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The Power of Crying When Lighting Shabbos Candles

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Rav Yehuda Davis, a rebbi in Yerushalayim, shared a touching story that shows how powerful our tears can be. As a fifth-grade rebbi, Rav Davis worked hard to teach his students the basics of Gemara. He wanted to build a strong foundation for their future learning.

However, one boy, Yossi, just couldn't understand the lessons, no matter how hard he tried. Every day, Yossi came to school with a positive attitude, but he always

left in tears because he felt like a failure. Yossi's struggles didn't just affect his learning. During recess, the other boys made fun of him and didn't want to play with him. They called him names and treated him like the "class dummy." The constant teasing took its toll on Yossi. He lost his confidence, and the spark in his eyes began to fade. Until that school year, he had been such a happy, cheerful kid. Now, he was a shadow of his former self.

Yet Nothing Seemed to Help

Yossi's parents were very concerned. They took him to various experts, to try to find out why he was having so much trouble. They hired extra tutors, bought him special school supplies, and offered him rewards for his efforts. Yet nothing seemed to help. Yossi's mother was heartbroken. She couldn't stand to see her son so unhappy and so discouraged.

Then, one day, something incredible happened. Yossi came to school with his head held high. His frown was gone, replaced by a smile that stretched from ear to ear. He participated in class, asking questions and giving the correct answers. During recess, he played with the other kids, laughing and having fun.

His rebbi, Rav Davis, was amazed. He hadn't done anything differently, yet Yossi was suddenly thriving. Curious about what had caused the change, Rav Davis called Yossi's mother. He told her about Yossi's remarkable improvement.

Then he asked, "Can you tell me what happened at home that brought about such a change?"

The Mother Deeply Felt Her Son's Pain

Yossi's mother explained, "I was so worried about Yossi that I cried for months. I couldn't sleep. I imagined him struggling in class and being left out during recess. Worst of all I was hearing him cry every night, as he soaked his pillow with tears. As his mother, I felt his pain deeply.

"Then, I thought of an idea. I told Yossi that there is one special time every week in which I daven very hard for him and all of my children — when I bentch light (light Shabbos candles). During that time, I recite a special tefillah for the wellbeing and success of my children. It's a special time, an eis ratzon, when I can pour out my heart to Hashem.

"Why don't you stand next to me when I light the candles,' I suggested to Yossi, 'and daven with me? Together, we can pour out our hearts to Hashem. Maybe that will help you.'

"Yossi was so miserable that he was willing to try anything," continued his mother. "So, on that Friday night, as I lit the candles, Yossi stood next to me. We both covered our faces and cried and we whispered our tefillos to Hashem. After a few moments, we were finished. Our eyes were red from crying, but we felt a sense of relief and hope.

“From that moment,” Yossi’s mother went on, “everything started to change. Yossi’s confidence returned, and he began to succeed in school. I believe it was our heartfelt prayers and tears that made the difference.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.
Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “A Most Meaningful Tisha B’Av.”

The Anonymous Man's Last Act Before He Was Killed

By Shmuel Raskin



Avraham Somechi

What have you heard about Avraham Somechi, who was killed this week in the terrible attack here in Holon? Most people didn’t know him. In online searches, you’ll find very little information—barely even a photograph. Personally, I only recognized him when his picture was published (and even that was a challenge). People around me also started talking about him.

As always, it seems that G-d plucks the most beautiful flowers.

Avraham lived in our neighborhood and prayed regularly at the Ahava Ve'achva synagogue. He rarely raised his voice, and those who sat next to him regularly didn't even know his name. He would arrive early, leave quietly, and that was that. Did anyone imagine that Avraham was a respected lecturer at Tel Aviv University? Did anyone dream that he was a phenomenal Torah genius?

Taught the “Patach Eliyahu” as a Scholar and a Way Others Could Understand

Very few knew his greatness. When the late Rabbi Ezra Yitzhak (who passed away about a month ago) struggled with a Talmud lesson, he would ask Avraham to explain. Sometimes the Torah teacher didn't arrive, and Avraham volunteered to stand in. He chose to teach the section of the Zohar known as “*Patach Eliyahu*,” which includes the foundations of Kabbalah. He explained it as a scholar could. The congregation understood, and Avraham returned to his anonymity.

I know several people who can explain *Patach Eliyahu*. I know others who can assist the rabbi with difficulty in a Talmud lesson. And, of course, I'm acquainted with professors and researchers at the university. But someone who could do it all—quietly and simply—that you do not meet every day.

You won't find much written about him anywhere. That's who he was. A great man who walked among us, until, in one moment, he sanctified G-d's name.

