nothing that can be done.' At that moment I didn't see him as a prime minister, but as a patient, and only the next day did it sink in that this was the prime minister. If you acknowledge that sort of thing while you are treating someone, you're in serious trouble."

His chosen field, [intensive care](http://www.aish.com/h/iid/48894307.html), is considered an undesirable specialty in medicine. The intensity of the demands, coupled with the absence of the private practice option, have prompted the Health Ministry to declare crisis mode. But Sorkin is optimistic.

"The people who come here enjoy their work a lot, because intensive care medicine is fascinating. You look at a patient whose life is in danger, and you treat them, and thank G-d they get better. It's fascinating.

"On the other hand, very few doctors come back [to the field], because they understand the challenges – how hard it is in terms of the family and financially. But those who do come back, don't come back because they want a flashy career, but because they want to be real doctors treating patients, and as time goes by there are more and more of those."

Ahead of his retirement he posted a status on the hospital's Facebook page that elicited thousands of likes and enthusiastic responses: "In my job I have seen patients that everyone was sure were already gone, but they managed to get back up on their feet and get well. Therefore, take a page out of my life experience and please, never give up, never relinquish hope, keep believing in the good and in the light even in the toughest situations. And above all, remember: Life is a gift."

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

**Short Story of the Week**

**Crying Over the Spiritual Tragedy of Other Jews**

One day, a group of close students entered the study of Rabb Zelig Bengis, the Av Beis Din of Jerusalem, to find his bent over his books, weeping uncontrollably. They immediately asked the Rav what was wrong. He pointed to an article in the Israel newspaper that reported that a shipment of non-kosher meat had arrived at the Israel seaport. He then looked up at them with tear-filled eyes, saying, "I know that no observant Jew will ever come into contact with this meat, but the mere thought that Descendants of our Patriarchs Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov will fall prey to this meat is too much for me to handle."

**Comment:** Many people are aware that the act of eating non-kosher meats (specified in this week’s portion) blocks the eater’s heart from developing a connection to Hashem and His Torah (Talmud, Yoma 39a). But how many of our own hearts feel pain when not-yet-observant Jews don’t even give themselves a chance to grow as Jews because of their non-Kosher diet?

Similarly, when an outreach organization asked a Rosh Yeshiva which is the first mitzvah a returning Jew should begin with. He replied, “They should keep kosher because kosher food will enable them to think straight.” We should take it upon ourselves to inform our brothers about the effects of non-kosher meat, and perhaps invite them to our homes for a (Shabbos) meal so they could experience some heart-unclogging. (from Peninim on the Torah)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5775 email of IVORT.*

**The Value of Tehillim**

Once it was revealed to the holy Baal Shem Tov that there was a heavenly decree against a certain .Jewish settlement that it should be destroyed, R”L The Baal Shem Tov joined with a few of his fellow ,hidden tzaddikim, Reb Mordechai and Reb Kehos to form a beis din and try to find a way to nullify .the decree

While the beis din convened, the neshama of the .Baal Shem Tov ascended to the heavenly worlds There he saw that the decree had already been sealed and could not be annulled.

While passing back through the heavenly spheres, descending back to the physical world, he saw a magnificent light. This light the BSH”T discerned was being fueled by the fervent words of Tehillim being recited by a simple villager, who would complete the entire Sefer Tehillim five times every day.

Since however ,this villager was void of halachic knowledge .he sometimes said Tehillim in unclean places. Nevertheless, HaShem valued his Tehillim so much that a sacred exalted place in Olam HaBa awaited .him

The Baal Shem Tov immediately traveled to see this man to ask him if he’d be willing to sacrifice his share in Olam HaBa in order to save the imperiled “?Jewish community

The simple Yid responded, “If I have a share in Olam HaBa, I am ready and willing to offer it for such a noble cause.” At that moment the ominous .decree was annulle

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Sparks of Light, a publication of The Baal Shem Tov Library in Flatbush.*

**Great Powers**

About 650 years ago, in a village in Germany there lived a simple pious Yid who was able to study Torah only at its simplest level. Every day, year after .year, he would recite the entire Sefer Tehillim

Less than thirty days after he passed away, he appeared in a dream to a chochom from the nearby city of Worms. In the dream he stood holding a little Tehillim, while cautioning the chochom to, “Warn the people in my village to escape immediately to the surrounding towns. During my life I protected them with my recitation of Tehillim, but now they.are in grave danger.”

