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Plane and Simple

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



Yaakov Budayov, a seventh grader in Yeshivah *Tomchei Torah* of Brooklyn, was an orphan who lived with his grandmother. His young mother had passed away two years before, while the whole family was still in Russia. In America his father married a woman who had no interest in raising the child, so Yaakov was sent to live with his grandmother, who spoke no English.

Yaakov was a brilliant student. Although he had received no Torah education in Russia, before long he was the top student in the seventh grade at *Tomchei Torah*. The Rabbi merely had to say the *Humash* or *Gemara* once, and Yaakov

could repeat it almost verbatim. His comprehension was nothing short of astounding and often he would ask questions that had been raised by the *Rishonim*.

However, there was a problem. Yaakov had a penchant for making intricate paper planes and flicking them across the classroom. His classmates thought he was hysterically clever, but the planes infuriated his Rabbis and teachers. At times he would quietly build a squadron of tiny planes, set them on his desk, and one by one propel them on missions, all over the classroom.

Nothing that any teacher or principal said to Yaakov had an effect. He knew the material he achieved high grades - but planes were taking off and landing on a regular basis. One night in November, there was a parents-teacher conference. Since Yaakov's grandmother could not speak English, his aunt and uncle came from Manhattan to speak to the Rabbi and teachers.

As they sat with the Rabbi, he took a few of the small planes out of his desk. "Yaakov is a very bright boy," he began. "He knows the material very well and his mind is as sharp as any I have ever seen for a seventh grader. But he is always playing with these planes. He makes them and shoots them all around the class. I like him and he is a good boy - but he is very disruptive. He won't stop no matter what I say."

The aunt picked up one of the planes and held it up for closer inspection. As she turned the plane slowly examining its intricacy, she began to cry softly and tears rolled down her face.

The Rabbi was shocked. "What's wrong?" he asked softly.

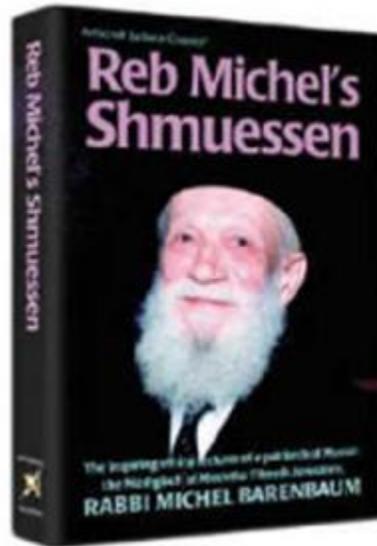
"My sister taught Yaakov to make these planes when he was a little boy," she said.

Now the Rabbi understood his orphan student. In Yaakov's uncertain voyage of the future, he was clinging to the security of his past.

Do we really know what is going on in another person's mind? It's therefore wise to choose all our words in all our conversations, carefully. (Echoes of the Maggid)

Reprinted from the Rabbi David Bibi's Parashat Terumah 5786 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Echoes of the Maggid" by Rabbi Paysach Krohn.)

The Tzaddik Who Had No Grandchildren Named After Him



Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky told a story. Rav Michel Barenbaum, zt"l, was the Mashgiach of Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim, known as MTJ, under Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l. After Rav Michel passed away, many grandchildren and greatgrandchildren were born to his family. But none of these babies were named Michel.

Someone asked one of Rav Michel's children why this was happening. Didn't they want to carry on Rav Michel's great name? The answer was astounding.

Rav Michel's wife had passed away before he did. But other grandfathers from other branches of the family had passed away during Rav Michel's lifetime. He thought about the other grandfathers' widows.

Unlike his wife, who was enjoying her reward in Olam Haba, these women were still living in this world. Wouldn't it make them happy to see babies named after their husbands? So, when Rav Michel wrote his will, he left these instructions: As long as these widows were alive, whoever wanted to name a baby for a grandfather should name for a grandfather whose wife would be able to appreciate it. He knew that eventually, as his generation passed, he'd have plenty of children named after him. But while the widowed grandmothers were still in this world, he wanted them to enjoy the honor!

Reprinted from the Parshas Terumah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefillah.

The Gold Omega Watch



Rabbi Shlomo Landau brings a story of Reb Aharon Pfeuffer while he was living in South Africa. One day while he was in Yeshiva a young woman came crying to him. She told him she was engaged, and that her fiancé had given her many beautiful gifts. She shared that she desperately wanted to give him something nice such as *chattan*—*groom* watch (as was customary in her circle) in return, but she could not afford it.

