**Shabbos Stories for Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5773**

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**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

*The Torah in last week's portion hints about the importance of supporting Torah institutions, as we read last week about the mitzvah to give a half shekel for the up-keep of the Mishkan (tabernacle). The following inspirational story will inspire all of us to give generously to institutions which teach our children Torah, which is the Tree of Life.*

**A Support Group**

**By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**

 R' Binyomin Wilhelm, founder of Yeshivah Torah Vodaath and other worthy institutions, succeeded where many others failed. He succeeded because he was a man of deep emunah (faith) and iron-willed determination. More importantly, he was always ready to give of his time and energy, even when some might have argued that the problem could not be solved.

 R' Binyamin was born in Poland around the year 1885 and was orphaned at the age of eleven. He then went to live with his grandfather in a one-room apartment. One morning, Binyamin awoke to discover that his grandfather had died suddenly during the night.

**Alone in the World**

 Now he was alone in the world. He did not attend yeshivah because there was no organized system of yeshivos as it exists today. Every father had to see to it that his son learned with a melamed (Torah teacher) who was paid directly by the parents of his students. If a boy's father could not afford to pay the melamed, or the boy was an orphan, he very often grew up ignorant of Torah.

 When he was sixteen, Binyamin received a letter from a friend who had emigrated to America and was living in New York. The friend knew of Binyamin's tragic situation and implored him to join him in the "new country." Binyamin soon boarded a ship without a penny in his pocket. He paid his way by working in the ship's kosher kitchen.

 Upon arriving in New York, Binyamin was welcomed by a small group of old friends. At a get-together, he and his friends solemnly vowed to always live faithfully by the Torah and never to compromise on a single mitzvah or halachah, no matter how great the pressure. This was at a time when finding a job in America was almost impossible for those who kept Shabbos, and when kashrus supervision in America hardly existed.

**Attended Torah Classes Every Day**

 Binyamin opened a successful hardware business, married a deeply religious girl from a fine home and settled in New York's Lower East Side. He attended Torah classes every day, and through intense study and effort, developed into a respected talmid chacham.

 In the early part of this century, the Lower East Side boasted the largest Jewish population in America. Most of its Jews lived in crowded apartment buildings. Across the river in neighboring Willamsburg lived another large concentration of Orthodox Jews. Willamsburg had many blocks of large single family homes, something which was quite appealing for a young, growing family.

**Moved to Williamsburg in 1917**

 R' Binyamin and his wife moved there in 1917 and were very happy in their new dwelling. But there was one major problem. In the Lower East Side, Yeshivah Rabbi Jacob Joseph had already been founded, but in Williamsburg there were no yeshivos. R' Binyamin's oldest son was four years old; R' Binyamin was determined that his son receive the Torah education that he himself had been denied.

 He approached a number of prominent Jews living in Willamsburg. They all responded the same way: Their neighborhood was not the place for a yeshivah. Though they were religious, they were resigned to sending their children to public school, where they could receive a quality secular education. Yeshivos, they felt, belonged to the "old world" of Europe. One man pointed to the palm of his hand and told R' Binyamin, "When hair will grow here, there will be a yeshivah in Williamsburg."

 One day, a man met R' Binyamin in the street and asked if he had had any success in his quest to start a yeshivah. When R' Binyamin responded in the negative, the man said, "R" Binyamin, take my advice. Stop asking others to start a yeshivah; start one yourself."

 Over the next four months many nighttime meetings were held in R' Binyamin's home. His wife served herring and kichlech in the hope of attracting a crowd. But the meetings were not successful and it seemed as if the predictions of failure were correct.

 It is customary in many shuls to read the entire Book of Devarim on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah. Such was the custom in the Poilisher Shteibel, one of the largest and most prominent congregations in Williamsburg.

**Disrupts the Services on the**

**Night of Hoshanah Rabbah**

 On the night of Hoshanah Rabbah in 1917, R' Binyamin made his way to the front of the Poilisher Shteibel and pounded on the bimah for attention. He said, "I will not permit the reading to commence until we resolve an urgent matter — the future of our children. Many are convinced that they can continue sending their children to public school and watch them grow up as Torah Jews. This is a grave error. Without Torah our children will not be Torah Jews. And without a yeshivah, they will have no Torah."

