

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS EIKEY 5782

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## Knowing When Not to React

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand



**Rav Motel Katz and Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

Rav Motel Katz, zt"l, who was the Head of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland for many years, had a very difficult life. He lost most of his family in Europe. He came to America and had to rebuild not only a Yeshiva, but his own family as well.

The following poignant vignette describes the man and his life. Someone once walked into Rav Motel's study in the middle of the day and found him crying. The visitor inquired as to why he was crying. Rav Motel explained that he had 10 children in Europe who were all killed during the Holocaust and now he was beginning to forget their names. He began to cry when he could not remember the names of his

own martyred children. This gives us a picture of the very difficult personal life that he led.

Rabbi Abba Spero from Cleveland told me an incident involving Rav Motel Katz. When I told him that I could not believe that the incident occurred, he responded that he had documentary proof of the incident. He sent me a copy of the incident described by Rav Motel himself in his own collected writings. I received permission from the son of Rav Motel, Rav Yakov Velvel Katz to publicly relate this incident, which I will in a moment.

### **There is No ONE Way to Raise A Child or Educate a Student**

The basic idea that Rav Motel wished to illustrate by documenting this incident is an idea to which everyone subscribes. The idea is that there is no ONE way to raise a child or to educate a student. Chinuch [education] is a very individualized and dynamic type of activity. It is ever changing. There are really no hard and fast rules. That which works for one child will not necessarily work for another child. That which works in one situation will not necessarily work in another situation. Parents and educators must always understand the demands of the situation.

“Sometimes,” Rav Motel writes, “‘Educating’ requires ‘not Educating’”. Sometimes a parent or teacher must NOT react. Even though the situation really demands that something be said – sometimes it is counter-productive to react.

This idea is really from the Talmud: “Just as it is a Mitzvah to say something (rebuke) which will be heard and accepted, so too it is a Mitzvah to not say something which will not be heard and accepted” [Yevamos 65b].

Rav Motel explained that this principle is illustrated in Parshas Shlach. The pasuk [verse] says, “Shlach LECHA” – send out FOR YOURSELF [Bamidbar 13:2]. Rashi explains that Moshe was instructed to send out the spies “for your own sake”. In effect G-d was telling Moshe, “I know that no good will come of this. Spies are not necessary; they will ruin things; they really should never be sent out... But if you want to send – then you go ahead and send them to satisfy your needs.”

### **Why Didn't G-d Just Say No**

Rav Motel asks, if it was so clear that this was not the way to proceed and that the mission had all the markings of a disaster, then why didn't G-d say straight out “Do not send the Spies!”? Forget the people's clamoring and yelling that they DO want spies; if it was clear to G-d that it was a bad idea then He should have forbid them from sending out spies! He could have told the people, “Sorry. I am G-d. I know better!”

The answer, says Rav Motel, is that the people were not on the spiritual level where they were ready to hear that. It would not have helped. Moshe could have given the people that message from G-d but they were not spiritually sophisticated enough to appreciate the message. They would have countered, “What do you mean that we are not sending spies? Everyone knows that the way to conquer a country is by sending spies and gathering intelligence!”

### **No Other Choice But to Allow Them to Have Their Way**

Under such circumstances, there was no other choice but to let them have their way. Objections would fall on deaf ears.

Anyone who has a child who is older than a toddler and certainly anyone who has adolescents or older children will understand this concept. Often, we as parents know what is good and what is right, but we know that our children will not listen to us. Sometimes, as difficult as this is for a parent, we must simply keep quiet. We can hint or suggest or perhaps provide incentives. But in the final analysis, our children have to make the decision themselves. It sometimes just does not help to say anything.

This was the situation with the Spies. The ‘right’ thing to do would have been to tell the Children of Israel ‘No Spies’! But that approach would not have worked. The incident that Rav Motel related occurred at the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland [presumably sometime in the 1950s]. The incident, which was an applied example of the above lesson, was as follows:

“I was asked by the students of the Yeshiva to permit them to daven Ma’ariv [conduct evening prayers] early. They requested that the established schedule of the Yeshiva be changed for the evening. Why did they wish to change the Yeshiva’s prayer schedule? So that they could listen on the radio to the Championship Prize Fight in New York to hear who wins.”

