

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS BESHALLACH 5784

Volume 15, Issue 20 17 Shevat 5784/January 27, 2024

Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

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## An Outrageous Marriage Made in Tsfat

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



**A photo of the Baba Sali  
In his younger years**

During his stay in Tsfat (Safed) in 5683 (1923), my father [the **Baba Sali**] made discreet inquiries about which *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars) were in need of receiving *tzedakah* (charity).

The Rabbis of Tsfat informed him that **R. Tzion Cohen**, a distinguished and elderly *talmid chacham*, was physically disabled and in desperate need of charity. His wife and all his children perished in the terrible famines of the First World War, leaving him to suffer his pain in utter solitude. Being that he was partially paralyzed, even the most minor chore was an excruciating task for the sick and elderly man.

### **A Pathetic One-Room Apartment**

My father visited Rabbi Tzion in his tiny, stale, unlit room. It measured no more than four *amot* by four *amot* [2 meters x 2 meters]. He found the elderly man lying helplessly in his bed, unable to move. Were it not for the generosity of the men and women who came regularly to feed him, his situation would have been much worse. My father gave him a substantial sum of money from his charity fund and then he prepared to bless him with a speedy recovery, intending to take his leave immediately afterwards.

But the sick man suddenly turned to my father and pleaded with him: "Rebbe! Give me a *perfect* blessing!"

My father, surprised by such a request, asked him, "What blessing do you want me to give you, Grandfather?"

He answered, "Give me a blessing that I should merit to heal from my illness that I should marry and bear children, on order that I may leave offspring in my memory."

### **Shocked by the Poor Sick Man's Request**

My father was astounded by the sick man's request. How could he pray to G-d that an invalid man in his seventies should marry and bear children? This request was beyond the ways of nature.

R. Tzion discerned my father's astonishment, and with confidence he encouraged him. "Rebbe, I have absolute faith that if you will bless me as I have requested of you, my wishes will be fulfilled."

Still, my father was uncertain. "Do you really have total faith?"

"Yes!" the sick man answered. "Otherwise, I would not ask this of you."

At last, his perfect faith succeeded in inducing my father to give him the blessing he so strongly requested.

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Ten years later, in the year 5693 (1932), my father once again visited *Eretz Yisrael*. When he arrived in Tsfat, he suddenly remembered the sickly Rabbi Tzion Cohen and the blessing he had given him.

When he made inquiries about R. Tzion's state, one of the prominent rabbis of Tsfat led him to a fine house. There, to my father's amazement, was none

other than R. Tzion, sitting on the porch on an elegant couch, dressed in the finest clothes. At his feet played two youngsters.

After having refreshments brought in, R. Tzion invited my mystified father to listen to his miraculous tale.

### **The Wealthy Widow from South America**

"You see, Your Holiness, a wealthy widow from South America arrived in Tzfat with her seventeen-year-old daughter. Upon asking the rabbis of Tzfat to whom she should give charity, she was directed to my poor home.

"When she saw my awful state, this saintly woman became extremely distressed, and she took pity on me. She ordered her servants to remove all the furniture from my tiny room at once, to paint the walls, and to purchase a new bed and linen. As well as covering all the costs, she personally supervised that her orders were executed precisely according to instructions.

'But this was not the end of the miracle.

'The holy woman decided not to return to South America, but instead, to remain at my side and to take care of me. An interpreter informed me of her decision, and I protested strongly.

"G-d forbid! I will not remain in seclusion with a woman and thereby violate the prohibition of *yichud* (â€œalonenessâ€™: remaining in seclusion with any woman other than one's wife [or mother or grandmother or sister] ).

"The interpreter relayed my refusal to her, but the determined woman asked,

'What can I do so that I will be permitted to stay by your side?'

"The bewildered interpreter answered, 'The only way is for Madam to marry R. Tzion according to Jewish law.'

"And can Your Holiness believe G-d's ways in the world “ she consented to marry me immediately!

### **His Protest Shocked the Local Rabbis**

“I again protested vehemently, however, much to the surprise of the local rabbis.