Reb Aharon was so moved by her story that he immediately removed his gold Omega watch he received as a *chattan* from his wrist. In front of the young woman, he began to shine the watch until he thought it looked like new, and he found a nice box in his office for the watch. He handed the amazed bride the box, and she showered him with blessings.

After she left. Reb Aharon returned to his studies. On his way out for the day he realized that his wife would probably be upset that he was not wearing the watch she gave him, so he decided to stop by a large jewelry store on his way home. In the store he found a nearly identical gold Omega watch. It was almost two thousand dollars, which was out of his price range. He decided to purchase the watch with a payment plan so he can preserve the peace in his home.

When Reb Aharon went to pay at the cashier there was a booming announcement over the speakers. He was the one millionth customer in the store, and his purchase of the gold watch will be free. Hashem was paying him back for his *mitzvah* he did earlier that day for the kallah.

Reprinted from the Parashat Yitro 5786 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Wisdom of the Chutzpahdik Student's Teacher



Rav Zelig Pliskin

Rav Zelig Pliskin writes that boldness and brazenness are two sides of the same coin. One leads to great acts of courage, and the other can cause great harm, but both can be turned to do good. Chutzpah and courage have certain elements in common. But they are on the opposite ends of the scale. Courage is a great virtue, while Chutzpah is generally a negative trait.

An extreme form of Chutzpah is exemplified by someone who murders his parents and then claims that the court should be lenient with him because he is an orphan. A more common form is seen by a child who speaks rudely to a parent, or

by a student speaks to a teacher without respect. Chutzpah usually means that someone is doing or saying something that is not appropriate.

Rebbe Yehudah ben Teima made two statements in Pirkei Avos (5:23,24), to be bold as a leopard... to fulfill the will of Hashem; and, the brazen go to Gehinom, but the bashful ones goes to the Gan Eden.

In the first statement, we see that being bold, in Hebrew, Az, is a virtue. In the second statement, he uses the strongest language to condemn someone who is brazen, in Hebrew, Az Panim. What makes the difference between the quality that is very positive and the one that is very negative?

Rav Zelig shares a story: When I was a young child, I was fearless around other people. I had the ability to say whatever came to my mind. At first, I was too young to understand that I needed to be more diplomatic about what I said and how I said it.

My parents kept telling me to refrain from saying things that they told me were Chutzpadik to say. But I would argue, "Why is this chutzpah? This is the truth." As a child, I didn't realize that even when speaking the truth, there are unacceptable ways to express oneself. I didn't realize that even when speaking the truth, there are acceptable ways to express oneself, and there are unacceptable ways.

Teachers kept telling me that I have Chutzpah, and I would disagree with them. I didn't understand why they didn't understand that I was speaking the truth. Finally, I had a teacher who understood me. This teacher realized that I didn't mean to do anything wrong.

My teacher told me, "You have a tremendous talent, but you have a responsibility to use it for the good. You need to be more aware of how the way you say things affects people. You will be able to do many acts of kindness with your ability to say whatever you feel is right. You will be able to ask people to donate money to Tzedakah and worthwhile organizations. You will be able to suggest to people that they need to correct their actions and their Middos. But what you have is like dynamite. It can be used for building, and it can also be used for destroying. The more powerful the explosive, the more careful one needs to be with it."

This teacher gave me several private lessons to help me differentiate between positive and negative ways to say things. This was the most important lesson in the world for me. I am very grateful that this teacher didn't just tell me that I had Chutzpah. Rather, this teacher showed me how to utilize it properly!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Terumah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefillah.

Miracle in the Garbage Dump

The Sefer Emunah tells of a story that happened a couple of years ago in Israel. A young family living in a rented apartment had finally saved up enough to make a down payment for a house. The husband whom we will call Eli hid the next incremental payment of \$10,000 in a box of cookies in their refrigerator. Meanwhile, the wife whom we will call Miriam decided to clean out the refrigerator for Pesach sooner than her husband expected. She saw an opened box of cookies and threw it out.

