

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYAKHEL 5784

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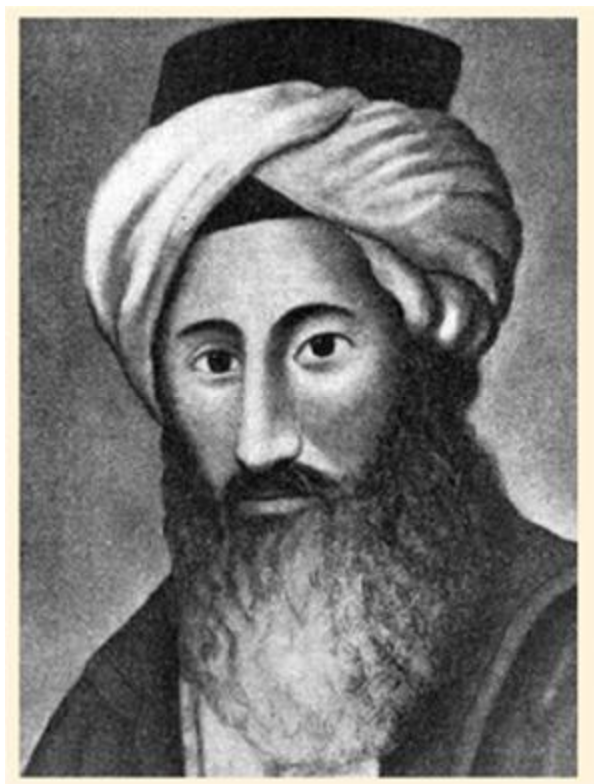
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*Past emails can be found on the website – [ShabbosStories.com](http://ShabbosStories.com)*

## The Rearranged Bones

By Dovid Hoffman



A *shadar* is a *sh'lucha d'rabbanan* – a rabbinic emissary, who is sent by the *rabbanim* of poor communities to raise much needed funds on their behalf. One of the most famous emissaries, as well as one of the greatest Sephardic sages of his time, was the holy Chida, Chacham Chaim Yosef David Azulai *zt"l*.

He was born and raised in Jerusalem, but spent more than 50 years of his life traveling abroad on various missions. In 1753 (5413), at the age of 29, he traveled to Europe as an emissary of the communities of Eretz Yisrael, and again in 1772 on

behalf of the city of Chevron. Each trip lasted in excess of five years. He completed his second trip in Livorno, Italy, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Despite the honor he was accorded abroad, he always yearned to return to the Holy Land. His reasons for remaining in Livorno until his death are unclear. It is believed that he was worried that the Jews in Eretz Yisrael wanted to appoint him to the position of Sephardic chief rabbi, which, in his humility, he did not want to accept.

### **Died at the Age of 83**

The Chida, who suffered from many ailments throughout his life, passed away on the 11 Adar 5466 (1806), at the age of 83. His death was mourned by Jews all over the world. In Livorno, *hespeidim* were delivered by the Italian *geonim*, Rav Yaakov d'Medina *zt"l* and Rav Chayim Shlomo Abulafia *zt"l*. Additional *hespeidim* were given by the greatest sages of the generation in Turkey, North Africa, Germany, Poland, Tunisia, France, Syria, and Eretz Yisrael.

More than a century and a half after the Chida was buried in Livorno, plans were made to exhume his remains and bring them to the Land of Israel, where he was to be reburied on Har HaMenuchos. In 1960, arrangements were made by the Sephardic Chief Rabbi Chacham Yitzchak Nissim *zt"l* to transfer the Chida's casket to Eretz Yisrael and re-inter his remains in a new plot in a different cemetery, because the local Italian authorities in Livorno planned to convert the cemetery in which he was buried into a public park, with a nearby highway passing directly through it.

### **It Was Not an Uneventful Flight**

With great care and as delicately as possible, members of the agency charged with exhuming the holy Chida's mortal remains had them brought from the cemetery and loaded onto a plane headed for Israel. It was not an uneventful flight, as turbulence caused the plane to shake violently, dipping and climbing steeply on a number of occasions. When the plane bearing the *aron* finally landed in Lod International Airport, the *rabbanim* who had come to escort it to Jerusalem learned that during the flight, the casket had fallen twice, and each time that it was picked up, it was turned upside down.