"They threatened me, stating, 'If you refuse to marry this woman, we will announce a prohibition against helping you any further.’’

"So, when I saw that there was absolutely no other choice, I went even further and made what must have seemed to be quite an outrageous request: 'If you really want to help me, then ask her to allow me to marry her daughter!'

"Well, when the widow was told of my latest request, she again startled us all and answered, 'The decision is not mine to make. My daughter must decide for herself.'

"At that point, the daughter was told the entire conversation as well as about Rabbi Tzion Cohen's firm belief that he would father children, and asked whether she would agree to marry an old, sick man. Of course, we all assumed the bizarre tale had reached its conclusion, but her answer also astonished everyone.

"I will do whatever my mother says. If my mother agrees, then I am 100% willing to marry him. It will be a great privilege and a merit to be married to such an important Torah sage and to bear the children that he so absolutely has faith will be born.'

### **Not the End of Rabbi Cohen's Miracle**

"And so, my dear Savior, this apartment was rented immediately, the best medical care was made available to me, and thank G-d, I have recovered from my illness. But again, that is not the end of the miracles--your blessing came to be; I have borne two sons!"

"And you know, Your Holiness, all of these blessings came to me as a consequence of my devotion to the study of Torah and my fear of Heaven, as it says, 'G-d desires the prayer of the righteous, He hears their supplications, and fulfills their words.'"

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*Source:* Freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "*Our Master, Our Teacher. The holy Baba Sali*" by [his son,] R. Baruch Abuhatzera, (I don't have the book in my possession, so I can't report to you the identity of the translator from the original Hebrew volume.)

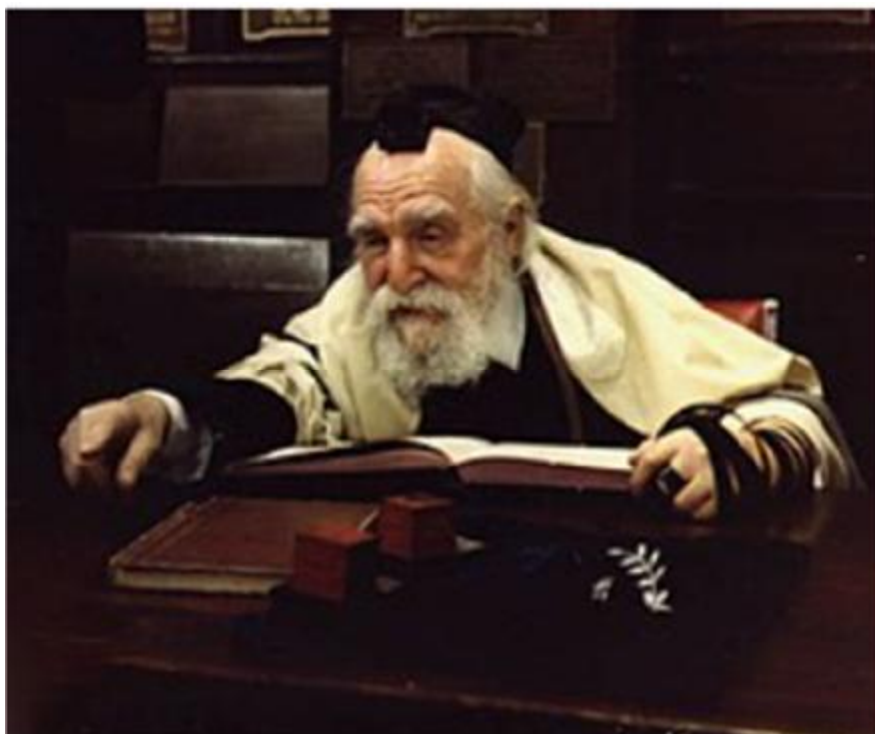
*Connection:* This Saturday night, the 4th of the Jewish month of Shvat, begins the 40th yearzeit of Baba Sali.

