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Story #1387

It Happened on the BQE

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Brooklyn Queens Expressway

A few decades ago, Reb Leib-Ber (Barry) Silberschlag then a young man with two kids, was working at B&H photo in Manhattan. During that time, he was offered the opportunity to move from NYC and buy the “Lax and Mandel Bakery” in Cleveland.

The kosher bakery was well-known and popular since its founding in 1956; it posed to be very lucrative for the new owner. Still, Leib-Ber was a faithful chasid and didn't want to close the deal without the blessing of his Rebbe. However, the Sadigora Rebbe was not available that week, so he decided to go to the Lubavitcher Rebbe in the Crown Heights district of Brooklyn.

He elected to do so on a Sunday morning when the Rebbe was known to give a dollar bill [for charity] and a blessing to whomever was waiting on line. He took along his wife and two children for the experience, but it turned out to be difficult when they had to stand in line that Sunday for nearly five hours.

Realized He Would Only Have Just a Few Seconds with the Rebbe

As Leib-Ber got close enough to see what was going on, he realized that his time with the Rebbe would be maybe a few seconds. This reminded him of a story in a Midrash (?) of a King who granted everyone in the country the opportunity to request one thing. One clever person realized that he would not have enough time with the king so he posed his request as a question that the king needed to answer.

Leib-Ber decided he would do the same. When he came before the Rebbe, he asked, "Rebbe, Should I buy the Lax and Mandel Bakery in Cleveland?"

The Rebbe looked at him directly and said, "Why are you asking me? Ask a Rav in Cleveland." And with that the family was pushed past the Rebbe to the exit. Reb Leib Ber's wife was devastated. They stood in line for five hours for that!?! Reb Leib Ber, though, was not perturbed. He suggested to his wife to have emunas tzadikim - faith in the Righteous.

A Decision to Visit Their Grandmother in Williamsburg

The family decided that instead of going straight home to Boro Park, they would visit their bubby [grandmother] who lived in Williamsburg - a short drive from Crown Heights. They spent an hour or so there and headed towards home.

Their route included driving on the BQE [Brooklyn-Queens Expressway] that connects Williamsburg to Boro Park. Very often, people looking to get from one Jewish enclave to the other would stand at the entrance to the highway and hope that people would offer them rides. Seeing an older couple standing near the entrance, Leib-Ber asked his wife if it would be ok to offer them a lift. She agreed, moving to the back to allow the older gentleman the front seat.

Their Passenger was the Rebbe from Cleveland!

After everyone was settled, they introduced themselves. Their male passenger was the Cleveland Rebbe (!) visiting family in New York [see Appendix A]. Leib-Ber was astounded. He explained to the Rebbe what had happened with the Lubavitcher Rebbe just a short time before.

The Rebbe's wife interrupted and asked, "Which bakery?"

"Lax and Mandel" the young man replied,

The Rebbetzin responded, "Lax and Mandel is owned by my cousin. Let me tell you why it's for sale. My cousin is an invalid and can't manage the bakery. The bakers are robbing him blind. The business is good, but it's not making any money. Unless you're a baker, don't buy it." [see Appendix B]

Reb Leib Ber told me that he was very impressed with the Rebbe's vision and that he had felt the whole time that the Rebbe was not just brushing his request aside.

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### **The Origins of the Clevelander Chasidic Dynasty**

**Appendix A :** The Clevelander Chasidic dynasty was founded by Rabbi Meir Leifer, of the Nadvorna chasidic dynasty, when he moved to the USA in 1922, and settled in Cleveland. Previously, in Europe, he had lived in Budapest, Hungary, where he led a large following. In 1934 he moved to Williamsburg. When he died in 1941, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, Rabbi Usher-Mordechai Rosenbaum. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Clevelander passed away in 1991, he was succeeded by his son, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and current Clevelander Rebbe, Rabbi Yehoshua-Heshel Rosenbaum. [excerpted from Wiki]. Therefore, either one of the latter two rebbes must be the Clevelander Rebbe of the above story, depending on whether it took place before or after 1991.

