**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Metzora 5774**

Volume 5, Issue 32 5 Nissan 5774/ April 5, 2014

For a free subscription, please forward your request to ***keren18@juno.com***

**It Once Happened**

**Yosay the Rich (Man)**

 The Sage, Rabbi Abba, had great love for his people and traveled around encouraging them to study the Holy Torah. One day he arrived in a small town where there were no Torah scholars. In fact, most of the townspeople there were ignorant. Rabbi Abba felt sorry for them and decided on a plan by which he could increase their Torah learning.

 One morning he came into the local synagogue and made an announcement: "Whoever would like to have great wealth and be granted life in the next world should come and learn Torah with me!" He managed to stir up a lot of interest amongst the local people and many came to study with him. Through his kind demeanor and clear method of teaching he developed a circle of eager and steady Torah learners.

**An Intelligent-Looking Young Man**

 One day a new face showed up at the study session. It was an intelligent-looking young man who approached Rabbi Abba, saying: "I heard about your promise of riches if one studies Torah and I would like to begin my study so that I may be able to receive them."

 "Very well," replied the rabbi. Of course, Rabbi Abba hadn't meant that his students would receive actual physical gold, but spiritual riches when they learned Torah. He was sure, though, that the young man would soon come to that conclusion himself when he had developed a true appreciation of Torah. "Who are you, what is your name?" the rabbi inquired.

 "I live in this town and my name is Yosay," the young man answered.

 "Well, Yosay, you are welcome to join our group. From this day on your name will be Yosay the Rich!" Yosay's face lit up when he heard these words, as visions of gold shone in his eyes. Yosay came to study with Rabbi Abba every morning without fail. He grasped the material easily and Rabbi Abba saw in this young man the potential for greatness.

**Wasn’t His Usual Self**

 One day Yosay wasn't his usual self. He sat listlessly looking out of the window throughout the entire study period. When it ended Rabbi Abba approached him and asked, "Yosay, my son, what is bothering you today? I missed your questions. Today you seem to be somewhere else."

 "Rabbi, I have been studying diligently for weeks and yet I haven't received any of the riches you promised me," said Yosay in an accusatory tone. Rabbi Abba was saddened to hear him speak in such a fashion, for he had hoped that by now, Yosay would have begun to love Torah study for its own sake. Nevertheless, he didn't want to dissuade him from his learning and so he answered, "My son, you are doing very well. Just be patient and continue. I have no doubt that one day you will be rich."

 After hearing his teacher's encouraging words Yosay felt better and continued to study as before, but Rabbi Abba was worried about him. Would he continue to study long enough to reach his great potential, or would he give up because of his expectation of receiving a material reward?

**Visited by a Strange,**

**Well-Dressed Gentleman**

 One afternoon as Rabbi Abba was sitting alone and poring over his parchments, a strange, well-dressed gentleman approached him. "Are you Rabbi Abba?" the man inquired. "Yes, how may I help you?"

 "Rabbi, I have heard that you are a great scholar and I'm hoping that you will be able to help me. I am a very wealthy man, but I never had the opportunity to study Torah. Now I am very busy and I don't have the time or ability to begin studying at this late stage in my life. Therefore, I would like to pay someone else to learn in my place. Here, I have a solid gold goblet. It is worth a great deal of money, and I have eleven more cups just like this. I am willing to give a golden cup to whomever will 'sell' me a share in his Torah learning."

 Rabbi Abba jumped at the offer. Losing not a moment he called Yosay over and introduced him to the wealthy gentleman. He explained the arrangement, and Yosay was, of course, more than happy to agree. Both parties were satisfied. Yosay devoted himself to his studies more and more diligently, until he could hardly tear himself away from the holy texts. He barely ever thought about the gold.

**Alarmed to Hear the**

**Sound of Weeping**

 One evening, Rabbi Abba was alarmed to hear weeping coming from Yosay's corner of the study hall. "What happened? Why are you weeping?" he asked, fearing that his student had received bad news. "Rabbi, I can't stand it any more! I hate the thought that I am learning G-d's Torah for a monetary reward.

 “At first, the money was my sole motivation, but now that I understand much more, I see that my actual reward is the knowledge itself. I have gained so much and feel a great difference in myself. Now I feel like a thief taking gold in return for my beloved spiritual labors. I was foolish to make a deal like this and I just wish I could get out of it."

