**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Mikeitz 5775**

Volume 6, Issue 14 28 Kislev 5775/ December203, 2014

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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**L’Maaseh…A Tale to Remember**

**The Great Reward of Not**

**Letting a Strong Wind Prevent**

**One from Learning Torah**

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss once related the following extraordinary story. In Tunisia, there was a much beloved chief rabbi named Rav Tzemach Tzorfasi, zt”l, who was a great Tzaddik and masmid, and was extremely diligent in his Torah study. Each night he would get up at midnight, sit on the floor and say Tikun Chatzos and mourn the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, and then he would learn Torah until Shacharis.

One night as he started his learning, a gust of wind cam suddenly and blew out his candle, leaving him in complete darkness. He searched the entire house for an ember to relight the candle but he could not find one. Distraught that he would lose out on a night of learning, he remembered that the town bakery was open throughout the night, and surely they would have a fire going!

He decided he would go there and get a torch so he could reignite his candle. Rav Tzemach headed to the bakery and he knocked loudly on the locked door, waking the night watchman who had fallen asleep. The startled man came to the door and upon seeing that it was the chief rabbi who was knocking, he hurriedly opened the heavy beam that bolted the door.

Rav Tzemach asked him for a fire so he could light his candle to learn Torah, and the guard pleasantly gave him a torch and wished the Rabbi a good night. Rav Tzemach started to head home when another sudden gust of wind blew out his torch! Undeterred, he turned right back to the bakery and once again, he knocked and woke up the guard. With a little reluctance, the guard lifted the heavy beam and opened the door for the Rav.

Rav Tzemach apologized and explained that the wind blew out his fire, so the guard relit the torch and bid him a good night. Once again, the Rav headed home, and once again, just before reaching his home, another wind blew out the fire! For the third time, Rav Tzemach went back to the bakery. This time, the guard ignored the knocking, and reasoned that it was almost morning anyway.

However, the Rav persisted, determined not to lose a night’s learning, and

finally, the guard came to the door. He said through a hole, “Rabbi, it’s the middle of the night and this beam is very heavy to lift!”

Rav Tzemach apologized profusely and told the guard that for lifting the heavy beam so many times to help him study Torah, he should be blessed with as much gold as the weight of the heavy beam! The blessing stirred the guard because Rav Tzemach was known throughout the town for his powerful blessings, and he quickly opened the door, relit the torch, and escorted the Rabbi to his home.

On the very next day, a well-dressed man came in to the bakery and approached the guard. This man said he had heard that the watchman had a reliable reputation, and he asked the guard how much money he makes each day. He answered, five riel (the currency at that time in Tunisia), and the visitor told him that he needed a reliable man’s help for a few days and offered to pay him 25 riel per day! The guard promptly accepted.

The visitor took out a handkerchief and told the guard that he would need to be blindfolded, because the place he needed the help was in a secret location, and the watchman agreed. They proceeded to travel several hours until the guard had the blindfold removed, and he found himself in front of a rickety cottage. When they entered, he saw a room filled with pictures on the walls. The well-dressed man walked over to one of them and moved it away, and revealed a small hidden door from behind the frame. They walked through the door, and the guard gasped in amazement at what he saw.

There were sacks and sacks of gleaming gold coins. The man told him, “See those wooden chests in the corner? I need you to fill each of them with a certain amount of gold coins from the sacks.” The guard worked efficiently for five days and packed all the gold up as he was instructed. When he finished the job, he was paid very generously and was given a generous tip. Then he was blindfolded once again and brought back to the bakery.

A few weeks later as he was working in the bakery, he heard a community officer announcing in the street that someone had passed away and left no relatives, and his small house was up for public auction. When he heard this, a far-fetched thought crossed the guard’s mind. Could it be that the house being auctioned was none other than that the small cottage? Could this be the fulfillment of the Rabbi’s blessing?

He attended the auction and to his incredulity, it was indeed the rickety cottage that he worked in just a few weeks before! He proceeded to buy it with the money he had just earned when he packed the gold in the chests, and he hurried over to see the cottage. He entered the small room, moved the picture that was hiding the doorway, and entered the secret room. He stepped in and saw before him all the gold packed away in all the chests, now belonging entirely to him!

