**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayechi 5775**

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**L’Maaseh…A Tale to Remember**

**In the Merit of**

**Kiddush Levanah**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

 Rabbi Yechiel Spero writes a story about a couple in Yerushalayim that had much difficulty having children. Rabbi and Mrs. Feldman, were married for 19 years and fertility centers could not help them, but they would never give up trying, and they would never stop davening.

Rabbi Feldman was very meticulous in performing mitzvos, but in particular, he loved the mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah, and tried to do that mitzvah each month in the best possible way.

One year, in the month of Teves, it rained every day, and it was impossible to see the moon through the clouds, which made it impossible to say the brachah on the new moon. Rabbi Feldman waited each night to try and say Kiddush Levanah, but it just didn’t stop raining.

On the night of the 14th of the month, the last possible night to fulfill the mitzvah, it was still raining, and Rabbi Feldman began to despair. A friend of his, Chaim Weinman, came to visit him, because he knew how precious the mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah was to him, and he suggested that they contact the local army posts to see if their weather forecasts predicted a break in the rain and clouds.

Without any other options, Rabbi Feldman called one of the posts. After a quick conversation, he excitedly hung up the phone and told his friend that the lieutenant told him that the forecast for Chevron was partly cloudy skies! Though it was only a small chance, it was still a possibility, and he drove with his friend toward Chevron to try and say Kiddush Levanah.

When they got to Bais Lechem, they looked out of their car at the sky and saw the moon shining brightly! They immediately got out and said Kiddush Levanah, and with great simchah, they danced and sang ‘Tovim Meoros Shebara Elokeinu!’ and then they went to Kever Rochel to daven by Rochel Imeinu.

A group of Chassidim were in Bais Lechem at the time, and they were very impressed with the way Rabbi Feldman said Kiddush Levanah, and by his happiness and enthusiasm at performing the mitzvah.

They approached him and asked him to tell them about himself. When they heard the difficult situation he was enduring that he did not yet have children, the entire group of Chassidim started davening for him.

They said, “Ribbono Shel Olam! Look at the sacrifice this Jew has shown for the mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah! Look how precious this mitzvah is to him! Mamma Rochel! Please cry for this couple who has suffered so much! Please cry that they should be blessed with a child!”

Miraculously, a little over nine months later, on the eleventh of Cheshvan, which is the Yartzeit of Rochel Imeinu, Rabbi and Mrs. Feldman were blessed with twin girls!

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

**Story #891**

**The Speediest Dipper of All**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000tGk0:001KadqX00002xzw&count=1419432442&randid=1389293456&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1389293456)

**Rabbi Chaim Halberstam, the *Divrei Chayim* of Sanz,** used to say that his prayers went up to Heaven only via Tsfat, the small holy city in the north of Israel. Therefore, he wished to have a synagogue in Tsfat to serve as his personal channel.

In the 1860s He sent his eldest son, **Rabbi Yechezkel-Shraga Halberstam** (eventually to be known as the ***Divrei Yechezkel* of Shineva**), to establish such a *shul*. The Shinever made the journey to Tsfat twice, where, in addition to his mission, the famous *Mikveh* of the Holy Ari was for him a major attraction.

He was an exceptionally pious Jew, and one of his long-established personal customs was to go the *mikveh* several times a day. Of course, as a pious Jew and a Torah scholar of the highest level he could never justify taking so much time away from Torah study, so he trained himself to be exceptionally quick in getting undressed, jumping into the freezing waters of the underground spring-fed Ari *mikveh*, immersing, emerging, toweling and dressing.

One afternoon, as he was undressing in the *mikveh* chamber, a much older man entered the room, undressed-immersed-dressed and started to leave before Rabbi Yechezkel could even finish undressing. He was astonished how could anyone do this so much faster than he could!

“Who are you?” he called out; “what’s your name?”

The man glared at him fiercely. “Why are you asking me my name?” Then he walked out.

The Divrei Yechezkel quickly put his clothes back on and ran out after the man, but he was already out of sight.

**\* \* \***

After finally establishing the Sanz *Shul* in the Tsfat’s Old City Jewish Quarter (where the remodeled version still thrives today), the Divrei Yechezkel made his way back to Europe. His father, the Divrei Chayim, demanded a detailed report of everything he had done and experienced. The son complied, but when he finished the father was not satisfied.