 Rabbi Abba's blinked back tears of joy, for he saw that his prize student had truly matured in his learning. His greed for riches had disappeared and been replaced with a genuine love of Torah. Rabbi Abba summoned the rich man and said, "You have reaped great rewards in Torah and mitzvot from your bargain with Yosay, but now it is time for you to share your wealth with another poor student. I will help you find a new partner. Meanwhile, know that you have succeeded greatly in this 'deal.'"

**Continued to Study Torah**

**For the Rest of His Long Life**

 When Yosay heard what his rabbi and teacher had done for him, he couldn't contain his happiness. Yosay continued to study Torah for the rest of his long life and taught Torah to his children and grandchildren. He became known as "Yosay the Golden" because he had exchanged his rewards of gold for the study of Torah.

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY (Issue #264 – Tazira/Metzora 5753/1993.*

**Should I Forgive My Deceased,**

**Formerly Abusive Parents?**

**By** [**Eliezer Danzinger**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/10434/jewish/Y-Eliezer-Danzinger.htm)

**Question:**

 I am about to be married to my wonderful fiancé, but my heart is troubled. Must I go to the cemetery to invite the souls of my deceased parents to the wedding, though they both abused me as a child—both physically and emotionally?

 Maybe I can forgive them for the beatings, but I cannot find forgiveness in my heart for the emotional abuse, which continued well into my adulthood years. My childhood haunts me and has continued to give me great pain, in spite of professional help and much prayer.

**Answer:**

 First, I’d like to wish you a warm mazal tov! May you and your fiancé share many years of happiness and meaning, enjoying a Jewish home based on Torah values.

 As a child, you experienced neglect and abuse at the hands of the ones who should have shown you the most caring, attention and love. It is no wonder that you continue to be haunted by those horrific memories.

 I am not sure how many years have gone by since your parents passed away. But their blemished souls, by now, have surely undergone the painful purifications of the Hereafter, which comes with the soul’s keen realization of the gravity of its misdeeds

 Surely, their souls were filled with bitter remorse for their deplorable behavior. And surely, by now their hot tears of contrition have scoured away their dark stains. If they were able to communicate with you today, they would certainly express their remorse and beg for forgiveness.

 Just one thing now stands in the way of complete divine forgiveness—that is the forgiveness that only you, their child and victim, can give.

 I encourage you to focus your thoughts on the gift of life your parents gave you, and whatever other goodness they showed you.

 A wedding is such a very special time. With the union of two souls, G‑d forgives the bride and groom for all their past misdeeds. I hope that by the time your wedding arrives, you will find it in your heart to forgive your parents, and to welcome their presence at your wedding.

 It may help, too, to take up the regular study of Chassidism. The divine light that shines through its teachings is very therapeutic, and would greatly complement the professional counseling you receive.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**The Rebbe and Some**

**Young American Jews**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Boltan**

 In the year 1927 the sixth (and previous) Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, was miraculously released from Communist prison where he had been sentenced to death due to his 'Outreach' projects in Russia. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of Jews directly owed their Judaism to his 'underground' Torah schools, 'illegal' synagogues and other 'counter-revolutionary' activities.

 A little over a year later he made a visit to Israel to pray at the graves of the 'Tzadikim' (Holy Jews) and from there he made a ten month visit to America (he would return there permanently in 1940).

 The unspoken motto of U.S. Jewry in those days was "America is not the 'Old Country'. America is different! They felt that in Russia and Europe Jews needed the Torah and its commandments but in the land of opportunity Jews must be the same as everyone else.

 No Jew dreamed of walking the streets displaying a beard on his face or 'Tzitzis' on his four-cornered garments. Religious Jews fortressed themselves in Yeshivas while Reform and Conservative 'Temples' flourished and atheism ruled the streets.

**America is NOT Different!**

 Into this melting pot stepped the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe with a brave and fresh view. Upon his arrival he declared, 'I have come to 'melt the ice' of American Jewry" and to show that "America is NOT different! (Niet Anderesh)"

 Several years ago the Jewish Press in New York ran an article about his life highlighting this visit to the U.S.A. and shortly afterward received the following response from one of their readers (loose translation).



**Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, zt”l**

 Dear Editor,

 I read with pleasure your article on Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe. I had the great fortune to personally experience this remarkable Rabbi's dedication to helping Jews return to the observance of Commandments. Even today, many years later and despite the anemia of my old age I blush when I recall the chutzpa (disrespect) displayed by me and six of my friends toward Rabbi Schneerson back then and how he gently turned us around.

