**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas mattos-masei 5781**

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**A Taxi Ride Reveals a Surprising Relationship**



It was the late 1970s, and Leslie Wenig had just finished three grueling years of law school and a bar exam. He couldn’t wait to celebrate by getting away for a bit. He decided to take a trip to Europe before starting his new position in the fall. After touring the continent, he resolved to make a stop in Israel, where his grandparents had been buried a few years ago, to pay his respects. His grandparents, both Holocaust survivors, had fulfilled a lifelong dream to move from America to the Holy Land when all their children were married and settled. Leslie’s family had held on to their apartment in Jerusalem, so he had a place to stay.

Leslie knew that his grandparents were buried in Beit Shemesh, and once in Israel he didn’t anticipate having any trouble finding the graves. While the Sephardic cemetery in Beit Shemesh is ancient, the Ashkenazi one is much newer and less crowded. He arrived and began walking through the cemetery, reading the headstones. The graves were quite spread out, and he walked from stone to stone, unable to find his grandparents.

**Unable to Find the Graves in the Hot August Day**

It was a torrid August day, and the Middle Eastern sun beat down mercilessly on Leslie’s head. He was extremely thirsty and hot, and becoming more and more upset as the time passed and he just couldn’t find the graves. The driver was waiting impatiently for him, and he felt like he was going to faint from the heat and fatigue. Finally, he gave up. He got back in the cab and returned to his grandparents’ apartment on Yahalom Street.

The following day, he decided not to repeat this trying experience. Instead, he thought he’d go to Kever Rachel, the gravesite of the biblical matriarch Rachel, a site Jews often visit to pour out their hearts in prayer. The tomb has a small dome-shaped structure over it that shelters visitors from the sun. Leslie figured he’d pray there a little and keep his grandparents in mind, as if he’d gone to visit their graves.

He hailed a cab and asked the driver how much he’d charge to take him to Kever Rachel. The driver, a coarse-looking fellow in jeans and a faded T-shirt, named a price in shekels that was about the equivalent of $300—for a trip to a site that isn’t much more than half an hour out of Jerusalem.

“Are you crazy?” Leslie retorted. “That’s outrageous!”

**A Taxi Fare Price is Agreed Upon**

The two men haggled furiously. Finally the driver said, “Okay, I’ll take you for 86 shekels. But you can only stay inside for ten minutes!” Leslie shrugged, not quite taking him seriously. They set off for Kever Rachel and arrived without incident. Leslie went inside and began to pray.

The holy ambiance of the site uplifted him, transporting him to a loftier sphere; he read the words in his prayer book and drank in new depths of meaning. He thought of his grandparents and prayed for them. Ten minutes passed, and another ten. He lost all sense of time. When he finally emerged into the blinding Middle Eastern sunlight, he found himself face to face with a fuming cab driver. “We said only ten minutes!” the cabbie snarled. “Now the price is going to be 160!” He got behind the wheel with a disgruntled expression. “Okay, where to now?” Leslie told him to head to 23 Yahalom Street. He couldn’t wait to get home and out of this cab; this driver was really a piece of work.

The driver maneuvered the car onto the main road. Suddenly he remarked, “My grandparents lived at 23 Yahalom Street.” Do you think I care where your grandparents lived? Leslie thought nastily.

Nevertheless, after a few minutes he found himself saying, “My grandparents also lived at 23 Yahalom Street.”

“Mine lived on the second floor,” the driver said. Leslie wrinkled his brow. He knew there were only two apartments on the second floor. One belonged to his grandparents, and the other belonged to a lady who was close to a hundred years old. Could this cabbie have such an elderly grandparent?

**The Taxi Driver’s “Grandparents”**

“My grandparents’ name was Geller,” the cabbie was now saying. Leslie almost fainted. His grandparents’ name was Geller! How could this obnoxious cab driver possibly be related to him? “How are you a grandson of Geller?” he choked out.

The cabbie smiled as he threw a cigarette out the window. “Well, as you see, I’m a driver,” he said. “Back in the seventies, I was driving at the airport, and I was hailed by an old couple with a bunch of suitcases. They needed to go to 23 Yahalom Street.

