

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR SUKKOS – SIMCHAS TORAH 5785

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

## Lulalva

By Rabbi Paysach Krohn



During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when the Israelis were caught by surprise and attacked by Arabs on all fronts. One of the critical points of battle was near the Suez Canal. For days after Yom Kippur and throughout Sukkos, Rabbi Shammai Parnes and his assistants traveled throughout the Sinai desert, where they cautiously and caringly gathered the bodies of those who had fallen in battle.

Throughout Sukkos, Rabbi Shammai traveled in his jeep, taking with him his Siddur, Tehillim, tallis, and lulav and esrog. In every army camp where he stopped, soldiers approached him, asking for permission to use his lulav and esrog.

Infantrymen who were irreligious would pick up his siddur and say, “Rabbi Shammai, let us pray from your siddur or say Shema.”

He would help as many as he could, and at times he was detained from his work for more than an hour. Much to his regret, though, he eventually had to say to the young men, “I cannot stay any longer. I have been summoned elsewhere.” On Hoshana Rabbah, Rabbi Shammai and his assistants were near the Suez. As he drove towards a new army base in the wide-open desert, the thought occurred to him that because he had already used his lulav and esrog for the last time this Yom Tov, he could leave them in the army base.

### **A Long Line of Soldiers Began to Form**

Shortly after Rabbi Shammai’s arrival at the base, a long line of soldiers began to form, waiting to use his lulav and esrog. As a crowd began to assemble, a young non-religious soldier, Arik Shuali, driving an ammunition truck, was making his way southward. Looking through his powerful binoculars he noticed a large crowd of fellow servicemen gathered in one area. Curious, he got out of his truck and made his way on foot to where the soldiers had assembled.

As he came closer, he asked someone, “What is all the commotion about?” They explained to him that Rabbi Shammai had come, and people were waiting for an opportunity to use his lulav and esrog. Arik was not interested in waiting around, but when one of his friends mentioned that it was the last day to do this mitzvah, he agreed to wait.

### **A Bomb Hit His Truck Just as He Took the Lulav and Esrog**

Eventually, Arik’s turn arrived. Just as he received the lulav and esrog, a bomb hit his truck. The vehicle exploded and set off multiple explosions of the ammunition on board. The blasts were so intense that a crater was formed in the ground where the truck had been parked. When they later examined the spot where the truck had been, the soldiers could not find even a shard of metal remaining from the shattered vehicle.

Three months later, Rabbi Shammai read a short notice in the Israeli army newspaper. It was an announcement stating that the wife of serviceman Arik Shuali had given birth to a little girl. The announcement included a statement by the new father: “I believe with every fiber of my being, that I am alive today and that I merited to see my new daughter only because of the Mitzvah that I was doing at the time my truck was bombed.”

*Reprinted from the September 20, 2018 website of Torah.Org. The article originally appeared in Inner Net Magazine.*

## Blast from the Recent Past --Succos 5778 (2017) **Preparations in Crown Heights, Brooklyn**



*Reprinted from the 5778 Sukkot website of collive.com*

# The Floating Sukkah

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

In the year 1915, the governor of the Kiev district in Ukraine was General Dernatalin, a nasty anti-Semite of German origin.

As the festival of Sukkot was nearing the general sought ways to interfere with the preparation for the festival by the Jews living in his district.

He was familiar with the Jewish tradition of eating and spending time [1] in the sukkah that they built in their gardens.

## The Governor's Wicked Plot Against the Jews

After deliberating and consultation with the circle of his acquaintances of like mind, he decided on a malevolent course of action.

Approximately a week before the start of the festival, he publicized a proclamation that it was forbidden to build sukkot in the district of Kiev. The sukkot constituted a fire hazard was the official reason provided. Severe punishment was threatened to those who would transgress the decree.

The farmers of the district received separate orders not to bring wood and branches into the city in the near future.

The city of Kiev was in upheaval; whoever heard of such a thing! To prevent the Jewish people from celebrating the festival of Sukkot according to halacha (Jewish law)?!

## The Jewish Delegation is Ignored

That same day a delegation was organized, among them one of the richest Jewish citizens, one successful business man and one well known and talented lawyer. They requested an urgent meeting with the governor. But General Dernatalin, realizing why the meeting was being called, refused to meet with them, giving a transparent excuse.

The overwhelming opinion among the greatly indignant Jewish people was not to give in to the decree. But transgressing it was also impossible. One cannot build a sukkah inside or in other ways hide it from notice.

The police increased their surveillance. Anything at all that might be construed as a possible start to building a sukkah was immediately halted by them. The city's rich and its dignitaries called a meeting to find a solution. Abruptly the owner of the local shipping company spoke up. "Many ships sail on the Dnieper River," he said, "We will build a big sukkah on one of the ships, and the Jewish citizens of the city will be invited to eat their meals there."

After some thought the lawyer remarked that this idea wasn't a transgression of the governor's edict. After all, he forbade to build sukkot on the ground of his district, nothing was said about the water.

It also removed the reason for the decree: the danger of a fire hazard, since that was not a threat on the water as it was on land.

### **The Participants Made a Decision to Do the Plan in Total Secrecy**

The participants of the meeting were delighted with this solution. They made the decision to go forward with the plan in total secrecy, so that not a whisper of it should reach the general. They had no doubt that he would do everything in his power to obstruct them.

Two days before the beginning of the festival a place was prepared on one of the ships, and two huge sukkot were built. One sukkah was built in the First-Class section which was meant for the rich of the town. Another sukkah was built in the Second-Class section for all the other Jewish persons.

The sukkot were built 100% in accordance with the letter of halacha. The staff of the ship made the kitchens kosher. Enormous amounts of food were prepared for the expected crowds of people. The owner made it known that the meals were free of charge for anyone who wanted to observe the mitzvah of "leishev besukkah" ("dwelling in the sukkah.")

