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Story #1350

Two Crumpled Pictures

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

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The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt'l

Seven-year-old Boaz (fictitious name) came home almost in tears from his school in Kfar Vradim and handed his mother an envelope.

Kfar Vardim is a small, pastoral, village in the north of Israel founded on "open thinking" and liberal ideals. An "open, progressive school" was founded there,

which attempted to eliminate divisions of aptitude, beliefs, and even pupils and teachers. This is where little Boaz learned.

His mother opened the envelope and found a letter from Boaz's teacher together with a crumpled picture of a rabbi.

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. C. This morning there were a few of these cards in our school. Someone must have put them here last night. Your son Boaz got so very angry when he saw them that he crumpled two of them up and threw them into the trash can. He said he hates religious rabbis, but he doesn't know why.

A Suggestion for the Son to Research and Write a Paper on the Lubavitcher Rebbe

"So, I suggested that maybe it would be fun if he did some research and write a paper on this rabbi. That way he wouldn't judge without knowing the facts. I hope you agree and would appreciate your feedback."

His mother looked at the crumpled picture. Under it was written in Hebrew; "The Lubavitcher Rebbe," and on the other side it said "Commandments to Bring Moshiach: Put on Tefillin every weekday. Learn Torah. Give Charity," and more.

At first, Boaz's parents just wanted to agree with their son and say no to the research. After all, those religious pictures had no place in their son's open school. Their little Boaz was right! But something about the rabbi in that picture aroused their curiosity.

"What do you think?" his mother asked his father. They talked it over and finally decided to help Boaz write the paper; maybe it would be fun!

But it wasn't as easy as they thought. First of all, the encyclopedia in their house had nothing written on "Lubavitch," "Rebbe" or "Moshiach," and almost nothing on "Commandments". And the Kfar Vardim public library didn't have much more, except for some Jewish stories by secular authors.

So, they called a few friends.

Referred to a Local Chabad House

After several phone calls they discovered that this Lubavitch Rebbe was also called the Rebbe of Chabad, had representatives in places called "Chabad Houses" all over Israel, and there was one in a town not far from them.

Little Boaz really was beginning to regret that he got everyone into this mess, but he was also getting curious.

The next day they picked him up after school and drove to the Chabad House they heard about. They felt a bit uneasy going into a religious *Charedi* ("ultra-Orthodox") place but, after all, it was just a small school project.

There they were in for a few surprises. First of all, the rabbi in charge was young, pleasant and even seemed to be happy; all of which were the opposite of what they supposed Judaism to be.

Then they discovered that this Lubavitcher Rebbe had written many dozens of books, some answering questions and others explaining Judaism's plan for the world.

Plan for the world?

They had always just figured that religious Judaism was insular and removed of the world. They couldn't figure out what was happening, and if it wouldn't have been for the young rabbi's beard and hat, they would have thought they were in the wrong place.

Returned Home to Begin the Research

They talked for a while, borrowed several books and pamphlets and returned home to begin work.

They sat down, got organized and tried to objectively write a proper essay but each piece of information made them realize they had no idea what Judaism, especially *Chassidic* Judaism, was all about.

But what they did understand had its effect.

Especially when they got to the philosophy of **the Baal Shem Tov**--the father of Chassidic thought.

He taught that G-d is constantly creating, enlivening, and providing everything . . . that Torah is G-d's inner wisdom and will . . . and that the Jews are "part" of G-d Himself (see Tanya, books 1-2).

Surprised by What They Discovered

This, and the Baal Shem's use of Jewish mysticism and emphasis on joy, was not what they were expecting.

They finished the paper, Boaz handed it in to his teacher the next morning, and their life returned to normal.

Almost.

Boaz's father couldn't get the ideas they had read out of his mind.

Somehow, they made sense to him. He brought it up with his wife but she didn't agree at all. In fact, she found the ideas abhorrent.

