**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas korach 5781**

Volume 13, Issue 42 2 Tammuz/June 12, 2021

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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**Tragedy in the**

**Bnei Brak Bank**



 A woman entered a bank in Bnei Brak and waited on line to withdraw some money. When her turn came, she asked the teller for 300 shekels from her account. The teller punched in her account number and politely explained that he couldn’t give her the money because she was already over her limit.

 The woman insisted that she needed the money, and the teller remained calm but firm, explaining that he was not authorized to withdraw any more funds until she deposited money into her account.

 The customer was distraught, and without seeming to realize it, she raised her voice so that everyone could hear. “Why are you making such a big deal out of this?” she started shouting. “It’s only three hundred shekels, and I need it to purchase basic groceries. Please! Right now, I know that we’re in a bad situation, but we’ll pull out of it sooner or later, and in the meantime, I don’t have money for food! I really need the money!”

**The Bank Teller Lost His Patience**

 But the bank teller was not having it. He lost his patience and snapped back at her, “This is not a charity organization. This is a bank, and we have rules and policies that I’m not authorized to violate. The bank has been very generous until now, and we’ve sent you numerous letters and reminders that were ignored. There is no way that I can withdraw another shekel from your account!”

 All eyes in the bank were fixed on them now. The woman was mortified and stood still with shock and embarrassment. Suddenly, she walked past the teller and straight into the manager’s office. Looking at the surprised manager, she burst into tears. “How could you employ such a hard-hearted man? What did I ask for? 300 shekels? I’m not asking for luxuries, but the basics to pay the grocery store. Why did he have to shout at me in front of everyone? What gave him the right to tell everyone my story and humiliate me in public?”

 The manager was horrified at the teller’s conduct. He told the woman that she was right and apologized profusely on behalf of the bank and the teller, while explaining that regardless of their genuine sympathy for her plight, they were still bound by the bank’s policies.

**She Ran Out of the Bank and Never Returned**

 The woman was not placated, and she jumped up from her seat and stormed out of the office in tears. The manager called out for her to wait and he opened his wallet and took out three hundred shekels to give to her, but she shook her head and refused to accept it. She ran out of the bank and never returned.

 The manager walked wearily back into his office and as he passed his associate’s desk, another employee of the bank, he saw the man wiping tears from his eyes. This was strange thought the manager, he’d never seen his co-worker cry. “What happened?” he asked in concern.

 The man blew his nose and finally replied, “In my life, there’s one trauma from my youth that I never got over, and this image still haunts me forty years later. I was a little boy, around eight or nine, and my mother took me to the grocery store. We didn’t have money, and my mother was always very careful about what she put in her shopping basket - bread, milk, a little cheese, a few vegetables - and then she asked the grocer to put it on her account.

 “‘Your account?’ the grocer answered with a grimace. ‘Lady, you’re way past that. Do you have any idea how much money you owe already? You haven’t paid your bill in months. I’m not going to put another thing on credit. Either pay for the food now or put everything back on the shelves. I’m not a bank, and I can’t afford to let customers take food for free!’

 “My mother pleaded anxiously. ‘Right now, things are tight, but everything will work out in the end, you’ll see! Look, it’s not like I took anything expensive, just the very basics. Bread, milk, and cheese.’ Her tone was so pathetically imploring that I remember cringing.

**The Grocer Refused to Listen**

 “But the grocer refused to listen and began taking the items out of her cart and placing them on the counter. ‘Pay for it, or leave.’ With her pockets empty and her heart shattered, my mother took me by the hand and left the store. As soon as we were outside, she burst into tears, unable to hold back any longer, and hurried home with me.”

 The bank associate paused to a moment. “I’ve never forgotten the scene. It was seared into my heart with the agony and helplessness that only a child can feel watching his mother - his rock and security - crumble. But today, when I saw the same scene unfold right before my very eyes, I suddenly recognized the woman. That grocer was her father. Do you understand? Forty years after that man shamed my mother, his own daughter doesn’t have money for the basics....”(Generations of Tears, by Tzvi Nakar)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Torah Tavlin 5781 email.*

**The Integrity of**

**The Chofetz Chaim**

 The Pasuk in Mishlei states (15:27) that one who hates gifts will live long, and the Gemara in Sotah (47b) uses this Pasuk to explain that when the number of people who accepted gifts increased, their days decreased and their years become shortened.