### **The Rumor Makes the Rounds to the Jewish People of Kiev**

The subterfuge was kept a secret till the day before the beginning of the festival. Only then did a rumor start making the rounds about sukkot that had been built on a ship, that the Jewish people of Kiev were invited to observe the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah.

Several hours before the beginning of the festival the police discovered the sukkot on the ship. They stared in astonishment at the sukkot, at a loss what to do. The orders they were given had no instructions about what happened on the Dnieper. Neither did they have a justification to order the dismantling of the sukkot on grounds of being a fire hazard.

The Chief of police ran to the governor to inform him of the unexpected turn of events. General Dernatalin, stunned, couldn't believe his ears. He demanded to go see for himself the sukkot built on the river.

The evening had begun and crowds of Jewish people were making their way to the river in order to observe the mitzvah of Sukkot according to the letter of the halacha.

The festive meal began with much joy till the whispers started "Dernatalin is here!"

The latter was beside himself with fury. He threatened to send everyone there to Siberia.

At that point, the Rabbi of Kiev stood up to speak. "Sir, honorable Governor," he said, "you should be aware that there is nothing that can cause a Jew to betray his religion. There is no power in the world that is capable of uprooting from our hearts the mitzvot of the Torah which we received from the Creator more than three thousand years ago. Our holy Torah instructed us to sit in the sukkah, and even though we have been in exile close to two thousand years, we will not desert its commands."

### **The Governor Silently Departed the Ship**

The general listened attentively to the words of the Rabbi. When the Rabbi finished his emotional address, the general went over to him and, much to the surprise of everyone present, shook his hand. Immediately after he silently departed, together with the police officers.

That Sukkot was celebrated by the Jewish people of Kiev with special joy. They celebrated the festival itself as well as the victory over the people who wanted to prevent them observing the mitzvot and instead were overcome.

From that day on a change was noticeable in the governor. He stopped trying to cause trouble for the Jewish people. He even annulled previous decrees he had passed against them.

*Reprinted from the Sukkos 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# **The Powerful Simcha of Sukkot**

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman quotes the Chatam Sofer in his Sukkot booklet of Torah Wellsprings. "Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret are even greater than Yom Kippur," he teaches, "because during Yom Kippur we love Hashem through affliction, and on Simchat Torah, we love Hashem through joy. The mitzvah and the holiness of the holiday come from the Jewish people's happiness.

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, in the middle of the month of Elul, Germany attacked Poland. The bombardment continued for three weeks and didn't stop until September 27<sup>th</sup>, Erev Sukkot, when the Polish commander surrendered. As soon as the ceasefire went into effect, an amazing phenomenon happened. Despite their bombed homes and the devastation everywhere, the people began to climb out of their shelters.

Hundreds of Warsaw's Jewish survivors leaped from the cellars and rubble, grabbed broken doors and window frames, and pulled them together to construct Sukkot. By the arrival of sunset – 5:40 pm that day – numerous makeshift Sukkot greeted the holiday, and a few hours later was the first night under German occupation. Gratitude to Hashem is not conditional. Just as He was and is there for us, our appreciation of Hashem will always prevail.

May we all truly appreciate all the good that Hashem has bestowed upon us, our families, and our community. May we have plenty of simcha on these holidays and let it flavor all our days in the future! Tizku leshanim rabot!

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

## Celebrating Sukkos in Venice, Italy



# Rav Chaim's Lulav

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



As Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, set out to buy his lulav in Bnei Brak, he was escorted by one of his students, one who had accompanied him for the past few years. This student knew the ins and outs of the business and therefore many dealers had called him to request that the Steipler buy his set of arba minim from them. The young man had chosen one particular dealer, and he and the Rav were on their way to that store.

When the Steipler walked in, all eyes turned to him. Although there were quite a few individuals there when he arrived, he was immediately ushered into a back room so he could examine the lulabim in peace. The nervous dealer had chosen what he thought were the absolute best lulabim in stock and set them out on a table.

The Steipler picked up the first one, examined it, and placed it down on the table where the others were. He then picked up the next one and did the same; each one he selected seemed to have its fault. Finally, he reached the last one on the table, inspected it, and after scrutinizing it closely, put it down. He then went back to the very first lulab he had looked at, one that he had quickly dismissed, and decided to purchase it. The seller, though somewhat perplexed by the Steipler's behavior, was thrilled to have been able to sell the lulab to the Steipler.



After the Steipler walked out of the shop, his student turned to him and wondered aloud why his Rebbe had settled on that lulab when there were so many other stores and lulabim to choose from. The Steipler was not one to compromise on misvah observance. Why had he settled now?

The answer he gave to his questioning student contained an unforgettable lesson. “It is true. There are many, many shops from which to choose a lulab and etrog. I am certain in fact that I could have bought one that was much nicer than the one I chose. But at what cost? Had I walked out the door without a lulab, then not only would those who were in the outer room have questioned why I left empty-handed, but word would have spread on the street that the Steipler could not find a kosher lulab in this dealer’s shop. This in turn would have caused him to lose many customers. And that is too high a price to pay for a lulab.” (Touched by a Story 3)

*Reprinted from the Sukkot 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Touched by a Story #3” by Rabbi Yechiel Spero.*

# **A Very Special Simchas Torah Story**

**By Yitta Halberstam & Judith Levantl**

It was a cold autumn day; the skies covered with the perpetual cloud of ash that hovered daily over Auschwitz. A group of fifty young yeshiva students were herded into the gas chambers, ostensibly for a cold shower. This was well enough into the history of Auschwitz that the cold truth of the cold showers was well known to the young men. They all knew that the nozzles would soon open and bathe them in a cascade of noxious fumes that would choke off their air supply and drain them of life.

