**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Nasso 5774**

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**Two Friends and**

**A Pair of Tefillin**

**By Chana Apfelbaum**



It was 1992 when **Howard Feinstein** first met **Ari** at his Manhattan office, leading to a years-long friendship with the **Halberstam** family.

 It was 1992 when **Howard Feinstein** first opened the door to his Lower Manhattan office to find a black-hatted young man staring back at him. "Excuse me, Sir,” the boy asked, “are you Jewish?” “Of course, I'm Jewish,” Howard replied.” I even had a Bar Mitzvah!” “Well, would you like to put on tefillin?” the yeshiva boy shot back with a grin. “I'm sorry, but I'm quite busy today,” said Howard. “Here’s 20 bucks for charity. Have a nice day."

 Howard closed the door behind him and thought nothing more of the encounter. Yet, it wasn't the last he saw of this teenage yeshiva boy, named Ari. Every Friday like clockwork, Ari returned to Cables & Chips - Howard's family-owned business- to offer Howard the opportunity to put on tefillin.

**Unable to Resist Ari’s Charm**

 After a few weeks, Howard could no longer resist Ari's charm and he relented. As Ari wrapped the tefillin around Howard's arm for the first time since his Bar Mitzvah, a spark was ignited, and a friendship was born.

 As time passed, Ari became a fixture in the Cables & Chips office. Howard would look forward to his weekly visits, when they would chat about politics, religion, and most importantly - sports. Howard and Ari shared a love of The Game - any game. They'd get into heated debates about the Mets vs. the Yankees, commiserate over teams’ losses and debate over hockey, football and basketball. Howard would treat Ari with tickets to games, and their bond continued to grow.

 Until one Friday, Ari stopped coming.

 It was March 1st, 1994 when Ari awoke extra early to travel to the Manhattan hospital where the Lubavitcher Rebbe was undergoing cataract surgery. At the hospital, Ari prayed and donned his tefillin, but did not have time to wrap them before catching a ride back to Brooklyn. As the van, filled with black-hatted teenagers, drove up the ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge, a Lebanese-born terrorist, armed with an arsenal of weapons, opened fire on the van. Ari was shot in the head while clutching his unraveled tefillin - the very ones which Howard had worn the previous Friday.

**Howard was Heartbroken**

 Howard was heartbroken to learn that the young **Ari Halberstam**, whose name was plastered all over the news stations, was the same Ari who had been coming to put him on tefillin for the past two years.

 Ari's friend, Zalmy, continued to come, but Howard Feinstein’s Fridays were never the same again.

 A few months after Ari's passing, the Halberstam family reached out to Howard. They invited him to the Torah dedication which was written in Ari's memory and Howard proudly inscribed his own letter in the Torah. Later, Howard and his wife, Susan, joined the Board of Directors for the Jewish Children's Museum in Brooklyn, NY, which was built in Ari's memory. When Ari’s tefillin buddy, Zalmy, dedicated the synagogue of his Chabad House to Ari's memory, Howard proudly stood by.

 Over the ensuing years Howard and Susan became extended family to the Halberstam’s. They shared in their joys - celebrating weddings, births, and happy occasions. The Feinstein’s friendship was always a source of comfort to the family.

**Ari’s Brothers Continued to Visit Howard**

 Ari's brothers continued to visit Cables & Chips on Fridays, with Ari's tefillin in hand. Howard welcomed them in like family, embracing them with his usual friendliness and warmth. When Ari's brothers went out of town, other yeshiva boys continued the Friday route, visiting Howard to don tefillin.

 In a collection of memories that was collaborated for Ari's 10th yartzheit, Howard wrote, "I remember the first time putting tefillin on. The boys wished me a Gut Shabbos. As they left my business, Zalman put his arm around Ari's shoulder and said, "Nice job, you did it, good deed convincing and showing Howard how to put tefillin on."

 He continued to highlight some of his memories of Ari. "Our competitive and heated discussions were always about Knicks vs. Nets, Rangers vs Devils and Giants vs. Jets." He continued, "I will always have fond memories of Ari Halberstam."

**Igniting a Love for the Mitzvah**

 Howard also spoke at a yartzheit gathering for Ari's family several years later. He reminisced about his time with Ari, and shared his feelings about the boy who put him on tefillin for the first time since his Bar Mitzvah, igniting his love for the mitzvah.

 This past Friday, Howard's soul returned to its heavenly place. The last mitzvah he did on Earth, was to put on tefillin from his hospital bed.