You might wonder how we know the details of this story. Towards the end of his life, Rav Tzemach moved to Eretz Yisroel. On his journey there, he stopped in Istanbul, and while resting, an Arab ruler passed by. He looked very intensely at Rav Tzemach and then suddenly fell to his feet and started kissing the Rav. He exclaimed, “Rav Tzorfasi! I am the night watchman from the bakery! Because of your blessings I am now a ruler and have my own palace!” He brought the Rabbi to his home and told him the entire story, and in gratitude, he gave Rav Tzemach enough money to live comfortably for the rest of his life in Eretz Yisroel! Rav Weiss explained that the moral of this incredible story is the great reward that awaits people who help and maintain Torah study to continue!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The True Test of One**

**Who Loves G-d**

**Once, a distraught man came to the great master Rabbi Levi Yitzchak [of Berditchev]. Standing in the rabbi's study, he said, "Rabbi, my business partners are about to make a terrible mistake. They want to take a new partner. But the man they have chosen does not even love G-d!"**

**Rabbi Levi Yitzhak looked worried. "Yes, that would be very bad. But tell me about this man they chose. Is he generous?"**

**"Well, yes, Rabbi. He even gives huge banquets and invites the poor. But he isn't pious!"**

**"And tell me," the Rabbi continued. "When others succeed, is he happy or jealous?"**

**"I guess he is happy. When I recently received the honor of providing the local count with supplies, this man invited me to his house to congratulate me. But he doesn't even attend synagogue!"**

**"I see. My friend, I would like to tell you a story." The rabbi stood up and spoke:**

**"There was once a king whose land was being invaded by a mighty army. His general went out with many soldiers to repel the invaders, but was defeated. So the king appointed another general. The second general succeeded.**

**"Now the royal counselors came to the king with an accusation: the first general, they said, had obviously been a traitor. If not, he would have won. After all, he commanded the same army that later prevailed!**

**"The king was in a quandary. This accusation was very serious. But how would the king determine whether the first general had tried to succeed or had purposely failed?**

**"Unable to solve this problem, the king summoned an old man who was known for his wisdom. When the old man heard the king's tale, he said, 'I will devise a test, your majesty. Please schedule a victory parade for the winning general!'**

**"Two days later, the city turned out for the parade. As the victorious general marched through the city, the grateful populace lined the streets. They cheered and shouted praises for the one who had saved them from their enemy.**

**"The old man had arranged for the parade to pass the home of the first general, who had failed. He told the king to clandestinely go and observe what the first general does when the parade passes his home.**

**When the victor strode by, the defeated general stood at his window, cheering as loudly as all the others, throwing flowers across his rival's path.**

**"The old man returned to the king. 'Have no fear, your majesty! The first general loves you so much that he even rejoices when his rival achieves a victory for you.'"**

**Rabbi Levi Yitzhak stopped his pacing and looked at the man in his study. "You see, my friend, we are all created by G-d to strive against the evil inclination within us. Many of us love G-d deeply but are defeated in that bitter struggle against our evil urges.**

**"How can you recognize those who honestly struggle to love G-d but have been defeated? By their ability to share whole-heartedly in the happiness of G-d's other children.**

**"My friend, please help this man obey all the commandments, if you can. But as long as he shows this deep, enthusiastic love for other struggling humans, you must never doubt his love for G-d!"**

**This, indeed, remains the eternal litmus test for religion. If you love G-d, you love people. If you believe in G-d, you believe in people. If you cherish G-d, you cherish people. If you are chosen by G-d, you make sure that every person feels chosen to fulfill his or her mission to bring redemption to our world.**

***Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad of Great Neck (NY).***

**It Once Happened**

**In the Merit of Matitiyahu, Father of the Macabbees**

A huge group was gathered on the other side of the large table and looked in the direction of their rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Wienberg, the Slonimer Rebbe. He stood opposite the wicks in the Chanuka menora, meditating and contemplating, for an unknown reason not yet ready to kindle the Chanuka lights.