The Nazi guards - gleefully awaiting the usual onset of panic, complete with frantic banging on the doors, desperate efforts to reach the sealed windows and futile clawing against bare walls - were surprised by this unique group. Just before the showers released their poison a young man addressed his friends.

"Brothers," he cried, "today is Simchas Torah, when the Jewish world rejoices having concluded their annual reading of the Torah. During our short lives we have tried to uphold the Torah to the best of our ability and now we have one last chance to do so.

“Before we die let us celebrate Simchas Torah one last time. We have nothing; no clothes to cover us or Torah with which to rejoice. But we have G-d who is surely here among us today. So let us dance with G-d Himself before we return our souls to Him.”

### **Upsetting the Nazi Commandant**

With this, he placed his hand on his fellow's shoulder and fifty young men broke out in joyous dance, the song of “Purify our hearts to serve you with sincerity” on their lips. The bewildered Nazis stood just beyond the gas chamber and could not understand the meaning of the incongruous celebration. The beastly commandant, who was accustomed to humiliated, broken Jews, could not countenance this spectacle of Jewish pride and flew into a rage.

Bursting into the chamber he grabbed the first boy and demanded to know the reason for the dance. Calmly, the boy replied, “We are celebrating our imminent departure from a world ruled by beasts such as you.”

The commandant decided to put an immediate end to the festivities with a cruel announcement. “You think you will escape your tortuous existence in the peaceful gas chamber, but I will grant you a truly painful departure. I will spare you today, but tomorrow I will torture every bone in your bodies; I will slice your flesh till you expire.” The commandant ordered the boys released from the gas chambers and housed in a barrack overnight.

### **Dedicating Their Last Night of Life to G-d and the Torah**

Despite their fate, the boys celebrated Simchas Torah all night with joyous song and dance. They sanctified G-d's name by dedicating their last night to expressing gratitude for the privilege of their Jewishness and for the precious gift of the Torah.

Later that night, the boys were miraculously selected for transport to another camp by a high-ranking Nazi official who was not aware of their “crimes.” This selection saved their lives and Auschwitz survivors testified that the entire group survived the Holocaust

*Reprinted from the Shemini Atzeres-Simchas 5776 Torah Compilation email of Torah Sweet's Weekly. (Small Miracles of the Holocaust, Halberstam/Leventhal). Comment: On Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah it's just us and Hashem. There is nothing – and no one – who can get in the way of our relationship. That's how close we can get to our Creator at this time!*

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS BEREISHIS 5785

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## The Rebbe and the Female Opera Hopeful



**The Kapishnitzer Rebbe, zt"l**

Nearly a hundred years ago, in Vienna, there lived a Frum, young woman, who had an exceptionally beautiful voice. This girl's reputation spread far and wide, and women would flock from all over to hear her sing. One day, this girl came home, and she was very excited to share some news with her parents. She was offered a very unique opportunity to sing in the opera! She knew that only the best singers around were ever offered such a chance, and she very much wanted to accept the position.

Upon hearing the news, her father began to tremble anxiously. He did not want his daughter to enter such a world where she would have to sing in front of men, but he did not know what to say to his daughter, because she wanted to sing in the opera so badly, and had just about decided that she would accept the offer.

He knew he had to approach this delicately, and he decided to go see the Kapishnitzer Rebbe (Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, 1888-1967), zt”l, and seek his advice. After hearing the situation, he asked for the man to bring his daughter in to see him. Not wasting any time, the father left and returned very quickly with his daughter, to see what the Rebbe would say to her.

The Rebbe looked directly at the young woman, and asked her, “Please tell me, why do you want to sing in the opera?”

The girl responded, “By singing in the opera, I know that I will be very successful in creating a very big Kiddush Hashem, because many people will see me, a Frum, young woman, who is able to sing like a world-famous singer. They will see me and appreciate that I am Jewish, and recognize the talent that Hashem has given me.”

The Kapishnitzer Rebbe said to her, “You want to sing in order that your voice be heard. If so, let’s make a deal. If you will promise me that you will not sing in the opera, I will promise you that you will merit to have a son whose voice will be heard from one end of the world to the other!”



**Rav Shmuel Vosner, zt”l**

The young woman thought for a moment, and answered, “If that is your promise, then I will agree to not sing in the opera.” A short while passed and this girl got married, and soon after gave birth to a son who was remarkably brilliant. His

mind was sharp and unique, and he stood out among his friends as a one-of-a-kind type of person, just like the Kapishnitzer Rebbe promised. This boy grew to up be the great Tzadik and Gadol Ha'dor, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner (1913-2015), zt"l, whose Halachic rulings and Divrei Torah reach from one end of the world to the other!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

# The Conflicted Tailor

## From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Meshulam was a simple tailor. He lived in the Polish city of Apta. His income was meager, he barely made enough money to bring home bread for his family. Their life was one of constant frugality and lack.

His poor economic situation disturbed him greatly. He looked for ways to increase his income but never succeeded, always ending up bitterly disappointed.

When he couldn't stand his desperate situation any longer, he went to the tzadik (righteous person) who lived in his city, the "Ohev Yisrael" of Apta.

The rebbe looked at him with pity, blessed him warmly and spoke words of comfort and encouragement.

The blessings and encouragement somewhat bolstered Meshulam's state of mind, but when the days went by and there was no improvement in this situation, he felt he needed an additional dose of reassurance.

Again, the rebbe received him warmly. Also, this time he didn't stint his words of comfort and support. As a result, Meshulam left feeling uplifted.

The visits to the rebbe became a regular occasion. Meshulam held on to the encouragement of the rebbe as a drowning man would grab onto a straw.

He would show up often at the tzadik's home, bow his head in submission and he again began to feel full of hope that the Creator would improve his situation, like it says: "G-d's salvation can come in the blink of an eye."

But then, one day when he entered the rebbe's house, it seemed as if another Meshulam had arrived. It wasn't the same depressed and despairing one. His energetic step and the smile on his face bore witness that something had changed.