Little Boaz was in the middle. So, the topic was rarely discussed at home. It continued this way for several months, until one day Mrs. C. told her husband that she saw an advertisement for a three-day seminar in Jewish mysticism at a place called "**Ascent**" in the northern Israel city of Tsfat. She signed up for herself and her husband, explaining to him, "I figured that mysticism might be interesting. So why not?"

Anyway, the last day of the seminar found Mrs. C. convinced that Judaism has a soul and Mr. C aware that he wasn't really Jewish! He revealed that his father had been Jewish but not his mother.

Nine months later Mr. C. reappeared at Ascent with his wife but it was almost impossible to recognize them. He had taken a nine-month leave from work, converted to Judaism, and now sported a beard, hat, and *tzitzit*. His wife looked like someone that had been religious all her life.

All because their precious son had crumpled a picture, and thanks to the concern of a "liberal, progressive" teacher.

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*Source:* Edited and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from a free translation-adaptation by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton of an article in *Bais Moshiach* magazine, #509).

*Reprinted from the Parshat Lech Lecha 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

# Fifty Signatures

By Yair Weinstock

At the height of the 1948 Israeli Independence War, as bombs and shells exploded throughout Jerusalem, a young Torah scholar risked his life to run through the streets towards the home of the city's Rav, R' Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky. R' Chaim Brimm's young wife, Hindel, was laying gravely ill, and R' Chaim had come to R' Dushinsky for a blessing, for advice, for anything that would effect a cure for his young wife, the mother of small children.

## The Hesitant Humility of the Rebbe

R' Dushinsky suggested that he hurry to the holy Rebbe, R' Gedaliah Moshe of Zhvil (son of the holy R' Shlom'ke of Zhvil) and beg him to pray for his wife. R' Chaim flew to the Rebbe's home in Katamon, which was farther away from the constant shelling. When R' Chaim poured out his tale of woe to the Rebbe, stating that R' Dushinsky had suggested he come, the Rebbe humbly said, "What does he want from me? Does he think I am like my father?"

R' Chaim understood that there was nothing more to say. The Rebbe had no intention of helping to affect a salvation. He left dejectedly, making his way back to R' Dushinsky's home. His sorrow made him oblivious to the menacing danger in the streets.

R' Dushinsky told R' Chaim, "Return to the Rebbe's house and tell him that I command him, in the name of the Mara D'Asra, to bring salvation to your sick wife."



**Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky and Rabbi Gedaliah Moshe of Zhvil**

R' Chaim was taken aback. Could the Rav actually decree that the Rebbe bring salvation? Though it was difficult to repeat such harsh words to the holy Rebbe, the thought of his poor wife hovering between life and death prodded him onwards.

This time, when R' Chaim conveyed R' Dushinsky's message, the Rebbe relented. "Your wife is in a state where only adding a name won't make a difference. What I need are fifty signatures, each of them from a man willing to donate one year of his own life, for the healing of Hindel, daughter of Sarah, may Hashem send her a speedy recovery. When I have the necessary signatures, we can, with heaven's help, do something together with a name change."

### **How Could He Get the Signatures**

R' Chaim mentioned to the Rebbe that he felt he might have a hard time obtaining such signatures, as in these hard times when people were dying of hunger, thirst, illness and from the shelling, people were clinging to every moment of life. R' Chaim was so distraught, that he burst into tears.

The Rebbe calmed him and said, "You can tell them, in my name, that I guarantee that anyone who signs up to give a year of life on behalf of your wife will emerge from this war unharmed."

R' Chaim figured that the quickest way to obtain the fifty signatures was to race to the nearest bomb shelter, where many Jews were congregated. R' Chaim entered one such crowded shelter and cried aloud, "Gevald!" Silence fell, and R' Chaim seized the temporary lull to plead, "My wife is very sick. She is the daughter of holy people, a modest and righteous woman. Please take pity on her. I need fifty people to donate one year of their lives for her. Here is the page in my hand. Please, I beg of you, fifty signatures. Save her!"