 When the Chofetz Chaim, zt”l, was young, he became a Rebbe in order to make a living. Although he could certainly have held a respectable position as the Rav of a town, he was unwilling to do this. Also, he refused to teach those who were older than himself. This left him with very few opportunities for Parnasah, and eventually, he found a job teaching Gemara to older Bochurim.

 When people noticed how absolutely destitute the Chofetz Chaim was, they pleaded with him to accept a monthly stipend to alleviate his poverty. They tried all sorts of ways to give money to the Chofetz Chaim in a very respectable manner, but he would not accept the gift under any circumstance.



 Even at a young age he was already resolved not to take money from others. He simply preferred to go hungry than to take a gift. When he was older and already had a reputation as a Gadol, Rav Meir Hillel Kolotzsky, zt”l, one of the most respectable people in Grodno, wished to donate a sizable sum of money for the Chofetz Chaim’s personal use, but he already knew that the Chofetz Chaim never agreed to take gifts from others.

 Therefore, he contrived a plan to send the money anonymously, so that it could not be returned. He sent the money to his mother in Eishishok to send it off to the Chofetz Chaim in an unmarked envelope with a note that said that the money was a gift freely given for the Chofetz Chaim’s use.

 But the Chofetz Chaim refused to use the money. He left it on the side of his desk for almost two years until he finally uncovered a small clue that helped him determine from where the money had come from.

 The moment he understood who the donor was, he sent it back. Exactly two years after the gift had been sent, every penny was returned to a disappointed Rav Kolotzsky!

Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar 5781 of the Torah U’Tefillah (compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg).

**She Tried To Find**

**Me a Husband But**

**She Found Me a Job**

**By**[**Miriam Beigelman**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/miriam-beigelman/)

 She tried to get me married, but instead she found me a job. She matched me up with her daughter. I neglected to ask if I owe her *shadchanus*. I appreciated her gesture and am thankful to be working. It provides structure to my day and helps financially. It is a few hours a day but gets me going early in the morning with a brisk walk to our office a mile away.

 We connected on our first phone call. She called to set me up with a gentleman I had heard about. I knew he did not want to date me and shared with her my story of why not. She related, as someone in her family was similarly challenged. My gut told me I could be candid about my journey. I was not disappointed.

 A few months after I married, she called to set me up again. She was thrilled to hear I had met my husband. We schmoozed. I told her I could not work as a social worker because I was not yet licensed in Florida. She heard me and stored the information. I forgot about it.

**She Called Two Months Later**

 About two months later, she called to inquire if I want to work for her daughter. My heart danced at her thoughtfulness. Even though the job was not my line of work I enthusiastically accepted. I knew being busy outside of the home would make for a happier me and hence a happier marriage. I was also curious about learning new skills. My “*shadchan*” strongly recommended me to her daughter, making me feel confident it would work out.

 Interestingly, her call came a few days after learning about the power of *bentching* with concentration. My mother had shared a moving story about a man who remained nourished during the Holocaust because he meticulously *bentched*. I took the story to heart and pledged to understand what I say. I am a work in progress.

 Traditionally, a *shadchan* makes matches between husband and wife. Perhaps there are other kinds of matchmakers. Mine found me a job. But more so, in her I found a friend.

*Reprinted from the May 9, 2021 website of The Jewish Press.*

**The Power of an Amein**



 An amazing story is told. (Thank you G.Z.!)

 Unfortunately, a woman passed away and left a house filled with young orphans. The father decided, that as a Zechus for the mother’s Neshamah, the kids in the house should try to only say a Brachah if someone was there to answer ‘Amein’.

 One day, one of the daughters was home alone and she was very thirsty. She poured herself a drink, however she then realized that nobody was home to answer ‘Amein’ to her Brachah. She waited two hours for a family member to finally come home, and only then did she say a Brachah and take her drink.