### **How About the NBA Playoffs!!**

Imagine if students came to the Rosh Yeshiva [Dean] today to ask that the Yeshiva prayer times be changed because of the NBA Playoffs!!

Rav Motel explained: “I knew full well that it was inappropriate to change the time of Ma’ariv and the Yeshiva’s schedule for a Heavyweight Prize Fight between people who are trained to hurt and injure one another.”

But what did this great product of Lithuanian Yeshivas — this product of Telshe in Europe — decide to do? What did Rav Motel respond to the request to daven Ma’ariv early so they could listen to the fight on the radio?

“I could not stop them and prohibit them from doing this. I knew that this was not the time to say no. Famous and respected people come from all over the country

to be present at a Heavyweight Championship Fight, to get ringside seats. A thousand people come from all parts of the country! This prizefight was viewed by the masses as an event of major proportions! It is difficult to forbid it. I could not say no because they would not know where I was coming from and they would not understand my reasoning.”

### **Most of the Students Came from Isolated Communities and Public Schools**

The majority of students in the Telshe yeshiva in the 1940s and 1950s came from public schools. They came to Telshe from small isolated communities. High level Torah study was just beginning to take root in America. They had not achieved the spiritual level whereby they could understand the idea that watching two people hitting each other in a boxing ring is a foolish pastime. To get up in the Yeshiva and castigate such activity as stupidity and nonsense would fall on deaf ears.

Rav Motel could not consider what his teachers in Europe would think about changing the time of Ma’ariv to accommodate such an event, because he knew that HIS students were not at the level of his teacher’s students. His students at that time were not ready to fully appreciate priorities based on Torah values.

That is Chinuch: Knowing when to say and when not to say — knowing one’s children and one’s students and knowing the time and the mentality prevalent in the era in which one is teaching. That is Chinuch!

### **Listening to a Prizefight on the Radio**

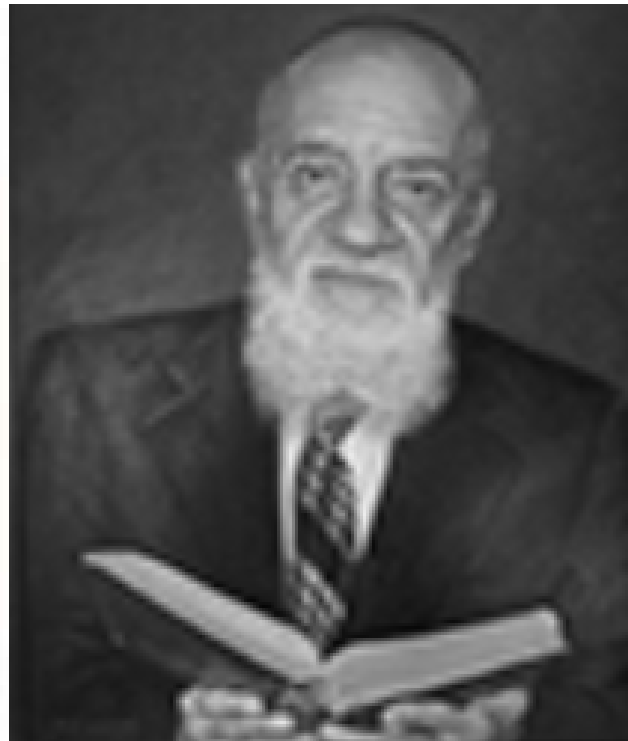
In the great Yeshiva of Telshe, ‘Chinuch’ in that situation was to schedule Ma’ariv early so that the students could listen to a prizefight on the radio.