“The old man was crying with emotion. As we traveled, he told me he was finally realizing his dream to live in Israel. He’d been through the Holocaust, raised a family in America, and now that they were grown up, he’d come here. “I felt so inspired by this elderly man and his tremendous love for the Holy Land. “When we reached the building, I couldn’t just let them schlep their suitcases up the stairs by themselves. I got out and helped them. When they opened the front door, I saw all their furniture had arrived, but it was still sitting in boxes. I thought, how could they ever assemble all of it on their own? “The next day was already Friday, right before Shabbat.

**Helping the Elder Couple to Set Up their Furniture**

I spent the better part of the night putting together their furniture. It was a big job, and when I finished, I decided to ask them for some money for my pains. The old lady said, ‘Come by later to eat some chicken soup. After that, I’ll give you the money.’ I came for the chicken soup, and then she told me, ‘Now come back tomorrow for the cholent.’ So I came back for the cholent, and in the end we all became very close. They became my surrogate grandparents, and I became their personal chauffeur.”

Leslie sat in the back seat, astonished. It didn’t surprise him that his open-hearted grandparents had befriended an Israeli man who was so different from them, but what were the odds he would end up in this same man’s taxi?

A thought occurred to him. “Hey,” he said, “would you by any chance know where my grandparents are buried? I went to Beit Shemesh yesterday, but I couldn’t find them.”

The man gave a snort. “Do I know where they’re buried? Do I know?” He opened the glove compartment and took out a well-thumbed Sefer Tehillim and a yarmulke. He handed the book to Leslie, who opened the front cover and saw his aunt’s name inscribed on the flyleaf.

“Your aunt came to Israel, and she gave me $100 and asked me to go to her parents’ graves regularly to pray. So of course I go!” The cabbie gave another snort of laughter. “Do I know where my own grandparents are buried?” he repeated. The elderly couple’s personal chauffeur then proceeded to chauffeur their grandson to the very gravesite he’d made a special trip to visit.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5781 website of Hidabroot.com*

**I Took Care of**

**What I Had to Do**

**By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon**

*I am posting an episode of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s life, which demonstrates the way he looked at educating every Jewish child. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.*

Towards the end of Cheshvan of 5681 (1920), which was eight months after the *histalkus (*the passing*)* of his father, the Rebbe Rayatz (as well as the rest of the family) contracted typhus, a severe, life-threatening disease.[[1]](#footnote-1) For a number of days his temperature was extremely high[[2]](#footnote-2) and his very life was in danger, with the doctor’s saying there is nothing they can do, besides praying for a miracle. *Boruch Hashem,*a few days later the Rebbe Rayatz the fever broke and on Yud-Tes Kislev the crisis was over. When he completely recovered in Shevat/Adar, he set out to fulfill the instructions that his father wrote in his will. He sent Reb Yehudah Leib Karasik to Moscow to review *maamorim* (Chassiic teachings) and to inspire the chassidim (his followers) of the importance to learn Chassidus on a regular basis.



**Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, zt”l, (1880-1950)**

**the Frierdiker Rebbe of Lubavitch (also known as the Rebbe Rayatz)**

Seeing the positive effects of this he began sending *mashpi’im* to numerous communities throughout Russia. In most cases/instances, he instructed a *mashpia*, to visit the communities around him. However, in some cases he instructed individuals to settle in a new community.

In order to fund this he re-established, *Kupas Raibeinu*, to pay for this expense. The Rebbe did not want to ask the participants to pay for the *mashpia’s* travel expenses, as then a few of them might decide, I won’t show up and I won’t have to pay.

That summer the doctors noticed that while he recuperated, nevertheless his body wasn’t completely healed. So they instructed him to go to the hot and mineral springs in Kislovodsk, in the Caucasus Mountains. When he arrived there he met with a group of local Jews and discussed with them about the importance of giving their children a proper *chinuch*. During the next few days, he gathered with many Jews of the community and spoke with them about the necessity to establish a *cheder* for their children.

He then informed his Rebbetzin that he is preparing to return to Rostov. The Rebbetzin was shocked and said, “But you weren’t in the hot springs even once / one time! We made this long trip because you need to be in the hot springs!”

The Rebbe replied, “My mission here was to encourage the townspeople to establish a *cheder*. *Boruch Hashem* that was accomplished. However, I had no plans on coming here, so Hashem made the doctors instruct me to come here to use the hot springs, and now that I took care of the real reason of mine being here, we can go home as there is no need to stay any longer.”

