**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayakhel - Pekudei 5772**

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**The Conservative**

**Cantor’s Matzos**

**By Yehuda Grossberger**

 In the early days of Internet, I subscribed to an online forum dedicated to halachic discussions. The members of this forum came from a wide spectrum of Judaism, and debates often raged over different halachic and Torah issues.

 One contributor to this exchange was a Conservative cantor from Nevada who quickly became known for his outspokenness and opinionated liberal views. On one occasion, he posted an article he had written about Jewish marriage, which was not exactly according to halacha.

**Sparking a Candid and Heated Debate**

 I felt compelled to reply and set the record straight. The cantor responded to my rebuttal, sparking a candid and heated debate. Eventually, this led to a general discussion of other topics concerning Torah and Judaism, as well as personal conversations about our families.

 Around Pesach time, the conversation turned to matza, and I asked my friend how had he conducted his seder. He replied, “Well, since the point is to remember the story of the Exodus, I actually eat whatever I can get a hold of to symbolize the matza.”

**Sent the Cantor a Box of Shmura Matza**

 He did not seem concerned that the matza be kosher for Pesach. Despite his objections, I sent him a box of shmura matza for the seder. After Pesach, I got an e-mail from my friend who, in typical fashion, complained that all the matzos had come broken and were also pretty tasteless.

 Nevertheless, the following year he contacted me and requested that I again send him matza. This began an unlikely tradition that continued for many years. Notwithstanding all of his rejections and criticism of Orthodox values, he used the matza every year and came to look forward to it. He even showed his appreciation by sending me flowers.

**A Daughter Who Rebelled**

**Against Her Family’s Values**

 This man had a daughter who had rebelled against the family values she had been brought up with, and, as a student of the University of California at Berkeley, became deeply immersed in the unhealthy culture that was popular at the time. She had also rejected even the limited Jewish values she had seen at home.

 Her parents were very worried about her, and she had not been home for a number of years, not even for the holidays. Eventually, this girl’s restlessness and searching spirit drew her to Israel where she ended up in a girls seminary for baalei teshuva in Jerusalem.

**A Time to Make a Final Decision**

 After a few months of study, she felt it was time for her to make a final decision: She could either stay in the seminary adopting a frum lifestyle, or she could leave it behind and return home and continue soul searching. She decided she needed a break to think things over. She was comfortable with what she had been taught but was not sure she had the conviction and personal strength to make such a drastic lifestyle change.

 It was now shortly before Pesach. Her madricha in Israel, although unhappy to see her go, asked her to at least take home the basic necessities for Pesach that she might not have at home, primarily matza. She declined and said, “Why should I bother? If G-d wants me to have matza, He will send me matza.”

**Reflecting on Her Options**

 Apprehensively, she departed and flew home to her parents planning to spend time reflecting on her options at this critical junction of her life. She hoped that somehow she would be guided into making the right choice.

 To her utter bewilderment, the first thing she noticed as she walked into her home was a box of shmura matza sitting on the dining room table. She could not believe her eyes. Her own ultimatum had been fulfilled:

 “If G-d wants me to have matza, He will send me matza,” and lo and behold, there it was!

 Having not been home for Pesach in a number of years, she was absolutely astounded that her family had a box of authentic shmura matza waiting for her! The hashgacha protis, the Divine providence, was undeniable, and she strongly felt that Hashem was answering her challenge and showing that He cared about her intimately.



**A Sign Sent from Hashem**

 She had no idea how the matza got to her home, and at that point, she really didn’t care; all she could think about was the sign that Hashem had sent her. After Pesach, she immediately returned to Jerusalem to complete her studies and to fully embrace Yiddishkeit with all her heart and soul. Today, this girl is the mother of a beautiful family and works in kiruv with her husband, a rabbi, teaching other Jews about Yiddishkeit.

 Many people had told me that I was wasting my time and money sending these matzos to a Conservative cantor. For my part, I simply felt that a Jew should have matza for the seder, not a chometzdik substitute. What I did not know was that I was not only sending matza for this cantor; I was sending it for his daughter and eventually grandchildren, as well.

 The lesson I learned from this is that we just have to do our small part and not give up. Hashem will take care of the rest. You never know the effect of your actions. Our mission is to do, and Hashem will accomplish!!

