**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas beha’alosecha 5772**

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**A Simple Twist of Faith**

**(Part One)**

**By Leah Schiermeyer**

Many have asked me, "How did a country girl like you, a Baptist raised in the middle of the Oklahoma Bible Belt, become an observant Jew?"

Well, it's a very long story. It took ten years from the time my family and I left the Baptist church until we finally converted to Judaism. But here's a glimpse into the story that forever changed my life.

Baptists believe that there is only one way to heaven, which is through faith in Jesus. Only those who have true faith and manifest it in their lives will be "saved." I was taught that true faith involved regular church attendance, a public profession of faith in the church, baptism, and of course, clean living. I believed that G-d loved me and had a special plan for my life.

Only those who have true faith and manifest it in their lives will be "saved."

I lived my life according to Christian doctrine for the first years of my life. I married a good Christian man and was blessed with three beautiful sons. However, I arrived at a point in my life, at age 37, where I desired to have a closer and more meaningful relationship to G-d. I was not depressed. I just felt as though I wanted to be more committed to G-d. I remember, as I lay in bed one night before going to sleep, praying , "G-d, I really want to know You – whatever the cost. Whatever it takes, please lead me into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with you."

Little did I know what was to follow.

**Meeting Former Neighbors Who**

**Were Becoming More Observant Jews**

Within weeks, my husband, a physician in the Air Force, was sent to a Continuing Medical Education Conference in San Antonio, Texas. He was accompanied by Reuvain Rossio, another Air Force physician. Both our families were living in Dayton, Ohio, and we knew each other as former neighbors from San Antonio. During the two years the Rossios had been in Dayton, they had made a dramatic move towards more observant Judaism.



It was a topic of excitement for Reuvain and because my husband was always open to topics of religion, a very lively discussion ensued while on the flight back and forth from San Antonio. Reuvain had recently attended a lecture by Rabbi Tovia Singer. He was so impressed by his talk that he purchased a complete set of his tapes, entitled "Let's Get Biblical.”

**Invited Bob to Listen to the Tapes**

Rabbi Singer's intent was to bring Jews back to their Biblical roots and strengthen their faith in Judaism. Reuvain invited my husband to listen to the tapes. Bob agreed, thinking that not only would he find them interesting, but also a tool by which he could demonstrate the credibility of his own Christian faith and be able to explain to Reuvain why he still accepted Christianity as his own true faith.

The tapes were comprehensive and intense. To my husband's surprise and dismay, he believed that the rabbi articulated Christian doctrine much better than many Christian pastors. Rabbi Singer raised many serious questions about the validity of the New Testament scriptures.

**Explains Why Jews Don’t**

**Accept Christian Scriptures**

He discussed, in detail, prophetic Christian scriptures and why Jews do not accept those scriptures. He talked about the Written and Oral Laws of Judaism and why Jews still view both of them as very important. He talked about many other serious concerns that Jews have with Christian doctrine.

Bob commented to me that the rabbi had very valid – and troubling – points. My response was "Who cares what he says? I'm sure the Jews have some contriving way to explain away why they don't believe. They have to. Don't you see? They're blinded! They can't see the true messiah!"

My husband was steadfast in seeking the truth. I thought that I already had the truth and wondered why my husband was so confused. Yet, after much study and prayer, both by me and my husband, I had to resign myself to the fact that there were problems with Christianity.

**Called into Question**

Realizing that my Christian beliefs might be flawed was traumatic for me. Everything I had been taught was suddenly being called into question.

My first response was to talk to our pastor and close friends, but sadly, they either didn't have any answers or were afraid to talk about it. Since rejecting Jesus meant an eternal hell of fire and brimstone to them, they didn't want to risk the consequences of considering anything else but Christianity. I eventually had to share the painful news with my parents. The response was hurt and anger. I felt as though I had no one to turn to other than G-d. I remember standing in front of my upstairs bedroom window and praying, "G-d, if Jesus is your son, then I don't want to offend you, but if I've been deceived please let me know."