Reprinted from the May 20, 2021 Weekly Story email of Rabbi Avtzon, a veteran mechanech (educator) and the author of numerous books on the Lubavitcher Rebbeim and their chassidim. He can be contacted at [avtzonbooks@gmail.com](mailto:avtzonbooks@gmail.com)

**The Power of a South**

**African Shabbat Table**

**By Rabbi David Sutton**



There is a story told of a Jewish couple from South Africa that came to Israel and wished to receive a blessing from Rav Eliezer Shach. The couple was not all that observant, and their daughter was dating a non-Jewish man. They wanted the Rabbi to give them his blessing that their daughter should have a change of heart and not marry out of the faith.

The person in charge – who related this story – brought the couple in for what was expected to be a very quick, routine meeting consisting only of a brief berachah from the Rabbi. But as soon as the couple entered the room, Rav Shach, without even hearing the reason why they arrived, started talking to them about the importance of Shabbat observance.

He emphasized to them the profound impact that the Shabbat experience has on a family, and urged them to make a commitment to observe Shabbat when they returned to South Africa. The couple agreed, and upon returning home they began observing Shabbat. They decided not to make any other attempts to dissuade their daughter from intermarrying, and to instead heed the Rabbi’s advice and observe Sabbat.

Six months later, the daughter broke off her relationship with the non-Jewish man. She told her parents that the experience of Shabbat gave her a very special feeling which she did not want to lose, and this led her to break off the relationship. Rav Shach understood that this was what the couple needed. We should never underestimate the power of the sanctity of Shabbat, the impact of the Shabbat table experience, where the family is together, singing songs, sharing words of Torah, and spending meaningful time together.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5781 edition of iTorah.com*

**Rav Shneur Kotler – Part 2**

R’ Shneur Kotler was known as a man of peace, always the first to defuse an inflamed situation and restore calm. He avoided and fought machlokes as one would fight an attempt to place an idol in the Bais Hamikdosh. In his Yom Kippur shmuessen he would often elaborate on the piyut which calls Yom Kippur a day of “leaving behind jealousy and dispute and replacing them with love and friendship.” He would use public platforms to plead for harmony among Jews. He proposed that Yidden all over the world learn a portion of the Sefer Chofetz Chaim every single day, in an effort to avoid lashon hora.

When R’ Shneur was in Eretz Yisroel, he became involved in a project which aroused the anger of a certain Rosh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The man went into a tirade against R’ Shneur, lashing into him full force for a long time. Months later, R’ Shneur saw the Rosh Yeshiva walking on the other side of the street in New York. R’ Shneur crossed over and gave him a warm welcome, insisting that he be his guest in Lakewood for Shabbos. The invitation was accepted.

That Shabbos, R’ Shneur could not do enough for the Rosh Yeshiva. He treated him royally in his home, sat him at the Mizrach wall of the yeshiva, and gave him the third aliyah. Finally, after Shabbos, R’ Shneur sent two talmidim throughout Lakewood to raise money for this Rosh Yeshiva’s institution. R’ Shneur never reacted to a personal insult at all!

K’vod Hashem and Chillul Hashem elicited a very strong reaction from him, but if the insult was personal, he was quiet. A person in Lakewood did something harmful to the yeshiva, which upset R’ Shneur. Later, the man came to R’ Shneur to explain himself and give an apology of sorts, but it was obvious that his explanations were poor and he was not very sincere.



**Rav Shneur Kotler**

**Not Concerned Whether the Apology was Sincere**

R’ Shneur nevertheless accepted the apology and excuse and escorted him out in friendship, as if nothing had happened. Talmidim came to R’ Shneur and told him that the apology was obviously not very sincere, the excuses obviously inadequate, and that the man shouldn’t be “let off” so easily. R’ Shneur responded with a quote from Orchos Chayim L’HaRosh: “Do not find fault in a person who excuses himself to you – whether truthfully or falsely!”

A talmid once pulled open the door to the Beis Medrash building and found himself face to face with R’ Shneur. He moved aside and waited for R’ Shneur to walk out. R’ Shneur, however, did not move; he told the talmid “you go through first, since you are coming to learn!”

