**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas nitzavim 5776**

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**When a Painful Ankle Injury Can be a Blessing in Disguise**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

Rabbi Zilberstein told a story about Nathan Straus, one of the greatest retail merchants in American history. He was the co-owner of both Macy's and Abraham & Strauss department store chains. He was a world renowned philanthropist who cared about other people. Due to his efforts in pasteurization, it is estimated that he saved the lives of over 450,000 children.

He donated large sums of money to Israel, and the city of Netanya was named in his honor. He was asked to donate a building that would serve as a central soup kitchen to feed all the poor Jews of Jerusalem, and he happily agreed.

In 1912, on a trip to Israel, he went to see that building. He was overcome with a feeling of satisfaction, as he watched hundreds of people eating the meals that he provided. When leaving that building, Mr. Straus fell down the steps and suffered great pain. He was taken to the hospital, and it was determined that he broke his ankle.

The people around him couldn't believe that after all the good he had done, he got hurt like that. Due to that injury, he had to stay in Israel longer than expected, and ended up missing his much anticipated trip on a boat that his brother Isadore booked for him and his wife.

That boat [however] was the Titanic. It became clear that due to his injury, his life was spared. What seems to be bad, is really good. It's rarely this obvious, but that's why we need to trust. There is always a good reason for every single delay. While I did see other versions of why Mr. Straus was delayed in Israel, nevertheless, the lesson is the same - We cannot comprehend Hashem in the present. We have to always trust that what He is doing is best, despite the way it appears.

*Reprinted from the September 19, 2016 email of Daily Emunah.*

**The One-Armed Bandit**

**By Yerucham Reich**

It wasn’t at all nice, and it seemed rather cruel, but there were those who referred to him as “The One-Armed Bandit.” There was certainly no apparent reason to call him a bandit, but he consistently failed to show his nicer side, which was, of course, undoubtedly hidden somewhere (far?) beneath the surface, and, as he was, nebech, one-armed, and as he came around in the mornings to collect money, some people, insensitively, called him that.

He would show up at Shacharis and would go from person to person for a handout. He never said please and he never said thank you. He didn’t smile. He did occasionally grimace, but it was clear that his grimace was indeed a grimace and not a poorly executed smile. He exhibited no discernible chen. And he didn’t seem too clean.

He could be seen outside the shul, sorting his collected coins on the hood of a parked car. He would separate out the pennies and then contemptuously sweep them off the car and into the street, and then pocket the silver. Oh, and he was Russian. There were times that he was the tenth man, but he refused to stay even one extra minute so that Kaddish could be recited. He would walk right out, the coins he just collected jangling in his pocket, leaving the congregants angry and frustrated.

On several occasions people told him that they would not give him anything until after Kaddish, or until after a minyan arrived. He promised to stay and, based on that promise, he got his money, whereupon he walked right out, again leaving us high and dry. And angry. People swore they would never give him anything again, and heatedly told him so. It made no apparent impression.

It was on one such occasion that I learned one of the most important lessons of my life. I learned something profound about tzedaka, and about my father, of blessed memory. At the height of one of those dramatic scenes, when people around us, frustrated, raised their voices and angrily told the man that he would never get another dime in this shul again, my father tuned to me and said, “ihm darf min geben.” To him, you have to give.

Giving tzedaka is a nisayon, a test. It’s not easy to dig into your pocket and hand over your hard-earned money to others, especially if money is tight, or if it’s a larger sum. But we are gomlei chasodim bnei gomlei chasodim, doers of kindnesses who are the children of doers of kindnesses, rachmonim b’nei rachmonim, people who feel pity and empathy for others who are the children of people who feel pity and empathy for others.

We understand, and have learned from early in life that this is what G-d expects of us, and it is for this reason that G-d put the money we have in our pockets in the first place. Still, we do have choice in where and how much we give. That is our right, but that too is a test. As my father explained, through his voice, his simple expression, the understanding and experienced wisdom on his face, without having to spell it out, if the gadol hador, the great man, the leader of our generation, asked us to donate to some very worthy cause, we would jump to do so. It would be easy. It would hardly be a test, except perhaps in how much we actually gave, compared to our ability to give.

