**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shelach 5774**

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**Never Give Up**

**On a Jewish Soul**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them that they shall make themselves *sisit*.” (*Bemidbar* 15:38)

In Czarist Russia, it was unthinkable for a Jew to achieve any prestigious public position. When a Jew in Kiev managed to get himself appointed as the head of a bank, it was only because he had become so assimilated that his Jewish ancestry had been all but forgotten.

While visiting the seashore, this banker witnessed a terrible tragedy when a body was washed ashore. While it proved impossible to identify the deceased, because the deceased was wearing *sisit*, he was given a *halachic* burial.

The assimilated banker came to the realization that although he had renounced his Jewish identity in order to further his career, this was only applicable in his lifetime. He had put financial success before living the life of a Jew, but he did want to be buried as a Jew, so he began to wear *sisit* under his clothes.

Wearing *sisit* had a profound effect on the banker, and he gradually undertook to keep more and more *misvot*. He eventually was forced to give up his position at the bank, and went on to become a prominent member of the Jewish community. We learn from this never to despair of a Jewish soul.

As a Rabbi for many years, I always made sure to be aware of the level of each member of the *Kahal*, never to push anyone to do more than he is ready for but, at the same time, never to limit any member of the *Kahal*. Always prod and encourage all members to grow at their own pace, without pressure. Never to give up on a Jewish *neshamah*.

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

**It Once Happened**

**The Saga of the Nunez**

**Family of Portugal**

The sad and often tragic history of the Marranos of Spain and Portugal began more than a hundred years before the Expulsion in 1492, and continued for several hundred years after. The bloody pogroms that started in Spain in 1391 forced many Jews to accept Christianity in order to save their lives. These Jews were, from that time forth, under the watchful eyes of the Inquisition, a clerical tribunal set up to apprehend backsliding "New Christians."

On the slightest evidence, people were arrested, tortured, and often burned at the stake for the "sin" of secretly practicing Judaism. In spite of the terror of the Inquisition, many Jewish families continued observing the mitzvot (commandments) in secret. One such family was the Nunez family of Portugal.

**A Secret Handed Down**

**Over the Generations**

Over the generations, the secret of their Jewishness had been handed down from father to son and mother to daughter. Three members of the family had paid with their lives for their loyalty to their faith: Clara, Isabella and Helen were all sentenced to death in 1632.

The family had branches in Spain and Portugal. The Portuguese family was considered among the aristocracy of that country. The head of that family, Samuel, or as he was known in Portuguese, Ribiero Nunez, was the court physician.

On the surface Samuel was a loyal Catholic, never arousing the slightest suspicion that he was a secret Jew. But the Inquisition set about to discover his secret.

One fanatical member of the tribunal succeeded in planting a spy in his household - a servant who was instructed to note all of the family activities and report back with his findings. Indeed, he returned to the tribunal with the news that the Samuel Nunez family was seen observing certain Jewish rituals.

Samuel Nunez's arrest caused a sensation in the land. A personal friend as well as physician to the king, Dr. Nunez was widely admired by the nobility. Although the king normally refrained from interfering with the actions of the Inquisition, he now used his influence to free the doctor.

The Inquisition freed him, but on the condition that an observer be installed in his home to watch for any questionable activities. Samuel Nunez decided that he had better plan an escape. It would be difficult to elude the spying eyes in his household, but Dr. Nunez seized upon a brilliant idea. Dr. Nunez invited many of his distinguished friends to an elaborate banquet at his home. After the meal he announced that a grand surprise awaited them. His yacht was anchored outside his home on a nearby river, and he would be treating them to a lovely after-dinner cruise.

**Well on Their Way to**

**England and Freedom**

The tipsy guests boarded the ship in happy expectation of more entertainment. By the time they sobered up and realized they were far from shore, the Nunez family was well on their way to freedom in England. For, the "yacht" was a well-appointed British battleship commissioned by Dr. Nunez for the purpose of bringing his family to freedom. The surprised passengers were assured that provisions were in place for their return voyage, but the Nunezes would be remaining abroad, since their lives were in jeopardy in Portugal.

Careful planning had led to the success of his secret plan. Relatives in England were waiting for the Nunez family, and when they arrived there, they joined a group of Jewish refugees bound for the British Colonies of America.

**Arriving in the New World**

In the summer of 1733 the Jews arrived in Savannah, Georgia, where Governor James Edward Oglethorpe provided them with the land they would need for homes and farming. When a protest was lodged by English trustees of the colony, saying, "We do not wish to make the American Colonies a Jewish settlement," Oglethorpe, an honest, liberal-minded man, ignored it.

Angry protests continued to issue from England to disenfranchise the Jews, and although the governor made a pretense of obeying, land records from that time show the Nunez family received the deed to six farms in the Savannah area.