 *Editor’s note: Mayan Yisroel is now launching our annual MitzvahShare program, which enables and encourages the frum Flatbush community to share matza with their not yet- religious coworkers and acquaintances. Create your own miracle story by visiting www. mitzvahshare.org for your own matza kits. The above article by Mr. Yehuda Grossberger of Flatbush appeared in Adar 5772 edition of Thinking Chassidus, a publication of Mayan Yisroel, a Flatbush shul under the guidance of Rabbi Yosef Vigler.*

The Human Side of the Story

**A Tip from Heaven**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 After hearing a personal story of Divine Providence from a cab driver in Jerusalem, I had the opportunity of hearing an even better one from him.

 He started off one day in a very bad mood. There was a debt of one hundred dollars due for payment that evening and he had no idea how he was going to get that kind of money.

 Driving through the city streets in a depressed state he picked up a tourist couple, obviously non-Jewish, who asked him to take them to a particular hotel.

**Pouch Left on the Back Seat**

 After dropping them off he picked up a religious Jewish passenger who informed him that there was a pouch on the back seat. The cabbie asked for it to be put on the seat next to him and soon heard a cell phone inside the pouch ringing.

 He answered the call and a worried voice on the other end of the line asked him to immediately bring the pouch to the hotel, assuring him that it would be worth his while.

**A Tip of Exactly $100**

 Our hero drove to the hotel and returned the pouch to its relieved owner who anxiously began examining its contents. Satisfied that nothing of these valuable contents had been touched, he presented the cabbie with a tip of one hundred dollars. This G-d-fearing cab driver clearly saw that this was a tip from Heaven.

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

**What’s the Right Thing to Do?**

**Real Life Questions of Social and Business Ethics**

**Prayer in the Air**

 Question: When I travel on an airplane I regularly join a *minyan* of Jews for prayer service at the back of the plane. This invariably creates highly unfavorable conditions for proper concentration and sometimes causes discomfort for stewardesses and fellow passengers. What is the right

thing to do?

 Answer: This question was put to the renowned halachic authority Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Wosner by El Al Rabbi Shmuel Avraham Katzir. In the ruling which he sent to El Al president Amos Shapira, Rabbi Wosner came out against the practice of large numbers of passengers gathering together for a prayer service in one part of the plane.

 He pointed out that, aside from being a safety hazard, such a practice is a detriment to true concentration. Passengers should instead form small *minyanim scattered* around the plane and try to sit in their seats.

**Don’t Clog the Isles**

**For the Amida Prayer**

 During the *amida* prayer when they are required to stand, they should try to stand in or near their own places on the plane. If this is impractical they should not clog the aisles but remain seated even during this prayer and even fasten seat belts if asked to do so by the staff.

 Another perspective on this problem was provided by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef who ruled that it is preferable to pray in the airport before a flight, even without a *minyan*, than with a *minyan* on the plane that risks disturbing the sleep of fellow passengers.

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

**Story #746**

**Choking on a Sin**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=ABC&msgNum=00012RW0:001FNmal00002Bq_&count=1331817484&randid=999573513&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=999573513##)

 Rabbi Baruch Neustadter, a well-known Talmudic scholar, was a follower of the tzadik, Rabbi Elimelch of Lizhensk. He often traveled to Lizhensk in order to spend Shabbat with the revered Rebbe.

 One Saturday night, as Rabbi Baruch was bidding the rebbe farewell, the Rebbe Elimelech said to him as follows: "Know that every mitzvah in the Torah makes us holy. For instance, we are forbidden to eat meat that was cooked together with milk. A Jew who keeps this mitzvah becomes pure to such an extent that his organs cannot digest this combination. If milk and meat were to enter his throat together, he would not be able to swallow, but would instantly cough them up."

**Took Leave of His Rebbe**

 After these words and the rebbe’s final blessing, R. Baruch took his leave. But he was puzzled. Why, of all topics, did the rebbe choose to speak about milk and meat just as he was departing? He pondered this for a while, but could come up with no answer, so he let his mind turn to other matters as he journeyed home.