 At Howard's funeral, his son, Geoff, grew emotional as he reminisced about Howard's special relationship with a yeshiva boy named, Ari Halberstam. As Ari's family members sat amongst the mourners, he expressed the Feinstein family's belief that Ari would surely be there to greet Howard at the heavenly gates, two souls united through the mitzvah of tefillin.

 Chaim ben Leizer Halevi was buried in Staten Island on Monday the 19th day of Iyar.

It was Ari's birthday

*Reprinted from the May 22, 2014 edition of the COLLIVE website.*

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

**Honoring the Rich**

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| **QUESTION:** |

Rebbi mechabed ashirim, Rebbi honored the rich people, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves the poor?

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| **ANSWER:** |

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They are two different subjects entirely. Rebbi didn't **love** the rich, he honored the rich. Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't **honor** the poor, he certainly doesn't, He loves the poor. And it's two different things.

**Honoring the Rich for Doing**

**Something Positive with Their Money**

Rebbi honored the rich because the rich were doing something with their money; a rich man gives more maaser. If a rich man has ten thousand bushels of grain and he gives his tithe, he gives a thousand bushels. A thousand bushels of grain come in handy, so the Levi'im can sit and learn. A poor man will barely get a pot full of grain from his little garden, so what do we have out of him?

Therefore you have to honor the rich because they are the vehicle of a mitzvah. Why do you honor an Aron Kodesh? Because an Aron Kodesh contains a Sefer Torah. Why do you honor the Sefer Torah, after all it's only a roll of animal skin? Because the letters are written on them. And the rich were the chefetz of mitzvah, the rich were the object of mitzvah, they gave to the poor.

**You Have to Honor Those Who**

**Support So Many Needy People**

The poor man however, could do the same if he had that much property, but you have to honor the one’s whose hand is supporting so many needy people. That hand, like the Chofetz Chaim once said to a rich man who gave money, he said "I would kiss your hand if it wasn't a mechalel Shabbos hand,” he said. A hand that gives tzedaka deserves to be kissed.
 We shouldn't despise the rich, it's a big mistake yeshiva men make. A rich supporter of the yeshiva walks into the yeshiva with flashy clothing and the rosh hayeshiva is showing him around, so the boys are snickering behind their gemoro; they're making a big mistake. That man is kodesh kodoshim, that man is an object of mitzvah, you have to honor him, it's the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Now it doesn't hurt him, because he has to give it away anyhow, otherwise he'll pay more income tax. Whereas the poor man who gives a dollar, the poor man doesn't have any taxable income, he gives a dollar it's a bigger thing. However this man is the one who is actually supporting the yeshiva and therefore he **deserves** to be honored.
 So Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves the poor because they were closer to Him, they didn't have so many bank accounts hanging between them and Him, so they can see Him, they can see Hakaosh Baruch Hu through the thin mechitza. But, you have to **honor** the rich, there's no question about that.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller” that transcribes one of Rabbi Miller’s answers to a question from the audience at one of his Thursday night hashkafah classes.*

**Remembering Rabbi “Murray” Maslaton, zs”l**

**By David Bibi**

On Saturday night I was shocked to hear of the very sudden passing of Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Maslaton, z’sl, affectionately known by many of us as Rabbi Murray. Murray Maslaton was able to see within each Jew, their Holy Neshamah. He lived by the knowledge that each person’s soul yearned and was most capable of getting close to Hashem.

Where others saw no hope in some people, Rabbi Murray sought those out and in a non-physical way beat them until their corporeal bodies would allow those holy souls to shine. Where my father was quiet, Rabbi Maslaton was loud. And Rabbi Murray was very successful. He most certainly touched the lives of thousands and was personally responsible for bringing back so many of them to the path of Torah and Mitzvot.

His great nephew Saul Kassin explains that, many Rosh Yeshiva’s attested that the boys or girls Rabbi Murray brought and requested to be accepted into their Yeshiva, didn’t look the part, weren’t on par educationally nor spiritually with those in the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva heads did not see how it was possible for these kids who were so far from religion to even become observant, let alone learners.

And it was beyond imagination that they would become Talmidei Hahamim, scholars and rabbis. But these same Rosh Yeshivas testified that they were wrong and that on each and every occasion Rabbi Murray was right. And furthermore not only did these students perform on par with the Yeshiva, many actually became the elite of the study hall.



How many lives did he change forever?

Two weeks ago Sunday, I spoke with Rabbi Murray for close to an hour, or better said he spoke and questioned me. He loved my father. They were very close and I remember countless occasions where he came to my dad for advice. His zealousness sometimes got him into trouble and my dad was a master at untangling webs. He told me how much he missed my dad. But he had his finger on the pulse of the community and wanted me to understand things from his perspective.