After exposing our doubts about Christianity, we were painfully asked to leave the church.

My husband was a prominent Sunday school teacher, but after exposing our doubts about Christianity, we were painfully asked to leave the church. Many questions arose such as, What do I teach my children? What do I do about the fact that they are in private Christian schools? How do we fit into any community now?

(To be continued next week)

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

**Three Hundred Words**

**By Rabbi Raymond Beyda**

A friend of mine recently underwent surgery to remove a polyp from his vocal cords. The recovery period started with complete silence – no talking and no whispering – for a period of five days. During the next stage of recovery, the patient was required to limit his speech to three hundred words per day.

Every time my friend needed to communicate, he had to stop and decide whether it was really worth using up the words it would take to get his idea across to the other person. Can you imagine walking around all day with a “word counter” – calculating total words spent against total words remaining?

The Zohar teaches that people are granted a certain number of words to speak whenever they choose during their lifetime. When the words run out, so does life. Someone who seeks long life should limit overall speech. Furthermore, in Tehillim (34:13), King David states, “Who is the man who wants life, who loves days to see good? – Guard your tongue from evil!”

If you find yourself about to indulge in “small talk,” count those words before they leave your mouth. Consider whether or not you want to “spend” them. It is a discipline that will take time to develop, but it will add years to your life.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin as excerpted from Rabbi Beyda’s book – “One Minute with Yourself.”*

**Chassidic Story #758**

**Humility Personified**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000iDk0:001FnTaM00002JP_&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1338933245&randid=110353975&content=central##)

Once, during a Chasidic gathering with his followers, Rebbe Chanoch Henich of Alexander, discoursed on the topic of humility. He concluded his words by saying, "If you want to know what real humility is," he said, "I'll tell you of an incident that happened to Rabbi Abraham-Abish, the head of the Rabbinical Court of Frankfurt-au-Main.

Rabbi Abraham-Abish, aside from the many hours he spent occupied with rabbinical duties and scholarship, occupied himself greatly with deeds of kindness, especially helping to provide food and clothing to the poor. It was his custom to make the rounds of the wealthy citizens of the city and merchants who came to Frankfurt to conduct business to solicit charity which he later distributed to the poor, to widows and to orphans.

**Soliciting Charity from Visiting Merchants**

One day as he made his rounds he stopped in one of the local inns and approached a merchant who was visiting Frankfurt on business. 'Excuse me, my good sir,' began the Rabbi. 'Could you please make a contribution to help the poor with food and clothing?'

It seemed as if the merchant hadn't heard, for he didn't so much as raise his eyes to gaze at the supplicant standing before him. Rabbi Abish, for his part, was too unassuming to announce his name, and so, he stood before the merchant patiently waiting. He made his request one more time.

The merchant wasn't in the mood to be troubled by paupers, who seemed never to leave him in peace. He lifted his gaze and stared at the beggar who had the impunity to interrupt him. 'Go away. Get out of here and stop bothering busy people.'

Rabbi Abish said not one more word. He turned and left the inn, never insisting and never imagining to use his identity to coerce the unwilling donor.

**Upset to Find His Valuable Cane Missing**

A few minutes later, when the merchant had finished perusing his accounts, he rose to leave and reached for his cane, but to his surprise it was nowhere to be found. This stick with its silver embossed handle happened to be a prized possession of his and he was very upset to find it missing.

It didn't take him long to assume that the pauper had stolen it in revenge. The merchant dashed out of the inn in hot pursuit of the thief. A few hundred yards away he ran right into the thieving pauper.

'Give me my walking stick, you no good thief!' he cried. 'I'm sorry, but I have not seen your cane, my good man,' Rabbi Abish replied calmly. 'I would certainly never take anything from you.'

**In Anger He Strikes the Rabbi**

But the merchant's anger, instead of being assuaged, only grew in ferocity and virulence until he even struck Rabbi Abish. Still, the chief rabbi of Frankfurt didn't respond with anger; he merely picked himself up and continued on his mission.

