**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas devorim 5776**

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**‘Apologize to the**

**Girl You Dated’**

**By Rabbi Lazer Avtzon**

[](http://matzav.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/rav-shmuel-kaufman-16.jpg)

*Rabbi Shmuel Kaufman, zt”l telling over Tzadikim stories to children in Detroit.*

Having grown up in Detroit, I flew there this week with my sister Dina Borenstein to comfort the family of veteran educator, Rabbi Shmuel Kaufman *zt”l*, the beloved teacher in Yeshiva Beth Yehudah in Detroit.

Sitting there, I was given additional details to the incredible Yechidus he had with the Lubavitcher Rebbe resulting in the bracha to him and his wife to have children. I also heard another amazing story that is equally mind-blowing.

This story was originally printed in the Kfar Chabad magazine a while back, but some details were not verified.

Reb Shmuel came to Detroit as a single bochur to teach at Yeshiva Bais Yehudah, a Jewish day school consisting of two campuses at Southfield and Oak Park, Michigan. It serves boys and girls from pre-kindergarten to grade 12.

Thursday nights and Shabbosim, Reb Shmuel would spend at the home of my parents Rabbi Meir and Cheyena Avtzon. He remained close after he got married to his wife Risha and their return to Detroit.

After several years of being married and not being blessed with children, my father suggested that they travel together to New York and see the Rebbe for a bracha.

Initially, he refused, but after visiting all the other Gedolim of the time and still no yeshua, Reb Shmuel finally relented and came with my father to 770 Eastern Parkway.

After detailing his situation and asking the Rebbe for a bracha, the Rebbe turned to him and asked whether he ever unintentionally hurt a girl’s feelings to the point she might have a ‘kpaida’ (grudge) against him.

Reb Shmuel answered, “No, to the best of my recollection.”

The Rebbe then asked again, “Is it possible you dated a girl and led her to believe you were interested in her and then broke up without asking Mechila (forgiveness)?”

Again, he said he does not recall.

My father, who was present at the Yechidus, intervened at that point. “If the Rebbe is asking you twice, you should think hard and remember, because there has to be something!”

After further thought, Reb Shmuel remembered being on a date and loaning the girl a sweater to warm her from the cold. He later decided it was not meant to be and merely informed the Shadchan that it was over.

The Rebbe replied, “You must ask Mechila with a full heart.”

“How do I even find her?”

The Rebbe replied, “If you really try, you will see how easy it is.”

The Rebbe then blessed him and said, “Once you ask Mechila and she truly forgives you, you will be blessed with children.”

“And what if she doesn’t want to forgive me”? he asked.

The Rebbe replied, tell her that if she forgives you with a full heart, she will soon find her bashert (her own match).

The Yechidus then turned to another subject with the Rebbe asking him what he does and learning that he is a teacher.

The Rebbe asked, “Do you tell stories of Tzadikim?” and he replied that he does not because he considers it Bitul Torah.

The Rebbe answered, “telling stories of Tzadikim is in itself Torah! Tell stories!”

\* \* \*

After leaving Yechidus, he searched and searched and ultimately found the phone number of a brother of the girl. He called and spoke to the brother and asked if there was any way for him to get in touch with his sister.

“Why would you want to speak to her now after all these years and after breaking her heart?” he answered.

Unbeknownst to Reb Shmuel, the girl had felt strongly that by his loaning of the sweater during the date that he really liked her. She was so grief-stricken from being left cold-turkey that she bore a tremendous resentment towards him.

Her brother then said, “She’s actually here visiting me now but she doesn’t want to talk to you!”

Reb Shmuel begged and said, “I just came from Yechidus with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and was told that the reason my wife and I were still not blessed with children is because I hurt your sister and must ask Mechila. Trust me, I had no idea and am terribly sorry.”

A meeting was arranged, the girl initially did not agree to forgive him. When he told her that the Rebbe said that if she forgives him it will open the doors of blessing for her as well, she agreed and said I forgive you with a full heart.

Some 3 months later, my mother called Reb Shmuel at 6:00 AM and wakes him to share the great news that the girl he had dated was now engaged to be married.

One month later, his wife became pregnant with their eldest sonYona. Over the years, they were blessed with another six children.