His Final Act – A Concern for a Beggar

But perhaps the last message from Rabbi Avraham was his final act:

On that Sunday morning, his last day, Rabbi Avraham finished his prayers and folded his prayer shawl. He was hurrying to leave the synagogue promptly to take his wife, may she live and be well, somewhere. Just before he exited the synagogue—unaware that it was the last quarter-hour of his life—he turned to one of his fellow worshippers and made a request: “Every day after prayers, there is a beggar who comes by. I see you're sticking around. Please take this coin and give it on my behalf.”

That was Rabbi Avraham's final act. When he completed the mitzvah of charity, he concluded his mission in this world. Now he resides in a better place, undoubtedly praying for all of us. Quietly. There, in the heavens, they see him differently than we did here.

May his great merit protect our neighborhood and the grieving family, within the entire people of Israel who mourn during these days of prolonged exile. And may we soon merit the true and complete Redemption. Amen!

Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org

A Reason for the Karp Family's Troubles

By Rabbi David Ashear

Duvi Karp* was going through a rough patch at work and began searching for another job. Eventually, he was offered a respectable position halfway across the country, in an established Jewish community. It was a major upheaval for the family to relocate after living in the same place for twenty years, but the situation looked promising and they were optimistic about starting a better life.

Forced to Relocate Again

But this was not to be. After some time there, they realized that matters were not working out well and were forced to relocate again. They integrated well into their new community, although they continued to struggle financially.

Shortly after their second move, the Karps' daughter Chavah* returned home after spending a year studying in Eretz Yisrael. It was time for her to begin dating, but her parents were worried. Their financial situation had not improved. They were virtual unknowns in their new community. Finally, when people would check out their family for shidduch purposes, they would learn that they had moved twice within a few years and wonder about their stability.

Mrs. Karp had been working on her emunah, and she did her regular hishtadlus. She called shadchanim, davened, and put her trust in Hashem. A few months later, her nephew recommended one of his friends, as a potential shidduch. When they checked him out, they found out that he was from their original community! The Karps knew his rabbi very well, and Mrs. Karp called to inquire about the young man.

The Rabbi's Enthusiastic Response

"I know why you are calling," the rabbi said as soon as she identified herself. "To ask about Yitzchok Haber.* He already called me to ask about you! Of course, I told him to go ahead with the shidduch." The rabbi continued, "Yitzchak told me that your daughter was mentioned to him last week. Since then, he flew to a friend's wedding – which turned out to be in the first community to which you moved. He 'happened' to stay in the home of Chavah's former teacher, who gave him a glowing report."

Chavah and Yitzchak met, and they got married. “We are so happy!” Mrs. Karp said. “Yitzchak is a top boy from a great family. Hashem is so kind! It seemed so unlikely that Chavah would meet the type of young man she was looking for, but Hashem worked it out. He put everyone in the right place at the right time, and He sent us the best!” (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book –“Living Emunah on Shidduchim”)

Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

Rav Chaim and the Boy With the Poor Vision

By R' Yoni Schwartz



A man once walked into the office of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, ZT”L, distraught, with his face penetratingly serious. His emotions were almost tangible. Next to him stood his son about which he explained to Rav Chaim that the doctors told him he had a serious illness that affected the eyes and was destined to lose his vision very soon.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, Rav Chaim immediately gazed deeply into the boy’s eyes, as if he was looking into his soul. After a long while, Rav Chaim looked up and offered a solution.

“I want you and your family and everyone you know to accept upon themselves the sanctity of Shabbos,” said Rav Chaim. “Accept upon yourselves to keep Shabbos earlier and due to that commitment, your child’s vision will be fine.”

He immediately went home and told his wife. Together they made phone calls to the community and together, everybody began ushering in Shabbos a little bit earlier each week with love, enthusiasm, and sanctity. They did not just passively observe Shabbos - they actively lived it, beautified it, and enjoyed its holiness.

Shortly after, the boy visited the doctor for his routine exam. The doctor was shocked! He exclaimed, “I do not know what happened. I checked your child and his vision is perfectly clear.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Va'eschanan '5784 email of Torah Sweets.

Where Are You Going?



Rabbi Sholom Rubashkin tells of a time he was once with a pilot looking at a small Cessna plane which was high winged and had a single propellor in the front. Inside the plane he saw many buttons and dials, but one stood out to him, it was a dial with a picture of a small plane.

He asked what that dial did, and the pilot replied, “That dial is what tells you if you are going up or down, sideways or upside down.”

Rubashkin was confused, “Can’t you just tell if you are going up and down. It’s pretty obvious, just look out the window”.

The pilot replied, “One would think. But in bad weather it’s very hard to tell. This little dial tells us exactly where we are going. Without this dial we would not know how to reach our destination!”

