

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS MATOS-MASEI 5783

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A Special Clock

By Rabbi Sholom Ber-Dov Avtzon



After the histalkus (passing away) of the Chozeh of Lublin, his children divided his belongings amongst themselves. One of them received his clock. On the way home he was delayed and was in an inn for an extended period of time.

The problem was he did not have enough money to pay for his lodging, so he offered to give the innkeeper the clock as part of the payment. Seeing that his guest was an honest person who was forced to remain at his inn longer than he anticipated, he accepted it and placed it in one of his rooms.

Time passed and many people used his inn. One evening he had a guest who used to be a student of the Chozeh. In the morning he asked him about the clock. After hearing how a son of the Chozeh gave it to him, he exclaimed, “I knew it was the Chozeh’s clock!”

“A clock is a clock,” replied the innkeeper, “how did you know this one belonged to the Chozeh?”

The student replied, “Every clock chimes. The chime reminds us that an hour of our life has passed and questions us what did we accomplish in this hour? This is a sobering thought. However, the chime of this clock has a different message. It is telling us that we are an hour closer to the Geulah (the final redemption through Moshiach Tzidkeinu). That is an invigorating and upbeat approach, and that is how my Rebbe the Chozeh lived his life. Therefore, I knew it was his clock.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas-Balak 5783 email of The Weekly Story by Rabbi Sholom Ber-Dov Avtzon.

The Humble Ones

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



The Al-mighty detests those who are haughty. He has no interest in sharing His universe with them (Sotah 5a). Conversely, humility plays a critical role in our receiving of the Torah (Bamidbar 12:3; Midrash Tehillim 68:9).

Make no mistake. Anivus does not dictate that we deny our ability and potential. It is crucial to possess a strong self-awareness and a healthy self-esteem. Without them, we will never be able to grow and maximize our potential.

As a young man, Rav Elyakim Schlesinger of London, a disciple of the Brisker Rav, served the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz). One time, he built up the courage to ask the Chazon Ish if he was fully aware that he was the gadol hador.

The Chazon Ish thought for a moment and then replied that he was cognizant of his role and responsibility as the gadol hador. When young Elyakim asked how

the Chazon Ish balanced that awareness with the middah of anivus, the Chazon Ish explained that humility does not entail a denial of one's abilities. Rather, one must appreciate the talents Hashem has given him and realize what he has. Anivus helps one ascribe those gifts to the Al-mighty. The Chazon Ish concluded, "I am certain that if someone else would have been given the gifts I was given, he, too, would have become the gadol hador."

Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas-Balak 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "The Eternal Wisdom of Pirkei Avos."

Moishe the Simpleton

Old Moishe was a simple man. For 30 years, every day, Moishe ate at "Abe's Kosher Delicatessen." Old Moishe was an honored guest and had his own reserved stool at the counter. Not overly intelligent, but very warm and friendly, he was loved by everyone. Abe, the owner, loved Moishe too, and looked out for him.

One day, Moishe didn't show at his regular time. Abe was worried a bit as he realized Old Moishe was a widower and lived alone, but then got busy and forgot about Moishe's absence. The next day... no Moishe... now Abe was worried... he phoned Abe's number and got no answer. He called a few local hospitals and even called Moishe's daughter in Eretz Yisrael – to no avail. Abe couldn't sleep that night wondering what had happened.

Going to Abe's Competitor Across the Street

Next day - again no Moishe! Abe was really concerned, and just as he was about to call 911, he glanced out the window and saw Moishe going into "Goldberg's Deli" across the street. Abe raced across the street and confronted Moishe, screaming, "Where have you been?! I lost sleep and spent so much time phoning around about you! And what are you doing here at Goldberg's? You know he's my competitor! Explain to me Moishe!!!"

Moishe looked at Abe and said calmly, "Settle down Abe, settle down. Let me explain. I went to the dentist three days ago and had one of those root canals. Oy the pain! The dentist gave me some pills and said... .. 'Moishe, for a few days eat on the other side.' "

Abe would not have believed it if he hadn't heard it himself! He loved Moishe, but never knew just how much of a simpleton he really was!

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.

Story #1334

A Mitzvah Path to Protection

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

editor@ascentofsafed.com



"*Rabbeinu*, please help us! Our brother is a soldier in the army and he suddenly went missing!"

The Baba Sali listened carefully as the soldier's distraught family poured out the story to him.

"The army sent out search parties for him, but they haven't found anything. And now so much time has gone by, the army generals are talking about stopping the search. We suspect that our brother was kidnapped by terrorists, and that maybe he's not alive anymore!" They broke down in tears.

To everyone's surprise, Baba Sali did not look saddened. To the contrary, his face shown with light! He signaled to his attendant, and then instructed him to please set the table with all kinds of pastries, fruits and drinks.