At the wedding of a talmid where R’ Shneur was the mesader kiddushin, the chassan’s family had a custom of paying the mesader kiddushin under the chuppah, and then and there, the chassan’s mother handed R’ Shneur a check for $100. When the canceled check was later returned, endorsed by the yeshivah, she called R’ Shneur and told him, “The check was not for the yeshiva. It was for you personally.” R’ Shneur replied, “Ach! If only I had known, I would have given it to Chinuch Atzmai. It’s in such desperate need now!”

**Reaction to the Chassunah**

R’ Shneur was at a chassunah in New York. He told the bochur who drove him to wait by the door of the hall, as he had an important meeting to attend in Lakewood and they had to leave the moment the chuppah was over. After the chuppah, R’ Shneur indicated to the bochur that he wanted to wait a while. After a full hour, R’ Shneur emerged from the hall. He explained to the bochur, “At the chuppah, I was not given any ‘kibud’. Of course, this meant absolutely nothing to me, but had I left early, the baalei simcha might just have imagined that I felt insulted and it could worry them, possibly even cause hard feelings. Preventing this was more important than the meeting!”

A young man in the Lakewood Kollel once came to R’ Shneur, requesting that he be put on the Kollel Payroll. R’ Shneur agreed. When the young man walked out, one of the office staff members told R’ Shneur, “But his wife is running a thriving business – it covers all their needs abundantly! How can the yeshiva give checks to yungeleit that don’t need them?” R’ Shneur replied, “True, the check is not needed for financial needs, but maybe the yungerman feels uncomfortable with the fact that his wife is bringing in all the money while he is bringing in nothing. Maybe the Kollel check is needed or his self-esteem. That’s why I gave it.”

The very wealthy family of a certain young man in the Kollel exerted great pressure on him to leave Kollel and go into business. He gave in. When R’ Shneur heard about it, he was very concerned, as the yungerman was capable of greatly progressing in his learning. R’ Shneur spoke to the yungerman and then arranged that he say a regular Chabura in the yeshiva, for which he would receive payment. The office staff pointed out that the yungerman did not need an extra salary, as he was being supported in comfort. R’ Shneur responded, “Do you think we are running a tzedakah organization? We are supporting Torah. This salary will help keep the yungerman in learning [giving him esteem in the eyes of his family], and that is why it is needed.” R’ Shneur shouldered the burden of the extra expense. Today, this yungerman is a great Marbitz Torah.

**The Yom Kippur Shliach Tzibbur**

At the end of Yom Kippur, R’ Shneur made a practice of davening Maariv before the amud. Why did he take upon himself this practice? One year, he told the shliach tzibbur not to wait for him to finish the Maariv Shemoneh Esrei because everyone was hungry and weak from the fast. The shliach tzibbur, however, did wait. R’ Shneur then decided to be the shliach tzibbur himself, for when he davened before the amud, he finished more quickly.

Three years before his petirah, R’ Shneur’s 26-year-old son, Meir, passed away, leaving a young wife and small child. R’ Shneur was very close to his son, who was a great Ben Torah, and was devastated with his petirah. Right before the levayah, R’ Shneur told one of his talmidim, who was working with Iranian youth, “Don’t think that during the shivah you won't be able to consult with me. I want you to continue coming to me with every problem as if nothing had happened.” During the shivah, every Rosh Yeshivah that came, left persuaded to take some of the young Iranian men into his yeshivah.

**More Concerned about an Elderly Man**

A few talmidim were accompanying R’ Shneur on a stroll after he had just returned from undergoing surgery. He grimaced in obvious pain with every step, but spoke not a word about himself, only inquiring after their affairs. They met an elderly man sitting on a bench, who had also just come out of the hospital. R’ Shneur sat next to him and encouraged the old man to speak about himself, while gently refusing to speak about his own condition.

On the way back, R’ Shneur said to one of the talmidim, “Baruch Hashem I finished the letter you asked of me a few weeks ago. In my present condition, I could never write it properly.”

When R’ Shneur fell ill during his last winter, he was literally carried to the yeshivah to deliver shiurim and shmuessen. He spoke to the yeshivah from his hospital bed by audio hookup, and, his voice breaking, said that he felt as if everyone in the yeshivah was his ben yachid (only son).

When he was very ill, the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah scheduled its meeting at R’ Shneur’s home, but he refused the honor. He would not hear of making the senior members travel to Lakewood. Instead, he traveled to New York, albeit the fact that he was dangerously ill. He had to rest every half hour or so, but he participated constructively until the end. It was the last meeting of the Moetzes that he attended.

