**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas ki tzeitzei 5774**

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**Chasidic Story #874**

**Innocent and Illiterate**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

For many years, before the great wave of immigration to Israel after 1948, many Moroccan Jews yearned to move to the Holy Land, but only some of them managed to fulfill their dreams. Unlike aliyah in later years which brought thousands of Jews to Israel in large groups, only a few families at a time managed to leave their homeland for this long and arduous journey.

Before completing his travel arrangements, anyone wishing to move from the large Jewish community in Tafilalet to Eretz Yisrael would first go to seek the permission of Rabbi Meir Abuhatzeira ("Baba Meir"). On completing all the necessary preparations, he would arrive with his entire family at Baba Meir's home in order to bid him farewell.

They would remain there for four or five hours with tears flowing like water and their sobs reverberating throughout the house. Rabbi Meir's children would wonder why Jews en route to Jerusalem were crying. When the children asked the emigrants why they were crying, the response would be that they were about to embark on a difficult and danger-filled journey. The family became accustomed to the fact that anyone about to move to Israel would spend half a day in their home sobbing.

Arriving in Rabbi Meir's home in Arpud (to where the family had fled from rebel Moslem persecution-editor) one day was a man he had known years before in a previous town of residence. The man was very innocent, his innocence being his greatest asset as well as his biggest shortcoming.

He had no understanding of what was happening in the world around him, yet he had pure and sincere faith in the Creator and in the tzadikim He planted in this world. He made up his mind one day to move to the Holy Land and had come to part from Rabbi Meir. He recalled from his days in Midelt that the custom had been to arrive at Baba Meir's home and cry prior to embarking on the journey. The man wished to do the same; he knew well that he had what to cry about.



**Illustration of the Baba Meir**

A river of tears began to flow. He sobbed like someone who had just lost a close relative. Rabbi Meir, noticing that his cries went beyond those of the average person about to make this great move, asked him why he cried so much.

The man answered: "Baba Meir, you have known me for a long time and I know you are aware that I am certainly not an educated man. I cannot recognize even a single letter of the alphabet and I have not read even one book in my entire life. I have managed until now to support myself through my business dealings with the gentiles.

“What does the future have in store for me? The population of Eretz Yisrael is composed of teachers and scholars, who will not even spare a glance at a boor such as myself. I am so ignorant that I cannot even tell you whether the white page on the other side of a book's cover is the first or final page of the book! How will I earn a living and what will I do all day?" He stopped speaking, yet his sobs continued.

Rabbi Meir turned to him saying: "Listen to me! Your innocence and ignorance is precisely what will help you manage in Eretz Yisrael. The fact that you cannot read and write will provide you with a livelihood for your entire life!"

The man listened and his eyes lit up. His tears dried up and gave way to a smile. He bowed as he took his leave of Baba Meir and was overjoyed with the blessing he had just received.

From that moment until the time of his journey, he happily conveyed his joy over the blessing he had received to all his neighbors. Then aboard the ship the other passengers who were fearful of what the future had in store for them detected his tranquility. He explained to them, smiling: "I have nothing to fear, for I have the tzadik Baba Meir's blessing in my knapsack. This will provide me with a living for the remainder of my life. "It is precisely my being an innocent ignorant fool that will provide me with a living."

The other travelers considered his words proof of his naivete and stupidity.

The man arrived in Eretz Yisrael and settled in Kfar Ata, located on the Mediterranean coast between Haifa and Akko. His sons excelled in both their religious and secular studies and succeeded in whatever they turned to. One of his sons received a job at "Institute 3," a part of the "Weapons Development Network," where he became well-liked by one of the leading missile engineers who appointed him as his personal assistant.

One day, the engineer mentioned to his assistant a problem the institute had been having for a long time. Every day, many potential secret missile plans were sketched. At the end of the day, there being no use for nearly all of them, these plans had to be destroyed. The engineers' cupboards were overflowing and the engineers, who were already swamped with work, did not have the time to deal with this.