Promises that Everything will be All Right

"Come, eat something," he told the family members. "And don't worry. Everything will be all right with HaShem's help."

Having no choice, the family joined Baba Sali at the table and took something to eat. Just as they were beginning to relax, a strange thing happened, Baba Sali raised the cup in this hand and announced loudly, "*V'nakeiloyinakei!* G-d will cleanse [those who do *teshuva* (repentance)] and will not cleanse [those who do not do *teshuva*"]. (the 13th of the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy see Ex. 34:7)

The family looked at each other in puzzlement. What did Baba Sali mean? What was this all about?

No one dared asked the question aloud.

After a while, Baba Sali turned to them. "You can go back home, *l'chaim tovim u'l'shalom* ("to a good life and peace"). With HaShem's help you will see salvation." Then he repeated the same words as before: loudly "*V'nakeiloyinakei!* HaShem will cleanse [who do *teshuva*] and will not cleanse [those who don't do *teshuva*]!"

With lighter hearts they returned home, waiting to hear good news. Two weeks passed, two weeks of tension and fear. Then one morning they received the joyous news from the army, their brother was alive! He indeed was kidnapped by terrorists and held captive in a secret hideout, but he managed to escape. He was currently being checked out by a doctor and debriefed. After that, he would return to his family.

An Emotional Meal of Thanksgiving

The same day he came home, the family, together with their newly-found brother, came to Baba Sali's home for an emotional *seudat hoda'ah* (meal of thanksgiving).

"My son," Baba Sali said to the soldier, "tell us about the good deed that you do in secret, which no other person knows about."

At first the soldier tried to avoid answering, but when Baba Sali continued to urge him to tell, he revealed that every *Erev Shabbat* (Friday afternoon), he would clean the *shul* (synagogue) in Petach Tikvah where he lived, without anyone knowing about it.

Baba Sali's face lit up. "You should know, it was this *mitzvah* that protected you," he told the soldier. "*V'nakei lo yinakei!* In the merit of your cleansing the shul, you were watched over!"

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**Source:** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from one of the English *Baba Sali* books, which is not in my possession at this moment.

**Connection:** The Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy are recited several times in the special fast day prayers.

**Biographical note:** Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzaira [1890 – 4 Shvat 1984] 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 Pinchas 5783 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safad.*

# **The Answer to Rabbi Broka's Question to an "Undistinguished" Jew**

Many years ago, in the Land of Israel there lived a well-known scholar whose name was Rabbi Broka. Early one morning he left his town to travel to the marketplace in the city of Beit Lept. The market offered a panorama of sights, every kind of merchandise was offered for sale, and Jews and non-Jews alike scurried to and fro hurriedly carrying on business.

## **Noticing the Obvious Difference Between Jews and Non-Jews**

Rabbi Broka was fascinated by the scene and the passersby. He reflected on the differences in styles of dress between the Jews and non-Jews. One obvious difference was that all the Jewish men wore four-cornered garments with tzitzit (fringes) hanging from each corner. Also, at that time it was customary for the Jews to wear colored, rather than black shoes.

The external differences were easy enough to discern, but a more profound question filled the Rabbi's thoughts that day. Which of these Jews would have a special place in the World to Come? As this question occupied his mind, Elijah the Prophet passed through the market. Rabbi Broka took the opportunity of asking him the question that was troubling him: "Of all the Jews here today, who will deserve a special place in the World to Come?"

Elijah looked around and pointed to one man, saying: "He is a tzadik (righteous person) who will merit a great reward in the next world."

## **The "Tzadik" Didn't Look Like a Jew**

Rabbi Broka was extremely surprised at the prophet's words, for this man didn't even dress like a Jew. He was wearing black shoes and a four-cornered garment devoid of fringes.

The Rabbi approached the man to ask him some questions, but to his further surprise, he was completely ignored. Unaccustomed as he was to such rudeness, he was still burning with curiosity to discover what was the hidden greatness of the man.

He asked again, "Tell me, please, who are you, and what do you do for a living?"

The man replied, "I have no time now, come back tomorrow." And with that he disappeared into the crowd.

Rabbi Broka waited until the next morning and then went again to the market to find the man. This time, the man accompanied him to a quiet side street. Rabbi Broka again asked: “Tell me, please, who are you, and what do you do?”

“I am a Jew, and I work as a guard at the state prison. In this prison there are some Jewish prisoners, both men and women, and I make sure that they are housed separately so that modesty is maintained. And, since the guards speak freely amongst themselves, I hear when the gentile guards plan to harm Jewish women prisoners, and I do whatever I must in order to rescue them. I have risked my life several times.” All of this was related with no sense of pride.

