**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas beshallach 5776**

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**Is it Ever Justifiable**

**To Bribe a Judge?**

 There was once a Jew who lived in an anti-Semitic country. He had a dispute with the Gentile resident of that nation and the case was to come before the local court. The man sent a beautiful gift, secretly to the non-Jewish judge.

 Upon receipt, the judge asked him "How is it that you are sending me a bribe? Doesn't it say in your holy Torah that it is forbidden to bribe the judge, because his heart and mind will be prejudiced in favor of the one who sent the gift? Don't your rabbis teach that bribes blind judges and prevent a just judgment from taking place?"

 The Jew replied calmly. "If two Jews came before you in dispute I know that your mind in regard to them would be fair and just. You would see them as equals. You would not have any prejudices and because of that, you might be able to reach a true and fair judgment. Therefore, if one would give you a bribe, he is ruining the possibility of you doing your job properly and according to the truth because he would tilt the scales of judgment in his favor.

 This is not the case in my trial, because in my dispute one of the claimants is of your people, and I am a simple Jew. I only sent you the bribe so that you would lean towards me and make it even again in your eyes and give you the chance to rule in this case in a fair manner."

 Comment: Many commentators (on Shemos 10:1) ask, "How is it that Hashem hardened the heart of Pharaoh and took away his free choice so that he would not want to release the Jews from his land even after being stricken with plagues?

 Based on this story we can understand why it had to be that way, writes Rabbi Raymond Beyda. Pharaoh did not wish to release the Jews from bondage. When Hashem struck him heavily with plagues, there was a strong possibility that he would give in and release the Jews even though that was not his true desire. In other words, the plagues would have removed his free will from him.

 Therefore, Hashem hardened Pharaoh’s heart to balance his true wish to afflict the Jews against the power of the plagues. With the power of the plagues on one side and the hardening of his heart on the other the balance scale was now even. This gave Pharaoh a chance to make his choice as to what he wished to do. We see from here how dedicated Hashem is to giving man freedom of choice. Let us appreciate the fact that we can choose our own destiny.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Mendel Berlin’s “Torah’s Sweets Weekly.”*

**Maaseh Avos Siman L’Banim … Stories of Greatness**

**Veiled Wisdom**

**By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

**וככה תאכלו אותו מתניכם חגורים נעליכם**

**ברגליכם ומקלכם בידכם וגו’ … יב-יא**

 The ancient city of Chevron was experiencing serious financial depression. Many of the yeshivos and other organizations were short of funds and it was decided that a well-respected emissary would be sent abroad to raise sorely needed money. The great Chacham, **R’ Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT”L,**known as the **Chid”a**, was asked to travel to Europe and raise money on behalf of the city of Chevron and its mosdos. He agreed and remained in Europe doing just that for a number of years.

 On one of his trips to Italy, a merchant who dealt in exotic cheeses came to see him. He requested that the Chid”a give him a hechsher on a particualr brand of cheese, however, the Chacham refused to do so when he learned of the origin of the cheese. The merchant desperately needed the approbation in order to market his product in Italy and decided to hire a group of local thugs to make the Chacham see things his way.

 One night as he was walking to his lodgings, the Chid”a was accosted by the thugs and was made an offer he couldn’t refuse: Either he agree to give his approbation on the questionable cheese, or he would be tossed into the sea, never to be heard from again.

 Well, given his options, the Chid”a finally relented and wrote the following hechsher for the merchant: “The cheese being sold by this merchant is Kosher Lemehadrin. It may be eaten ….” At the end of the flowery approbation, the Chid”a signed it: “Signed and sealed, today, the third day of the weekly Torah portion, ‘וככה תאכלו אותו מתניכם חגורים’, which is found in Sefer Shemos, 5513 – 1753.” The evil merchant had gotten what he wanted and he let the Chid”a go unharmed.