Rabbi Murray was like a cousin. Everyone knows how close and intermingled the Maslaton and Bibi families are. My uncle Morris and Aunt Rebecca were the Rabbi’s uncle and aunt, and his uncle Isadore and aunt Esther were like my aunt and uncle. Although we only spoke a handful of times, there was always closeness. I knew he loved me. But perhaps he had that with everyone.

My earliest memories are of Rabbi Murray talking with my dad along Avenue S. They would speak for hours and I remember standing there waiting, but I never minded as I would wander off into the candy store on the corner of East 7th where Jerry would give Victor and me anything we wanted.Â Later on we prayed in his children’s minyan in the Midrash of Shaare Zion until we were able to replicate what he built with Rabbi Mevorach at Ahi Ezer.

I’ll never forget the pressured sales attempt when I was in eighth grade. He desperately wanted me to study under his Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman in ner Yisroel in Baltimore. My mother quickly nixed that and Rabbi Murray knew that the one person he didn’t have a shot with was my mom! Nobody messes with a Gindi girl!

When he learned 25 years ago that I was a student of Rabbi Abittan in Long Beach, he was quite happy. From then on, I became Long Beach to him and his primary concern was that I remain connected to the community and grow in Torah. When I received semicha, he told me that he always knew I had it in me and the detour via Flatbush rather than Baltimore just added some years onto the path.

In our last conversation he was particularly interested in the community’s presence in Manhattan where I spend much time. He was pleased to know that there were at least three active daily Synagogues and that in Safra there were two minyanim each morning and classes every day. He was concerned that those in Manhattan keep their connection to Brooklyn and even more concerned lest the community members begin thinking that they were like the modern orthodox in the city. We had to be aware that we were different.

We discussed the recent phenomenon of what is being labeled as "Social Orthodoxy." As I understand from some recent emails from KJ, it is described as Modern Orthodox Jews who live a committed Jewish life that doesn't rely on G-d or a divinely authored, authoritative Halakha for inspiration or obligation. In their minds, no one is being obligated to do anything.

Social Orthodox Jews are developing what might be described as a voluntary commitment to behave in a religious way as a manifestation of their commitment to the Jewish people, to a 4,000 year old history, to Zionism, and to Jewish culture. All of this is expressed through serious, religious practice including Shabbat, Yom Tov, prayer, tefillin, kashrut and other forms of observance.

Jay Lefkowitz writes in Commentary Magazine: "And so for me, and I imagine for many others like me, the key to Jewish living is not our religious beliefs but our commitment to a set of practices and values that foster community and continuity. Â This way of life makes the social Orthodox Jew part of the Jewish people and the sweep of Jewish history in a very powerful and fulfilling way."

Rabbi Maslaton at first commented that orthodoxy without G-d could not last even a generation or two. Without Anochi Hashem “I am G-d,” the first of the commandments, there is nothing. He further stressed that this idea of practicing without belief is the exact opposite of what our community is all about. Even the most non-observant among us have a direct connection to Hashem. Even if people don’t practice all the laws, they are believers and the children of believers. We are emotionally and spiritually connected to G-d, as a child is forever connected to their parent. We may wander, but we never go lost and we always know there is a path back.

He bid me that I remind people that we are different, that we are special and that we are always attached to our Father in Heaven. Our problems are different, and our paths are different and we and our children and our grandchildren, need guides who know us, know our parents, our grandparents, our DNA and our souls; we need rabbis and teachers who understand us and recognize how to guide us. We are not and pray G-d, never will be Social Orthodox.

He stressed that wherever we go, we need to keep attached and never forget that there is no place like home and that someone is waiting for us when we get back.

Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Maslaton knew and appreciated the value of every Jewish soul. He loved everyone and saw the beauty within everyone. He was selfless, took nothing for himself and always gave of himself to others. He impacted generations and his touch will be felt for generations to come. I know I will never forget him. The community mourns the loss of a scholar, a worker and a leader. Tehi Nafsho Serurah BeSror HaChayim.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Good Thief**

In the last years of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, there lived a woman named Ima Shalom "the Wise." She was born into a family of scholars descended from Hillel and was related both by marriage and birth to the greatest Sages of her time.

Once, a Roman nobleman visited Ima Shalom and began to ridicule the Jewish religion. He said to her: "I have read the account of your G-d's creation of Eve. I really wonder how you Jews can believe in a G-d who is no more than a thief."

