

# SHABBOS STORIES

## FOR PARSHAS EMOR 5784

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### Lost and Found

By Dvora Kiel



My cousin was returning to Brooklyn from Monsey, where she and her husband and baby had just spent yom tob with her in-laws. Heeding her mother-in-law's advice, my cousin had taken all her jewelry with her, even though she wasn't planning to wear most of it. Her mother-in-law warned her repeatedly never to leave jewelry at home when staying away overnight and, above all, never to pack it in her suitcase.

Dutiful daughter-in-law that she is, she had carefully stowed the small green velvet bag containing her jewelry in the baby's carrier bag on the outward-bound leg of the journey and did the same homeward bound. My cousins stopped briefly on Lee Avenue in Williamsburg to shop for a few items on the way home. At one point, my cousin pulled the baby's bottle out of the carrier bag to give it to the baby, not noticing that she had also dislodged her jewelry bag, which fell onto the sidewalk.

### **Checking Every Store They Had Shopped In**

During this brief stop, a man who was handing out flyers for a local merchant walked over and handed her a flyer. My cousins got back into their car and drove home. At home, she immediately realized that her jewelry bag was gone and told her husband. He rushed out to retrace their footsteps, first to the car and then all the way back to Lee Avenue, checking every store they had shopped in. No one had turned in a small green velvet bag.

One storekeeper, however, suddenly remembered looking out his shop window and seeing a man hand a woman a flyer and then bend down and pick up something green, put it in his pocket and walk away. Despite the crowd of shoppers in his store at the time, the flash of green caught his eye. With heartfelt thanks, my cousin's husband drove home to see if my cousin still had the flyer.

### **Finding Out the Name of the Man Distributing the Flyers**

A phone call to the publisher of the ad on the flyer established the name and address of the man he had hired to distribute the flyers on Lee Avenue. My cousins called the police, reported the incident, and passed on the information. The police proceeded immediately to the address and caught the man off guard. He handed over the green velvet bag, which was still intact and which the police returned to my cousin.

My cousin thus recovered her lost jewelry thanks to a "chance" glance through the window of an extremely busy storekeeper. Always take your jewelry with you? Maybe...maybe not. Listen to your mother-in-law? Sure...most of the time. Hashgachah peratit? Definitely. (excerpted from the Feldeim Publishers book – "When the Time is Right")

*Reprinted from the Parashat Kedoshim 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# A Mincha Minyan at an Italian Gas Station

By Rabbi Yosef Farhi



So here is this week's story from R' Goel Elkarif. A Jew who visited Italy told him this story. That Jew heard the story from a tour guide there, about a group of Hassidic Jews who had been in Italy a week previously.

This Hassidic group was travelling on a private bus on the highway with many lanes, a highway that rarely has traffic. They intended to pray Minha upon their return to the hotel. For whatever reason, there was suddenly a big traffic jam on their highway. The Hassidim knew that they would not be able to arrive at the hotel before sunset. They told their guide that they wanted to stop at the nearby gas station to wash their hands and pray Minha properly.

## **“Just Pray on the Bus”**

The tour guide told them, “Just pray on the bus.”

They said, “What? On the bus? There is no chance! We want to pray standing up, we want to wash our hands first...”

The tour guide responded, “Are you insane? This is Italy! There is antisemitism around here! If people see you praying at the gas station, who knows what they will do to you!” But the Hassidim insisted. “Someone who beautifies a Mitzvah, nothing bad will happen to them!”

The guide stopped the bus. The Hassidim got off the bus, washed their hands, and got ready to pray, deciding who among them should be the Hazzan. Suddenly, they see a huge motorcycle pull up right next to them, with a very loud and obnoxious engine-sound. The motor-biker had a ponytail and looked scary. He pulled off his helmet, and looked at the Hassidic group. “Minha?” he asked.

### **He Didn't Look Like He Knew What Mincha or Kaddish Was**

They said, Yes. He said, Great. He prayed Minha with them, and then said Kaddish. One of the guys approached him, and asked, “Excuse me. But the way you look, I would have never thought that you knew what Minha or Kaddish is, or what it even means to be a Jew...”

The biker said, “I grew up in Jerusalem, in Beit Yisrael neighborhood, in a Hareidi home. I went to Chutz La-aretz, and I went down in my spirituality, and in my religious observance. My father died a few years ago. Shortly before he passed, when we knew that his days were limited, he asked to speak with me. He said, “I begged you, that you put on Tefillin and keep Shabbat; but it seems that I have no one to talk to. One thing I am asking from you, please say Kaddish for me!”