**Appendix B:** Shimon Lax and Burt Mandel founded the Lax and Mandel Bakery in 1956 on South Taylor Road in the Cedar-Taylor neighborhood of Cleveland Heights. It became a fixture in the Cleveland Jewish community for nearly 60 years, until it closed in May 2015 at its then current location, 14439 Cedar Road in South Euclid. Barak Ben-Tor, the last owner, had hoped to sell it, but was unable to. In June 2015, he put everything in it up for auction, including the recipes.

**Story Source :** Freely adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from a submission in 2021 by ? [In my records from a number of years ago I recorded that this story was sent to me by a certain (non-Chabad) chasid. But when I emailed him last week to clarify a certain detail, he insisted that not only did he not send it to me, he had never even heard the story. So, if whoever submitted it in the name of someone who heard it from Mr. Silberschlag is reading this, please get in touch with me.]

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email from KabbalahOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# In the Merit of Yossele Mishnah



The Rav of Antwerp, Rav Chaim Kreizwirth, zt”l, who later became and a world-famous gadol and talmid chacham, was already a Rosh yeshiva in Warsaw and Krakow as a bachur at only eighteen years old! Though he was one of the roshei yeshiva, he still slept in the yeshiva building - nonetheless, of course, he had his own room.

Once, he heard that there was a bachur from a small town who was coming to Warsaw for a few days to get special medical treatments by a local renowned doctor. The bachur’s name was Yosel, and he was unfortunately blind. He was a very special bachur, who had memorized many Mishnayos ba’al peh and would constantly review them to himself— so much so that he was known to his friends as “Yossele Mishnah.”

## **Went to the Train Station To Greet a Special Bachur**

Rav Chaim, out of his kindheartedness, decided that he would go to the train station to greet this special bachur and help him get to the place where he was staying. Rav Chaim waited at the station, and when Yossele finally arrived, it was revealed that somehow there’d been a mix-up, and no sleeping arrangements had been made for Yossele.

Rav Chaim immediately said, “I know of an extra bed!” Rav Chaim walked him to his very own room and led Yossele to his very own bed. “Here is a bed for

you!” Rav Chaim set up for himself a place to sleep on the floor on the other side of the room. As it turned out, the doctor began a series of treatments that ended up taking a few months. During Yossele’s entire stay, Rav Chaim happily kept Yossele in his room while he himself slept on the floor. No matter how much the talmidim of the yeshiva tried convincing Rav Chaim to have Yossele sleep elsewhere so that he, the rosh yeshiva, could sleep in a bed, nothing worked to make Rav Chaim give up this special mitzvah.

### **The Day the Nazis Entered the Beis Midrash**

After a few months, Yossele finally returned to his hometown, and life got back to normal—though not for long. One day, a group of Nazi soldiers came and entered the Beis midrash! It was known that when they did so, they would take away the rabbanim and roshei yeshiva or even kill them, without warning.

Everyone froze. The panic and terror was palpable. The leader pulled out a paper and began calling out several names. Those who were called were commanded to go outside. The names of a few of the rabbeim were called out. Then Rav Chaim heard the Nazi say, “Kreizvert!”

With trepidation and unease, he stepped outside. A Nazi motioned him to the side of the building, indicating him to stand against the wall. As he stood there, another Nazi walked up and lifted his gun, aiming directly at Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim began to say Shema, and daven with all his heart.

“Hashem,” he whispered, “in the z’chus of all the Torah I’ve learned with such hasmadah...”

The Nazi raised the gun to his eye. “Hashem,” continued Rav Chaim, “in the z’chus of all the many talmidim to whom I’ve taught Torah with such dedication...”

The Nazi’s finger slid onto the trigger. “Hashem,” pleaded Rav Chaim silently, “in the z’chus of Yossele Mishnah, and all I did for him...”