But tzedaka is a test. We are not allowed to test G-d, except in this one area, tzedaka, and that is because of its centrality to the purpose of our being on this earth. But G-d does test us all the time, especially regarding goodness and kindness, and perhaps most especially regarding the commodity that is so very important to most people, money.

In testing us regarding our honesty and especially our willingness to part with our money -- and yes, money is important in life, in that without it life is very difficult – G-d is examining not just our character, not just our spirit, but our understanding and acceptance of how we came to be here, Who governs the world, and Who put that money in our pockets to begin with. And why He put it there. And giving money to the highly objectionable, obnoxious “One-armed Bandit”, is exactly that test. It tests who we are, really. It tests our very relationship with G-d, not on the terms we choose to define that relationship, but on the terms He chooses. Swaying and shukkling and fervor and outward piety, studiousness and prayerfulness, are all important. But to legitimize and give credence to all that, you have to “put up”, and perform where perhaps you don’t really want to. But that’s where G-d wants you to.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5775 email of The Shtieble, a project of the Manhattan Beach Community Kollel.*

**The “Man” Who Regretted in the Concentration Camp Not Having Better Served Hashem B’Simcha**

Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, once met a nonobservant Jew who had absolutely nothing to do with religious practice. He did not even know the pasuk, Shema Yisrael, which is a staple in Jewish life.

The man said, “I am aware of one verse from the Torah which I memorized. ‘Tachas asher lo avadita es Hashem Elokecha b’simchah u’b’tuv leivav meirov kol, “Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant” (Devarim 28:47).

Rav Yaakov was slightly taken aback by this revelation. After all, from among the many pesukim of the Torah which impact Jewish life, this was not at the top of the list.

The man’s response is in and of itself a lesson in devotion to Hashem, and how one person’s sincere service can have an enduring impact on another person’s life:

“Rebbe, I experienced seven levels of Gehinom. During the Holocaust, I lived in purgatory on a regular daily basis. In one of the camps in which I was incarcerated there was a holy Jew, a rabbi of distinguished lineage, whose influence upon the other incarcerates was overwhelming. As a result, the Nazis singled him out for singular punishment.

“This was their way of saying to us: ‘Look, we control everyone – even your illustrious rabbis are putty in our hands.’ They placed a 50- kilogram stone in his hands and ordered him to carry it up a steep mountain. Once he reached the summit, he was told to carry it down.

“This was not yet the end. The debasing process continued on all day, as they made the holy man walk up and down the mountain for hours with the relentless heat of the sun beating down on him. During this entire time, all I heard from the man (who was none other than the holy, venerable Klausenberger Rebbe, zl.) was this pasuk, repeated over and over again.”

The Klausenberger Rebbe had already experienced the tragic loss of his wife and eleven children. He had been beaten, degraded and subjected to painful persecution. Yet, the vicious animals in the guise of human beings did not succeed in breaking this man. Indeed, he survived and rebuilt his life, successfully establishing a kehillah, congregation, in the USA and in Eretz Yisrael. He founded a premier hospital and returned atarah l’yoshnah, the Crown of Torah, to its original place.

Yet, despite all that he had suffered, all that entered his mind that fateful day was: “I am suffering because I did not serve Hashem with joy.” Rather than entitlement, he felt that he owed Hashem!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Penimim on the Torah by Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum.

**Story #982**

**Greater than Resurrection**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=00016200:001NsGaE000034IC&count=1474376846&randid=1684524223&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1684524223)

Once,the chasidic masterknown as the *Baal HaToldos*, **Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye**(one of the three main disciples of the Baal Shem Tov), told his son-in-law, Rabbi Avrohom Dov of Chmelnik, "As you well know, I was not always a follower of **Rabbi Yisrael, the *Baal Shem Tov***. I'd like to tell you the story of how I became a chasid of the man I once so strongly opposed.

"For many years, I had heard much about the Baal Shem Tov. I heard that he could perform miracles, heal the sick and interpret dreams. Honestly, these reports did not surprise me. After all, if the Al-mighty wishes to heal one who is sick, or enlighten one with spiritual insight, He can do so to any person, for no reason whatsoever.