Hundreds of Chasidim stood in awe and with great respect, watching their Rebbe as he stood preparing for this mitzva. They waited with bated breath for the glorious moment when he would take the wax candle in his hand and begin reciting the words of the Chanuka blessings.

Minutes, which seemed like hours, passed and then the Rebbe began chanting the blessings. He infused each word with kabbalistic intentions, and each chasid there was able to hook into the holiness of the moment according to his own level.

"Help me, deliver me!"

The dreadful cry tore through the hearts of all those gathered there and awakened each person from his reverie. Everyone looked in the direction of the voice.

The Rebbe, his face aflame with the holiness of the moment, also turned his head in the direction of the voice toward the end of the synagogue. There stood a women with her hands outstretched toward the heavens, crying with a bitter heart.

It became clear that this woman was not one of the wives of the chasidim gathered there. In fact, she had no connection to the Rebbe or the Chasidic lifestyle. "Who was she?" some murmured.

The distraught woman lived with her family in this town. Her husband was a wealthy and well-respected businessman who had never in his life entered this Chasidishe synagogue. He and his friends were among those who laughed at the Chasidic lifestyle and customs.

For many years the couple had not been blessed with children. When their son was finally born they were already much older. Their happiness knew no bounds. He was always given the best of everything, though he was not especially spoiled.

On the eve of Chanuka the young boy fell ill. The doctors came to his bedside and cared for him with devotion. But they could not help him. To everyone's horror his fever rose from day to day. Tonight, his situation worsened. The boy lost consciousness and the doctors who were standing around his bed raised their hands in hopelessness.

The father of the child was pacing around the house in agony and bitterness. But his mother could not stand seeing her son's suffering any longer and left the house. Suddenly she began walking quickly. Toward what or where or whom she knew not. But her feet seemed to have a mind of their own, and before she knew it she found herself in front of the Slonimer synagogue just as the Rebbe was preparing to kindle the Chanuka lights.

"Rebbe, help me," cried the woman in a voice that echoed throughout the entire synagogue.

"Tell her not to worry," the Rebbe said quietly to someone. "She should go and return home. She should ask her husband to add to her son's name the name 'Matitiyahu' [Matithias]. And in the merit of that great tzadik--father of the Macabbees--who gave up his life for the Jewish people and the Holy One, the sick child's life will be lengthened. And another thing, when the child is fully recovered, his father should bring a 'pidyon nefesh' of chai--life--18 coins which will be given to charity in the Holy Land."

The following day, at about the time when the Chanuka candles were being lit, a new face was seen in the Slonimer synagogue. It was the father of Matitiyahu, who had brought to the Rebbe 18 rubles, a pidyon nefesh for his son who was fully recovered, to the Rebbe.

*Reprinted from the Archives of L’Chaim Weekly (Issue #227 – Parshas Mikeitz – December 1992).*

**Rabbi Getzy Rubashkin Visits A Sick Friend and Saves a Life**

The Gemara (Nedarim 40a) teaches that visiting the sick can literally restore them to life. But it’s not often that the result of this mitzvah is as apparent as it was recently to Rabbi Getzy Rubashkin of Miami, Florida.

“My wife Chana and I have been directing Chabad of West Kendall & The Falls in Florida since last December, and we’ve gotten to know many people,” said the 26-year-old father of two. “One of our friends is a woman named Ellen. During Sukkos, she was hospitalized with chest pains. It turns out that her lungs were full of blood clots. She was hesitant to go through a procedure to address them, but her mother finally convinced her by phone that she had to do it.

“Right then and there, apparently, her lips started to turn blue, and she was rushed to the intensive-care unit. Thank G‑d, there was a specialized team of interventional radiologists there at the time, and they were able to perform the procedure she needed right away. We were out of town, but I made a mental note to visit her as soon as I returned.”