 A few weeks passed. R. Baruch was in the beit midrash [study hall] one night, learning Torah. Suddenly one of his children burst into the shul. "Tatte, come quickly!" the child exclaimed breathlessly, grabbing his father's hand. "Mama was eating supper and a piece of meat got stuck in her throat! She can't breathe! Hurry!"

**Rushes Home to Find the**

**Doctor Unable to Help**

 The two ran out of the shul and hurried home. R. Baruch found his house full of neighbors trying all sorts of remedies and tricks to save his wife. The poor woman was lying on a bed, her face blue and her eyes popping, struggling to breathe as she attempted to dislodge the meat that was obstructing her airway. But nothing seemed to help. A doctor had been summoned as well, and he arrived on the heels of R. Baruch, but he was no more successful than the rest in helping the choking woman.

 "If only I could ask the Rebbe in Lizhensk to pray for her!" R. Baruch thought desperately. The Rebbe...Lizhensk and then it struck him like lightning! The rebbe's cryptic message during his last visit lit up his mind, and he knew just what to do.

**Prepares a Glass of Hot Milk**

 R. Baruch quickly prepared a glass of hot milk. Prying his wife's mouth open wide, he poured some of the beverage inside. And just as he hoped would happen, the moment the hot milk touched the meat that was stuck in her throat, his wife began to cough and retch. It only took a moment for the meat to be dislodged.

 The rebbe was right: the body of an observant Jew could not digest that which is forbidden. Within a very short time his wife was breathing freely and was completely recovered. Rabbi Baruch hastened to Lizhensk to thank the rebbe for his advice. But the Rebbe Elimelech only smiled.

**Yahrzeit of Rebbe Elimelech**

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Glimpses of Greatness" by Rabbi David Koppelman [Moznaim].

 Connection: Seasonal 21 Adar is the yahrzeit of the Rebbe Elimelech.

 Biographical note: Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhinsk (1717 - 21 Adar 1787), was a major disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, successor to the Baal Shem Tov, and the leading Rebbe of the subsequent generation in Poland-Galitcia. Most of the great Chassidic dynasties stem from his disciples. His book, Noam Elimelech, is one of the most popular of all Chassidic works.

Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed

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**Ham, Holidays and Other Puzzles as Medical College Shifts Its Religious Affiliation**

**By Richard Perez-Pena**

VALHALLA, N.Y. — New York Medical College was planning to change its affiliation to Jewish from Catholic when an employee approached Rabbi Moshe D. Krupka in the cafeteria, voice raised and finger wagging, and demanded, “When you take over, will I be able to eat my ham sandwich here?”

 A nervous hush fell over the room on that day two years ago. Some students and workers had protested the impending takeover by [Touro College](http://www.touro.edu/), while others were just nervous, unsure what to expect. The college officials giving Rabbi Krupka his first tour were mortified by the confrontation, but curious about his answer.

 The rabbi, a senior vice president at Touro, cut the tension with a most rabbinic reply: “It depends.”

 “On what?” the man asked.

 “On whether you like ham,” the rabbi answered.

 Institutions of higher education switch religious affiliations, as [New York Medical College](http://www.nymc.edu/) did nine months ago, so rarely that there really is no playbook to follow. It has meant addressing countless wary questions as they arise, including where to install mezuzas in doorways — 108 so far — and where people may be allowed to carry a cup of coffee.

 Some teachers and students worried about a loss of identity; others said Touro lacked the prestige to be a suitable sponsor. But as Rabbi Krupka’s reaction suggested in that cafeteria exchange, the shift has been subtle for most people.

**A Lot of Speculation and Worrying**

 “There was a lot of speculating and worrying,” said Matthew Pravetz, a Franciscan priest and a professor of anatomy who has been at the medical school since 1982. In reality, he said, the biggest change may be scheduling classes around Jewish holidays, “but I don’t think anyone minds having more days off.”

 Students wondered if they would find the library locked on the Jewish Sabbath, but it remains open — no one staffs it, but the lights work on timers, and the Internet connections stay on. When officials met to choose holidays, Rabbi Krupka said, “we got to Good Friday, and people assumed we would cross it off the list.” But he added, “We decided there was no reason not to keep it.”



