

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TETZAVEH 5786

Volume 17, Issue 25 11 Shevat/February 28, 2026  
Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

## Alexander's Story

By Sivan Rahav-Meir



I received the following note from Devori Kleytman, who asked me to share the story of her father-in-law, Alexander Kleytman, one of the victims of the [Chanukah] terrorist attack at Bondi Beach, Australia.

“My beloved father-in-law, Alexander, was 87 years old, a Holocaust survivor whose family fled to Siberia when he was still a child. They endured years of hunger and bitter cold. They survived, and eventually returned to Ukraine.

“Later, Alexander and his wife, Larisa, applied to emigrate to Israel. They were refused. For many long years, they lived as *refuseniks*, trapped behind the Iron Curtain, longing to leave and longing for Zion.

“Alexander was a man of integrity and a proud Jew. He loved the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. He wrote two books about his Holocaust experiences, and he would often say that we must remember the Holocaust, not only as history, but as a moral obligation so that we know how to stand up to our enemies.

“He was deeply connected to faith. In recent years he began wearing a *kippah* and putting on *tefillin*.

“Alexander was murdered while doing what he loved most: living as a Jew, among his people. He died while protecting his wife Larisa, who survived the attack. Alexander and Larisa were devoted to one another for more than fifty years, and they were blessed with children and grandchildren.

“We believe that Alexander’s story is not one that began under Nazi persecution and ended with Islamic terror. His story is about life, love, faith, and holiness. We look forward to continuing his legacy, and we ask anyone reading these words to do one good deed today in memory of Alexander ben Simcha.”

*Reprinted from the January 30, 2026 website of The Jewish Press.*

## **The Rebbe Who Refused to “Sell Wagon Oil”**

A Chassid approached Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzmir seeking advice on his *parnassah*. The Rebbe pushed him away, saying, "I don't occupy myself with the frivolities of this world."

Immediately after this Chassid was rebuffed, another Chassid entered the Rebbe's room and spoke to the Rebbe for a full two hours about his *parnassah*! The first Chassid returned to the Rebbe, and inquired why the Rebbe had refused to discuss his *parnassah* with him at all, yet subsequently had a lengthy discussion with his friend about the same subject.

The Rebbe answered, "I'll tell you a parable. A wagon driver entered a store which sold a variety of expensive merchandise, and requested to buy a little oil to grease the wheels of his wagon. The store owner began screaming, "Get out of here, I don't sell wagon oil!"

The wagon driver retorted, "Why did you just give wagon oil to the customer before me?"

The store owner explained, "The customer before you bought a large quantity of expensive merchandise and I earned a hefty profit. As he needed some oil for his wagon, I gave him oil for his wagon. You, however, are requesting only oil, and therefore I'm informing you that I'm not a wagon oil merchant."

The Rebbe continued, "Your friend has asked my advice many times on the education of his children, organizing his time better to learn more Torah, and other issues of serving Hashem. Therefore, when he came now to ask about parnassah issues, I dedicated my time to discuss it with him because it's impossible to educate your children and to serve Hashem properly without parnassah. You, however, came only about parnassah, like wagon oil, and therefore, I told you that I'm not an oil merchant."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5786 edition of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.*

## And These are the Names of the Children of Yisroel.



**Reb Yisochar Dov of Belz, zt"l**

When Reb Berl Karniol z"l of Lemberg was blessed with a baby boy, he sent a telegram to [Maran Reb Yisocher Dov of Belz zt"l](#), asking which name he should give the child: Yitzchak, after his father, R' Yitzchak Korniel zal, or Yehoshua, after

his father-in-law, R' Yehoshua Rubinfeld zal. He added that he personally preferred the name Yehoshua.

Maran replied that he should specifically name the child Yitzchak. Later, when Reb Berl was blessed with another son, he named him Yehoshua. When Yehoshua reached marriageable age, he married the daughter of Reb Yitzchak Cohen zal.

Only then was it understood why Maran had instructed that the elder son be named Yitzchak. Had the firstborn been named Yehoshua, the second son would have been named Yitzchak, which would have created a difficulty with the shidduch. In Belz, they are careful to follow the will of Reb Yehuda HaChasid zt"l that a chassan and his mechutan should not share the same name.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5786 email of the World of Belz Weekly Newsletter.*

# Two Inspiring Stories of the Sassover Rebbe

## Story # 1 - The Needed Trip

It was in the late 1700's and there lived a man, whom we'll call Yeshaya, that suffered from his wife's distresses. At a young age, his wife began losing her mind, and the household maintenance soon fell entirely on him. Within a few short months, his wife was completely dysfunctional, and the breadwinner was left to launder the clothes and supply supper. Yeshaya didn't know how to cope with the situation, and the new stress was taking its toll.