 Armed with his can’t-miss hechsher, the merchant brought his wares to an Italian port city and announced to any and all who would listen that he was selling the finest cheese, imported direct from the Holy Land, Kosher Lemehadrin, under the strict supervision of none other than the great Sefardic Gaon, the Chid”a. As was customary, the merchant proudly presented his letter of approbation to the local Rov, who perused every word carefully.

 All seemed to be in order, except one thing bothered the Rov: Why had the Chid”a written on the bottom of the seal that the posuk **“וככה תאכלו אותו מתניכם חגורים”** was found in Sefer Shemos? Wasn’t it obvious that this posuk was in Parshas Bo, in Sefer Shemos?

 The Rov spent some time pondering this question, attempting to understand the deeper meaning behind these veiled words. After carefully analyzing it from every angle, he came to the realization that **ש’מ’ו’ת** was an acronym for the words **“שנים מקראואחד תרגום”,** a reference to the mitzvah of reviewing each parsha in the Torah, twice in Hebrew and once in Targum Onkelos, the Babylonian translation. He quickly looked up the Targum on that specific posuk and read: “**חרציכון יהון אסירין”** which, taken out of context can be understood, “Your cheese shall be prohibited.”

 Immediately, he declared the cheese not kosher and had the local authorities take the merchant in for questioning, where he cracked under pressure and admitted to coercing the hechsher out of the Chid”a. In a voice full of emotion and admiration, the Rov stood up in his place and said about the Chid”a, **“ברוך שחלק מחכמתו ליראיו”** – “Blessed is He who gave from His wisdom to those who fear Him.”

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshas Bo 5776 email from Torah Tavlin.*

**Story #946**

**Silver Nitrate Disaster**

**By Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**editor@ascentofsafed.com**

 Though I was just a teenager, Iâ€™ll never forget the day I was sitting at ULY (United Lubavitch Yeshiva, in Brooklyn) when my English teacher, George Landberg, put down his chalk and interrupted the lecture. He was a fine teacher. Usually he liked to talk to us about literary things like onomatopoeia in poems or characters in fiction. But that day he told us an amazing story that was not fiction, but pure fact. A real miracle of *tefillin* had occurred to real people like¦him and his tragically blind son, Daniel.

 Daniel Landberg was born in 1973 with normal eyesight. New York State law at that time required the eyes of all newborns to be treated, as a prophylactic measure against infection, with a one percent silver nitrate solution while still in the hospital.

 An inexperienced nurse’s assistant, on duty in the delivery room that day, picked up a stick of silver nitrate intended for cleaning the area of the umbilical cord, a medication seventy times stronger than the one percent intended for ophthalmologic use and highly corrosive, and tragically used it on Daniel’s eyes. As a result, both the infant’s eyes were burned by the chemical solution, his skin scarred, and his eyelashes gone. Worst of all, he was blinded.

 For three weeks, Daniel remained in the hospital, receiving antibiotic treatments and getting tests from one specialist after another in an attempt to cure him. None of the doctors believed Daniel’s sight would return. To make matters worse, each was more callous than the next in their treatment of the frantic parents. Why was this couple even bothering? It was clear their child would forever be blind.

 A window of hope opened when Dr. Albert Hornblass took up their case, though not quite in the way the Landbergs expected. Dr. Hornblass was an ophthalmologist who, two years earlier, had returned from Vietnam, was an expert in chemical burns and, importantly, an observant Jew. Hornblass applied himself to Daniel’s case with a prognosis for healing that others had ignored. He wrote to the Center for Disease Control in Washington and obtained their permission to treat Daniel with steroids that had not yet been approved.2

 He also took a more personal interest in Daniel’s healing, suggesting more spiritual, Jewish channels of healing. In particular, he shared with the couple how a healing from G-d had occurred for him, personally. His own father had suffered a heart attack, and the prognosis was very, very bad. A religious man, he wrote to the Lubvitcher Rebbe asking for a *berachah*. He received one, and within a week, his father was cured. Might not the Landbergs do the same?

