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You Made It!

By Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky



The Klausenberger Rebbe

My good friend, Rabbi Mordechai Krasny, once told me that his father, R' Shmuel, was very close to the Klausenberger Rebbe *zt"l*. Once, the Klausenberger Rebbe was making a wedding for one of his children in New York, yet R' Shmuel was scheduled to be out of town. Notwithstanding, R' Shmuel was set on not missing the wedding, come what may. As such, he made certain to book a flight, along with its connecting flight, to return on time for the wedding.

As so happened, there were delays on both flights, and time began slipping by ever so certainly. Despite feeling terrible, he did everything he could to make it to the wedding hall as soon as possible. After deplaning, he caught a taxi and rushed over. As soon as he arrived, though, he realized he was late. Very late. They were reciting Shir Hamaalos before bentching. The chuppa, the dancing, the meal... everything had been completed. Feeling broken, especially after considering all the hard work and planning that went into coordinating his trip, R' Shmuel humbly took a seat.

But having arrived, he figured that he'd at least approach the Klausenberger Rebbe and wish him a mazel tov. Making his way to the head table, he exchanged looks with the Rebbe. And then the Rebbe, in a warm, echoing voice said, "R' Shmuel! I knew you would make it!"

R' Shmuel, later reflecting on this moment, remarked, "In one second, I went from feeling like two cents to a million dollars!"

From the Corner of Your Eye

Now, for a moment, put yourself in the Klausenberger Rebbe's shoes. You might have found yourself in a similar predicament at a family simcha of your own. You've gone through hours upon hours of the chuppa, the dancing, the meal, and more dancing. And then, after all is done, and most people have left, there remains a select number of close family and friends. You sit down, about to begin bentching, and from the corner of your eye, you notice someone walking through the door.

They don't look familiar. In the past several hours, you can't remember someone looking quite like that. Until he steps closer and closer, and his face comes into focus.

It's a good friend of yours. Someone near and dear to you. Except there's one problem: everything is done. He missed it all. The chuppa that proceeded so wonderfully, along with the dancing that was so lively, and the meal that was well-received by all. All of it is in the past, and your friend didn't show up for any of it. What should you say?

A Lesson from the Klausenberger Rebbe

The Klausenberger Rebbe taught us. "I knew you would make it!" Just how well do we know exactly how much effort our friend put in to making it to the wedding. In this case, R' Shmuel spent hours rearranging his schedule and thinking and implementing ways to make it on time. But, for reasons beyond him, he didn't.

Our response? With middos. Take all the thoughts and considerations you might have of him not caring or being preoccupied with his own life and turn it all around. And then let him know that you had no doubt that he'd make it. You will see how such a warm, embracing and welcoming comment will make his face light up. A lesson to take home, and a lesson to take outside.

Reprinted from the Parshat Chaya Sarah 5784 edition of the Torahanytimes.com Newsletter.

Security Blanket

By Naama Klein



Baruch Hashem, my husband and I are getting up in years, and although I can't say that I relish the worry lines and extra poundage I've accrued, overall, I'd say that it is definitely a cause for celebration and thanksgiving.

Seven of our ten children, *baruch Hashem*, live nearby in the Holyland, and arguably that *bracha* deserves a robust rendition of *Hallel* in and of itself. Add to that our kids' growing families, *ka'h*, and I truly feel beyond blessed in virtually every way possible.

In fact, the only less-than-perfect aspects of our life these days is that, on the flip side, three of our daughters and their beautiful families live thousands of miles away... and to a lesser degree, our financial security is a concern as retirement age looms.

We do our best to *daven*, cajole, beg, (whatever it takes!) our U.S. kids to make *aliyah* and join us in the holiest place on Earth, and in the meantime we suffice

with visits to and from both sides of the ocean. Technological advances such as WhatsApp and Skype make the separation infinitely easier in the interim.

Also Entitled to Collect Social Security

As far as an alternate source of income for our old age, *b'ezrat Hashem*, we are fortunate that Bituach Leumi provides financial and other assistance to Israel's aged population. And as citizens of the United States who spent many years gainfully employed in the *alter heim*, paid annual taxes to the IRS, and contributed to Social Security throughout that time, we are likewise entitled to collect Social Security benefits when the time comes.

However, as many a U.S. citizen residing abroad can attest, claiming said benefits may involve a fair amount of jumping through hoops! Proof positive that "There's no such thing as a free lunch!"