### **The Baba Sali's Biographical Note**

*Biographical note:* **Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzera** [Rosh Hashana 1889 - 4 Shvat1984] known as **Baba Sali**, was born in Tafilalet Morocco, to one of Jewry's most illustrious families. From a young age he was renowned as a sage, miracle maker and master kabbalist. In 1964 he moved to Eretz Yisrael, eventually settling in 1970 in the Southern development town he made famous, Netivot, and where, since 1984, his tomb has become one of Israel's most visited pilgrimage sites. A number of collections of stories featuring him have been published, including at least two in English.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaera 5784 email of Kabbalaonline.org, a project of the Ascent of Safed.*

# Rav Moshe and the Luban Mikvah



Rav Dovid Hoffman relates that in Communist Russia, the Communists were opposed to all forms of religion, especially Judaism, and they expended great effort to destroy Jewish religious life. They called for the death of the Jewish religion. One of their methods to do this was that they opened a network of kindergartens, schools, and youth clubs, where there was no mention of Jewish history or faith, and where the belief in Hashem was treated as ‘a superstition of backward people’, R”L.

Instead, they taught the Communist ideology and culture with great enthusiasm. As time went on, Yeshivos, Cheiders, and Mikvahs in Russia were forced to close, and teaching Torah became a crime against the State.

The Rav of one of the Russian communities, Luban, was Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, and due to his quiet and respectful manner, and his avoidance of public encounters with the Communists, remained in relatively good standing with the authorities and its supporters.

Although there was no doubt where Rav Moshe stood on the religious issues, the government could tolerate him, because he did not, at least publicly, talk against

them or their harsh policies. In private, though, Rav Moshe continued to learn Gemara with the men of the town, and he gave Chizuk to the people to remain strong in their belief in Hashem, and their observance of every Mitzvah, regardless of the persecutions.

There was one particular incident that illustrated both Rav Moshe's courage, and his effectiveness during those years, and he succeeded in having a Mikvah built, with the help of the Communists themselves. In Luban, the officials decided to demolish the old Mikvah building, giving the excuse that it was unhygienic. In its place, they planned to build a new bathhouse, which would be designated for mixed swimming.

### **Arranged to Have Ice or Snow Placed in the Empty Bath**

There was nothing Rav Moshe could do to stop these plans. However, when it came time for the new construction, Rav Moshe was able to convince the non-Jewish contractor to build the pool in such a way that it would be a Kosher Mikvah. He then bribed him to arrange to have ice or snow placed in the empty bath. The pool was now filled for the first time with forty Se'ah of Kosher water for a Mikvah, because when there is no choice, one may place snow or ice in an empty Mikvah with Keilim.

With the construction completed, a different problem had to be solved. Men and women were expected to use the pool at the same time, and this is something that no Jew in Luban would ever dream of doing. Rav Moshe knew that unless this situation could be changed, the pool would be useless as a Mikvah.

Rav Moshe approached a high-ranking official, someone whose respect he had earned, and presented the dilemma to him in a tactful way. He said that the Jewish community very much wanted to enjoy the new sanitary swimming pool and bathhouse that was generously provided by the government, but they would not bathe in a mixed environment.

### **A Deeply Ingrained Sense of Modesty**

Rav Moshe gave a convincing argument and said, "These new ways may be good for some people, but the Jews have always lived with a deeply ingrained sense of modesty, and we won't bathe in a mixed bathhouse. This will be a danger to everyone, because not bathing is unhygienic, and it will bring about all sorts of disease. The best solution is to allow separate bathing at least once a week."

The official understood the problem and he agreed to Rav Moshe's proposal, and the Jews now had a Kosher Mikvah, which was the only one for miles around. Since most people didn't have access to transportation in those days, there were men and women who would walk all the way to Luban, and in some cases, this was a journey of three days, just to use the precious Mikvah.

Although Rav Moshe had to rely on a number of leniencies for the new Mikvah to be Kosher, Rav Moshe allowed his Rebbitzen to make use of it, and this was vital for the Jews of Luban and the surrounding areas to see that even their esteemed Rav and Rebbitzen benefitted from the Mikvah, and this gave them confidence in the Kashrus of the Mikvah for themselves.