When Eli got home, he checked the refrigerator and was horrified to see the box was missing. He had forgotten to tell his wife that he hid the money there. It was too late. The garbage truck had already picked up the garbage and brought it to the dump. Word spread quickly in the neighborhood and forty men showed up to help Eli sift through the garbage to search for the money. It was like searching for a needle in a haystack. Each man volunteered a *third* day to find the money and that night they found the money!

Only the Jewish nation would spend their days searching a smelly dump for their neighbor. It is likely that their miraculous find was due to their selfless sacrifice. They truly embodied the spirit of Bnei Yisrael by Har Sinai loving their fellow Jew “as one person with one heart.”

Reprinted from the Parashat Yitro 5786 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

How Often to Visit the Wife's Elderly Parents

There was once an older, well-off couple who lived comfortably and had one only daughter, a girl of exemplary *middos*, who had dorned in a high school outside their city. When she began dating, her parents were prepared to invest a fortune to secure a boy with *yiras shomayim* who was learning full-time, even offering to buy a spacious apartment for a top boy.

The first boy suggested made an excellent impression, and the couple could have become engaged, but the girl had a stipulation: after marriage they would travel once a week to visit her parents, and if the boy would not explicitly promise to comply, she was not prepared to get engaged.

When the boy heard this condition, he replied that he did not know if he could agree to such a thing. Of course, they would visit her parents, but committing to a weekly visit, especially since they would not be living in the same city, was a major obligation that could be very difficult to keep. He said that if she would forego this condition, he was ready to make a *vort*, but she refused to relent.

Her parents were offering a generous dowry and a beautiful apartment, yet she felt they were obligated to visit at least once a week, particularly since she was their only daughter. The boy did not want to accept an obligation he could not guarantee to fulfill, and the *shidduch* ended.

Sometime later, another *shidduch* was suggested, and once again, after the couple had met several times and reached an understanding, the girl raised her stipulation that he must agree to visiting her parents weekly, and this boy, too, declined to accept such an obligation.

The third time a *shidduch* was suggested, the boy already knew from the outset about her condition, having heard about it from a friend who had met her. He was deeply impressed by her *middos* and *yiras shomayim* and wanted to proceed. When she presented her stipulation, he responded, "I'm amazed that you're asking to visit your parents only once a week. After all, they are your parents and you are their only daughter. I think we should visit them twice a week."

His answer astonished her, and she was overjoyed, feeling she had finally found the right boy. The *chasunah* took place three months later, and the couple moved into their new apartment. During the first two months they visited her parents once a week, but then she told her husband that she felt once every two weeks would be sufficient, as it was difficult to travel so often while working daily and managing the home. A few months later, he found himself begging her to make the trip even once every few weeks, and only after much pleading did she agree to visit every so often. (Meant To Be)

Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5786 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Head of a Man

A touching story is told about *Rav* Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Rabbi of Jerusalem in the early 1900's.

One Friday night, his wife fell ill, so he went to the home of Dr. Schwartz to ask him to treat her. When the Rabbi knocked on the door, the doctor answered with a lantern in his hand. The Rabbi was disappointed that Shabbat was being desecrated but he didn't say anything about it. The two of them went back to the Rabbi's house

where the doctor examined the *rebbetzin* and gave her some medication which quickly improved her condition. The Rabbi thanked the doctor, and they began walking together back to the doctor's house.

On the way, the Rabbi asked the doctor, “What percentage of a person's body does the head comprise?”

The doctor was puzzled by the random question, but he answered, “The head takes up about a seventh of a person's body.”



Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld

“That's all?” said the Rabbi. “So, imagine if all the limbs and organs united against the head and complained, ‘It’s not fair! We do all the work, but when it’s time to eat, you open your mouth and devour all the food! And when you want to express an opinion, your mouth becomes the spokesman for all of us! We protest!’ But the head responds, ‘It’s perfectly fair because I direct and orchestrate all actions of the body. If it weren’t for me, you’d all be worthless hunks of flesh.’”

The doctor, amused by the Rabbi's allegory, agreed with the argument of the head.

Then the Rabbi said, “The ratio of the head to the body is exactly the same as the days of the week - six days of physical pursuits and one day of rest. From the one day of rest, a person draws his inspiration and blessing for the other six days, and through that, his days are filled with meaning and perspective. If not for Shabbat, man would become a slave to his desires and monetary aspirations. We should therefore be careful to preserve the sanctity of Shabbat, just as it preserves us in body and spirit!”