 At the conclusion of his address, R' Binyamin asked for pledges toward founding a yeshivah. One of the shul's wealthy members, Mr. Aharon Goldman, wrote out a check for one thousand dollars, and a furrier named Mr. Wolf pledged five hundred dollars, both enormous sums in those days. Many others came forth with smaller pledges.

**A Founder’s Committee is Established**

 As news of R' Binyamin's Hoshanah Rabbah "protest" spread, people came forward to offer their participation in a founder's committee. A few months later, a building on the corner of Marcy Avenue and Keap Street was rented. Forty-five children were registered for the yeshivah, which was to open its doors the following September.

 But when September arrived, the picture became clouded once again. With only forty-five children spread across five grades, there was not enough tuition to pay the necessary rebbeim, secular studies teachers and office staff. At a committee meeting held a few days before Yom Kippur, the committee voted to postpone the yeshivah's opening for one more year.

 The only dissenting vote was R' Binyamin's. "How can we wait another year?" he demanded. "What of the children who might become lost to us this year, and might never be brought back? How can we face the Ribono shel Olam on Yom Kippur after having made such a fatal decision?"

 After hearing R' Binyamin's heartfelt plea, the committee decided to postpone a final decision until after Yom Kippur.

 R' Binyamin spent the Holy Day in a most unusual manner. He arose early on Yom Kippur morning, and instead of going to shul, davened alone in his house. He spent the rest of the day going from shul to shul making appeals — not appeals for money, but for children. He appealed to fathers and mothers to save their children, and future generations, by registering them in the yeshivah that was soon to open.

 When the fast had ended, R' Binyamin returned home after a very successful day. Forty-five more children would now be enrolled in the yeshivah.

 With projected income from tuition now doubled, the committee voted to open the yeshivah in a few days. Yeshivah Torah Vodaath had been born. (Shabbos Stories, Rabbi. Shimon Finkelman, p. 105)

 R' Binyamin has tremendous merit; he is credited with generations of Jewish children and adults who have been able to learn Torah because of his deeds.

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

**It Once Happened**

**Reb Moshe Leib and the Jewish Woodchopper**

 Long ago in the small village of Sassov there lived a Jewish wood-chopper, a man of deep and pure faith. No one knew his name, and so, he was known simply as "the villager."

 All week he made his way into the forest and chopped wood which he sold in the town. During the week, he and his family lived frugally, eating just enough to sustain themselves. But for the Holy Shabbat, he joyfully bought challahs, candles, and other delicacies.

 Not only did the family enjoy the Shabbat treats, but despite their poverty, they always invited others to join them. At times they even went without food themselves so that their guests had enough to eat.

 One Friday morning the villager stood with his bundles in the village square waiting for customers to buy his wood when a woman came and bought the whole lot for six silver coins. He was about to begin his customary Shabbat purchases when the tzadik Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov approached him with a request.

 There was woman in the town who had recently been widowed. She was so overcome with grief that she lay in bed all day weeping, and so was completely unable to take care of her two young children. Her health was failing and the poor orphans were going hungry. Could he help?

 Now the villager was a good-hearted man. He immediately took two silver coins and handed them over to the tzadik. "Thank you so much, but could you perhaps give a bit more?"

**Hands over Another Two Coins**

 The wood-cutter reached into his pocket and handed over another two coins. Again, the tzadik, thanked him and asked for maybe a bit more for the family.

 "I'm sorry Rebbe, but I can't give any more. I have only two coins left. As it is I won't have enough money to buy wine and challa, but I must leave enough to buy candles to brighten our Shabbat."

 Reb Moshe Leib was moved by the man's kindness and his love for the mitzva of Shabbat candles. He turned to the man and asked, "Do you have any valuable object in your house?"

 "No, Rebbe, I have nothing except an old cow."

 "When you return home," said the Rebbe, "sell the cow, and with the money you make, buy the first thing that comes your way. I give you my blessing that G-d will grant you success."

**Wife Refuses to Go Along**

**With the Rebbe’s Directions**

 The wood-cutter ran home happily, brimming with anticipation. But when he told his wife of the plan to sell the cow, she absolutely refused. "How can we sell the cow? Its milk is our main source of food. How do you imagine we'll live?" And with that the discussion ended.