**Librado Romero/The New York Times**

**Shlomo Machlis, left, a rabbinic supervisor, and Todd Kurtis, a manager, uphold New York Medical College's kosher rules**

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**A Step Up for Touro College**

 Ultimately, the change may be less profound for the medical school than for Touro, a move up in prestige with a well-known subsidiary and a new academic field. The medical school gained a prominent new dean late last month, with the appointment of Dr. Edward C. Halperin, previously the dean of the University of Louisville’s medical school and a former vice dean at Duke’s medical school.

 The medical school takeover continues Touro’s aggressive expansion, from its start in 1971 as a 35-student college in Manhattan to one with dozens of campuses across the country and overseas, and with some 19,000 students.

 Since it was founded by Bernard Lander, an Orthodox rabbi and a sociologist who served as president until his death in 2010, Touro has identified itself as a Jewish institution engaged with worldly problems. It has long had a mostly non-Jewish student body, with particular appeal to older students and immigrants.

 In the past 15 years, Touro has opened a graduate school of business and three schools of osteopathic medicine, and it was a pioneer in online education, before selling that operation in 2007. Touro has been known for a bare-bones administration and for having low tuition costs for a private college — undergraduates pay about $25,000 a year in tuition, room and board.

**A Natural Expansion for Touro**

 The relative lack of structure may have contributed to its occasionally being in the news for the wrong reasons, as in 2007, when two people, including an administrator, were indicted for falsifying transcripts in exchange for bribes. Dr. Alan H. Kadish, a noted cardiologist who became president of Touro two years ago, said that acquiring the medical school was a natural expansion for a college with osteopathic schools and popular undergraduate programs in medical science, and was not about raising Touro’s profile.

 “It really was the logical next step,” he said. He declined to be specific about future expansions, but said, “There are probably 10 proposals on my desk right now.”

**Founded in 1860**

 With about 800 M.D. students and nearly as many in related graduate programs, New York Medical College, which is in Westchester County, has long been the major supplier of student doctors to its next-door neighbor, Westchester Medical Center, and to Metropolitan Hospital in Manhattan. In its early decades, the college, founded in 1860, was unusually open to women and minorities.

 In the late 1970s, facing financial trouble, the medical school agreed to be sponsored by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York. The college did not become a Catholic institution, like Notre Dame or Boston College, but a college “in the Catholic tradition,” operating with fewer church restrictions.

**Conducting Embryonic Stem Cell Research**

 Touro officials said on taking over that they were surprised to discover that there were no crucifixes to take down and few doctrinal limitations on curriculum to reverse. It already taught topics like contraceptive and fertility treatments that the church opposed. Dr. Kadish said that as far as he knew, the only area the school might embark on that it shunned during its Catholic affiliation was embryonic [stem cell](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/health/diseasesconditionsandhealthtopics/stemcells/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) research.

 The medical school’s chapel was never church-consecrated, so no formal decommissioning was needed.

 As for how Jewish to make things, officials played it by ear. Mezuzas, the little boxed Hebrew prayer scrolls mounted on door jambs, were installed at building entrances but not auditoriums or classrooms. Professors chose whether to have them outside their offices, and after the tradition was explained, some non-Jewish professors requested them.

**Major Changes**

**In the Cafeteria**

 The one area in which strict Jewish standards apply is the cafeteria, whose kitchen operates under kosher rules and rabbinic supervision. The old kitchen equipment was thrown out or blowtorched in a cleansing ritual.

 Lacking space for two sets of everything — one for cooking and serving meat, the other for dairy — it was decided that this would be a meat kitchen, untouched by milk products. A griddle was set aside solely for making eggs, which can fit into either category. Pastries made in a factory that uses dairy products are acceptable, as long as they are individually wrapped, and opened somewhere else.

**A Huge Learning Curve**

**For the Dining Director**

 “This was a huge learning curve for me, and I’m Jewish,” said Todd Kurtis, the dining director.

 The rules extend only as far as the cash registers, which divide the kosher serving area from the nonkosher dining commons, where any food from outside is welcome.

 But about that cup of coffee.

 With milk forbidden, a table was set aside in the common area for adding ingredients to hot drinks. Once milk is added to a cup, the drink may not go back across that invisible barrier into the serving area, much less into the kitchen. There is no sign to that effect, but the rule was explained. Repeatedly.