“That’s it?” he queried.

“Yes.”

“No, it can’t be,” stated the Divrei Chayim firmly. “You left something out.”

“No I didn’t”

“Yes you did!”

The Divrei Yechezkel racked his memory. He had given his father an exhaustive detailed verbal report that had taken over an hour. What more could there possibly be to say?

Then he recollected the strange incident at the Ari *Mikveh*. Strange, but not particularly significant, he thought to himself. Nevertheless, I’d better tell him about it.

He related to his father the entire incident. His father looked up at him compassionately.

“My son, the next time you merit to greet **Eliyahu HaNavi** (Elijah the Prophet), don’t ask him his name. Ask him for a blessing!”

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*Source*: As heard by Yerachmiel Tilles from good friend, loyal Sanz chasid, and famous kabbalistic artist, **Yaakov Kaszemacher** of blessed memory, soon after moving from New York to Tsfat in 1978.

*Biographical notes*:

**Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Sanz** [of blessed memory: 25 Nissan 5553 - 25 Nissan 5636 (April 1793-April 1876 C.E.)] was the first Rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty. In addition to being a renowned Torah scholar, he is famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of tzedaka. His voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title *Divrei Chayim*.

**Rabbi Yechezkel-Shraga Halberstam of Shineva,** (of blessed memory: 20 Shvat 5573 - **6 Tevet** 5660 (Jan. 1813- Dec. 1899 C.E.)], was the eldest son of the *Divrei Chayim*, Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Sanz. As an emissary of his father, he founded the Sanzer community and synagogue in Tsfat in 1870. He served as the rabbi of Shineva from 1855 till 1868, and then again from 1881 till his passing. A great Torah genius, many of his Torah insights into Scripture, Law and Kabbalah are collected in *Divrei Yechezkel*.

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**Hanukkah in Jamaica**

**Holiday Celebrations Bring Together the Island’s Diverse Jewish Community**

**By**[**Elissa Goldstein**](http://tabletmag.com/author/elissa-goldstein/)**|**

“Chabad of Jamaica,” Rabbi Yaakov Raskin declares when he answers his phone, and I think I detect a note of bemused triumph in his voice. Yes, there’s a Chabad house in Jamaica—not exactly a place you would expect to find Orthodox Jews. It opened in July 2014 in Montego Bay, right by the main hotel strip; the latest development in Jamaica’s long, fascinating, and diverse Jewish history. Jews have resided on the island since the time of the Spanish Inquisition—longer than almost any other community in the Americas or the Caribbean. From a peak of 2,500 in the late 1800s, there are now just 250 Jews (or thereabouts) in Jamaica, but their presence and influence in public life is certainly felt—and appreciated—by the wider population, many of whom express a strong connection to the Hebrew bible and Jewish culture.

So, how did Raskin, who is from Montreal, end up in Jamaica? Through a combination of keen scouting, and, as he told me over the phone last week, “divine providence.” In 2012, he visited the Caribbean islands with a friend and “developed a feeling for these small Jewish communities.” The following year he married Mushkee, a Brooklyn native, and together the couple began looking for a location to conduct *shlichut*—religious outreach directed towards Jews—which is one of the main undertakings of the Chabad movement. In March 2014 they visited Jamaica and met with about 30 local Jewish families. It was a “very warm visit,” says Raskin, but he was finally persuaded that it was the right move when he learned that his grandfather, Leibel Raskin, had been sent to the island in 1957 by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe.



Bringing the spirit of Chanukah to the Caribbean island of Jamaica

I visited Jamaica this past summer, right before the official opening of the Chabad house, and met with members of the Jewish community in the capital of Kingston, which is located on the opposite side of the island from Montego Bay. Services are held every Shabbat at Shaare Shalom, a gracious, sand-floored synagogue just outside the downtown area, and attended by a small but dedicated coterie of congregants. I wondered how the established community would respond to the arrival of the Raskins, who bring a welcoming but distinctly more Orthodox flavor of Judaism to the country.