### **“Why Do You Wear Black Shoes?”**

Rabbi Broka was greatly impressed by what he heard, but he still was curious. “What you do is certainly praiseworthy, but I must ask you, since you are a Jew, why do you wear black shoes, something which is contrary to the custom of your people? And why do you wear clothing without tzitzit?”

The man’s expression changed, and he uttered a deep sigh. “Since my mission, as I understand it, is to aid my fellow Jews who have been imprisoned, I take great pains to conceal my identity from the other guards. You see, they regard me as one of them, and so, they speak openly before me. Under these conditions, I hear about any plots which are being hatched against the Jewish inmates, and I am able to foil them.

“As soon as I hear about any evil plan, I quickly run to the Sages and inform them so that they can beg G-d to have pity on the Jews and cancel the evil plot. That is why I couldn’t speak to you yesterday in the marketplace. I can’t afford to be seen speaking in public to such a well-known person as yourself; also, at that moment, I was rushing off to the Rabbis to tell them of a terrible plot I had just discovered, and I had no time to stop.”

### **Even at the Risk of His Own Life**

The man took his leave, and Rabbi Broka was left in great awe at the deeds of this unknown Jew. Imagine, this simple Jew whose days are devoted to the great mitzva of saving the lives of his fellow Jews, even at the risk of his own life! As Rabbi Broka continued thinking in this vein, Elijah appeared a second time.

The Rabbi thanked him for opening his eyes to the hidden merits of the guard, and asked if there were any more such Jews among the shoppers that day. Elijah showed him two pleasant-looking older men who were approaching. Just as before, Rabbi Broka stopped them and inquired about their identities and professions.

The men smiled and replied, “We are just simple people, and don’t do anything special. Only, if we happen to see a person who is sad, we stop and chat and joke with him until we leave him in a happy mood.

“That way, he will be more inclined to do good deeds and will be more willing to learn G-d’s Torah. And if we happen to see two Jews arguing, we approach them and change the subject. We talk to them about all sorts of pleasant things until they are not in the mood to argue anymore, and they make peace.”

When these two men left Rabbi Broka thought about all he had seen and learned that day. He would never again presume to judge another Jew, for all outward appearances are deceptive, and the heart is known only to G-d

*Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5783 edition of L’Chaim.*

## The Small Coin



Once, a Chosid of Rav Dovid of Skver, zt”l, was drafted to the army. He immediately went to see his Rebbe to get a Brachah that he be exempted from army service. Rav Dovid gave him a Brachah, and handed him a small coin. He instructed him, “Take this with you wherever you go.” The loyal Chosid gratefully accepted the coin and left.

Days later, he reported to the army headquarters for his required medical examination. In the middle of the exam, he suddenly remembered that he had left the coin he received from Rav Dovid in the pocket of his outer coat, which was still in the waiting room.

Frantic, he jumped up and shouted, “My money! My money! I must retrieve my money!”

He ran back to the waiting room and returned to the doctor a moment later, clutching his precious coin tightly in his hands, and he was obviously very much relieved.

The doctor, who had assumed the man must have left a sizeable sum of money outside, thinking that he didn’t want to risk losing a significant amount of money, couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw the coin of almost worthless value his patient was clutching. The doctor concluded that this man must surely be insane, and he exempted him from army duty!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*



# Trying to Help Others!



Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, zt”l, the Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, would pay great attention to details when it came to helping other people, and he would do anything to help someone who was suffering.

One time, while Rav Yehuda Zev was staying in Stamford Hill, London, an elderly man came to see him, recalled Mr. Shimshon Mozes, who was a close Talmid. He asked if the Rosh Yeshivah could possibly come by to see his son, a young father, who was very ill.

Rav Yehuda Zev was leaving for Bournemouth for some rest the next day. On the way, he had an appointment to see Dr. Shloime Adler in the Golders Green area, and he told the man that Bli Neder, he would visit the sick son, who lived nearby.

## **Spent an Hour Giving the Man Encouragement**

Mr. Mozes said, “When we arrived, the young man, who was suffering from a terminal illness, was in a bed downstairs, and the Rosh Yeshivah spent an hour talking with him and giving him Chizuk, encouragement.

Above the bed was a picture of three young children, and a Siddur. The Rosh Yeshivah looked inside the Siddur and saw that it had a label, as it had been given to one of this man’s sons as a prize.”

Rav Yehuda Zev asked the father, “What is this?”

The father proudly replied, “It’s a prize given to my older son. He was the top of the class in Kriah.”

Rav Yehuda Zev remarked, “Top of the class! How many boys are in the class?”

The man answered that there were 16 boys in that class.

“Wonderful! You must be so proud!” the Rosh Yeshivah said. Then he turned to Mr. Mozes and said, “Shimshon, do you hear this? His son was the top reader in a class of 16 children!” The father beamed.

