**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ki Seitzei 5772**

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**My Barber Morris**

**By Mordechai I. Twersky**

**After discovering my local barber's dark secret,**

**No haircut has ever been the same.**



I was always drawn to this affable, Mr. Hooper look-alike with the Popeye laugh, who greeted me with a smile each time I entered his popular Bronx barbershop along with my father and younger brother.

The adult customers who flocked to him -- Jews, Italians, Irish -- sat in cream-colored, vintage barber chairs. Children had other amenities: an elevated, gleaming red fire truck and a box forever filled with candies.

I may have been only six-years-old, but Morris made me feel like a grown up.

"Nu, *calegaleh*, how do you want the neck? A square-back or natural?" he'd ask, invoking the affectionate Yiddish word for colleague. Then he'd wrap the white-cloth smock around my neck, close the snaps, and remove my yarmulke.

"Careful with the *peyis*!" my father, who was Morris' rabbi, would warn him, while directing the haircut like a movie scene. Morris would then clip my side-locks precisely at the cheek bone.

The mere touch of Morris' loud, vibrating electric razor at the base of my neck would tickle my funny bone, triggering fits of hysterical laugher. "*Nu, zai shtil*!" Morris would whisper, in a futile attempt to get me to stop fidgeting.

**The Secret Weapon – the “Hot Comb”**

Then, in the haircut's final moments, he'd bring out his secret weapon -- what he dubbed the "hot comb" -- in a semi-successful attempt to tame the two stubborn cowlicks at each corner of my forehead. "Horns," I called them.

The rest of the time Morris would converse with my father in Yiddish. I couldn't understand a word, but the deep sighs and long pauses spoke volumes.

And all the while there was the perpetual, almost haunting, sounds of Morris' scissors.

Aside from my regular visits to his barbershop, I would see Morris at my father's synagogue when he'd come to recite the *Yizkor*, or Memorial Prayer, during the holidays.

**Notice a Different Man Staring**

**Blankly into His Prayer Book**

On those occasions, I would notice a different man. Morris didn't mingle with his fellow congregants, nearly all of whom were his customers. He'd sit in the back row and stare blankly into his prayer book, sometimes straight ahead, seemingly into nowhere.

Over time, I would learn that Morris, along with my father and nearly the entire congregation shared something in common: they were survivors of the Holocaust.

I would learn that the off-blue "KL" tattooed onto Morris' right forearm -- the mark I stared at for years -- was from a concentration camp, and I would take note of the repeated references to Nazis in Morris' Yiddish conversations with my father.

I would learn that my name wasn't *merely* biblical: I was named for my paternal grandfather, who was murdered together with one of his sons and more than 50 Jews in July of 1941.

For me, Morris' lonely, sad, and detached synagogue demeanor overshadowed his barbershop persona. In a congregation of Holocaust survivors who seemed otherwise happy and well adjusted, Morris somehow stood out. His sighs could move mountains.

But I did not dare approach him.

**Unraveling the Mystery**

During my high school years, as I drifted away from home, I drifted away from Morris. With my adolescent desire for "space" came the desire to replicate my friends' perfectly layered, designer haircuts. The bangs were combed back. The barbershop on White Plains Road was replaced by a trendy Manhattan salon with pulsating music, free of parental direction, Yiddish, and signature sighs.

Over the years I would see Morris in synagogue and feel guilty. He would look at my assorted holiday haircuts -- one year he saw a perm gone awry -- and ask: "Who's giving you haircuts? *Er hut tzvei linkeh hendt* (He has two left hands)!"

**The 31-Year-Old Graduate**

**Student in Journalism**

It was not until I was a 31-year-old graduate student in journalism in search of a documentary subject that I had my first in-depth encounter with Morris. I sought out this man -- who had since retired but continued to cut his rabbi's hair at our home -- determined to unravel the mystery of his past.

"What would you like to know?" he replied in his heavily accented English. "Come up to the house, and we'll talk."

Several days later I visited Morris and his wife at their Bronx apartment. A faded, black and white picture immediately caught my eye: that of a baby girl in a carriage.

**A Child Named Rivkaleh**

"You've grown," said Morris, who hadn't seen me as often since my move to Manhattan. His wife, Fela, emerged from the den with an old color photo: it was from my brother Isaac's traditional first haircut at age three. The year was 1969, and pictured with my brother was Morris, holding his trademark scissors.

"I had a child, once," he began. "Her name was *Rivkaleh*. She was only five years old when they took her from me."