 Fortunately, the means to implement the doctor’s suggestion were close at hand. George already had a connection to Lubavitch, having worked at ULY for ten years, and his boss and principal, Rabbi Tenenbaum, had personal access to the Rebbe. Landberg asked Tenenbaum to approach the Rebbe. Rabbi Tenenbaum agreed and in no time was face-to-face with the Rebbe in private audience, beseeching him on Daniel’s behalf.

 The Rebbe gave his blessing

 One week later, the Landbergs got a call from Dr. Hornblass in the hospital, "I’m witnessing a miracle," he told them, "I’m watching all the conjunctiva and stain ooze out of Daniel’s eyes. I dare say I’m confident his vision will return!" Indeed, within a short time, Daniel was no longer blind.

 The Rebbe didn’t exact any payment, but Rabbi Tenenbaum pursued Landberg. "You owe us," he asserted. "Now you must lay *tefillin* every day!"

 At first, Landberg was stunned; he didn’t have the mitzvah of*tefillin* anywhere on his personal spiritual radar, so it was unfamiliar to him.

But he was a good father, and he saw an inkling of what Tenenbaum was after. No matter how skeptical he was, he observed. The road to medically ensure Daniel’s newfound sight was a long and often hard one, but through it all, every day, George Landberg laid *tefillin*.

 Daniel was only six months old when he developed cysts on his cornea, a condition that would require surgery. But Dr. Hornblass had strong feelings against it. The child had so many steroids in his system, anesthesia would be risky. He delayed the surgery. Then one night, little Daniel rubbed his eyes in his sleep and broke the cysts. NO surgery was necessary.

 As a preschooler, Daniel, like all small children, touched everything around him, including the floor and his eyes. As a result, the Landbergs were constantly at the eye doctor for treatment of eye infections, some so severe they oozed pus.

 When Daniel was ten, a different sort of cyst developed on his eyelid that would affect the shape of his cornea. Surgery was required. When the surgeons went to remove the cyst, they also removed a great deal of scar tissue on the underside of his eyelid, further relieving the pressure on his cornea and improving his vision.

 Years passed. Today Daniel is in his forties. His vision isn’t perfect, but it is amazingly good, and the only physical damage remaining is a scar on the cornea of his right eye. He drives a car, coaches high school football, and has a child of his own. What’s more, Daniel lays *tefillin* every day and is passing his connection to the mitzvah to his young son. He knows, without questions, that health and *tefillin*go together.

 "We do feel it was all miraculous," Rita Landberg, Daniel’s mother, concludes. There was this special *berachah.*It was miraculous that we found Dr. Hornblass and had a connection to Rabbi Tenenbaum, and that he, in turn, got a private audience with the Rebbe. *Tefillin* will always be intertwined with Daniel’s wellbeing. There is no doubt his health is directly connected to the mitzvah."

 I can attest that what Rita Landberg says is true. The mitzvah of *tefillin* is directly caught up with her family’s health and wellbeing. I heard at school one day that George Landberg had fallen down the stairs at home and injured himself. Had he put on *tefillin*that day? No. He’d skipped it! He went right back up the stairs and put it on. Never again did he miss a day.

 Thus, it was my English fiction teacher who taught me a Torah fact. When we observe the mitzvahs assiduously, carefully, and without fail, we ourselves bring down enough power to transform darkness, quite literally, into light.

 The entire story of Daniel’s amazing recovery wad documented by Dr. Hornglass in 1976 in the *New York State Journal of Medicine*; it is archived only at the NYU Health Sciences Library, reference cited as: *New York State Journal of Medicine*. Hornblass; October, 1976; Issue II;"Sever silver nitrate ocular damage: in newborn nursery"; pp. I, 875-8. [Many state statutes requiring treating newborns eyes with 1% silver nitrate have been changed in favor of less caustic treatments with fewer chances for error. Silver nitrate as treatment was a law in place for a century prior; cases like Daniel’s over the course of many years influenced this change in medical policy.]