Feigning anger, Ima Shalom replied: "I am going to the Roman consul to seek justice. Do you know, last night a thief entered my house and stole all my silver cups and bowls and left vessels of gold in their place!"

The Roman laughed, "You certainly can't call him a thief - he is a friend."

"That's true, " replied Ima Shalom. "And it is the same with G-d, who took a single rib from Adam's body and left in its place a wonderful and valuable gift. Adam received a good, beautiful wife to be a comfort and helpmate and to save him from loneliness."

But the Roman still objected. "Why, then," he countered, "did your G-d first put Adam to sleep and then steal from him like a thief in the night?"

Ima Shalom called her servant and instructed him to fetch a piece of raw meat from the butcher shop in the market place. She then took the meat, seasoned it and cooked it while the Roman looked on. When it was well-cooked, she served him a portion and invited him to eat. He refused, saying, "I have no appetite for the food you have prepared, since I recall how disgusting it looked just a little while ago when it was raw."

Said Ima Shalom, "Do you think Adam would have been pleased to receive Eve if he had been able to see her being created from his own rib?" The Roman had to agree that Ima Shalom had bested him in the dispute.

Reprinted from the recent edition of “L’Chaim” for Parshas Bechukosai, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.

**Rabbi Yechiel Spero Tells Stories to Inspire a Greater Appreciation of Davening without Talking in Shul**

**By Daniel Keren**

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**Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

 Rabbi Yechiel Spero, world renowned educator and author of the popular ArtScroll “Touched by a Story” series of inspirational books came to Flatbush recently to speak at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin shul on the topic of “Kedushas Bais HaKnesses: Touched by its Sanctity!” The program was a special Sefirah Gathering orchestrated by Hakhel in conjunction with Va’ad LeMishmeres HaTefillah. The special Sefirah Event was dedicated to the refuah shelaimah of cholei Yisroel and in memory of Reb Avraham Moshe ben Eliezer, zatzal.

Rabbi Spero admitted that the topic of the evening that he was asked to speak about was one that he had never before lectured on. “It is always a privilege to learn about the topic of which you are speaking,” he declared.

 He began by recalling a story he heard from Rav Yeshaya Cheshin that took place in the town of Ostra. A terrible plague had broken out and struck down many families with illnesses that the doctors were unable to cure and the toll of those who died was very high and still increasing without any hope to the terrified residents.

**Suspicion Fell on One Particular Individual**

 The Rav of the town asked some of the shul officials to keep a look out for strange actions of any of the town’s people that might offer an explanation for this inexplicable catastrophe. The suspicion fell on one particular individual in the town whom they noticed acted very strangely at night after most people had gone to bed. And to add fuel to their suspicions, this individual never came to shul to daven.

 The shul officials were instructed by the Rav to follow the individual at night and contact the Rav immediately when they saw him doing anything strange. Late at night they followed this man as he started walking into the forest. At first they were frightened as they thought that perhaps he was planning a scheduled meeting with robbers or other dangerous men of ill repute who would be the only ones to travel into the forest at night when beasts of prey abound.

**Reciting an Inspiring Tikun Chatzos**

 They immediately contacted the Rav and he quickly joined them as they followed the suspicious townsman. But just a short distance into the forest, the Rav and shul officials saw this strange Jew from their community sit on a stump and start reciting with incredible concentration, the “Tikun Chatzos” that mourns the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. They were overwhelmed by his sincerity, but also struck by the fact that it seemed as though a second voice was also reciting with heartfelt kavanah the Tikun Chatzos.

 Afterwards when the man started returning to his home in town, the Rav and the shul officials confronted him. The Rav asked “Who was that second voice we heard reciting Tikun Chatzos?” The answer was that because of the townsman’s sincerity, he had the merit to be joined by the heavenly voice of Yirimiyahu Hanavi.

**The Rav was Greatly Impressed**

 Greatly impressed, the Rav asked “Why is that you don’t come and join us in shul for communal davening?” The man said that he would come for the Shachris services and everything would be explained.

 That morning a few minutes after everyone was in shul, the strange townsman entered wearing his tefillin. Almost immediately as many turned to stare at him, numerous mispallilim began collapsing to the floor in a feint. The Rav rushed over to the man and asked for an explanation of what he was doing to the members of the shul.

 The man answered that he never davened in shul because he couldn’t tolerate the talking during prayers and how too many people spoke terrible lashon hora about others. Now when he came into daven in the shul, these type of people who spoke during services would automatically collapse from the fright they had when seeing him wearing his tefillin with purity. And that was why he never could not come to shul to daven.