Indeed, Meshulam was in a great mood. He told the rebbe that the neighboring village was sold to another landowner, and as a result an opportunity for a better income opened up for Meshulam. The new owner requested of Meshulam to supply clothes for his entire family!

As the orders started coming in, so did the money. With G-d's help he saw nice profits from his work.

"Like I shared my troubles with the rebbe, I wanted to share the success that, thanks to G-d, came my way," he said joyfully.

Some time went by before Meshulam again visited the rebbe. "There are rumors that the new landowner is actually a Jew who converted," he told the rebbe. The Ohev Yisrael's expression became grave. "Check this thoroughly and let me know what you find," he told Meshulam.

After painstaking research, it was ascertained that it was indeed the case. He was a Jew who had left the heritage of his parents and ancestors, and even converted in order to mix with the gentiles in the surroundings. In this he succeeded; he was extremely successful in business, to the extent that he was able to buy an estate close to Apta.

Meshulam told the Apter rebbe everything he had discovered. The rebbe listed to him intently. Then he gave him a strict instruction: "Be careful not to sew him a garment containing shatnez (a mixture of wool and linen.)"

The tailor took this instruction to heart.

It wasn't long before the land owner sent him material for a new garment. Meshulam was in a quandary. He remembered clearly what the rebbe had told him, but his fear of losing his income gave him no rest. He couldn't make up his mind what to do, so in the meantime he put the material aside and didn't start sewing the garment.

The expensive material was lying there useless while Meshulam thought what to do.

After several days the land owner came to see how the work was progressing. Meshulam tried to avoid answering. The man became angry, "I understand that you didn't advance any with your work. You should have told me before and not let me wait for nothing!" he reproached him.

The tailor tried to justify himself by telling him that he was not to blame, that it was the Apter rebbe who had told him not to sew a garment for a Jew that contained shatnez.

The land owner grew furious. He stormed out of the house of the tailor and made his way to the house of the Ohev Yisrael to demand to know how the rebbe dared to interfere with his affairs. How dare he tell Meshulam the tailor not to sew a garment the way he ordered him to.

The rebbe looked at him pleasantly, until he was finished spilling his complaints. Then he responded. "Our Sages said 'A Jew, even if he sins, is a Jew'. Theoretically what is so special about that saying, can one think differently? Is it written anywhere that an apostate Jew is not a Jew anymore?"

"What the Sages wanted to highlight was the virtue of the Jewish people. Their words are directed at someone like you, a Jew who left his religion and converted to another one. You want to cut off all connection to your G-d and your people, you're convinced you will succeed. Our Sages explain that you are mistaken. Your being a Jew cannot be changed. It is impossible to lose or release yourself from it. Your Jewishness is your essence and you cannot change your essence.

"Now maybe you understand why I told Meshulem not to sew you a garment containing shatnez. If our Sages define you as Jew, in that case you are obligated to keep all the mitzvot, among them the mitzvah of not wearing shatnez. How can I allow a Jewish tailor to cause you to fail and commit the sin of shatnez?!"

When the rebbe finished speaking the expression of the landowner was unreadable. But the Apter's words must have affected him deeply. Without a word he left the rebbe's house. Not many days later he returned to the rebbe, this time to ask him to show him the way back.

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**Source:** Enhanced by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation by Mrs. C.R. Benami, long-time editorial assistant for AscentOfSafed.com, from the popular Hebrew weekly, Sichat HaShavua #1755.

Why this Week? This week's Torah reading contains many commandments. One striking prohibition is to not wear a garment with a wool and linen mixture.

**Biographic Note:** Rabbi Avraham-Yehoshua Herschel (1755- 5 Nissan 1825) the Apter Rebbe, was a main disciple of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhinsk. He is also often referred to as "the Ohev Yisrael," both after the title of the famous book of his teachings, and also because its meaning ("Lover of Jews") fits him so aptly.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Seitzei 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

## What We Do Not Understand

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman brings an inspiring story that happened to Reb Avraham Aboulafia, a respected Rav in Arizona. Recently, he was traveling to Toronto to arrange a get—divorce. The passenger sitting next to him was a dark man. Rabbi Aboulafia greeted him and asked him his name. The man replied, "Shah!" Rabbi Aboulafia understood that he preferred not to engage in conversation, so he didn't ask any more questions.

Reb Aboulafia took out a sefer and began to learn the miforshim—commentary on the parashah of the week, parashat

*Chukat*. He began reading up on the words “V’zot Chukat Ha’Torah,” but he could not help but notice that his neighbor was staring at the words of the sefer. Finally, the goy pointed to “Chukat Ha’Torah” and asked for the meaning of the words.

“This is a Jewish book, and these are Hebrew words.” The goy was interested in the two words “Chukat Ha’Torah,” wanting to know their translation. The Rav told him what it meant and taught him how to pronounce the words. While they were speaking, the gentile rolled up his sleeve, revealing his tattooed arm. The tattoo was nothing other than the words, “Chukat Ha’Torah” written in Hebrew.

The Rav was shocked. Why did this gentile have Torah words on his arm!? He asked for an explanation. When I was young, the gentile replied, “my father had my arm tattooed with these words. He said it was a Chinese custom, an omen for the child's success. It is supposed to bring the child good luck for the rest of his life. He told me that wondrous secrets are hidden in these words.”

The Rav told him his explanation didn't make sense and kept probing for a proper explanation. The gentile admitted, “For forty years, I've been trying to figure out what these words mean. In fact, until now, I didn't realize they were letters. I thought they were, just symbols or drawings. Only now did I discover that they are letters.” The Rav realized that the gentile was speaking the truth; he had no idea why those words landed on his arm.