I would not have believed this story if I had not seen it written by Rav Motel himself. This is a great tribute to the pedagogic wisdom of Rav Motel Katz, zt”l. It is a tremendous insight into the meaning of being an educator or a father or a Rebbi or a Rosh Yeshiva. Sometimes it is necessary to say “Yes”. But sometimes it is just necessary to not say anything at all!

This is what we pray for when we recite the prayer (in Shmoneh Esrei, the Amidah) for wisdom and understanding. We are asking G-d to grant us the wisdom to do what is right in the education of our children, our students and our community.

*Reprinted from The divrei Torah adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 287, Women and Tzitzis. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman ; Baltimore, MD*

# The Vision of a Chacham



**Chacham Baruch Ben-Haim and Chacham Yaakov Kassin of blessed memories**

There was once a man who was praying in Shaare Zion [a Sephardic synagogue in Brooklyn] and objected to the fact that somebody else, who was known to be far less than strictly Torah observant, received an *aliyah*. The man expressed his objection to *Chacham* Baruch Ben-Haim, who assured the man that this other fellow was allowed to receive an *aliyah*.

When the man continued to voice his disapproval, *Chacham* Baruch said, “Many years ago, there was a man here in this synagogue who was known not to be particularly observant, but *Chacham* Yaakov Kassin allowed him to receive an *aliyah*. Rather than rejecting him, *Chacham* Yaakov decided it was best to welcome the man with love and friendship.”

*Chacham* Baruch continued, “That man was your father. You are observant today because your father was warmly welcomed and respected when he was not yet strictly religious.”

*Reprinted from the Parashat Devarim 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

# A Master Teacher



**Rabbi Yoel Kahn and the Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memories**

I sat across the table from him (Rabbi Yoel Kah) and he taught a maamar (a Chassidic discourse). At the end of the class, he turned to me and asked me, the young student, “Did you understand [what was explained].”

That floored me. Here was the man who was responsible to record and transcribe the [Lubavitcher] Rebbe’s teachings. He was the most senior master in the knowledge of Chassidus. Yet he was interested in knowing if a simple student as myself understood what was being taught. That was the first time that a teacher came over to me and asked me that question. It demonstrated that he wasn't just interested in saying his thoughts, but wanted to make sure that it resonated with his students, otherwise the entire class was for naught.

*Excerpted from the Parshas Devorim 5782 email of the Weekly Story email of Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon.*

# Rabbi Hillel of Paritsh zt"l

Rabbi Hillel of Paritsh used to spend a substantial part of every year traveling through the towns of the southern parts of Russia in order to arouse people to repentance and upkeeping Torah and Mitzvos wherever the need arose.



He once arrived in a town where the Jewish tavernkeepers kept their businesses open on Shabbos. Reb Hillel was shocked to hear this, and invited them all to meet him. When he had explained to them what a serious matter this was they all undertook to conform to proper observance, but on one condition.

There was a tavernkeeper whose turnover was the highest in town. If he would persuade that wealthy tavernkeeper, to do likewise, otherwise they would not be able to survive competition with him.

The Tzaddik thereupon sent for that man once, twice and a third time but he ignored the invitation. Reb Hillel stayed on in the town for Shabbos. Shabbos morning the wealthy tavernkeeper suddenly suffered increasingly severe pains in the stomach, and his wife, fearing that they were brought on by the disrespect her

husband had shown the Tzaddik, hastened to seek him out so that he should intercede on his behalf.

### **The Tzaddik Remained Silent Despite The Tears of the Tavern Keeper's Wife**

While Reb Hillel was at the Shabbos dinner surrounded by a large company of Chassidim, she burst into the room, and with tears in her eyes implored the Rebbe to give her husband his blessing for a speedy recovery. The Tzaddik remained silent. His Chassidim were dismayed.