But even more amazing than this story is the fact that Rabbi Kaufman is remembered as a devoted and beloved teacher and the one who inspired thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of students to live lives of Yiras Shamayim.

What was his secret ingredient? Stories.

Throughout his career in chinuch, Reb Shmuel told stories like you never heard. When he told a story, you felt you were there witnessing and a part of it. He brought to life the characters, the setting and the pure faith they exuded.

The Rebbe told him to tell stories and assured him that not only is it not Bitul Torah, but that it’s Torah itself. From that day onward, he never ceased to tell stories.

*Reprinted from the July 29, 2016 website of Matzav.com Originally featured on* [*COLLIVE.COM*](http://www.collive.com/show_news.rtx?id=41557&alias=apologize-to-the-girl-you-dated)

**A Cantor Rockoff Story**

**I’ll Never Forget**

**By** [**Rabbi Akiva Males**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbiakivamales/)

[](http://www.jewishpress.com/indepth/opinions/a-cantor-rockoff-story-ill-never-forget/2016/07/22/)

**Cantor Seymour Rockoff**

I find it hard to believe, but the first *yahrzeit* of Kesher Israel (KI) Congregation’s beloved Cantor Seymour Rockoff is rapidly approaching (21 Tammuz – corresponding this year to July 27.)

I will always treasure the talks I had with Cantor Rockoff, many of which took place while walking home from Friday night services. During those short walks, I never knew where the discussion would lead. The cantor might share his unique perspectives on world events, or a little-known detail relating to Jewish prayer, or an original Torah thought. On rare occasions he would offer a window into his life by sharing some of his own experiences from his younger years.

What follows is a Cantor Rockoff story I’ll never forget.

The cantor and I had officiated at a Kesher Israel funeral that week. As with other funerals at KI’s cemetery, after the casket containing the deceased was lowered into the ground, family members and friends each offered a loving good-bye as they took turns shoveling earth into the open grave. Once the casket was fully covered with earth (and then some), we stopped to recite the final memorial prayers.

Upon completion of those prayers, I announced that the service was over. However, I invited any friends and family members who wished to continue placing earth into the grave to do so. When everyone was finished, I let the cemetery workers know we were done. They promptly cleared away the folding chairs and carpeting from the gravesite and used a truck to bring in a load of earth to fill the rest of the grave.

During our Friday night walk home from KI that night, Cantor Rockoff told me that decades earlier he had been a pulpit rabbi in Liberty, New York. While visiting a shiva home the day after a funeral at which he’d officiated, he was approached by the widow. The grieving woman told Cantor Rockoff that her just-deceased husband had vividly appeared to her in a dream, telling her he felt so cold.

Cantor Rockoff did his best to calm her, assuring the woman she had done everything possible for her beloved husband, and that it was natural to have dreams about someone she loved so much and was now gone. His comforting words seemed to put her mind at ease, and their conversation moved on.

When Cantor Rockoff returned to pay another shiva call the following day, he was again approached by the widow, who was just as distraught as she’d been the day before. She told him she had again clearly seen her husband in a dream – and again he had complained about how cold he was. Once again, Cantor Rockoff did his best to reassure the woman.

As he drove home from the shiva house, however, the cantor decided to stop at the cemetery for a quick look. He parked his car and walked over to the fresh grave of the man whose family was now observing shiva. Cantor Rockoff was stunned to see that the cemetery workers had left before finishing their job. A pile of earth still sat next to the grave in which only the casket had been covered at the time of the funeral. Cantor Rockoff immediately took off his jacket and tie and went to work with a shovel. The grave was soon properly filled.

The cantor told me he returned to the shiva home the next day, but never mentioned to the family what had occurred. He noted with a sense of fascination that during that visit (and during all subsequent interactions) the widow said nothing further about any uncomfortable dreams involving her late husband.

We walked a bit further. Cantor Rockoff paused, raised an eyebrow, looked at me with that mischievous look of his, and asked: “What do you think of that?”

I just shook my head in amazement, and we continued walking in silence. However, you can be sure I visited KI’s cemetery that Sunday morning to double check that the grave of the funeral at which we had recently officiated had been properly filled. It certainly had been, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

I often thought about Cantor Rockoff’s story during my time at KI. On several occasions I stopped by KI’s cemetery the day after officiating at a funeral just to take a quick look. I’m happy to report that I never encountered any problems – our local cemetery professionals do their job extremely well.