Many years later, Rav Moshe wrote about this in Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim I 126), "In our city Luban, it became possible, through Hashem's kindness, to construct a Mikvah during the years of evil decrees, in a public bathhouse that was run by the government. And the authorities were unaware that it was in fact a Kosher Mikvah."

Such was the love that Rav Moshe had for his fellow Yidden, that he went to all sorts of lengths to help others!

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

## The Sassover Rebbe and the Innkeeper

Yankel the innkeeper lived in an isolated village for so long that he barely remembered that he was a Jew. Shabbos was a word he dimly recalled. Day and night he served the Polish peasants who bought drinks in his little inn. Nothing new ever happened and one year slipped unnoticed into the next.

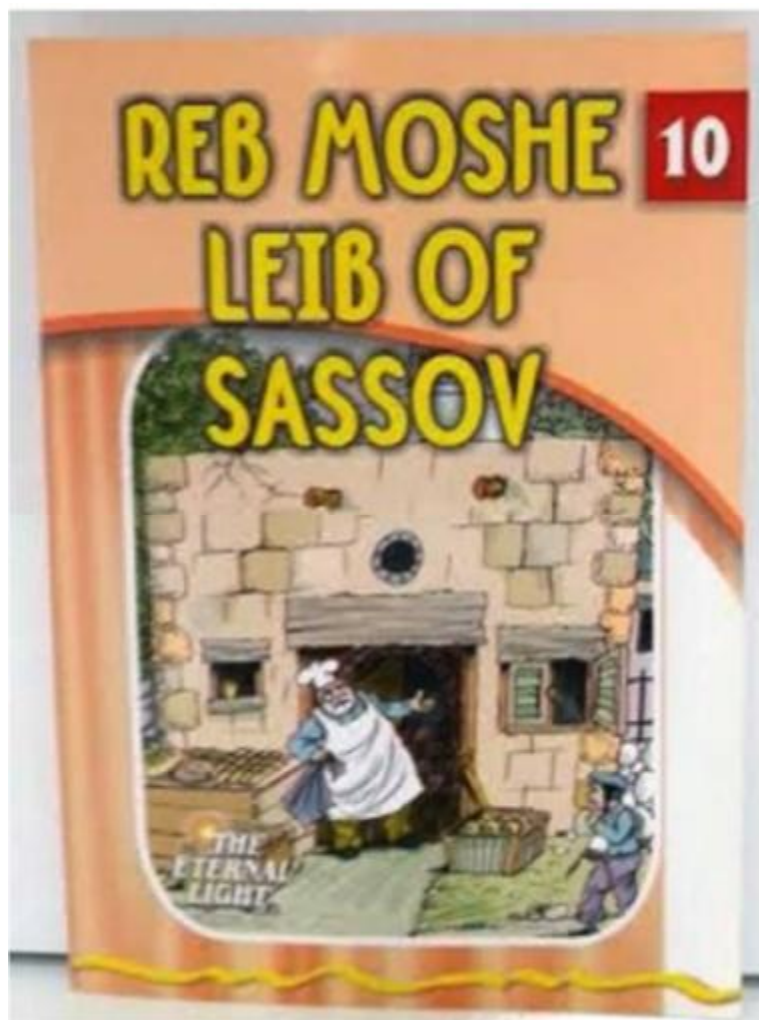
One day, however, a tall, husky Jew entered Yankel's inn and disturbed Yankel's quiet existence. This visitor was none other than the famous Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, who had leased a hut in the middle of a forest in order to meditate and pray in the stillness of the woods. At times, however, he came to the village to purchase food, and that is how he happened to meet Yankel.

When Rabbi Moshe Leib had first entered his inn, something deep inside Yankel stirred and prompted him to say to the Rabbi, "You know, sir, I am a Jew."