The young man offered to destroy the documents himself, but the engineer made it quite clear that he does not have the security clearance to be permitted to take the slightest glance at these secret papers.

The educated engineer answered incredulously, "Can it be that there is anyone in the entire land of Israel who does not know how to read and write?"

The young man responded: "My father is such a person." The engineer could not believe his ears - how could such an ignoramus be the father of such a learned son. Despite his skepticism, he passed the suggestion to the managers of the plant. They were thrilled with it, so they promptly requested the security people to conduct a security check.

The ones assigned began investigating the background of the supposedly illiterate immigrant from Morocco. When convinced that he was in no way connected with any enemies of the state, they decided to visit him personally to assess what kind of man he was.

When they arrived at his home in Kfar Ata, they found him wandering on the porch and simply staring. They spoke with him for a few moments and realized that he actually was as simple as his son had claimed. They gave him a newspaper to look at. He held it sideways. They asked him how he managed to pray if he could not read. He told them that he had learned the prayers by heart in his youth and merely mumbled the words.

The security investigators reported back to their superiors. Realizing that this man was uniquely suited for the job, they offered him the position of "Destroyer of Secret Documents" of the entire Institute 3. They gave him his own office where he sat from morning until night, tearing and burning. At the end of each month he was compensated with a handsome salary.

After thirty years, he was forced to retire because of his age. Despite the sizable pension and severance pay that was guaranteed him, he was upset. He travelled up the coast to speak with Baba Meir's son, Rabbi David-Chai Abuhatzira, the Chief Rabbi of Nahariya (north of Acco), and said to him sorrowfully, "Your father promised me a living for my entire life, yet they have terminated my job."

In less than a week after that, the managers of the institute contacted him and asked whether he would consider returning to work, for "they have been unable to find anyone qualified to take your place!"

The man worked there for many more years, as long as he was able, and all of his needs were provided. Everything Baba Meir said decades earlier came true.

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*Source*: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Abir Yaakob: The Lives & Times of the Saintly Grand Rabbis of the Abichazira Dynasty* (vol 2.) by Chanoch Regal¦who heard the story from Rabbi David-Chai Abuhatzeira, son of Baba Meir and currently still the Chief Rabbi of Nahariya, israel.

*Connection*: weekly reading - Deut.18:13 ("Innocent you shall be with G-D your G-d").

*Biographical note*: Rabbi Meir Abuhatzira, popularly called "*Baba Meir*" (10 Tevet 1917 - 17 Nissan 1983), was the oldest son and designated spiritual successor of the Baba Sali. The Lubavitcher Rebbe indicated in private conversation that he was one of the pillars of the world. However, he pre-deceased his illustrious father by two years.

Born and educated in Morocco where he became there one of the most important rabbis of his generation as well as an accomplished Kabbalis. In 19??, he made aliyah and moved to Ashdod, where, after turning down an offer to be chief rabbi of Jerusalem, he lived reclusively for the rest of his life. Today, one of his five sons, Rabbi David, chief rabbi of Nahariya, is considered the scion of the Abuhatzeira clan.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentofsafed.com*

**THIS DAY IN JEWISH HISTORY (August 30, 1909)**

**Death of Chacham Yosef Chaim (Ben Ish Chai)**

From https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/

biography/benishchai.html

[](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=oIFX2Pqi&id=88689126C6ACEFE9DC62C14661D1AF5A4B5FF994&thid=OIP.oIFX2Pqi_-0P19yLEW1ZfwDWEs&q=photos+of+the+ben+ish+chai&simid=608048408833229262&selectedIndex=0)

Chacham Yosef Chaim was born in 1832 in the city of Baghdad where his father was the Rabbi. (Chacham [wise man] is commonly used among Sephardim as equivalent to Rabbi.)