 That night, the girl’s mother came to her in a dream, and told her daughter that because she restrained herself and did not take a drink without an Amein being answered, it caused a great commotion in Shamayim, and that because of that, a girl in her class who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness will now be cured. The girl awoke in shock and went to share her dream with her father. The father then went to the diagnosed girl’s father and asks if his daughter was ill. The father astonishingly asked, “How do you know this? Nobody knows about this because we haven’t told anyone!”

 The father told him the dream his daughter had, and the diagnosed girl’s father told him that his daughter was supposed to begin chemotherapy treatment that day. The father of the ill child went to his Rav, and asked him what to do.

 The Rav advised him to hold off on beginning the treatment, and have his daughter retested. The man listened and took his daughter for testing again, and when the test results came back, all the doctors were in amazement. Baruch Hashem, there was not even a trace of disease found in the results! The power of Amein is immeasurable, and should never be underestimated!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilla (compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg)*

**The Woman Named Chagigah**

 The Sefer Menoras HaMaor (vol. II, ch. 5) writes the following fascinating, true story in the name of the Medrash Tanchuma. There was a man who designated a place in his home to learn. Every day he would learn Masechta Chagigah, which discusses the Korbanos that are brought in the Bais HaMikdash during Yom Tov. He reviewed and reviewed this Masechta his entire life, for over sixty years. He was fluent in only that Masechta, and he was not well versed in all the other Masechtos. When he passed away at home, he did not have any family living with him, and no one knew that he had died.

**The Crying and Wailing Woman**

 A woman entered his house and started crying, wailing, and carrying on. The neighbors heard the commotion, ran into the home, and found this woman uncontrollably sobbing and weeping.

 The woman told the neighbors that they should honor this deceased righteous man, because he honored her and never abandoned or forgot about her, even for a day. She begged the neighbors that they should also bury him honorably, as he deserved, and she guaranteed them they would merit Olam Haba for doing so.

 All the women of the village gathered around this woman, and they arranged for the righteous deceased man to be eulogized and buried properly. At the burial, one of the village women tried to understand the why the woman was crying and carrying on so much, and she approached her and asked, “Who are you? What is your name?”

 The woman responded, “My name is Chagigah. I am the representation of the Masechta this man learned every day his whole life. I was sent here from Shamayim to tell the people of this town how special this person was, and of this righteous man’s diligence in learning. Even though I was the only Masechta he learned, and he was unfamiliar in all the other Masechtos, he had such great respect and love for me!”

 After the Levayah, some of the other women wanted to speak a little more with Chagigah, but she could not be found anywhere. The woman had disappeared!

*Reprinted from the Shavuos 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah (compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

**Story #1223**

The Incomparable Blessing

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**editor@ascentofsafed.com**



 It was one of the festival days of Passover at a synagogue in Westchester County, NY. The rabbi of the *shul*, a Chabad emissary, was standing near the front door, warmly greeting each arriving member of the congregation.

 He looks at his watch. It's 9.30, and everyone is still waiting for a tenth to complete the *minyan* -- a familiar story for Chabad houses across the world.

 Finally, a man of about 80 years walks into the *shul*. The Rabbi is overjoyed to see him. The man is a regular, and every *Yom Tov* it is the same story: although he is often the 10th, yet he always leaves before the blessing of the Kohanim at the end of the *Musaf* service.[[1]](https://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0001Dt00:001WdIpg00002hkL&count=1621451516&randid=1284734224&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=2&randid=1284734224" \l "_ftn1" \o ")

**Puzzled by the Man’s Unusual Departure**

 The rabbi is each time puzzled by this man's strange behavior.

 This time he determines to question him about it. "Sir, can we have a chat before the prayers start - that is, if you don't mind. Please tell me, why do you always leave before *Birchat Kohanim*?"

 The man obliges. He first rolls up his sleeve to reveal a tattooed number on his arm, and then proceeds to tell his story:

 The year was approximately 1942. The setting was in one of the barracks in Auschwitz.