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*Source*: "Guardian of Israel: Miracle Stories of Tefillin and Mezuzah" by Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin

*Connection*: Weekly Reading - Concludes with the first two mentions of tefilin in the Torah.

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**The Boss and the Rebbe**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 About 250 years ago in the Ukraine Jewish education was a big problem. Gentiles often chose to leave their children unlettered but not the Jews! That a Jewish child could be illiterate and unable to learn the wonderful, holy Torah was inconceivable!

 In fact, education was so ingrained in the Jewish soul that even non-observant parents (that had been swept up in the spirit of the times) often hired Torah teachers for their children.

 One such assimilated Jew lived in a small village. He was well-off financially and personally considered himself to be far above the antiquated Torah and it's commandments but for some reason that he himself couldn't figure out, he wanted his children to learn Torah and Judaism.

 The teacher he hired happened to be a young married Chassid, who will call Yankel (Short for Yaakov), who had to leave his wife and three children far away to come to teach in this village with an agreement that he had two months a year off; Tishre and Nissan to celebrate the Jewish holidays.

 But as the month of Tishre approached his boss started to have regrets. True he didn't have any connection to Judaism the rest of the year but Rosh HaShanna and Yom Kippur were different! On these High Holidays everyone; even the most non-observant Jews, went to synagogue and he was sick of the old farmer that usually led the prayers there.

 He wanted Yankel to stay in the village and lead the prayers on the High Holy Days. But an agreement is an agreement and in any case he wouldn't prevent Yankel from seeing his family.

 But he was surprised to hear that Yankel had no intention of going home. Rather Yankel told him that he was going to Liozne see his Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Laidi the (first) Rebbe of Chabad and be there for the holidays.

 His boss couldn't figure out why Yankel would want to go see a Rebbe when Yankel was himself a rebbe! Everyone in the village called him 'Rebbe Yankel'. What did he need a Rebbe for?

 He asked him and Yankel even tried to explain it to him but he didn't understand a word; something about the Moses of each generation whose soul included all the Jews.

 Yankel seemed to be a normal, intelligent young man. Why would he forego a visit to his family to see some Moses?

 Yankel tried several times to explain it to his boss from different angles but nothing penetrated. Until finally Yankel just said, 'Listen, if you want to know what a Rebbe is, then why don't you just come to Liozne with me and see for yourself. If nothing else it will be an adventure! And you won't have to listen to that old farmer-cantor."

 It was all too spiritual and religious-sounding for the boss and at first he refused. But after several days of hearing Yaakov ramble on, his curiosity got the best of him and he took up the invitation.

 Yaakov was especially glad not only because it might awaken his boss' Jewish soul but also because his boss had a carriage and a two strong horses so he wouldn't have to walk for five days to the Rebbe.

 When they arrived in Liozne his boss was surprised to see hundreds, maybe thousands of Chassidim that seemed to know and respect Yaakov and each time Yaakov introduced him they shook his hand warmly. In general the atmosphere was happy and positive and he enjoyed it.

 He accompanied Yaakov to the place where they were staying but Yaakov, instead of just falling exhausted into bed as he did, seemed to be preparing for something. He was looking in his Siddur (prayer book) praying and swaying back and forth with such concentration that his boss had to interrupt and ask him why.

 Yaakov explained that tomorrow after the morning prayers, would be his turn to enter for 'Yechidut', a private audience, with the Rebbe that he had been waiting months for, and now he is thinking about it.

 His boss didn't understand a word but the next day they woke early and when Yaakov went to stand in line for Yechidut he stood there with him for a few minutes and then went back to the room to eat and rest up.

 An hour later he returned to the line and when he didn't see Yankel he decided to go into 'Yechidut' himself. He wasn't aware that each of the Chassidim there had been preparing intensely sometimes for years for this moment that they would be with the Rebbe, in fact he had never been aware of anything spiritual his entire life.

 But he got in line, there were only a few people before him and in just a few minutes he was next! The Rebbe's door opened, the Chassid who had been inside came out and although he obviously had been crying, grabbed another Chassid and began singing and dancing.