When his father passed away, Rabbi Yosef Chaim was only twenty five years old. Nevertheless, the Jews of Baghdad accepted him to fill his father's place and Rabbi Yosef Chaim became the Rabbi of Baghdad.

Chacham Yosef Chaim was a great leader who guided his people through a time of religious upheaval. His contribution to Jewry was not restricted to Baghdad.

His opinion on halachic (Jewish law) issues was sought throughout the Sephardi world and is still followed by thousands of people from these communities. Indeed, his decisions are considered to be of halachic significance even outside of the Sephardi communities.

Chacham Yosef Chaim authored many works, both of halacha and agadah (sections of the Talmud that deals with esoteric, non-legal subjects). His most famous book is Ben Ish Chai, a book based upon the weekly portion of the Torah with a discussion of the portion and practical halacha.

This book is considered the standard reference in all religious Sephardi homes and is studied by Jews worldwide. Due to the popularity of this book, Rav Yosef Chaim came to be known by its name and today he is referred to universally as the Ben Ish Chai

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Young Israel of Flatbush Bulletin.*

**It Once Happened**

**Are You a Rebbe or a Construction Worker?**

Reb Leibush had just arrived in Belz to pay a visit to his mother. When he entered her home, which she shared with his brother, Reb Shalom, the Rebbe of Belz, the sound of hammering resounded through the rooms. The town of Belz was constructing a new synagogue.

Reb Leibush couldn't wait to visit the site of the new shul, and so after partaking of a cup of tea and some fresh cake with his mother, he went out to check on the progress of the building. He was surprised to see his brother standing with a shovel in his hand, helping with the work like a member of the construction crew.

Reb Leibush felt that this manual labor was below the dignity befitting the town's rabbi, and decided to tell his brother how he felt. "Listen, my brother, you know that the Talmud says that a leader of a Jewish community is not permitted to perform menial labor in the presence of three or more people. You, the Rebbe of Belz, know this law, so why are you standing here like a common worker?"

Reb Shalom listened quietly to his brother's words before responding. "Leibush," he began. "I will tell you a story that will explain my apparently strange behavior. Many years ago when I was studying in the town of Skohl my two study partners and I learned that if we studied with the utmost dedication and unstinting effort for a 1,000 consecutive nights without sleeping, we would merit a revelation of the prophet Elijah.

When we heard about this, we wanted this holy revelation more than anything else in the world. We resolved that we would undertake to study together for a 1,000 nights in a row. In the beginning it wasn't hard. After all, we were very enthusiastic and burning with our desire to reach our exalted goal. Nights passed in intense study, and we hardly noticed when the morning came.

"But, after a while, it began to be increasingly more difficult to study with the same dedication. We were becoming tired from not sleeping night after night. Finally, one of my partners couldn't stand the strain any longer and he decided to drop out. But I continued the nightly session with my remaining partner. It was on the eight hundredth night that he, too, lost the quest, but I was firm in my will to continue right through to the end.

"I sat alone in the dark shul every night, fighting sleep and utter exhaustion, determined to reach the one thousandth night. When I thought that I had no more strength to continue I still pushed on, so deep was my desire to receive the revelation of the holy prophet.

"On the thousandth night a terrible storm blew up. It seemed like the gates of Hell had opened and the fierce winds had threatened to destroy the world. Even I, who was normally unfazed by the weather, no matter how violent, was shaken by the unearthly howls and piercing flashes of lightning that zig-zagged across the sky.

“Still, I sat by my open book, determined that nothing would interfere with my reaching my goal. Suddenly there was a loud, frightening crash of glass. The wind had blown out one of the windows of the study hall and its breath had extinguished my candles. This was too much for me. I had persevered for a 1,000 nights though my strength was all but gone, and now this. The rain and wind pelted me through the shattered window and my spirits had plummeted to rock bottom. I would have left had I not been so terrified of the raging storm.