After studying the pros and cons of applying for Social Security benefits at the various approved ages, my husband decided which age made the most sense for himself personally, and then initiated contact with the agency and formally filed a request. He was told that his request had been registered, but that it would most likely take several months until he would receive a return call, and that he should feel free to follow-up periodically.

The Day for the Appointed Phone Conversation

Sure enough, that information was reiterated a number of times over the next few months, until one fine day when the Social Security agent set up an appointment with him for a phone conversation to iron out the details and set his request in motion. He was instructed to have all his paperwork and documentation available and to keep the long-awaited date and time clear for the scheduled phone meeting.

The big day finally arrived, and my husband set off to work, but made sure to be prepared and available at the prescribed hour. I, too, kept my eye on the clock in anticipation. Suddenly, I received a harried message from my better half: When is our date of marriage???

For all of you readers who think that my husband committed the ultimate offense and forgot the date of our wedding anniversary AND that his issues with Social Security would therefore pale in comparison to his issues with me, allow me to clarify. He actually *did* remember both the Hebrew and secular date of our *chuppah*; however, the secular date when we officially registered our marriage with the state of New York only took place a few months later. And neither of us could recall that (to us) inconsequential date!

I dropped everything I was doing and scrambled to find our official Certificate of Marriage. But, try as I might, rifling through our most important documents again and again, it was nowhere to be found.

The Murphy's Law Scenario

Finally, in desperation, I recalled a certain eerily-similar Murphy's Law scenario in which the elusive document was instead my fourth son's inoculation record. I had easily found the records of the nine children who did *not* need them, but that crucial record had seemingly vanished into thin air. As a last resort, I physically removed the heavy drawer of the filing cabinet holding our documents. Sure enough, the missing vaccine record had slipped behind the drawer!

With nothing to lose except a few minutes of heavy lifting, I tried pulling the drawer out as far as I could to peek behind it. Ouch! I may have pulled it out a tad too far; the heavy drawer landed squarely on my foot!

The good news, however, was that once again the elusive document had fallen out of its secure spot in the filing cabinet, and was now easy to retrieve. The bad news, other than my aching foot, was that by the time I found it and contacted my husband, his scheduled conversation with the Social Security Administration representative was already over.

Everything Works Out in the End

No worries! *Baruch Hashem*, the agent had been pleasant and accommodating, and had instructed my husband to message him directly with our wedding date and one other piece of missing information. *Baruch Hashem*, he was true to his word, and about a month later, the first direct deposit from the Social Security Administration was made to our bank account in the U.S. And, as promised, the amount transferred was retroactive to the date that my husband officially qualified for benefits!

In the ensuing months a much-appreciated gift from Uncle Sam has likewise been deposited into our account on the fifteenth of every month. So, *baruch Hashem*, "All's well that ends well" yet again. My bruised foot is thankfully good as new, and our once sorely-depleted bank account is, *baruch Hashem*, recovering nicely as well, to provide a much-appreciated security blanket for our golden years. Now if only we can convince our three final hold-outs to make *aliyah*!

Reprinted from the November 17, 2023 website of The Jewish Press.

The Longtime Steward of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's Household

By Eli Rubin

Behind the scenes, his resourcefulness and discretion proved indispensable



Rabbi Shalom Ber Gansburg, right, with Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi

Throughout the decades of his leadership, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—was supported by a core team of close aides who worked in a variety of different roles. There was secretarial work to be done, scholarly work, logistical work, educational work and household work. All of these elements were crucial, and together they enabled the Rebbe to inspire a global Jewish renaissance in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Shalom Ber Gansburg, who passed away on Nov. 1 (17 Cheshvan) at the age of 86, was one of the less visible members of this cadre.

His was not a life lived in the limelight. Behind the scenes, however, Gansburg was the diligent, resourceful and discrete steward to the Rebbe and his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Those who knew him testify that he was an unwitting model of humility and awe: Every fiber of his being communicated the recognition that he lived in intimate proximity to immense holiness.

Shalom Ber Gansburg was born in Moscow on June 20, 1937 (11 Tammuz, 5697), during a time when Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim suffered intense persecution at the hands of the Soviet authorities. His father, Shneur Zalman (1901-1991), had studied at the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah in the village of Lubavitch prior to World War I. His mother, Batsheva, was the daughter of Rabbi Yaakov Baruch Karasik (1884-1921), a member of the yeshivah faculty.