I said to my father, You want me to say Kaddish?! Better that I should not say Kaddish! I eat pork with my mouth, and I use my mouth to speak inappropriate talk. My mouth won't be able to help your soul with its Kaddish!!!

My father responded, “It seems that this is the Kaddish that I deserve... But all I am asking of you is to say Kaddish, once a year, on my Yahrzeit. That is it. Once a year!

O.k. No problem.

### **There Would No Minyanim in Any of the Small Cities on the Road**

I said Kaddish each year on his yahrzeit. But today, I planned on travelling from my city in Italy, where I live, to Merce. 700 kilometers. As I was in middle of my trip, I remembered that today is my father's Yahrzeit. But as I was on the road, I realized that in all these small cities on the road, there are no minyanim, no Kaddish. As I road my bike, I turned to G-d and said, Master of the World! If you want me to say Kaddish for my father, please make it that I will have a minyan! This will be the sign. If my Kaddish is worth anything, I will find a minyan! But if my kaddish is not worth anything, I will not find a minyan!

I kept riding my bike, and the sun was setting. I understood that my Kaddish was not worth anything. Suddenly, I see a group of Hassidim at a gas station, out of nowhere, getting ready to pray. My heart jumped! G-d made it possible for me to say Kaddish on my father! G-d showed me that my Kaddish is worth something!

The Hassid told the man: G-d made this whole traffic jam, out of nowhere, in Italy, and a bunch of Hassidim who are not afraid of antisemitism, and who will do anything to pray the best Mincha they can, because there is nothing in the world that is precious to G-d, like your Kaddish!!! So why do you say Kaddish once a year?! Say it as often as you can!

*Reprinted from the Parashat Kedoshim 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# A Hungarian Act of Hashgacha Pratis

By Rabbi David Ashear



**Marcel Sternberger**

It was January 10, 1948. Marcel Sternberger boarded the 9:09 am train on the Long Island Railroad, as he did every day. While en route to work, he decided to visit a sick friend in Brooklyn, so he got off that train and boarded a different one. He remained in Brooklyn until noon, when he took a Manhattan-bound train to his Fifth Ave office.

The train was crowded; no seats were available. As soon as he entered, someone jumped up and got off. Mr. Sternberger raced to take his seat. The man

sitting next to him was perusing the classified section of a Hungarian newspaper. Mr. Sternberger understood Hungarian.

“Excuse me,” he inquired politely, “are you looking for a job?”

### **Hoping to Find His Wife**

The man replied, “No, I’m looking for my wife.” He explained that he was from Debrecen, Hungary, and during the war, he had been taken by the Russians to bury the German dead. By the time he returned, his city had been liberated, but he had no idea what happened to his wife. He came to America to search for her, hoping she had been liberated and brought to the US. Now he was in New York, beginning his search.

Marcel recalled that just a few days ago, he was at a large gathering where he met a woman from Debrecen. She related that she had been liberated by the Allies and brought to the US, and her husband had been taken by the Soviets to bury the German dead. Her story moved him deeply. He wrote down her name and phone number, intending to connect her with the women in his family. Perhaps they could help alleviate the terrible pain in her life.

“What’s your wife’s name?” he asked his seatmate, who replied, “Marya Paskin.”

Mr. Sternberger pulled a slip of paper from his wallet and read the hastily scrawled name. Marya Paskin.

“What is your name, sir, if I may ask?”

“Bela Paskin,” the gentleman replied. Struggling to maintain his composure, Mr. Sternberger said,

### **Wants to Make a Phone Call with You**

“Please get off the train with me at the next stop; I want to make a phone call with you.”

They got off the train and went to a phone booth. While Mr. Paskin waited outside, Mr. Sternberger called the number, and Mrs. Paskin answered the phone. He reminded her of their meeting days earlier. Then he asked for her husband’s name.

“Bela Paskin,” she replied. “Please hold on,” Mr. Sternberger said. “You are about to experience the biggest miracle of your life.”

He handed the phone to Mr. Paskin and, moments later, watched as the man slapped his forehead and screamed in joy and disbelief. With tears in his eyes, Mr. Sternberger began to reflect on the chain of events leading up to this moment.