 When Shabbat was over the couple went to the barn to feed their cow. No sooner had they entered the barn when a carriage with two men pulled up. "Do you have a cow for sale?" they asked.

 The astonished Jew saw the words of the tzadik materializing before his eyes. His wife blurted out: "We'll sell only for a hundred rubles!" The men agreed to pay the absurd price. Now, it was clear that the blessing was having its effect.

 The next morning the villager went to town with the hundred rubles intending to carry out the Rebbe's instructions. He noticed a group of landowners gathered for the auction of a choice estate. The man's simple faith was so great that he pushed himself into the crowd intent upon buying the estate regardless of the fact that he couldn't afford it.

 The wealthy landowners looked at the poor Jew. What a nerve he had to try to bid against them! They would punish him for his chutzpa and at the same time help themselves. They agreed not to bid on the property at all. When the Jew's offer would be accepted, he would lose everything because there was no way that he could afford the complete payment. Their plan succeeded. The villager bought the estate, giving the one hundred rubles as a deposit, and returned home feeling very satisfied.

**A Loud Knock at the Door**

 That night as the Jewish family slept, there was a loud knock at the door. They were shocked to see the village priest standing in the doorway. "I understand that you bought an estate today, and I would like to be your partner," the priest said. Having heard about the low price, he figured he could take advantage of the simple wood-cutter.

 "I agree to the partnership if you will pay the total outstanding amount," answered the Jew. The priest eagerly accepted, handed him the money, and agreed to formalize the deal in a few days. When the day came to complete payment on the estate, the furious landowners couldn't believe their eyes as the Jew paid up the entire balance.

 The villager set out to visit his newly acquired estate. Traveling down the road he saw a group of people crowded around an accident. "What happened?" he inquired.

**Learns that the Priest was Killed**

 "This priest was killed when his horses panicked and overturned the wagon," was the reply.

 The Jew approached the accident site. It was his "partner" the priest. Now, the property belonged to him alone. The blessing of Reb Moshe Leib had been fulfilled, and in gratitude the villager distributed large amounts of charity to the poor throughout his long and prosperous life.

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, New York, from issue #205 (Parshas Vayakhel of 5752/1992.)*

**Seth Goldstein**

**Cross Country Runner**

**Saves Life, Finishes Race**

**By Geoff Calkins**

MEMPHIS —He had started in on his second loop, halfway through the cross country course, and Seth Goldstein liked the way the race was unfolding.

 A group of kids ran just in front of him. Many more had fallen behind.

**

Seth Goldstein

 "I was feeling good," said Goldstein, 17. "That's when everything happened in front of me."

 One of the kids in the pack dropped to the ground. The others raced onward toward the finish line. Goldstein did something altogether different.

 He stopped.

 He stopped racing. He went to the kid who had fallen, who by this time was in severe distress.

 "His lips were turning blue and his eyes were rolled back in his head," said Goldstein. "I was terrified. But then I thought to myself, freaking out isn't going to help any here."

**The Right Lesson**

 What lessons do our kids learn through sports? It's hard not to wonder at times.

 Winning is the main thing. Steroid users seem to hit a lot of home runs. If you're a gifted athlete, you'll get more chances than you deserve.

 Sportsmanship is so last century. The flashiest athletes get the richest sneaker deals. If you want a headline, you've got to crush the other guy.

 Those are the real lessons, aren't they? If we're being honest with ourselves? So consider today's story a reminder of what it's supposed to be about.

 Goldstein is a senior at Cooper Yeshiva High School, a small, Orthodox Jewish school in East Memphis. He runs cross country to get in shape for basketball. But what he did in the middle of a race a few weeks ago may be more deserving of headlines than anything that's happened since the academic year began.

 He stopped. That was the first thing.

 "I'm a lifeguard," he said, as if that explains it all. "It was obvious he needed help."

**Takes Control of the Situation**

 Goldstein called for a parent to phone 911. Then he turned back to the kid — a student from Germantown — who had blood bubbling out of his mouth.

 "He had bitten his tongue and was bleeding pretty bad," said Goldstein. "I feared he was going to choke on his blood. I rolled him on his side so he wouldn't asphyxiate."

 In the midst of this, a woman named Jessica Chandler ran up. She's the mother of another Germantown runner and had known the fallen runner for years.