"How can you live in a place where there are no other Jews?" the Rabbi queried him. "It seems you have even forgotten our holy traditions. My poor brother, even the animals of Jews refrain from work on the Shabbos. How can you do less than that?"

Yankel blushed at Rabbi Moshe Leib's words. "But, Rabbi," he continued, "I have to stay open on Shabbos or the peasants will buy their drinks elsewhere, and I will lose my livelihood!"

"Nevertheless," Rabbi Moshe Leib insisted, "you must close on Shabbos. How can a holy Jewish soul do less than the donkey of a Jew who is kept from working on the Shabbos day?"



When Yankel saw that the Tzaddik was adamant, he began to consider the matter more seriously. Eventually, he resolved to close the inn on Shabbos. Yankel's announcement provoked a bitter reaction from his customers.

"If you refuse to sell us liquor, we'll complain to the landlord! He'll throw you out! You can't do this to us!"

Yankel knew they would follow through on their threat especially since it involved the issue of vodka. He walked deep into the forest until he found the hut of Rabbi Moshe Leib. "The peasants are threatening to ruin me," Yankel cried.

"Don't worry," replied Rabbi Moshe Leib. "Bolt the doors. If the landlord questions you, do not hesitate to tell him that your G-d commanded Jews to keep the Shabbos day holy."



The innkeeper was very frightened, but he still resolved to do as the Rabbi said. Shabbos arrived and Yankel bolted the door of his inn. The peasants arrived and began to pound on the door and windows trying to get in. Finally, the voice of the landlord could be heard outside, demanding that Yankel open the door.

### **The Innkeeper Opens the Door for the Furious Nobleman**

Yankel had no choice but to accommodate him. The furious nobleman entered the inn and screamed, "Who do you think you are, denying vodka to your customers! Why else did I lease this inn to you, except to make a profit?"

"Sir," began a frightened Yankel, "surely you know I am a Jew. Just recently I was told by a holy Jewish Rabbi that our Torah forbids us to work on the Shabbos day. That is why I have closed the inn today."

The directness of the reply intrigued the landowner. "Where is this person? Bring him to me!"

Soon, Rabbi Moshe Leib was standing before the landlord. "Tell me, Jew, does this prohibition against working apply to a Jew who is in danger of losing his livelihood?" he asked, in a cutting tone. "Sir, it applies even in such a case," was the Tzaddik's reply.

"How can you allow yourself to torment this man? I doubt your answer would be the same if it were your livelihood that was involved. Well, I know how to find out. If you are really sincere, I will permit the innkeeper to close on the Shabbos."

The landlord dismissed the Rabbi, a plan hatching in his mind. The following Shabbos, the landowner rode into the forest with a bag of gold coins. He scattered the coins on the ground near the Tzaddik's hut and waited to see what would transpire.

### **Returns to Examine the Gold Coins More Closely**

At first the Tzaddik passed right by the coins after barely glancing at them, but then he returned and examined them closely. The landlord waited gleefully for the fatal moment when the Jew would eagerly scoop them into his hands. But no, he averted his eyes and continued walking.

The landowner then rushed out of his hiding place. "I am very impressed, and I will keep my end of the deal. But tell me, why did you first ignore the money and then bend down to examine it?"

"I will explain," began Rabbi Moshe Leib. "At first, I ignored the money, for it was Shabbos. But then, I began to think how I needed the money to rescue many imprisoned Jews. I considered that perhaps the Mitzvah of redeeming captives and saving lives overrides the prohibitions of the Shabbos. I became confused, and then I prayed to G-d to give me direction."

“Suddenly I understood. Sir, if I had taken or hidden the money, you would not have understood my motives. You would have assumed that I was taking it for my own desires. I realized that G-d is certainly capable to provide me with the money in a permissible way. I have always scrupulously observed the Shabbos, and now Heaven has protected me from coming to any harm. Surely, now you can see the importance for a Jew to keep the holiness of the Shabbos.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va'eira 5784 email of Rabbi David Caro's Inspired by a Story.*

## **Not Your Size**

**By Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein, zt”l**



Years ago, a young 31-year-old woman with a wonderful spirit and generous heart living in the Five Towns, New York, passed away. The tragedy was compounded even further by the fact that her husband had passed too some years before. Between them, they left a 7-year-old orphaned son with no mother or father. It was a reeling sorrow for the community, aside from the entirety of Klal Yisrael. With no parents to raise him, the boy found a new home with his grandparents. I knew of this woman, as her sister attended my seminary.