 In the middle of the night, a group gathers together. An elderly Jew everyone referred to as ˜The Rabbi” beckons everyone closer.

 Everyone huddles around. He whispers, “Friends, we need to experience going our going out of Egypt this year, our very own Pesach Seder in Auschwitz!”

 Everyone was thinking the same thing, “Has the Rabbi finally snapped?”

 Look,” he continued, “we don't need '*marror*' (˜the bitter herbs),[[2]](https://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0001Dt00:001WdIpg00002hkL&count=1621451516&randid=1284734224&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=2&randid=1284734224" \l "_ftn2" \o ") this place is full of bitterness. But if we could at least get *matzah*. Yankel, do you think you can manage to get two kilos of flour?"

**The First Matzah Baked in Auschwitz**

 Yankel somehow gets the flour. “The Rabbi” meticulously watches over the first matzah ever made in Auschwitz. It's Erev Pesach afternoon, only a few hours till Seder night. Everyone is looking forward to being part of a unique Seder.

 When night falls, Chayim, who is keeping watch, makes sure nobody is around before he gives the all-clear.

 Jews from the surrounding barracks quickly scurry in to crowd around “The Rabbi,” who makes the blessings over the matzah. Everyone receives a small piece to nibble and quickly swallow. Then they take turns reciting the *Hagadah*, as much as they can recall by heart.

 Suddenly, there is a loud thud! Dogs start barking. A group of soldiers burst in through the door.

 Their officer-in-charge glares at each of the Jews sitting on the floor. He yells, "Who is responsible?" If you tell me now, the rest of you will live; but if you don't....”

**The Rabbi Confessed His Guilt**

 'The Rabbi' instantly raises his hand. "I am. I am the one responsible for all of this."

 The officer shouts, “Tomorrow I will shoot this man dead where all the Jews in Auschwitz can see him!”

 The next day, Nazi soldiers tie him up and throw his battered body to the ground in full view of all the Jews prisoners, who were forced to assemble for the occasion. Their eyes are frozen to the center of the muddy grounds where “The Rabbi” lies in pain. The officer reaches for his gun.

 “The Rabbi,” with all the courage and strength he can muster, cries out, 'Please grant me my last words!

 The soldiers, officers, and senior camp administrators laugh mockingly at him. The officer with the gun chuckles menacingly. “What do you want to say? What do you have? Nothing!”

 'The Rabbi' bravely struggles to stand. He exclaims, “That's where you are wrong. What I can do is bless my brothers!”

 Then, before he can be interrupted, he begins *Birchat Kohanim*:

 “May G-d bless you and guard you.

 “May G-d make His countenance shine upon and be gracious to you.

 “May G-d turn his countenance toward you and grant you peace.”

 The man paused his story for a few moments, then stated firmly that he had been present at these events, and that he was so shaken by them that he felt compelled to change. He made an oath to himself that if he survived, he would lead a more traditional Jewish life.

 Thankfully, he did survive.

**A Sudden Flashback**

 One time, a few years after he was redeemed from Auschwitz, he went into a non-kosher restaurant and ordered lunch. Suddenly, he had a flashback back to that Passover in Auschwitz. He clearly pictured ‘The Rabbi’ and his emotional priestly blessing before he was murdered. Quickly he left money on the table for his yet-to-be-served order and fled the restaurant.

 When his daughter asked for his consent for her to marry a non-Jew, the same flashback occurred. He couldn't run, but he did decide to further turn his life around.

 "So, you see, Rabbi," he concluded his explanation, ‘the memory of the priestly blessing that was given by that holy martyr in Auschwitz still is with me -- and to me, no other priestly blessing can ever be its equal!"

*Source*: Submitted by Baruch Gordon, who wrote it based on the rendition he heard from Chabad Shliach Rabbi Shabtai Slavaticki of Antwerp during an online *farbrengen* in April 2020.

*Connection* : The source of the ‘Blessing if the Kohanim’ text is in the Parshat Nasso reading (Num. 6:22-27).