The rabbi of Shaare Shalom, [Dana Evan Kaplan](http://tabletmag.com/author/dekaplan) —who previously led a Reform congregation in Georgia—was circumspect about the possibility of the two rabbis officially working together. Chabad and Reform Judaism, he pointed out, don’t exactly go hand-in-hand—even on a tropical island. But despite their theological differences, Rabbi Kaplan was enthusiastic about the arrival of the Raskins, who he described as “the nicest, most genuine, most sincere people. We get along very well and I have deep respect for him and her.” Over the phone last week, he told me “a little shaking up” and competition would be a good thing for the established community.

Jamaica’s Hanukkah celebrations offer a microcosm of this evolving dynamic. On Sunday afternoon, Chabad hosted “Chanukah in the Sand,” a party for the community at the Bamboo Beach Club in Ocho Rios, which is a 90 minute drive from Kingston. About 50 people attended, partaking in a meal of Jamaican jerk chicken (the hotel’s kitchen was kashered for the occasion). Kids played in the water, and an 8-foot-tall, custom-designed bamboo hanukkiah was lit. In the crowd were Ainsley Henriques and Margaret Adam, two stalwarts of the Jamaican Jewish community who made the journey from Kingston with several others. Henriques, a jovial 76-year-old who has held various leadership roles in the community, was enthusiastic about the party, which attracted a mix of locals, tourists, and expatriate Jewish-Jamaicans (including his brother, who was visiting from abroad with 15 family members). When I asked him how he felt about the arrival of Chabad, he said, “For us it’s not a competition, they’re providing services which we don’t provide, they’re providing kosher meals for tourists… If they’re putting on a program, there’s no reason I shouldn’t attend.”

Adam, who teaches at Hillel Academy, a private school in Kingston founded by the Jewish community in 1969, was admiring of the Raskins, but careful in her choice of words and her framing of the community’s challenges.“I really do enjoy the energy of the Rabbi Raskin and Mushkee, and anything that brings more [Judaism] to the island is enriching,” she said, but at the same time, “we can’t compete with Chabad, and I do wonder about the future of our community.” Adam, who has served on Shaare Shalom’s board for the past three years, helped to organize the Hanukkah festivities in Kingston. There was a kids’ party on the first night at the home of one of the congregants, a Shabbat Hanukkah service at the synagogue on Friday (latkes, sufganiyot, and pizza were served), and a combined Carol/Hanukkah song hour at Hillel Academy on December 11, which coincided with the end of the term. (Hillel is non-denominational, but students learn about the school’s Jewish history.)

The Raskins travel regularly to various towns across the island and hold Torah classes in Kingston every two weeks. “When we go to Kingston, we try to do programs with the children there,” said Rabbi Raskin, who co-ordinates with Margaret Adam. “Our slogan is ‘Serving the Jewish tourists and locals from A-Z.’” In Jamaica, this means everything from providing kosher meals to visitors, to teaching Torah, to helping Jewish travelers in emergencies. (When a tourist died suddenly on Shabbat a few weeks ago, they assisted in repatriating his body back to New York.) “We’re here to bring light, to clarify what Judaism is to all those who would like to follow or learn without any pressure,” he told me right before Hanukkah. “We are here until the last Jew is on the island.”

Reprinted from the December 24, 2014 email of Tablet Magazine.

**Op-Ed: Europe is Gone**

[](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/97)

**[By Rabbi Berel Wein](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/97)**

[Rabbi Berel Wein is a noted scholar, historian, speaker and educator.](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/97)

What can one say about Europe? I imagine that if one wants to be bitterly truthful then one could easily say that Hitler has in effect triumphed. He branded the Jews as the root of all troubles and proclaimed that the “final” and only solution to the “Jewish problem” was to eradicate all Jews from the face of the earth.

And as we all know, he followed through on his genocidal program. A great deal of Europe, its leaders, intellectuals and common folk, willfully and almost gleefully cooperated in this genocide. Many did so actively while many more Europeans did so passively.

Once the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed after the war ended, this irrational and pathological hatred of the Jews went underground. After all, it was too shameful to admit that the continent that prided itself on the advancement of civilization could be guilty of such organized, government-sponsored inhumanity and cruelty. So, most Europeans shielded themselves from any true feelings of guilt by simply stating that they were ignorant as to what was occurring.

The Vatican and other Christian churches aided many Nazis and other war criminals in escaping from Europe and settling rather comfortably in other continents, notably South America. As penance for their atrocious behavior, many European countries, though not all, voted for the establishment of the state of Israel and granted the nascent nation diplomatic and sometimes even economic recognition and help.