One of the rabbinic escorts meeting the plane was Chacham Mordechai Eliyahu *zt"l*, who later served as Israel's Sephardic chief rabbi. After the necessary arrangements for bringing the *aron* to Jerusalem were made, Rav Eliyahu told them to wait. "The bones must be in terrible disarray," he said. "We must open it up and properly arrange the Chida's remains."

The other *rabbanim* were unsure; however, Rav Mordechai insisted that it wasn't respectful to bury the Chida in such a state. Then, fearfully yet courageously,

he lifted the casket's lid slightly and said, "Rabbeinu HaChida, please forgive me if in any way I am not fulfilling this *mitzvah* properly." He reached inside and began to rearrange the contents.

After a few moments, though, he trembled and closed his eyes. Whispering in a broken voice that he did not possess the ability to complete the task, he asked pleadingly, "Rabbeinu, please do this task by yourselves, lest I err."

Immediately, a powerful, almost explosive sound was heard; the *aron* began to shake, and a terrifying rattling caused by the *tzadik's* bones striking the inner walls of the casket was heard. All the other rabbis fainted on the spot. Rav Eliyahu did not faint, explaining afterwards that his absorption in the *mitzvah* helped him remain conscious. It was beyond belief! The banging and shaking continued until, bone by bone, the entire skeleton rearranged itself perfectly.

From Lod, the *aron* was brought to Jerusalem. There it was met by tens of thousands of Jews, who escorted it to Har HaMenuchos, where *hespeidim* were conducted before the reburial. The Chida had finally come home.

*Reprinted from the January 27, 2021 edition of the Queens Jewish Link. Originally published in Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's popular Tavlin parsha sheet.*

## It's Never Too Late

By Adina Perez

There is always hope for a new start even at the age of 44, when the will is sincere and true.

My story goes back exactly a year ago when my husband mentioned on Shabbat that he does not know how he will pay for our son's *tefillin*.

This was very unusual for my husband to talk about money matters on Shabbat.

I was very alert by that and I understood that I had to undertake actions.

Once Shabbat was over I told my husband that I was very concerned of him talking on Shabbat about money. And I understand that our financial situation has to be improved and that I have a plan to help him.

The next morning, I set out to find a job selling in a store. This was from my point of view the fastest way to start an income.

As I arrived downtown and started to walk into stores I could not get over it to approach and ask if there was a need for a salesperson.

After going in and out of a few stores without having the courage to make the approach I gave up and started to head home.

On my way home I passed by the store of a cousin of mine, which I haven't seen since our last son's bar mitzvah.

And so, I decided to go inside and to have a small talk with her and to see how she was doing.

My cousin was thrilled to see me. She noticed right away that I was with a head covering and mention to me that she never saw me without a *sheitel*. Since we haven't seen each other for a long time she didn't know that I switched from a *sheitel* to a head cover.

And so, she said to me "That's such a wonderful thing, you for sure see so much blessings and prosperity since you have taken this on."

And then I told her the whole story about my husband being worried with our financial situation and that we have a bar mitzvah coming up and we need *tefillin* for our son.



She told me not to worry about it at all and that her father will be ready to pay for it right away, as he is very eager to help out with money for mitzvah matters.

I told her that I prefer to work and earn the money. To which she responded that they had a salesperson for 12 years that left them a month ago and they couldn't find a suitable replacement for her. And she would give me this job right away if

I'm interested. I told her that I had come down to look for a job and I was about to leave because I couldn't make the approach in any store to ask for a sales job.

She told me all the conditions which looked very appealing to me. At the end she mentioned to me one more thing, she would like me to be more presentable. Which means she would like me to be with a *sheitel* in the store rather than a head cover.

### **Having to Give Up My New Principle**

I was in despair. I couldn't believe it, here was the exact job that I was looking for being presented to me under the condition of giving up my new principle. Could I just for the sake of money give in to my highest decisions.

I told her that I have to speak this over with my husband and I would let her know.

I called up my husband and presented him with all that happened to me and my husband told me right away I should not give up on my most important values for money and that I will find even a better and more fulfilling job with a higher income.

And so, my husband suggested to me to call my boss that I worked for eight years ago and to see if he had a job for me.

### **My Husband's Suggestion Seemed Ridiculous**

To me this sounded so ridiculous. I left a project manager job eight years ago and had no training in it anymore. Why would he take me back?

But nonetheless I called him up and his response was amazing. He said he will look into it and I should call him back in a week.