Based on his first impassioned plea, some people thought R' Chaim had lost his mind – for wasn't the Angel of Death picking new victims day by day during those dangerous times?

### **The Rush to Benefit from the Rebbe's Guarantee**

Then R' Chaim added, "The Rebbe of Zhvil guarantees that anyone who signs will survive the war unharmed!" There was a sudden surge in the crowded shelter, as everyone tried to reach R' Chaim at once, desperate to sign the life-saving document. Within minutes, he already had more than fifty signatures, and he hurried back to the Rebbe.

Beneath the signatures, the Rebbe wrote, "I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF AS A GUARANTOR THAT NO HARM WILL COME TO THEM. GEDALIAH MOSHE GOLDMAN, THE REBBE OF ZHVIL." The Rebbe then added the name "Ruchama" to R' Chaim's wife's name, and blessed her with a speedy recovery, a long life and good years.

Indeed, Rebbitzin Ruchama Hindel Brimm recovered from her illness. Within a short time, she left her sickbed. She lived 51 years longer, until her death in the year 1999. The yahrzeit of R' Gedaliah Moshe ben R' Shlomo (Goldman) of Zhvil zt"l is on 24 Cheshvan (1950). May his merit protect us. (Tales for the Soul Vol. 4)

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

# A Chaver in Need

## By Rabbi Chaim Arye Zev Ginsberg



There are some acts of chessed that provoke such a tumult in Heaven that you can practically hear the footsteps of Mashiach around the bend... One such act of chessed happened to a member of my family a while back. My eldest daughter, Shoshana, was on her way to her special-ed teaching job in Brooklyn one winter morning and turned onto the road leading from the Nassau Expressway to the Belt Parkway.

Apparently, a large pothole had developed, and it caused one of her tires to be sliced in half. After her incident, another six or seven cars hit the same pothole with the same results. Stranded on the side of the road in an unsafe place, she called me for help. But being far from the area (and, truthfully, not knowing how to change a tire, either), I did not know what to do.

I decided to try Chaverim. Within minutes, they called back and said that one of their members was driving in the area, and he would attempt to help. About half an hour later, my daughter called me with the most uplifting story.

A member of Chaverim named Binyamin (no last name given) stopped and quickly changed the tire on my daughter's car. The other stranded motorists expressed out loud to my daughter that "you Jews are always available to help each other out."

Then, Binyamin did a most incredible thing. He proceeded to change the tires on all the other stranded cars in that spot, and that included people from a wide range of races and nationalities. When they wanted to pay him, he refused. My daughter

explained to her new friends that he belongs to an organization called Chaverim, whose members volunteer their time and expertise to help people, for free.

(My daughter did hand them envelopes from Chaverim, in case they would want to send a donation to the organization to help defray their costs. They all said they would gladly do so.)

Then — to underscore the message — the following occurred: As the various folks were getting back into their cars to return to their own little worlds, they turned to my daughter and said, “You Jews are such special people. It’s surprising that with people like Benjamin, your Messiah still has not appeared. You truly do deserve his coming.”

Let’s not underestimate the great power and influence that a little chessed can have in arousing Hashem’s mercy and bringing an end to all our suffering. After all, it may truly be said one day that saving Klal Yisrael is as easy as changing a flat tire.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bereishis 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book “Rays of Hope” by Rabbi Chaim Arye Zev Ginsberg.*

# Why is a New School Building Needed?

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



I heard the following story from Reb Binyomin Silberstrom of Yerushalayim, in the middle of the summer. However, I decided to wait and posted as the school year begins in earnest. As always your comments and feedback are appreciated.



Rabbi Silberstrom said he was attending a bar mitzva of a Lubavitch family and the Bar Mitzvah boy related the following story.



**Rabbi Shmuel Chefer, zal**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe instructed Rabbi Shmuel Chefer of Bais Rivkah in Kfar Chabad, to build another building to accommodate the growing student body, noting that the new building be built in Kfar Chabad Sheini. After obtaining a parcel of land, architects began drawing up the plans for the building. When the plans were finalized Rabbi Chefer decided that before he submits it to the authorities, he would fly to New York in order to present it to the Rebbe. Only after the Rebbe approved or made some suggestions and they will be incorporated, would he then submit the architectural plans to be approved.