Then, Morris, who must have been 80 years old at the time, held out his hands.

"You see these?" he asked. There was a slight tremor in his hands, which were thick, tinged with red, with hardly a wrinkle. "These kept me alive."

"I don't understand," I politely replied, hoping he would elaborate.

"The Nazis needed barbers in the ghettos and in the camps," he said matter-of-factly. "Why else would they keep me alive?"

As I sat there, my mind raced. I imagined Morris some 50 years earlier in a striped prison uniform. I stared at his hands -- the very same hands that for years caressed my face, offered me candies, and shielded my eyes when he trimmed my bangs. My thoughts turned to others who sat in his barber chair during the war in Poland: German SS officers who came for their daily shave, and countless Jews whose hair was sheared before entering the gas chamber.

**The Harrowing Story of**

**His Daughter’s Murder**

Over the course of two hours, Morris described the harrowing tale of his daughter's murder. He said he dreamt of her often and still wonders whether she could have been saved.

"A Pollack once begged me to give him my girl," he recalled. "He wanted to raise her. She had blonde hair and didn't look Jewish."

He told of his experiences in five concentration camps, his liberation from Dachau, and his arrival in the United States with his first wife, who by that time was ill and could no longer have children. She died in 1970.

"*Doss iz iss*," Morris said in Yiddish, summing up with a deep sigh. "That's the way it is. There was nobody to cry to for help."

**Sharing His Food Rations with Other**

**Concentration Camp Inmates**

I learned how he prolonged the lives of fellow inmates by sharing with them the food rations he earned as a barber. And I learned of his encounter with his daughter's murderer when he testified against him at a war crimes trial in Germany.

"I spit him in his face, that Nazi bastard," Morris said, in his only visible display of emotion.

In the year following my interview with Morris, I returned to him, making sure to be present at my parent's home every time he cut my father's hair.

Now I *wanted* Morris to cut my hair.

Following my *aliyah* to Israel I maintained contact with Morris, speaking with him before the Jewish holidays. He would emerge from retirement to give the traditional first haircuts to each of my brother's four sons.

My father and Morris have since passed away, and no haircut has ever been the same.

More often than not, the barber chair feels cold. My memory drifts back to the Bronx, to the voices and images of two men who shared their past and their pain in a bi-monthly series of conversations that spanned 40 years.

**Can Still Hear the Scissors**

And I can still hear the scissors.

Today, Morris' old barbershop is a stationery store. The legacy of that space, receded into history, is unknown to a new generation of residents. But for me, the light in the store still burns. The barber's pole on White Plains Road beneath the elevated subway line still turns.

"What's it gonna be?" a bi-lingual barber in his forties asks me before beginning a recent haircut in Jerusalem .

"Give me a square-back," I reply. "And -- "

"Yes?" he asks.

"Careful with the *peyis*."

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

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Stand-by for Minyan**

As we enter the Jewish month of Elul, we begin to increase our spiritual growth and improvement. It is especially important at this time to look back at the year gone past and to ask ourselves: What have my spiritual accomplishments been? What are my spiritual failures? As we approach judgment day on Rosh HaShana, we must make sure to correct all of our spiritual missteps and to resolve to be better in the coming year.

The Torah told us last week, “You shall be “tamim” with Hashem your G-d.” (Devorim 18:13) “Tamim” can be translated as “whole, flawless, perfect, honest, upright.” In order to learn a relevant spiritual lesson, we will read the above verse to say, “You shall be perfect with Hashem your G-d.” The mystical Torah teaches us that every mitzvah gives life to a different part of the body. When one violates the Torah, he therefore damages the spiritual power in the part of the body which did the offending deed.

**The Damage Caused by**

**Speaking Lashon HaRah**

For example, when one violates the mitzvah of Lashon HaRah, (speaking ill of others) he damages the spiritual force in the mouth. Therefore, when the verse tells us “You shall be perfect with Hashem your G-d” it is possible to say that the verse is telling us to do teshuva – to correct our spiritual wrongdoings. Because, when one does teshuva, he repairs the spiritual damage he has done to himself. So, only after teshuva – correcting one’s ways, can one’s soul be complete or ‘perfect’ in its relationship with Hashem.