Yeshaya visited his hometown to seek guidance and chizuk from his beloved rebbi, **Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov**. Besides for being his rebbi, the Sassover himself endured great yesurim, and Yeshaya was sure that he was the right one to guide him. Reb Moshe Leib's body was covered with blisters to the point that even regular movement was bothersome. He davened that his blisters wouldn't cover the three fingers of his right hand. He was a sough after mohel, and didn't want the blisters to prevent him from fulfilling that special mitzva.

(Reb Moshe Leib not only had yesurim, but also brought them upon himself. Once, the Rebbe's son overheard his father ask for the yesurim to disappear at a particular time and only return later.)

When Yeshaya arrived at R' Moshe Leib's home, though, he felt an aura of simcha and kedusha permeating through the air, as if the Rebbe had detached himself from the struggles he was facing.



*Moshe Leib of Sassov, zt"l*

Yeshaya asked the Rebbe, “How are you always b’simcha? You are also faced with many pressing challenges, and yet you are a perpetual source of happiness. A stranger would think that your life is filled with bliss, but I know that it’s not. How do you keep afloat?”

R' Moshe Leib answered affectionately, “I awake to the struggles of my everyday life, but their weight lasts only until I say ‘Shelo Asani Goy.’ As I say the bracha, all my aches and pains disappear, as I’m filled with immense gratitude and joy, and that alone relieves my problems. I reflect how Hashem handpicked me out of the nearly one billion people on the planet [at that time], and that distracts me from my pain. The nisyonos then find no home in my heart. Ashreinu, ma tov chelkeinu.”

Hearing this, Yeshaya felt that he’d gotten the proper advice to prevent him from drowning in his challenge. He had learned to appreciate who he was and value his self-worth.

## Story # 2 - A Beating Doesn't Last Forever

On other occasions, R' Moshe Leib shared with those who sought his *chizuk* a personal experience:

R' Moshe Leib was once walking from town to town collecting funds for *hachnasas kallah* when a band of robbers attacked him. The robbers surrounded him and wanted to kill him when, suddenly, their leader recognized him and prevented them.

"This is the holy Rabbi of Sassov!" he exclaimed. "I won't allow anyone to harm him!"

That robber had once been a beggar. Together with other beggars, he came one day to the marketplace in the city of Brod very hungry with no means of buying food. Someone informed him that R' Moshe Leib distributed food free-of-charge, and the entire group made their way to his house. Reb Moshe Leib welcomes them into his home and he personally served them a lavish meal. Now, that same beggar remembered the good R' Moshe Leib had done way back when, and was sending it back.

The robbers treated R' Moshe Leib with respect. "We have a Jewish boy with us who once learned Torah, but now he's a member of our gang," they told him. "Test him and see what he remembers."

R' Moshe Leib asked the boy a question in Gemara, but he couldn't answer. He asked him a question on Chumash, but that, too, he couldn't answer. When the robbers saw that the young robber failed the test, they started to lash him. When the Sassover saw that he begged the robbers to pity him, and the lashes stopped.

The gang agreed to allow the youngster to accompany R' Moshe Leib to the next town. At one point, R' Moshe Leib turned to the robber and asked, "How did you bear all those lashes?"

"We get used to them," replied the robber. "We beat each other to build up our strength so that, if we're ever caught by the police and tortured to reveal our secrets, we'll endure the pain and remain quiet."

"And how do you muster that strength?"

"I keep thinking that each lash is the last one. After all, a beating doesn't last forever!"

As they walked, R' Moshe Leib tried to convince him to do *teshuvah*, and indeed he left the gang and became a *baal teshuvah*.

And from this, Rav Moshe Leib learned an important lesson: a beating does not last forever. "The challenge that you face will one day leave!" This was the message he relayed when people requested his *chizuk*.

*Reprinted from Issue #183 of The Zichru Toras Moshe.*

# “Don’t You Recognize Me?”



**The town of Kuzmir**

One Friday night in Kuzmir, a man arrived at Shul of Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir (founder of the Modzitz dynasty) whom none of the hundreds of Chassidim that were present recognized. For the duration of the entire evening, this man stood opposite the Rebbe and stared directly at him. The Rebbe continued in his usual way with Shabbos songs. At the end, the Rebbe wished his guests "Good Shabbos" and went off to his room.

The strange man left as well. No one asked about his unusual behavior; in fact, no one spoke to him. This strange behavior repeated itself on Shabbos morning after the prayers, with the man again standing opposite the Rebbe and staring at him for the entire time. And at Shalosh Seudos, again this man came and stared at the Rebbe.