### **Shocked by the Rebbe's Reaction**

When he entered the Rebbe's room for the Yechidus (a personal audience), he handed the Rebbe the folder that had all the plans. To his shock, the Rebbe moved the folder to a side, as if to say, "This doesn't interest me."

Looking at Rabbi Chefer, the Rebbe asked, "Why is so and so no longer a student in Bais Rivkah?"

Rabbi Chefer replied, "She left on her own accord, [as if to say that the administration didn't ask her to leave]."

"Do you know why she left," the Rebbe inquired. The Rebbe then added, "What is the need of a [new school] building, if a student is unhappy and leaves?"

Realizing that the Rebbe was unhappy, Rabbi Chefer said, "As soon as I return to Eretz Yisroel, together with other members of the administration, I will go to her house and ask her to return to Beis Rivkah."

Only then did the Rebbe retrieve the folder and examined it and then told Rabbi Chefer whatever he said.

### **Returning to Israel and Scheduling a Time to Meet the Girl**

The following day, Rabbi Chefer went to the airport and took a flight back to Eretz Yisroel. When he landed, he called the other members of the administration and they decided a time to meet and go to her house in Tel Aviv.

When they knocked on the door, it was opened by the girl who had left. She was startled to see them, but quickly composed herself and asked, Why are you here now?

I was sent by the Rebbe in New York, two days ago, and he asked me why you are no longer a student in Bais Rivkah, and I promised him that I and other members of the administration will visit you and see if we can resolve the problems or complaints that you have with the school.

The girl replied, since the Rebbe wants me to go back, I will give it a second try. She then told them why she had left and they answered, we will make it a priority to take care of it.

### **The Bar Mitzvah Boy's Connection to the Story**

The Bar Mitzvah boy concluded "how do I know this story? Because I am the youngest son of that girl. Because of the Rebbe's interest in one girl, all of her children are chassidim of the Rebbe!"

Compiler's note: From here we see that the Rebbe's opinion is, that it is not enough that the teacher, principal and the administration do their job properly. But if at the end of the day a student is unhappy, those who assumed responsibility to be part of the yeshiva's or school's faculty, it is their responsibility to see that each and every student feels comfortable and happy.

*Rabbi Avtzon is a veteran mechanech and the author of numerous books on the Rebbeim of Lubavitch and their Chassidim. He can be contacted at [avtzonbooks@gmail.com](mailto:avtzonbooks@gmail.com)*

# The Man Who Specialized in Learning Two Talmudic Tractates

Rav Yechiel Spero related a great story. A man was walking in a Bais HaChaim (cemetery), and he saw engraved on a Matzeivah (tombstone) the name R' Eliezer Yosef Lederberg, and under the name it was written that he learned Masechtos Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah over 4,000 times.

This man was very intrigued by this unusual inscription, and he tracked down the family to find out more about this Talmid Chacham. He found Rav Eliezer Yosef's son, and he was happy to share the following story about his father.



**The front pages of Masechtos Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah**

At some point, Rav Eliezer Yosef started to experience headaches, and when it would not go away, he realized it was time to go to the doctor. The doctors ran some tests and determined that it was necessary to perform a surgery to correct the problem. However, the surgery was a little risky, and it may cause him some discomfort and temporary blindness that would last for a few months, but there was also a strong possibility that it may leave him completely blind.

R"l. Rav Eliezer Yosef was devastated by the news, and he asked the doctors if he had to have the procedure as an emergency, or if he had some time to prepare

for it. The doctors told him that he had some time, but he shouldn't wait more than six months.