When I called him back a week later he right away asked me if I can meet him as he has two options to offer me!

So, there I was a week later with almost double the pay and with an occupation to my liking.

Where there is a sincere will, the way will always open up.

We managed to pay for the *tefillin* and all other bar mitzvah needs!

Thank you Hashem for taking care of us!

*Reprinted from the February 4, 2024 website of The Jewish Press.*

# A Sense of Betrayal

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Yaakov and Moshe Ahron learned in yeshiva together. When they became older bachurim, still without a shidduch, they decided to study accounting, so they would have a parnassah when they eventually get married.

They finished the course and they both found their intended spouse, and married. Yaakov landed a job at a firm with three other bookkeepers, but Moshe Ahron, unfortunately, remained unemployed.

Yaakov had Moshe Ahron in mind, and always sought to help him find a job. When Yaakov heard that his boss was looking to hire another accountant, he eagerly recommended his friend, Moshe Ahron.

## **“I’ll Give Your Friend a Chance”**

The boss said, “I was really looking for someone with experience, but since he’s your friend, I’ll give him a chance.” After an interview, Moshe Ahron was hired.

Several years later, the manager told his employers, “I am moving out of state, but the firm will continue at this address. One of you will be appointed foreman so everything will run smoothly.”

Yaakov assumed he would get the position. He had seniority and was the boss’s righthand man. He was shocked when the boss gave the position to Moshe Ahron.

Yaakov thought “If it weren’t for me, Moshe Ahron wouldn’t have this job.” It didn’t seem fair. He did a chessed, and now it backfired on him. For ten years, Yaakov was jealous. He didn’t say anything. He kept his bitter feelings to himself, and kept up a friendship with Moshe Ahron. He worked on his emunah, to believe that everything is exactly as Hashem planned it, but it was a very hard test for him.

## **Their Children Reached the Age of Shidduchim**

Moshe Ahron’s and Yaakov’s children got older, and reached the age of shidduchim. A shadchan came over to Yaakov, “Your son is a talmid chacham and a baal middos and I know someone who wants him for his daughter. He is willing to buy a four-room apartment in Bnei Brak for the couple, That’s how much he desires him.” Yaakov was shocked. Who was willing to pay so much money for his son?

“It’s your manager, Moshe Ahron,” the shadchan said. The shidduch went through. Yaakov said, “For ten years I was jealous of Moshe Ahron, and all this time, he was working for me! My jealousy was all a mistake. He was working for my son’s sake.”

*Reprinted from the January 4, 2024 email of Torah Times. Copied with permission from Machon Be’er Emunah*

# A Shidduch Timebomb

By Baruch Lev

Elisha called his close friend, R' Refael Rosenthal, to ask about a proposed match for his son. The girl suggested was the daughter of Tanchum Lavan, a neighbor of R' Rephael, and also a regular attendee of R' Rephael's shiur. But when Elisha called about the Lavan girl, R' Rephael, for some reason, had a total temporary memory lapse.

## A Promise to Call His Friend Back

Elisha did not want to cause R' Rephael to feel more discomfort than he already felt, so he did not press the issue. R' Rephael promised to call Elisha as soon as he could recall his connection to the Lavans.

A few short moments later, R' Rephael remembered! How could he NOT recall the Lavans? Their building were not sound-proofed enough to muffle the shouting emanating from the Lavan apartment one flight down. Their doors were always being slammed. The Lavans were a dysfunctional family. R' Rephael was now in a difficult predicament. Elisha would surely check out the Lavans and surmise that R' Rephael had "blanked out" in order to hide their shame.

Yet R' Rephael felt it was his duty to prevent this shidduch from materializing at all costs. He did not think it would be a good match, as the families were not at all compatible. He tried reaching Elisha numerous times throughout the evening, yet the line was consistently busy. He resolved to call Elisha on the morrow. The next day, R' Rephael's schedule was exceedingly hectic and he forgot all about reaching Elisha.

## It Was Far Too Late to Call

He arrived home close to midnight, and though he then remembered Elisha, it was far too late to call. The next day, when he saw Tanchum Lavan at his shiur, he decided that come what may, he would phone Elisha the minute he arrived home. But as soon as he entered his home, he received a call from Elisha. The noise in the background sent chills up and down his spine.

"Mazel Tov!" Elisha shouted into the telephone. "R' Rephael, we've made a shidduch! We're in your building. Come down to the Lavan apartment and drink l'chaim with us!"