Amazing stories of Divine providence have a tremendous power to awaken our hearts to do teshuva. Because, if we can internalize the idea that Hashem supervises the entire world, then it will be easier for us to want to do teshuva. Because, through amazing stories such as the following, we will know with a certainty that nothing goes unnoticed in heaven…

**Planning to Attend a NYC Trade Show**

A group of four frum (religiously observant) businessmen from Cleveland had arranged to travel together by plane early one Sunday morning to a New York City trade show. It was Rosh Chodesh Elul (the first of the month of Elul). One of the businessmen Reb Mordechai, had assured the others that, provided their plane landed on time at LaGuardia Airport in New York City, they would be able to catch any of a number of minyanim for Shacharis (the morning prayers) in Manhattan and still be at the trade show when it opened at 9:00 A.M.

R' Mordechai was supposed to pick up the others at 5:00 A.M. to catch the light an hour later. But he overslept, and at 5:30 his brother, a second member of the group, came frantically to his house to see what had happened. R' Mordechai awoke with a start and told his brother to get the others and go without him; he himself would have to make the next plane. The three others made their way to the airport as R' Mordechai frantically put his things together, dashing around to find his tallis, tefillin, attache case, trade samples and car keys.

Equipped with a cup of coffee and his radar detector, he drove with abandon and got to the plane just as the doors were about to be closed. The others were surprised that he had made it.

The plane took off from Cleveland's Hopkins Airport in perfect weather. But shortly after the flight was in progress the captain announced that he had just been informed that there was a thick blanket of clouds and fog enveloping the New York City area. He promised the passengers to keep them informed of any developments. The men began to become apprehensive, for they had not really left much time to get from the airport to a minyan and still be on time to the trade show.

**Scheduled to Divert to Washington, D.C.**

The flight continued as passengers tried to figure out alternate ways of getting to their destinations if they couldn't land in New York. Soon the captain's voice came over the intercom again. The news was not good, he announced. The fog had traveled westward over the New Jersey border, and not only was it impossible to land in New York, it would be dangerous even to attempt a landing at Newark Airport. They would have to land further south - in Washington, D.C.

On board with these businessmen was a small group of chassidim. They had come to spend Shabbos in Cleveland Heights with their rebbe, Reb Mechele, and were returning to New York that morning as well. When the plane landed in Dulles Airport, in the nation's capital, the chassidim and the businessmen decided that perhaps they had better form a minyan right there, for by the time they could catch a connecting flight and land in New York, the time for reciting Shema would be long gone.

**Just 10 Men – Enough to Make the Minyan**

They counted to see if they had ten. Indeed, the chassidim were six, and then they counted the businessmen: one, two, three - and R' Mordechai made four! They had their minyan -and only because R' Mordechai had caught the plane!

A member of the airline personnel designated a corner of the waiting room where they could say their morning prayers. The ten men congregated there, each in his tallis and tefillin. All this was in perfect view of any passersby who could watch the proceedings through the glass partition behind which the men stood.

As they were saying Hallel, a well-dressed man slowly and hesitantly walked into the area where they were davening (praying). A few heads turned to see what he wanted. "Would you mind if I said Kaddish?" the man asked softly.

One of the businessmen, R' Yankel, was taken aback. The man hardly looked Jewish. How did he even know about Kaddish, and what did he want with it? It was then that R' Yankel noticed that the man was wearing a black ribbon on his lapel.

R' Yankel motioned to the man to wait for a few moments and he did so. At the appropriate time R' Yankel went over to the man, gave him a prayer book and a yarmulke, helped him put on a pair of tefillin and said, "You may begin the Kaddish."

**The Man Looked Around Uneasily**

The man looked around uneasily, then began. "Yisgadal veyiskadash ..." he whispered, and burst into tears. He regained his composure and continued, "... shemei rabbah ..." The men answered "Amen" with reverence. The gentleman struggled through the remainder of the words, as the men of the minyan helped him get through the entire Kaddish.

When he finished, he nodded his head in thanks and asked, "Is there another one to recite later?" They told him that there was. He waited patiently and then after the davening they motioned to him once again to begin. And once again as he said the Kaddish he burst into tears. All in the minyan could not help but be touched by the sensitivity and sadness of the man.

When Shacharis (the morning prayers) ended, one of the chassidim went over to the gentleman and introduced himself. After a few moments of conversation the chassid said, "I couldn't help but notice that you were so emotionally torn as you prayed. Is everything all right with you?"

**The Gentleman’s Incredible Story**

It was then that the gentleman told this incredible story. "You see," he began, "my father died just a few days ago, and last night he came to me in a dream and said to me, 'Robert, how come you're not saying Kaddish for me?'