**The Best of Times Before the**

**Depression and World War Two**

 1929 was the best of times in America this was before the depression and World War Two. My friends and I had all but abandoned Judaism…occasionally attending Reform services, but we considered ourselves very progressive and complete, even superior, Jews.

 One day we noticed several articles that appeared in some of the Jewish newspapers in Philadelphia that a Rabbi Schneerson, who called himself the Lubavitcher Rebbe, had been given the use of a house on 33rd street by Mrs. Faggen Miller, a woman well known for her charity, and was acting like some sort of king.

 My friends and I read these articles about how this Rebbe was blessing people, giving advice and encouraging religious observance and it made us mad. Who did this man think he was; G-d? Who was he to give blessings and tell people what to do?

 We discussed this with an official of our synagogue and he suggested that we visit this Rebbe, confront him and ask him what he had in mind. We figured we'd show this old-fashioned fellow a few things!

**Driving to the 33rd Street Address**

 So one Sunday, we all piled into a car and went to the 33rd Street address. As we climbed the steps to the front porch we saw through the window that the living room was crowded with men. We rang the doorbell and a dignified, bearded man came to the door and inquired what we wanted.

 One of us responded, "We'd like to speak to the Rebbe. We have an important question to ask."

 The man, took out a pad of paper and a pen and replied, "Please excuse me but the Rebbe must know the question before he can see you."

 So we answered, "We'd like to know if he expects us to keep his old-fashioned religion in a modern country."

 "You'll have to wait," he said. "You see there is quite a crowd before you. But come in."

 We told him we'd wait on the porch because there was no room in the packed living room. We were surprised when, a few minutes later he returned and said that the Rebbe would see us as once. He ushered us into the house, through the crowd and up the stairs. We wondered why we had been admitted before all those people who had been there before us.

**His Hand was Outstretched in Greeting**

 At the top of the stairs stood the saintly Rabbi; He was tall, and handsome with gleaming bright eyes and he wore a large fur hat. But what stood out most was his hand was outstretched in greeting. We were surprised because we never knew that Chassidic Jews shook hands.

 He showed us into his room and said, "This is the happiest moment I've had since I arrived in Philadelphia" and he began to arrange chairs around his desk. We tried to help him but he insisted that he do this task himself.

 Once we were seated he took a long look at each of us, one at a time and said, "You look like very intelligent young men and therefore I must speak on your level. You are probably wondering about those people downstairs who were here before you and why I let you in first. Well, here are some of the problems for which they are asking help.

 "One man's daughter is seriously ill. What can I do? Nothing more than he can do; provided he approaches G-d and asks for a complete recovery, and if he does so G-d will help him. Another has a lawsuit and wants me to pray that he will win. I don't know who is right in his lawsuit but perhaps I can convince him to pray for justice. There is a man who wants to buy a business and wants me to make it succeed. If I could do that, I myself would be a rich businessman, wouldn't I? But I'm taking you first because if I could not answer your question I'd have no right to be a rabbi.

**Admits a Great Secret**

 "First I must admit a great secret which you will most likely keep. There are 613 commandments. While the Lubavitcher Rebbe tries to keep them all, he finds it impossible to keep them all. (footnote: many commandments can only be done in the Land of Israel, many require the Holy Temple etc.) So what does he do? Discard 613 Mitzvot? No, he keeps as many as he can."

 With these few words he removed the venom we had brought with us.

 Then he asked us to try to do the same as he did and keep as many Mitzvot as we could and assured us that if we did so, namely tried our best, then we would be doing the same thing as the Lubavitcher Rebbe!

 He asked us for our Jewish names and the names of our mothers. We also offered our American legal names and addresses but he said that he had no use for them. Several of my friends put their hands in their pockets to take out their wallets but he stopped them with a gesture, thanked us all and said he didn't want money… he wanted commandments.

**Asked About Whether**

**We Put on Tefillin**

 He asked us whether we put on Tefillin every day and several admitted that they had given it up (In fact we all had. But some were ashamed to say so). And the Rebbe even offered them Tefillin so they could fulfill the Mitzva then and there. All of us promised to try to live up to his suggestions. He then blessed us individually, shook hands again and we left.

 We walked through the crowd and out the door to the front porch again. But we didn't leave. We stood on that front porch for nearly two hours digesting the visit. Every one of us agreed to pray at least once a day. One said he would give up his Saturday work as a dental technician and some months later he even prevailed upon his employer to do the same.

 One of us, Gabriel Lowenthal of blessed memory, attached himself to a synagogue and taught what he had learned from the Rebbe's philosophy to many others. I have lost track of some the boys but I am sure that the ten minutes we spent with the Rebbe strengthened the spirit of Judaism in all of us.