### **The Nazi Soldier’s Unexpected Compassion**

At that very moment, the soldier slid his gun down, and quickly said, “Jew! You’re a handsome young man. I’d hate to kill you for nothing. I will shoot the gun and miss you purposely. As soon as you hear the shot, run to those woods as fast as you can! I will need to shoot after you, so it will appear as if you ran away, but I will miss you. No matter what happens, keep running! If the others follow you, they will surely kill you!”

A shot rang out, and Rav Chaim felt a bullet whiz by him and hit the wall. He began to run and run through the woods, as shots rang out around him, and angry cries echoed through the trees. He kept running until it got dark. Eventually, he survived the war, and went on to live for many more years, becoming a Gadol Hador.

He would always say that he was certain that it was in the z'chus of his kindness to Yossele Mishnah that his life was saved. Every mitzvah has great value. Whether it comes easy or hard, Hashem values it, and stores away immense reward for us. But when it comes with a struggle, and it's not natural, its value is so much greater. The fact that R' Chaim was saved by the z'chus that came when he went out of his comfort zone shows how the struggle makes it so much more valued and cherished.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Zichru Torah Moshe.*

# Look Where He Is?

**By Rabbi Moshe Zoren**

Reish Lakish (Berachos 63b) learns from this pasuk that words of Torah are only retained by one who “kills” himself over it, meaning, one who is ready to devote all his efforts to Torah.

The great R' David Pardo, author of Shoshanim L'David, Michtam L'David, Mizmor L'David, and other works, had a childhood friend with whom he was very close. During their youth, the two were inseparable, and they managed to learn the entire Shas together several times.

## **He Gave Up and the Two Friends Drifted Apart**

When the two grew older, they continued to maintain their bond of friendship. But when they were around 25 years old, R' David's friend went into business and eventually became very wealthy. R' David continued to grow in Torah, and he tried to convince his friend to carry on their joint learning session. But when he saw that his friend was not interested, he gave up, and the two drifted apart.

The friend's love for Torah was not snuffed out completely, however, and he asked a prominent sefarim merchant to bring him a copy of every new sefer printed anywhere in the world. The price of sefarim in those days was very high, and most people could not afford to purchase many sefarim. But this wealthy man was insistent on having a fully stocked library, and he did not want even a single sefer to be missing from this library.

Every week, the sefarim merchant would bring this man the latest sefarim that had been published. One day, he brought him a large package of new sefarim, and the man opened them one by one, deeply gratified to see that Torah was flourishing in many different areas of the Diaspora.

Suddenly, an anguished howl burst from his throat. The merchant, who was on his way out of the house, hurried back to see what was wrong with his customer, who was known as a calm, even-tempered person. He was greeted by a strange sight:

The wealthy man was sitting with the sefer *Shoshanim L'David* in his hand and crying, almost tearing his hair out in anguish.

“What happened?” asked the merchant with concern.

The wealthy man pointed to the newly printed sefer. “Do you know who the author of this sefer is?” he asked. “It is my old chavrusa! We grew up together and learned together for so many years, and look where he is, and look where I am ...”

When the wealthy man saw the great heights that R' David had achieved in Torah study, he decided on the spot to give over all of his business affairs to trustworthy people, and he returned to the beis midrash and began to once again devote all of his time to Torah study, until he, too, became an accomplished scholar.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of At the ArtScroll Shabos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book “Aleinu L'Shabei'ach” written by Rabbi Moshe Zoren based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein.*

## The Rebbe's Brilliant Nephew

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Eichenstein known as Reb Hershele of Ziditchov had no sons, but his four younger brothers and three of their sons were all very special. Once, a little nephew of his became gravely ill. Everyone in the extended family was praying for him. Nevertheless, his condition grew worse from day to day.

Rabbi Alexander Sender, the Rebbe's brother and the child's father, was distraught. The situation grew so critical that late one night the doctor feared that the end was near.