The Friday morning of *shiva*, I headed to the grandparents' home to be *menachem avel*. As Shacharis was called for 7 a.m. and the young boy wasn't up yet, I took a seat next to the grandfather, the father of the woman who had passed

away. I remained silent at first, as my mind raced with thoughts of what I could possibly tell him to provide a dose of comfort.

Waiting until I felt it was appropriate, I began relaying the core of my *shiur* I had given around Purim time about how Esther was born with no parents (her father passing away before she was born, and her mother passing away when she was born). As the grandfather allowed my words to settle, he turned back to me and composed himself. “Rabbi, you speak a lot, and I want to tell you something that you can share.

### **The Daughter’s Secret for the Past Ten Years of Her Life**

My daughter for the last ten years of her life worked in a clothing store in the Five Towns. A few days ago, my daughter’s good friend came here and told me something that I never knew. ‘I have something to share with you,’ she said. ‘Your daughter swore me to secrecy never to tell anybody, but now that she’s passed, I think I can tell you. It should be a source of merit for her *neshama*.’ The grandfather had no idea what information his daughter’s friend would spring on him.

“Your daughter had a secret,” began the friend. “As you know, she herself was very slender. One day she told me that every time a girl walks into the store and she’s a little overweight, she does the same thing. She doesn’t bring her a dress that is her size and will fit her well; instead, she brings her a size bigger than she needs. When she does this, and then the customer puts it on, her reaction is, ‘It’s too big.’ And if her mother is accompanying her, she might add, ‘You see! Not everything is too small on me! Look, I lost weight!’

Every single girl who may have been conscious or embarrassed of her weight and walked into the store received this response. And every single girl ended up feeling good, knowing that there are other clothes that don’t fit her. For ten years this was your daughter’s secret.”

### **A Simple but Remarkable Idea**

As the grandfather relayed this to me, I sat still, no words coming to mind. Remarkable. A simple, little idea that meant more to others than would have ever been assumed.

“Seeing” someone else is a Jewish secret. It is the verb used to describe Avraham’s behavior when he “saw” the angels approaching his tent in the scorching heat of the desert, and how Yosef “saw” the butler and baker who looked downtrodden one morning as they sat in jail and he showed them he cared. ‘Why is your face downcast?’ were Yosef’s words.

This 31-year-old woman had a very hard life. You’d think that she was able to worry about everyone else because her life was great. It wasn’t. She had lots of personal woes and worries to deal with. But it didn’t spell a difference to her. She

came up with this little idea, and who knows how many hundreds of girls walked out of that store happy, and perhaps even positively encouraged. “I lost a little bit of weight; who knows, maybe I can lose a bit more?” Daughters walked out uplifted and mothers and daughters walked out together in good spirits.

Where does this come from? Being a Rosh Yeshiva, a Rebbetzin, Mama Rachel? From a woman who worked in a clothing store. She “looked” at others and saw their struggle. That’s the hallmark of greatness. The merits of this young woman will continue to reverberate for her in Gan Eden for eternity.

If you have the sensitive eye to peer beyond the humdrum of life, embedded there behind it all are layers upon layers of opportunity. And when you seize them, you will be capturing a gem. A gem that will brighten up the life of all those around you, and leave them just a little bit more loving of themselves and the beautiful life Hashem gave them.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shemot 5784 Torahanytime.com Newsletter as compiled and edited by compiled by Elan Perchik.*

## “Good Morning”

**By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**

The annual dinner of Agudath Israel in the spring of 1999 was dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who had passed away one year earlier on the day of that year’s annual dinner. In preparation for the dinner, Rabbi Sherer’s son, Rav Shimshon, visited Agudah headquarters in Lower Manhattan. He entered the huge office building and walked across the lobby to the receptionist, a gentile woman.