R' Rephael froze; he could not utter a sound. How could he have let this happen? Yet R' Rephael was not one to question Hashem's Will. He went down to

wish them mazel tov, heaping blessings on the new couple, which were more of a silent plea that indeed everything should go well for them.

A few months after the wedding, Elisha told R' Rephael, "Do you remember when I asked you about the shidduch with Tanchum Lavan's daughter?"

R' Rephael trembled; the moment he feared had arrived. Elisha continued, "We later found out that the Lavan family had some problems. But my daughter-in-law? She's a jewel! My son is so happy. They have a wonderful life together. After all, he doesn't live with his father-in-law, and in his own home, peace and contentment reign. I have often thought of what my son would have missed if I had heard about the Lavan family's problems and dropped the shidduch.

"You were so wise, R' Rephael! Thanks to your memory lapse, we were able to take our diamond and place her in the proper setting." (There Is No Such Thing As Coincidence) R' Rephael's memory lapse, his inability to reach Elisha by phone, his hectic schedule causing him to forget reaching Elisha the next day, were all part of Hashem's Master Plan to bring about a most unlikely, but destined, shidduch.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*

# **The Incredible Insurance for a Death Sentence**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

Rabbi Yitzchok Hisiger tells an amazing story that illuminates this misvah of honoring one's parents.

Rav Mordechai Moskowitz is a resident of Ashdod, in Israel, whose wife, Mrs. Penina Markowitz A"H, passed away several weeks ago. She passed away following an illness of about four years. During the shiva, Mrs. Moskowitz's doctor shared the following story with the family.

Four years ago, after Mrs. Moskowitz was feeling sick and underwent various tests, her doctor shared with her that she was severely ill and that she had approximately six weeks to live. Her illness was ravaging her body.

Strangely, upon hearing the devastating news, Mrs. Moskowitz was composed and calm. With aplomb, she told the doctor that she's not worried because, "I have insurance."

"Insurance?" asked the doctor, bewildered. "How is insurance going to help?"



Mrs. Moskowitz explained that her “insurance” wasn’t what the doctor was thinking.

“My ‘insurance’ is my mother,” said Mrs. Moskowitz. “My mother lives with us in our home, where we care for her.”

Despite the various difficulties involved in caring for her mother, Mrs. Rachel Halpern, Mrs. Moskowitz demonstrated superhuman strength and dedication, tending to her every need with remarkable devotion. Her mother was weak and elderly and no longer recognized her daughter or grandchildren, but she was treated with tremendous sensitivity and compassion. When the home health aide who spent the days with Mrs. Halpern went away overseas to India, Ms. Moskowitz assumed full care of her mother, despite her own weakened condition due to her own illness.

At the same time, Mrs. Moskowitz was taking a dosage of medication and miraculously, against all odds, defied the doctor’s predictions, living year after year while caring for her mother.

Two months ago, Mrs. Halpern passed away. Shortly after, Mrs. Moskowitz began deteriorating and her own condition worsened considerably. Six weeks after first experiencing a serious decline in health, Mrs. Moskowitz passed away.

“Medically,” the doctor told Rav Moskowitz, “It was impossible to explain how your wife stayed alive these four years. But as she said, she had ‘insurance.’ She had her mother who she cared for so devotedly.”

And indeed, as the doctor thought, Mrs. Moskowitz had just six weeks to live. But these weeks didn’t begin until after her mother passed away, once her “insurance” had expired.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Yitro 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# Drive Carefully

**By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn**

In May 1996 Rabbi Mordechai Neugroschel’s father-in-law became quite ill. He was taken to the Tel Hashomer hospital in Ramat Gan, where, despite the doctors’ efforts, his condition deteriorated. Family members never left his bedside. One night Rabbi Neugroschel stayed at his father-in-law’s bedside, prepared to assist and give comfort in any way he could.

After midnight, the nurses encouraged him to get some rest. Rabbi Neugroschel respectfully rejected the advice and remained at the bedside throughout

the night. He was tired, but he felt that a family member should be awake and available should any need arise.

### **While Driving He Felt His Eyelids Beginning to Droop**

At 7:00 in the morning, another family member relieved Rabbi Neugroschel. He collected his belongings, went to a local shul to pray shaharit, and then got in his family van to begin the hour-long ride home to Jerusalem. As he drove onto the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway he felt his eyelids beginning to droop. He listened to Torah tapes as he drove to keep him awake.