May G-d remember how faithfully Cantor Seymour Rockoff served Kesher Israel Congregation. May He bless the cantor’s devoted wife, Dena, with much health, happiness, and *nachas* from their beloved family.

About the Writer: *Rabbi Akiva Males is rabbi of Kesher Israel Congregation in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He can be reached at* [*rabbimales@yahoo.com*](mailto:rabbimales@yahoo.com)*.*

*Reprinted from the July 22, 2016 email of The Jewish Press.*

**A Threefold Brachah**

**By Tzvi Yaakovson**

In conclusion, allow me to share one story that I heard this week at Bikkurim, the convalescent home at the Ramada hotel for mothers after birth. While I was there, Mrs. Batya Zlotnick, the dedicated supervisor, showed me a group of three beautiful triplets whose loud cries filled the air in the nursery, and explained the story behind their birth.

The triplets’ father once approached Rav Yeshayahu Epstein, the loyal right-hand man of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, and said, “I would like to receive a special brachah from Rav Chaim – not just something stam, such as the word ‘buha’ [an abbreviation for ‘brachah vehatzlachah’] that Rav Chaim has been using over the past couple of years.”

Rav Yeshaya smiled and said, “Rav Chaim’s ‘buha’ is not ‘stam.’”

The yungerman waited in line, and when his turn arrived, he requested a brachah for children. Rav Chaim smiled his aristocratic smile and said, “Buha, buha, buha.” And so it was that the couple was blessed with triplets.

*Reprinted from the July 29, 2016 email of the Yated Ne’eman.*

**Jews Take Care**

**Of Each Other**

**By Emuna Braverman**

**A recent Shabbos experience in Europe reminded how privileged it is to be a part of the Jewish nation.**

"I've always relied on the kindness of strangers," says Blanche DuBois at the end of "A Streetcar Named Desire." For her it was a statement of tragic irony, filled with innuendo. For Jews, it is a statement of genuine reality and the power of living in a community – both locally and globally.

Recently my husband and I have been traveling frequently for business (too frequently if you ask our children!). Due to the timing of a conference we were attending we knew we'd spend Shabbos in a European capital (which shall remain nameless except for the fact that it won't be a European capital much longer!).

The conference was ending close to Shabbos and the traffic was terrible. We didn't want to risk the trek out to the more populous Jewish neighborhood but we knew there was a synagogue close to our hotel. So what were two lonely (and hungry!) observant Jews to do?

Call the local rabbi; what else? Actually we emailed – and we didn't do it last minute; my mother taught me better than that!

What was amazing was not that we called (we were desperate!) but that he graciously offered to host us. Lest you think he felt he had no choice, there is a specific offer on the website to contact him if anyone needs a meal for Shabbos, not his secretary, the rabbi himself!

When we arrived at the shul (completely unmarked for security reasons which definitely gave us pause) we quickly discovered that we were not alone. Visitors from Israel, from other parts of the city, and even from beautiful downtown Brooklyn graced his table.

Everyone was given a warm welcome – and a full plate. It was very moving, one of those "Who is like Your people Israel?" moments. It was done without pomp, without fanfare, just with the simple warmth and caring of one Jew (and his wife/Rebbetzin) for many others.

As Dennis Prager wrote when discussing anti-Semitism, the allegation that "Jews only care for themselves" should be reframed. It's not that "Jews only care for themselves" but rather that "Only Jews care for themselves". I can't speak to the experience of other ethnic groups or nationalities throughout the world but I can only say that ours was special. And yet not surprising. We've come to expect it. Because that's what it means to be family. We take care of each other. Even when we don't really "know" you.

We felt privileged and moved anew to be part of such a people. Not to mention that the food was delicious..

*Reprinted from the July 16, 2016 website of Aish.com*

**Chacham Tzemach Tzarfati**

**And the Plague Striking Tunis**

**By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

The city of Tunis was known as a great spiritual center for the Jews of North Africa, and many students came to the yeshivah there to learn Torah with its renowned spiritual leader, Chacham Tzemach Tzarfati zt”l, who implanted in his students a love of Torah, and an understanding of the various commentators on the Talmud.