Due to the continued anti-Jewish pressure, Dr. Nunez moved his family to Charleston, South Carolina for a time, later returning to Georgia, where he lived out his life. The doctor's son-in-law located in New York, where he became one of the leading members of the Spanish-Portuguese congregation there.

*Reprinted from the recent Parshas Bamidbar edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitcher Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.Adapted from The Storyteller, Kehot Publication Society*

**Three Recent Stories of Jewish Heroism**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

The first two I heard years ago in a video presentation on “Chabad Org” by Rabbi Nissen Mangel.

When Rabbi Mangel was a ten year old boy in Hungary the Germans conquered that country and shipped him and his father off together with hundreds of thousands of other Jews to Auschwitz. Miraculously he and his father survived the ‘selection’ and were told to turn to the right, undress and put on prisoner’s uniforms.

**No Small Concentration Camp Uniforms**

But there were no uniforms small enough for ten year old children so little Nissen was ordered by the presiding officer to return to the huge mountain of clothes that everyone taken off when they arrived, find his own garments and put them on.

So he returned to the massive pile, searched until he miraculously located them and put them on. But as he was doing so he noticed something interesting; the clothes his father had been wearing. So, pretending that he was still busy carrying out orders he bent down put his hand in first one pocket and then the other and came up with two treasures: a sardine and a small package containing… a pair of Tefillin (phylacteries) which he hurriedly put into his shirt.

When returned to his father, at the first opportunity, when he was sure no one was looking he showed his father what he found; first the sardine and then the small package.

**Rejoicing Over the Can of Sardines**

When his father saw the sardine he almost wept in joy. A sardine was worth more than a diamond! What good is a diamond to a starving man? But a sardine could mean the difference between life and death for both of them.

But when he saw the Tefillin; he almost passed out; as though someone opened the gates of the camp and told him he was free. And, in a certain sense he was; as the saying goes: you can imprison the Jewish body but you can NEVER imprison the Jewish soul (actually this is true for every soul, Jew and gentile alike… but the Jews are supposed to lead the way).

The Tefillin reminded him that his Jewish spirit was free!

But there is more. Eventually the word got around to the prisoners that someone had Tefillin and it began a minor revolution…against meaninglessness. Hundreds wanted to put them on, if even for only a minute.

**No Chance to Put on**

**Tefillin During the Day**

But all the prisoners were marched out of the camp every morning at sunrise and had to work non-stop under sadistic surveillance until well after sunset. Even one moment of rest was instantly rewarded with corporal or capital punishment. In other words; putting on Tefillin in the proper time, namely in the daytime, was out of the question.

So every evening instead of getting a few hours of desperately needed uninterrupted sleep, some four hundred men waited in turn to strap one black box around their arm and another around their head, say a short prayer and remove them for the next in line.

Not only was this a sacrifice of sleep; if the guards caught them or if they were tired the job the next day it could cost them their lives.

And it also made no sense. The reason they were in this predicament is because they were Jews. So why should they do Jewish commandments? And the reason they were putting on Tefillin was because they believed that G-d is the ruler of the world. So if He’s ruler, why are the Anti-Semitic Nazis ruling?

**An Announcement that**

**“Tonight is Passover”**

The next story Rabbi Mangel told was about Passover. One cold evening one of the 1,500 prisoners in the concentration camp barracks he was in, announced that ‘Tonight is Passover’. How exactly this man knew this no one could figure out because in Auschwitz there was no such thing as dates or months; only days and nights and winters and summers.

Nevertheless when they heard this news all the prisoners spontaneously decided to make a Passover ‘Seder’. Of course there were no Matzos, wine or even Hagadda books. All they had was the bitterness of the ‘bitter herbs’ and their memories. Someone said; ‘anyone who knows any part of the Hagadda; (specially arranged praises of G-d’s taking us out of Egypt), by heart should say it and everyone will repeat’.

And so it was. One person remembered a few paragraphs, another remembered a song, another remembered a story, another a joke, another a deep idea and so it continued for some time with almost everyone participating; some more and some less. Suddenly the door burst open and an infuriated S.S. officer stormed in, pistol drawn, yelling and screaming to stop the nonsense and go to sleep. Immediately everyone complied, the ritual stopped and everyone lay down and fell silent in the darkness.

Five minutes later however, when they were sure the officer wasn’t listening, it resumed.

**Continuing to Defy the**

**Murderous Threats of the S.S.**

That night the S.S. repeated their angry visits with murderous threats four times…. And each time with the same results; the prisoners fell silent, lay down on their wooden planks, feigned sleep and after a few minutes resumed the Passover ‘Seder’…. Until the morning!!!

Miraculously no one was punished or killed but even more so was that despite the fact that many, perhaps most of them were not religious and some were avowed atheists.