"Rebbe, at least give the blessing that is traditional in such cases on Shabbos, 'It is Shabbos, one may not cry out; and healing will come soon!' "

But Reb Hillel said not a word. The woman left bitterly disappointed, and her husband's pains grew worse. On Motzaei Shabbos, the Tzaddik was sitting with his Chassidim at a table with hot drinks, in fulfillment of the Talmudic statement that hot beverages after the departure of Shabbos serve as a cure. In ran the same woman, weeping and wailing, begging the Tzaddik to have pity on her husband and to pray for him.

Reb Hillel simply said: "It is Shabbos, when one may not cry out; healing will come soon."

### **The Chassidim Were Shocked**

The Chassidim were amazed. On Shabbos itself the Tzaddik had said nothing and now, when the holy day was over, he said these words usually uttered only on Shabbos?

Reb Hillel continued, "If Shabbos itself will no longer have cause to cry out against him, then healing will come soon! Go along and tell him that if he gives a solemn handshake in the presence of three witnesses that he will close his business on Shabbos, then he will be cured."

Three Chassidim hastened to his bedside to convey the Rabbi's words and he earnestly gave his word of honor. His illness passed, and from then on all the taverns were closed on Shabbos.

*Reprinted by the Parshas Devorim 5782 email of Rabbi Dovid Caro's Inspired by a Story.*



# Celebrating the Scholars Mentioned in the Gemara



**Rav Shalom Schwadron**

Rav Shalom Schwadron, zt”l, would Daven in a certain Shul in Shaarei Chesed. He once heard an elderly fellow enthusiastically reading a volume of Gemara.

However, he saw that the man didn’t understand even a little bit of what he was reading.

In a friendly way, Rav Shalom said, “It doesn’t sound like you understand the Gemara you are reading.”

The man replied, “You’re right. I don’t understand anything that I’m reading.”

Rav Shalom asked, “Then why are you sitting here and reading with such enthusiasm?”

The man explained, “A person who is a patriotic citizen might want to know the names of the country’s generals. That person might not know a thing about military strategy, but he still feels good about learning the names of the generals who lead the army.

“That is how I feel about knowing the names of the great Sages of the Gemara. I want to be familiar with the names of Rava and Abaye, of Rav Pappa and Rav Huna, of Rav Meir and Rabbi Yehudah. Even though I don’t understand what they are saying, I feel privileged to know their names!”

Rav Shalom later commented about the virtues of this individual. He said, “That man didn’t think, ‘I can’t understand what I am reading, so why should I bother?’ Instead, he was happy to recognize his level, and he said, ‘I am a person who loves to read the Gemara, even if just to know the names of all the scholars who are quoted there!’”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Devorim 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

# Slamming the Door in the Face of His Sick Sister



The Kotzker Rebbe's sister was once ill, and nothing she did helped her get better. She went to her brother, the Rebbe, and asked that he Daven for her. He looked at her and said, "I'm sorry, there is nothing I can do for you," and he then closed the door on her.

His sister then started crying, "Ribono Shel Olam! My own brother won't help me. You must help me!"

The Kotzker Rebbe then opened the door and said, "This is what I wanted to hear. It is not the Kotzker Rebbe who can help you, or the doctors who can help you, it is only Hashem that can help you. I just wanted you to realize that. Once you have come to that realization, then you will be fine."

This is the definition of a "complete Tefilah". The Baal Shem Tov quotes the Gemara, that Tefilos are matters 'that stand at the heights of the world,' yet people treat them lightly. Many times, we Daven, and our Tefilos have tremendous impact, even though we do not recognize that fact, and even though we may think that our Tefilos have gone unanswered.

We do not see the results, becomes sometimes the effect is not felt until generations later. We think that when we Daven for a sick family member that the Tefilos have to help that sick family member. That is understandable. But we do not know the power of Tefilah. Many times, even though the specific person we had been Davening for may not have benefited from those Tefilos, those Tefilos will be used to help so many other people!

Reprinted from the Parshas Devorim 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

# Your Chance to be a Hero

By Rabbi Joey Haber



A man named Shmuel lived in Israel and enjoyed a happy, fulfilled life, with a rewarding job and beautiful family. But then, when he was in his 40s, he developed a debilitating medical condition, as a result of which he lost his job. The financial struggles caused tension in his marriage, and it became very difficult to raise his children.