 The depression and then World War II and all the confusion afterward gave me little hope of ever gaining more light from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak and he passed away in 1950. However I found the continued inspiration from his son-in-law the present Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel to keep as many of the 613 Mitzvot as I can.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel. Adapted from “Chassidic Gems by Rabbi Tuvia Litzman, page 155.)*

**A Visit With Nachum Segal, Avatar of Modern Orthodox Sincerity**

**By Norman Samuels**

 ‘I reach more Jews every day than the prime minister of Israel,’ says the popular radio host



**Nachum Segal in the studio, 2013.(Jewish Radio World with Nachum Segal)**

 Nachum Segal is a big, bearded bear of a man; sitting behind his broadcast console with large fluffy earphones over his kippah, a ready chuckle, and a surprisingly sweet voice, he seems like the kind of gentle Disney character children would love. But his agenda is no child’s game. Segal heads up what he calls his “Jewish Radio Empire”:

 Since 1983, he has hosted a live music and talk radio show every weekday morning from 6:00 to 9:00 on WFMU at 91.1FM in the New York area, now web streamed as well and [archived](http://www.nachumsegal.com/jm-in-the-am/jm-in-the-am-with-nachum-segal/) at [jmintheam.org](http://www.nachumsegal.com/jm-in-the-am/jm-in-the-am-with-nachum-segal/). He plays songs, conducts interviews with guests, broadcasts the news from Israel, and keeps his audience informed about community events.

 The music runs from Carlebach to Hasidic rock, Israeli modern to klezmer; the political stance is unapologetic Zionist-nationalist; the religious orientation is Modern Orthodox leaning a tad right of center. Segal’s views are passionately held. We spoke during and after a show in January at the Jersey City, N.J., studios of WFMU.

**A Rabbi Son Becomes a Disc Jockey**

***You come from a distinguished Orthodox rabbinical family: How did you end up as a disc jockey?***

 I didn’t plan this career in any calculated way. It began as a college hobby; I joined the student radio station at YU in 1981 as a social activity and because I liked music. Then two years later the dean of students received a call looking for a YU student who could take on a “Jewish Hour” slot at the Upsala College (East Orange) radio station, because it would otherwise be canceled.

 So, I said why not, it should be fun—and it gradually developed from a hobby to a part-time job to a full-time career. I later moved from Orange, N.J., to New York—we now live on the Lower East Side—then Upsala closed and WFMU moved to Jersey City and here we are.

**Understood the Great Jewish**

**Outreach Potential of His Son**

***I knew your father,*** [***HaRav Zev Segal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zev_Segal)***, o”h, and he was a very smart, learned, and tough man. What was his reaction?***

 He was a tough man, certainly not the koochie-koo type of father. I was not a very good student, but he never expressed disappointment about grades. I guess it was clear that I wasn’t headed for a scholarly career. When I really got into building the radio program, he was curious about how it worked and, when he understood the Jewish outreach dimension, became very interested. He didn’t tell me he was proud of me, but lots of other people would report that he had boasted about the impact I was having. My mother, on the other hand, was happy because I was happy.

**The irony is that Rabbi Segal’s congregation at its height had 500 families and the day school he established had another few hundred families, but his son the disc jockey reaches tens of thousands every day, and the message is the same as his: Orthodox Judaism, Jewish community, Israel—but with music?**

 I am doing what I enjoy and what I am good at. But, sure, I’m reaching out to Jews in new ways for new generations. And my father’s experiences—he lived in Israel as a child and his family was driven out of Hevron in 1929, for example—undoubtedly helped shape my outlook.

**Most of His Listeners are Women**

***Who is your audience?***

 We have not done a proper recent survey, but I estimate that we have at least 55,000 listeners, all ages from 12 to 90, more than half are women (they listen while getting the kids ready for school, the men listen in their cars driving to work, the retirees listen together). The Jewish spectrum ranges from Hasidic through Orthodox and Modern Orthodox to some Conservatives. Brooklyn, because of the sheer number, is the center of gravity geographically, but our live listeners are all over the New York metropolitan area and really all over the world—Israel, Europe—on the web. While much of the radio industry is moving to the web, our population is slower to do so—there are [religious concerns about the web](http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/99840/rallying-against-the-internet), for example—and our audience is pretty steady. They are like family: I hear from them all the time. Radio is personality driven: They have to identify with you. If you are them, then you have a loyal relationship.