As Divine Providence would have it, the merchant was delayed longer in Frankfurt than he had anticipated. When the Shabbat approached he found himself still in the city. On the afternoon of the holy day all the Jews gathered to hear some words of Torah, and he decided to join them, for he had heard that their chief rabbi, the famous scholar, Rabbi Abraham Abish would address the crowd and he very much wanted to hear the great man in person.

**Impressed by Rabbi’s Two-Hour Lecture**

The merchant entered the large hall which was full to capacity. He took a seat in the back, and was quite impressed by the rabbi’s two-hour complex dissertation. Yet he could not shake the feeling that this awesome scholar’s voice sounded familiar.

At the rabbi’s concluding words he stood and raised his eyes to the podium to catch a clear glimpse of the great man. To his great shock and dismay, he recognized him at once the impudent beggar that he had slapped a few days before! The episode flashed before him in a horrible new light.

Unable to bear the shame, he fainted to the floor. When he regained consciousness, he found himself surrounded by the congregants. 'What happened?' they all asked him anxiously. To his great shame, he related to them the entire incident.

'You must go to the Rabbi and beg his forgiveness,' was the advice offered from all sides.

**Afraid to Approach the Rabbi to Request Forgiveness**

“But how can the Rabbi ever forgive me for what I did?” he cried. Nevertheless, the merchant realized that he had no choice but to make the attempt. When the Rabbi had finished speaking he passed through the crowd, greeting everyone graciously. The quaking merchant stood a little to the side, speechless with embarrassment, as the Rabbi approached.

Rabbi Abish instantly recognized the man standing before him. Although the rabbi was in the midst of an admiring audience of hundreds, most of whom were still overcome by his erudition, he gave no thought to his own dignity. Before the merchant could stutter an apology, Rabbi Abish cried out to his former persecutor, “Please, believe me, I didn't take your cane. I promise you on my word of honor!”

**Not Above Trying to Placate Again the Thoughtless Merchant**

Concluded the Alexander Rebbe: "The Rabbi had no thought that the man might be coming to apologize to him. He was so humble that he never considered his own honor above that of anyone else. The Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt was not above attempting to placate yet again the thoughtless merchant, even before the eyes of his admiring congregants."

Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the versions on L’ChaimWeekly.org (#951) and in Gut Voch (Artscroll).

Connection: Weekly Torah Reading Num. 12:3 (see also 11:27-29).

Biographical note: Rabbi Abraham-Abish Lissa, one of the outstanding scholars of his generation, was the Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt-au-Main from 1760 until his passing on 11 Tishrei 5529 (1768).

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed* [www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) [ascent@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000iDk0:001FnTaM00002JP_&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1338933245&randid=110353975&content=central##)

**The Immediate Future, Everywhere**

**The World to Come**

**By Rabbi Yanki Tauber**

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| (c) Michoel Muchnik |

Shabbat, our sages tell us, is “a taste of the World to Come.” As the six-day workweek culminates in Shabbat, so too will the six millennia of our work and toil to make to world a home for G‑d culminate in the messianic era—“the day that is wholly Shabbat and tranquility, for life everlasting.” *(Talmud, Berachot 57b; Nachmanides on Genesis 1; Grace After Meals)*

“And at that time, there will be no hunger or war, no jealousy or rivalry. For goodness will be plentiful, and all delicacies available as dust. The entire occupation of the world will be only to know G‑d . . .

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G‑d, as the waters cover the sea.” *(Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 12:5)*

May it be now.

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

**Who's Who**

**Yitro**

Yitro (Jethro) was the father of Tzipora, Moses's wife. He was a priest in the country of Midian. According to the commentator Rashi on the verse, "And Yitro heard all that G-d had done ... " (Exodus 18:1), Yitro had seven names: Reu'el, Yeter, Yitro, Chovav, Chever, Keini and Puti'el. The Torah portion that contains the historic event of the Ten Commandments is named, "Yitro."

Reprinted from last week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.