A friend advised him to go to one of the outstanding Rabbis of our generation, Rav Moshe Shapiro, for his blessing and encouragement. He went to Rav Shapiro, explained to him his struggles, and Rav Shapiro warmly blessed him and expressed words of inspiration and encouragement.

Sometime later, on Purim, he decided to return to Rav Shapiro's house. The house was filled with students and others who had come to spend time with the Rabbi and hear his brilliant Torah insights. Shmuel, a humble, unassuming person, stood quietly in the back as the Rabbi began to speak.

"One day," the Rabbi said, "Mashiah is going to come, and people are going to line up to greet him and speak to him. He is going to walk over to a simple man named Shmuel who will be standing in the back of the line – and who is standing here right now, in the back room." Rav Shapiro pointed to Shmuel, drawing everyone's attention to him.

“He is going to come over to Shmuel and ask, ‘What did you accomplish? How many pages of Gemara did you learn? How many hours did you devote to community service? How much money did you give to charity?’

“Shmuel, I want you to then look at Mashiah straight in the eye and say: ‘I am the one who brought you to the world. It is because of me that you came.’”

### **A Vitaly Important Lesson**

Rav Shapiro was teaching a vitally important lesson. True greatness is not scholarship, charity, leadership positions, an impressive resume, or a large following. Of course, these are all wonderful and should be encouraged. But what makes someone great is overcoming challenges. We bring Mashiah by persevering, by getting through difficult periods and coming out stronger and more connected to Hashem. This is real greatness.

All people have heroes. Some people’s heroes are famous singers, actors or athletes. Other people’s heroes are businessmen who are worth billions. For some, the heroes are prominent donors and philanthropists. And for others, the heroes are famous Rabbis or Rosheh Yeshiva.

Here are some of my heroes:

- A 15-year-old whose parents are going through a horrible divorce, and is doing everything in his power to overcome the negativity, and remain committed to Hashem.
- The wife of a man who lost his job, found another, and then lost that job, as well, who, despite the struggles and the embarrassment of having to live simply, remains in good spirits and continues to be a loyal, loving and supportive wife.
- The man whose wife developed ALS twenty years ago, and throughout that time, he has tended to her and cared for her in every which way, even as her health deteriorated and she is confined to a wheelchair.

### **The Son Who Became More Religious than His Family**

- The father whose son became more religious than his family, and who, despite not fully understanding his son’s direction, loves and respects his son, and supports him so he can pursue his religious studies in yeshiva.
- The man who started a business, but then, due to circumstances, had to leave, and his younger brothers took it over and became very wealthy as a result. Despite it all, he never expressed any jealousy or resentment, and ensured to remain on good terms with his brothers.
- The mother of a boy who became addicted to drugs, who does everything she can to help him and support him, all while lovingly and devotedly raising her other children.

These people are not going to get too much attention. They are not going to receive awards, be honored at fundraisers, or have articles written about them. They likely don't have social media accounts, and if they do, they probably have fewer "friends" and "followers" than others. But they are the real heroes. Because it is overcoming difficult challenges that makes someone great.

This is the meaning of the famous Mishnah in Pirkeh Avot (5:23), לפום צערא אגרא – "The reward is commensurate to the pain." When we experience pain and hardship, this is our opportunity to achieve greatness, to become a hero. True, few people – or nobody – will hear about it, but this makes no difference. Because real greatness and real heroism is not about attention and popularity.

Whenever we're struggling, with any sort of problem, we must remember that לפום צערא אגרא – that the struggle is our chance to be a real hero, to be someone great. Rather than feeling embittered or frustrated, let us relish the opportunity we have been given to attain greatness. Let us rise to the challenge, and become the real heroes that we are all capable of being.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Behukotai 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*



**A Chanukah Menorah**