 “At the beginning, a couple of times, there was almost a flying tackle of somebody,” Mr. Kurtis said. “But everyone’s gotten the message.”

*Reprinted from the March 5, 2019 website of The New York Times.*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller**

**Appreciating Artwork**

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

If artwork is a waste of effort, then why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu give some people that talent? Doesn't that demonstrate that He wants it to be utilized?

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

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| --- |
| **UploadedImages%5CStdImage%5C450weck-Weinrib** |

People must make a living, so if you're capable of earning your parnassa from artwork, that's your answer. As a result of your artwork you'll be able to send your children to yeshivos, and you'll support Torah institutions.

 Or it may be, some of your artwork might be utilized for mitzvos, like making ornamental decorations on things of mitzvos, could be. But in itself - it's considered a waste of effort.

 It's like saying, here's a man who has a talent in computers. So therefore you say it's an ideal in life he should sit all his life and continue to tinker with computers? No, his talents should be utilized in order to earn an honest livelihood, and maybe he'll retire in due time to go into a kollel before he's too old, and even before that he can sit and learn, so therefore he's utilizing it. But it doesn't mean that computers in itself is an ideal existence - for people to spend their lives punching keys.

 The fact that people have certain talents doesn't mean that these talents are an ideal in themselves. Here's a man who's an expert barber, so it means all his life he has to be a barber? Of course it's no aveira to be a barber, and you shave people's heads l'kovod Yom Tov, L'kovod Shabbos, and you’re careful not to use a razor blade on their payos, certainly it's a good thing, but it doesn't mean that barbering is itself an ideal.

 People have certain talents that can be utilized for the eventual ultimate service of Hashem.

 *Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l,” from questions posed to Rabbi Miller by members of the audience to his classic Thursday night lectures at his Flatbush shul.*

**Jewish Brooklyn, Through Japanese Eyes**

**By Hannah Dreyfus**

 For Jews, sitting in a cramped, clumsily crafted wooden Tabernacle for seven days is simply a cheerful part of the holiday calendar. For Japanese scholar of Jewish history, Mina Muraoka, who had never met a Jew before in her life before arriving in Brooklyn, in 2003, the experience was pleasantly exotic.

[](http://www.thejewishweek.com/images/mina_muraoka_secular_buddhist_japan)

[Mina Muraoka, a “secular Buddhist” from Japan.](http://www.thejewishweek.com/images/mina_muraoka_secular_buddhist_japan)

 “My close Jewish friend who I interned with at the [Museum of Jewish Heritage](http://www.mjhnyc.org/findex.html) invited me to her aunt’s house for the Sukkot holidays,” Muraoka recalled in a recent interview. “I was excited to come, but confused when my friend pointed to the hut in the backyard and said that’s where we would be eating dinner…” — hasty laughter, followed by quick qualification — “but I really enjoyed the experience. The family time together was really beautiful. And there was a real feeling of connecting with an ancient tradition.”

**Knows More about**

**Judaism than Some Jews**

 Surprisingly, given her background, Muraoka has spent much of her young life connecting with all things Jewish. Currently a research fellow at the Center for Jewish History and pursuing a doctorate in Jewish history at Brandeis University, she probably knows more about Jews and Jewish history than many practicing members of the tribe.

 “Today, most of my friends are Jewish,” confessed Muraoka. “I’ve been in the academic community with Jews for so long that I no longer feel like an outsider.” Although a self-described “secular Buddhist,” Muraoka admits, “All my Jewish friends are convinced I’m going to convert. But, I’m not so sure. For now, I’m happy where I am.”

**Inspired by Her Own Experiences**

**Of Being Discriminated Against**

 Muraoka’s confrontation with racial discrimination at a young age stimulated her lasting interest with the Jewish people. From ages 10-12, Muraoka’s father, a geologist, moved the family to New Zealand where Mina attended a local public school.

 “The other children saw that I was different and singled me out,” Mina said of her experience being the only Japanese student in the class. “They treated me differently, and, as a young girl, I couldn’t understand why. I barely knew the language, but I was very hurt. It left a lasting impression.”