At nightfall, the custom was to have candles brought to the table (either by a non-Jewish attendant, or by one of the Chassidim who was prepared in advance to daven Maariv immediately at nightfall, and then is permitted to light a fire). This unusual guest then positioned himself where he could see the Rebbe's face directly from the light of the candles, and stared at him once again. The Rebbe then said

words of Torah. His lofty words, said in a very sweet and pleasant voice, causing everyone present to forget their own problems.

But suddenly, the Rebbe's voice rang out, "Why are you staring at me so much? Don't you recognize me?" Immediately thereafter, the Rebbe blessed Bircas Hamazon, davened Maariv and made Havdalah.

There was one Chassid present who was really curious about what the Rebbe intended with his words to this strange man that nobody knew. Surely there was more than meets the eye. He was so intent in finding out that he followed this man out of the Shul, and when they reached an isolated spot, a dark alleyway, he asked him what this encounter with the Rebbe was all about.

"Oh, this is an old story," replied the man, trying to avoid a full answer. But the Chassid wasn't satisfied with this, and insisted on hearing all the details. "In that case," replied the man, "you'll have to come with me to my place of lodging, and I'll tell you the whole story."

Over a cup of tea, the man began: "I left this world for the World of Truth, where the Neshama (soul) goes after death some twenty-two years ago."

The Chassid began to tremble, seized with a terrible fright. Could it be that he's speaking to some kind of spirit or ghost? Reassuring him, the man said, "allow me to speak, and then you'll understand everything."

"Twenty-two years ago, I was a melamed (a teacher of young children). Even though my livelihood only allowed us to have some black coffee and dry black bread, no meat, fish or fancy clothes, my wife, our two children and I were happy with our lot and never complained. We accepted our lot in life with love.

"Around that time, I contracted a severe case of pneumonia. The doctors attempted to treat it with medicine, but I could tell by the look on their faces that they didn't hold out too much hope for me, my days on earth were limited. Nevertheless, they informed my family that I was improving and that I would be able to return home in a few days. You can just imagine what it's like for a young man to leave this world and leave behind a young widow and two small children!

The man continued, "You know, when a person departs from this world, he still thinks he's alive. So, it was with me, I merely thought that I didn't have the strength to get up. I thought my family didn't want to hear what I wanted to say to them. They invited the Chevra Kadisha [Jewish burial society] to begin their holy work on me, preparing the body for burial. My wife and children were crying bitterly. It was then that I realized that I had left this world, and I thought to myself, what a tragedy, a young man leaves behind young orphans. Who's going to care for their welfare, that they receive a proper Jewish education? Who is going to care for my little children?"

"Perhaps I should have been concerned over what is happening to my Neshama, but maybe because I was a melamed, all I could think about was the chinuch of my children and I was broken hearted thinking about their future.

My soul began to feel the absence of the body, and it My soul began to feel the absence of the body, and it began to rise, higher and higher, turning and rising, and I began thinking, 'What will happen now, who knows me, and how will I end up?'

"Suddenly, I felt different than before, and didn't understand why I had risen so high. I saw thousands upon thousands of souls, and tried to stop myself, when suddenly the soul of another young man came up to me and asked, 'Who are you, and where are you going?' I felt as if I knew him, and asked, 'Perhaps you can tell me where I can find out why my soul was taken from the world below at such a young age, and who's going to watch over my children that they should go in the ways of Hashem?'

"'You are in the World of Souls (Olam HaNeshamos),' the man answered. Pointing off into the distance, he said, 'Over there, the Heavenly Court sits, and judges who are cleansed from Olam Hazeh, and who are fit to enter Gan Eden. I will tell you something that can be very helpful to you. You should go to that distant place where the judges are. Among them is one judge who is one of the living Tzaddikim in the world below. He was chosen to be on the tribunal because he is so righteous; in fact, he is the only one from Olam Hazeh, with a body and soul that is on the tribunal. Since he is still involved with the world below, he can find merits for your case, and fully understand it.

"Upon finishing his advice, the Neshama of this man vanished. "So, I went to the place which the man had told me about, and tried to find the living Tzaddik. Not before long, the judge who was sitting in the middle called me and asked in a very pleasant and sensitive voice, 'What do you want?'

"I began to cry profusely, and was so overcome with emotion that I could not utter a word. The Tzaddik reassured me, in the same voice, that he would listen carefully to every word of mine. It took all my strength to rein in my emotions, and I was finally able to cry out to the heavenly court: 'How could it be that I was taken away at such a young age from the world below, leaving behind young orphaned children without any guidance?'