And there the matter seemed to rest during the decade of the 1950s. But the state of Israel, always being the burr under the world’s saddle, would not let the matter rest then. The wound was too deep and raw and the world would not be allowed to so easily forget what had happened.

So, Israel captured Adolf Eichmann and placed him on trial for his crimes against the Jewish people and humanity. The trial, which lasted almost a year, revealed in a stark and graphic way what had happened to the Jewish people on European soil from 1939 to 1945. Thus it was not only Eichmann and the Nazis that were the defendants in that most bruising and bitter trial, but in a very real sense, Europe itself was on trial. Eichmann was justifiably found guilty and executed for his crimes, subliminally Europe was also judged to be guilty and complicit in the horror of the Holocaust.

Europe has never forgiven Israel for that trial and verdict. It is well aware that it is guilty but can never own up to this guilt. Therefore, in line with its time-honored obsession with the Jewish people and its innate necessity to scapegoat Jews for all of Europe's problems, Europe has turned its enmity in an unremitting fashion against the Jewish state.

Israel should be pilloried and boycotted, delegitimized and isolated, while the noble Palestinians – fomenters of worldwide terrorism, intifadas and recurring wars – are worthy of diplomatic recognition, media support, financial aid and moral justification. This is Europe's revenge against the Jews for surviving the Holocaust and thereby instilling the unease and guilt that Europe feels towards Jews, Judaism and the Jewish state.

To use a Christian phrase, Europe is sorely in need of redemption. Catholic countries such as Ireland, Portugal and Spain have not digested the lessons of history vis-à-vis the relationship of the Church and the Jews over the centuries. The liberal Left refuses to deal with its history of oppression and anti-Semitism that Marxism, the Soviet Union and the Left generally has inflicted on European and world Jewry. Thus it again bans circumcision and kosher slaughter, all in the name of some lofty ideals of infant and animal rights.

All of this naturally occurs in the background of rampant child abuse and slaughter of humans, the repression of women, the elimination of minorities and the other pernicious facets of intolerant social norms, which characterize Palestinian and Islamic society. Perfidious and hypocritical as it is, Europe nonetheless claims the high moral ground for itself, sneering condescendingly at the United States and feels justly entitled to be the moral judge over the state of Israel.

Europe regrets not so much the Holocaust itself, but that the Jews survived it and because of it were allowed to create a nation state for themselves. Therefore it will allow for the creation of Holocaust memorials and museums but objects that somehow the state of Israel be included in the Jewish story that it depicts.

Hamas is no longer a terrorist organization as far as Europe is concerned, but Israel should be hauled before the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Even George Orwell would be astounded to see how skewed the vision and policies of Europe are today. Only time will tell if Europe is ever able to right its perverse attitude towards Jews and Israel. History teaches us that it will be doomed somehow if it does not do so.

*Reprinted from the December 26, 2014 email of Arutz Sheva. Rabbi Berel Wein is a noted scholar, historian, speaker and educator.*

**The Broken Bottle**

**By Rabbi Yitzchok Tzvi Schwarz**

This story, as told by the great Yerushalmi maggid Rav Shabsi Yudelevitz, goes back many years ago. The old yishuv of Yerushalayim was suffering from hunger. They desperately needed aid from their brethren overseas. The community leaders convened to see what could be done to ease their plight. They decided to send an emissary abroad to appeal to fellow Yidden for help. It would have to be someone dignified, a man of stature capable of articulating clearly just how hard the situation was. It was decided that a certain Yid, Rav Avrohom, should make the journey on behalf of his community.

The voyage was fraught with great danger, as the ships of old were not well-equipped to handle the raging ocean waves. But Rav Avrohom, who was so dedicated to his people, was more than willing to be moser nefesh for them. After a few days of preparation, he was off with the blessings of the gedolei Yerushalayim. The journey itself passed without incident, but much to his chagrin, the ship arrived at port right before Shabbos. There he was, a lone Jew with his suitcase, having nowhere to go, no place to stay, and the holy Shabbos was soon arriving.

With a heart full of emotion, he cried out to heaven, “Ribono Shel Olam, please help me! If not for my merit, then for the merit of Your beloved children of the Holy City who are starving. For the sake of the dear people of Yerushalayim who sent me on this difficult mission and are depending on me. I don’t know where to turn for help, so my eyes turn to You, Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Please, please help me!”