“ But I wanted to learn more about the great piety that his followers spoke, and of his scholarship in all areas of Torah knowledge -- the revealed and the hidden. Perhaps this was a man of great spirituality, and so I decided to find out for myself if that was true.

"I traveled to Mezhibuz, the home of the Baal Shem Tov, and stayed for several weeks. During that time, I actually did see the Baal Shem Tov perform wonders, but as I said, that ability did not interest me and I never expected to deny his supernatural powers. In truth, I had come to see remarkable levels of sanctity. So throughout that time, I carefully observed his daily behavior -- in prayer and Torah study -- but I saw nothing that could be considered extraordinary.

"I therefore assumed that he concealed his piety. So I resolved to remain in Mezhibuz longer, hoping to somehow observe the Baal Shem Tov during times when no one else had.

"One day, a villager came to the Baal Shem Tov weeping bitterly. His son was critically ill and had been bedridden for the past week. Could the Rebbe please come and visit him? The Baal Shem Tov agreed and immediately asked that his carriage be prepared for the trip. Then, to my surprise, the Baal Shem Tov invited me to accompany him.

"When we arrived at the villager's home, we were offered some refreshments after our long trip. Suddenly, the villager's wife rushed in screaming that her son was in the throes of death. I looked expectantly at the Rebbe but he did not seem disturbed by the situation. He had not even yet seen the boy. Seeing that the Baal Shem Tov was unmoved, she returned to the boy's room crying.

"Soon thereafter, the boy's mother returned to the dining room sobbing bitterly - her son had died. As I am a Kohen, I quickly stepped out of the house, since it was forbidden for me to remain under the same roof with a corpse. While I stood outside, I looked through the window and saw the Baal Shem Tov rise from his chair and enter the boy's room. After several minutes of silence, he opened the door and said to the boy's mother: 'Bring some soup for your son.' Then the Baal Shem Tov returned to his seat to finish his meal.

"Since it appeared the boy was alive and there was no longer any reason for me to remain outside, I returned to the dining room. I was greatly impressed by this exhibition of reviving the dead, but this was still not what I sought from this man who was reported to be such a holy person. I had yet to see an indication of the Baal Shem Tov's piety that might induce me to accept him as my Master.

"By the time we left the village, it was dark. Our carriage drove into the night along a path that led through a forest. The trip should have taken no more than an hour but after two hours of traveling with no civilization in sight, we realized that we were lost. It was past midnight of a Thursday evening. The Baal Shem Tov knew that if he did not soon find the way to Mezibush, he would be forced to transgress an extra strictness he had taken upon himself of not traveling on a Friday, not even in the morning, in order not to chance desecrating the Shabbos.

The Baal Shem Tov stopped the carriage, stepped down, and wandered off into the dense forest. I quietly followed at a short distance. The Baal Shem Tov wandered in a circle for a few minutes and then prostrated himself on the ground.

"*'Ribono Shel Olam* (L**-**rd of the world),' he cried, 'You know that all that I do is for Your sake and to glorify Your Name on earth. You know that I have made a personal oath not to travel on Fridays to not to risk profaning the holy Shabbos. If I am forced to break this pledge, it would be for me as if I profaned the Shabbos itself, G-d forbid. Please, beloved G-d of mercy, have pity on me and save me from violating my promise. Direct me on the right path home and enable me to return before daybreak ....' The Baal Shem Tov then cried bitterly for some time, pouring his heart out in devotion.

"It was then that I saw that this man was truly a *tzadik* â€“ a perfectly righteous man who feared G-d from the depths of his being. At that moment, I no longer doubted that his piety was genuine.

I quietly returned to the carriage and waited for him. When he returned, we began to travel again. The horses did not hesitate but led us out of the forest, and we reached Mezibush before sun rise.

"After I had had time to contemplate what I had seen and heard, a deep remorse took hold of me. How had I dared doubt the greatness of such a man? I was so overcome with a desire to beg forgiveness; I rushed to the Baal Shem Tov's study. Before I opened my mouth, the holy Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, 'I know what you have come for. Let me answer you in the words spoken by the Almighty to Moshe Rabbeinu - '*Solachti Kidvorecha'* - You are forgiven according to your word.'"

