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The Man Who Made Rav Chaim Kanievsky Envious



Rav Chaim Kanievsky

Rav Meir Stern from Bnei Brak relayed a great story that he once heard from a photographer, who told him the following:

“I was offered a side job where I would have made an additional 10,000 Shekels. I was very tempted to take it, and the extra income would have really helped me, but after I learned that it would have required me to compromise on Kedushah by being around people who were not appropriately dressed, I declined to take the job.

“A few days later, I was the photographer at a Chasunah, when I saw Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt”l, who was one of the guests. I was so surprised when Rav Chaim called me over! I was sure he couldn’t be motioning to me, but when I looked

at his face, it was clear that he really meant to call me over, and I hesitantly went over to him.

Rav Chaim said, 'I envy you!'

"He was sitting, and when I leaned over to hear what he wanted to tell me, I nearly fell over. Rav Chaim again said, 'I envy you!'

"I asked him, 'What could the Rav be jealous of in me?'

Rav Chaim said, 'All the people here don't know, but I know. I know the great challenge you recently withstood. That is why I'm jealous of you.'

Rav Chaim Himself was Saying How He Envis My Fortitude!

I understood what he was referring to. It was the previous challenge of Parnasah that I had faced and withstood, when I turned down the job. I couldn't believe it! The Gadol HaDor, Rav Chaim himself, was saying how he envies my fortitude!"

Rav Meir Stern said, "This man overcame his personal challenge, and Rav Chaim envied and admired his achievement. We see the great value and significance in overcoming a personal challenge, that even Rav Chaim was envious of this man's victory!

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

Shabbat is the Real Gift

The story is taken from the book, "Touched by a Story," by Rabbi Spero. It's a story that tells of a man named Moshe Goldman who came to America with his family from Europe in the early 1900's, looking for a better life. When he told his first boss that he wouldn't be coming in on Saturday, he was given a pink slip. This pattern continued week after week. Moshe had a very difficult time earning a living, but his family's commitment to Shabbat was unwavering.

One day, Moshe came home to his Lower East Side apartment, crushed by the burden of another futile job interview, to find an eviction notice lying on the floor. He was more than three months behind with the rent. Moshe pleaded with his landlord, Mr. Wells, for an extension. However, the landlord needed the money, and there was someone else willing to rent the apartment. Compassionately, Mr. Wells he allowed the Goldmans to remain in the building for free, but they would have to move into the dark cellar. Their new "apartment" was the building's coal room.

One day, a wealthy businessman, Mark Bookman, was driving through that neighborhood and was intrigued to see two fair colored young boys with kipas covered in black soot. He instructed his driver to pull over. He inquired about the soot, and the boys described their heartbreaking living conditions.

Mr. Bookman was Overcome with Compassion and Wrote Them a Check for \$5,000

Mr. Bookman then asked the boys to show him where they lived, and he followed them to their apartment. Their mother, Mrs. Goldman, came to the door and saw this distinguished guest. She was completely embarrassed. Mr. Bookman, seeing the pitiful situation, was overcome with compassion and wrote them a check for \$5000, which in those days, was an enormous amount of money. It was enough to support their entire family for over a year.

As she thanked the man, Mrs. Goldman was overcome with joy; this was the answer to all her prayers. When her husband, Moshe, returned, she told him the good news. He said, "We can't accept the money!" "Why not?" asked his wife, "He really wants to give it to us." "I know Mark Bookman," said Moshe. "His business continues to operate on Shabbat, and Jews work there. We didn't sacrifice for the last two years to observe Shabbat to be rescued financially by someone who desecrates it."

Moshe Goldman Returned the Check to Mr. Bookman

Early the next morning, Moshe went to Mr. Bookman's sweater factory to return the check. He was extremely grateful for the gesture, but he said that he couldn't accept it, and he told him why. That night, Mr. Bookman came home looking very disturbed. His wife asked what was wrong. "I can't believe he didn't take the money," he told her, as he began to describe the events that took place.

Then he became teary eyed and said, "We used to be like that. Don't you remember? We also treasured Shabbat, until one week, when business was so awful, and we were short on money, we said, we're going to leave the store open, just this one time, on Shabbat." Tears streaked down his cheeks as he recalled that day ten years ago. "I want that passion back," he said. "I want to be a committed Jew also."

Right then and there, they accepted upon themselves to be Shomer Shabbat again. That Friday, an hour before sunset, Mr. Bookman entered his factory and proudly told all the workers, the factory would be closing for Shabbat. When he arrived home on Friday afternoon and watched his wife lighting the Shabbat candles for the first time in ten years, he felt like he returned home from a very long journey.