### **Devoting the Late Hours of Night**

The Rebbe was accustomed to devote the late hours of the night to holy study and prayer. No one ever disturbed the Rebbe when he secluded himself in his attic room, shutting the entire world out of his consciousness to concentrate on his sublime thoughts. But if the Rebbe was not told now, it might be too late.

The Rebbe's brothers, the sick boy's father and uncles, thought and thought. Whom could they send to disturb the Rebbe without incurring his wrath? They finally decided to send young Yehudah Tzvi, the Rebbe's favorite nephew, who later in life also became one of the Rebbe's successors.

With a small lantern in his hand, the lad climbed up the narrow staircase leading to the attic where his uncle secluded himself. When he reached the door, he hesitated and then coughed. The Rebbe heard, rose and went to open the door. "Nu?" he asked.

### **“I Have Come to Tell You Good News, Fetter”**

Little Yehuda Tzvi beamed up at his saintly uncle, his cherubic face aglow. "I have come to tell you good news, Fetter! (uncle). Your nephew is feeling better! But you still must pray for his complete recovery!"

The Rebbe beamed with joy and motioned to the boy to enter his study. He then went over to a cupboard and took out some herbs. He put them in a small paper bag and handed it to the boy. "Tell your aunt to boil this up into a tea and give it to the child while it is still hot. It will make him sweat and he will get better!"

The little boy thanked him and rushed out of the room, down the stairs and straight to his uncle, Rabbi Alexander Sender, with his instructions. The tea was made and given to the patient, spoon by spoon. Within hours he had passed the crises and recovered completely!

The next morning Rabbi Alexander Sender went to his elder brother to tell him that his son had recovered. The Tzaddik looked sternly at him and said, "you can learn a lesson in Chasiddus from your nephew, Yehuda Tzvi. You, with your long face and worried looks, only increased my own anxiety and suffering. But that little boy knew exactly what to do to change my mood to a happy one. And once my spirits were lifted I felt Divine intuition returning to me and I knew at once what to do to bring about the patient's recovery!"

### **How to Daven to Hashem**

Let us take this message in our Avodas Hashem and our prayers. We daven to Hashem and we have a long list of requests. Many time we have terrible suffering that we are enduring. So, we daven to Hashem with pain and tears, from a broken heart. It is a prayer that breaks many barriers.

But there is another sort of prayer which is even more powerful. When we start to daven, let us thank Hashem for all the things He has given us, for His kindness, for our good health and so much more. Then of course we have to add that we still need Hashem's help for everything else. Such a prayer opens up the gates of gratitude and happiness and therefore is so powerful!

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chukat 5784 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.*



# Too Jewish to Be the Yeshivah Janitor

By Yoni Shwartz

Larry Levine just could not keep a job. Perhaps, his employers did not like his long hair or informal appearance. About to get evicted from his apartment, he spotted a job listing for a janitorial position at the Sha'ar Yashuv Yeshiva in Far Rockaway to which he applied. Expecting to meet with the building manager, he was surprised when he was interviewed by the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Shlomo Freifeld, ZT"l**.

As they were speaking, Larry told him that he's Jewish and used to attend yeshiva but how his life fell apart when various issues arose causing him to leave Judaism behind.

## Offered Him a Most Surprising Job

Rav Freifeld said, "You are hired. Would you like to be a Rebbe?" Shocked, Larry responded, "I do not know how. I am not religious and have not learned Torah in countless years."

Rav Freifeld said, "You will be great. I have three students with longer hair than yours and we need a new Rebbe. Plus, the pay is double than the janitor's position."

Unable to refuse, Larry graciously agreed. The first day, Larry entered with a blazer, no kippah, or tzitzis and feeling confident having prepared the first couple Mishnayos. After a while, Larry started feeling inspired and told Rabbi Freifeld, "I really love this job but it feels weird without a kippah or tzitzis."