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*Source:*Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the redition of Tzvi-Meir HaCohen (Howard M. Cohn, Patent Attorney), on his website, //baalshemtov.com/

*Biographic notes:* **Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer** (**18 Elul** 1698 - 6 Sivan 1760), the ***Baal Shem Tov*** ["master of the good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of *Tzava'at Harivash*, published by Kehos.

**Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye**[5470 - 24 Tishrei 5542**\*** (1710 - Oct. 1781 C.E.)] was one of the earliest and closest rabbinical disciples of the Baal Shem Tov. He was the first to author a book of Chassidic teachings, called *Toldos Yaakov Yosef,*which had a revolutionary effect immediately upon publication. Subsequently, he published two other chasidic classics, *Ben Porat Yosef*and*Ketonet Passim*. These three books were the chief printed sources for teachings in the name of the Baal Shem Tov.  \***\*** Not certain, Some say 5544 (1783) and some say 5551 (1790)

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**No News is Good News**

On erev Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 1968, the first space ship landed on the moon and made headlines in all the media. At the Shabbos farbrengen, the [Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher] Rebbe explained a lesson to be learnt from the event and added:

One should not mistakenly think that he should read the newspapers to be able to derive lessons in serving Hashem. The world would be better off without the papers at all, and it is a rachmonus on those who read them.

The Rebbe then related a story: "There was a Yid in Lubavitch who would sit day and night learning in the beis medrash, and had no interest in what was happening in the outside world.

One day, someone related to him that Czar Nikolai was crowned. The Yid was surprised, 'Didn’t they crown him years ago? Why are they crowning him again?' "

It turned out that when he was a child, in the days of the Mitteler Rebbe in 1825, Nikolai the First had been crowned [Czar of Russia] and in his honor they had lit additional candles in the shul. Since then, without this Yid realizing it, two Czars had come and gone. When Nikolai the second was crowned seventy years later (in 1894), the Yid was perplexed by the second crowning of Czar Nikolai." The Rebbe concluded, "From this story we can see how Yidden lived in the past, long peaceful years; unlike today, when people need to run to doctors and take tranquilizers out of stress."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Chabad of the Cardo (Yerushalayim)*

**Sincere Regret**

The tzaddik Reb Zushe of Anipoli would travel to faraway Yiddishe townships and villages, and indeed to any place where he sensed an impurity, whether caused by an aveira (spiritual transgression) that had already been committed or by a misdeed that someone was about to do.

On arrival, he would ask the wrongdoer if he could stay in his home overnight, and if necessary would even insist on receiving that favor. At chatzos, sReb Zushe would wash his hands, get out of bed, light a candle, sit on the floor, and tearfully recite Tikkun Chatzos. With intense feelings of regret and teshuva, he would list in detail the aveiros the host had done, as if he himself had committed them.

His host, overhearing this account of all the aveiros he had committed, would be shaken up with intense remorse. He would jump out of his bed and hurry to Reb Zushe: "Rebbe! Enough listing of my sins! I admit to my wrongdoing! I won't do it again! Ask Hashem to show me mercy and forgive me for all my aveiros!"

However, Reb Zushe would not end his vidui (confessional prayers) until the entire household was filled with such fear over the commission of an aveira that they sweated and trembled, even more than they would have done in the presence of a king of flesh and blood. And anyone who was brought to teshuva through this approach of Reb Zushe would never commit that sin again.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Chabad of the Cardo (Yerushalayim)*

**The Joy of Fulfilling an Uncommon Mitzvah**

It was the day after Succos, while the Chassam Sofer (1762-1839) was writing replies to questions from all over the world, that he heard a knock at the door.

It was the wealthiest person in the community whose business collapsed and was now penniless. The Chassam Sofer offered words of encouragement until the man regained self- confidence.

The man then said that at this time of the year he usually goes to the Leipzig

Fair, but now he didn’t have money to make the trip, let alone for purchases. The Chassam Sofer lent him the money he needed and instructed him what to do at the fair.