"But then I gathered myself together. Was this not my last night, after which I could expect a visit from the prophet Elijah himself? How could I allow a mere storm to deprive me of my reward? I felt my way to the holy Ark and slid open the carved door, and wept my heart out before G-d, begging Him to help me. I don't know how long I stood there pouring out my yearning and frustration to the One Above, but at one point I realized that the storm had ended.

"I came to myself and went out to look out the broken window. I saw an old man walking in the direction of the study hall. I knew it was Elijah who had come to learn Torah with me. We sat together and learned all that night, and I was like a person transported in a dream.

"The last part of the Torah which he taught me was the laws of building a synagogue. This teaching is so precious to me that if I were able, I would erect the whole building by myself from beginning to end. Alas, this little bit is all I am capable of doing, but even so, it is so dear to me that my entire being is full of joy with each brick that I place."

Reb Leibush smiled, happy with his brother's explanation.

*Reprinted from last week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization of Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Expectant Mother Who Didn’t Listen to the Doctor**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

˜*You shall be wholesome [in your faith] with Hashem*.” (*Debarim* 18:13)

Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum has a great story and lesson for us. There was a pious couple who lived in a little village in Lithuania with their ten children. While pregnant with one of the younger children, the woman’s doctor perceived a serious problem with the baby and recommended she terminate the pregnancy.

The woman’s faith in Hashem was strong and she refused to listen to the doctors.

Eventually she bore a healthy little boy.

During the Holocaust, eight of the children perished, and only one daughter and a son survived. The son, who would carry on the family name, was the same child the mother had refused to abort.

The child grew to become Rav Elazar Shach, one of the leading Torah authorities in our generation.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**‘She Saved My Life’**

**By Larry Gordon**

Michal Levine wanted to go to college in New York, but her parents were completely opposed to the idea. She was born and raised in Florida and went to a right-leaning yeshiva from which most of the graduates just did not go to college. It was that simple.

Eventually, though, her parents gave in, and that saved Yaakov Hagler’s life. Hagler is a well-liked businessman who resides here in the Five Towns with his family. In addition to his busy work schedule, he is a *ba’al* *tefillah* on the High Holy Days at Congregation Aish Kodesh in Woodmere and an in-demand teacher of *bar* *mitzvah* lessons, including instruction in reading from the Torah and leading the congregation in *tefillos*.

A short time before Pesach in 2004, Yaakov was playing a pickup basketball game with friends when, he says, his legs just gave out and he collapsed to the court floor. His friends helped him up and busily inquired whether he was hurt, suffered a leg injury, a sprain, cramp, or anything similar. No, he said, he seemed to be fine but could not understand why his legs would just give out like that.

A visit to his doctor a few days later and some blood tests revealed a staggering diagnosis—leukemia. There was no family history and no prior symptoms that would have indicated that anything was amiss. He says that until that point in his life he never had any medical issues and was never in a hospital except on the occasion that he and his wife had a baby.

This story comes to the fore at this point in time not only because it is both dramatic and inspiring, but because the Gift of Life Bone Marrow Foundation will be hosting their annual Long Island Walk-a-Thon on September 14 in the sprawling Eisenhower Park in East Meadow, New York, to raise much-needed funds.

The foundation was established in 1990 when Jay Feinberg, a New Yorker, was diagnosed with leukemia and told by doctors at the time that his only likely chance of survival was to find a match for a bone-marrow transplant.

The Feinberg family began an international drive to find a match for Jay, an endeavor that repeatedly was met with disappointment. Over a four-year period, the best they could find was a partial match that, according to doctors, would be taking a chance on the possibility of success.

After several years and continued frustration, one of Feinberg’s friends in Milwaukee organized a bone-marrow drive at which the last person tested was found to be a perfect match for Feinberg—after 55,000 such tests has been performed. The young lady, a teenager at the time, donated bone marrow that saved Mr. Feinberg’s life.