Not only did they all participate at the risk of their lives but not even ONE of them so much as complained that this religious ritual was putting them in serious danger or even suggested that they keep the noise down.  
On that night everyone in those barracks was just ………. a Jew.

The third story was told to me just yesterday. When the American Army liberated one of the extermination camps among the thousands of surviving inmates was the famous Klausenberger Rebbe.

**The Spiritual Strength of**

**The Klausenberger Rebbe**

He had lost his parents, his wife, eleven children and hundreds of other family members to the Germans as well as thousands of his beloved followers.

He was hungry, tired, sick and should have been broken in spirit but he wasn’t. His main concern was finding a Jewish soldier among the liberating troops with a pair of Tefillin that he could put on even for a moment.

After intensive inquiry he was successful and when the other inmates heard of his discovery, they too wanted to do the commandment…… despite all they had been through.

So every day (except for Shabbat and holidays when Tefillin are not worn) until their release, the American soldier would hurriedly put on and remove his Tefillin at the break of dawn and then for the rest of the day until sunset there was a line of survivors that said a blessing, put them on for a minute and passed them on to the next in line.

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

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**What Should One Learn, Halacha or Gemara?**

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| |  | | --- | | **QUESTION:** |   If someone doesn't have time, is learning *halacha* more important than learning *gemara*? |
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| |  | | --- | | **ANSWER:** |  |  | | --- | |  |   If you don't have time, then learn *ma shelibo chafetz*, what you desire to learn. That's the truth, *ma shelibo chafetz*. If you need to know certain *halachos*, learn them, but in general to engage in learning *halachos* you should know is also theoretical. You start learning *shulchan aruch*, many things will never happen, and therefore it's like *gemara*, too. So a person should learn *ma shelibo chafetz*.  But this I can tell you: once you start learning and *vehareiv na*, it becomes sweet, and you start liking it, then *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will make you find more time to learn, that’s a rule, *klal gadol*. Once you like to learn you'll find more time to learn  So start out now and do whatever you want, and succeed in it, maybe in the course of time you'll have more time to learn everything.  *Reprinted from last week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l” and based on Rabbi Miller’s answer to a question from the audience at one of his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures in his Flatbush shul.*  **Rabbi Meir Nissim (Michel) Abehsera, Promoted Health And Jewish Spirituality**  By [Menachem Posner](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm)   |  | | --- | | Rabbi Meir Nissim (Michel) Abehsera. (Credit: JEM) | | Rabbi Meir Nissim (Michel) Abehsera. (Credit: JEM) |   Rabbi Meir Nissim (Michel) Abehsera, an acclaimed author and counselor on macrobiotic food and health whose open heart and home influenced thousands to return to Jewish tradition passed away Friday, June 6 in Jerusalem after a long illness. He was 80.  Born in Morocco—a scion of the Abuchatziera family, famed for spawning successive generations of Kabbalists, Torah scholars and miracle-workers—Meir Nissim Abehsera relocated with his family to France at the age of 10. There, he became a successful civil engineer, but his heart's passion was in writing and literature.  While in France, Rabbi Abehsera became involved in a emerging field of healing through macrobiotics, teaching that a balanced diet of nutritious, unprocessed food is key to good health.  Following that path, in the early 1960s, the ambitious writer moved to New York and opened the first macrobiotic restaurant in New York City. During the next decade, Abehsera published eight books and became a sought-after lecturer nationwide.  Through his contact with the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—and his emissaries, Abehsera adopted a religious lifestyle. Subsequently, he would go on to teach and influence countless others. He and his wife, Claude, had an open home, where thousands would come for advice, nourishment and direction.  In some circles, he was best known as the champion of macrobiotics.  Among Chassidim, Abehsera was famed for having the distinction of being the “Rebbe’s whistler,” often asked by the Rebbe to whistle during Chassidic gatherings and during the singing, when the Rebbe would distribute wine after holidays.  The Rebbe encouraging Abehsera to whistle.  The Rebbe encouraging Abehsera to whistle.  In his book, *The Possible Man,* Abehsera recalls that he had come to the Rebbe with many questions about Judaism in 1971, when the Rebbe first asked him to whistle.  “I entered an unknown dimension as I blew my first whistle. The first blow was timid, but I quickly grew more self-assured and went at it as forcefully as I could. Others soon joined until we were hundreds whistling. The air caught fire with the resonance of the piercing sounds. My lower lip ached from blisters. But the Rebbe would not let me pause. He was taking the matter quite seriously.  “He called for still more energy as I, in my abruptly unbound imagination, envisioned thick threatening black clouds shattering into dust. We discomfited darkness with our collective breath. Minds were swept clean of all indoctrination, and I knew my guest was being purged of his folly. Every sweet seduction murmured from the *other side* was blown away by the stiff wind we had summoned. Fallacious arguments flew away like frightened bats as we toned the walls of our hearts to prepare for an all-out war—fairly fought, wind against wind—challenging those irrational emotions that pose as thought, but whose essence is only wind. We alienated every gaseous enemy and incurred no casualties; not even the singers hurt their throats as they sang background to our breath.  “Our final blast took off like the plaintive calls of a ram's horn. I was thinking of this as a folly ordained, a rehearsal for redemption, when the Rebbe paused.”  Rabbi Abehsera is survived by his wife, Claude, and seven children. Shiva will be observed at the Abhesera home, Rechov Rashbag 5, in the Katamonim section of Jerusalem.  Reprinted from this week’s website of Chabad.Org |
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**Queen Victoria, Montefiore,**