First, he had spontaneously decided to go visit his sick friend in Brooklyn. Afterward, he rode a subway he never traveled. The single seat that became vacant was next to a man who “happened” to be reading a Hungarian newspaper. This

caused him to start a conversation with a total stranger. And he had just “happened” to meet Mrs. Paskin a few days before and was moved enough by her story to take down her contact information. *A re-united shidduch is also bashert.* (Living Emunah on Shidduchim)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Kedoshim 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*

## The Gold Half Shekel



**The Ksav Sofer**

Rabbi Avraham Benyamin Sofer was the son and successor of the illustrious rabbi known as the Chasam Sofer. Rabbi Avraham Benyamin, who was called the Ksav Sofer, was appointed by the secular government to the head of Austro-Hungarian Jewry. To mark the Ksav Sofer's appointment, a gathering was made with all the heads of the Jewish communities throughout Austro-Hungaria. At the gathering, the Ksav Sofer addressed the crowd:

### **A Small Silk Pouch**

"In honor of my illustrious guests, I would like to make a surprise presentation." All eyes turned to the Ksav Sofer as he removed his wallet and withdrew from it a small silk pouch. He opened it and took out a gold coin. "This coin is a half-shekel, the same coin used in the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple for sacrifices, and other needs."

Everyone in the room craned their necks to get a better look at the coin. Each person wanted to see it and hold it in his own hands, to experience a personal brush with history. The Ksav Sofer continued, "I received this half-shekel from my father, who received it from his father and so on through all the generations of my family from the times of the Holy Temple. This coin is the only one left; it is unique in the entire world."

### **“Where is the Half-Shekel Now?”**

An excited murmur passed through the crowd as the coin was passed and lovingly examined. While this was occurring on one side of the room, the rabbis across the room sat discussing its weight and shape and exchanging their differing opinions. A short while passed when suddenly one voice rose above the others saying, "Where is the half-shekel now?"

Everyone started searching for it, but it was as if the coin had disappeared into thin air. The Ksav Sofer turned white. He turned to the assembled crowd and said, "I do not, G-d forbid, suspect anyone of taking the coin. It is forbidden to suspect another Jew. But, it is possible that while your thoughts were so absorbed with the coin, one of you might have accidentally laid it down amongst his other possessions. Therefore, I ask you to please look through your things, and perhaps you will find it."

Everyone did as the rabbi requested, but the coin was not found. Then, the Ksav Sofer had another idea. "Since the coin has not been found, please check your neighbor." Everyone agreed, but suddenly one elderly rabbi who was known as a great scholar, opposed this idea. "It would be good to wait for fifteen minutes. Perhaps the coin will be found."

### **Refuses to Grant the Elderly Rabbi's Request for a Third Extension of Time**

The Ksav Sofer agreed, but after the fifteen-minute wait, the coin failed to turn up. The elderly rabbi requested another fifteen-minute waiting period, but again it wasn't found. When a third time the rabbi asked for another fifteen-minute period, everyone was coming to the conclusion that the rabbi had quietly pocketed the coin and was stalling in the hopes of finding a graceful way to extricate himself from the situation. Even the Ksav Sofer said, "Despite the request of the honorable rabbi, I won't extend the time. In the next five minutes please check your neighbor."



The rabbi again rose and with tears in his eyes, pleaded with the Ksav Sofer to wait yet another fifteen minutes. The Ksav Sofer stood in silence for the allotted time while the elderly rabbi stood in a corner and prayed. Many of the assembled notables were confident that the rabbi would soon admit that he had taken the coin, and waited expectantly.

Suddenly the shammes (orderly) rushed forward and exclaimed, "We found it! After the meal we removed the tablecloths and shook out the crumbs. I started thinking maybe we accidentally shook the coin into the garbage. I searched for it and just now I managed to find it in the garbage."

### **Just Now Found it in the Garbage**

When everyone settled down, the rabbi asked permission to speak. "Gentlemen, I also have in my possession a gold half-shekel which has been passed down in my family as well. When I set out to attend this gathering, I intended to share with you my prized possession, and so I brought it with me.

"But when our host surprised me by bringing his coin, and in addition saying that his was unique, I left it in my pocket. Imagine what would have happened if we had searched and the coin had been found in my possession! I would have been considered a thief. Each time I requested another fifteen minutes, I prayed that in the merit of the Chasam Sofer I would not be shamed. Thank G-d, my prayers were answered and the coin was found." The rabbi removed the coin from his pocket and solemnly looked at the half-shekel, which was identical to the other.

