

# SHABBOS STORIES

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# We Make Sure Nobody Dies Truly Alone

**“Sometimes it’s Just Me, the Workers and Our Volunteer Minyan”**



Rabbi Shmuel Plafker (courtesy of Staten Island Advance)

Rabbi Shmuel Plafker remembers the case of Ira Schildman, a mentally-, hearing- and speech-impaired man who died at a Far Rockaway rehab center. He was days away from having his unclaimed body harvested for its organs when HFBA intervened to give Mr. Schildman a traditional Jewish burial. Only the volunteer minyan showed up.

Every year HFBA buries scores of people like Ira Schildman who leave this world with no one to mark their passing. “If there’s no one to ask what this person did in their life, or what they enjoyed, there’s nothing I can say,” says HFBA chaplain Rabbi Plafker. “Sometimes we don’t know a person’s Hebrew name. When

someone dies alone, and we don't have a minyan to say kaddish, all I can do is say Kel Maleh Rachamim, the prayer for the soul of the departed and some psalms.”

The rabbi says that sometimes it's just him, the workers, and the deceased. “We try to find someone connected to the departed, perhaps a disabled relative or friend who can't come to the cemetery,” Rabbi Plafker says. “I'll get them on the phone and ask if they can say something about their loved one. I might even just hold up my phone so they can hear the ceremony. In the sad event that no one is present, we remain committed to doing the burial with the greatest respect.”

An experience Rabbi Plafker had in his early days as HFBA chaplain cemented his commitment to doing his best on behalf of each individual who “had a life.”

### **A Cold, Rainy November Day**

“It was a cold, rainy November day at Mount Richmond Cemetery,” he recalls. “We had four women to bury. None of them had any relatives. The mud kept sliding into the graves. When the last funeral ended, I went to the office and said, ‘That was terrible.’”

“I got the biggest lesson of my life from the funeral director, who was not Jewish.

‘Terrible?’ he echoed me. ‘Those four women might have been buried anywhere, including a potter's field.’”

“The funeral director brought home to me the real point of what we were doing. ‘You gave these women a proper Jewish burial,’ he said. I keep that in mind with each person entrusted to me.”

*Reprinted from the Fall 2023 edition of The Hebrew Free Burial Association magazine Chesed.*

# **An Eternal Message**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

Ever since he had been forcibly separated from his wife and children, upon his arrival at the dreaded death camp of Sobibor, Nachman Frietag felt as though his will to live had gone up in smoke together with his family. With no desire to live any longer, he was determined to put an end to his misery and take his own life.

After giving the matter a lot of thought, he decided that after work he would throw himself at the barbed-wire fence. The voltage running through the wires was powerful enough to electrocute him in a matter of seconds. It was the only sure way.

Nachman's daily routine consisted of heavy lifting, usually of logs or bricks. Now he stared at the mound of logs, the only thing separating him from death. He would finish moving them to the other end of the field and then he would die. It was as simple as that. Slowly the pile diminished and Nachman drew closer and closer to his end. Twenty logs remained. Ten...five...And then he came to the final one.

### **He No Longer Cared to Live**

He bent down, and although his back was sore and his fingers were bleeding, a bizarre tranquility permeated him. As he moved in slow motion, he pictured the faces of his Mendy and Yanky, his Rochele and Tzirel. "I'll be with you soon, children." Step by step. Closer. But he no longer cared. Because if no one else did, then why should he?

Finally, he bent down and placed the last log on the ground. But as he straightened up, he leaned forward to get a closer look at something he saw - something impossible. Although the glare of the setting sun made it difficult to see, he stared and leaned closer. There it was. An unmistakable message was carved into the wood of the log. Nachman squinted as he tried to make out the words. What he saw would save his life.

"Nesah Yisrael Lo Yeshaker - The Eternal One of Israel will not fail!"

A whirlwind of emotions erupted within Nachman's mind, heart and soul. Why would someone have carved this, if not with the hope that some lost soul would see it and gain encouragement? The thought struck Nachman, "Someone does care." He looked up and saw the German guard's face contorted into a sick, twisted grimace.

### **A New Determination to Live On**

"I can't let them win. I must fight on. My children will have to wait a little bit longer." Nachman glanced around. Another man had stumbled and needed help getting up. Nachman, now determined to live, stood up, walked over and helped his sick, weak friend. He did not know his name but that did not matter.