So too, we must know where we are going. Just like pilots, we cannot use our assessment of the situation to guide us. We can’t only listen to our emotions, because they change our perspective. We feel like doing different things each moment. That is why we have the Torah to guide us throughout our lives. Just focus on what the Torah is saying to do because the Torah is the *emet*—truth, and it will lead us on the life we are meant to live.

Reprinted from the Parashat Va’etchanan email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Legacy of the Mensch of Malden Mills



Rabbi Yoel Gold told a few stories in his video presentation, *Illumination*, that remind and inspire us to follow in Hashem’s ways and be a light unto the nations. The first story in the video was about the Mensch of Malden Mills.

In December 1995, a boiler exploded in the largest textile factory in the country, the Malden Mills. The entire factory was burned to the ground in a fire so

large, that it took an entire week to put out. At the most festive time of the year for thousands of Mr. Feuerstein's largely Christian workforce, they faced the stress of unemployment, the anxiety over providing for their families, and the uncertainty of what lay ahead.

Mr. Aaron Feuerstein ZT'L, the CEO of the company, a third-generation owner, was about to collect half a billion dollars in insurance for the overnight destruction of his factory. He was faced with a decision: either pocket the money and retire or rebuild the company overseas, saving money on labor, and then pocketing most of the insurance money. Both were great and reasonable options. At 70 years-old, it was commonly assumed he would retire.

A Stunning Decision to Do the Unexpected

The next day, Mr. Feuerstein called a press conference to publicly declare his plans. It was televised and many important political figures attended along with the factory employees. Mr. Feuerstein stood up and announced that he would rebuild the factory where it originally stood. Everyone waited in shock, and he continued with an even more stunning proclamation. "All our employees will be paid their full salaries while the factory is rebuilt." The entire place erupted in applause filled with intense emotion.

Mr. Feuerstein paid tens of millions of dollars in employees' salaries during this uncertain time. It was covered on the national news. When he was interviewed and asked why he did such an inspiring act of kindness, he quoted Pirke Avot in Hebrew, "Bimkom she'en anashim, hishtadel lehiyot ish—In a place where there's no humanity, strive to be a human being."

Mr. Feuerstein was a man of Torah who treated his workers as human beings, not a pair of hands. He did plenty for his employees, as well as the Orthodox community in Boston. Sadly, he passed away after Rabbi Yoel Gold's interview, but he will be remembered for many years as an anav and a man of integrity and chessed.

Reprinted from the Parashat Va'etchanan email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

Brotherly Love

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

One morning, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Kapishnitzer Rebbe, traveled from his home in Boro Park to see R' Chatzkel, one of the members of his daily minyan in his office in the diamond district in midtown Manhattan.

When R' Chatzkel heard that the Kapishnitzer Rebbe had come, he burst into the reception room and asked in shock and disbelief, "Why did the Rebbe come here? I would have come to the Rebbe wherever he would have called me!"

The Rebbe smiled gently and said, "It is I who needs you; therefore, it was proper for me to come to you."

R' Chatzkel reverently ushered the Rebbe into his private office, again expressing how embarrassed he felt that the Rebbe felt it necessary to make a personal visit. The Rebbe again assured him that since it was he who needed something from R' Chatzkel, it was only proper that he should come, and not vice versa.



R' Chatzkel then asked how he could be of assistance.

The Rebbe began slowly, looking R' Chatzkel squarely in the eye. "I have become aware of a family that is in desperate need of funds. The husband is out of a job; the wife must be home to care for their many children, and thus she cannot work for an income. Some of the children have been ill and there are considerable medical bills to pay. Even food is scarce in that home. I need a significant amount of money for them."

R' Chatzkel protested that the Rebbe could have called him on the phone and he would surely have responded with a donation.

The Rebbe told him, "No, this is a very important situation to me and I felt I had to approach you personally."

R' Chatzkel was forthcoming. "I will give as much money as the Rebbe requests. Just tell me how much I shall give."

The Rebbe explained that that decision is only one that R' Chatzkel, as the donor, could make by himself.

R' Chatzkel then asked, "May I give a check?"

The Rebbe confirmed that he could.

"To whom shall I make out the check?" asked R' Chatzkel.

The Rebbe looked down at the floor for a moment, hesitated before he spoke, and then said quietly, "Write the check to your brother."

Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

“Good Morning!”



A Bachur who learned in the Mir Yeshivah in Eretz Yisroel, would Daven in the Yeshivah, and would enter into the Beis Medrash through a door that was near the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zt"l. As he would enter, he would say "Good morning" to his Rebbe, and the Rebbe would respond to him with "Good morning" also.

One morning when this young man entered and approached the Rosh Yeshivah, he saw that his Rebbe had already put on his Tefillin Shel Yad and had not yet put on the Shel Rosh. Knowing that his Rebbe couldn't speak at that moment, he didn't say "Good morning," but made his way to his seat instead, in the back of the Beis Medrash and began Davening, not thinking anything of it.