 Yankel's boss entered, closed the door behind him and there he was...standing before the Rebbe. The room was quiet and very solemn but besides that he didn't really see anything special. So he just stood there. After all, he thought to himself, he had put a lot of time and effort to come here, now the Rebbe has to do something.

 The Rebbe looked up at him and said, 'Nu?' (usually Chassidim give the Rebbe a note with their name and request or question but he gave nothing.)

 'What, Nu?' Yankel's boss replied, he couldn't figure what the Rebbe wanted.

 "What nu…" The Rebbe asked rhetorically, and then added, "I will tell you. Sometimes it could be that a Jew who doesn't learn Torah and doesn't care much about the commandments can come to do sins. For instance…" and the Rebbe proceeded to list, one at a time, all the sins that Yankel's boss had done in the last few years.

 The boss couldn't believe his ears! At first he was startled, how could he know!? But then he realized what happened; it was Yankel! He must have told the Rebbe all this!! Why, that snake!!

 As soon as the Rebbe finished he turned, walked out of the room, slammed the door behind him and began looking for the culprit; the informer!!

 By the time he found Yankel he was burning mad. He grabbed him and began yelling. 'How could you stab me in the back?! I've treated you well and even brought you here… and you told the Rebbe my sins!!? Why I'm going to..." but he saw that Yaakov was bewildered.

 "What? Me? I would never! G-d forbid! What! I told your sins to the Rebbe?? Why, how could I know if you did sins?? How could I possibly know? Just think! And even if I did, I wouldn't tell the Rebbe! G-d forbid! That is loshon hara (slander).

 "Well, if it wasn't you then who could it be!!" his boss sputtered. "It was you all right! You can forget about working by me again! You're lucky I don't punch you. Just keep away from me from now on!" And he turned in anger and stormed away.

 But after a few minutes it dawned on him that what Yankel said made sense. But on the other hand, how did the Rebbe know? Why did he tell him? What did he want? It was too confusing. He decided to leave.

 Meanwhile Yaakov stood in line again to the Rebbe, entered, told him what happened, how now was out of a job and asked him to help.

 So a few moments later Yankel's boss, who was in his room packing his suitcase, heard a knock on his door, opened up and saw a Chassid saying that the Rebbe wants to see him.

 In a few minutes Yankel's boss was back in the Rebbe's room listening to the Rebbe explain that not only had Yaakov never told him anything but in fact all he said was that it is possible for one to do sins not that anyone actually did them. And even if someone did do all those sins they could easily be corrected.

 For the first time in his life Yankel's boss didn't feel like a boss and he didn't like the feeling… but he sensed it was the truth

 Suddenly he noticed that the Rebbe obviously cared about him and wanted him to be a Jew.

 He had been fooling himself and the Rebbe was peeling off his foolishness.

 His eyes began to fill with tears as the Rebbe told him that from now he would have to change his attitude to G-d and the Torah and learn to act and think differently.

 Yaakov's boss left the room a humbled man as though the Rebbe turned on a light that made him see that his life had been in the shadows; a complete bluff. He remained in Liozne for several months, became a different man and came home a happy Jew.

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**L’Maaseh… A Tale to Remember**

**The Power of a Mother’s**

**Pure Emunah**

 Rabbi Scheinbaum writes that the power of faith in Hashem is awesome, and it can help transform a grave circumstance into one of joy. Once, the parents of a young child were distraught, because their six-year-old son would wake up in the middle of the night and cry without stopping.

 They had taken him to specialists to seek an explanation or a cure, but none were able to help them. They turned to Tzaddikim for Brachos, amulets, or Segulos, but nothing worked.

 One day, the mother, who was a simple, trusting soul, found a page torn out from a Chumash lying on the street. She felt this was a sign from Shamayim. She picked it up and cleaned off any dirt, and that night she placed it beneath her son’s pillow, hoping that this page of Chumash would help cure her son.

 Amazingly, the child had his first restful night! He slept through the night without waking up to cry! The parents were overjoyed.