Suddenly, a most elegant wagon drawn by two mighty horses pulled up right in front of him. Its door opened and a man looking obviously Jewish and wealthy stepped out. He asked Rav Avrohom about his whereabouts and quickly used this opportunity for chesed to invite him as his guest for Shabbos. He also promised to do everything in his power to make sure that the emissary from Yerushalayim would be successful in his mission.

With a heart full of gratitude to Hashem and his mouth showering blessings on his savior, he climbed into the wagon. It wasn’t long before he found himself in a palatial residence. The furnishings were ornate, the designs on the walls and ceilings exquisite. Rav Avrohom, who had never before left the city of Yerushalayim, was never exposed to such opulence before. Strangely enough, one area of the house, centrally located, gave the impression that the designers of the house had totally neglected it. Perhaps more accurately, it looked like it was transplanted from a dilapidated house belonging to paupers, so far removed from the lifestyle of this family.

There was a beautiful table in that forsaken area. On top of it was an old broken glass bottle, with jagged edges. It was dusty and filthy, and, with old age, had turned green. What in the world was this strange object doing sitting prominently in a house filled with such luxury? Today, we might call it “modern art,” but that wasn’t existent in those days. Rav Avrohom wondered about this strange artifact, but he was hesitant to ask about it at the seudah with so many guests there.

It was a beautiful seudah, with savory delicacies, zemiros and divrei Torah. The table was adorned with gold and silver dishes and sparkling silverware. During the seudah, the host could not help but notice Rav Avrohom eying the table with the broken bottle on the other side of the dining room. He thought that his curiosity about the broken vessel was distracting him from the marvelous seudah, so he decided to explain to his guest what it was all about.

“Listen, my friend, I see that you are wondering about the broken bottle and cannot understand what it is doing in this house at all, let alone in such a prominent place. I want you to know that it serves a very important purpose. I put it there to constantly remind me of something that I never want to forget, a story that changed my entire life.” Now the curiosity of the guest was really piqued. The host continued and addressed all of his guests.

“My friends, at this moment, you see me sitting at the top of the world, surrounded by wealth, owning an estate worth millions. But it wasn’t always like this. My life in this country started with meager earnings. I was sent here as a young lad by my father to help out my aging grandfather, who was trying to maintain his small family business. My family lived in Amsterdam, Holland, and I was sent here to Rome away from my parents, my siblings, and my friends. It was so lonely here for me, so difficult, but I had to listen to my father’s request and my grandfather needed me.”

At first, running the business was difficult. My grandfather, who was aging and becoming weaker, couldn’t keep it going properly. As I got involved, I learned about running the enterprise. Pretty soon, it began to flourish. After about a year, the business had expanded and I was totally in charge. A few years later, grandfather passed away, a wealthy man, with the satisfaction of knowing that his grandson would own his business.

“After his death, everything continued as usual - everything regarding the business that is. My own personal life changed drastically. As long as my grandfather was alive, I remained a religious Jew. Despite the hard work of running a business, I davened three tefillos a day in shul, learned some Torah, and kept all the mitzvos. After my grandfather’s passing, I started to slacken off in my observance of Torah. It began with missing Minchah with a minyan. I reasoned that it’s not so bad, because running a business by myself is difficult and missing tefillah was an oneis. But then it morphed into missing a Shacharis and a Maariv and finally, with the passing of time, not davening at all during the week and on Shabbos.

“Yes, I felt I had an excuse for all of this and was oblivious to the fact that this was all the work of the yeitzer hara, who little by little was tearing apart my Yiddishkeit. It didn’t take very long for the mitzvos of tefillin, Shabbos and kashrus to fall by the wayside. In the beginning, my conscience bothered me, but eventually I didn’t even give it a thought. The business became my religion and the wealth allowed me to enjoy life in a way that I had never enjoyed it before.

“My grandfather looking down at me from the Olam Ha’emes undoubtedly didn’t get much nachas from my way of life. That’s putting it mildly. He was most definitely terribly agitated. He had many merits, and I believe that he went before the Bais Din Shel Maalah to plead for me to be given an opportunity to turn my life around and to return to Yiddishkeit.