The Gift of Life Foundation has tested almost a quarter-million people in 25 years around the Jewish world and has been instrumental in providing lifesaving bone marrow for over 2,700 leukemia patients. The necessity for just such a registry became clear when it was revealed that the most likely matches would be found amongst people with similar genetics, most often family members. However, in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the tragic curtailment of extended families, the pool of such potential donors was seriously depleted.

Each of these human-life dramas can be spun into a riveting tale to captivate and move readers, keeping them awe-inspired by the quiet goodness that genuinely exists within a world where usually the inefficiencies and malevolent ways of people are highlighted. Also woven into these very real-life stories is the intriguing fashion in which G‑d has chosen to run this mysterious world that we live in.

For Yaakov Hagler of Woodmere, Michal Levine of North Miami Beach became his literal lifeline through enthralling circumstances.

Michal did not just want to go to college in New York; she wanted to attend Barnard and eventually attend medical school. According to Hagler, however, when she arrived at Barnard she was less than pleased with the dormitory arrangements and facilities, and she sought out living quarters uptown in Washington Heights. As she explains it, it was around ten years ago when she saw an ad in Washington Heights about bone-marrow testing for a four-year-old Israeli girl who desperately needed a transplant. The testing was being held at Yeshiva University, just a short distance from her apartment.

“I was always interested in science and medicine, and I was anxious to help as well,” she said as we talked on Monday of this week.

She explains that when she arrived at YU, she looked through the glass doors and saw only men there, so she was somewhat apprehensive about stepping into the large room in which the testing was taking place. Apparently, one of the YU students noticed her hesitation and went out to meet her and assure her that she was certainly welcome to be tested. She describes the procedure as simply swabbing a Q-Tip in her cheek.

At this point, Yaakov Hagler was in remission but functioning with the understanding that he would need a transplant sometime in the near future. A few months after being tested, Michal was called by Gift of Life with a request that she do some further testing, to which she was very amenable. It seemed that the testing indicated promising signs of her being a perfect match for one of the many people waiting for just such a gift from heaven through an angel of mercy.

“When I found out that I was a match for someone, my father called Rabbi Moshe Meiselman, at Yeshivas Toras Moshe in Israel, a close friend of the family, to discuss the issue with him,” Michal says. They analyzed the matter from multiple angles and concluded that there was minimal health risk, and both the rabbi and her parents consented to her going forward, she says. Her mother, she adds, told her at one point that she was an adult and that she and her father had no problem with her making her own decision.

When she found out that she was a match, all she was told was that it was for a 46-year-old male. The law in New York dictates that neither party can know the identity of the other for a year after the procedure is performed. Michal says it did not matter to her who the recipient was and that she was determined to go forward with donating her bone marrow regardless. She says that when she later learned that it was a husband and father from Woodmere, she was additionally elated.

Yaakov Hagler today looks back at the situation as having been wrought with miracles from the outset. He says that despite the encouraging news that a donor had been found for him relatively soon after he took ill, it was still quite a harrowing experience. “A bone-marrow transplant requires that your body is taken to its weakest level prior to receiving the donor’s marrow,” he says.

Michal adds that she was told about certain side effects like tiredness, weakness, and nausea, so when she felt those symptoms she was not too concerned. They both experienced a routine recovery and it was shortly thereafter that Yaakov was declared by doctors to have no signs of leukemia in his system.

A year later it came down to the matter of meeting. Michal says that she is a private person for the most part but was still anxious to make the acquaintance of the family her selflessness had kept intact. They met at a midtown Manhattan restaurant and became quick friends. Talking with Yaakov, it becomes understandably clear that all words are inadequate when it comes to the matter of expressing gratitude to someone who saved your life.

At the time Michal was still single and became a fairly steady guest at the Hagler home on *Shabbos* and *yom* *tov*. She married a few years ago, and after receiving her doctorate in molecular biology and genetics from Johns Hopkins University, she is now known as Dr. Michal Millrod. There is no question, she says, that her interest in research into stem cells was heavily influenced by these events.