By the time the Rubashkins came home, the rabbi learned that Ellen was back at her house and recuperating. “It was close to Shabbat, but I asked Edward Hollander , a mutual friend, if he would like to go with me to visit Ellen at home,” he went on to explain. “We made plans to meet at my place and drive over to Ellen’s.

“By the time Ed came over, it was even closer to Shabbat and I had a few things to do, so I asked him if he would go alone. He told me that he preferred to go with me and offered to wait while I did what I needed to do.”

**Saw a UPS Truck Parking**

**In Front of the House**

Fifteen minutes later, they were on their way. As they pulled up at Ellen’s home, they saw a UPS truck parking in front of the house. Happy to do a favor, Ed accepted the package, which was for Ellen, and brought it inside.

“We sat down and talked about how wonderful she looked, and we all marveled at her miraculous return to health and what Divine providence it was that the team of specialists were there just when she needed them,” the rabbi recalled. “After a few minutes, Ed offered to open Ellen’s package, which contained an oximeter ordered the night before by one of her sons. Curious to see it in action, Ed popped in the batteries, and she put it on. He was shocked to see that her heart rate was soaring to over 200 bpm [beats per minute]-more than double normal rate.

**Amazing Series of Events**

“At first, he thought the device must be defective,” he continued, “since Ellen had been looking so great, but then Ed tried it on himself and on me, and it showed a normal heart rate for both of us. Ed then put the meter on back on Ellen again, and it showed the high heart rate.”

With minutes to spare, Ed called 911, despite Ellen’s request not to do so, preferring just to call her doctor or the hospital. Because of Ed’s prior experiences in the field, he knew it was a life-threatening situation.

By the time the ambulance arrived, Ellen’s situation had deteriorated to the point that it was difficult for the rescue squad to attach an IV to her. It took the paramedics nearly 15 minutes to stabilize her before rushing her to the hospital.

**The Amazing Series of Events**

**That Saved Ellen’s Life**

Reflecting on the drama of that day, the rabbi pointed out the amazing series of events that literally saved Ellen’s life.

“Had we come a few minutes earlier, we may have never sensed anything wrong, and a few minutes later, it may have been too late,” he noted. “Had we come even a minute or two before or after the arrival of the UPS truck, we would have never brought in the package, and never thought to open it and hook Ellen up to the oximeter. When your heart is running at 200 bpm, you don’t have a lot of time, so we are all grateful to G‑d for timing our visit just so.”

For his part, Ed called it a “Divine moment,” saying that “there was no doubt that G‑d was there during our visit and played a pivotal role in saving Ellen’s life.”

As for Ellen, the recipient of the attention and good deeds, she stated: “Things may look really awful, but G‑d’s hand is there all the time, and he prepares everything that is necessary for a good outcome. All we need to do is have trust, and you will see him there.”

*Reprinted from the December 15, 2014 website of Matzav.com Originally printed on the CrownHeights.Info website.*

**Chabad Couple Set to Bring a New Kind Of Warmth to Sub-Saharan Angola**

**By**[**Mordechai Lightstone**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/13002/jewish/Mordechai-Lightstone.htm)

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| Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Devorah Leah Chekly are looking forward to opening the first permanent Chabad center in the African coastal nation of Angola, along with their daughter, Chaya Mushka. |
| **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Devorah Leah Chekly along with their daughter, Chaya Mushka.** |

Although far from major centers of Jewish life and even farther from their hometown of Paris, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Devorah Leah Chekly are looking forward to opening the first permanent Chabad center in the African coastal nation of Angola.

Once racked with a civil war that lasted nearly three decades, Angola has experienced relative calm and prosperity since 2002. The seventh largest country in Africa, Angola lies on the Atlantic Ocean, and is bordered by Namibia on the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo on the north and Zambia on the east.

**Attracting Jewish Businesspeople**

Foreign businesses have taken a significant interest in the country’s vast natural resources, including oil, gas and diamonds. Jewish businesspeople from France, Israel, America and elsewhere have moved to the coastal nation because of the economic prospects, and the Angolan government is touting the country’s natural beauty and scenic coastline to build a nascent tourism industry.