**Old Memories**

**From: Jonathan**

***Dear Rabbi,***

*My grandmother is in the final stages of dementia and she could leave us at any time now. We just don’t know when. My question is about her memories. I wonder where her memories are. Are they gone, are they in Heaven or will the memories “catch up” with her when her soul is in Heaven?*

**Dear Jonathan,**

I truly empathize with how you must feel. It’s so difficult to see a loved one slowly become detached from the world and from those who were such an important part of his or her life.

And what’s really hard about your grandmother’s situation is that so much of our love for a person is bound with our wonderful memories of everything we shared together. We therefore assume that that person’s love for us fades and is lost with his or her fading and lost memory.

**A Sense of Void Over the Loss**

It is a very hopeless feeling, and the sense of void over the loss of that person is, unfortunately, felt so acutely, even while he or she is still among us. I understand that this is at least part of what’s troubling you about where your grandmother’s memories are and whether they will be regained.

From the Jewish perspective, the impact of one’s life experiences on the psyche, which we call memory and perceive as a function of the brain, also affect the soul. But while the brain, as a finite, physical instrument wears out and eventually expires, the soul, which is spiritual and eternal, does not.

**The Soul is Still Very Aware of Every Experience**

This means that although the brain may longer be able to access the memories accrued in the mind, the soul is still very aware of every experience accumulated through one’s lifetime. So even if your grandmother seems detached or totally disconnected from her surroundings, that’s only because her brain no longer functions properly as the interface between her body and mind/soul.

But from a Jewish point of view, her soul is perfectly aware of everything happening around her. And when she passes, and is fully liberated from the limitations of body in general, and from her ailment in particular, she will remember you and her other loved ones, and all that you shared together, with exquisite detail and vividness.

It’s for this reason that you should continue your relationship with her in as much as a natural way as possible until she passes, and continue to cultivate it after she moves on by maintaining a spiritual connection with her through prayer, Torah study, mitzvah observance and charity on her behalf.

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

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Half Hearted Tip,**

**Whole-Hearted Confession**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

During a recent condolence visit to a neighbor whose mother passed away at the age of 95, one of her sons told a touching story about her piety.

One of her relatives observed the earnest manner in which she would always say the *viduy* confession of sins. On one occasion he asked her what sin could such a righteous woman be guilty of.

Her reply took her back more than seventy years to Frankfurt, Germany, where her mother ran a little restaurant

in their home. As a waitress in this very homey eatery, it was customary for her to receive tips from the customers whom she served. “I suspect,” she concluded, “that there was one client who gave me a tip but failed to do so wholeheartedly and it is for accepting such a tip that I am doing penitence.”

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

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Cover Up**

The Torah obligates a Jewish woman who was ever married to cover her hair when she is in public or amongst a large number of people. (Mishnah Berurah, 74:11, cited by Modesty - An Adornment for Life, Rabbi Pesach Falk, p.228) According to some opinions, a woman should cover her head at all times, even in the confines of her own home. The obligation for a woman to cover her hair is derived from the verse in last week's parsha, *"The Kohen shall uncover the hair of the sotah."* (Ibid., citing Bamidbar 5:18), which implies that the woman's hair should be covered.

**A Source of Great Holiness**

A woman's head covering is the source of great holiness for the woman and all those who are around her. As the Sages tell us, "The head is king over all the limbs." (Ibid., citing Shabbos 61a) Thus, metaphorically speaking, a kosher head covering cause holiness to permeate her entire being.

The following amazing true story illustrates the power of tznius, dressing modestly, specifically the mitzvah for a married woman to cover her hair. Jonathan Aminoff (his real name) is a Yid who lives in Great Neck, New York. Jonathan has volunteered with Hatzalah (Unit # Q100), the Jewish volunteer paramedic/first-responder service, in the New York area for more than 20 years now.