“I was already married to a Jewish woman whose attachment to Yiddishkeit was about the same as mine. We had two children together and were living a life of splendor, but we were spiritually bankrupt. My children went to a secular school together with goyim. They knew that they were Jews, but nothing at all about Yiddishkeit. We all would have continued on this route…but then it happened. An incident that revolutionized our lives occurred.

“One day, I was walking in the street and I saw a little boy crying bitterly. In his hand, he held a broken glass bottle. Jews, by nature, are compassionate, so I stopped to see what was bothering the child. He was inconsolable. It took me a while to get him to stop crying and to tell me what troubled him so. Finally, he was able to talk amidst sobs.

“‘Tonight is a Jewish holiday,’ he said. ‘It’s Chanukah, when we light candles and relive a great miracle that took place with our people a long time ago. My parents are very poor and cannot afford to buy oil for lighting. For a long time now, my father put away penny after penny that he saved for this occasion. Finally, we had enough for a bottle of oil. My father gave me the coins to buy the oil and instructed me to be careful with the bottle and not to let it drop.

“‘I felt so important carrying out this sacred mission. Off I went to the store and proudly paid for the precious commodity. Now all I had to do was bring it home. I held on tightly to the bottle, envisioning the happiness on my father’s face when I brought him this cherished oil. I could already see the simcha in my mother’s eyes and in the eyes of my siblings as we lit the menorah, with the beautiful little flames rising upwards towards the heavens. But then, engrossed in my thoughts, I didn’t notice a little stone in my way. Suddenly, I stumbled and found myself flat on the ground, my precious bottle broken and the oil all over my clothing.

“‘Since then, I have been here crying. I can’t return home. How can I face my father? What can I answer when he asks me why I didn’t follow his instructions? How can I see the sad look on my father’s face when I return empty-handed?’ And then the boy broke out again in sobs.

“When I heard the heartfelt words of the child, feelings that were in my heart years before when I was first leaving the straight path suddenly emerged. I am a Jew just like that child, I thought. Look at where he is and look at where I am. Look at what troubles him as compared to the trivialities on my mind. He is crying bitterly because his father doesn’t have the means to light the Chanukah candles, while I have the wherewithal to easily fulfill all of the mitzvos and I threw them all away. At that moment, I decided to rethink my ways, objectively examine my conduct, and come to the desired conclusions.

“Quickly, I pulled out a hundred dollar bill and gave it to the child. His eyes lit up with a special radiance, a glow that I vaguely remembered from my youth, one that is reserved for those whose souls are enveloped with spirituality. The boy thanked me with heartfelt words and quickly set out for the market to buy more oil. I went back home, taking with me the broken bottle as a memory of this encounter.

“Perhaps this incident alone wasn’t enough to bring me to action. Yes, I had thoughts of doing teshuvah, but I didn’t act immediately to better my ways. A couple of days later, I received another message from heaven. I happened to see a sign posted near my home inviting the Jewish public to attend a drashah to be given by a famous maggid visiting from Yerushalayim. What did I have to lose by going? So I went and listened attentively.

“It was the week of Parshas Vayigash and the drashah centered around the story of Yehudah beseeching Yosef to allow Binyomin to go back home with the brothers to the land of Canaan. Yehudah pleaded with Yosef with great emotion, ‘For how can I go up to my father if the youth is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father’ (44:34).

“The maggid proclaimed these words in a loud voice and said, ‘My dear brothers, precious Yidden, let us say these words to ourselves and contemplate, ‘How will we return to our Father in heaven with the youth no longer with us? We were given a pure, pristine neshamah, young and full of potential, and what did we do with it? We have sullied it with our aveiros. We have stained it. It is filthy with sin. What are we going to answer to the Ribono Shel Olam, who has sent us down to earth on a mission that we have failed? This is a question we must always ask ourselves: ‘How will we go back up to our Father?’

“The entire tzibbur started crying. At that moment, I became a complete baal teshuvah. I swore to immediately change my ways and to bring my family back to the ways of Torah. Boruch Hashem, my wife supported me in going on this new path and today my family is totally steeped in the ways of the Torah. As a commemoration of this miracle of my return, I kept the broken bottle and put it in a prominent place in my home. Whenever I face hardships and nisyonos, whenever the yeitzer hara tempts me to do something contrary to the Will of Hashem, that bottle reminds me, ‘How can I go up to my father…’?”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Yated Ne’eman.*