[**Chabad-Lubavitch of Central Africa**](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=117894)

The match between the Cheklys and Angola didn’t come completely out of the blue. As a rabbinical student, Chekly spent time as a “Roving Rabbi,” visiting Jewish communities in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville in the neighboring Republic of the Congo.

After his rabbinic ordination and marriage, he and his wife were contacted by Rabbi ShlomoBentolila, Chabad-Lubavitch emissary to Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and director of Chabad’s operations in Central Africa, about moving to Luanda, Angola’s capital. They agreed and will soon be moving there, along with their 8-month-old daughter, Chaya Mushka.

“I saw something truly amazing when visiting Jews in Africa,” he says. “The farther Jews were away from the established community—from traditional observance—the greater the thirst they had to learn. It’s beautiful.”

**Growing Jewish Life in Africa**

The Cheklys’ permanent presence in Angola marks another step in the long-term growth of Chabad-Lubavitch in Sub-Saharan Africa.

For the past 20 years, Bentolila has supervised Jewish activities in 12 African countries, including Nigeria, Namibia, Kenya, Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone, serving Israeli expatriates, European businessmen and women, tourists from Europe and America, and locally born Jews. “Roving Rabbis” programs are growing during Jewish holiday periods, and permanent Chabad centers are expected to open soon in Ghana and Mozambique.

The Cheklys, who speak French, Hebrew and English, hope to reach out to both the estimated 300 Jewish families living full-time in Angola and visitors to the country, are preparing to host their first Chanukah celebration there later this month. In fact, it will be the inaugural public menorah-lighting in Angola.

When asked about their decision to move to such a remote place, Chekly replies: “I’m a Chassid; my life is given over to helping other Jews. What does distance matter? If there are people there, then we need to be there.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Brenham Synagogue Moving To Austin, and a New Life**

**By**[**Corrie MacLaggan**](http://www.texastribune.org/about/staff/corrie-maclaggan/)

[](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.texastribune.org/media/images/2014/12/11/Synagogue_jpg_800x1000_q100.jpg)

**B'nai Abraham synagogue in Brenham, Texas.**

**Photo by Anneke Paterson**

BRENHAM — In Leon Toubin’s dreams, Jewish life would again be vibrant in this city where he and his wife, Mimi, care for the B’nai Abraham synagogue where generations of his family worshipped.

But Jews are not moving to Brenham, so Toubin has decided to cut B’nai Abraham’s roots so that it may bloom anew. He has arranged to move Texas' oldest orthodox synagogue 90 miles west to Austin, which does have a thriving Jewish community. The 121-year-old white wooden building could be trucked to the Dell Jewish Community Campus in Austin as soon as Hanukkah, which begins Tuesday evening.

Across the country, as Jews have left small towns for bigger cities, synagogues have deteriorated or been converted to churches, theaters and even a [hardware store](http://forward.com/articles/194945/the-hardware-store-synagogue/?p=all). Toubin, a cowboy-hat-wearing 86-year-old, did not want that for B’nai Abraham, which has not regularly been used for religious services in more than half a century.

“This one here, G-d willing, it’ll have a future,” he said.

Once moved, the synagogue — whose name means “Children of Abraham” — will lose its spot on the National Register of Historic Places and its status as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. Some connected to the synagogue worry that the move threatens to erase the memory of Jewish life in Brenham, a onetime regional economic hub where immigrants from Poland and Lithuania worked as merchants and, in 1893, built a modest synagogue.

[](https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.texastribune.org/media/images/2014/12/11/Synagogue-2_jpg_800x1000_q100.jpg)

**Leon Toubin, whose family worshipped at B'nai Abraham synagogue for generations, inside his home in Brenham, Texas.**

**Photo by Anneke Paterson**

Those applauding the move say a new beginning awaits B’nai Abraham in the Texas capital, where a modern Orthodox congregation called Tiferet Israel plans to worship in the building. Austin Jewish leaders say the building could spark interest in the city among Orthodox Jews.