"In my dream I replied, ‘Dad, I hardly know how to say Kaddish , and besides, there are no synagogues where I live and I am always traveling:

"'I need you to say Kaddish,' my father insisted to me. I kept repeating that I just could not get to a place where I could say Kaddish for him. It was then that he asked me, 'But what if I send you a minyan? Would you then say Kaddish?'

"'Of course I would,' I replied, and that's when I woke up. I couldn't believe that dream. I was trembling as I awakened. As I was getting dressed I managed to convince myself that there was really nothing to that dream. But then I came to the airport to catch a flight, and there, to my unbelieving eyes, were all of you praying in a minyan -in the minyan that was obviously meant for me!" (R. Paysach Krohn, “Around the Maggid’s Table”) Hashem supervises all of the Creation. Hashem has kept an exact accounting of all our deeds. Let us use this time before Rosh HaShanna wisely, to repair our spiritual missteps.

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

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

**What is the Purpose of Davening (Praying)?**



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| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

Why should we ask *Hashem* in our *tefilos* everyday for the same thing? Doesn't *Hashem* know what we should have? Doesn't He know what we need?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
| http://gallery.mailchimp.com/51050d25b69193df91b43c6e8/images/OrthodoxAndSoldierPraying.jpg |

Our *tefilos* are not to tell *Hashem* what we need, but *l'hispallel*, which comes from the word *pe’lillim*, which means to think, to make us think. We should know that *Hashem* is the **giver** of all that we get. That's the importance of *tefila*. And therefore we go to **Him** in order to demonstrate that we know He is the giver.  
  
Now why every day? The answer is: *auf’rious ha’chumrous ga’as*, the *Mesilos Yesharim* says. The materialism is a very heavy thing in this world, and little by little it enters the minds even of *tzadikim, - gashmius*. And they must constantly reiterate and remind themselves, *v’yodata ha’yom va'hasheivoso el le’vovecha*, again and again, *ki* ***Hashem*** *hu Ho'elokim*. We have to remind ourselves **constantly**, and davening is not enough! Not that we daven too much, we don't daven enough.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.” that is based on a transcription of some of the questions asked by members of the audience attending the classic Thursday night lecture of Rabbi Miller in his Flatbush shul.*

**Yaakov’s Visa to**

**Leave Russia**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

During World War Two the Jews in Poland suffered terribly and often their only hope was to cross the border and flee to Russia. But when the war ended suddenly the situation was reversed. Jews in Russia, especially religious ones, tried desperately to leave Stalin's hell, even by forging passports, and getting into Poland.

A Chabad Chassid called Yaakov Lefkefker also tried this trick but instead of escaping to freedom his forgery was discovered by the Russian border guards, he was 'tried' and then sentenced to life in Siberia.

**A Miraculous Stroke of Good Luck**

But, in a miraculous stroke of good luck, after he managed to survive there over ten years, when the evil Stalin died, he, along with tens of thousands of other prisoners, was released from exile.

But getting out of Russia was a different story.

As the clerk in the government office in Tashkent put it the first time Yaakov gave him his form requesting an exit visa to mail to Moscow;

He held up his hand as though to slap him and declared, "Before a criminal like you gets permission to leave Russia …… hair will grow on the palm of my hand".

And so it was; every year Yaakov repeated the same futile ceremony: He filled out all the forms, mailed them to Moscow (it was permissible to request only once a year) waited a week or two and received an official letter of rejection.

But there was something else he did as well. Each time immediately before filling out his annual request he would call his relatives in America and ask them to would request the Lubavitcher Rebbe to give a blessing that it would work …. but the Rebbe never replied.

Perhaps the normal reader will be perplexed as to how religious Jews, who are supposed to believe ONLY in G-d, can ask a human being for blessings. The answer to this is that since G-d blessed Abraham and said “You will be a blessing”, blessings were given into the hands of holy Jews (see Rashi on Gen. 12:2). Such a person was Rabbi M.M. Shneerson a.k.a. the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**Back to Our Story.**

One year his relatives received an envelope from the Rebbe's office! The first time there was a reply! It contained a letter from the Rebbe informing them that he had received Yaakov’s request and promised that this year he would the visa would be granted!

Of course their joy was immense! As soon as they called Yaakov in Russia he packed his bags and waited for the good news

….. But it didn't come.

People all around him in Tashkent were receiving replies; some positive, some rejections but he received nothing and the time was getting short. There was a deadline for using such visas, and after that date a new request had to be made to Moscow. And he didn’t even have a visa!