Nachman survived to tell this story and is now a very proud great-grandfather. He is alive, and has fathered generations of families, only because a man - a nameless man - cared enough to make a difference. (Touched by a Story 2)

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

# A Promise to Always Protect His Daughter



**A note in the Kosel Maaravi (the Western Wall)**

R' Shneur Guata told a story that he had read recently. There was a young man here in Israel who had a wife and daughter. The wife got cancer, and during the time when she went through treatments, this good man took care of his wife, worked extra jobs to pay for the treatments and at the same time, brought up the daughter. He survived the juggling, until things got really serious with his wife. Then, his wife begged him that if she dies, he will always protect their daughter, Shlomit. When she passed, this man became not only the father of this girl, he also became the mother.

Of course, a man can never replace a mother, and the time that Shlomit reached high school age, she suddenly was taken over by the teenage syndrome. Teenagers, from the age 15 till the age 25 can go through changes of growth in their prefrontal cortex, as the body and brain mature. This can cause teens to lack

competency in three main executive areas in the brain. Long Term Perspective, Justice, and Consequence.

Especially if there are reasons why the teen brain won't work effectively, like different causes of trauma. Trauma could come from early exposure to desires, a sibling that gets more attention, being screamed at or other abuse, ADD/ADHD, an identity crisis, and a long laundry-list of other things.

### **Giving Unconditional Love and Affection**

The only thing parents can do when their teens rebel is give unconditional love and affection, and pray their hearts out, when they say in the Amidah for the children to have a relationship with G-d, for generation after generation, we will thank You, and we will speak your praise!

Well, Shlomit who grew up without a mother, with only a father who tried his hardest, looked for other places of love and acceptance that she might have felt lacking. The father warned her to stay away from bad friends, from getting close to boys, from dressing in ways that can attract the wrong type of people and from coming back extremely late at nights.

But she told her father, "Dad. It's my life... They are just friends... It is just clothing..." "But Shlomit dear, I promised your Mom, before she died that I would protect you. I can't choose your friends for you, but please realize: the person you will be are the friends you have, and the clothing you wear."

Shlomit said, "Dad! You can't force your values on me. It is my life. Let me learn from my own mistakes."

### **Telling Her Father of Her Plan to Leave on a One-Way Ticket to India**

This went back and forth for a while. Until one day, Shlomit said to her father, that she is flying with her Israeli friends to India, with a one-way ticket, not sure when she is coming back. The father told her, "Shlomit, you are going to dangerous places. You are hurting your soul and your future. I never stopped you. But this is too far. Shlomit, you are not flying! It is out of the question!"

Well, with all the emotions involved, his only daughter and family member, and his promise to his wife, Shlomit's father forgot the first rule of power. Never try to overpower the one who has more power. This is what our Rabbis call, When you are with the fox in his fox hole, bow to him.

Our teens have the power of choice of their own lives, more power than we. Shlomit's father met her at the airport with her suitcases and friend-hippies. He watched in dismay as Shlomit was actually walking through security. This was for real. This was not a joke. With shock, and tears in his eyes, he called to Shlomit and

begged her to come over to him before she walked through security towards the gate, with her passport in hand.

My daughter! Why are you doing this to me? I am begging you! Shlomit, if you walk past that gate, if you board that plane, you are walking out on me. I am putting down my foot now, because I love you, and I gave a promise to your Mom that I will always protect you. If you go now, you are going against all of your father and mother's values. You may never come back, and I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU. If you walk on now, I am cutting off all connection with you.

### **“Don't Force Me to Live My Life Your Way”**

Shlomit turned around, and with tears in her eyes, said to her father what she was saying all along. “Dad, its hard on me, too. It's my life. I can choose my friends, how I want to dress and the values that I believe in. Your path - Mom's path - does not work for me. I am not holding by where you want me to hold. I don't want what you want. You have to accept me as I am, and this is who I am. Don't force me to live my life your way.”

With that, he said, “If so, I am breaking off all connection with you.” He turned around and walked away, in tears. Shlomit walked back to her friends and walked passed security.