### **Explaining the Words of the Mishna**

When the gathering drew to a close the Ksav Sofer again addressed the crowd. "Do you know why we gathered today? It was to explain the words of the Mishna which teach that we should judge every person in a meritorious fashion, rather than assume that he is guilty. The Mishna appears clear and simple. But we can see for ourselves that if we had found the coin in the rabbi's pocket, would anyone have believed that he hadn't stolen it? Especially as I had stressed that it was unique, would anyone have believed that there was another like it in this very room? So we are gathered here to understand that sometimes circumstances point to someone's guilt, but we should still see him as innocent. We see how deep is this Mishna and how far we must extend ourselves to really fulfill this commandment."

*Reprinted from the Parshat Kedoshim 5784 edition of L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

# A Compassionate Psak for a Non-Shomer Shabbos Couple

By Rabbi Ruven Schmelczer



**Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt'l**

A shomer-Shabbos hotel in Netanya once had to deal with a difficult predicament with a couple who wished to make a reservation there. After giving their deposit, the couple contacted the hotel and wanted to pay upfront for their stay. The front desk responded that since payment was only due when departing, there was no reason to pay upfront.

## **Admitting Their Plans to Leave the Hotel on Shabbos**

The couple then explained that since they'd be continuing their journey on Shabbos, when the front desk would be closed, they wanted to pay upfront to get the matter of payment squared away and dealt with.

Hearing this, the clerk then apologized and told them that their reservation would have to be cancelled, as the hotel's policy was that they only rent their rooms to shomrei Shabbos. Having admitted to plan to drive away on Shabbos, they obviously didn't fit the hotel's policy and couldn't stay in the hotel.

They pleaded with the secretary to reconsider, but she said she couldn't do anything more than let them speak with the hotel manager, Mr. Schechter. Mr. Schechter heard their situation, but he repeated to them that the hotel's policy was to only accept reservations from Shomrei Shabbos.

They told him that this hotel was the only one in the area that they needed to be in, and that they couldn't go anywhere else. Mr. Schechter didn't acquiesce but said that he'd consult his Rav and get back to them with the final answer.

Mr. Schechter then went and sought the guidance of R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. When he got into the room, it took several minutes before he was recognized, but once R' Elyashiv saw him, he presented to him the question.

### **“Why Should it Bother You if They Eat Kosher for a Few Days?”**

R' Elyashiv replied with his typical several-word response that contained great guidance: “Why should it bother you if they eat kosher for a few days?!”

With that Mr. Schechter left the room. In other words, R' Elyashiv was saying that being in their hotel would be one of the only times that these Jews would be eating kosher. Who knows what they eat the rest of the time? Now that they'd be eating kosher for several days, don't shoo them away. Let them have a few days of eating kosher, and don't let their Shabbos departure disturb that opportunity.

With these few short words, Mr. Schechter took his answer and headed back to the hotel, making an exception for this couple and allowing them to stay in his hotel. When he called the couple back, he could tell from the other side of the line that they were touched beyond just the fact that they were allowed to stay in the hotel.

Mr. Schechter asked them what moved them so, and they went on to explain. They were Holocaust survivors who arrived in Israel with no family and no support system. Nobody in their new world showed them any interest in doing mitzvos, as they had done when they grew up in Europe, and so they slowly drifted away from their previous dedication. Eventually, they'd drifted so far as to stop observing Torah and mitzvos altogether.

### **The Couple Saw How the Rav Valued Their Mitzvos**

When they heard how R' Elyashiv valued the mitzvos they'd do by eating kosher, enough to advise the hotel to go against their policy, it was the first show of support they'd been given for their mitzvos that they'd heard of in a long time. They saw how he valued their mitzvos, and the empty void they'd felt all those years could be filled yet again.

When that Shabbos finally came, something surprising happened. The staff assumed that they'd see the couple packing their bags, making an obvious departure on Shabbos, but they saw no such thing. Mr. Schechter assumed that they'd defiantly be seen violating the Shabbos, but to the contrary, they were seen observing Shabbos and taking in every aspect of it, absorbing it into their bones and cherishing every moment.

This story doesn't end here. Experiencing the uplifting aura of Shabbos left them motivated and inspired to start keeping other mitzvos. One mitzvah led to another, until over time they were observing all the mitzvos, no different than any other Yid. (excerpted from *The Joy of Emunah*, p. 259)

By knowing how their mitzvos were cherished by R' Elyashiv, this couple built an inner appreciation toward Torah and mitzvos. We too, by knowing how our mitzvos are treasured by Hashem, we can build in us an inner recognition, appreciation, and admiration toward the mitzvos we do, leaving us with a strong pride, satisfaction and happiness in being able to serve Hashem.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Kedoshim 5784 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.*

## How to Win the Lottery!



**The Chasam Sofer**

Rabbi Yankel Galinsky told over the following story from his Rebbi, Rabbi Avraham Jaffen. There was a boy who wasn't very smart. He didn't do well in his studies at all. Everyone who knew him had pity on him. Who knows what would become of him.