Then the goy said, “My father is still alive. He is seventy years old. You can call him and ask him about it.” The Rav took down his father's phone number and, as soon as the plane landed, called the man. He began the conversation by giving the father regards from his son. “I sat beside him on the plane; I enjoyed speaking to him. But I am wondering about something. I saw on your son's arm two words from our holy Torah, ‘Chukat Ha’Torah.’ Can you please tell me why these words were tattooed on his arm?”

The father replied with the same story about the Chinese custom, and the Rabbi inquired again. After the father tried giving various other explanations, but the Rav succeeded in getting the secret out of the father. The father broke down in bitter tears as he began his tragic story. “When I was a bachur—young man, I studied in Ponevezh. I was very close with the great Rosh Yeshiva, the gaon Harav Elazar Menachem Man Shach (1899-2001) zt'I. I studied with diligence and after getting married, I learned in Kollel.

“As time passed, parnassah became very difficult. At that time, I was offered a nighttime job in an office. I would be able to earn a living at night while continuing to learn Torah all day in Kollel. My money problems were resolved. This went on for some time. But then, a non-Jewish, black woman was hired to clean the office at night, doing the same hours I worked there. I immediately went to Rav Shach and



informed him of this new development. Rav Shach ruled, "You cannot work there anymore under these conditions it involves the prohibition of yichud—seclusion!"



**Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach, zt"l**

“I began to plead with Rav Shach that I needed this job for my parnassah. I added that if I gave up this job, my shalom bayit would unravel, and my children would go hungry. Rav Shach opened a Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer 22] and showed me that the prohibition of yichud also applies with a gentile.

“I replied, "But Rebbe! What connection do I have with a black woman? I have no interest in her!" Rav Shach replied, "Don't try rationalizing this issue. ‘Zot Chukat Ha’Torah! —this is the decree of the Torah.” If the Torah doesn't permit, we can't transgress. We can't be smarter than the Torah." He explained that one isn't allowed to say the reason behind a prohibition doesn't apply to him. What the Torah forbids is forbidden, and there is no room for rationalizing and making loopholes.”

“But I didn't pass the test. I was desperate to earn a living, so I continued working there. I will not elaborate, but the black woman and I became friendly with time. I divorced my wife, left my young children, and married this black woman. We moved to her country of origin. Throughout this whole time, I knew I should have listened to what Rav Shach said. So, when my son was born, I called him Shach, after my Rebbe, Rav Shach zt'L (This is why the son said "Shah' when Rav Aboulafia asked him for his name. It is difficult for non-Jews to pronounce the sound of a “chaf,” so he called himself "Shah" instead of 'Shach.")

“I also immediately had my son tattooed with the words “Chukat Ha’Torah” as a reminder of my Rebbe's words. I wanted a constant reminder of what caused my destruction and downfall. I thought I was clever. I thought I could outsmart the Torah. And now, look what happened to me. From then until today, I have had no life. With one foolish act, I buried myself in heartbreak and sin.”

May we all take care to learn Torah every day as the antidote to our evil inclination. May we raise our children with a unified voice. And may we always follow the mitzvot no matter our personality type and see great rewards in the future! Amen!

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

## To Help Others to Be Happy



The Kovno Rav, Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spector, was the Poseik HaDor, the leading Halachic authority of the generation, in the early 1900's. He was once speaking with someone, when there was a knock his door. A student came in to tell Rav Yitzchok Elchonon of great news, that an older Bachur had finally got engaged.

The Rav was thrilled to hear the great news and thanked the boy who told him. A few minutes later, there was another knock on the door and someone else told the Rav the same news. The Rav was once again thrilled and thanked him. A few moments later, the same occurrence repeated itself, and then yet once more, someone again came to tell the Rav the good news.

Finally, the man asked the Rav, “Rebbe, please explain to me. The same news was told to you four times over, yet each time you heard it, you reacted as if it was the first time!?”

Rav Yitzchok Elchonon answered, “They come to tell me the news for they know I will be happy to hear it. This makes them happy, so it’s worth their efforts. If I don’t act surprised to hear the news, their efforts would have been for nothing, and I would have deprived them of their joy. Therefore, I allow them to have the pleasure of informing me of the exciting news!”

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

# Caring for His Wife

By R’ Yoni Schwartz



The way Rav Dovid Feinstein, ZT”L, treated his wife was a prime example of how one should respect their spouse. Years ago, when Rav Dovid Feinstein and Rebbetzin Feinstein were at the engagement party of one of their grandchildren. The time was dragging on and on.

A curious person approached Rav Dovid and asked, “Doesn’t the Gadol Hador (the leader of the generation) have better things to do with his time than sit here for so long?”

In his gentle voice, Rav Dovid said, “The Rebbetzin is having a nice time. As long as she is enjoying herself, I am going nowhere.”

There was another time when one of Rav Dovid Feinstein's children got married, the soon-to-be daughter-in-law visited his house on Friday afternoon to meet her new mother-in-law. After she entered, she heard the sound of a vacuum cleaner emanating from one of the rooms and followed the sound. After turning a couple corners and weaving her way through the halls of the house, she finally found the room where the sound was coming from.

As her head peeped the corner, expecting to see Rebbetzin Feinstein, she was surprised when she saw Rav Dovid, the Gadol Hador, vacuuming the floor. "Doesn't the Rav have more important matters to attend to," she wondered, and Rav Dovid saw a curious look on her face. He explained that on Fridays his wife works, and he wanted to do something nice to help around the house. In fact, Rav Dovid would often make kugels and cakes and give them out to the kids.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5784 email of Torah Sweets.*

# **The Bnei Brak – Yerushalaim Dilemma**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

A shidduch was suggested for Rabbi Diamond\*, a widower, with a widow. Sometime later, both sides wanted to proceed to the next step – engagement – but there was a problem. Rabbi Diamond lived in Bnei Brak, where he had a position as a maggid shiur. He also gave various shiurim and learned in a kollel there. He did not want to leave Bnei Brak and move elsewhere.