She had a great time in India... for the first few days. Parties, sin, freedom, drugs, alcohol, music, discos, living like a gentile or, more precisely, like an animal... It was hard, though, to get out of the cycle of guilt and lack of happiness. But at least, she was free, and no one could stop her from trying to find the love and happiness she thought she had missed, because she grew up without a mother. But, of course, she never found that love and happiness that she was looking for. This is because when a person feels like they are not complete, when they feel a lack, they need to connect to G-d to fill that lack.

### **The Shocking News of Her Father's Death**

Three years later, a friend from Israel showed up in India and met Shlomit. She surprised Shlomit and gave her a hug, telling her she is so sorry about her father, and that she could not make it. “What?? Why are you sorry for him? What are you talking about?” The friend turned white. “Your father passed away a few months ago. You did not know?”

Shlomit went into shock. She told her friend, that she did not know, and how her father was so disappointed with her, he cut off all contact. She got on the next plane back from India to Israel and ran straight from the plane towards the cemetery, looking for her father's grave, near her mother's. She read the inscription of her father on his grave, and she fell on his grave, balling. She hit herself, looked up to the sky and said, “Dad, I am sorry!!” But the clear-blue sky was quiet, as if her

father's soul was repeating the last words he told her. SHLOMIT, I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU.

Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. That is all Shlomit could hear in her head. She turned to G-d and said, "G-d!!! I want to do Teshuva! I want to come back to You! I know that You always accept Teshuva, and that You always forgive, EVEN IF MY FATHER WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME! But this voice in my head is not letting me come back!!! Father in Heaven, HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS!!!" She called a cab, and she went straight to the Kotel, to pray her heart out.

### **Asking G-d for a Sign of Forgiveness**

She stood up front, crying, like a daughter who is leaning on her father; she leaned on the Wailing Wall, right near the Mehitza. As she cried her soul out, she looked up to the sky again, and saw the letters in the Wall. She decided to write a letter, and push it into the cracks between the stones in the Wall. She wrote, Father in Heaven, send me a sign of forgiveness. Send me a sign of acceptance. Send me a sign that what I have done to my father will not stop me from coming back!!! Send me a sign that my father forgives me!

She folded this letter and looked for a crevice to put her note in, but there was none. She tried to find a spot, but she could not find one. She felt that maybe G-d is was just telling her, Shlomit, I will never forgive you.

But Shlomit did not give up hope. Any woman who attended a Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel knows there is some sort of step, on the Mehitzah. She stood on the step and looked over the Mehitza for a spot on the Wall: maybe she could reach a spot in the men's section. The Kotel was empty, as it was midday, and she noticed that nobody was paying attention to her, when she leaned over the Methitza. So, she pushed in her note... and another note fell out, into her hand. She was about to put that other note back, but then she saw that written on that note, was the same name as hers. Shlomit.

### **A Shocking Revelation**

Out of curiosity, she opened it up to see what was written on it. She started to shake. "Master of the Universe! My daughter is in India. Please bring her back; make her repent! Her name is Shlomit bat Rivkah! If I could speak to her, I would tell her, I forgive you for everything, just go in the right path in life!!!"

She cries out thanks to G-d, and she repents completely. A father of flesh and blood can forgive his daughter, no matter what she has done. G-d, who can do the impossible, who is א-ל טוֹב וְסַלַח, the Almighty of Forgiveness, He for sure can forgive!

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

# Why Would You Want that Boy to Marry Your Daughter?

By Yair Weinstock

Yossi Milevsky\* was an average, wholesome 20-year-old. Not brilliant, not the “best learner” in his yeshivah, not dynamic. Yet he possessed a heart of gold, sterling middos, and would make a model husband one day. But in the world of shidduchim, in which only the “best” boys are recognized, Yossi was considered “inferior goods.”

Coming from a chassidishe family in Yerushalayim, with two sisters close in age right behind him, Yossi, and his parents, felt the despondency of not being offered even one remotely relevant suggestion. One day, a shadchan called. She suggested Ruti Nudel\*, the daughter of R’ Meir Nudel, an outstanding talmid chochom, who learned all week in a distant town, arriving home only for Shabbos.