One day the whole town was in shock. The boy won five thousand rubles in the lottery. He had written the correct three winning numbers. Everyone asked him what happened.

The young man answered, "I never thought about buying a lottery ticket. But last night I had a dream and I saw the numbers, 17, 18, 370 and I understood that they were the lucky numbers."

"But those weren't the winning numbers," everyone replied.

He smiled, "I understood the dream. I added the numbers together 17 plus 18 plus 370 adds up to 415 so I marked off the numbers, 4, 1, and 5."

### **The Blessing of Not Being Good at Math**

One of the listeners counted it up and said, "but they add up to 405 not 415." "Oh really," the young man replied, "isn't it good that I'm not good at math!"

In the end his weakness brought him his good luck. If Hashem wants, no matter how wrong things may look, He can work it out so much better than us. The truth is that constantly during our lifetime we go through situations, trials and difficulties which we feel that we are suffering are being punished by Hashem. It can take hours, days, weeks, months or even many years and something happens.

Looking back. we see that what we thought back then was suffering or a punishment was actually for our benefit. Our Avoda is to be able to reach the level that even during those dark moments have belief and full trust that Hashem is behind it and it is solely for our good.

### **The Nudnik Non-Jewish Questionnaire**

When the Chasam Sofer was a student in Yeshiva he was staying somewhere and in the same place there was a non-Jewish student who was also staying there. The student asked the Chasam Sofer all his questions about Judaism on a daily basis, wasting many hours of the Chasam Sofer's precious time that he was trying to learn.

Many years later after he became famous some of his fierce anti-religious opponents informed on him to the Government that he had been transferring funds to Eretz Yisrael that was an enemy Government [under the control of the Ottoman Turkish Empire] and was therefore guilty of treason. The Chasam Sofer was in great danger and was brought to trial.

The Judge listened to the prosecutor and the defense. The Judge ruled that the Chasam Sofer was innocent and the case is dismissed. It was an open miracle! The Judge called the Chasam Sofer in to a private room. He turned to the Chasam Sofer and asked, "do you recognize me?"

"No," replied the Chasam Sofer.

"I am the student who quizzed you for weeks and weeks and wasted your time forty years ago. I knew that the claims against you couldn't be true. I knew you must be innocent."

The Chasam Sofer explained the Passuk in Parshat Ki Tisa that when Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to be able to see Him. Hashem replied, "You can see from behind Me, but not My face." The Chasam Sofer explained that there are times that from behind, looking back one on one's life, one can see what Hashem did for the person, but the face, when looking up front, we can't see and as situations unfold, we can't see Hashem, and we might think that we are going through suffering,

troubles, challenges and possibly even traumas. But ultimately in the end we will look back and see that everything was from Hashem and everything was ultimately for our good and eternal benefit.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Metzora 5782 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.*

# **The Unusual Remorse Of Rav Shaag**

**By R' Yoni Schwartz**

An old woman once approached a grandchild of Rav Avrohom Shaag, z"tl, in Yerushalayim asking where she could find his burial site. Curious, the grandchild asked the woman why she came to visit it and she told the following story.

Years ago, an enormous sum of money was entrusted to Rav Shaag to watch over. However, he was so engulfed in his learning, he put the money in his safe and forgot about it. Later, he searched for the money unsuccessfully. He employed a maid and since there was nobody else who could have taken it, he had figured it had to be her. He felt bad, though, and thought, "How can I accuse her of stealing? That would ruin her life!"

Instead, when the person returned to receive the money back which he entrusted to the Rav, the Rav asked for a few more days. Rav Shaag borrowed a massive amount of money to repay him and spent years paying back the loan. One Pesach, as he was cleaning out his seforim, he found the money.

Although this was years later, the Rav quickly called the maid. He was distraught and broken over the fact that he even suspected her of taking the money and begged her from the bottom of his heart for forgiveness.

The maid was astonished and said, "You borrowed so much money and spent years paying it back just to avoid embarrassing me and you're asking me for forgiveness?" Although she insisted that the Rav did not need her forgiveness, he persisted and she agreed.

However, being older and childless, the former maid asked the Rav to promise her she'll have a child and the Rav obliged with a blessing. Fast forward years to the present: the woman in Yerushalayim told Rav Shaag's grandchild, "I am her daughter."

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