**Vacationing in Miami**

About two years ago on the 15th of Av (July 26) 2010, Jonathan and his family were vacationing in Miami, Florida. One afternoon, Jonathan and his wife Charlene were enjoying some of the tourist attractions which the area has to offer. Jonathan and his wife had left their 2 year old daughter Avigail ("Gali") by the condominium pool with the family's maid, who had joined them on the vacation to help take care of the children.

At about three in the afternoon, Jonathan told his wife that he wanted to go back to the condo to attend to some business matters. On their way back to their room, Jonathan and his wife walked past the pool. When they came to the pool saw an older man standing in the pool holding a small child. When the older man turned around, Jonathan saw that he was holding the limp body of their two-year-old daughter Gali.

A 20 year Hatzalah veteran, Jonathan sprang into action and began working on resuscitating his own daughter. Jonathan's wife looked on with sheer terror as her husband worked desperately, trying to save the life their precious two-year-old

In a moment of desperation, Jonathan's wife Charlene called out to G-d, making a “neder” a vow, that if the young girl would survive, then she would cover her hair, as is required by Jewish law. After an agonizing 3 min. and 10 seconds, during which Jonathan worked on his daughter, Boruch Hashem, the girl spit up water and began breathing on her own.

**Quickly Rushed to the Hospital**

The girl was quickly rushed to the hospital and later transferred to Miami Children's Hospital, where the doctors advised that she stay for 24 hours to make sure that everything was in working order. Understandably, many of the girl's "numbers" (such as oxygen and blood count) were "off," and the doctors wanted to be certain that the girl did not need further medical attention.

After the initial 24 hours, the Chief Doctor Dr. Keith Meyer (his real name) advised the parents that amazingly, the girl had not suffered any damage whatsoever. However, the doctor advised the couple to keep the girl hospitalized for an additional 24 hours, just to make sure. Charlene, Jonathan's wife asked the doctor why he recommended another 24 hours if their daughter was okay.

The doctor then said that in all his years of practice, he had never seen such an amazing recovery in a drowning case, and it was hard for him to believe that the young girl was truly okay. He said that he watched over and over the security-camera tape from the pool area which showed Gali drowning and he couldn’t believe how she was under the water for so long and still survived with no injuries.

**Doctor Answers that**

**He Believes in Miracles**

Jonathan's wife asked Dr. Meyer if he was Jewish and if so, did he believe in miracles? The doctor answered both questions in the affirmative. Although he was totally “secular,” and he was a skeptical “scientific-minded” doctor by nature, he said that after seeing this case with Gali, he began to believe in miracles!

Later, the initial rescuer of the girl, a non-Jew by the name of Richard Marianski, related to Jonathan how it was a “coincidence” that he was in the pool at all at that time. Mr. Marianski said that he only comes to the condo 2 months out of the year. Furthermore, Mr. Marianski had pulled a tendon and had therefore needed to exit the pool by the shallow end where Gali had fallen in. That is how he came to see Gali on the bottom of the pool.

The security camera later revealed how Gali had fallenl into the pool. The maid and Gali had laid down to take a nap by the pool and Gali woke up, unbeknownst to the maid. Gali saw her bucket floating in the water and when reaching for it, the little girl fell into the pool and sank right to the bottom. Miraculously, Mr. Marianski exited the pool in the shallow end soon after Gali fell in and he took the child out of the pool the moment Gali’s father Jonathan, the 20 year hatzalah member happened to be walking by the pool.

As for Jonathan, he "spoke" to Hashem while doing CPR on his daughter. He told Hashem that he had given 20 years to Hatzalah and now he was ready to "cash in" his "IOU" and that if Hashem allowed him to save his daughter, he would give 20 more years to Hatzalah. Interestingly enough, this was the first time he had ever performed CPR on a child.

**The Blessing of the Bad Tonsils**

Six months after the drowning, Jonathan and his wife took their daughter to an ENT doctor to remove the girl's tonsils because of bad sleep apnea. Jonathan asked the ENT doctor if he was aware of the girl's past medical history. Jonathan then filled in the doctor of all the details of Gali's fall into the pool, and her miraculous survival.