## At the Very Last Minute!

R’ Meir agreed to allow Yossi to meet his daughter, based on the descriptions of his sterling character. Yossi and Ruti met, and the two mothers were ready to conclude the shidduch. Then at the very last minute, Mrs. Nudel’s sister-in-law, hearing about the prospective match, wasted no time in phoning Mrs. Nudel.

“What,” she demanded, “has your wonderful talented Ruti done to deserve a weak boy like Yossi Milevsky? Yossi learned together with my son in cheder for seven years, and he excelled in only one thing: a complete lack of excellence! Is Ruti, Heaven forbid, a cripple? Don’t you understand that this match is simply unsuitable? Ruti is a talented girl, outstanding in every area, while Yossi Milvesky is, to put it plainly, mediocre. What were you thinking?”

## A Destroyed Shidduch

Mrs. Nudel, shaken, asked what else her sister-in-law could tell her about Yossi. Straining every brain cell, the other woman came up with insignificant things when taken in context, but which in this case loomed large as mountains. Within minutes, the two women had finished off their conversation – and the shidduch.

That night, Yossi Milevsky stayed home. He and his family had been all dressed and ready to travel to the Nudel home for the l’chaim. Then, out of the blue came the phone call. “We want to think about it a little more,” Mrs. Nudel said. “Let’s not rush into anything.”

The simple words burst their bubble. There were no dramatic heart attacks or fainting spells. But anyone who has ever experienced a shidduch falling through at the last minute will never forget the pain, humiliation and bitterness. Aside from a few isolated individuals, no one knew about the proposed and rejected match. And Ruti? She did not suffer from this in the least. She continued to receive abundant marriage suggestions.

### **The Announcement of Ruti Nudel's Engagement**

A few weeks later, the Milevskys noticed an announcement in the newspaper. Ruti Nudel had become engaged to an outstanding bochur. About a half hour before the vort was to take place in the Nudel home, another shadchan, knowing nothing of the impending engagement, called the Nudel home to suggest a shidduch for Ruti – none other than Yossi Milevsky!

Ruti's younger sister answered the phone. She wrote down the information for her mother: "Yosef Milevsky, 21 years old, as full of good qualities as a pomegranate is with seeds, modest and refined, not brilliant but with a heart of gold. I think it's a match made in Heaven for Ruti." She gave paper to her mother, who was carrying fine glasses on a tray.

When she saw the note, her hands began to tremble; the tray crashed to the floor. She held an emergency private consultation with her husband, who ran to their Rebbe for guidance. But he did not ask with all the pertinent details. The Rebbe advised them to proceed with the current shidduch. Before the week of Sheva Brachos was over, Ruti ran home. Her husband had mistreated her. A year later she received her get. The Milevskys heard of the news, but they were not the sort to triumph in another's downfall.

### **A New Group Came to Bake Matzos**

Pesach was approaching, and Yossi, for years, had worked in the Matzah Bakery. That year, a new group came to bake matzos. They especially requested that Yossi work with their group, as he had a sterling reputation. The group's leader was R' Meir Nudel, who supervised every step in the process of baking. He was especially impressed with Yossi, who was quick and efficient, was careful with every halachah, and seemed to be a wholesome young man.

He was patient with the children's questions, and when Yossi was called away, R' Nudel looked into the mishnayos that Yossi learned during breaks and saw that he had undertaken to learn for childless people who had passed away. Curious as to his name, he found it written in the Mishnayos – "Yosef Milevsky."

It seemed familiar. Then it hit him, and R' Nudel nearly fainted away. He had been the boy they had rejected for Ruti, and who was suggested on the evening of the vort of the failed match! When R' Nudel asked the head baker for his opinion of

Yossi, he responded that if he had a daughter, he would grab him – such a heart of gold, such refinement, such gentleness!

Without knowing it, the baker served as Yossi's final shadchan. A short while later, the shidduch between Yossi and Ruti was successfully concluded. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - Holiday Tales for the Soul)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemini and Parshas Tazria 5784 emails of The Weekly Vort.*

# Lashon Hara in the Age of Smartphones

The Chofetz Chaim Foundation published a true story about how quickly lashon hara can impact a person's life, especially in the age of smartphones. One hectic Friday in Brooklyn, community men and women were doing their usual last-minute pre-Shabbat preparations by scurrying like frantic mice from one store to another.