Following his advice, he made a huge profit. Not too long after, he became even wealthier than before. Overwhelmed with gratitude for the loan and advice, he bought an expensive gift. When he presented it to the Chassam Sofer, [the great Torah scholar’s] face lit up with joy while praising the beauty of the diamond. After admiring the jewel for a few minutes, he said he can’t accept it since it would be a violation of taking interest. When the businessman left, the Chassam Sofer explained to his students there that he felt so joyous upon seeing the jewel since it was the first time in his life that he had the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of not taking interest.

In a related story, R’ Nosson Adler was once traveling with the Chassam Sofer on a cold winter day in a wagon being pulled by two horses. Suddenly one of the horses tumbled over and died. Being that only one horse remained, the wagon driver traveled on foot to the nearest town to procure another horse, as one horse didn’t have enough strength to pull the wagon.

The driver later came back with a donkey. Upon seeing this R’ Nosson Adler descended from the wagon and began to dance with joy. When his student asked him why he was so happy, he replied that since the driver brought a donkey he could now fulfill יחדיו ובחמור בשור תחרש לא ;you shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Sitting in my home in Frankfurt, I would have never dreamed that I would be so fortunate to fulfill this!

In another incident, the students of the Magid of Zilichov asked their Rebbe- who always had great Simcha how he could recite the Bracha צרכי כל לי העושה every day since he had tremendous afflictions and poverty. The Magid answered that it must be poverty is what I need. Therefore, I can say with Simcha that He [Hashem] gives me all that I need.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Fascinating Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt.*

**One Hour of Teshuva**

**is Better… –**

**By Mrs. T.G.**

“My daughter, remember to stay in touch with Uncle Aaron even after my 120 years.” This was the last request of my father, my teacher, before he departed from the world. Uncle Aaron was a Jew who, because all of the troubles that befell him, lost his way and became blended with the gentiles to the disappointment of the rest of the family.

Father made sure to maintain a warm relationship with him with the hope that the spark will glow anew. This summer I took a trip to New York with my husband and I remembered the last request of Father to stay in touch with Uncle Aaron… the request was constantly playing in my mind again and again as if Father had just given me the instruction even though ten years had already gone by since his passing.

In spite of the fact that we had not yet made arrangements for a place to stay, I asked my husband to get me the number for my uncle who did not live far away in order to set up a visit. My husband did not understand why I was in such a hurry as there was plenty of time to do this calmly, yet he gave me the number and I called my uncle, and I was told that he was no longer among the living.

“When did he pass away?”

“Three days ago.”

“Where did you bury him?”

“He left in his will that he wanted to be buried only in a Jewish cemetery and we do not have the money to pay for the burial, so in the meantime he is still in the hospital where he passed away!!!”

We immediately connected with the local rabbis and we arranged a proper funeral in a Jewish cemetery. It was clear that at the end of his days he regretted his life choices and he did not have the power to change reality.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Tiv Hakehila from Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz.*

**The Chassid Who Climbed Through the Window**

**By** [**Yehudah Chitrik**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/10216/jewish/Yehudah-Chitrik.htm)

It once happened that that the young daughter of Nechunya the digger of wells fell into a deep well.

Some bystanders immediately ran to inform Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who was known as a holy man. After hearing what happened, he replied, “She will be fine.”

Time passed, and it was doubtful if she would be able to stay afloat in the water much longer. But Rabbi Chanina once again declared that she would be fine.

After more time had passed, and it was a foregone conclusion that no one could possibly remain alive in a well for that much time, Rabbi Chanina said, “She has come out of the pit.” And sure enough, the girl had managed to climb out of the well.

When she was asked how she managed to scale the tall, steep walls, she said that she was assisted by a ram led by an old man (a reference toAbraham and the ram he brought as a sacrifice instead of Isaac).

The people then turned to Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, asking if he was perhaps a prophet.



He said to them, “I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. I made a simple calculation. Nechunya put so much effort into digging wells for the benefit of the pilgrims who come to Jerusalem every year. Shall the thing to which that pious man has devoted his labor become the downfall of his own progeny?”

It once happened that the daughter of Rabbi Mordechai (Feitelson) of Lieple was gravely ill. Seeing that her days were numbered, Rabbi Mordechai hastened to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi to ask him to pray for her recovery.

Arriving in the middle of the night, he tried to enter theAll the doors were locked home of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, but all the doors were locked. He tried the windows and finally found one that was open.