**Annual On-the-Air Fund-raising Marathons**

***Who pays for the salaries and materials? You call it “listener-sponsored radio”—is that the only source of money? Do you get paid for playing someone’s songs or announcing their dinners?***

 We run on-the-air fund-raising marathons every year with additional occasional appeals. I get much-appreciated support from Jewish organizations. I lend my name and presence to trips and events, and you would be surprised at the range of our supporters: My biggest donor is non-Orthodox. Organizations support me so I can’t turn them down when they ask me to promote events—actually I can’t think of a Jewish organization I’ve turned down.

 As to the musicians, they send me CDs and I listen to them: I won’t play anything if I don’t like it. I read books and invite authors for interviews if I think my audience will be interested. I should say that I couldn’t do any of this without the support of my wife Staci: Never in 25 years of marriage has she even mentioned that I am out of the house very early every morning and she has had to dress and feed our six kids and get them off to school by herself. And I have a wonderful network of close friends, some since college, who work with me on projects, sub when I’m away, and are as involved here as in their own full-time jobs.

**The Question of Kol Isha**

***Let’s get to the heart of what you do: To me, that’s about music, religion, and politics, not necessarily in order of priority. The music all expresses a religious theme, which leaves out a lot of Jewish music, and a lot of potential listeners. And how about the “kol isha” issue, the prohibition against men hearing women sing?***

 Yes, I would like to search for more common ground on the music, to expand what we play, but it’s a delicate balance to maintain between what the listeners want and are accustomed to and anything new. And I hear from them loud and clear, so it’s a matter of interdependence. “Kol isha” is an example: Any informed rabbinical authority can tell you that listening to a woman’s voice on the radio is a nonissue; the fuss about that is misguided and incorrect. In the late 1990s, however, people on the right started to call about it, and frankly they wore me down, so we play some women singers but not as many as we should.

 But we have a good range of interviews and book reviews, we broadcast the news from Israel (in Hebrew) and the weather, we have guest sermons before Shabbat and holidays, we follow Yeshiva League sports—one of our most popular features, so there’s something for everyone. I am very proud of the range of our content; nobody else does as full a spectrum of outreach.

**Remembering the Past, But**

**Participate Fully in the Present**

***You mean a full spectrum as long as it’s Orthodox. Where’s the line between you and Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, culture? I never hear you speak Yiddish on the radio.***

 I have to confess that I don’t speak Yiddish. As you know, the Modern Orthodox perspective is to live in the modern world, not to replicate the shtetl. Certainly we should remember the past, but we participate fully in the present, and we look to the future. And I reject those Jews who reject the State of Israel.

**Has a Nationalist, Zionist,**

**Pro-Settlement Position on Israel**

***How about your politics? Do you welcome a spectrum there?***

 I make no secret that my political position on Israel is nationalist, Zionist, pro-settlement; call it right wing if you want, but my bottom line is the survival and the flourishing of the Jewish state and the Jewish people. Should I be providing equal time to critics of Israel? I consider myself to be equal time to the huge left-wing Jewish media out there. I can’t tell you how often someone will say to me, “I love your show, but I hate your politics.” But you know, both the show and the politics come from the heart, that’s who I am.

**Music, religion, politics: Which drives the others, which is the core mission?**

 I am reaching out to Jews. I reach more Jews every day than the prime minister of Israel. Thousands of people are inspired or informed by an interview, a moving song, connections to Jewish events. Religion, the Jewish community, tradition, Israel, are all part of the message, and I love music and music is great at conveying a message.

*Reprinted from the February 25, 2014 email of Tablet Magazine.*

**The “Mountain Family”**

 A recently published book by ArtScroll Mesorah called “The Mountain Family”, has touched the hearts of people all over the world. The Mountain Family chronicles the journey of Sheryl Massey and her family, from a small sect of Sabbath-observing Christians living in isolation in the Appalachian Mountains, to well-loved and well-respected members of the Jewish community here in Eretz Yisrael.

 Yeshivat Ohr Somayach [in Jerusalem] played a vital role in the lives of the Massey sons. Over the course of ten years all six Massey boys learned within the hallowed halls of Ohr Somayach. Nosson, the second son shares some of his reminiscences.

 “It was my first Shavout in Ohr Somayach, and my brother Dovid, a friend and I stayed up all night learning, and then walked to the Kotel in the morning. It was an incredible experience.

 We felt so connected to G-d, the Jewish People and the Torah.