Joined the Great Escape of 1946

The family fled to the Central Asian city of Samarkand, in Soviet Uzbekistan, during World War II, and in 1946 joined “the Great Escape” of Lubavitchers fleeing the Soviet Union via Lvov (today Lviv, Ukraine) using false Polish papers. They spent time as refugees in France before traveling on to Montreal. By this point, Shalom Ber was a teenager, and he enrolled in the Chabad yeshivah there, where he formed a close relationship with the dean, Rabbi Isaac Schwei (1932-1988).

In 1953, the family moved again. This time, they settled permanently in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., where the Chabad court had been re-established in 1940 by the Sixth Rebbe—Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory (1880-1950). By the time the Gansburgs arrived, the Sixth Rebbe had passed away, and his place had been filled by his son-in-law—the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

Within a short time, the young Gansburg’s handiness became known to the Rebbe’s mother-in-law, Rebbetzin Nechamah Dinah (1881-1971). His first job for her was mending a broken window shade. He had a knack for fixing things and a discerning eye. Soon enough, he was helping set up and serve at mealtimes, becoming a trusted pair of hands whenever assistance was needed.

A Helping Hand

On festivals, the Rebbe would dine and conduct the Passover Seder in the Sixth Rebbe’s apartment, which occupied the second floor above the central Chabad synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway. On these occasions, Gansburg would escort the Rebbe’s mother from her apartment, a few blocks away, to the Seder. Then he would descend to the Rebbe’s office, on the first floor of the building, to let him know that everything was ready for his arrival upstairs. Following the Seder, Gansburg would carry the Rebbe’s silver matzah tray back downstairs. “The Rebbe instructed me to

walk in front of him,” he later explained, “so that I wouldn’t be pushed by the crowds.”

Then there was the holiday of Sukkot. Concerned that the Rebbe had to go out of his sukkah at 770 in order to ritually wash his hands, Gansburg built a cubicle in one of its corners with a sink and running water. Though the Rebbe’s mother lit the festival candles in the sukkah, she initially didn’t notice the new additions. But the following evening, as Gansburg accompanied her to 770, she said to him: “My son asked if I saw the new additions to the sukkah ... he said it’s worth going into the sukkah just to take a look at them!”

After Gansburg’s marriage to Shulamis Hochman in 1969, he started a plumbing business. During the next decade or so, he frequently visited the home of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, who came to rely on him for anything she needed help with.

During this period, Gansburg experienced difficulties in his personal life. In the years to come, the help he was able to extend to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin shored him up amid these travails, providing him with a strong sense of purpose and even a semblance of home.



**The Rebbe and Rebbetzin's home on
President Street in Brooklyn, N.Y.**

Devoted and Discreet

By the early 1980s, the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin were entering the ninth decade of their lives, and Gansburg’s assistance became increasingly indispensable. He was not only handy, but also resourceful, dependable and discrete. After the Rebbetzin hurt her leg and was briefly hospitalized, Gansburg moved into the Rebbe’s home and dedicated himself entirely to his role as steward of the household.

On a daily basis, he would help prepare and serve meals, and ensure that everything in the house was properly maintained. He built the sukkah each year and assisted the Rebbe as he searched the house for *chametz* on the night before Passover. To help with the Rebbetzin's mobility, he designed a bespoke elevator and installed it in a space that originally held a dumbwaiter.

The Rebbe and Rebbetin Hadn't Begun the Seder

From 1971 until this point, the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin had eaten their Shabbat and festive meals, including the Passover Seder, alone. Gansburg expected that this would continue even after he had moved into their home. On the first night of Passover, he prepared everything they would need and went to participate in the Seder in his parents' home. Then he hurried back to the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin's home to serve the festive meal, which takes place towards the conclusion of the Seder. "But when I arrived, I was surprised: The Rebbe and the Rebbetzin were waiting for me, and hadn't begun the Seder yet!" Gansburg later recalled. The Rebbe instructed him to take matzahs and join them at the table. "I was more astonished than I ever had been in my life!"

Something similar occurred the following Sukkot. During the festival, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were staying in an apartment in the building housing the Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, adjacent to 770, so that the Rebbe would not have to walk back and forth to their home. Gansburg had built a very small sukkah for them to eat in. Under such circumstances, he felt it would be inappropriate to impose his presence on them. But again, the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin both insisted that he sit at the tiny table and dine together with them.