 The next day, the father looked at the Pesukim that were printed on the page. Apparently, the sheet was torn out of the Tochechah, the section of harsh Rebuke written in Parashas Ki Savo!

 The father read the words, “Hashem will strike you with madness… and you will be frightened night and day!” (Devarim 28:28,66). He said, “How could we use this page? There are terrible curses stated here!”

 The mother simply replied, “I did not read it when I found it. It is a page of Chumash, and that is all that matters. The holy words and letters will help our son. It doesn’t matter what it says!”

 The husband, however, could not accept this. He went to the holy Rav of the Sephardic community, Rav Yaakov Mutzafi, zt”l, to seek his guidance. The sage told him that he had no reason to worry. He explained, “This is the power of pure Emunah! Your wife’s faith in Hashem is so positive and powerful that it could transform curses into blessings, and tragedy into joy!”

*printed from last week’s email (Parshas Bo 5776) of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Stories compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**It Once Happened**

**A Couple of Inspiring**

**Baal Shem Tov Stories**

 When the stranger entered the little shul, the regulars were curious -- who was he and why had he come to their town. But he was in a great hurry and so, he was relieved to see a quorum of men already assembled, ready to begin the morning prayers. There was no rabbi there, and not wanting to wait, the stranger ascended the bima. The "regulars" were surprised and offended that this unknown man presumed to lead the prayers. After all, who was this fellow, who didn't even have the courtesy to wait a few minutes for the rabbi or the president of the congregation?

 The stranger had already begun the morning service when the president arrived. Seeing a stranger at the bima, he rushed up to him and said, "What a chutzpa! Who do you think you are to begin the prayers before the rabbi or I have arrived!" And he continued berating the man in this fashion.

 The stranger, however, just kept silent. But his refusal to respond infuriated the president even more and he blurted out, "Don't you see who's speaking to you?"

Finally the stranger replied in a quiet voice, "You also do not see to whom you are speaking."

 No sooner had those words been uttered than everything went dark before the president's eyes. He rushed to a doctor, then to a specialist - to several specialists - but no one could find a cause for his sudden blindness. He tried every treatment that was suggested to him, but nothing proved a cure.

 Then, it dawned upon him: when had his blindness begun? After he had angry words with the stranger in the shul. Undoubtedly he had offended a hidden tzadik with his words, and this was the consequence of his anger.

 In despair, he decided to travel to the Baal Shem Tov. He had heard about this great tzadik; maybe he could help.

 "Rebbe, I have heard that you can perform miracles. I have been blind since I angered a certain hidden tzadik. My problem is that I don't know who he is or where I can find him."

 The Baal Shem Tov replied, "The man is my disciple, Reb Yaakov Koppel, and you sinned against him with your angry speech. Go to him and beg his forgiveness. If he forgives you, your blindness will be cured."

 The man indeed traveled to Reb Yaakov, who accepted his apology. His sight returned as quickly as it had vanished.

 The morning prayers had just ended. The Baal Shem Tov, who was an esteemed visitor in the town, was about to wash his hands before partaking of a meal, when a distraught woman approached him. She had waited throughout the whole service and could contain herself no longer.

 "Rebbe! My husband has been missing for a very long time. I have done everything I can think of to try to find him, but I have no idea where he went. What will happen to me? Please, Rebbe, help me find him," the woman wept.

 The Baal Shem Tov stood there, his washing cup poised to pour water on his hands in preparation for the blessing on bread, but instead of continuing, he stopped and responded to the woman.

 "You will find your husband in the city of M."

 Infused with new hope, the woman departed. But the rabbi of the city, who had heard a great deal about the Baal Shem Tov, had been watching the exchange. Now he had what seemed to him to be a serious question of Jewish law.

 "I beg your pardon," began the rabbi, "I was watching your exchange with the woman, and it seems to me that you were saying words of prophecy to her. If that was true, I think you were required to have washed your hands before speaking."