**Called Over by the Rebbe**

Back to New York; a few weeks later on Shabbat the Rebbe made a large 'Farbringen' ('Chassidic get-together'). All the Chassidim were there when suddenly the Rebbe turned to Yaakov's relative and motioned to him as to say "Why haven't I heard any news?" When the latter just shrugged his shoulders the Rebbe called him over and said.

"The permission is there, he just has to pound on the table… even turn over a table, and he will get it."

After Shabbat they again called Yaakov in Russia and told him what the Rebbe said.

The next morning Yaakov, usually a mild mannered, quiet fellow went to the government office, walked up to the clerk, took a deep breath, braced himself and shouted,

"Give me my visa!!! I know it's here. I! WANT! MY! VISA!"

At each of the last four words he pounded on the table with all his might. The two soldiers standing at the door walked toward him but before they got there he yelled…..

"And I want it…. NOW!!!"

He swiftly grabbed the edge of the table nearest him, closed his eyes and lifted up with all his might turning it over and sending papers and metal things flying and crashing all over the office.

The police were astounded, Yaakov just stood there and quietly said to them, "I want my visa and they won't give it to me."

For some reason in all the confusion someone took a look at the clerk's papers on his desk and there it was!! An official letter from Moscow addressed to Yaakov! And in it….. Yaakov's Visa!!

It seems that the clerk was a rabid anti-Semite and planned to hold the letter until the last day so Yaakov wouldn't be able to use it. And somehow….. the Rebbe knew!!!

A week later Yaakov was in Israel.

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

**Report on the Jewish Scene In the Phillipines (Manilla)**

**By Rabbi Eliahu Azaria**

Being a rabbi in the only Jewish synagogue and community center in Manila brings many challenges, but it also provides gratification in knowing how different and special our community is. Our community is very united, celebrating together, mourning together, and sincerely caring for any Jew in the country.



**Rabbi Eliahu Azaria**

We follow the Sephardic tradition but there are lots of members that come from different backgrounds and levels of observance. This gives a great feeling of tolerance and acceptance to members and visitors.

When my family and I arrived to Manila in September 2004 after my rabbinic ordination at Midrash Sephardi Yeshiva (Shehebar Sephardic Center) in Jerusalem, the community had about 30 member families. It was a struggle to complete a minyan on Shabbat. The community was depleting in numbers as the manufacturing industry was moving to China, and some members thought that our community was dying.

**Jews in the Philippines Date Back to the Inquisition**

The presence of the Jews in the Philippines dates back to the Inquisition, but it was only until after World War I, when many Jewish refugees arrived from Russia to escape persecution, that the Jewish community in Philippines was formally organized. In 1922, the community built the first Synagogue in Manila named “Temple Emil.”

By the early 1930s, the Jewish community of Manila numbered around 500 people. In the 1940s, at the request of the Jewish community in Manila, the government issued visas and permitted more than a thousand European Jews to enter the Philippines and escape the war in Europe.

[](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=KCguMB5v&id=FE9E7C48EF75620CFF216FE9717AE77C968CE820&thid=OIP.KCguMB5vTMJV_8QMP509NgEsDC&q=photos+of+temple+emil,+manila&simid=608000696016113189&selectedIndex=0)

**Photo of the original Manilla synagogue that was destroyed**

**during fighting in World War II**

During World War II, the Philippines was under the Japanese occupation and the synagogue in Manila was eventually destroyed due to all the fighting. After the war, while the synagogue was being rebuilt, many Jews left the Philippines for Israel or the United States and the community shrunk.

**Current Synagogue Was Built in 1982**

In 1982, the synagogue was moved to its new location in Makati City. Now, it is part of a beautiful stand alone complex that houses a large function room, a spacious kosher kitchen, a library, classrooms, a mikveh and offices. The community owns a Jewish cemetery as well.

Despite the challenges, we continued having Friday night services, followed by Kiddush in our house, where we would share a Shabbat meal with seven to 15 people. On Saturday mornings we would have prayers with minyan and a beautiful lunch with about 40 people.

After almost eight years, the community has grown, our membership has almost tripled and we now have more visitors. The Friday night meals that we used to host at our home were moved to the Social Hall because of the increase in the number of people coming that now ranges between 40 to 50 at night and 80 to 100 in the morning.

With the help and support of the community, we have established a minyan on Mondays, Thursdays, Rosh Hodesh, Holidays, Shabbat and any other time that we have a special occasion like a Brit Milah, burial, wedding, etc.