## The Effect of Wearing the Kippah and Tzitzis

To which the Rav happily responded, "I have some in my office." Shortly after, the kippah and tzitzis became permanent fixtures for him as he began drawing closer to Hashem each day that passed.

Thanks to the warm, and uncritical love of Rav Freifeld and the yeshiva, Larry kept on growing spiritually and is now Levi Levine, a respected Rebbe teaching Torah in Yerushalayim.

Comment: As observant Jews blessed with a religious upbringing, we must extend a loving hand to those in need. We should not expect those never blessed with a Jewish education to magically approach us asking for spiritual help. Rav Freifeld showed us how: with love and respect for Hashem's image in each person,

regardless of how different he/she dresses or acts. In this week's Parsha, Hashem strongly rebukes Moshe for getting angry instead of showing love to his people when they were rebellious. We must never make the same mistake. Like a wildfire, anger burns those who bear it but love, like a healing candle, gently warms, and illuminates the path before us.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Torah Sweets*

# Keeping a Promise

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach



When he was handed an invitation to the wedding of a young man, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the famed tzaddik of Yerushalayim, did not recognize the prospective chatan. He nevertheless conversed with him about his wedding plans. In the course of their conversation, he discovered that the kallah's parents were boycotting the wedding because of some differences between them and the chatan's parents.

This caused Rabbi Levin to have reservations about participating in such a wedding, so he said that "he would attend if he could."

"But you once promised to be at my wedding," the inviter protested. He then went on to remind the rabbi, who was famous for his visits to Jews imprisoned by the British Mandate forces, of the time he visited him when he was in the prison "death row" because of anti-British activity.

He encouraged him by telling him that he would not be executed, leaving him with the promise that he would even someday dance at his wedding. Rabbi Levin thereupon said he would keep his promise but asked that the wedding be postponed

in order to give him time to make peace between the young man's parents and those of his kallah.

The happy ending was that the wedding eventually took place with both sets of parents there along with the holy man who kept his promise. [credit: Ohr Somayach Institutions [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)]

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Menucha Magazine.*

## The Baba Sali's Kiddush Levanah



One Motza'ei Shabbos after Maariv in Eretz Yisroel, the people gathered outside the Shul to say Kiddush Levanah, but the moon was covered by clouds. As the Baba Sali was also standing there, everyone turned to see what he would do. The Baba Sali raised his cane and pointed it to the right, and called on the clouds to move to the right. He then did the same thing to the left. And suddenly, the moon became visible between the clouds!

Later, when the Baba Sali was asked if he was able to control the moon, the Baba Sali replied that what had happened was the result of something that had occurred years earlier when the Baba Sali lived in Lyon, France.

One month, the sky was completely overcast, and on the last night to say Kiddush Levanah, the people informed the Baba Sali that if he wanted to say it, he would have to travel to Marseilles, which was a distance of 230 miles away!

The Baba Sali did exactly that, and rather than giving up on the once-a-month chance to say the Brachah on the new moon, just as one who had no choice, he travelled the distance so he could do the Mitzvah.

The Baba Sali explained that when one is Moser Nefesh for a Mitzvah with self-sacrifice, he receives some type of small control over what is involved with that Mitzvah. He said that it was because of that Mesirus Nefesh years earlier that he was able to direct the clouds away from the moon!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefillah.*

## The Proud Jew



**Rav Daniel Agalar**

Rav Daniel Agalar shared a great story. A non-religious bank manager in Eretz Yisroel had just decided to become observant of Torah and Mitzvos. Already on the first day of his commitment, he faced challenges in fully carrying out his decision.

Every morning, the bank provided cake and coffee for all the employees, and as he was starting to eat, he remembered that he couldn't just eat without making a Brachah. But to do that, he knew he must put on his Yarmulka, which, at that time, he wasn't wearing. However, he was afraid, unreasonably, that if someone caught him doing this, he would be fired.