When Davening was over, the boy noticed that the Rosh Yeshivah had stood up from his seat, and with great difficulty, was walking through the Beis Medrash and making his way slowly to the rear. It was so difficult for the Rosh Yeshivah to walk that he was usually wheeled in and out of Davening in his wheel chair, yet he carefully made his way down the aisle.

All eyes turned to watch as they tried to imagine what was so pressing for the Rosh Yeshivah to make such a strenuous effort to get through the Beis Medrash. When he arrived at this Bachur, the Rosh Yeshivah said to him, with a voice full of love, "Good morning!" and then turned around and made his way back to the front.

The young man was overcome with emotion because, like so many others, the Rosh Yeshivah made him feel like a prized Talmid. To Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, every Talmid and every Yid was prized and special!

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

The Older Rabbi's Secret

Elishai is a teacher in Eretz Yisroel who works with immigrant youth. Recently, he was traveling on a bus and met an older man, who was wearing clothing that clearly identified him as a religious Jewish Rabbi, including a long coat and black hat, and this Rabbi began to engage with Elishai in Torah learning during the bus ride.

As the bus approached their destination, the older Rabbi turned to Elishai and asked him about his work. Elishai told him about his young students, and noted that many of them feel far from Torah and the Jewish religion.

The Rabbi's Special Story

The Rabbi was silent. After a few minutes, he began to tell Elishai a story. "Next month, I'm going to take early retirement from the Bais Din where I have worked as a judge for the past 25 years. But you should know that I didn't always look like this. These clothes, the beard, the religion, it's not something I learned from at home.

"My parents were older Holocaust survivors, and they didn't have the emotional ability to give me the attention that I needed. I spent my time in the streets, and before my Bar Mitzvah I was already practically a criminal. By age 15, this is how I was known among my local community, as a criminal.

“My friends and I often spent the Holy Shabbos playing soccer near a local Shul, and the ball would often fly into the Shul courtyard. One week, I kicked the ball very hard. It flew out of the field and toward the Shul just as the Rabbi came out. The ball went so far and hard, that it hit the Rabbi’s black hat and knocked it to the ground. My friends and I fell down laughing. The Rabbi came over to me, and I said mockingly, ‘Shabbat Shalom, would his honor the Rabbi like to make Kiddush or join the game?’

Asked About His Parents

“The Rabbi was not upset, he looked at me and asked, ‘Where are your parents?’

“I answered, still mocking, ‘My parents are dead.’

“The Rabbi said, ‘Come with me.’ It amused me, so I decided to go with him. We reached his house and went in. He made Kiddush and gave me some to drink, and asked me, ‘Are you hungry?’ I answered that I was starving. The Rabbi gestured to his Rebbetzin, and they set the table and gave me food. I ate like someone who hadn’t eaten in a week.

“The Rabbi ate just a little, and mostly looked at me and talked. I later realized that I had eaten his share, too. When I finished eating, he asked, ‘Are you tired?’ ‘Exhausted,’ I said. The Rabbi offered me a bed. I went to sleep, and slept there the whole day. When I woke up it was Saturday night.

Gave the Boy Money to Go to the Cinema

“The Rabbi asked me, ‘What would you like to do?’ I told him I wanted to go to the cinema and see a movie. He asked, ‘How much does the cinema cost?’ I told him one and a half shekels. He gave me the money and sent me on my way, and before I left he told me, ‘Please come again tomorrow,’ so I listened and came to his house again the next day.

“I ate, slept, and got more money for the cinema. This happened again another day, and many more days to follow. Over time I discovered that there were 12 other kids like me, from off the street, who came to this Rabbi’s house. I couldn’t be ungrateful, and I also began to really love him. With time, he started to teach me about the Mitzvos. He bought me a pair of Tefilin and he would sit and teach me Torah.

“All thanks to him, I eventually went to Yeshivah, and ended up learning to be a Rabbi, and ultimately, a Dayan on a Bais Din. He married me off, came to my children’s weddings, and was Sandek at my grandsons’ Bris Milahs. So, I am telling you all of this to please don’t despair of your students,” the older Rabbi told Elishai. “You see me as I am today, a Dayan in a Bais Din, but once I was just like them.

Just love them. Love them like they were your own children, just as my Rabbi did with me.”

As the two began to descend from the bus, Elishai asked the Dayan, “What was your Rabbi’s name?” The man responded, “What do you mean, was? He still is. He’s very old, he’s 92, but Baruch Hashem he is still alive.”

“And what is his name?” Elishai asked again.



“Rav Ovadia Yosef,” his fellow passenger answered!

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