Easing the Burden

One evening, in the winter of 1988, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka felt unwell. A doctor examined her and, upon consultation, advised that she be hospitalized. The Rebbe asked Gansburg to accompany her and to call him every 15 minutes with an update. That night, the Rebbetzin turned to Gansburg saying, "Shalom! I'm very thirsty. I would very much like to have a bit of water." After he brought her a glass of water, she recited the blessing affirming G-d as the one "by whose word all comes to be" and drank the water. She took a deep breath and said, "Oh Shalom! May G-d give you life, as you have given me life!" Shortly thereafter, the Rebbetzin's life ascended on high.

At the Rebbe's request, Gansburg stayed on as his personal steward, and all household concerns were placed in his hands. During the next few years, Gansburg lovingly dedicated himself to every aspect of the Rebbe's personal needs. At the conclusion of each Shabbat, the Rebbe would perform the Havdalah service in his

presence, and together they would read the “*vayiten lecha*” liturgy, which invokes blessing for the week ahead.

This was a time when hundreds of thousands of people looked to the Rebbe for blessing, advice and leadership. Many were preoccupied with lofty spiritual ideals, and with intense anticipation of the entire world’s final redemption. But Gansburg never lost sight of the Rebbe’s day-to-day needs. As the Rebbe grew older—and with the Rebbetzin no longer there—Gansburg found innumerable ways to discreetly ease the Rebbe’s burden and increase his comfort.



Lessons for All

At one point during this period, Gansburg asked the Rebbe’s guidance about a personal issue. When the Rebbe counseled him to take a particular practical step, Gansburg expressed surprise. “This was when the Rebbe was constantly speaking of the imminent arrival of Moshiach, so I said, ‘Moshiach’s already about to arrive, to what end should I burden myself with this?’ ”

The Rebbe responded by referring to the example of his predecessor: “On the one hand, he insisted that ‘immediate *teshuvah* [repentance]’ would bring about ‘immediate redemption.’ On the other hand, he instructed that we build more institutions and more institutions.” Complete faith in the messianic redemption, in other words, does not absolve us of our obligation to take practical steps to alleviate the darkness of the current exile.

For many years, Gansburg’s customary discretion prevented him from revealing anything about what he saw and heard in the Rebbe’s house. Many of the anecdotes related above only came to light due to the efforts of Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi (1943-2015), the longtime rabbi of Kfar Chabad, Israel. Rabbi Ashkenazi would often spend time with Gansburg when he visited New York, and persuaded his friend to share his memories and edit them for

publication. The personal experiences and stories of Shalom Ber Gansburg, he emphasized, hold important lessons for everyone.

Shalom Ber Gansburg is survived by his wife, Shulamis Gansburg, and their children, Chanie Wiesel and Levi Yitzchok Gansburg. He is also survived by siblings Yitzchok Gansburg, Mendel Gansburg, Chaya Sara Zarchi and Rivkah Majeski.

Reprinted from the November 20, 2023 website of Chabad.Org

A Kvittel for the Waitress

By Yisroel Besser



Mr. and Mrs. Benny Fishoff were once sitting in a Miami restaurant with their dear friends, Reb Eliyahu and Miri Abramczyk. Reb Eliyahu noticed Mr. Fishoff chatting quietly with the waitress, then handing her a slip of paper.

“Did you give her a kvittel?” Reb Eliyahu joked.

Mr. Fishoff smiled, but his expression was serious. He explained that he had greeted the woman and, after asking where she was from, he learned that she was a baalas teshuvah who did not have a husband, raising her daughter on her own.

“Then I asked how the daughter was managing and she looked concerned and told me that the girl is becoming bas mitzvah. I thought that maybe she has to celebrate, to make some sort of party, so I gave her a check just to help a little.”

“How much was the check?” asked Reb Eliyahu.

“Two thousand dollars,” Mr. Fishoff replied.

“Benny, do you know her from before?” asked Reb Eliyahu in surprise.

“I don’t,” Mr. Fishoff conceded, “but this I do know. She needs help and I am able to help.”

The waitress eventually moved up in the ranks and became a manager at a more prominent Miami restaurant. Until the end of Mr. Fishoff’s life, whenever this woman saw Reb Eliyahu or his wife, she would approach and ask how Mr. Fishoff was doing. “I say Tehillim for that man every day,” she would say.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “B’ahavah, Benny – Reb Yechiel Benzion Fishoff” by Yisroel Besser.