[[1]](file:///C%3A%5C%5CUsers%5C%5CChaya%20Rachel%5C%5CDownloads%5C%5Cs1223BircatKohanim.docx%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1%22%20%5Co%20%22%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)Outside of Israel, the Kohens in the congregation recite the Priestly Blessing towards the end of the Cantor’s repetition of the Musaf prayer on the first two and last two days of Pesach and Sukkot, the two days of Shavuot, and on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. [In Israel it is recited much more often.]

[[2]](file:///C%3A%5C%5CUsers%5C%5CChaya%20Rachel%5C%5CDownloads%5C%5Cs1223BircatKohanim.docx%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2%22%20%5Co%20%22%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)Nearly always horseradish and/or Romaine lettuce.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Nasso 5781email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

**Michele Sankar’s Faith Journey to Judaism**



 I was always interested in my family history. My Irish grandparents had lovely stories of their ancestors. My Hungarian grandfather also talked about the difficult years growing up in southern Hungary. My Hungarian grandmother did not like to discuss the past at all, saying that the wars and Communism were painful to discuss.

 Fortunately, my father's sister had an excellent memory and was able to help me put together my family tree shortly after I got married. My grandmother's name was Eva, and her mother was Elly. Elly's father was a doctor. Really? A doctor? And what was his name? Simon. Simon? But no typical Hungarian man has the name Simon unless…. I decided to take a chance, and I wrote to the caretaker of the Jewish cemetery in the town where Simon once lived. Did they have a burial record for a Dr. Simon Winter, who died in 1943?

 Yes.

 Things unfolded, leading me to more documents and discoveries that are another story altogether. Suffice to say, I discovered that my paternal grandmother was a Jew, born to two fully Jewish parents in 1914. In 1923, things were not good for Jews in Hungary, so my great-grandfather had the family baptized to improve their political and social situation. They did not maintain connections to most other family members, and lived thereafter as Catholics.

**Grandmother was Devastated on**

**Having Her Secret Being Discovered**

 My grandmother was devastated when I discovered her "shameful" secret. But my grandmother was a Jew, which means that my father is a Jew. The two people who were the most distraught by my conversion were Jewish according to Torah law. My grandmother was devastated when I discovered her "shameful" secret and did not acknowledge or discuss it with me.

 I respected how painful it was for her, so I didn't probe – but my heart was aching. She passed away just before Passover three years ago. My research led me to discover that some of my Jewish ancestors and their families were killed during the Holocaust. Some tried to take refuge in the Portuguese safe-houses of Budapest, only to be forced out by the Hungarian Arrow Cross and murdered. Another survived and left the country, childless. My great-grandparents had to wear the yellow star, yet somehow survived in Budapest during the Holocaust. I do not know more because the one remaining relative from this time period refuses to discuss any of it with me. Even that person's own children do not know that their parent is Jewish.

**The Catholic Grandfather**

 My Catholic grandfather must have known about his wife's Jewishness, but if he did, he never mentioned it. My father and sisters were certainly surprised by the news. We learned, however, that during the war, my grandfather hid a Jewish colleague in their apartment. I also have old letters attesting that he looked after some belongings for Jewish neighbors when they were sent to the ghetto – and that he returned all of it.

 More than ever, I felt responsible for bringing back the Judaism that was lost to my family through murder and assimilation. My children and I are the only living Jewish descendants of my great-great-grandparents. Hashem had a reason for bringing me back to Him. I needed to be the voice – and the soul – for those who could no longer speak.

 So what was I going to do about it? It was a tremendous responsibility that Hashem entrusted to me. The truth is that during the first few years of married life, we had become somewhat lax in our observance. While I didn't write or go shopping or watch TV on Shabbat, we drove to synagogue, reheated food in the microwave, and flipped lights. I was blessed with three children. They all went to Jewish babysitters, and on to Jewish Day School.

 Kosher? We had a separate meat and dairy section in our kitchen, and only food products with a kosher symbol were allowed. Despite the stringency at home, however, we still ate out, ordering "vegetarian" or fish.

**Discovering about a Synagogue in Town**

 One day, my husband came home and said, "Did you know that there is a synagogue here in Richmond Hill?"