### **Such Sweet Children!**

Then the Rosh Yeshivah pointed at the picture and said, “Please, give me the picture.” Mr. Mozes passed it to him. “Such sweet children! Would you mind if I could see them and give them a brachah before I leave?”

After taking his leave of the patient, Rav Yehuda Zev spoke to his wife outside the room, offering her Chizuk. Then he Bentched each child warmly, and individually.

They then left. Mr. Mozes commented, “This was the Rosh Yeshivah’s way, to do everything possible that he could to help someone!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

# **I Will Not Send Him Back!**

**By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**

Rabbi Mordechai (“Mookie”) Diamond attended a coed day school through ninth grade. At the end of ninth grade, he told his parents that he wanted to transfer to a yeshivah, but did not know which one. Mordechai’s parents were receptive, and the search for a yeshivah began.

That summer, we looked around for a yeshivah, but nothing seemed to be working out. Then someone suggested that we try Rabbi Brafman and Yeshiva of Far Rockaway. I went out and bought a yeshivishe black hat and came to the interview wearing the hat, my Shabbos suit, and a white shirt. It was obvious that I really wanted to be accepted into the yeshivah.

Rabbi Brafman tried to test me on my knowledge of Gemara, but he soon came to the realization that I knew absolutely nothing - no Gemara, no Rashi, and certainly no Tosafos. He gave me a Masechta Megillah and told me to read. I couldn’t read the abbreviations in the Mishnah. He asked me to read an easy Rashi, but I had no idea what it meant. He did not ask me to read Tosafos.

Rabbi Brafman called in my mother, who had accompanied me to the farher, and told her, “I don’t know where we’re going to put him; he hasn’t learned Gemara.

But I will not send him back to where he came from. We'll take him, but we can't put him in an aleph shiur."

I was clueless about basics, and Rabbi Brafman was always there for me. The first Hoshana Rabbah towards the end of Hoshanos, everyone took their hoshanah and proceeded to beat it on the floor. I didn't have a hoshanah, so I started to beat my lulav on the floor. Rabbi Brafman came running from the front of the beis midrash to stop me.



**Rabbi Aaron Brafman**

The road to success was not easy, but Rabbi Brafman never gave up on me. He did not hover over me; he let each rebbi develop his own relationship with me, and indeed, I became particularly close with one rebbi who helped me very much. On the other hand, Rabbi Brafman seemed to have a sixth sense for always knowing what spiritual level I was at and what I needed at any given time.

One day, he came into our class and said that he expected everyone to make a siyum on the masechta we were learning that year, Bava Kamma. He had a sheet of paper on which he wanted us to sign to our commitment to be mesayem.

Later, when we passed each other in the hallway, he told me, "I don't expect you to finish Bava Kamma, but I do expect you to get a new hat. The one you're wearing is not befitting a ben Torah." I was wearing an old, beat-up hat that was totally bent out of shape. It didn't bother me, but it did bother him, and he didn't hesitate to let me know. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Rabbi Aaron Brafman" by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.*

# Can a Difficult and Bitter Wife be Worth Keeping?

By Daniel Keren

Rabbi Fischel Schachter recently spoke at the Flatbush July 4<sup>th</sup> Hakhel Event. Speaking on the topic of Ahavas Yisroel, the mitzvah of treating a fellow kindly, Rabbi Schachter dealt with the related question of how hard should one work on developing Ahavas Yisroel with a particularly difficult spouse.

He told of a man who was basically a gentle person, but who had married a woman whom after the chupah, he quickly discovered was truly a very difficult and demanding wife who made his life very challenging, to say the least. It got to the point where he even spoke to Rabbi Schachter about the possibility of his ending his misery by pursuing a get (divorce). The rabbi's advice was that since this was the wife that G-d gave him, he should still try and work it out by trying to increase his Ahavas Yisroel to her.

## **The Doctors Wanted to Pull The Plugs that Would Kill Him**

The man insisted that he had no alternative but to end his marriage. But before he could do so, he caught a deadly strain of COVID and was hospitalized and incubated because he had difficulty breathing. After a few weeks without any significant improvement in his condition, the doctors gave up on the patient and announced their decision to simply pull the plugs and use the incubator on another COVID patient who might have a better chance of survival.

But those doctors didn't take into account the patient's wife. She burst past the security barrier and went to the bed where her husband was and threatened the doctors that under no condition would she allow them to pull the plugs and kill her "beloved" husband. Afraid to deal with her the doctors changed their mind and sure enough the husband did improve and shortly thereafter was able to leave the hospital alive because of his wife.

Rabbi Schachter then challenged the husband by asking where do you think you would be if you had divorced you wife and she would not have been there to stand up for you against those doctors and protect you from being killed when plugs were removed from the incubator. And what if your wife wasn't such a difficult personality and would not have the will to stop the doctors from pulling the plugs?