**Immediately the Plague was Stopped**

 The Rav immediately gave instructions that everyone in the community was to stop speaking in shul and talking lashon hora. Immediately the plague stopped and those still ill recovered.

 After completing the story, Rabbi Spero asked in a pained voice, “I ask you who doesn’t know of megafas (plagues) striking people we know who are need of refuahs, who are in need of shidduchim, who are in need of decent parnassah, who are in need of blessings for children or even from the pain of loneliness.” He told of hearing from a mother who spoke of her daughter who had not yet received a phone call regarding shidduchim in almost two years. He challenged those in the audience to take it upon themselves to stop talking during davening in shul.

**A Special Sefer Torah for Sholom Rubashkin**

 Rav Spero told of an inspiring story he heard about in the Otis Federal Penitentiary in upstate New York that occurred this past June. For the past two years Sholom Rubashkin who was convicted in a controversial trial that many legal experts saying was seriously flawed and had strong overtones of anti-Semitism in how the judge conducted the proceeding has been serving his sentence in the Otis Penitentiary.

 A special Sefer Torah had been written in honor of Mr. Rubashkin and permission was obtained for a group of slightly more than 10 Yidden to come into the federal prison with the Sefer Torah and hold a Chachnosis Sefer Torah celebration for a few hours with Sholom Rubashkin. The group was told that the affair had to end exactly at 3:30 P.M. and all those visiting the prisoner had to leave at that time with their Sefer Torah.

 For a couple of hours everyone including Sholom Rubashkin were dancing ecstatically rejoicing over the new Sefer Torah as if they were not in a prison. The guest of honor occasionally looked at his watch as he continued to dance as though he was a chasan at his own wedding. Then all of a sudden at 3:15 P.M., he called out for everyone to please stop dancing.

**A Precious Opportunity to Daven with a Minyan**

 The chevra called back that they had permission to dance until 3:30 and that was another 15 minutes. To which Sholom Rubashkin answered that this was the first time in all of the two years he had been incarcerated at the Otis Prison that he had a minyan of frum Jews who could daven Mincha. It was such a precious opportunity that he didn’t want to lose it and he begged them to stop the dancing as at 3:30 P.M. the prison officials would force them out and who knew when he would again have a chance to daven with a minion.

 The dancing stopped and Sholom Rubashkin led the davening with incredible kavanah. As you can imagine nobody talked during that special and unforgettable Mincha minyan.

 Perhaps the inspiration of that unique Minyan might inspire all of us not to take our davening for granted and to try and utilize the great potential it offers us to change our lives and those around us for the better.

*Reprinted from last week’s edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Tales of the Gaonim**

**Their Lives Saved**

**By Charity**

**By Rabbi Sholom Klass**

The piety and good deeds of Rabi Chanina ben Dosa inspired his disciples to follow in his footsteps. Foremost among his good deeds was charity. The following story is told about two of Rabi Chanina’s disciples.

One day, they went out to the forest to cut wood. An astrologer, seated in the marketplace, announced to the audience gathered in front of him: “These two men who enter the forest will never come out alive. I foresee that they will die.”

On the way, the disciples met an old man who said to them in a pleading voice: “Please have pity on me. I have not eaten or tasted food for three days.”

The disciples had one loaf of bread between them. They broke one half of the bread and gave it to the hungry old man. The man ate the bread and said to them: “Just as you saved my life, so may your lives be saved this day.”

**The Disciples Return Unharmed**

The two disciples entered the forest and spent many hours chopping and sawing wood. Late in the afternoon, as they entered the town, they passed the marketplace and all the people who had heard the prophecy of the astrologer saw them and remarked, “This astrologer must be a faker. Didn’t he say that these two men would not come hack alive from the forest? Now look at them, they seem to be in the best of health.”

The astrologer replied: “It would seem that I am a liar and my astrology is false! But I usually don’t make mistakes. There must be something else involved here.”

The astrologer, with the people following behind him, went to investigate the matter. They asked permission of the disciples to examine the packs which they were carrying. In one bundle of wood, they found half of a large snake. They then examined the bundle of wood carried by the other disciple and there they found the other half of the large snake. The snake had unknowingly been cut when they cut the wood with their saw.

“What good deed did you do today that you deserved to be saved?” the astrologer asked the two disciples.

The disciples told him all that had happened, how they saved an old man from starving.

Thereupon the astrologer exclaimed: “What can I do if the G-d of the Jews is appeased with half a loaf of bread!”

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