On the other hand, Mrs. Steingold, the prospective kallah, lived in Yerushalayim and served as the principal of a prominent school there. She did not want to leave her job to move to a different city, and commuting from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim every day was not feasible. As a result, the shidduch was stalled. Everyone involved was terribly disappointed, as it seemed these two individuals would be a perfect match.

But no one could figure out how to overcome this hurdle. One day, Rabbi Diamond's daughter Chayah\* met one of the board members of the school she works in, in Bnei Brak. The board member, Mrs. Davis\*, noticed Chayah's preoccupation and downcast demeanor and inquired about it. Chayah decided to confide in the older woman. She told her how sorry she felt that her father was not marrying Mrs. Steingold, who seemed so perfect for him. She explained that she was a principal in

Yerushalayim and would not consider moving to Bnei Brak, and her father would not consider moving to Yerushalayim.

“Honestly,” Chayah added, almost as an afterthought, “my father is very dependent on my sisters and me to take care of his needs, including his meals and household chores. For his sake as well as ours, we would be so happy if he remarried!”

“This conversation is completely orchestrated by Hashem!” Mrs. David exclaimed. She then proceeded to disclose some information that had not yet been publicized. The principal in the school they worked in had recently given notice, and the board was concerned about the challenge of finding a suitable replacement.

“Let’s approach the president of the board and suggest Mrs. Steingold as a candidate,” Mrs. David said. “This is a very distinguished institution, and most people would jump at an opportunity to take this position.”

The two women set up a meeting with the board president, who was very interested. “Mrs. Steingold is quite renowned,” she said. “She has an excellent reputation!” The board offered the position to Mrs. Steingold who accepted it. A few hours after that decision, Rabbi Diamond and Mrs. Steingold were engaged. They married and settled in Bnei Brak, to the delight of all involved. (Living Emunah on Shidduchim)

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

# **Tears for a Lost Brother**

**By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**

All Jews are in essence brothers. The Chofetz Chaim states: ... In Heaven, the souls of the Jewish people are like one ... It is only in this world, where each soul is clothed in its own physical body and is involved in its own personal matters, that one sees himself as a distinct entity, apart from his fellow Jew. In truth, however, all Jews are one in a very real sense.

In the 1980s, before the collapse of the Soviet empire, Agudath Israel’s Vaad L’Hatzalas Nidchei Yisroel, under the leadership of Rabbi Mordechai Neustadt, regularly sent shlichim (emissaries) to teach Torah in secret to small, courageous, irrepressible baalei teshuvah in the Soviet Union.

Fraught with risk, these missions were blessed with great siyata diShmaya. The late Rabbi Mordechai Shapiro, Rav of Congregation Beth Israel in Miami Beach, and his rebbetzin, were two of those shlichim. They had spent many hours at the Vaad office in New York prior to their departure learning the do’s and don’ts of

such mission. They had been warned not to allow strangers to lure them into conversations that might jeopardize what they aimed to accomplish.

From the moment they landed in Moscow, they knew that they were being watched. As they left the airport to head for the hotel where they had booked reservations, an official pointed to a specific taxi and said, “That is the taxi you will take.” They entered the taxi, and immediately the driver struck up what was ostensibly a friendly conversation in Yiddish.

“So where are you folks from? Florida? So how’s the weather there? Is it true that Florida has lots of palm trees? How long are you living there...?”

And then, in the midst of his idle chatter, the driver said with feeling, “Aber alle Yidden zenen brider” (“However, all Jews are brothers”).

The Shapiros froze. Was this a trap? Was the driver an agent of the KGB (secret police), trying to lure them into saying something incriminating? There was no way for them to know. Following the instructions they had received in New York, they did not respond.

The driver seemed to ignore their silence. He resumed his mindless chatter and then, a few minutes later, said once again with feeling, “Aber alle Yidden zenen brider.” Again, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Shapiro did not respond.

When they reached the hotel, the Shapiros paid the driver, checked in at the front desk, and then made their way to their room. Rebbetzin Shapiro was about to begin unpacking when she looked up and saw that her husband was crying.

“Who knows? That driver may have been sincere and was desperately trying to reach out to us. And we could not respond.”

“Now,” said Rabbi Shapiro, “I know how Yosef HaTzaddik felt when his brother Binyamin stood before him unaware of his true identity. The time for Yosef to reveal himself had not yet come, and Yosef was overcome with emotion. He therefore went into a private room and cried.

Alle Yidden zenen brider. A feeling of true brotherhood with all Jews impels special people to undertake dangerous missions to Russia, and to cry when they cannot acknowledge a stranger’s overtures of brotherhood. As the Torah indicates with the term *achicha ha’evyon*, your destitute brother, a feeling of brotherhood should impel all of us to treat those in need with kindness and compassion.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Re’eh 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living the Parashah” by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman.*

# All One Family

By Rabbi Meir Yedid

An area that will build our children's inner soul is to help them realize that Am Yisrael are one. We are a family. We are all responsible for one another.

A couple once came to Rav Shimshon Pincus for shalom bayis counseling. In the course of the conversation, it emerged that one of the things that bothered the wife was that her husband wouldn't eat all the food she worked hard to cook for him.

## Asked the Husband Why He Wouldn't Eat His Wife's Food

When Rav Pincus asked him, in private, why he wouldn't eat her food, he sheepishly explained that he had neglected his teeth for many years, and they had decayed to the point that he simply couldn't chew certain dishes she prepared.

"Why don't you fix your teeth?" Rav Pincus prodded.

"I don't have money," the man replied.

Rav Pincus was not a rich man by any stretch, but he took all the money he had at hand and gave it to this man. "Go get your teeth fixed," he said.