We now have weekly Monday and Thursday night adult lessons, Bar Mitzvah and Sunday classes for children in Hebrew and Torah, men and women’s lessons on Shabbat, summer camps, additional lectures and other religious and/or cultural events.

**The Rabbi is Also a Shohet**

Since I am also a shohet, the community in the Philippines has the benefit of being the only community with its own production of Halak Bet Yosef beef, veal, lamb and chicken in South East Asia. We also supervise and work with a farm in Batangas to maintain milk production and a supply of different kinds of kosher cheese. All meals served in the synagogue are strictly kosher. We also cater for events and provide take-out meals, sometimes preparing 600 meals a week.

At present, we are working on a number of plans, such as the renovation of the mikveh to serve better the needs of our increasing number of women and a Jewish school in the near future.

Working with the community has been a great learning experience and we hope to continue to be blessed with the opportunity to strengthen Jewish education, values and identity.

(Editor’s Note: Rabbi Azaria can be reached at [rabbiazaria@gmail.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000zoW0:001GD_5100000xcp&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1345824123&randid=1062534418&content=central##).)

*Reprinted from a recent email of the Shehebar Sephardic Center that is dedicated to reviving Sephardic and Jewish life in the Diaspora. For more details about their work, click* [www.ssc.org.il](http://www.ssc.org.il)

**Criminal Justice**

“*It will be that if the wicked one ought to be beaten, the judge shall cast him down; and he shall strike him, before him*.” (Debarim 25:2)

The Sifri derives from the word lefanav, "before him," that the one administering the lashes must have enav bo, "look at the one being punished." He may not stare elsewhere while flogging the sinner.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, z”l explains that it is an issue of empathy; the Torah demands that the flogger comprehend and sympathize with the sinner's pain. Regardless of the sinner's culpability, it is essential that we consider his pain, feel his anguish and understand what has catalyzed this punishment.

A Rebbe is required, at times, to punish a student. He does not have to enjoy this part of his vocation. In fact, he should eschew this aspect and perform it with a heavy heart. The educator who takes perverse enjoyment, actually gloating over the punishment he administers, should find another vocation. He has no business teaching Jewish children. Not every student is a perfect angel, and there comes a time when a head of a school must ask a student to leave. This necessary action should engender a sense of sadness.

**The Example of Rabbi Uri Hellman**

As principal of Bet Yaakov for over half a century, Rav Uri Hellman inspired thousands of Jewish girls with a love for Yiddishkeit. Regrettably, not all students fit into a program and not every school is suitable for every girl. Once, Rav Hellman was compelled to ask a girl to leave the school. It was a difficult decision, one that he had been putting off for quite some time, but, nonetheless, necessary and vital to the stable maintenance of the school.

The day that he was to expel the girl began as usual. Rav Hellman was in his office addressing various issues, when his secretary brought him a piece of cake from someone's party. She left it on his desk, as he continued plowing through his work. When she returned hours later, she noticed that the cake had not been touched.

Curious, she asked him why he had not tasted the cake. Rav Hellman's reply is telling. He said, "How can I eat today when I have to send a Jewish girl from the school?" To him, administering disciplinary punishment was something that had to be done - but with a very heavy heart. (Peninim on the Torah)

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

**Story #769**

**Conflicting Prophecies**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=00010Vk0:001GF9J0000011Je&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1346161363&randid=1643964668&content=central##)

This story was first told by Grand Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhin.

Reb Aryeh Leib was known as the Shpoler Zeide (grandfather) since he emulated the ways of our grandfather Abraham. His home was always open to guests and he loved his fellow Jew with a genuine and encompassing love. As a result, within a short time after he arrived in Shpole, every Jew in town became a dedicated and pious individual.

**A Chasid Who Was**

**Not Blessed with Children**

The Shpoler Zeide had a chasid who was very devoted. Tragically, this individual was married for many years and still had not been blessed with children. On numerous occasions he came to beseech his Rebbe (who was quite fond of him), for a blessing for offspring, yet the Shpoler Zeide rejected his request every time.

One day, the chasid and his wife decided that enough was enough. They decided that he would go to beseech the Rebbe once more. This time he resolved that no matter what, he would not take no for an answer.

**Discovers the Rebbe Absorbed**

**In Private Contemplation**

He arrived in Shpole and found the Rebbe absorbed in private contemplation. He interrupted the Zeide gently and told him the reason for his appearance. The Shpoler Zeide told him that he was involved in a matter of great importance having to do with the welfare of the entire Jewish people, and now was not the time to accept individual petitions.