### **Spent Every Moment Reviewing Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah**

Rav Eliezer Yosef understood that after the operation, it was quite possible that he would never be able to look inside a Gemara again, and the thought of that was unbearable. However, if it was indeed true, he had work to do. For the next six months, Rav Lederberg spent every moment of the day focused on one thing — learning two Masechtos by heart. He reviewed Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah over and over again, day and night.

The day of the operation came, and his family cried and Davened for the best possible outcome. Rav Eliezer Yosef cried as well. He gazed one last time at his dear family, and at the words of his beloved Gemara, knowing quite well that this may be his last time to see them. He thought of all the moments he had wasted during his lifetime, time he could have spent doing more, and learning more. Now he had done all he could. He had mastered these two Masechtos, and he knew that he would always have them close to his heart, and forever in his mind.

He was wheeled into the operating room, and he was cast into a world of darkness. When he woke up, Rav Eliezer Yosef's eyes were bandaged, and he was told that until the bandages were removed in a few days, he would not know whether or not the operation had blinded him.

### **The Day the Bandages Were Taken Off**

Finally, the day arrived, and the bandages were taken off. He opened his eyes and began to weep tears of immense happiness. Baruch Hashem he could see! When he eventually came home, Rav Eliezer Yosef realized that since he was prepared to learn the Masechtos of Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah without his eyesight, he should certainly continue learning them with his vision intact! For the rest of his life, wherever he went, Rav Eliezer Yosef continued to review the Gemara he had studied so diligently during those six months when his eyesight hung in the balance.

After he passed away in 1955, his children found an unusual request in his will regarding what he wished to have inscribed on his Matzeivah. He asked that it be written that he had learned the Masechtos of Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah over 4,000 times. After this, the following words were to be engraved: "In his will it was written that this accomplishment be engraved on his Matzeivah, so that perhaps one day, someone will read this and accept it upon himself to do the same!"

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

# The Baal Shen Tov and the Errant Son-in-Law

There was a wealthy Jew, whose only daughter was becoming of marriageable age. While there were many promising young Torah scholars in his own town, he desired to have an exceptional Torah scholar as a son-in-law. After much effort, he indeed found one such young man. The couple were married, settled down and were extremely happy. The young man learned in the yeshiva study hall and grew in his learning and Torah knowledge. Everything was going as desired.

Some years passed, and the wealthy father-in-law began noticing small changes in his son-in-laws conduct and observance of mitzvot (commandments). At first, he tried to dismiss them as insignificant changes, and perhaps his learned son-in-law has reasons to conduct himself in this new manner. After all he knows much more than I do, so who am I to question him!

But as the weeks and months passed, he began noticing that he was taking off much more time from his learning and was seen in the company of others who were known to be completely non-observant. This was a situation that he was no longer able to ignore and pretend all is well.

## The Drastic Change

So, one day, he sat down with his son-in-law and asked him, “What caused this drastic change. Are you perhaps unhappy about something or is something or someone bothering you?”

The son-in-law replied, “I am extremely happy and fortunate. Your daughter is an excellent and kind hearted person. She is the perfect wife, and you are very gracious to us. A man couldn’t ask for more.

“But you want to know if everything is perfect, what caused these changes? I began having some questions about G-d’s ability to do certain things that our sages stated had happened. I noticed that some of the great commentators also wrote that these things are exaggerations. So, I no longer knew what is real and what is being said as a way of a parable or metaphor.

“Whoever I asked either replied that those are dangerous questions, that one is not allowed to ask, or gave me such weak answers and explanations, that they themselves admitted weren’t complete answers, they weren’t satisfactory. So now I have my doubts about many things, such as does G-d really care about such minute details, for example, when you wash your hands for bread, does it have to go until

the wrist and a drop off makes it invalid or it isn't so important. And therefore, I decided not to do it all."

The father-in-law was torn with grief. This is the son-in-law that he had hand-picked for his wonderful daughter, who is so proper in her observance of every mitzva (commandment). Is everything lost G-d forbid?