## **Paying \$132 for a Gorgeous Rack of Lamb**

Rabbi R. was at the local butcher, picking up a gorgeous rack of lamb for Shabbat. "That'll be \$132 please," the butcher said. Unfortunately for Rabbi R., there was a nosy woman behind him, and her ears perked up at the unusually large sum for an unusually fancy piece of meat that the rabbi paid for. She whipped out her iPhone, snapped a picture, and started frantically texting her friend.

"OMG! I just saw Rabbi R. pay \$132 for a rack of lamb for Shabbat!" she texted her friend Chana, who quickly posted the "breaking news" on Instagram. 686 followers instantly saw the post and started commenting. Rabbi R. was a modest rabbi at the local yeshivah, and speculation was rapidly getting out of hand.

"We can barely afford chicken for Shabbat, and this guy's buying a rack of lamb? Something's not right here!" Sarah soon tweeted. "Should we speak with the school principal about this?" Michael replied.

## **The Questionable Purchase Turns into an Attack on Rabbi R**

"I went to school with Rabbi R., and I always felt there was something weird about him," Moshe texted. In an instant, the attack on Rabbi R.'s questionable purchase transformed into an attack on Rabbi R. himself. "I was set up with his son for a shidduch, and Baruch Hashem, it didn't work out," Rina replied.

Like wildfire, the scandal was spreading fast. Phone calls were being made from New York to Los Angeles and Miami. “On Monday morning, we need to meet and get rid of this guy. He’s obviously doing something fishy to have so much money,” Jimmy posted. “My sister's brother-in-law's next-door neighbor's mother lives two houses down from him, and she says that family lovessss food! A little too much if you ask me!!” Jaclyn texted.

### **The Rabbi’s Wife Starts Getting Complaints**

In 20 minutes, the lashon hara reached massive proportions. It got so out of control that a woman from Los Angeles actually called Rabbi R.'s wife and complained to her, demanding to know why they were eating racks of lamb on Shabbat. The rabbi’s wife was really upset when her husband finally returned home 10 minutes later.

On the way home, however, Rabbi R. made a stop at a friend's house and dropped off the meat that he asked him to pick up for their daughter’s sheva berachot the following night. He thanked him gratefully for saving him so much time, and paid Rabbi R. for his order. “Of course! I’m always happy to do a favor for friends,” Rabbi R. happily responded, as he headed home empty-handed.

By the time he got home, his wife was flustered and upset by all the phone calls and accusatory texts she had to deal with. Rabbi R. was only out of the house for 30 minutes. In that time, his reputation had been completely ruined. In only 30 minutes, hundreds of people found out that he picked up a rack of lamb at the butcher. In only 30 minutes, his career had been destroyed potentially beyond repair. In only 30 minutes, he no longer had any friends. The worst part was that it was a complete misunderstanding when he was, in fact, doing a chessed.

### **As Deadly as a Gun**

Lashon hara is bad enough when it’s done from person to person. It is as deadly as a gun. But lashon hara through social media and texting is like an atom bomb. The damage is irreparable. There are two lessons we learn from this. First, always think twice before judging a situation. We never know all the factors involved, even if we personally witness it happening. Second, never share questionable information about anyone, not over the phone, and certainly not online. It could literally be destroying someone's life.

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

# My Walking Partner

By Rabbi Sheldon Rudoff



**Rabbi Sheldon Rudoff**



**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

The story I am about to tell happened in the early 1950s, not long after the Rebbe [Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l] took over the leadership of Chabad Lubavitch. At the time, I was in high school and living in Crown Heights on Carroll Street, which is around the corner from President Street where the Rebbe lived.

I used to see him on Shabbat mornings, walking from his home to Chabad Headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. He was not yet as well known then, and he was very approachable, as he walked alone without an entourage.

## **“We Would Part Ways When We Reached Eastern Parkway”**

He’d greet me with “Gut Shabbos,” and we’d walk together, while he inquired about my Torah learning and about my teachers. We would part ways when we reached Eastern Parkway – he’d go right to Chabad, and I’d go left to Young Israel, where I served as a youth group leader.