 "You're kidding!" I replied. "Where is it? What's it called?"

 "It's Chabad Lubavitch, and it's actually in the basement of the rabbi's house."

 I looked at him. "Lubavitch? Are you kidding me? That's really Orthodox. Aren't they all black hat and beards? No way!" I assumed they would know that I "didn't belong."

 The truth is, I was worried. Such a small group in a personal space… I wouldn't be able to slip in anonymously or check out the lay of the land. I assumed they would know that I "didn't belong," that I was "just" a convert. I thought that I would be judged by stern and solemn people. No, thank you. A few weeks later, David convinced me to give it a try.

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**Rabbi Mendel Bernstein**

 On one lovely Shabbat, we reached the home of Rabbi Mendel Bernstein and his family. In we went, and a nice young brunette named Toby sat near me and smiled. She was friendly, made nice small talk, and didn't ask any uncomfortable questions. After an hour, it occurred to me that she was the rebbetzin.

 We became regulars. My oldest son, about 8 years old, began bugging me about covering my hair. For the sake of peace, I started to put a kerchief over my head. Over the period of a couple of years, the kippahs and tzitzis stayed on my boys even when they were out of school. My pants remained unworn in my closet, and I began wearing more modest clothing. It was a new critical point in my life. Through increased learning, I knew that our growth had to continue.

**Discovering the Religious Observances are Gifts**

 I decided that instead of announcing what I was going to observe, I needed to ask myself when I was going to embrace other aspects of Jewish life. These observances weren't burdens; they were gifts – gifts that had been taken away from so many Jews in the past, and I was grateful for them.

 Just as the instruction manual for our new appliances is written to ensure the best results – even when it tells us what not to do – so too Hashem wants what's in our best interests, and gave us an eternal manual called the Torah. We quickly learned that when a person wants to increase in observance, obstacles soon disappear and life becomes easier and happier. Being Jewish according to Torah law is truly a joy for me, but there were difficult times too.

 Unlike my friends, I couldn't refer to my bubby's kreplach recipe, or my zaidy's traditions. Everything we did we had to borrow and personalize, secretly watching the rabbi, for example, to make sure we were doing a mitzvah right. And that scared me. I had a fresh Jewish soul and I didn't want to soil it. But I also know that, as humans, Hashem always gives us another chance.

**We Need to Live in the Present**

 Mistakes don't undo the good that has been done, and it doesn't tarnish the good we will do in the future. We need to live in the present, to make this moment count. I am a Jew. I never get tired of saying it, thinking it, believing it, loving it I used to feel sad that I had nothing Jewish to offer my children… no traditions, no stories, no heritage.

 Now I know that every woman, no matter what her history or status, influences the dynamics in her home. Like most Jewish mothers, I fret over my menus for the High Holy Days, I grumble about the cleaning we need to do for Passover, I go into panic mode in the half-hour before Shabbos starts. But deep down, I am intensely grateful.

 And that "stern Orthodox community" I was so worried about? How wrong I was! We quickly became a part of the Chabad family in Richmond Hill, sharing services, classes, celebrations, and friendship. This is a home where we have never been judged – only embraced. I am a Jew. I never get tired of saying it, thinking it, believing it, loving it.

 Every day, there is that a thrill in me that exclaims: "Yay! I'm a Jew!" Hashem made me work for my Jewishness, and because of that, I appreciate it every moment. I don't believe that any event in our lives is just coincidence. Every one of us has a wonderful ability to renew our commitment to Torah and good deeds, to learning, praying, and making a difference to others – every single day.

 My wish for you is that every day you get hit with that thrilling realization, "Yay! I'm a Jew!" and that you do something with it. When someone gives you a designer jacket or an expensive purse, you don't leave them in the closet. You take them out, use them, and enjoy them. It's the same for your Jewish life. Don't keep your Jewish flame hidden in the closet. Take it out, utilize it, and go gently if you must. Flames can be shared without the giver losing any light; the more we share, the brighter it becomes. I pray that each of us treat every day as our first day as a Jew.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5781 email of Good Shabbos Everyone*