The doctor was inspired by the Rabbi's words and accepted upon himself to keep the Shabbat from that day on. As we say in the *Lecha Dodi* prayer on Friday

night, “*Ki hi mekor haberachah—for [Shabbat] is the source of our blessing.*” The more we elevate the level of our observance of Shabbat, the more blessings we will see in the rest of our week.

Reprinted from the Parashat Yitro 5786 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

A Synagogue with a Soul

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



The original grand Belz shul as built in Belz, Poland (now in the Western Ukraine)

As soon as **Rabbi Shalom of Belz** began building his synagogue, a local gentile noble began to build a place of worship directly opposite it, with a tall steeple. To make his point clearer, he sent a message to the rebbe saying that he was a second Haman. The rebbe replied that his end would resemble that of his Biblical namesake.

On his way to shul one day, R. Shalom was stopped by the son of that same graf (nobleman) who held up a piece of pork and said: "Eat this, rabbi!"

No sooner had he uttered these words than he began trembling convulsively. Panic spread through the bystanders, and the young man's father came running to ask the tzadik to forgive him and pray for his son - but he refused, and the young man died. From that time on the graf was ten times more furious than before.

R. Shalom built his shul in such a way that it should stand higher than the other edifice over the road.[1] The graf thereupon made his steeple taller - but one

day Reb Shalom told him: "With the Almighty's help you will not be able to beat me, nor will you ever complete your building."

In the course of time, it became known that the land on which that building stood belonged to a family of orphans, and had been held by the noble unlawfully. One thing led to another, until the courts advertised the block of land for public sale. The noble promptly made it known that any Jew daring to buy it would be killed at once by his sword, no matter what consequences he himself would later have to face.

R. Shalom, however, was on friendly terms with a Christian medical specialist in Vienna, to whom he dispatched a courier with a message, asking him to come to Belz for the auction, and buy the land for whatever price was named. This he did and in due course buildings belonging to the rav were constructed there.

The graf now began to build his house of worship on a different street, but still opposite the shul, and once again the two buildings were competing for prominence. At this point the festival of Pesach was approaching, and the noble, who was the lord of Belz and owned most of its property, decided to issue a new decree forbidding the baking of matzot in the town, ostensibly for fear of outbreaks of fire.

Reb Shalom had been accustomed year by year to distribute his many students among the householders of the surrounding towns and villages for the duration of the festival. Though his own household could provide meals for them throughout the year, the special needs of Pesach meant that the burden had to be shared out. This year, however, he gave the order that they should all remain with him for the festival, for he trusted the Almighty that there would be ample matzot for all comers.

And so, there was. Only a few days after the decree was issued the noble was out riding on his horse on a narrow track, where he encountered the graf of the nearby town of Hubnov. An argument flared up as to which of them was going to make way for the other, and in the course of the duel which followed, the graf of Belz was killed - to the relief of the Jews of the town, who were now able to bake matzot as in earlier years.

When R. Shalom laid the foundation stone of the shul in Belz, he requested heaven that the prayers of all persons entering it be heard On High.

One day he took up a bucket of mortar, wanting to have a share personally in its construction. A chasid who saw him hastened to help by taking the bucket from his hand, but his pious rebbetzin urgently motioned to the chasid through the window that he should not dare to touch it, for fear of confusing the rebbe in his inspired concentration.

* * *

There is a tradition among the Belzer chasidim that this shul will continue being built until the coming of the Mashiach, and that R. Shalom did not complete it intentionally, in order that the worshipers of each succeeding generation should add to it - and since 1843 until this day {at the time my sourcebook was published

many decades ago) the building is not quite finished, though additions are made from time to time.[2] On one occasion the tzadik was offered a large sum of money to enable him to complete its construction, but he refused it, saying: "I would like all of Israel to have a share in this synagogue."

It is told of his rebbetzin, Malka, that for a thousand nights she stayed awake with her husband, holding the candle for him as he studied in preparation for the attainment of the lofty spiritual insights involved in the building of his shul. If he fell asleep for more than half an hour he could depend on her to wake him up. On the thousandth night he was overcome by a deep sleep, but the rebbetzin did not let him succumb, for on that night he finally attained the exalted level of spirituality to which he had for so long aspired and toiled.