 The Baal Shem Tov responded to the rabbi with a question: "If you saw chickens suddenly fluttering about your table set with expensive glassware, what would your reaction be? I think you would automatically reach out to chase them away."

 The rabbi acquiesced, but he clearly was not following the Baal Shem Tov's logic.

 "I did what came naturally to me," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "I saw standing before me a woman who was in utter despair almost to the breaking point. I knew where her husband was. Do you imagine that I should have continued washing my hands while she stood suffering before my eyes?"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vaera 5776 edition of L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Importance of Trusting Our Torah Sages**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**

 In its preface, the seferChayei Olam writes that the generations began to deteriorate terribly when emunas chachamim [trusting in our Torah sages] started to diminish.  And the saintly Chasam Sofer, in his responsa [6:56], writes that it is very important to praise and aggrandize Torah sages to our family.

 Let me share with you one story that illustrates vividly how important it is to adhere strictly to the words of our sages.  The great **Rav Moshe Feinstein**, Zt”l, Zy”a, [before coming to America] was a rabbi in the Russian town of Luban.  Also living in the town was a very wicked Jew who was a moser, an informer.  During this man’s lifetime, he wreaked all kinds of havoc for the Jewish community.

 As this informer was lying on his deathbed, he summoned the Chevra Kadisha, the Jewish burial society, and made a very unusual request.  He said that as he was about to leave the world and face his final reckoning, he felt terrible remorse for the horrible things he had perpetrated against his Jewish brothers.

 He therefore asked the Chevra Kadisha to bury him like a donkey, with his coffin standing upright in the ground instead of lying down.  In this way he hoped that this disgrace and indignity would be an atonement for his dreadful sins.  He then made the Chevra Kadisha members sign a document stating that they would bury him in this unusual fashion.

 The Chevra Kadisha actually thought it was a very good idea that such a sinner should be publicly shamed and disgraced.  It could be a lesson for others not to follow in his wicked ways.  However, nothing was done in the town without the approval of the Mora D’Asra, Rav Feinstein, so they went to the Rav to get his permission.

 Rav Moshe adamantly refused to agree. He said that we are taught in Shulchan Aruch that we don’t bury a human like a donkey and therefore we may not do so, even to a rasha.  Although the members of the Chevra Kadisha were disappointed, they buried him in the normal fashion.

 Two days later, the dreaded NKVD – the anti-Semitic secret police – came to the Chevra Kadisha and demanded the informant’s grave be opened.  Having no choice, they exhumed the body.  The Russian official looked, shrugged with surprise, and told them to rebury the body.  He went on his way.

 It was only then that the Jews realized the horrendous plot of the dying man.  He wanted to get the Jewish community in trouble – even with his dead body, and had informed the Russian authorities that the Jews, to get even with him, would bury him like a donkey.  It was only because the Jewish community sought the wisdom of its Rav and followed his words that it was saved from a terrible calamity.

 May we merit to follow the words of our sages – and in that zechus may we be blessed with good health, happiness and everything wonderful. (January 11, 2016)

*Reprinted from the January 11, 2015 website of Matzav.com*

**Cast You Bread...**

**Reb Pinchos the Grocer**

**By Rabbi Yosef Weiss**

 Even as an elderly widower, Reb Pinchos Gliksman kept up the Brooklyn-based grocery store he had been running for decades. But he was far from the typical grocer.  R’ Pinchos put his chessed before his livelihood.

 When a customer of limited income presented his items for payment, R’ Pinchos would quietly reduce the charge of each item as he added up the bill, sometimes deducting even more from the final total.

 His son, Dovid, remembers how right before Pesach he would watch his father cross out from his ledger entire debts that were owed to him. In the 1970’s, right after one Rosh Hashanah ended, Dovid Gliksman’s phone rang.  He was informed that his father, who had always enjoyed good health, had suddenly passed away.