The next week, he went back to Moshe Goldman and offered him the check again. This time, he explained how inspired he was from his loyalty to Shabbat, and

that he had resolved to keep it from now on. Moshe was relieved of his financial troubles, and Mr. Bookman has religious grandchildren to this very day.

There's a famous saying that goes..."As much as the Jews kept Shabbat, the Shabbat kept the Jews!" The Shabbat that we keep today and that we kept throughout the generations is the secret that has kept the Jewish people alive and our continuity everlasting as a great nation until this very day.

Reprinted from the Parashat Behar 5784 of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Value of Every Free Minute!

The mother of the Chofetz Chaim was once asked why she thought she had merited to have a son as special as the Chofetz Chaim. She said that the only thing she could think of was some advice that her mother had given to her before she got married, that whenever she had a free minute, like while waiting for the soup to boil or any such opportunity, she should use the time to say Tehilim. She felt that due to the Tehilim she said in her spare minutes, she was Zocheh to have a son who grew up to be the Chofetz Chaim.



Rav Binyomin Kirschner writes a story about Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l. Rav Elyashiv was once going to be the Sandek at a Bris, and his grandson, who was escorting him, had arrived fifteen minutes early. As he waited, he noticed that Rav Elyashiv was getting ready to walk out the door, and he asked, "Aren't we going to leave in fifteen minutes?"

Rav Elyashiv looked at his grandson in surprise and said, "I'm going to the Bais Medrash. It takes five minutes to get there, then I will have five minutes to learn, and it will take five minutes to walk back. Isn't it worth it?" Exactly fifteen minutes later, Rav Elyashiv returned home to go to the Bris!

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

Ahavat Yisrael

Rabbi Paysach Krohn shares a recent story about his friend, Rabbi Yaakov Gibber. Rabbi Gibber brought twenty-five of his community members to visit Israel for three days to give chizzuk—encouragement to the Jewish communities affected by the war. They visited the war front, houses of displaced families, and then they visited a hospital where injured soldiers were being treated. On the amputee unit, they came across a well-dressed 70-year-old amputee sitting by a bedside. He was clearly not a soldier, so they asked him what he is doing there.

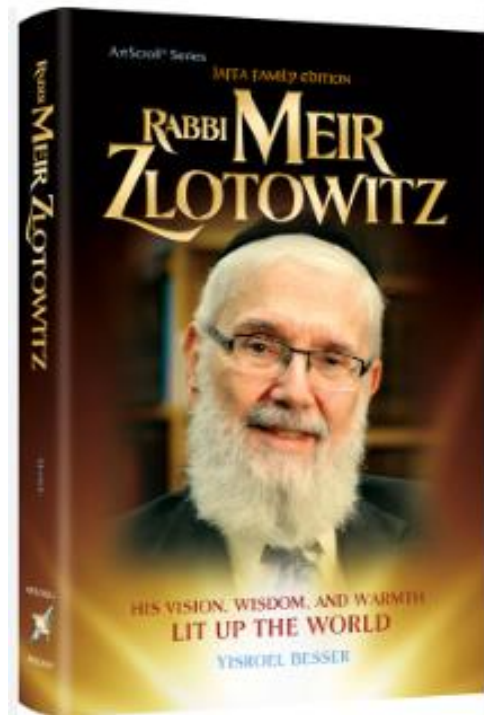


The man smiled and explained that 51 years ago, he lost his leg fighting in the Yom Kippur war. The elderly man described that he was able to get a job, get married and enjoy time spent with his children and grandchildren. Since he became injured, he visits the hospital every day to give encouragement to the soldiers. He tells the soldiers that their lives are not over, and there is so much that they can accomplish. That is ahavat yisrael—love for your fellow Jews.

Reprinted from the Parashat Behar 5784 of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

You Don't Need To be a Nebach!

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



In his biography, Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, ZT”L, founder of Artscroll, talks about the various difficulties he faced in his personal life. He explains how he was overweight since a young boy, how he got divorced, and how his life was just falling apart in every single way. He felt like one of those people that somebody might look at him and think, “Oy, Nebach.” One day, he had an appointment to speak with his Rebbe, Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT”L. Unfortunately, at the last minute, Rav Moshe was unable to meet because he had a *Din Torah* to attend to.

The following day, there was a huge blizzard and everybody was snowed into their homes. At the time, Rabbi Zlotowitz was sole caretaker of his three children. At end of that day, after spending hours running after them while bearing all the financial burdens on his shoulders and much emotional baggage, he felt completely wiped. One could see exhaustion in his eyes and feel his pain in his frown. Suddenly, he heard a knock on his door. His heavy frown became a little lighter as he saw Rav Moshe!