As he was thinking all of this over, he noticed on the security cameras a prestigious philanthropist had just come into the bank to put something into his safe deposit box. As he was walking, the bag he was holding ripped open, and his whole collection of priceless gems fell onto the floor, scattering in every direction.

All the bystanders in the bank started bending down to take this opportunity to get their hands on a priceless jewel, thinking, how could anyone stop them? Seeing the potential liability on his hands, the bank manager quickly pressed the “control button,” which is used in case of a bank robbery, and locks all the doors of the bank, which effectively seals everybody in. The jewels were at least now contained in the building.

### **The Philanthropist was on the Floor Gathering His Fallen Gems**

When he then looked closer at the scene on the camera, he saw this philanthropist on the floor gathering all his gems. This was an unusual sight because he normally conducted himself in a dignified demeanor. This was now totally lost, and he was on his hands and knees collecting his gems like everyone else.

The bank manager thought to himself, “Is this really what I am seeing? That this philanthropist is conducting himself in such a way? It is beneath his dignity to do so!”

### **Recognizing the True Diamonds in Your Life**

But he realized that he really knew the answer. When there are “diamonds” at risk, you don’t care about your dignity. You do what you have to do to save the gems. This man’s wealth was at stake, and therefore, he got down on the floor to save his gems. The manager then clearly understood the message that Hashem was personally sending him, at this challenging time. When you have “diamonds” on the line, no matter what embarrassment you will suffer, whatever you have to do is worthwhile to get them. And with that, he gathered the courage to put on his Yarmulka to say the Brachah, as he was so proud to be a Yid!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefillah.*

## **A Special Shabbos in an Israeli Yishuv**

A few years ago, in Eretz Yisroel, there was a major traffic jam on an Erev Shabbos, and many people could not make it to their destinations in time for Shabbos. A nearby Yishuv (community) heard about this and decided to take action. Many families went out to the highway and invited people in for Shabbos. Without any other choice, the people in the traffic were hosted by families in this Yishuv.

That Shabbos night, a father of one of the families being hosted told his kind host that he preferred not to eat after Kiddush and Challah. The host told him that if

he was worried about Kashrus, he can show him that everything in his kitchen had top Hechsherim. The guest replied that this was not the reason. The host pressed him a little to see why he refused to eat. At first he didn't want to say, but finally, he told him that he was going through a certain difficulty, and he went to see Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, about it, and Rav Chaim told him that he needed to do something with Mesiras Nefesh, self-sacrifice.

### **Rav Chaim' Suggestion to a Generator for the Shabbos Electricity**

He said, "I asked Rav Chaim what I should do, and Rav Chaim told me that I should get a generator for my Shabbos electricity. It was Mesiras Nefesh for me since it cost a lot of money to hook up, but this is what Rav Chaim told me to do, so I did it. This is the second Shabbos of my new Kabalah, so I prefer not to eat from the hot food that is being heated up by your electricity."

The host smiled and responded, "Actually, I'm happy to tell you that we are relatives of the family of the Chazon Ish, and we happen to be the only people in this entire Yishuv that has a generator! You can feel comfortable eating here because the food is not being heated by any use of electricity!" The man was relieved and delighted. The host then asked, "If you don't mind telling me, what is the difficulty you are going through?"

### **Committed to Doing Acts of Chesed (Kindness)**

The man said, "I'll tell you. I have an older daughter in Shidduchim. She is not with us for Shabbos because she loves to do Chesed (acts of kindness), and this week she is spending Shabbos with a Kallah who is an orphan. Rav Chaim suggested that as a Zechus for her, I should take on a Kabalah that is difficult for me."

The host replied, "That is very interesting, because I have an older son who is in Shidduchim, and he also loves doing Chesed, and he is with the organization Ezer Mitzion for Shabbos, helping them. I wonder if we can maybe make a Shidduch together with our children."

After Shabbos the information was exchanged and the son and daughter were set up, and Baruch Hashem, after a just a short time, the couple announced their engagement!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefillah.*