 Dovid forced himself to overcome his shock so that he could make proper arrangements. He knew that his father had always felt it a merit to be buried in Eretz Yisroel. But no arrangements had ever been made and Dovid did not know where to begin. He called a relative in Eretz Yisroel who promised to take care of everything.

 As a Kohein, Dovid would not accompany his father to the kever, as that was the accepted custom in Yerushalayim.  The relative quickly called R’ Mendel Stillman, one of the heads of the chevra kadisha for Har HaZeisim. When R’ Mendel heard that the person who passed away was R’ Pinchos Gliksman, he seemed unusually interested.  He wanted to know where he had lived and if he had owned a grocery store.

 R’ Mendel told the relative that he had known R’ Pinchos and assured him that he would arrange everything satisfactorily.  The relative seemed somewhat perplexed, but relieved that the burial would be in good and capable hands.  On the shloshim, Dovid arrived in Eretz Yisroel to visit his father’s grave.  He was more than surprised to find that his father was buried in a section for prominent Kohanim on top of Har HaZeisim, which had been set up to make it easy for a kohein to visit.

 Later that day, Dovid made a special trip to visit R’ Mendel Stillman to personally thank him for his extraordinary efforts on R’ Pinchos’ behalf.  R’ Mendel revealed to him why he had gone to such lengths for R’ Pinchos:

 “Your father was a very special man.  I met him in the early 1970’s when I was in America to raise money for Torah institutions in Eretz Yisroel.  When I stopped in your father’s neighborhood, I visited his grocery store.  He greeted me like an old friend and escorted me to the back of his store.  I was astonished to see a table and chairs set up for company.

 “Your father explained that he kept the table and chairs prepared to show proper respect for anyone who came to collect tzedakah.  He served me coffee and cake and took the time to speak with me.  He then gave me the incredible sum of fifty dollars at a time when I was collecting dollars and quarters!  His respect for me made such an impression that I’ve never forgotten him.  I wanted to make sure he would be given the respect that he truly deserved.”  (Originally published in “Visions of Greatness, Vol. 5” by Rabbi Yosef Weiss.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo email of The Weekly Vort.*

[**An El Al Flight**](http://www.mayanyisroel.net/templates/blog/post.asp?aid=2792698&PostID=58525&p=1)

**By Rabbi Yoseph Vigler**

 I just got off an El Al flight and as I breathe in the holy atmosphere of Yerushalayim, I'm thinking what a colorful flight it was, with representatives of the full spectrum of Jewish life.

 They say the captain on an El Al flight once announced, "To all our passengers who are sitting, happy new year.  And to all those who are standing, Happy Chanukah!"

 The Chassidim from New Square were on their way to spend Shabbos with their Rebbe who is in Eretz Yisroel for a visit. They were davening Shachris together with a Yeshivishe guy from Lakewood and some other various types of yarmulkas of all shapes, sizes and colors.

 The South African fellow behind me deemed it inappropriate halachically to disturb the plane. He davened in his seat.

 Side by side they sat and engaged in cross discussion, a yid from Flatbush with a French Jew.

 And one guy was walking up and down the plane asking everyone to put on Tefillin. He was having a lively debate with an artsy Tel Avivian with long hair and a Yiddishe kop.

 The stewardesses were trying somewhat good naturedly to weave their way through the mispalelim and dish out the meals.

 And a fellow from Teaneck was getting really upset - why were these guys intruding on his space, why couldn't they keep to themselves.

 My Rebbetzin went over to him and showed him the El Al slogan **הכי בבית בעולם.** "The most at home in the world!"

 When you're at home you're with family.  We are all one.  Sure, we each need our individual space,  but let's realize we are all in this together.

 An orchestra needs a variety of instruments and a body has multiple organs and all work harmoniously towards one beautiful goal.

 The Jew next to you may be worlds apart, but that's great. Embrace the differences.  **הכי בבית בעולם**. Here,  with Am Yisroel, you should feel the most at home in the world.

 What a great bunch we are!

Reprinted from last week’s email (Parshas Bo 5776) of the Mayan Torah Center in Flatbush.