Somebody heard about this and just couldn't understand why Rav Pincus would squander so much money to get this man's teeth fixed. "Rabbi, you don't even have enough money for your own family," he exclaimed. "How could you give so much money to a person you barely know?"

"If this man would be my son," Rav Pincus replied, "would you ask me why I'm giving him money to fix his teeth? Of course not! So, what's the difference if it's my son or someone else's son — we are all Hashem's children." We are all banim l'Hashem, we are all one family.



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# The Reward for Eating in a Refined Matter



**Rabbi Chaim Zaid**

Here's a story I heard from Rabbi Avrum Mordechai Malach that took place a few years ago in Eretz Yisroel. It's about someone I don't know but whom nonetheless I consider as one of my heroes. I will call him Avi.

The story begins on Yom Ha'atzma'ut, which is essentially a legal holiday for most people in Eretz Yisroel. Kiruv workers use that opportunity to schedule special learning programs for Jews of all backgrounds. Rabbi Chaim Zaid, a Sephardic kiruv rabbi, gave an introductory shiur tailored to a diverse audience that included an assortment of kippot – knitted, colored, black – along with several bare heads. Some of the kippot looked like they had been taken out of a drawer for the special occasion.

He began by reviewing the laws of Netilat Yadayim. He followed by discussing eating b'kedushah, with holiness, explaining that a Jew is supposed to approach eating and drinking in a refined manner: a Jew sits down, makes a bracha before and after eating, and cuts his food into bite-sized pieces. Eating in a refined manner, he assured his audience, is propitious for Divine help in being granted a good living.



When he finished speaking, Avi, a man with a tiny kippah, who had worked in a bakery for years and was now unemployed, approached Rabbi Zaid and exclaimed, “I am accepting always to eat in a refined manner.”

(I wondered if Rabbi Zaid thought to himself, should I tell him to first keep Shabbat, wear tefillin, and eat kosher, ) he nevertheless encouraged Avi much success with his commitment.

The following Yom Ha’atzma’ut, Rabbi Zaid spoke at the same venue. Afterwards, a very pious looking Jew approached and said, “Shalom aleichem, Mori veRabi (my teacher, my rebbe). Do you remember me? I was the non-religious Jew who told you he was only going to eat in refined manner.”

Now, Rabbi Zaid remembered the man.

“Do you want to hear my story?” Avi asked.

“Absolutely!” was the reply.

“Last year, I took very seriously what the Rav said about eating with kedusha. The Rav mentioned that a Jew eats and cuts his food with a knife into smaller pieces, and then eats. I said to myself, granted I am not Orthodox, but I am not an animal. I can still eat like a refined person. I accepted upon myself to only eat after cutting my food into small pieces, and made my whole family do the same.

“After a while we started making brachos on our food. We didn’t wear kippot, but we learned when to make a Shehakol, Mezonot and Ha’nitz.”

“One day, I went with my kids to a park. They ran around and played for a while and had a good time. After a while they became hungry but I had nothing to feed them. Then, we saw a delivery truck for one of the big bakeries in Israel. My kids said, ‘Aba, there is a bakery truck. Maybe you can buy us something?’

“I said, ‘They only sell wholesale.’

“They responded, ‘We are so hungry. Please ask anyway.’

“I went to the driver and asked if I could buy something for my children. He confirmed that they don’t sell retail. But then he said, ‘You asked so nicely ...’ He opened the back of the truck and there were these fresh chocolate Danishes, oozing with chocolate. I bought a few and we sat down to enjoy.

“As the kids were about to eat, I said, ‘One minute, remember, we eat civilized. Let me get a knife and eat like Jews.’

“‘Of course,’ the kids said.

“As I was cutting, I noticed, mixed in with the chocolate were these small green spots. Since I had worked in a bakery, I knew you can have some sugar or chocolate that is not mixed well, but this was different. The color was strange. I pulled off a small piece and sniffed it carefully. It smelled like engine oil!

“All the Danishes I’d purchased were the same. It was clear, whether by accident or by intention, a worker had put add engine oil to the mix. I ran to the driver and shouted to stop him from pulling away, yelling, ‘Everyone is in danger!’ “He thought I was crazy. I told him I had worked in a bakery a long time. ‘I know! This is poison!’”

“He checked the rest of the Danishes. They were all adulterated. He called the boss. The boss halted all of the trucks in the fleet.”

As he recounted his story, Avi reflected on what had happened. “If I hadn’t cut them up, because of all of the chocolate and sugar, we wouldn’t have noticed until it was too late.”

Due to a seemingly small commitment regarding kedushat ha’achila, Avi and his family changed their lives forever. (The icing on the cake: the boss offered Avi to be his general manager. The segula for eating b’kedushah was realized!)

This story illustrates what can happen when we are careful with something seemingly small – we allow special Divine influences to affect our lives and usher in significant growth.

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## The Rest of the Story

# Ahavas HaTorah and Ahavas Yisroel:

By Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

The great *gaon*, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, was an uncle to three *roshei yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva, Rav Aharon Cohen, Rav Yechezkel Sarna, and Rav Moshe Chevroni. At the *levayah* of Rav Isser Zalman in Yerushalayim in 1953, Rav Moshe Chevroni was *maspid* and told a fascinating story about his uncle’s love of Torah. This is the story he told.

During the period of British control of Eretz Yisroel in the lead-up to the founding of the State of Israel, a bitter guerilla war was ongoing between the British occupiers and the Jewish underground. In an attempt to curtail the activities of the underground, the British imposed strict overnight curfews, forbidding anyone to be out of their homes between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. British soldiers would patrol the streets, and anyone who was found disobeying the curfew was taken to jail and locked up,

no questions asked. If the person looked suspicious to them, they would shoot him on the spot.



**Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer and Rav Moshe Chevrone**

During one of these curfews, Rav Moshe Chevrone was learning in the *yeshiva* at 2 a.m. when he heard knocks on the door. He became frightened, afraid that British soldiers were looking for weapons or suspects. He did not understand English and had no way of communicating with them. He feared that they would take him away. As the knocking continued, he said a *tefillah*, asking Hashem to protect him, and approached the door. He stood by the door and, in a shaking voice, asked who was there.

“*Der feter*. It is your uncle,” said the voice on the other side in Yiddish.

He opened the door, and there, at 2:00 in the morning, was his uncle, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. Relieved, he let him in and began asking questions. “What are you doing here at this hour? Why would you leave your house in middle of a curfew and put your life in jeopardy to walk here? It is dangerous to be seen outside on the street.”

Rav Isser Zalman explained that he was learning at home and arrived at a difficulty in understanding a ruling of the *Rambam*. As hard as he tried, he could not come up with a solution to his question, and he knew that he would not be able to sleep until he understood the *Rambam*. “I was wondering who I could ask my

question to at this late hour. I told my wife, ‘Our nephew, Rav Moshe Chevroni, is certainly awake. He must be in the *yeshiva* learning now. I will go to him, and together we will review the *sugya* and the *Rambam*. We will figure it out and arrive at an understanding. Then I will return home.’ So here I am.”

As he was delivering the *hesped* and recounting this, Rav Chevroni said in amazement that he was astonished by Rav Isser Zalman’s love for Torah. How at 2 a.m., he left his house, during a curfew no less, to walk to the Chevron Yeshiva in pursuit of an answer to his question on the *Rambam*. Then he continued with the story.

“He told me his brilliant question and looked at me. I asked Hashem to enlighten me and help me offer an explanation. A thought came to my mind. I shared it with him and he was satisfied that he now had the proper understanding of the *Rambam*.

“He got up to leave and return home. I said to him, ‘Where are you going? You can’t go back home. It is too dangerous. Stay here with me and rest until 6 a.m. Then you can safely return home.

“But he wouldn’t hear of it. He said that he had to write down the answer. I told him that he could write the answer there in the *yeshiva*. I would supply him with a pen and paper. But he said that he needed to write it in his notebook and that he couldn’t write it in *yeshiva*. He had to be home in order to write it properly. So he went home.

“Look at that love for Torah! Look how dedicated he was to understanding Torah! What a wonderful story. What an amazing lesson. What an astonishing person he was!”

He finished his *hesped* and everyone was impressed with his story and buzzing about it.

During the *shivah*, when he went to be *menachem avel* his aunt and family, his aunt called him over. “That was not what happened,” she said. He looked at her. “What do you mean that’s not what happened? It happened with me. I was there. I heard and saw everything. He came to me in the middle of the night during a tough curfew and asked me the *kushya* on the *Rambam*.”

“That part is true. He came to you during the curfew at night and asked you a *kushya* on a *Rambam*. You told that story to demonstrate the love of Torah of your uncle, and that is true, but everybody knew that before you told them the story. Everybody is aware of his love for Torah and his *hasmodah*. But now I’m going to tell you the rest of the story, and you will see a different side of his greatness.”

This is what she told him.

“He wrote his *sefer Even Ha’azel* and I helped him with it. He very much wanted it to be printed, as did I. But in those days, it wasn’t simple. The printer had a lot of work and it moved along very slowly. The printer told him that there would

be a multi-year wait to get the *sefer* out. He was very upset, but there was nothing we could do other than wait.

“One day, I was notified by the printer that there was a cancellation. If I would get him Rav Isser Zalman’s transcripts by 8:00 the next morning, they would immediately get to work on the *sefer*. But, they told me, if they are not there by 8:05, we would lose our opportunity and they would give the slot to someone else.

“When he came home that night, I told him the good news. I was thrilled. Everything was prepared. The *kesovim* were all organized and ready to go to the printer. And now, we had an opportunity to have the *sefer* finally printed.

“But when I told him this, he turned white. I asked what happened and he explained: ‘You know that I included in the *sefer* a *kushya* and *teirutz* from Rav Aharon Cohen. I also have a *kushya* and *teirutz* from Rav Yechezkel Sarna. But I do not have anything from Rav Moshe Chevroni.’

“I told him that Rav Moshe Chevroni is humble and would not be hurt if there is nothing from him in the *sefer*, but he wouldn’t hear of it. He said that he couldn’t fathom the risk of hurting him, even if it meant not printing the *sefer*.”

The *rebbetzin* related that she was so upset that she almost began to cry, but she had a brainstorm. She told Rav Isser Zalman that he should go to Rav Moshe Chevroni. “Ask him to answer a question that you have in your writings on a difficult *Rambam*, even though you already know the answer. Then erase the answer that you wrote and insert his answer into the *Even Ha’azel* and it will be ready to go to press.”

The *rebbetzin* told Rav Chevroni, “Rav Isser Zalman accepted my proposal and left the house, arriving at the *yeshiva* at 2 a.m. to hear your answer to the question, so that there would be no chance of your feelings being hurt.

“He came to you with his difficult *Rambam* and told you that he could not sleep. And that was the truth. He could not sleep if there was any chance that you would be insulted. He desperately wanted to print the *sefer* that he had worked so hard on. So he went out in the wee hours of the morning, at great danger to himself, to ensure that he would not hurt the feelings of another person. He asked the question to which he knew the answer, and then he ran back home to adjust the transcript and get it to the printer by 8 a.m.”

Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was famed as a great *talmid chochom*, a great *rosh yeshiva*, and a great *masmid* who loved the Torah. But he was also exceedingly considerate of other people, to the extent that put his life in danger to prevent hurting another. And that is the greatness demonstrated in the story that Rav Chevroni told at his *levayah*.

May we learn the lesson taught by Rav Isser Zalman, who knew what it means to be a *Yid*: kind, considerate, gentle, and unfailingly thoughtful.

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