Rav Moshe walked a tremendous distance in the snow storm just to meet with him. He helped settle the energetic children, tuck them into bed and say the bedtime Shema with them. Afterwards, he sat with Rabbi Zlotowitz and listened to him pour out his heart. Rav Moshe, feeling every ounce of his pain, encouraged and supported him, and never stopped believing in him. Rav Moshe's empathy and support was one of the reasons why Rabbi Zlotowitz was able to turn his life around and become a person who transformed the America Torah scene through his publishing house.

Reprinted from the Parshas Behar 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

The Crashing Wheelchair

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Chaim-Moshe Mendel was known to be one of the leading Ashkenazic Kabbalists of the previous generation. Born in the town Bistrita in Romania in the year 5662 (1902), he was ordained as a rabbi in Hungary. Before World War II he served as *Dayan* (a judge in a religious court) in Timisvar, Western Romania. During World War II he was sent to a labor camp in Romania, where due to the harsh living conditions and forced labor, he became disabled and suffered terrible tribulations all his life.

In the beginning of the Jewish month of Elul in 5709 (1949), he emigrated to Israel with his family. It seemed that the words of our Sages, "One of the three things that can only be acquired if accompanied by suffering is the Land of Israel," was proven by the hardship his family experienced. After descending from the ship in Haifa, they were housed in a camp for new immigrants. They were allocated a small and dilapidated tent. They shared the tent with mice and the strong sea wind shook their shelter.

Went to Visit the Admor of Seret-Vishnitz

Also, the heat and humidity in the middle of the summer were too hard to bear. Pearl, Rabbi Chaim-Moshe's wife, decided to go to Haifa to ask for help from the *Admor* (Rebbe) of Seret-Vishnitz, **Rabbi Eliezer Hagar**, son of the Admor known as **the "Makor Baruch"** whom her father had been a follower of.

She was received warmly. The Rebbe listened to her attentively. When she finished, he advised her that the family should move to Tsfat. The dry and cool climate of that city was a great improvement and they started to feel more at ease.

That Rosh Hashanah, they heard knocking on the door of their shack, and Pearl went to open it. In the doorway stood a man and a woman. Without

introduction the woman asked, “Are there Jews here from the city of Grosswardein?” [1]

“I am from Grosswardein,” answered Pearl.

“You are Pearl Goodman!” exclaimed the woman. “I don’t believe it!”

Deeply moved, the women embraced.

The woman’s name was Sabo. Pearl’s grandfather was Rabbi Meir-Zeev Roshnak, a great scholar who lived in the city of Grosswardein close to the Sabos, who were a wealthy family. When the Sabo family immigrated to Israel they went to live in Tel Aviv. However, when it became close to Rosh Hashana, they decided to celebrate the holy festival in the “City of Kabbalah,” Tsfat.

Noticed a Man with Radiant, Joyful Face

On the first night of the holiday, after the prayers, they decided to visit the neighborhood where the newly arrived immigrants lived, in the hope of encountering relatives or acquaintances. While walking through the street, something attracted their attention. Through the window of one of the shacks they saw a woman lighting *Yom Tov* (festival) candles. They noticed that next to her a man with a radiant, joyful face was lying in a bed.

“We saw the presence of G-d hovering over their house,” they would say later. This was the reason they decided to knock on the door.

When the strong emotions of the reunion had calmed, Mrs. Sabo turned to Rabbi Chaim-Moshe. “Why didn’t the rabbi go to the synagogue on the night of Rosh Hashana?”

“To my great regret I cannot walk,” answered the rabbi softly, with quiet acceptance of the bitterness of his fate. “I do not have the means to hire people to carry me to the shul.”

Decided to Do All in Her Power To Help the Man in the Sickbed

Seeing Rabbi Chaim-Moshe laying on his sickbed broke Mrs. Sabo’s heart. She immediately decided she would do all in her power to help him and cheer him up.

The couple’s faces became somber. “What can we do for you?” Mrs. Sabo asked generously. The rabbi’s answered surprised her.

“I know that if I can go to Meron to pray at the *tziyun* (burial place) of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, I will be healed.”

The decisiveness with which these words were said convinced Mrs. Sabo to fulfill his request. She asked her husband to pay for the ride to nearby Meron [A 15-minute drive]. “We will make every effort, even if it is only to make the rabbi feel better!” she stated assertively.

The couple arranged the trip with alacrity. The day after Rosh Hashana, on the Fast of Gedaliah, they hired an ambulance with four male nurses who would assist the Rabbi in reaching the tziyun.