**Saw Film on the Holocaust**

 Around the same time, Muraoka saw a film on the Holocaust. “I felt a deep sense of identification with the Jewish people,” she said. “I saw how Jewish children were turned away from schools, how Jewish men lost their jobs because they were Jewish. I was shocked. I knew I had to find out more about this people.”

 The two experiences were the beginning of a long arc that would take her from Anne Frank to Jewish cultural icons like Man Ray and George Gershwin, and, eventually, to Brooklyn.

**Providing an “Authentic**

**Jewish Experience”**

 The heavily Jewish borough promised to provide Muraoka with the “authentic Jewish experience” she was seeking. A recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, Muraoka spent two years studying in the Judaic studies department at Brooklyn College. And riding the bus with chasidim on the way to class.

 “As the Yiddish saying goes, ‘a gast af zayl, zet a mayl’ — a temporary guest sees everything,” said Robert Shapiro, professor of East European Jewish history at Brooklyn College and Muraoka’s close adviser. “Mina was able to come into a completely foreign environment and see it with completely new eyes. That’s what makes Mina’s experiences and insights so unique, so important.”

 Brooklyn, with its diversity of Jewish religious life and culture, became her new classroom. “Before coming to Brooklyn, I had only ever read books about the Jewish people,” Muraoka said. “Many books, but coming to Brooklyn was still quite a shock.

**Naïve About What**

**It Meant to Be Jewish**

 “In Japan, there are three primary associations with Jewish people: Israel, the Holocaust and chasidim. I was very naïve about what it meant to be Jewish. I didn’t realize the amount of diversity there was. I always knew there were different types of Jews — Reform, Orthodox, Conservative — but I didn’t know what those differences actually meant until I came here.”

 That diversity was a marked contrast to Japan, a homogenous country. “In a population of nearly 127 million today, the Jewish population in Japan has remained negligible,” Muraoka said, “even during the refugee influx during World War II. That’s why people in Japan know so little about the Jewish people, and that’s why I had to come to America to study more about Jewish history.”

**Teaching American Public School**

**Students about the Holocaust**

 Muraoka’s determination to trace and disseminate the story of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, originating from her childhood sense of identification with Anne Frank, found voice during a summer internship at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park. After a summer of rigorous study, she was sent to several public schools in the Bronx, Queens, and Roosevelt Island to educate students about the Holocaust.

 “The first question the students had for me was, ‘Why aren’t you Jewish?’” she recalled with a good-natured laugh. The students were accustomed to receiving Jewish interns from the museum — but Muraoka was something new.

**Challenged on Her**

**Qualifications to Teach**

“They wanted to know why I wanted to teach about the Jewish people if I wasn’t Jewish. I told them my story about encountering discrimination and intolerance and how I found myself interested in Jewish history. In the end, the students were extremely receptive to my message because I was from a different background.”

 Muraoka plans to continue teaching Jewish history when she returns to Japan after completing her dissertation. “Since there is no department for Jewish studies in Japan, I hope to start by teaching basic courses about Jewish history, literature and culture.” Muraoka’s dissertation focuses on Jews and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, examining the role played by Jacob H. Schiff, a German-born Jewish American banker and philanthropist, who provided financial services and support to the Japanese in the war, at the time of the First Russian Revolution.

Collecting Jewish Artifacts

 Besides a pile of books on Jewish history, “I have been collecting Jewish artifacts to bring back with me to Japan,” Muraoka explained. “So far I’ve collected kippot, a mezuzah, Shabbat candlesticks, a seder plate, a menorah, and chanukiah — I’ve started with the basics. I want to be able to show my future students that the Jewish people, the Jewish culture, is real and alive today.”

 Asked what she admired most about Jews and their survival instinct, Muraoka said, “It’s the concept of peoplehood — that all Jews are responsibly for one another. It’s a loyalty that goes beyond country, or family history, or specific religious practice. All of Israel is one. I find that extremely special.”

*Reprinted from the March 6, 2012 edition of The New York Jewish Week.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Son of**

**Pnei Yehoshua**

 When Aryeh, the son of the famous Torah giant Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua (author of the work Pnei Yehoshua) reached marriageable age, his parents were overwhelmed with offers from numerous matchmakers. It was only natural, as a bridegroom from such a distinguished family was a real catch.