Early the next morning, the chochom sent a messenger with an urgent letter telling the villagers of the looming danger. The people heeded his .words, and they were saved.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Sparks of Light, a publication of The Baal Shem Tov Library in Flatbush.*

**Reb Pinchas Koritz**

Reb Pinchas Shapira of Koritz was born in the city of Shklov, in the year 1726, He was one of the great talmidim of the Baal Shem ,Tov, and a colleague of the Mezritcher Maggid Reb Michel of Zlotshov, Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polno’ah and other great tzaddikim.

He first lived in Koritz and then moved to Ostro’oh. Many of the chassidishe Rebbes were guided by him. In 1791, he planned to immigrate to Eretz Yisroel but passed away en-route, in the .town of Shpituvka, on the 10th of Elul .

Reb Pinchas once asked the Mezritcher Maggid, “Why do you have many chassidim whereas I only have a few.”

The Maggid replied, “We know that the parshiyos of Chukas and Balak can be together .and so can the parshiyos of Matos and Maasei. ,Parshas Pinchas, however, is always separate because Pinchas was a zealot and only wanted the truth. The same is with you, for you are always demanding truth and consequently, you.have few followers .”

A chossid of Reb Pinchas was once traveling when he was suddenly overcome with strong hunger pangs. He stopped at an inn and asked .the innkeeper to quickly bring him some food.

“I’m very sorry,” apologized the innkeeper. “I cannot serve you the hearty meal I usually provide, since it is already three days that my daughter is having trouble giving birth, and my entire household is in great turmoil. All I can .offer you is some cake and mashke.”

The chossid took the cake and mashke and announced with great fervor, “You are now fulfilling the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim! And since I am the recipient of the mitzvah, I am now close to Hashem. I therefore daven that Hashem immediately help your daughter!”

As he concluded his proclamation, voices were heard happily calling, “Mazal tov! Mazal tov! It’s a boy.” When the chossid returned to Reb Pinchas and greeted him with “sholom”, Reb Pinchas said I see on you a ‘thread of kindness,’ the likes of techiyas hameisim!” The chossid then related all that had occurred to him. When he finished, Reb Pinchas heartily thanked him, “Yashar koach! No tzaddik in this world has as of yet thought to give life to a child and his mother in the merit of the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Sparks of Light, a publication of The Baal Shem Tov Library in Flatbush.*

**L’Maaseh… A Tale to Remember**

**You Think the Locomotive Train Needs Your Help?**

The Chofetz Chaim once heard some disturbing news. A certain student in his Yeshivah was involved in a Shidduch, and since the girl was reluctant to commit to him, there was no progress. The boy’s friends in the Yeshivah advised him to shave off his beard, thinking that the beard was the reason for the girl’s hesitation. They claimed that most Yeshivah students these days shaved their beards, and he should do the same.

The Chofetz Chaim invited the student to his home, and began to speak to him about Shidduchim, then he told him the following mashal. A locomotive train was pulling more than a hundred loaded train cars up a steep mountain. Even though the engine driver had put the engine on full steam, the locomotive was moving slowly due to the extremely heavy load.

One of the passengers, who thought of himself to be a clever fellow, decided that he wanted to speed up the pace of the train. He got out and walked to the back of the last car and began pushing with both hands certain that with his help, the train would now move faster.

The other passengers laughed at him and said, “What is your strength compared to the strength of a locomotive’s? Yours is like the strength of a mosquito compared to that of an ox!”

The Chofetz Chaim ended his mashal and said to his student, “The same thing applies to Shidduchim. Even though every Shidduch is announced in Shamayim forty days before the formation of a child, nevertheless, the matter is as hard to accomplish as the splitting of the Yam Suf! We know that Hashem Himself makes the Shidduchim. You might suddenly have the idea to help Hashem out by shaving off your beard so that the girl will like you more, but then you will be similar to the ‘clever’ passenger who pushed the heavy train with all his strength, thinking that he was ‘helping’ a hundred loaded train cars up the mountain!”

The Chofetz Chaim reminded his student to realize that everything is in the hands of Hashem, even any difficulties one might face. We must turn to Hashem with faith and trust, and do what is right in His eyes, and everything will work out for the best! (Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah, p. 92)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages**

**The Reason for Imperfect**

**Bad Malachs (Angels)**

Rav Zushe of Anipoli taught that whenever a Jew does a mitzvah, he creates a good Malach, while whenever he transgresses, a bad Malach is formed. Rav Zushe commented, “I have never seen a complete, unblemished Malach that was created by the aveirah of a believing Jew.

These bad Malachim are always missing a limb: this one its head, and that one an arm. For as soon as the Jew sighs in remorse, it cripples the accusing Malachim and maims them!” (Otzar HaChassidus)

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