Chacham Tzarfati was a man of astonishing wisdom, with purity and holiness. His courteousness to all people, and his nobility of spirit, was well known, to the point that even non-Jews respected and esteemed him as well. Chacham Tzarfati devoted his days and nights to the study of Torah. At night, when a tallow candle was necessary in order to learn by its light, the Chacham would burn through a full candle each night.

On one occasion, when he had no way to light his candle, he asked a baker’s assistant to light his candle and the young boy did so joyfully. Even when the candle went out a number of times, the assistant kept coming back to light the Tzaddik’s candle, and in return, Chacham Tzarfati blessed him with great riches. The blessing came true and many years later, this baker’s assistant turned wealthy businessman, returned the favor by providing the Chacham with enough money to live out the rest of his life peacefully in the Holy Land of Israel.

He was fluent in the revealed Torah, yet his knowledge of the hidden paths of Nistar, for which only a select few traversed, was equally voluminous. It was said that his mastery of the Zohar and other mystical works allowed him to retain a certain measure of control over the angels and other celestial beings. No one knew to what extent this power contained, until an episode occurred and the people of Tunis were awestruck with wonder.

One year, a terrible epidemic struck Tunis, producing numerous victims. Cries of distress rang out from every home. There was not one house that was not touched by illness. Men, women and children - no one was exempt from the path of this massive plague, and few caregivers could continue to treat the sick for fear that they too would contract the deadly illness. People began streaming to Chacham Tzemach Tzarfati for blessings and amulets that would protect them from the plague.

The Chacham obliged as many people as possible, but he found that he was unable to continue his rigorous schedule of Torah learning due to the stream of hapless Jews who required his assistance. Finally, the Chacham could no longer tolerate seeing the suffering of his people. He stood up, and in a loud voice, ordered the Angel of Death to come to the Bet Midrash. The students sitting at his feet were stunned and began cowering in fear, but Chacham Tzarfati told them to remain silent. After a moment, he signaled to them with his hand that the destructive angel had arrived.

In front of his students and many other bystanders, he began to rebuke the angel in harsh terms. Then, he picked up a bag of beans that had been on his desk and held it aloft. “I order the Angel of Death to immediately leave this city and its inhabitants alone for as many years as there are beans in this bag.” Then, he put the bag down and resumed learning.

Pushed by curiosity, one of the students dared to ask the Chacham for the bag in order to count the number of beans inside. Distractedly, he handed over the bag and the student counted out exactly eighty beans. Word spread rapidly, and soon the epidemic lifted. People began to recover and the inhabitants of Tunis breathed easier. They had seen with their very eyes that “a Tzaddik decrees and Hashem executes.”

And in fact, eighty years later the epidemic once again struck the city, but Chacham Tzarfati was already in the world where only goodness reigns. Near the end of his life, the Chacham fell gravely ill and suffered terribly for two years, without a remedy for his ills. Then, Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to him and gave him the cure to his ailment: If he studied Gemara and Poskim on the eve of a Brit Milah in the home of the baby’s mother, he would be healed.

The Chacham agreed to do this, and he was quickly healed. From that day on, he was invited into each home in which a boy was born. There he studied Torah until daybreak. Since that time, the custom among the Jews of Tunis has been to gather a minyan of scholars in the home of a newborn baby to study until daybreak. Chacham Tzarfati passed away in Jerusalem in 5477 (1717), and received the honor due a Tzaddik.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5776 email of Torah Tavlin.*

**The Washing Machine**

Our washing machine was breaking and there was no money for a new one, the signs that it was on its last legs were getting stronger and all that was left in my wallet was a prayer to the Creator of the World that He show us mercy and provide a fitting alternative.

Two weeks later the washing machine died and the laundry was beginning to pile up. We felt that we had reached our breaking point when my cell phone began to vibrate.

On the other of the line was an older man whom I knew asking if I was interested in a washing machine in good condition. Interested? Certainly! He asked that I come to his house.