 “Since we were still observing two days of Yom Tov at that time, we wanted to try it again the next night. Rabbi Geffen told us that if we really wanted to learn well, a good night’s sleep was crucial. He stressed that the custom was to stay up the first night only.

**Appreciated the Clarity and Stability**

**That our Rebbeim Gave Us**

 “As a ger (convert) I really appreciated the clarity and stability that the guidance of our Rebbeim gave us. Just a few short years earlier I was still living with my family back in the mountains, trying to find our own way to G-d. Now, here in Yerushalayim, it was no longer a mystery what G-d wanted from us. Thanks to His Torah Laws and the Torah scholars who put their hearts and souls into teaching His Word to newcomers like myself, I was finally being offered the direction that I had craved all along.

 “During the years that my brothers and I learned in Ohr Somayach we were privileged to spend our days in the presence of some very special Torah personalities. Among them were Rabbi Dov Schwartzman zt’l, Rabbi Nachman Bulman zt’l, Rabbi Mendel Weinbach zt’l, Rabbi Nota Schiller shlita, Rabbi Isbee shlita, Rabbi Aharon Feldman shlita, and Rabbi Moshe Carlebach shlita. In Ohr Somayach we received a tremendous amount of personal guidance not just in hashkafah and learning but in the day-to-day behavior of a “ben Torah”.

**Touched Every Area of our Lives**

 This personal guidance touched every area of our lives, an excellent example of which was the tape one of the rabbis made for me in which he recorded Shalom Alecheim, Kiddush and a number of the Shabbat Zemirot so that I would be able to conduct my own Shabbat meals in accordance with age-old customs and tunes.”

 “Not only was Ohr Somayach instrumental in molding and uiding my brothers and me into true bnei Torah, but it was a etter written by Rabbi Samet shlita that eventually smoothed he way for my mother’s and younger siblings’ conversions, as he tells in her book:

 I drove up to Baltimore with my youngest daughter in order to peak with Rabbi Mendel Feldman about my conversion. By this time was eginning to feel desperately uncomfortable with my non-Jewish status. Neither Jew nor gentile, I lived alone in never-never land.

**After So Many Years of**

**Searching for the Truth**

 Rabbi Feldman’s shul was reached via a set of curved stone steps. As I waited outside I noticed a gaping hole where one of the stones should have been. When I spotted the forlorn stone, cast off to the side, I immediately identified with that missing piece. I belonged with the Jewish people, just as that stone belonged to the stairs. And yet, after so many years of searching for the truth I was still all alone, to find my way home.

 I took the small hand of my four-year-old Debra firmly within my

own and entered the old shul. Rabbi Feldman offered us seats across the table from him. I felt his eyes bore through me. “Well?”

 He waited for me to begin speaking, but I didn’t know where to start or how to begin. As I desperately thought of what to say, I remembered a letter I’d received from Rabbi Samet of Ohr Somayach. It was in my U-Haul truck. I excused myself to retrieve the letter.

**Handed the Letter to Rabbi Feldman**

 Upon my return I handed Rabbi Feldman the cherished piece of paper.

 Dear Mrs. Massey,

 You have just become the proud mother of the fifth Massey tzaddik! We know that the souls of all the geirim were at Har Sinai, but for one father and mother to be privileged to bring so many of these souls into the world is unusual.

 How many tears have Jewish mothers shed throughout the ages to be worthy of sons like your boys. Each one of them is a jewel in his own right.

I have been very close with them since they came. They have found favor in the eyes of many, so that you as a concerned mother don’t have to worry about their spiritual and material welfare.

 I am sure that with Hashem’s help they will all find good shidduchim.

Nosson once pointed out to me that one of their virtues is that they were never exposed to the impurities of the modern world.

 I hope that things will work out for you soon in Baltimore with your conversion, as well as the other children.

 May the time soon come that your whole family as well as the entire Jewish people will be together here in Eretz Yisrael with the coming of the Mashiach, speedily in our times.

 Sincerely,

 Rabbi Yehuda Samet

 Rabbi Feldman read the letter through and then looked up a time or two as he paced back and forth.

 “Did you solicit this letter?”

 “No.”

 Finally he said, “Okay, I’ll convert you.”

 I continued to state my case.

 “Did you hear what I said? I said I would convert you.”

 Finally it started to sink in. I hardly heard much of what he continued

 to say. I was both elated and guarded, as we had thought we were so close a few times before.

 All I had to do was move my fam family to Baltimore and then wewould be allowed to convert...

*Reprinted from the recent Parshat Shemini edition of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*