"The Tzaddik then asked me, 'Do you mean that your only concern is for your children, that they should grow up to be good Jews?'

"And I responded, 'Of course! My whole life was dedicated to chinuch; we lived in abject poverty only so that I could give the proper chinuch to my children.'"

"I watched as the judges discussed my case, and then the Tzaddik called me over to give their decision, 'The clear and pure words that you have uttered before

us indicate that they are completely true, and we have decided to allow you to remain in the world below for another twenty-two years.'

"Back at my funeral, the Chevra Kadisha, my family and all those who attended were astonished to see me sit up suddenly, and in their extreme fear, they all fled from the cemetery. I was left alone in the cemetery with hundreds of graves, but I remembered everything that had happened. At nightfall, I got up and walked home. Of course, there was a great tumult throughout my town and country about this awesome techias hameisim [revival of the dead], but over time, things quieted down and it was forgotten.

"But I never forgot! I always wanted to know who this Tzaddik was, who was part of the Heavenly Court, and in whose merit I was granted more years of life. I wanted to see his face and thank him personally. I began to travel throughout Galicia and Hungary in search of the Tzaddik, whose image was always before my eyes. But I didn't find him! I gave up my search and returned home, but whenever someone from out of town came to our town, I told him my story and described the Tzaddik, perhaps someone would know where I could find him.

"Over the course of time, I began to forget exactly what the Tzaddik looked like. When I reached my forty fourth birthday, I realized that the additional time allotted to me by the Beis Din was soon to expire. It upset me very much that I still hadn't found him in order to thank him.

So, I began again to inquire in all the Shuls, until I found a Polish Jew who had come to my town. I told him the story, and he asked for a description of the Tzaddik. I remembered that his most distinguishing feature was that he was extremely tall; in fact, he was a 'head taller' than the other judges.

'It must be Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir, who is indeed very tall,' he told me. 'In fact, when he needed a new hat, they needed to make a special order for it; and also for his walking stick.'

"I left everything and went to Kuzmir, Poland. On Friday night, I couldn't remember if the Rebbe's face was same as the judge who was on that Heavenly Court. However, his pleasant voice was somewhat familiar. Similarly at the second meal, I still wasn't sure if this Tzaddik was the judge who had helped me. But at Shalosh Seudos, when I heard his awesome Divrei Torah, I remembered clearly that this was exactly how his voice sounded when he was discussing my case in the Heavenly Court.

"It was at that very moment, when I was certain that he was that Tzaddik who had saved me that I could live for another twenty-two years, that when he finished his Divrei Torah and said to me: 'Why are you staring at me so much? Don't you recognize me?'"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5786 edition of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.*

# The Reward for the Mitzvah

One should make a great effort to *Daven* with a *Minyan* because *Hashem* does not reject the *Tefilah* of a congregation, and the *Tefilah* will be more accepted by *Hashem* (*Orach Chaim* 90:8, *Mishnah Brurah* 52:3, 90:28).

Rebbe Yochanan teaches us in *Brachos* (6b) that when *Hashem* comes to a *Shul* and does not find ten men gathered there for a *Minyan*, *Hashem* immediately becomes angry. The *Meiri* explains that if a *Minyan* is not present when the time for *Davening* arrives, it is clear that the people are lacking in their devotion to serving *Hashem*, and this provokes *Hashem's* anger.

Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum relates the following story. In a resort hotel in *Eretz Yisroel* outside Yerushalayim, the *Mashgiach*, the *Kosher* supervisor, would see to it that there was a daily *Minyan* for *Minchah*. It happened that one day he had a very difficult time completing the *Minyan*, and he decided to go outside to search for a tenth man.

He soon met a Jew who neither had a clue about what a *Minyan* was, nor about what the *Mashgiach* wanted from him. After the *Mashgiach* explained the significance of *Minyan* and the incredible reward in store for those who participate in a *Minyan*, the stranger agreed to join them as the tenth person. He went with the *Mashgiach* into the building and began walking up the stairs to the dining hall, where the *Minyan* took place.

Suddenly, someone told the *Mashgiach* that the son of one of the regular people at the *Minyan* had arrived, and they now had a *Minyan*. The *Mashgiach* turned to the Jew who had only walked up the steps, and told him that their *Minyan* problem had just been solved. He thanked him for his good intentions and wished him a good day.

Ten years went by. One night, when the *Mashgiach* was sleeping, he had a dream. In the dream, the man whom he had called in to be the tenth man appeared before him, and his face was shining brilliantly. The man related to him that he had passed away from this world during the previous month.