The elderly man told me that they were leaving their large apartment and were moving to an assisted living facility and there were things that they did not need and they thought of offering it to me first because two weeks earlier when a large fire broke out near their apartment and I went to their home and tried to convince them to leave their apartment because of the danger. However, they refused in spite of my pleading.

Because of my concerns for them as a distant neighbor they were touched and decided to offer me their items before offering them to others. I received a washing machine that was literally almost new and some other things that I needed gifts from Heaven… (Mr. Y.A.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Balak 5776 email of Tiv Hakehilah.*

**The Baal Shem Tov and**

**The Tavern Keeper**

**By** [**Menachem Posner**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm)



Two carts clattered along the dusty road. Inside one sat Rabbi Meir Margulis, known for his scholarly works called the Meir Nesivim. In the other sat Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, whose fame as a man of G‑d was just beginning to spread.

Curious to get to know the mysterious man about whom so much had been said, Rabbi Meir asked the Baal Shem Tov to disembark so that they could speak. “They say you can perform miracles and can even read people’s minds,” he began. “Is that true?”

“Well, I’ll just tell you this,” replied the Baal Shem Tov. “When you were praying this past Shabbat, you accidentally chanted the weekday blessings instead of the special insert for Shabbat.”

“Yes, it’s true!” replied Rabbi Meir in amazement. “Now, please tell me what I can possibly do to correct this lack.”

The Baal Shem Tov advised him to carefully scrutinize his deeds and think thoughts of remorse, the standard course of correction for such an error.

“Rebbe,” said Rabbi Meir. “I know about those remedies. I was looking for something more.”

“In that case,” replied the Baal Shem Tov, “you should be sure to be patient in judgment.”

With that, the two men returned to their respective carts, and they were off.

As the spiritual leader of a large region, Rabbi Meir made a point to travel through every Jewish town and hamlet in the area at least once a year.

Upon his arrival in a rural community, the villagers asked the rabbi to help them solve a weighty problem that had torn their tight-knit group apart.

“You see,” explained one of the elders. “There is a young man who lives a ways out of town. None of us know who he is or where he comes from. He dresses all fancy, like a non-Jewish prince, and operates a tavern. One day, one of our men asked his wife to go pick up some vodka at the tavern. She took her time in returning. Things seemed just a bit suspicious, and rumors began to swirl that she and the tavern-keeper were up to no good.”

After listening to the accounts of various villagers, the rabbi determined that the situation did seem suspicious and called the tavern-keeper to appear before him.

Sure enough, the young man soon swaggered in, decked out in colorful silks and furs. Yet despite the accusations of the villagers, the man steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Unable to conclusively rule on the matter, Rabbi Meir left the village, feeling uneasy about the entire affair.

As he traveled along, he came upon the Baal Shem Tov once again. He stopped his horses and asked the Baal Shem Tov to do the same. Sitting in the Baal Shem Tov’s cart, Rabbi Meir recounted the chain of events that he had just encountered.

“Did I not tell you to be patient in judgment?” the Baal Shem Tov chided him. “You should know that in every generation there are 36 righteous people in whose merit the entire world stands. That tavern-keeper is the greatest of them all.”

Rabbi Meir immediately climbed into his cart and asked his driver to return to the village so that he could personally beg the young man for forgiveness.

But it was too late. The mysterious man was already gone without a trace. All Rabbi Meir could do was share the Baal Shem Tov’s words with the villagers, thus restoring the tavern-keeper’s good name.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Massei 5776 email of ChabadOrg Magazine.*

**It Once Happened**

**Reb Meir of Premishlan**

**And the Rich Man**

All his life, the rabbi had longed for one thing only: to live in the holy land of Israel. There was no doubt in his mind that the time had now come to move to the Holy Land. Of course, just how he would manage it wasn't so clear, but G-d would surely help. The rabbi was sure that a trip to obtain the blessing of the great tzadik Reb Meir of Premishlan would facilitate his plans, and so the rabbi packed a bag and started off by foot.

When he finally arrived in Premishlan and was led into Reb Meir's study, the tzadik asked, "How will you raise the money for the journey?"

"Well," the rabbi began, "I have many relatives, and I am sure that when I explain the situation to them, they will be generous enough to help me."