When Mr. and Mrs. Sabo together with Rabbi Chaim-Moshe, Pearl and the others arrived in Meron, emotions were high. “Please bring me to the holy tziyun and leave me there by myself,” requested the Rabbi.

Begging G-d to Send Him a Speedy Recovery

He spent a long time there, praying to the Creator of the world. He spilled out his heart and begged G-d to send him a speedy recovery. At a certain point he felt sure that his prayers had been answered! He called the nurses and asked them to lift him out to the wheelchair. “I don’t need this anymore,” he said to the incredulous men.

His second request struck them with utter astonishment. “As soon as I get up, take the chair and throw it down the mountain.”

His determined instruction amazed everyone. And when Rabbi Chaim-Moshe stood up on his own, they were even more amazed.

All present watched as the wheelchair was pushed off the mountain, breaking into pieces along the way to the bottom. They stood in wonder as the rabbi took several steps. None of them had ever seen such a miracle.

Blessing His Benefactors with the Gift of Old Age

“In your merit I was healed,” Rabbi Chaim-Moshe said to Mr. Sabo, his voice shaking with emotion. “I bless you with long life till ripe old age.”

To Mrs. Sabo he said, “I know that all this is because of you. I bless you that you will live as long as the numerical value of [98], and that you will have the strength and health to practice kindness with G-d’s creations till your last day, with a clear mind.”

This heart-felt blessing was fulfilled in its entirety. Mrs. Sabo died on her 98th birthday. Several years before that she became very ill. It seemed that her end was near. Her son, who was taking care of her, heard her whisper, ‘Master of the world, I’m not giving up on the blessing of the *tzadik* (pure, righteous person).

“Immediately after that her health improved. She recovered and lived out her years according to the wondrous blessing of Rabbi Chaim-Moshe Mendel. Till her last day she occupied herself with charity and helping others, among them many elderly and lonely people.

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*Source:* Translated by Mrs. C.R. Benami, long-time editorial assistant for AscentOfSafed.com, and revised and supplemented by R. Yerachmiel Tilles from the popular Hebrew weekly, *Sichat HaShavua* #1896 (5-5-2023).

*Biographical notes: Rabbi Chaim-Moshe ben Meir-Yosef Mendel [1902 - 4 Tammuz 1996] was born in the town Bistrita in Romania. He was ordained as a rabbi in Hungary, and before World War II he served as Dayan (a judge in a religious court) in Timisvar, Western Romania.*

He tried hard to conceal his deeds and holiness, but after Rabbi Yisrael Abichatzera [the “Baba Sali”] and the Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Yakov Rabikov [“the shoemaker”] sent him people to be blessed, and even Admorim came to receive his blessing, he became renowned as one of the leading Ashkenazic Kabbalists of his generation, a performer of salvations and a great lover of Israel. Many thronged to him for his advice and blessings. He is buried in Bnai Brak. [This paragraph is excerpted from mytzadik.com]

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[1] **Oradea** (in Hebrew and Yiddish texts the German name **Grosswardein** is used), is a city in Transylvania, West Romania, about 10 kilometers from the border with Hungary. (jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Behar 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

## Treasures of Emunah

# The Dishonest Doctor

**Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**

Reb Binyamin Zev Deitsch, zt'l, mashgiach of Yeshivas Ponovizh, told how he was saved from the Holocaust. When he was a bachur in Hungary, before War World Two, he and forty-nine other bachurim were drafted to the Hungarian army.

The parents of the fifty children called an emergency meeting, to see what they could do to save their children. They decided to write a letter to a doctor who, for a price, was willing to write up false, medical reports for the fifty bachurim, claiming that they aren't fitting to serve in the army.

Each of the parents pitched in to pay the high price. Reb Benyamin's parents, and the parents of one other bachur, were wealthy, and paid a higher sum, to ascertain that their children would get the coveted documents.

The doctor promised he'd send the documents in the mail. They anxiously waited for the letters, which only arrived on the morning the bachurim were supposed to sign up for the army.

To their horror, the doctor only wrote letters for forty-eight bachurim. Reb Binyamin and the son of the other wealthy family didn't receive exemption letters. (Ironically, it was the children of the wealthy parents who paid the most, who didn't get an exemption.)

Reb Binyamin and the other bachur had to flee to Eretz Yisrael. They had no time to say good-bye to their families properly, and they didn't have time to prepare for their long trip either.

### **“A Very Difficult Time for Us”**

Reb Binyamin said, "I remember our sentiments that day when we escaped without saying good-bye to all our family members, and without preparing for the trip. We thought we were so unfortunate in comparison to our forty-eight comrades who remained home with their families. We arrived in Eretz Yisrael alone, two young bachurim having to fend for ourselves. It was a very difficult time for us.