After forty minutes, however, even the taped lectures could not counteract his exhaustion. Traffic was heavy. The plodding row of buses, cabs and cars jammed tightly together made his head sag as his eyes closed for a moment. He snapped awake when he realized that his van was coasting close to the embankment on the shoulder of the road.

He was only ten minutes from home. Surely he could force himself to stay awake until then. But suddenly the van was rolling down the side of the hill, plunging into a valley, ripping a tree from its roots, rolling over again and again, until finally it landed on its side against a boulder. Rabbi Neugroschel was pinned against his seat.

### **Dozens of People Saw the Van Going Off the Road**

Dozens of people saw the van going off the road and made their way gingerly down the hill to help. Police and ambulances converged on the roadside.

Rabbi Neugroschel was helped out of the van. He was dazed and bleeding slightly, but once outside the van he was able to walk unassisted. One man took him aside and said, "The police will be here shortly. Whatever you do, don't tell them you fell asleep. Otherwise, they will suspend your license, give you a big fine and the insurance company won't pay your claim."

Within minutes a policeman was on the scene, and he asked Rabbi Neugroschel what had happened.

Rabbi Neugroschel said, "Officer, I have been driving for nineteen years. I never had an accident and never fell asleep at the wheel. However, I was up all last night at the hospital with my father-in-law, who is very sick. I guess I was just so exhausted that I must have fallen asleep at the wheel."

The officer looked at him, at the van and at the roadside above. "The misvah saved your life," he said. "I won't issue you a summons. Refuah shelemah to your father-in-law."

Rabbi Neugroschel thanked the officer, who went on to write his report.

*Reprinted from the ArtScroll book – "Echoes of the Maggid".*

## A Real “Levi!”



R' Avraham Goldstein, a well-known ger-tzedek living in Scranton, Pennsylvania, had a friend whose son started drifting from Yiddishkeit. The family reached out to R' Avraham to see if he could try to influence their son, Yaakov. R' Avraham sought after Yaakov, hoping to influence him for the good.

During their conversation, he thought of a great idea. Soon after, R' Avraham brought Yaakov to John's store, who greeted R' Avraham warmly and inquired as to who was R' Avraham's companion. R' Avraham introduced Mr. John to his young friend, Yaakov, and told him that Yaakov was a Levi, Levite.

### **“All Workers Should Come and Get a Blessing from an Authentic Levite**

Hearing this, John leaped from his seat and announced on the PA system that all workers should come and get a blessing from this authentic Levite. “We want all our people to be blessed by such a person.”

Within moments, all seventy employees of John's store gathered around R' Avraham and Yaakov, seeking his brachah. Everyone lined up, bent their heads, as they were instructed, and Yaakov bentched them all.

As Yaakov and R' Avraham returned to the car, Yaakov started crying uncontrollably.

“Why are you crying?” asked R' Avraham.

“All this time I never valued myself as a special Levi. This is the first time that the awareness is touching me!”

This episode stood for Yaakov as a life-changer, motivating him to redirect his life, to serve Hashem, to do His mitzvos, and to understand his intrinsic value.

Most of us are not Leviim, yet we have a lot to learn from this story. We are the one and only chosen nation, chosen by non-other than the Creator, Hashem. This recollection gives us nobility and dignity. This in itself stands for us to take great pride in and to conduct ourselves in an uplifting manner.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5784 email of The Zichru Toras Moshe.*

## Waiting for the Rav to Fast



**Rav Elya Lopian, zt'l**

Rabbi Uren Reich told a story about his grandmother, Mrs. Steinbuch, who lived in London during World War II, and who, like Moshe, strictly adhered to the guidance of her Rav before making life-altering decisions. Mrs. Steinbuch was a young widow in her thirties with nine children, when her husband, Rav Asher Steinbuch, passed away tragically. She brought her children up with tremendous determination that they should grow up to be b'nei Torah with yiraat Shamayim.

At one point, London was being bombed relentlessly by the Germans, and Sir Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of England, made a public announcement that there's going to be a boat going out to America, and they're hoping to take 2,000 English children. It made a lot of sense for her to send children to America. She had relatives there.

She said to the children, "I will not do it without asking a Talmid Chacham his daat and his haskamah. Since her father lived in Switzerland and it was hard to contact him during wartime, she asked Rav Elya Lopian, zt'l.