Reb Meir didn't respond, but he appeared to be lost in thought. Finally, he said, "It would take many months to accumulate so much money - months which would be better spent devoted to Torah study. There is a different way. Remain here and you will obtain all the money you need for your journey and to set up your household." Needless to say, the rabbi readily agreed.

When the meeting ended, Reb Meir didn't dismiss his visitor as was usual. Instead, he had the next petitioner admitted to his study while the rabbi was still there. This man was a very wealthy person, and when he entered, Reb Meir said, "I would like to tell you a story, but I want the rabbi to listen as well for it will contain meaning for both of you.

"There was once a man named Moshe, who was very rich, but was a cruel and selfish person. Although G-d had provided him with great riches, he was the stingiest person you would ever have the misfortune to meet. Whenever a poor man came to his door asking for food or money, he would throw a veritable tantrum, screaming and cursing the hapless beggar. 'What do think this is?' he would thunder, 'a charity institution? Get out of here before I break every bone in your body!' And that beggar would be directed to the home of Moshe's neighbor, Reb Matisyahu. Now, this neighbor was not wealthy, far from it. But he had a kind and generous nature and never refused a fellow Jew in need.

"This scene occurred many times over the years, and Reb Matisyahu never failed to rise to the occasion. You might think that Moshe's reputation had gone as low as possible, but you would be wrong. For, since he was a very rich man, there were always those who sang his praises in order to ingratiate themselves with him - maybe there would be some gain in it for them.

"Reb Matisyahu's interminable kindnesses went unnoticed; after all, he was a nice guy and people expected him to be kind. The inequality of the situation may not have drawn notice down here, but in Heaven, it provoked the angelic host to fury. It was decided that Moshe's great wealth should go instead to Reb Matisyahu. The sentence was about to be carried out, when Elijah the Prophet spoke up. 'It's not right for a person to be judged on hearsay. I propose to go down to earth and test Moshe. Perhaps he isn't as cruel as we have heard.'

"This proposition was accepted, and soon an emaciated Elijah stood at the door of Moshe, knocking and begging for help. Moshe's reaction was the same as usual. First he berated the beggar for coming, and then he threw him outside into the bitter cold night. Elijah didn't give up so easily, though. He knocked again and with tears streaming down his face, he begged for a bit of food, a drop of warmth. But all to no avail, and the prophet realized that Moshe had forfeited his chance. The tears which continued to stream down his face were being shed for Moshe's lost soul."

The rabbi and the rich guest listened with rapt attention to the story, and as Reb Meir paused for a moment, they looked at him anxiously, wanting to hear the conclusion of the story. "When I heard about the terrible verdict that had been pronounced against Moshe, I felt very sorry for him. How could a man be condemned without fair warning, I thought.

“And so, I took it upon myself to provide Moshe with one last chance to redeem himself. If Moshe would provide the money necessary for the rabbi's move to the Holy Land, then he would be worthy of redemption. But, if, G-d forbid, he lost this one last opportunity, his soul would be lost. He would lose his fortune and be condemned to wander for the rest of his days, at the mercy of everyone he would meet."

Then, Reb Meir turned and his eyes met the terror-stricken eyes of the very Moshe of his story, but just for a split second, for Moshe fell to the floor in a faint. When he came to, he tearfully said to Reb Meir, "You are so right about me, and yet you have given me another chance to live and redeem my soul. He reached into his pocket and took out a heavy purse which he offered to the rabbi.

"Here, please take this, and when you reach the holy city of Jerusalem, please pray for me," said Moshe through his flowing tears.

The rabbi and his family were soon in Israel, living the fulfillment of their dreams. And Moshe completely turned his life around. In fact, every beggar or traveler who passed through his village was directed to his home, which was a comfortable haven for them all until the end of his days.

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

**How Valuable is**

**Your Torah Study?**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman**

I was recently told a true story which might be indicative of how we may express our value for Torah even though we are not called upon to make the same sacrifices as in previous generations:

A young man at our yeshiva went on an outing with a friend, taking with him a pack with his belongings. Despite having considered taking his notebooks with his Torah notes which he thought he’d review with his friend on the trip, at the last moment he decided not to.

Ultimately, his pack was stolen, together with his wallet, money, credit cards, expensive camera equipment and other valuables, which all totaled several thousand dollars.