The doctor took a look at the girl's tonsils and said that the tonsils were in such bad shape, that the girl's breathing was very shallow, which helped her stay underwater for such a long time without breathing! Had Jonathan and Charlene done the tonsil surgery on Gali earlier, as other doctors had urged them, Gali may not have survived the drowning.

Jonathan's wife kept her word and immediately began to cover her hair after Gali recoverd. She went one step further and began marketing wigs and encouraged other women to cover their hair properly. She even donates wigs to ladies who cannot afford them. You can see a picture of Jonathan and Gali soon after the drowning here at the website for the company Charlene started to market her wigs: [www.galiscouturewigs.com.](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/www.galiscouturewigs.com.)

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

**Rav Eliyahu Brog Relates Hashem’s Reward for Doing Chesed to Others**

**By Daniel Keren**

Rav Eliyahu Brog, the *Mora D’Asra* of the Bais Yisroel Torah Center in Flatbush, the *shul* founded by his illustrious grandfather – *Harav Hagaon* Avigdor Miller, *zt”l*, spoke on the second day of *Shavous* as is his custom on *Megillas Rus*. He focused on the theme of how Hashem rewards a *Yid* for going out of his or her way to do *chesed* to others.

He began with the example of Rus the Moabite who demonstrated extraordinary kindness to her mother-in-law. Naomi became extremely impoverished following the deaths of her husband Elimelech and her two sons, including Rus’s husband.

**Refuses to Abandon Her Mother-in-Law**

Rus refused to abandon Naomi as did Orpah when her mother-in-law advised her to go back to her royal Moabite heritage. Rather she declared that not only would Naomi’s G-d be her G-d, but that wherever her mother-in-law would go, she would go; and wherever Naomi would die, she too would die there.

Because of that overwhelming demonstration of becoming a sincere gairess (convert) and doing extraordinary *chesed* to her mother-in-law, Rav Brog explained, Rus merited the reward of becoming the mother of Jewish royalty – Beis Dovid (the House of David) and the future moshiach.

We too can learn from that great personality to try and go beyond what is generally expected of one when it comes to doing *chesed* for others, even when it seems that so doing will make one a “big loser.”

**The Boy Had Mastered the Parsha**

As an example, Rav Brog told the story a young boy in *Eretz Yisroel* who was scheduled to *lein* (read) the *parsha* (the Torah portion of the week) for his *bar mitzvah* in his family’s *shul*. He studied hard and had truly mastered the *parsha*. On the great *Shabbos* when all of his family was gathered for the *simcha,* he discovered that another boy, a *yasom* (orphan) was planning to *lein* the Torah in the same *shul*.

The orphan hadn’t realized that he needed to reserve the *Shabbos* and as the *gabbai* in the *shul* had started to tell him the sad news that he couldn’t *lein* the Torah, our young boy understanding what had happened voluntarily decided not to read the Torah that week in favor of the *yasom*.

A year later Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv had to be rushed to a *Yerushalayim* hospital just before *Shabbos*. On *Shabbos* morning, his family wanted to have a small *minyan* in Rav Elyashiv’s hospital room and they asked if there was anyone who could read that week’s *parsh*a. This young man volunteered that he could and he did perfectly. Afterwards, the famous rabbi asked him how he had learned to read that *parsha* so perfectly and he related the story of what happened the year before when he was *Bar Mitzvahed*.

**Asked if There was Anything He Could Do for the Boy**

Rav Elyashiv was deeply impressed and asked if perhaps there was some favor he could do for the boy. The boy said that he was in the hospital because his mother had a very serious heart condition. There was one particular doctor whom everyone said was best qualified to handle the situation but the family had not been able to get an appointment. When the Rav heard the name of the doctor, he exclaimed that that was his personal doctor and he would speak to him on behalf of the boy’s mother.

Well the doctor couldn’t refuse the request of Rav Elyashiv and when he examined the boy’s mother, he scheduled a surgery that proved so successful as to be a complete cure.