When the chasid realized the his Rebbe might actually be speaking to the Almighty face to face, he understood that this was an auspicious moment and he redoubled his efforts to gain a blessing from the Shpoler Zeide. He was so relentless that finally, with more than a trace of aggravation in his voice, the Zeide turned on the chasid with the full force of his presence and assured him that he would never merit having a child.

Broken, and distressed over his tragic mistake, he went on his way. If there was even a minute chance that he might have a child before, there was certainly no chance now. He absorbed himself in his business and his travel to forget his anguish.

One day he came to the town of Koretz, where the great tzadik Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was still a young man, concealing himself in the Beis HaMedrash (study hall) so that he could engage himself solely in serving G-d. The chasid had spent enough time in Shpole to recognize a person of exemplary qualities when he saw him, so he decided to get to know Reb Pinchas a bit.

**Recognizing a Man of**

**Great Spiritual Stature**

His further observations only confirmed his notion that Reb Pinchas was a man of great spiritual stature. The chasid, with the hope that maybe one day Reb Pinchas could reverse the negative proclamation of the Shpoler Ziede, made a point of visiting Koretz whenever his business took him to the general area.

Once, he arrived in Koretz a few days before Pesach. Reb Pinchas was sitting in the Beis HaMedrash, learning and praying. As usual he was destitute. Nevertheless, even the demands of the approaching holiday did not cause him to waver from his studies.

The wealthy chasid went to the Rebbitzen (Rabbi’s wife) and inquired whether or not they had the means with which to celebrate the upcoming Pesach. The Rebbitzen informed him that they had neither meat nor chicken nor fish. Not wine, not candles, not even matzah, and no prospects were in sight for obtaining any of these items.

**Offers to Help the Rebbitzen with**

**All Her Needs for Pesach**

The chasid turned to the Rebbitzen and offered, "I will provide all the needs for the entire holiday if you will let me be at your Seder table." The Rebbitzen readily agreed.

When Reb Pinchas left his house the morning before Pesach, he knew that there were none of the provisions needed for the Holiday. Still, he went to pray and study like on any other day.

As soon as Reb Pinchas left, the chasid and the Rebbitzen went to work. The previously ordered supplies began to arrive. When darkness fell over Koretz and the candles were lit, the home of Reb Pinchas was prepared for royalty. There were meat and fish and chicken.

There was the extra-strictly prepared expensive Shmura Matzah and there were wines of every type. Fresh fruits from all over the world were piled high in baskets. All the furniture in the house was replaced. The table was decked with a new snowy white cloth, new porcelain dishes, gleaming silverware, Kiddush cups and a tall candelabra.

The children and the Rebbitzen had new outfits, and a white silk Kittel (robe) was draped over the back of Reb Pinchas' chair. The family anxiously awaited the arrival of Reb Pinchas.

**Enters the Door of His House**

**And Becomes Speechless**

But he, knowing that there was nothing to come home to, stayed on at the synagogue for a long while after the prayers before finally heading home. When he walked in the door and saw all that was before him, he was speechless. He immediately donned the silk Kittel and with great exultation made Kiddush and began to recite the Hagaddah.

Reb Pinchas's exuberance was infectious and the family sang and chanted and discussed the Exodus from Egypt with great passion until finally they reached the festive holiday meal.

Reb Pinchas turned to the Rebbitzen and asked for an explanation. She motioned to the guest indicating that he had wanted to spend Pesach with them and had provided the bounty.

**Asks His Guest if There is**

**Anything that He Can Do for Him**

Reb Pinchas, still in a rapturous state, turned to the chasid and asked him if there was anything that he could do for him. The chasid realizing that his chance at last had come, broke down and told the whole story of how he had been a chasid of the Shpoler Zeide and how he and his wife had been childless for so many years, and how he never merited a blessing from his Rebbe until he bothered him about it when he shouldn't have and received the opposite of a blessing.

Reb Pinchas, being in the exalted state that he was and very moved by the man's story, replied, "If I have any merit in the Heavens at all, it is my oath that this year you will be blessed with a son!"

The Rizhiner Rebbe related that the moment that Reb Pinchas made his oath, a great tumult erupted in the Heavens. Here were two promises, made by two great Rebbes, and they contradicted one another. Whose would be upheld?