He relayed to me in all sincerity and completely wholeheartedly that the first thing he thought when he realized his pack had been stolen was, “Thank G-d my Torah notes were not in the pack. Everything else is only of monetary value and can be replaced. But my Torah notes are priceless and irreplaceable!”

This means that on the spot, immediately and intuitively, with unshaken conviction and clarity, he valued his Torah to be undoubtedly worth more than thousands of dollars – indeed invaluable!

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chukat 5775 email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Story #975**

**The Land of the Living**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=00011p00:001NcS5200003kXq&count=1470258865&randid=2019007320&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=2019007320)

**Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef of Drivin** was one of the elder disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber Shneuri of Lubavitch, the Mittler Rebbe of Chabad, and, after his passing in 1827, of his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Shneersohn. On one occasion the latter, known as the Tzemach Tzedek, was heard to remark, â€œI have two and a half Chasidim, one of them being Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef.

He was also a prodigious scholar of Talmud and Jewish Law. After serving as the rabbi of Drivin, he became the chief rabbi of Polotzk, a Jewish metropolis at the time, and respected elder and teacher of the Chasidic community there.

After some years he became dangerously ill, and his doctors despaired of saving his life. It so happened that the disease from which he suffered is the subject of a conflict of opinion in the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law, [written in Tsfat] by Rabbi Yosef Caro. If an animal were to contract this disease, Rabbi Caro writes that it is still suitable for kosher slaughtering because the disease is non-fatal, while Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Ramah) rules that even after kosher slaughtering the animal is treif and must be discarded because the disease is fatal.

Said Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef: "I know what I should do. I will [leave Europe which is under the legal authority of the Ramah and] go settle in Eretz Yisrael, where Rabbi Yosef Caro -- from his time onward -- is the accepted ruling legal authority for that region. Therefore my case will be settled in accordance with his view!"

He went first to consult with his Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek,who approved the plan and gave his blessing for the move.

Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef then set out at once for the Holy Land, in 1847, and settled in Jerusalem. He was entrusted by the Tzemach Tzedekto be the head of a group assigned to build a Chabad synagogue in the Old City.

The first step involved raising funds from wealthy Diaspora philanthropists, such as Sir Moses Montefiore in England and Elias David Sassoon in Bombay. Land was purchased in 1850 and the construction of what became the famous Tzemach Tzedek Shul of Old City Jerusalem was completed in 1856.

After eighteen years of extended life in Jerusalem, Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef of Drivin passed away in 1865, exactly three months after his beloved Rebbe.

**Sourc**e: Compiled and adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in A Treasury of Chassidic Tales (Artscroll), as translated by the esteemed Uri Kaploun from Sipurei Chasidim by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin; and from an article in Days of Chabad by Rabbi Yosef Y. Kaminetzky, as translated by Yosef Cohen. The paragraphs about the Tzemach Tzedek shul are based on //lubavitch.com/news/article/2026278.

Biographical notes: **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn** [of blessed memory: 29 Elul 5549 - 13 Nissan 5626 (Sept. 1789 â€“ April 1866)], the third Rebbe of Chabad, was known as the***Tzemach Tzedek***, after his books of Jewish Law responsa and Talmudic commentary called by that name. He was renowned not only as a Rebbe, but also as a leading scholar in his generation in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah.

**Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef of Drivin** was one of the elder disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber, the second Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty, and subsequently of his successor, the Tzemach Tzedek, both of whom used to send students to learn Chasidic philosophy from him. He was also a prodigious scholar of Talmud and Jewish Law. Before moving to Jerusalem in 1847, he served as chief rabbi of Polotzk, a major Jewish community.

**Connection:** Weekly Reading Preparing to live in the Holy Land.

**Editor's note:** FYI, and especially for my fellow Tsfatim(residents of Safed): Tzemach Tzedek Synagogue in Tzfat was commissioned by the Tzemach Tzedek around the same time the one in Jerusalem, but was completed a few years before. The Tzemach Tzedek himself provided the funds for purchase of the plot of land on the eastern side of the Jewish Quarter, and the Chabad chasidim that lived in Tsfat at the time finished its construction in 1853. In recent years, the shul underwent a large-scale renovation and modernization.

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