“When I look at that synagogue, I see a house that’s soul-built, that’s spirit-built, because there is nothing ostentatious about it,” said Rabbi Daniel Millner of Tiferet Israel. “In that way it really embodies the purest spirit of Jewish ritual life. It is that vision, it is that dream, it is that essence that we are transporting, not just the building itself, but everything that it represents, and all of the work and all of the love that went into it, from the handmade nails to the hand-cut wood.”

When Toubin looks at B’nai Abraham, he sees himself as a boy accompanying his father to services. He remembers being sent to the corner filling station to phone people when there were not enough men for a minyan, or quorum.

The building, like Toubin himself, is a mix of American and East European, said Samuel D. Gruber, an architectural historian in Syracuse, N.Y. “He’s as much a Jew as a Texan and as much a Texan as a Jew,” Gruber said.

Gruber’s great-grandfather was among the founders of B’nai Abraham, and the synagogue inspired him to dedicate his life to preserving historic Jewish sites around the world. He has mixed feelings about the move.

“It’s there like an anchor for me of what my American roots are,” he said. “Not having the synagogue in Brenham may make it harder for me to connect with that past.”

But moving, Gruber said, means B’nai Abraham will once again serve a synagogue’s main purposes: as a house of gathering, prayer and study.

“Jewish life in Brenham is a thing of the past, and Jewish life in Austin very much has a future,” said Jay Rubin, chief executive of the Jewish Federation of Greater Austin.

As Austin has grown, so has its Jewish community. In the metropolitan area of about 1.9 million people, there are some 18,000 Jews, compared with about 3,000 in 1980, Rubin said. Still, there are few Orthodox Jews.

“The interest is tremendous,” said Jeffrey Kane, president of the Tiferet Israel congregation, which has about 50 member families. “We get calls every couple of weeks from people in New York, or people in Dallas or Houston, who want to move to Austin, but ultimately decide not to do it because there is no infrastructure here.”

Infrastructure like a religious school and an eruv, a ritual boundary that allows actions normally prohibited outside the home on the Sabbath (carrying things, for example). An eruv set to be completed by February — and the arrival of B’nai Abraham — could help generate interest in Austin among Orthodox Jews, Millner said.

First, the synagogue must make the journey. Last week, sawdust covered the building’s floor as workers braced its interior for the trip. The Torah scrolls and prayer books had already moved to Austin.

The roof will be lifted off with a crane and cut into two pieces. The building will be jacked up and loaded onto one flatbed truck, and the larger roof piece onto another, said Chris Sharp, general superintendent of DKC Construction Group, which is handling the move. Slowly, the two trucks will make their way to Austin with a police escort. The roof’s smaller piece will follow later.

The move — and building upgrades — will cost about $600,000, paid for by donors, most connected to the Toubins or the synagogue, Rubin said.

The Texas Historical Commission encourages communities to preserve historic buildings in their original locations, but in the case of B’nai Abraham, the agency “recognized that additional negotiation wouldn’t have changed the outcome,” said an agency spokesman, Chris Florance.

Brenham, the home of Blue Bell ice cream, considered making the synagogue part of its parks department, Mayor Milton Tate said. But it would have been a tourist attraction with no religious services.

Jews played a vital role in developing the community, Tate said, but most have moved away or died. The Toubins’ children live in Houston and Dallas.

“The Toubins,” Tate said, “are the last of the Mohicans.”

At the Jewish community campus in Austin, the building will be pieced back together in a grove of trees on a site where soil from Brenham and Jerusalem were mixed with the Austin dirt. It will get new insulation, restrooms, air-conditioning and electrical wiring.

It will be called B’nai Abraham Brenham Historic Synagogue.

It will host daily prayers for members of Tiferet Israel, who now worship in an education building at the Jewish community campus. Other Jewish groups will also use it. There will be holiday services, educational programs and bar mitzvahs.

Judith Katzman's oldest son had his bar mitzvah at B'nai Abraham in Brenham. She treasures the synagogue as part of the town’s landscape.

“It really touches me to drive by it and have it pop up,” she said. But when it is gone, she added, “We’ll all be okay.”

*Reprinted from the December 14, 2014 edition of The Texas Tribune.*