In addition to visiting the Haglers throughout the year, she makes certain to be in town on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to hear Yaakov lead the *davening* at Aish Kodesh. She says that she is both moved and inspired by his *davening*. “Our mutual experience gives his *davening* for me a lot of depth,” she says. “I think he understands the issues of life and death better than most.”

And when she got married in Baltimore a few years ago, Yaakov Hagler sang under the *chuppah*. He describes it as an emotional but very important moment for him. He adds that he knew very few people at the wedding and after the *chuppah* people came up to him to ask who he was and what his connection to the *kallah* was. “I am a blood relative,” he explained.

*Reprinted from last week’s edition of the Five Town Jewish Times.*

**And the Name is Dvir**

***Submitted by*** [***Rabbi Shalom White***](http://www.chabadwa.org/user/4)

Dvir Imanuelov was the first Israeli soldier to be killed in operation “Cast Lead” a year and a half ago. Two years earlier his father had died of an illness and Dvir, as the only male in the family took upon himself all the responsibilities together with his mother.

[](https://picasaweb.google.com/rabbiwhite/MyBlogPhotos#5613286071958045986)

The loss of Dvir was especially tragic as they were left with only a mother and daughters in the family.

On his last birthday the family and friends got together around the gravesite cleaned it up and planted new flowers. During the ceremony Dvir’s mother told the following shocking story:

“One night before I went to sleep I spoke to G-d and asked him out loud the following request: “Please – give me one hug from Dvir so that I will know that it was not all in vain.”

I then went to sleep.

That same week, my daughter asked me if I would come with her to a concert of Meir Banai – a famous Israeli singer. I wasn’t in the mood of going to a concert but at the same time didn’t want to upset my daughter. In the end I decided to go to the concert without much enthusiasm.

The concert took place at the Sultan’s poll stadium in Jerusalem.

We got there a little early and while the band was getting ready a little boy came up to me. He was about two years old with beautiful blond curls and had the face of an angel. I started talking to him.

What is you name? – Eshel

Do you want to be my friend? – Yes.

Do you want to sit next to me? – Yes

At this point the parents, who were sitting two rows above us signaled the kid to come back and stop harassing old ladies.

I motioned with my hand that it is fine and we continued our conversation.

Eshel started telling me about his family. He told me that he has a baby brother named Dvir.

When I heard the name my entire body started shaking. I went up two rows and asked Eshel’s mother.

“Excuse me for being so rude, but how old is Dvir?” – Six moths old, was the answer

“Sorry for being so arrogant but was he born before or after operation “Cast Lead”?” “After” came the answer.

“Please excuse my question but why did you call him Dvir?”

And Eshel’s mother answered: “I work in the army as an officer that informs families of their wounded or killed sons and follows their needs.

While I was pregnant with Dvir the doctors informed me that they suspect a very serious defect with this baby. Since the pregnancy was at a very advanced stage it was not possible to have an abortion and there was nothing to do but wait for the birth and see.

On my way home from the doctor I heard over the radio that a soldier named Dvir was killed in Gaza. Right away I made a deal with G-d. “If you give me a healthy child I promise to call him Dvir in memory of that soldier” concluded Shiri, Eshels mom.

With tears in my eyes I turned to Shiri and told her that I am the mother of Dvir.

Shiri didn’t believe me.

I insisted that I am Dvir’s mom.

She still didn’t believe me and then asked for my name. “Dalia” I answered. “Dalia Imanuelov from Pisgat Ze’ev.”

Shiri then picked up Dvir and handed him over. “Here- take Dvir in your hands – he wants to give you a hug…”

Until this day the families are in touch and Shiri follows Dalia and the family in all their needs.

And you tell me. If that is not powerful, what is???

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad of Western Australia in Perth, Australia. This article was originally posted on February 6, 2011.*