He said, "I have come to thank you for attempting to include me in your *Minyan*. You have no idea of the incredible spiritual reward I have received because of the few steps I walked up in order to complete the *Minyan*."

He added, "I have one favor to ask of you. I have one son who lives in Yerushalayim. He is non-observant. In fact, he is very estranged from a life of *Torah*

and *Mitzvos*. Please go to him and ask him to recite *Kaddish* for me. It will mean so much." The *Mashgiach*, of course, met with the son of this man, and was successful in convincing him to say *Kaddish* for his father.

Rav Scheinbaum commented, "This man got great reward, and it was all a result of him going a few steps out of his way. Can we even begin to imagine the reward for actually completing a *Mitzvah*? The *S'char* must be astounding!"

*Reprinted from the Torah U'Tefilah – Special Edition of Not Talking in Shul, Vol. 2.*

# The Hungry Bear

A hungry bear was finding it very difficult to find food. So, one day, the bear decided to sign up to work in a zoo. People will look at him all day long, but in exchange, he will get food to eat. That is certainly better than dying from hunger.

He appeared before the zoo manager and applied for the job. The manager replied, "We don't need any more bears. The bear department is full. However, there is a vacancy in the monkey house. The eldest monkey died a few weeks ago, and we still didn't find a replacement. If you want, you can work there."

The bear replied, "But I don't know the first thing about being a monkey. The spectators will immediately realize that it's a fraud."

"You don't have to worry" the manager told him. "We have a school on campus, and we will teach you how to swing in the trees, and how to eat bananas...and everyone will assume you are from the monkey family."

The job was very difficult for the heavy bear. He wasn't as light as a monkey who can climb and swing easily in the high trees. But, as the saying goes, "What won't one do for *parnassah*." So the bear endured the hardships, and tried the best he could.

Nighttime arrived, and it was time for dinner. "This is what I've been waiting for all day along" the bear thought to himself. They threw him some bananas and some peanuts. It wasn't the foods he was accustomed to eat, and even if it were, it wasn't nearly enough for a large bear, like himself. His stomach grumbled from hunger.

The bear starting walking around the zoo, thinking about his dilemma, when he saw a sign that said, "Bears"! He went right inside. This is where he could be himself. He saw one bear sitting next to a large portion of food, but wasn't eating anything.

"Why don't you eat this good food" the visiting bear (pretending to be a monkey) asked him. The bear replied, "I'll tell you the truth. I'm not really a bear. I'm a monkey. I didn't find enough food to eat in the forest, so I applied to be a monkey in the zoo. The manager told me that they didn't need a new monkey, but they were in need of a bear. An old bear died a few weeks before, and they didn't yet find any animal to take his place. I told the manager that I don't know how to be a bear, but the manager told me that I shouldn't worry. They would send me to a school in the zoo that will teach me how to be a bear. And that's how I ended up being here. But I don't eat everything they give me, because I'm really a monkey and I need only a third of what bears eat. Besides, they feed us fish, berries, and nuts, and I am really yearning for good old bananas and peanuts..."

The visiting bear replied that he has a similar story, only the opposite. He explained that he is really a bear, pretending to be a monkey. They both realized how impractical and foolish their situation was. Here was a bear, working hard pretending to be a monkey, and he was unsatisfied with his meals. In another cage there's a monkey living among bears, working hard to act like a bear, and he was also unsatisfied with the meals. Wouldn't it be better if they just exchanged places?

They went to the zoo manager and told them their wonderful plan. The zoo manager didn't want to hear about it. He said, "Go back to your places, and don't think of changing them. You were hired to be a bear, and you were hired to be a monkey, and that agreement remains, regardless of how impractical it is."

The bear and the monkey told him, "You're speaking like a dumb donkey."

The zoo manager responded, "Actually, I am a donkey. Years ago, I didn't find enough food to eat, so I applied to be a donkey in the zoo. The heads of the zoo told me that they have enough donkeys, and they didn't need new ones, but they were looking to hire a zoo keeper. The old zoo keeper had passed away a few weeks before, and they hadn't yet found a replacement. They said I could take that position. I told them that I don't know anything about being a keeper, but they said, 'That's not a problem. We have a school. You will learn how to be a keeper.' And I've been working ever since."

This story reminds us how foolish it is when people try to play the role of someone else, and they don't want to fill the role for which they were created. Be happy with the lot Hashem gave you, and then you will succeed in all your spiritual and material pursuits. Don't lose everything that was giving to you by trying to take the place of others.

*Reprinted from the 2020 Parshas Beshalach email of Rabbi Elimelech Biderman's Torah Wellsprings.*