When his devout and devoted helpmate passed away, R. Shalom said, "Almighty G-d, You know that it was the rebbetzin who made a Jew of me! If I were able to revive the dead I would bring her back to life - but I cannot. But You, Master of the Universe, are able to raise up the whole house of Israel. Why then do you not raise her up?"

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Editor's Postscript: Actually, the shul was replicated and completed in Jerusalem and began functioning in 2002. Although destroyed by the Nazis in 1939 (an interesting story in itself), it was rebuilt in Jerusalem from 1987 - 2002, larger than the original in Belz, Europe, but in the exact same proportions. Recently though (2025-26), the Belz community in the capital managed to obtain the necessary permits to expand it.



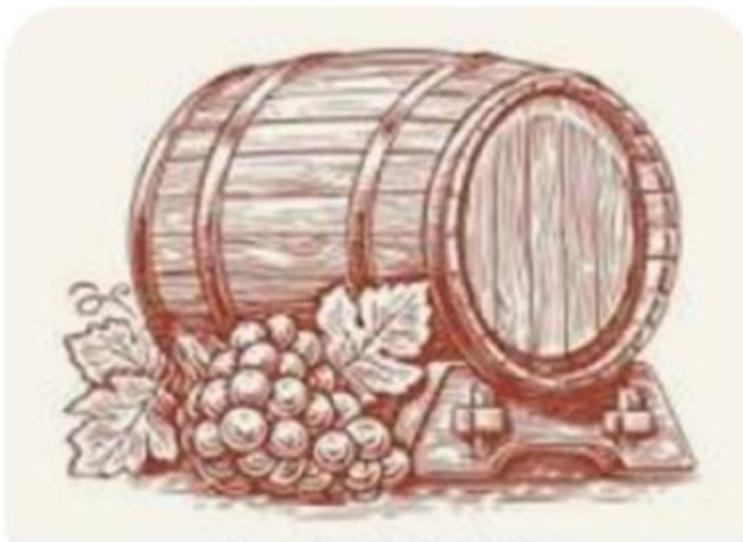
**The rebuilt Belz Synagogue interior as seen in Jerusalem.**

Modified and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from 'A treasury of Chasidic Tales' (Artscroll), the translation by R. Uri Kapoun of the classic 'Sipurei Chasidim' by one of the most prominent Talmudic and halachic authorities of the 20th Century, Rabbi Shlomo-Yosef Zevin.

Biographical note: **Rabbi Sar Sholom of Belz** [1779-27 Elul 1855] was the first of the Belz chassidic dynasty. He became the main rebbe of Galician jewry, and had tens of thousands of chassidim. His teachings are collected in **Dover Shalom**.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Trumah 5786 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of the Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

## Wine from the Wall



The holy Kaminka Rav zt"l once sat with the Kaminka community at the Purim tisch. After a while, all the wine had been consumed, yet no one offered money to buy more for the seudah.

When the Kaminka Rav noticed this, he exclaimed, "I can show you how to take wine out of the wall!"

The crowd responded eagerly, "Nu, show us!"

The Kaminka Rav then said, "I cannot perform such a wonder for free. If everyone contributes a few coins, I will show you a miracle!"

Curious and excited, the attendees immediately placed coins on the table. Once all the money was collected, the Kaminka Rav declared, "Nu, now there is money to buy wine I do not need to perform a miracle for nothing!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tetzaveh 5796 email of The World of Belz.*

# First Kiss the Embarrassed Boy

By R' Yoni Schwartz



One summer Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky was in a bungalow colony. He was standing next to the bookshelf after Krias HaTorah on Shabbos morning. A seven-year-old boy wanted to help by collecting all the chumashim and bringing them back to the shelf. He stacked the chumashim all the way to the top in his hands because... well... he was seven years old, and that's how seven-year-olds show that they're "big boys."

He was approaching the bookshelf with a chumash tower in his hands that was probably taller than him when he lost his balance and twenty chumashim came crashing down right at the feet of the Gadol Hador, Rav Kamenetsky. The boy was mortified; this was probably the most embarrassing moment of his life.

Everyone nearby rushed over to kiss and pick up the chumashim. However, Rav Kamenetsky rushed over to the boy and began gently conversing with him, asking him, "Where are you from and who is your rebbe in school?" After a couple of minutes, the young boy calmed down and went off. Rav Kamenetsky turned to the person next to him and said, "First kiss the boy, then kiss the chumashim."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayechi 5786 email of Torah Sweets.*