 "Honestly, I was in shock," she said. "But this guy was taking complete control. He was like, 'You — call 911. You — go get some ice.' He turned him on his side. I thought he was a parent or an EMT."

 At this point, the victim was shaking, his body seizing again and again.

 "This is normal," said Goldstein. "I've seen this before."

 Note: Goldstein had actually never seen this before. But he didn't see the point in panicking. He was calm, reassuring everyone involved.

 "He was awesome," said Chandler. "He was so competent and kind. When the boy started to come out of it he just kept saying, 'You're going to be OK. We're here. We're with you. You're going to be OK.' "

**Gets Permission to Finish the Race**

 Before long, an ambulance arrived. The real EMTs took over. Whereupon, Goldstein posed a question to the group.

 "Can I finish the race?" he said.

 Only then did Chandler realize that Goldstein was another competitor.

 "The EMTs looked at me kind of funny," Goldstein said. "They're like, 'You're racing? Well, sure, go ahead. I guess you can finish the race.' "

 So that's what Goldstein did. All the other runners were long since done.

 "Everyone was clapping for me, like I was the chunky kid who couldn't finish," he said. "They were all cheering and saying, 'You can do it!' I'm thinking, 'C'mon, man!' "

 Goldstein's teammates had been wondering where he was. They joined him for the last part of the race.

 "It's an example of exactly the values we're trying to instill in our kids," said Gil Perl, the dean of the Cooper Yeshiva School. "We have the concept, from the Talmud, that if you want G-d to have mercy on you, you have to have mercy on others."

 The fallen runner turned out to be fine, by the way. He had suffered a seizure because of the heat. Goldstein finished in 32 minutes and change.

 If you ask him, Goldstein will tell you it's the slowest race he's ever run. It's also his personal best.

*Reprinted from the September 23, 2012 edition of the Memphis Commercial Appeal. The article originally appeared in the Knoxville News Sentinel.*

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



**How to Avoid Talking**

**Too Much**

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

Is there an antidote against talking too much?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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It depends where and when. If it's at **work**, so before you enter your place of work stop on the threshold and say, "Look here Chaim, how long will you shoot your mouth off? People ridicule you, they dislike you.

 “I am only going to say what's absolutely necessary for politeness or for utility. So before I open my mouth I will ask myself two questions: Is it polite to say it? And is it something of utility, useful to say?"

 It says, pi’huh pos’cha be’chochma v'soras chesed al le’shona, this wise woman in Mishlei opened her mouth only when there was wisdom, that's utility or Toras Chesed which is kindliness. So to say to somebody "good morning" or something like that, **good**. If it's useful, somebody needs a word to help him out in something, **that's all**.

 Otherwise put a padlock on your lips. So these are the two criteria, is it chesed or chochma? Of course the highest chochma is Torah, but even any chochma, it's useful to open your mouth. So pi’huh pos’cha be’chochma v'soras chesed al le’shona, these two criteria: Is it useful? And is it something that's kindly? Otherwise don't say it.

 And that's the secret of being happily married; if you'll open your mouth only for kindliness or utility, you'll be happier in your married life and you'll live longer, and you'll be zoche to olam habah.



*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**Love of the Land**

**A Life Saved Twice-Over**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

 “May I please get ahead of you in this line? I have to catch a plane back to America and I must get a pizza for the trip to the airport.”

 The elderly gentleman generously granted this request and soon the tourist was outside, pizza in hand, rushing towards his cab. But then a huge explosion rocked the air and he realized that the Sbarro restaurant he had just left had been the victim of a terrorist suicide bombing.

 Rushing back to see what happened to the man who had given him his place and thus had possibly saved his life, he found him alive but wounded. After expressing his deep appreciation for his role in saving his life, he informed him that he was a wealthy businessman back in New York and he would be glad to help him any time he was in need. He left his business card and was on his way to the

airport.

 The opportunity to keep his promise soon came. The son of the elderly man phoned him that his father required major surgery in an Israeli hospital and could not afford to pay for it. Upon hearing this, the businessman responded that he

was ready to come to Israel himself to see that everything would go well with the operation and that he would cover all expenses.