“However, a few short years later, we realized that we were the fortunate ones. The Second World War raged and none of our friends [who got the false medical documents from the doctor] survived. Only we survived, since we were in Eretz Yisrael...”

Reb Binyamin learned from this episode that even when things seem bad originally, they are always for the good. In retrospect, he was able to discern how everything was for his good.

*Reprinted from the May 20, 2024 email of the Torah Times Media.*

## **Rachel and Akiva**

As Rachel lay on the coarse pallet of straw which now served as her bed she thought back to her life before Akiva. She had been a princess or almost so, the beloved daughter of the wealthy Ben Kalba Savua, and there was nothing she lacked, not the most beautiful dresses, nor the finest delicacies.

But, she would not exchange her life with Akiva for even the most precious gem in the world. For her aspirations lay elsewhere--her husband would one day be a great Torah scholar. It didn't matter that her father cast her out of their home, or that people laughed at her and scorned her--she had no doubt that one day Akiva would be a leader in Israel.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Akiva rose to answer and saw on the threshold a man dressed in tatters. "Please, have pity on us. My wife has just given birth and I have no bed for her and the baby." Rachel leapt to her feet, looking

helplessly around for something to give him. Sensing her confusion, he said, "Just a bit of straw would help a lot." She gathered a large pile of soft straw and handed it to the grateful man.

"You see, Rachel," whispered her husband, "they are even poorer than we are, but someday I will buy you a golden tiara engraved with scenes of Jerusalem, just like your friends wear." She smiled at him, happy with his loving thoughts.

### **She Waited for Her Dream to be Realized**

The days went by and Rachel grew accustomed to her new status. Life was hard, but her thoughts never dwelt on the present; she waited for her dream of the future to be realized.

Akiva knew that his work was cut out for him. Forty years old, he was just now embarking on his education, just now beginning with [learning the] aleph-beit. Was it possible for him to achieve the heights imagined by his wife? Akiva's thoughts were interrupted by an amazing sight, for there a bit to the side of the road was a huge rock with a large hole bored through the center.

He stared at it wondering what kind of tool could have made the hole and for what purpose, when he noticed a small drop of water hitting the hole and then falling again into the depression. He watched as the process repeated itself again and again. Then, he realized that the soft, pure drops had bored the hole in the hard rock.

He had stumbled upon the answer to his unspoken question; if water could make a hole in solid rock, then surely the holy words of Torah could work their way into his willing heart, even at the age of forty.

### **Acquiring Fame as a Teacher of Torah**

The traits that Rachel had perceived in her shepherd husband matured and his learning advanced, until he reached the stage where he attracted his own students. He was actually acquiring fame as a teacher of Torah and a scholar in his own right. Rachel had encouraged him to go away and immerse himself in further learning; it was hard to believe that twenty-four long years had passed.

Akiva the shepherd had become Rabbi Akiva, the teacher of twenty-four thousand students, the greatest of his generation. And the time had finally come for his triumphant return to home and his wife.

The huge crowd thronged around Rabbi Akiva and his disciples. Suddenly a woman emerged from the crowd and reached for the hem of his coat which she kissed. The students surrounded her and attempted to chase her away, but their teacher reprimanded them: "She is my wife! Know that what is mine and what is yours is all hers!"

Also, amongst those gathered to welcome the tzadik was Ben Kalba Savua, the father of Rachel. He had suffered the pangs of regret during the many years since

he had driven his daughter from his home. Now, the arrival of the tzadik of the generation would give him an opportunity to learn how to right the terrible wrong he had done her. Rabbi Akiva graciously admitted the old man into his presence and listened while he related the story, not knowing that this was his own father-in-law. As the man's story unfolded, Akiva realized who he was.

"If you had known that the poor, ignorant shepherd would one day become a great scholar, would you have acted differently?" inquired Rabbi Akiva.

"I promise you, if I had thought that he would know even one Torah law, I would have permitted the marriage!"

"Then know, that I am that shepherd, and it is only through the merit of your daughter that I have achieved this position!"

Rabbi Akiva was able to nullify the vow Ben Kalba Savua rashly made so many years before. The old man, in his happiness, gave the couple half of his great wealth.

Their dream realized, Rachel and Akiva felt the old pain of separation diminish, overwhelmed by the new joy of their reunion. Rabbi Akiva hadn't forgotten the promise he made many years before--he had achieved greatness; and in addition to the crown of Torah, Rachel wore a golden crown of Jerusalem.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Behar 5784 edition of L'Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn.*