The desperate father climbed into the house and found Rabbi Schneur Zalman laying on the floor saying, “Nechunya the digger of wells … become the downfall of his own progeny … Mordechai Liepler has done such and such … become the downfall of his own progeny?”

Seeing Rabbi Schneur Zalman tearfully praying for his daughter was all Rabbi Mordechai needed. He left the house and returned home, where he found his daughter well on the road to recovery. (Talmud, Bava Kama 50a; Reshimot Devarim I, pp. 78-79.) *Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Chabad.Org Magazine. Translated from Hebrew by Menachem Posner.*

**L’Maaseh**

**Rav Shach and the Bochurim Who Broke into the Kitchen In Order to Enjoy Cholent**

The kitchen workers in the Yeshivah of Ponovezh once complained to the Rosh HaYeshivah, Rav Elazar M. Shach, zt”l, about a group of Bachurim who after studying until the early hours of the morning on Shabbos night, decided to ‘break into’ the kitchen and help themselves to some of the Cholent that had been prepared to be served Shabbos morning.

Rav Shach was shocked to hear this, and immediately declared that those Bachurim who had done this were disqualified from being a witness before a Bais Din, because they were thieves.

“Taking property from the Yeshivah without permission is an act of theft. If they are hungry,” he said, “they can come to my house and I will give them food. They do not have to worry that they are waking me. I am up at those hours!”

That week when Rav Shach gave his weekly Mussar Drashah to the Yeshivah, he devoted a portion of it to the Cholent fiasco. He explained that when Pharaoh’s daughter brought the infant Moshe to the palace, she attempted to have him nursed by one of the maidservants, but he would not nurse from them. Moshe refused until a Jewish nurse, who was actually his mother Yocheved, was summoned.

Why did Moshe reject the Mitzri maidservants? Chazal explain that he thought, “The mouth that is destined to speak with the Shechinah should not drink milk from women who eat nonkosher food!”

Based on this, the Rashba rules that a Jewish child should not be given to a non-Jewish nursemaid, and this is recorded as Halachah by the Rama in Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deiah (81:7).

Rav Shach wondered how the Rashba could draw a general conclusion applicable to all Jews from the specific case of Moshe? The Gemara is clear in its reasoning that Moshe Rabbeinu’s mouth had to remain pure because it was destined to speak with the Shechinah. But clearly, this reasoning does not apply to the average Jewish child!

Rav Shach declared that, indeed, it does apply to each and every Jewish child, because every child recites Brachos every day. When we say, Baruch Atah Hashem, “Blessed are You, Hashem,” we are addressing Hashem directly!

Rav Shach concluded and said, “Can it be that a mouth that has taken into itself stolen food, how can it dare speak to the Shechinah in Tefilah and when saying Brachos?!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**Short and Sweet Story of the Week**

**The Chazon Ish and the Politics of Mediocrity**

Rav Shlomo Cohen, a close associate of the Chazon Ish, OB”M, recalls that he once complained to the Chazon Ish about someone who wasn’t strict in keeping the laws of the Torah. The Chazon Ish replied that the time had not yet arrived wherein all of Israel could be considered complete Tzaddikim (righteous). Accordingly, there were no grounds to criticize those who sought leniencies. “Why, then, do you vigorously combat and criticize a certain group in Israel for their compromises?” Rav Cohen asked.

The Chazon Ish explained: “Compromise has no validity when it becomes a policy. A person who sometimes relies on lenient rulings accepts that he should be more stringent but finds himself in a position where in he lacks the fortitude or will to do so. However, when a political party chooses a halachic compromise as its banner, it justifies these leniencies and mocks those who choose to be more stringent in keeping the law.

This is an enormous danger, for it teaches people to be satisfied with mediocrity.” Comment: This story sheds a great light on the concept of change. To fall is human; failure is part and parcel in life and is actually a prerequisite for success. But to live life with a mindset of justifying your failures and allowing incorrect and immoral behaviors to be your start and end point is just tragic. As Judgment Day is only a few days away, let us make sure that if we’re lenient in certain areas of Torah observance, it’s not a life philosophy.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5776 email of Torah’s Sweets Weekly as compiled by Reb Mendel Berlin.*