 He soon found himself sitting together with the son who called him in the lobby outside the area where the elderly man was undergoing the critical operation. As they looked up at the television screen they saw an impressive skyscraper in Manhattan in which the businessman had his offices. Then they saw one plane after another crash into it. The date was September 11th, one which would never be forgotten as a day when one life saving led to another.

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

**The Ponevizher Rav Rebuilds**

**His Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel**

**By Hanoch Teller**

 How the Ponevizher Rav managed to escape Europe is a mystery that even he never fully understood. Certainly, it was not a deliberate plan of his to be far away from Ponevizh, his family and his yeshiva in the winter of 1940, and thus be spared the horror of the Nazi infiltration.

 His absence was caused by his involvement in a misguided attempt by the Lithuanian government to solve the Jewish refugee problem prior to the inevitable German takeover. Equipped with a diplomatic passport, Rabbi Kahaneman was selected to be Lithuania's "ambassador" to persuade the United States to authorize the immigration of all stateless Jewish individuals.

**The Naiveté of the Plan**

 The idea was that American Jews should bring their substantial influence to bear upon Washington. The naiveté of the plan was a tragic reflection of the common misconception about America's humanity and largess towards outsiders (read: Jews), and the supposed clout of its Jewish citizens.

 Keenly aware of how precarious the situation was, the Ponevizher Rav announced prior to his departure that anyone to whom he owed money should inform him forthwith. A week before he left, the villagers of Ponevizh, whose love of Torah could never be dampened, celebrated a siyum ha‑Shas, accepting upon themselves to learn through the cycle again.

**Time to Say Goodbye**

 It was time for their beloved rabbi to say goodbye, to part from his family and the learning empire that he had created, believing that someday all would be reunited.

 The entire town escorted the Rav to the train station, and just as he was about to board, the youngsters began to chant, "Rebbe, Rebbe, nemt unz mit! Master and teacher, take us along!..."

 According to the Rav, this haunting chant would stay with him forever. Most of these precious Jewish lives would soon be engulfed in the Nazi inferno…

 In 1940, the near sexagenarian Ponevizher Rav arrived in Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), commencing the most remarkable chapter of his life. The Rav looked out at the few scattered homes nestled in the "Zichron Meir neighborhood of Bnei Brak (a religious community near Tel Aviv) and at the hill overlooking it all.

**A Perfect Location for a Yeshivah**

 He thought to himself that this would be a perfect location for a yeshivah. The Ponevizher Rav's escort explained that the land was private property, and was currently being bid on by a Professor Zitron. The doctor had his eye on the plot as the site for a large sanatorium.

 Rather than rely on hearsay, the Ponevizher Rav investigated the matter and discovered that the owner was offering the plot for the relatively low price of 500 Lira Sterling on condition that the purchaser would break ground within twelve months.

 Such a condition was in no way a deterrent to the Ponevizher Rav, and without any further deliberation, he bought the land. People were reluctant, however, to wish him mazel tov on the purchase.

**Time of Appalling Reports**

 It was the middle of World War II, Nazi forces were raging across Europe, and appalling reports had begun filtering in about atrocities and and the mass murder of Jews. It did not seem to be the right time to think about, let alone build

new yeshivos. Furthermore, although no one wished to actually articulate the thought, the Nazi juggernaut seemed to be invincible, and Palestine was clearly in Hitler's crosshairs.

 The feeling that prevailed in Eretz Yisroel at the time was that of sinking despair. All were absorbed with the catastrophic losses in Europe, and the Ponevizher Rav was no less consumed than anyone else. However, he was even more consumed with the necessity to rebuild.

 His plan was to erect a building that could accommodate at least 500 students. Indeed, as he ascended the hill of the not‑yet‑built yeshivah, he was heard to declare, "I can already hear the sound of Torah that will emanate from this place!"

**Preposterous Torah Visions**

 Nothing could have sounded more preposterous, for the youth in the country at the time were singularly focused upon finding employment. And

whereas there may have been a few exceptions, they probably didn't number more than a dozen. Five hundred students no less absurd than 50,000. But, the Ponevizher Rav was characteristically unfazed by the critique. "Days will soon come," he predicted, "when there will be millions and millions of Jews who will live in Israel. Then there will not be enough room for the students in Yeshivos Chevron and Ponevizh!"…

 Prodding him incessantly was the agonizing memory of the millions of

martyrs who perished, including his own wife and children, the only

exception being one son, Avraham.