**And Real Wealth**

In 19th century England there lived a famous Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore. Queen Victoria once asked him , "What is the extent of your wealth? How much do you own?"

Sir Moses told her it would take a few days to do some accounting, and afterwards, he would reply. When Sir Moses told her his wealth, she became upset saying,

"This is offensive: Everyone knows that you have far greater wealth."

Sir Moses explained that he considered as his true wealth whatever money he gave to Tzedakah. Anything else that he possessed was only temporary and could be confiscated or lost.

*Reprinted from the website Revach L’Daf.*

**Chasidic Story #863**

**A Quick Trip**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

When Rabbi Yaakov- Chaim Sofer, author of the Kaf HaChaim, was preparing to publish the first volume of his work, he had no idea how to pay for the cost of printing. He had not so much as a penny in his pocket at the time.

His friends advised him to travel abroad in order to raise money. But this was a very hard thing for R' Yaakov Chaim to do. He was always begging G-d not to ever force him to leave *Eretz Yisrael*. But in the end, having no choice, he did go -- praying that he would not have to stay away for long.

**Taking the Train to Egypt**

R' Yaakov Chaim took the train from Yaffo-Tel Aviv to Alexandria, Egypt. When he stepped off the train onto the platform, he ran into one of the wealthiest philanthropists of his time, a man by the name of Yosef Somocha, with whom he was acquainted.

Mr. Somocha asked, "To what do we owe the honor of this visit?"

R' Yaakov Chaim explained his purpose in coming. The rich man immediately took 200 lira out of his pocket -- the cost of printing the first volume.

Later that same day, R' Yaakov Chaim boarded a train for the return trip home. It was the same train that had brought him to Alexandria.

**Surprised His Friends Back Home**

His friends back in Jerusalem were surprised to see him back so soon. When R' Yaakov Chaim explained the amazing thing that had happened, they protested, "If you were so successful in raising the money, you should have stayed a few days and raised the amount you'll need for future volumes!"

"No!" R' Yaakov Chaim declared. "I will not remain in a foreign country one minute longer than urgent necessity forces me to stay."

[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *"Stories my Grandfather told me "* (Mesorah) by Zev Greenwald]

Biographic note: Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer, (1870 - 9 Sivan 1939) better known as the *Kaf Hachaim* (the name of the monumental *halachic* work which he authored), was born in Baghdad. In the beginning of the 20th century he emigrated to the Land of Israel, and settled in Jerusalem.

Connection: Weekly Reading-true love of the Land.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**Samson's Mother**

**By Rabbi Ozer Alport**

More than 60 years ago, a man and his young daughter entered a yeshiva in Jerusalem and announced that they had just arrived from the city of Ostrovtza in Europe. The men gathered there knew that the Ostrovtzer Rebbe was a world-renowned miracle-worker and asked the man if he could share with them a story.

The man replied that he himself had been the beneficiary of one of the Rebbe's miracles, as his wife had given birth to several children, all of whom died shortly after birth. In despair, he approached the Rebbe for a blessing.

The Rebbe advised him to name his next child based on a person mentioned in the parsha to be read the week of the child's birth. The man concluded by pointing to the living girl at his side as proof of the Rebbe's powers, and noted that she was born during the week of Parshas Nasso.

However, a quick perusal of Parshas Nasso, or even an in-depth one, will reveal a big problem with following the Rebbe's advice: there are no women mentioned anywhere in the entire parsha. Armed with this dilemma, the man returned to the Rebbe, who suggested that although there no women appear in the parsha itself, the Haftorah indeed contains a bona-fide woman: Manoach's wife, the mother of Shimshon.

However, a study of the verses discussing her life reveals another problem: her name isn't mentioned anywhere. Fortunately, the Talmud (Bava Basra 91a) comes to the rescue by teaching that her name was Tzlalponit. Although not exactly a common name, the Rebbe advised the man that giving this name to his daughter was her best hope for survival. Willing to try anything, the man named his daughter Tzlalponit, and was quite fortunate to be able to point to her as living proof of the Rebbe's powers.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Candle Lighting*