The Heavenly Court finally decided to examine the chronicles of the lives of each Rebbe to see if one of them had been so cautious as to have never before made an oath or promise. They found that only Reb Pinchas had been so circumspect in his speech that he had never made an unqualified promise or oath. Therefore the chasid and his wife were indeed blessed with a child within the year. The fame of Reb Pinchas began to spread.

The Rizhiner concluding his story saying, "Despite the fact that Reb Pinchas' blessing was upheld, one must nevertheless learn from this an important lesson that one ought not go against the words of another tzadik.

**The Grandson Becomes a**

**Troublesome Misnaged**

The grandson of that chasid was Shimshon Finkelman, the Misnaged who brought about so much trouble for the grandsons of Reb Pinchas - Reb Pinchas and Reb Avraham Abba, leading to their arrest and torture by being

sentenced to receive 1500 blows in a gauntlet of two long rows of brutal soldiers holding a club in each hand. The victim would have to pass between the two rows absorbing the brutal blows as he struggled to reach the end. One in a thousand survived. Most barely made it a third of the way through. Surviving was not necessarily desirable since the survivor would be sent to Siberia. The two brothers actually made it through, but they were disfigured and mutilated in the process.

**Devotion to Keeping His**

**Yarmulke on His Head**

It is told how the legendary Awe of Heaven of Reb Pinchas resembled that of his holy grandfather. As he was passing through, one of the blows sent his yarmulke flying. Not wanting to go on without it, he backtracked to retrieve it, absorbing many extra blows as a result.

They survived and were sent to Siberia. However, they got only as far as Moscow and were not able to travel any further because of their injuries. They were admitted to a government hospital where they stayed for a number of months until the Czar died and they were granted pardons.

They returned to Slovita as heroes, mutilated in body but elevated in spirit. Many Jews were drawn to them and they acquired large followings of chasidim inspired by the Awe of Heaven of the grandsons of Reb Pinchas of Koretz.]

**Source:** Adapted from the rendition of Rabbi Benyamin Adilman on //nishmas.org.

**Connection:** Seasonal 221st yahrzeit of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz.

Biographical notes: **Rabbi Pinchas** (ben R. Avraham Abba Shapiro) **of Koretz** (1726 - 10 Elul 1791) was considered to be one of the two most pre-eminent followers of chasidism's founder, the Baal Shem Tov (along with his successor, the Maggid of Mezritch). His teachings appear in various collections (such as Midrash Pinchas), and are cited in the classic Bnei Yissaschar.

**Rabbi Aryeh Leib** [25 Kislev 1725 - 6 Tishrei 1811], known as the Shpoler Zeide ('grandfather'-a nickname given to him by the Baal Shem Tov at his circumcision), is famed as a miracle worker and devoted to the succor of poor Jews in distress. In his early years, he was a disciple of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, a leading figure in the first generation of chasidim. The Lubavitcher Rebbe stated the possibility that the Shpoler Zeide and Rabbi Leib Sarah's are the same person.

**Rabbi Yisrael Friedmann of Ruzhin** [1797 - 3 Cheshvan 1850] was a great-grandson of the Maggid of Mezritch, at a young age was already a charismatic leader with an large following of chassidim. Greatly respected by the other rebbes and Jewish leaders of his generation, he was -and still is-referred to as "The Holy Ruzhiner." Six of his sons established Chassidic dynasties, several of which -Sadigora, Chortkov, etc- are still thriving today.

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**The Human Side of the Story**

**Keeping Kosher**

**In Costa Rica**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

Can you imagine a New York-style kosher deli in faraway Costa Rica? Jeremy Zibell, a 25-year old arrival from Montreal, opened one there after a friend who visited this tiny Central American country told him that not much was happening there as far as Jewish deli food was concerned.

Kosher food in general has been available for only about a decade for the 2,500 strong Orthodox Jewish community established in Costa Rica in the 1930s. Two local rabbis, Rabbi Gershon Miletski and Rabbi Hersh Spalter, established operations for slaughtering and importing meat and poultry.

An Israeli by the name of Gil Aharoni does a big business in kosher foods in his “Little Israel” market and offers an online catering service for tourists who observe kashrut rules while visiting the country’s jungles and rain forests. A newly opened resort on the Pacific Coast has even set aside a

kosher kitchen for its guests.

This is all a far cry from the situation when Rabbi Miletski arrived to become head of the local Israel-Zionist Center:

“Ninety percent of the space in the suitcases my wife and I were carrying would be filled with food we were bringing back from our visits to family in Israel.”

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