**Even More to the Story**

Rav Brog said that there is more to the story than just the obvious fact that Hashem had so richly rewarded the young boy and his family for the extraordinary *chesed* they had done the year before for the orphan. The mother after she recuperated related to Rav Eliyashiv that a few months before she gave birth to this boy, the doctors were highly concerned about her difficult pregnancy and urged her to abort in order to save her own life.

She asked Rav Eliyashiv at the time what she should do and he advised her to not abort. Indeed that advice truly came around to save her own life just 14 years later and also aid the Rav by having someone to read the Sefer Torah for him in his hospital room.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of Yated Ne’eman.*

**It Once Happened**

**In Defense of Helpless**

**Jewish Children**

*The following story was recorded by the Chasid, Reb Dov Zev who witnessed the events with his own eyes.*

More than 100 years ago there lived a Chasid by the name of Reb Chaim Yehoshua. He had lived to the ripe age of 87, but although he was not ill, he had a feeling that his days were drawing to a close. He summoned the elders of the town to his bedside and in addition, a visiting emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Dov Zev.

"I have an important request to make of you," he said, "but before I do, I want to tell you about something that happened to me many years ago. Many years ago, I spent Chanuka at the court of the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe). During the course of the holiday, he spoke about the self-sacrifice of the Maccabees in sanctifying the Name of G-d. The words of the Rebbe made an enormous impression on me.

**Returning to the Family Farm**

"After the holiday ended I returned to our farm. Our father, who was a Chasid of the Alter Rebbe and the Mittler Rebbe after him had instilled in his children a particular devotion to the mitzva of hospitality, so when two frozen strangers appeared on our doorstep one cold snowy night, we, of course, invited them in and served them a warm, hearty meal.

"I had retired to my own room when I heard the faintest whining sound. I thought it was a cat and I listened carefully, straining my ears to make out its source. As I followed the sound, it became obvious that it was not a cat, but a child who was crying.

I approached the spot from where the cry came and to my utter shock, there in the wagon of the two strangers lay two small children, one sleeping and the other crying, both tied hand and foot. I knew at once that they were victims of kidnappers, or "khappers," as they were known at the time. For then was the height of the terror of child-kidnapping for the Czar's army. The unfortunates were stolen from the bosom of their families, never to be seen again, to serve in the army for twenty years and more.

"I took the two into my home and fed them and put them into a warm bed. My brother confronted the kidnappers and in a frenzy of anger threatened to give them a beating they would never forget. They, for their part, feigned innocence. No, they were the wronged ones, they claimed. They concocted a story about the children being mentally ill and being taken to a famous doctor, but when they saw that we wouldn't buy their ridiculous story, they disappeared as fast as their horses could gallop.

**A Blessing and Advice from the Rebbe**

"When my brother next visited the Rebbe, he blessed us all and told us to hide the children for a full year before returning them to their families, and this we did. The event inspired in me a great desire to continue in this mitzva of redeeming captives, and for a large part of every year I traveled to different parts of the region, seeking out these children, who were called Cantonists, and saving them.

"I continued this work for seven years, until I fell into a trap and almost lost my life. I traveled to the Rebbe and he gave me a blessing for long life and promised me that when it came my time to leave this world, I would be 'with him in his abode.'

The Reason for Summoning the Town Elders

And this leads me to tell you why I have summoned all of you here today. I feel sure that my life is about to end, and I am asking you to gather a minyan at my grave side and say these words, 'Reb Menachem Mendel, son-in-law of Reb Dov Ber and grandson of Reb Shneur Zalman! Your servant Chaim Yehoshua ben Esther is dead. Before his passing, he appointed us to inform you of this and to remind you that you promised him, that because of his mitzva of ransoming captives, he would be with you, in your abode.' "

The Chasidim agreed to carry out his wish, and the following day, Reb Chaim Yehoshua recited Shema Yisrael, and returned his soul to its Maker. That same day, a minyan surrounded his grave and said the words he had requested of them, reminding the Rebbe of his promise of long ago.

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