Energy and Laziness

By Aharon Spetner

“Kinderlach,” Totty said, walking into the house. “We have an urgent mitzvah and I need your help!”

The Greenbaum children looked up in surprise. “Is everything okay?” Basya asked.

“Everything is wonderful!” Totty said. “I just met a poor couple who got married this week. They are baalei teshuvah who are new to the neighborhood and they don’t know anyone. So we are going to make them sheva brachos tonight. It’s a huge mitzvah and opportunity for us!”

The children looked at Totty without much enthusiasm.

Hours of Boring Speeches

“Sheva brachos?” Shimmy said. “Does that mean hours of boring speeches? Couldn’t we take the new couple go-karting instead?”

“Or we could take them on a trip to the air and space museum and show them all of the niflaos haborei in the science behind how planes and rockets work,” suggested Yitzy.

“I’d love to help,” Basya said. “But Malky invited me to come over and brainstorm for her new zerizus project. Maybe another time.”

“Wait, wait, hold on,” Totty said. “This is a huge mitzvah. Anshel Holtzbacher himself has offered to hire a caterer for the event so he can get a chelek in the mitzvah, even though he is away on a business trip.

“I need you three to help with a few things. Basya, I need you to dust the shelves and clean the windows. Shimmy and Yitzy, I want you to straighten up the dining room, sweep the floors, and take out the garbage.”

The Greenbaum children looked disappointed at the boring chores Totty assigned them. But still, they listened to Totty and did their part to get the house ready for the sheva brachos.

A few short hours later, the Greenbaum house had been completely transformed. Tables were set with beautiful tablecloths and the caterer served delicious mouthwatering food. The chosson and kallah arrived, looking overjoyed at how many people had come together to celebrate with them. And to top it all off, right before dessert, the Horki Rebbe himself walked in to deliver divrei brachah to the young couple!

“This was so special,” Basya said to her brothers as they cleaned off the tables. “Well, at least the food was good,” Yitzy said. “But we had to do so much hard work.”

“Not to mention listening to the speeches,” added Shimmy.

“Shimmy, Yitzy,” Totty said, walking into the room.

“Yes, Totty?” both boys answered.

The Horki Rebbe Forgot His Watch

“It looks like the Horki Rebbe left his watch here,” Totty said, holding up a shiny gold pocket watch. “Would you be able to please run it over to his house?” Shimmy and Yitzy’s eyes widened with excitement. An opportunity to visit the Horki Rebbe? Quickly, Shimmy took the watch, placed it carefully in his pocket and hurried off to the Rebbe’s house.

“At least this will be interesting,” Yitzy said. “I heard the Rebbe has 40 gabbaim in his house to take care of everything he needs.”

“Oy I wish I could be a Rebbe one day,” Shimmy said. “Imagine never having to do any work yourself.”

But as the boys approached the house of the Horki Rebbe, they were shocked to see none other than the Rebbe himself coming down the stairs carrying two heavy garbage bags.

“Hello yingelach,” the Rebbe said. “To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“U-u-uh we have the Rebbe’s watch,” Shimmy said, holding out the pocket watch, at a loss for words as the Rebbe himself opened the garbage can and dropped the bags inside.

“Thank you so much!” the Rebbe replied, pocketing his watch.

“Uh, can we ask the Rebbe a question?” said Yitzy.

“Of course!” replied the Rebbe, his face shining.

“Why is the Rebbe taking out the garbage himself? I heard that the Rebbe has 40 gabbaim. Couldn’t one of them take out the garbage so the Rebbe could stay inside?”

“This is part of my avodah,” the Rebbe answered, closing the lid on the garbage can.

“I don’t understand,” said Shimmy.

“Think about this week’s Parsha,” the Rebbe explained. “Yankev Avinu arrives in Charan and sees Rochel Imenu, his future wife and the mother of Klal Yisroel, arriving at the well to draw water. She didn’t just stay at home and let one of her father’s servants get the water. She could have done that. But instead she wanted to do it on her own.



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

“Had she stayed home, Yaakov would never have seen her and she would never have been zocheh to become the mother of Klal Yisroel. It’s only because Rochel didn’t want to be lazy that she became great. She understood that greatness comes from people who do things themselves. That is what made her so great and gave her the zechus to marry Yaakov Avinu.”

Takeaway:

Laziness is a bad middah. If we want to become great we have to work on becoming an energetic servant of Hashem.

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