 All his life, he kept a photograph of his children in his wallet, and engraved on his heart. These were not the only kindred he deeply mourned: only a handful of over 1,000 students from the Ponevizh educational network survived the war, and nearly all of his rabbinical colleagues from Lithuania were sacrificed together with their flocks…

**Kedoshim in the Presence of**

**Rabbi Akiva and G-d Himself**

 Speaking at a gathering in memory of the Holocaust martyrs, the Ponevizher Rav declared: "I shall not eulogize; all I can say is that the kedoshim are in the presence of Rabbi Akiva and G‑d Himself, and no one can stand in their presence or their holiness.

 "We owe these sacred souls a debt, and that is to become the fathers and mothers of those few orphans who have miraculously survived. The wish of those that perished is that their children should not forget their Judaism and the Oneness of G‑d. It is therefore imperative that we establish for them Batei Avos, homes that will nurture and educate these precious children...."

**Providing Emotional Stability**

 Considering the horror and upheaval these youngsters had already endured ‑ coupled with the typical challenges of adjusting to a new environment ‑ simply providing them with a well‑appointed dormitory would not suffice. Emotional stability does not flourish by chance.

 The care and the love showered upon these traumatized children had to be carefully considered, and a delicate balance struck between "head" and "heart." This aspect too, the Ponevizher Rav oversaw with fatherly concern, and meticulous planning.

 The cuisine at the Batei Avos, as all other facets of the (Ponevizh) institution (in Bnei Brak), was superior to the standard in other Israeli schools, with a far more varied and bountiful menu.

 One member of the community felt that the operation was not cost‑effective, and he had a number of suggestions to reduce expenses. His first recommendation was that the students themselves fetch the institution's food, in order to avoid delivery fees.

 This fellow never detailed his other proposals, for the Ponevizher Rav cut him off. The Rav firmly explained that he was not running a commercial, for‑profit venture, that the institution was filled with hundreds of "only children," ‑ his children who were his bnei zekunim (children born in old age) as well as udim muzalim m'aish (brands snatched from the burning fire.)

**Central Focus of Rav's Life**

 The Batei Avos became such a central component of the Ponevizher Rav's life that it was not uncommon for him to drop everything in the middle of the day to go and schmooze with the youngsters. The discussions that he conducted were peppered ‑ often highly seasoned ‑ with Torah thoughts.

 At night, frequently in the very dead of night, he would quietly stroll through the dormitory to replace a wayward blanket or plant a kiss upon a tousled head. The Ponevizher Rav lavished unbridled love upon the children of the Batei Avos....

 Like a true father, the Ponevizher Rav would never abandon any child of the Batei Avos. One day, as he was riding a taxi down Bnei Brak's Rechov Rabbi Akiva, he spotted a former student named Avraham in the company of friends with whom he would never have associated had he remained in the Batei Avos.

**Stopping the Cab to Make an Appeal of Avraham**

 The Rav instructed the driver to pull over. He then rushed out of the cab and urged Avraham to join him, but the troubled youth refused. The Rav's eyes began to swim in tears and he cried, "Avram'ala, chazor b'cha! Avram'ala, chazor b'cha! Avarm'ala come back, come back to yourself!"

 But the boy turned away and departed with the smirking thugs. The Ponevizher Rav never saw him again. This boy descended deeper and deeper, yet every time that he was about to "hit bottom," the plaintive cry of the loving Ponevizher Rav ‑ "Avram'ala, chazor b'cha!" held him back.

 Decades later, it was the resonance of that very call, he declares, that changed the course of his life, rehabilitating him to a life of mitzvah observance.

*(Editor's Note: The above is excerpted from "Builders: Stories & Insights into the Lives of Three Parmount Figures of the Torah Renaissance" by Hanoch Teller. The book examines the lives of three great Torah educators of the 20th Century ‑ Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (the Ponevizher Rav) and Sarah Schenirer.*

**The Gaon and Sadik Rabbi Rafael Dabush, zs”l:**

 The Gaon, Rabbi Raphael Dabush, zassal, was the head of the Beit haDin in Tripoli, Libya, one hundred and ten years ago.