We were just two people walking to their synagogues — a teenager and the Rebbe. Being so young, I did not realize the import of these encounters. I only learned to appreciate them later. Then there came a time when my Young Israel youth group was invited for a private audience with the Rebbe. We were all Torah observant boys, studying at such storied Orthodox institutions as the Brooklyn Talmudical Academy, Yeshiva Chaim Berlin, and the Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva, which had a branch in Brooklyn back then.

From our Modern Orthodox perspective, Chabad was an anomaly, because the other chasidic sects that we were familiar with were very insular, but Chabad was open and doing a great deal of Jewish outreach. For instance, on Sukkot, Chabad chasidim would stand outside the subway stations offering the lulav to Jews, so they could fulfill that commandment. This was strange to us, and yet it also made an impact on us. And I do recall that some of the kids became enraptured by Chabad as a result.

### **The Rebbe Greeted Us Warmly**

So, knowing all that, we were excited to have a chance to talk with the Rebbe, and about a dozen of us went to the meeting, which took place at 770, and lasted for at least a half hour. We were invited to sit at a table, and the Rebbe greeted us warmly. He asked us — one by one — to tell him about ourselves, and then he encouraged us to pose questions.

As I recall, we got into a discussion about the State of Israel, which was still in its infancy, having been founded in 1948. Because it was a secular state, the opinion within the Orthodox community was very divided — people were either for it, against it, or neutral. Many chasidic Rebbes refused to recognize it, so my group wanted to know where the Lubavitcher Rebbe stood. And somebody had the courage to ask him outright.

In response, the Rebbe said that his view of the State of Israel was similar to his view regarding any Jewish enterprise. For example, if Jewish people were to form an insurance company, he would want that company to function legally and ethically, and in accordance with the precepts of the Torah.

### **He Did Not Take a Political Position**

As for the State of Israel, he had similar view — that it should be a place where Torah would flourish and Jewish law was respected. He did not specify if he recognized “the State.” Neither did he say that he didn’t. He did not take a political position. And I thought that his was a fine answer. That was how he explained his position early on, and as the years went on, he promoted this view more intensely.

The other vivid recollection that I have of the Rebbe took place one Rosh Hashanah. As is customary, Jews walk on that day to a body of water to symbolically cast off their sins, while reciting the Tashlich prayer. In the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, there is a lovely pond which is a perfect place for Tashlich.

I remember seeing the Rebbe walking down toward the Botanic Garden. He was walking alone, but about a quarter of a block behind him a huge phalanx of chasidim followed. Everyone marched together, accompanied by two policemen on horseback who were escorting the Rebbe and this Tashlich procession.

It was another Chabad anomaly — another very public mitzvah. And that was typical of the Rebbe.

He came to America in 1941 with a college degree, and for a while he worked as an engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. One could not have predicted then what course his life would take. But when he became the Rebbe, he showed himself to be a great spiritual leader, and he put Chabad on the map — literally. Today, wherever you go there is a Chabad House, which is a haven for Jewish travelers. What the Rebbe did to inspire this flowering of the Chabad Movement is nothing short of historic, and I only hope it is appreciated by the Jewish public as it should be.

Rabbi Sheldon Rudoff (1933-2011) was an attorney who held leadership positions in a number of Jewish organizations including the OU, UJA-Federation, Yeshiva University and others. He was in January 2010.

*Reprinted from the Tazria 2024 edition of Here's My Story, a project of the JEM Foundation.*

# Finding the Good in Others

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



One year, on Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT”L, was taken with a wheelchair into an elevator. The man standing next to him, who was not wearing a kippah, wished the Rav a happy new year. The rave warmly returned the wish when the man leaned over and added, “And a healthy one.”

With the biggest smile and enthusiasm, Rav Feinstein wished him in return, “May you, too, have a healthy year. May you enjoy great success and have much nachas from your children.” Later, the man said, “The Rabbi could see that I am not an observant Jew. But it was clear to him that I was somebody.”

Rav Elya Svei, ZT”L, was once being driven back to his house in Philadelphia. As the car pulled up, he saw one of his non-Jewish neighbors playing basketball in the street, dressed quite minimally. At a sight that may have taken many religious Jews aback, the Rav remarked, “b’etzem (in essence) we need to see the tzelem Elokim (the G-dly image within each person).”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tazria 5784 email of R ’Mendel Berlin’s Torah Sweets.*