 Everyone, of course, assumed that Aryeh was a Torah scholar in his own right. But in fact, such was not the case. The son of the famous scholar was not intellectually inclined, and that was putting it mildly. The young Aryeh was very far removed from the world of Torah study and erudition.

 Aryeh was a simple boy who had not been blessed with any particular aptitudes or talents. Nonetheless, he was an amiable fellow who was well-liked by all who knew him. In truth, it wasn't easy being the son of a famous rabbi. Aryeh often found himself in unpleasant situations when people tried to engage him in scholarly discussions; the only way he could extricate himself was by changing the subject.

**Showed Great Promise as a Child**

 As a child, Aryeh had shown great promise. Many people remembered how the young boy had demonstrated a surprising diligence and capacity for concentration. But something had obviously happened as he grew older. No one ever saw him studying, and his knowledge seemed to be quite limited.

 But the matchmakers would not be deterred. All of the finest families competed for Aryeh as a son-in-law, although no one scrutinized the young man himself. With such a prestigious father, they figured, why even bother?

 Eventually one of the matchmakers' offers was accepted, and the girl's father, a wealthy Torah scholar in his own right, was overjoyed.

**Comes to the Bride’s Hometown**

 A few days before the wedding the bridegroom's family set out for the girl's town, where the ceremony was scheduled to take place. All of the town's important personages came out to welcome them, led by the girl's father. It wasn't every day that such an important guest graced their village, let alone married into one of their own families.

 After the usual exchange of pleasantries the prospective father-in-law turned to Aryeh and brought up a certain topic in Torah, wishing to hear his thoughts on the subject. It did not take long to discover that the young man had no idea what he was talking about. He was as far from being a Torah scholar as east is from west.

**The Wedding is Called Off**

 The father was horrified. It was unthinkable to allow his daughter to marry a young man who could barely read. The wedding was immediately called off, and the situation was terribly embarrassing for all involved. The Pnei Yehoshua and his son set out on the road for home, deeply distressed and mortified by their humiliating experience.

 On the way home they stopped in Berzan, where they were greeted warmly by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Halperin, the rabbi of the city. The rabbi was delighted to open his home to such a distinguished figure and his son. But he could not help noticing that his guests seemed troubled. When he asked them what the matter was, the whole sad tale came pouring out. The Pnei Yehoshua let out a deep sigh.

**Something More than Meets the Eye**

 Rabbi Yechiel Michel looked closely at the despondent Aryeh. There was something more about the young man than met the eye.

 "I have a daughter named Rachel," Rabbi Yechiel Michel said suddenly. "She is a G-d-fearing and pious young woman. I would be very honored if you agreed to a match with your Aryeh."

 The unexpected offer was immediately accepted. Overnight, the dark cloud that had hung over their heads was gone.

 The wedding took place amidst great festivity and celebration, and the young couple set up household in Berzan. In truth, many of the townsfolk shook their heads in wonder at the strange match. They just couldn't understand why their rabbi had allowed his daughter to marry such a simple fellow.

**A Heated Argument**

**Over a Point in Torah**

 But as time passed, it ceased to be a topic for conversation. Then one day, Aryeh went to the synagogue for the afternoon service and found it in an uproar. Everyone was involved in a heated argument over a certain point in Torah.

 "What happened? What's going on?" Aryeh asked, but no one bothered to respond. There was no point; it didn't even pay to explain it. Finally, Aryeh found someone who told him that that morning, the rabbi had posed a very deep and complicated question during his daily Torah lesson. No one was able to come up with an answer.

**Quickly Solves the Problem**

 When Aryeh heard what the question was he was surprised. "Why, that's simple!" he said, and without further ado uttered a few words that quickly solved the problem.

 It was so silent in the study hall that you could have heard a pin drop. Everyone was astonished by the simplicity and brilliance of the answer, let alone by the fact that it had come from Aryeh.

 Once his secret was out there was nothing Aryeh could do about it, although at first he regretted it deeply. Quite unintentionally, he had revealed himself as the great Torah scholar he really was. With the passage of time he was appointed head of the local yeshiva, and later achieved renown with the publication of his magnum opus, Pnei Aryeh.

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