Rav Shimshon wished her a “Good morning” and asked if he had to sign in. “If you’re here to visit Agudath Israel, it’s not necessary,” she replied. Rav Shimshon said that, indeed, he had come to visit Agudath Israel. He added, “Rabbi Sherer, the late president of Agudath Israel, was my father. Did you know him?”

“Did I know him?” the woman responded. “I smile every day because of him!” She explained: “Among all those who occupied offices in this building, Rabbi Sherer was always the first to arrive for work each morning. He would enter the building briskly, as if he was in a hurry to do something important. He would press the button for the elevator and then, as he waited for the elevator to descend, he would hurry across the lobby to my desk. ‘Good morning — and keep on smiling,’ he would tell me. And I knew that he meant it.

“Tears are welling up in my eyes as I say this. At times, my life is rough, but then I remember your father’s words and I smile.”



**Rabbi Moshe Sherer, z"l**

Hearing this, Rav Shimshon was reminded of an incident that happened in his youth. As a young boy, he would walk through the streets of Boro Park on Shabbos morning together with his father as they made their way to shul. Rabbi Sherer wished a “Gut Shabbos” to every Jew he passed and a “Good morning” to every gentile.

One Shabbos morning, young Shimshon asked his father, “Daddy, are you running for president? Why must you say ‘Good morning’ to every single person whom we pass?”

### **I Greeted the Tzaddik with a ‘Shalom Aleichem’”**

Rabbi Sherer replied, “As you know, when I was a student at Mesivta Torah Vodaath, I had the great privilege of serving as an assistant of sorts to the gaon and tzaddik Rav Elchonon Wasserman when he visited America in 1938. I first met Rav Elchonon when I reported to his room one morning at the Broadway Central Hotel. I greeted the tzaddik with a “Shalom Aleichem” and then we headed for the elevator to go downstairs.

“As we waited for the elevator, Rav Elchonon turned to me and asked, ‘Vi azoi zagt men ‘Gut morgen’ oif Eenglish?’ (How does one say ‘Gut morgen’ in English?) I replied, ‘Very much like we say it in Yiddish — ‘Good morning.’

“R’ Elchonon then paced back and forth and practiced saying ‘Good morning.’ The elevator arrived, and as we entered it, Rav Elchonon wished the

gentile elevator attendant, ‘Good morning.’ He then turned to me and asked, ‘Hob ich gut gezokt?’ (‘Did I say it well?’)

“And so,” concluded Rabbi Sherer, “I learned from Rav Elchonon that saying ‘Good morning’ to everyone is something that a Jew should do.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’eira 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “The Gift of Speech” by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman.*

# No Need to Apologize

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



**Rabbi Yosef Weinberg and the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

Rav Yosef Weinberg, Z”L, a Lubavitcher chassid, was once called by a colleague late at night for help with an emergency. Rabbi Weinberg’s colleague asked him if he could write a note to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, ZT”L, asking for a blessing with this emergency. Rav Weinberg quickly ran to 770 to get the Rebbe’s blessing. Since it was late at, the secretary was not in but the light in the Rebbe’s office was still on. With the door to his office being closed, Rabbi Weinberg then slipped the letter underneath the door so as not to disturb him.

Immediately afterward, Rabbi Weinberg realized that now the Rebbe was going to have to bend down to get the letter and was filled with regret because that would not be respectful. The next morning Rabbi Weinberg wrote a letter of apology to the Rebbe for making him bend down. Not long after, the Rebbe’s secretary came looking for Rabbi Weinberg and said that the Rebbe would like to see him. When he got to the Rebbe, the Rebbe said, “Why did you apologize? What was that note all about? My whole life is dedicated to bending down and lifting up those who are down!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ve’eira 5784 email of Torah Sweets*