“Should I send my children to America?” she asked. And he said, “This is a question that needs a goral hagra (a ritual where a big tzaddik opens a chumash for Divine guidance), and I can’t do that unless I fast. I will fast on Thursday.”

She went to him on Friday morning, and he said he wasn't capable of fasting the day before. “It'll have to wait until Monday.” She was very taken aback. The boat was scheduled to leave on Tuesday. She went to him on Monday night, and he said, “Mrs. Steinbuch, I am so sorry. I felt very sick; I couldn't fast, and I cannot do a goral hagra without fasting.

### **There Was Much Disappointment in the House**

Because she was such a strong-minded person when it came to yiraat Shmayim, she told her children, “It’s out of the question for me to do a thing like this, without the haskamah of a Talmid Chacham, and therefore you're not going.” There was so much disappointment in the house, but the children trusted their mother’s bitachon in Hashem and her ability to adhere to her principles in waiting for her rabbi’s guidance.

A day later, Mr. Churchill made a special announcement on the radio. “I have sad news to share with the English people. The boat that took the children to America was torpedoed by a German submarine, and most of the children on the boat have tragically died.

Mrs. Steinbuch not only set a beautiful example for her children, but a wonderful legacy because they were saved. Moshe did not make any steps in Egypt without consulting the ultimate Rav for guidance, Hashem, and we all benefitted tremendously from his amazing example.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Bo 5784 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

## **The Ibn Ezra and the Rambam**

### **From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**Rabbi Avraham Ibn-Ezra**, the famous 12 century biblical commentator, led an extremely difficult life. In the introduction to his commentary on *Koheles*, he writes that he could not find success in any manner of making a living that he tried. His bad fortune was such, he wrote in one of his poems, “If he were to sell candles, the sun would never set; if he should deal in shrouds, no one would ever die.”

Still, despite his challenging experiences, the Ibn Ezra recognized that each difficulty was a blessing in disguise, a stepping stone on which to draw closer to The Creator and His infinite kindness.

The Ibn Ezra had vast knowledge in Torah, science, mathematics, philosophy, poetry and Hebrew grammar. He spent the latter third of his life traveling to different parts of the world to acquire knowledge from the experts in different fields. One of the great men whom the Ibn Ezra wanted to obtain knowledge from was **the Rambam, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon**. He traveled to Egypt to spend time in the company of the Rambam and gain from his wisdom.

### **Ordered to Peel Onions for the Next Three Days**

When he arrived, the Rambam ordered his servants to set up the Ibn Ezra in a room with a pile of onions. He was to peel onions for the next three days.

The Ibn Ezra was not very pleased with this arrangement. He had wanted to learn from the Rambam, and instead he was put to task peeling onions like a kitchen maid. However, since he was a guest in the Rambam's home and thus depended on his host for food, he had no choice but to obey.

He stood over a mountain of onions, peeling one after the other, the pungent scent causing his eyes to water terribly. Tears streamed down his cheek as he worked his way removing the brown skin on onion after onion.

Soon, servants arrived, and upon instruction from the Rambam, held buckets to his cheeks to collect his tears. For three torturous days, he sat with burning eyes and wet cheeks, peeling and chopping onions as his tears dripped into containers. He could not understand why he was subject to such cruelty.

### **Embraced Warmly on the Fourth Day**

On the fourth day, he was brought before the Rambam who embraced him warmly and greeted him with tremendous respect. "*Shalom Aleichem*, Rabbeinu Avraham ben Ezra!"

Confused, the Ibn Ezra responded, "I've heard so much about you, and I want to learn from your knowledge but why did you treat me so sadistically for three days?"

Instead of responding, the Rambam asked a servant to bring the bucket containing the Ibn Ezra's tears. "Look carefully into the container," he told his guest. The Ibn Ezra peered inside. Crawling, creeping, swimming inside the puddle of tears were tiny bugs.

"As soon as I saw you, I knew it was urgent for you to cry profusely for three days, to rid your eyes of these poisonous bugs," The Rambam said quietly.

The Ibn Ezra was astounded at the brilliance of the Rambam, of his incredible diagnostic skills and medical know-how.

The Rambam and the Ibn Ezra spent a lot of time together, sharing each other's wisdom. The days passed, and it was time for the Ibn Ezra to move. He left by ship to travel to another part of the world to acquire a different kind of knowledge.

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