 Once, Rabbi Raphael was walking along the street of the Jews in Tripoli and came across a violent gentile, who was close to the authorities. This gentile decided to make trouble for the Rabbi of the Jews, and stopped

him, asking: "Who are you"?

 The Gaon, who was modest and humble, answered as usual with the words of Abraham our father: "I am dirt and ashes". The gentile did not expect such a response and said: "go away" and made a motion with his hand indicating that he wanted him to go.

**The Gentile Becomes Very Sick**

 The Rabbi continued on his way, and the gentile fell sick with a terribledisease. His body swelled with water, his flesh turned coarse, and none of the doctors could find a cure for him. He was wavering between life and death, gasping for every breath.

 One of the priests of his religion came and asked him if he had done anything bad in his life. The man could not remember ever doing anything bad! He asked again: "Perhaps you hurt someone holy recently"?

 The gentile thought and remembered: "Once I was walking along the street of the Jews. I met the Jews' Rabbi and asked him who he was. He replied: dirt and ashes. So I said to him, go away."

**The Kadi Discovers the Reason for the Illness**

 The Kadi said: "I have discovered the reason for your illness. If you want to get better you must quickly go and ask forgiveness from the Rabbi." The gentile went and sent his children to the Rabbi, bearing presents.

 The Rabbi refused to accept their presents but heard their plea that he forgive their father. He stood, put his hand on his eyes and prayed to Hashem. Then he opened them and said simply "Go home".

 They went home, and the gentile had risen from his deathbed and was better. He and his household went to the house of the Sadik to thank him and to ask forgiveness in person for humiliating him. This incident was a sign and sanctity of Hashem's name amongst the nations!

*Reprinted from the archives of the Aram Sobah Newsletter.*

**Jewish History**

**Blood Libel Declared**

**False (1817)**

 On Adar 24, Czar Alexander I of Russia declared the Blood Libel -- the infamous accusation that Jews murdered Christian children to use their blood in the baking of matzah for Passover, for which thousands of Jews were massacred through the centuries -- to be false. Nevertheless, nearly a hundred years later the accusation was officially leveled against Mendel Beilis in Kiev.

**A Government Blood Libel: The Beilis Affair**

 IN FEBRUARY 1911, the liberal and socialist factions in the Third Duma introduce a proposal to abolish the Pale of Settlement. Right wing and monarchist organizations such as the Union of the Russian People and the Congress of the United Nobility react violently: they embark on a campaign to harshen anti-Jewish policies instead of lessening them.

 For this campaign, both organizations receive secret state subsidies from a government that has lost practically all support in parliament. When in March 1911 the body of a young Christian boy is found in Kiev, the Czarist authorities seize the opportunity to revive the age-old accusation of ritual murder.

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| 37-1 | Mendel Beilis and his family. He was the last European Jew who had to defend himself against a Blood Libel.  |

 A Jewish inhabitant of Kiev, Mendel Beilis, the superintendent of a brick kiln, is arrested and charged, although by that time the authorities already know the true perpetrators.

 For more than two years, Beilis remains in prison while the authorities try to build a case against him by falsifying papers and pressurizing "witnesses." But the case backfires. In October 1913, the jury unanimously declares Beilis not guilty.

 The Beilis case not only draws international attention to the plight of the Jews in Russia, it also unites the conservative Octobrists and the radical Bolsheviks in their opposition to the government.

 The Czarist government finds it difficult to accept this humiliating defeat. G. Zamyslovsky, one of the prosecutors in the case, repeats the accusation against Beilis in his book *The Murder of Andrei Yushinsky*. The book is published on the eve of the revolution in 1917 with secret funds of the Interior Ministry that have been approved by the Czar.

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**The Human Side of the Story**

**Little League, Big Players**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

 When officials of Rockland County in New York State decided to allocate the use of county sports fields to baseball teams in the Orthodox “Little League”

as part of services due to local residents, they included professional umpires in the package.

 One of these umpires, who also officiates at games of non-Jewish Little League teams, was recently reported as commenting on the difference between the two leagues.

 At those other games, he said, there are frequent violent clashes, not only between the players of the opposing teams but even between the fathers who are spectators. What a pleasure, he concluded, it is to umpire a game in which the

players are so well behaved!

 It may also be assumed that there is no trouble between the fathers who are probably using their free time to study Torah rather than watch their children play.

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