"No! It can't be," he told himself. "I must find a way to correct this." Turning to his son-in-law he said, "My dear son-in-law, you are much more learned than I, and if the great Torah scholars of the town couldn't answer your questions satisfactorily, I for sure don't have the ability. However, I am asking you one thing, please come with me to a great sage and allow him to answer and clarify everything."

Wanting to please his father-in-law, especially as he always has the ability to say that the answer this sage gave was not a convincing or even good answer, he agreed. The father-in-law didn't waste any time, but immediately set out with his son-in-law to see the Baal Shem Tov. They arrived in Mezibuzh on a bright sunny day and the father-in-law poured out his troubled heart to the Baal Shem Tov and pleaded with him that he does whatever is in his ability to bring the son-in-law back to the ways of G-d.

### **"Can It Rain Now?"**

The Baal Shem Tov asked them to join him on a small journey. With the father-in-law sitting on his right and the son-in-law sitting on his left, they left Mezibuzh. Once they were out of the city and on the road in the midst of an open field, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the son-in-law and said, "Young man, can it rain now?"

Looking at the clear blue sky, the young man replied, "No, there isn't a cloud in sight."

The Baal Shem Tov said, "And I say it can rain!"

Looking up once again, the young man peered in all directions to make sure that he saw correctly and indeed there wasn't a cloud in sight. So, he smugly retorted and said, "It is impossible! No way in the world can it rain here at this very moment."

The Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, "And I say it will rain momentarily!" A few seconds later the heavens opened and a deluge of rain came pouring down. The young man was bewildered at this happening.

Not only is it pouring from a cloudless sky, but the Baal Shem Tov's wagon is remaining completely dry. This is truly miraculous and beyond human comprehension. Being an extremely intelligent person, he realized why the Baal Shem Tov showed him this and didn't try to answer his questions verbally. Far be it that the Baal Shem Tov was merely showing off to him his miraculous powers. It was much more than that; he had clearly demonstrated that stories of our sages that

are beyond human comprehension, doesn't mean that they never occurred or are not real.

There are many happenings that the human intellect says one way, but in actuality they happened the opposite way – the way he thought was impossible. Once this question was answered, he realized that all of his other questions and doubts were based on this premise. And therefore, if this was resolved they all have nothing to stand on. Full of remorse he turned to the Baal Shem Tov and beseeched him, to guide him back to the way of G-d.

During the first year after his passing, the students of the Baal Shem Tov gathered and many of them related a miraculous story of the Baal Shem Tov that they personally were privy to. That night the Baal Shem Tov came to one of his students in a dream and said, "My greatness is not my ability to do miracles, it is my awe of heaven for even the smallest detail of a mitzva.

*As told by Rabbi Shalom Dovber Avtz. Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5784 edition of L'Chaim.*

# The Little Boy and the Tailor

**By Rabbi Nissan Mindel**

Many are the stories about the piety and unusual qualities of the little boy [who grew up to become the Rebbe Reshab of Chabad]. One of the stories worth remembering: Shalom Dovber was then about four years old. He happened to be with his mother when the tailor brought her a garment he had made up for her.

The boy busied himself around the tailor, and, without any particular thought in mind, pulled out a piece of material from the tailor's pocket. The tailor blushed and began to stammer an explanation that he had really meant to return the piece of cloth which was left over, but had forgotten to do so.

When he was gone, the mother said to her boy, "See, what you did to that poor man; you shamed him and made him unhappy. You must be careful never to shame anybody, even if you do not mean any harm."

The boy felt very sorry and cried bitterly. For a few weeks he carried the burden of the sin, then one day he asked his father, "Father, how can one make good the sin of shaming someone?" His father told him what to do, and asked him what had happened.

"I just wanted to know," the boy replied.

Later, his mother asked him why he didn't want to tell his father what had happened. To which the boy replied gravely, "Is it not enough that I sinned by shaming someone? Would you have me sin again by bearing tales and saying bad things about someone?"

To tell the whole story to his father would have meant telling him also about the dishonesty of the tailor, and this he did not want to do.

*Reprinted from this week's website – Chabad.Org*