**Concerned About the 11 Poor Families**

When the doctor told him that he had but a few months to live, R’ Shneur told his Rebbetzin, “I have so much locked inside my head, seforim to be written, things to accomplish.” He said it was not the pain of his illness that concerned him, but how his condition would affect his ability to help others. He revealed that he had been secretly supporting 11 poor families, and was concerned about who would assume this responsibility.

When waiting to enter surgery, R’ Shneur spent two hours making a cheshbon hanefesh. He said to his Rebbitzen, “There is a person who insulted bnei Torah and I think I may have answered him a little too harshly. Please call him up and ask for his forgiveness.”

During his last day, he was lying in the hospital and groaning. It was thought he was in pain, but he replied that he was thinking of the casualties in Lebanon (during the 1982 war).

If a Talmid told him a good “shtikkel Torah,” he would noticeably be filled with pleasure. His love for his talmidim was boundless – loving each one like his own son. He felt the pain of his talmidim, and rejoiced with them in their simchos. While in the hospital, he made a shidduch for a talmid. When he found out that the shidduch worked out, R’ Shneur asked that the engagement be celebrated in his own home, as the kallah was from Eretz Yisroel. Despite his great pains, he participated in the simcha and even spoke at the se’udah. With his last strength, he danced to gladden the hearts of the chosson and kallah.

**Also Carried the Burdens of Klal Yisroel**

At R’ Shneur’s levayah, R’ Yakov Kamenetsky, who was a friend of R’ Aharon’s from Slobodka, cried out, “R’ Shneur was father and mother not only to the Yeshivah in Lakewood, he also carried on his shoulders the burdens of Klal Yisroel! He left worthy successors to fill his role in Bais Medrash Govoha, but who can replace him in regard to Klal Yisroel?”

R’ Shneur served as Rosh Yeshiva of Lakewood for 19 years, 7 months and one day. R’ Aharon served for the same exact length of time. This was seen as a sign that in Shomayim, R’ Shneur was considered a worthy son, talmid and successor who carried on his father’s mission.

R’ Shneur was buried on Har HeMenuchos next to his father, R’ Aharon, and his grandfather, R’ Isser Zalman. The yahrzeit of R’ Yosef Chaim Shneur ben R’ Aharon Kotler zt"l is on 3 Tammuz (1982). May his merit protect us. (The Torah Profile, "Rav Aharon Kotler", Olomeinu-Mador Ivri)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5781 mail of The Weekly Vort.*

**Weekly Chasidic Story #1226**

**Nuclear Explosions**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 

**Rabbi David Lapin and the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

I (Rabbi David Lapin) am a descendent of an illustrious rabbinic family, and the son of a rabbi who served the South African Jewish community for most of his life. So it was clear to me from an early age that I too, would become a rabbi. I was educated at the Gateshead Yeshivah in England, and also at Kfar Chassidim and Mir Yeshivah in Israel, where I received my rabbinic ordination.

However, as soon as I entered the rabbinate of South Africa, I became concerned about retaining my intellectual independence - something I am fiercely protective of - while serving as a community rabbi at the will of a synagogue's board of directors. Therefore, I believed that I also needed to secure an independent source of income. So I first went to work for an international commodities trading company, and later I founded the leadership consulting firm that I currently lead.

At about that time, an opportunity arose to join a company of commodity traders in Johannesburg, and this is what I did, as well as establishing a Torah study academy known as "Beis Hamedrash Kesser Torah." This Torah academy along with Chabad and "Kolel Yad Shaul" became involved in the South African *Baal Teshuva* movement - the movement for young people to return to their Jewish roots and Torah observance.

I held classes every Saturday night, when most young people usually went to the movies, yet these classes were attended weekly by hundreds of people. On other days of the week, I also conducted Talmudic studies, teaching advanced Talmudic methodology to bright young people, many of whom could barely read Hebrew. There were additional classes for men and for women in *Chumash, Tanach, Halacha* and *Musar.*

**My Family was Paying a Heavy Price**

But I was not sure I was on the right track. Was I right to divide my time between my business and my rabbinic duties? It seemed as if I had two full-time jobs and my family was paying a heavy price as a result.

There came a time when I felt I needed the opinion of someone much wiser than me, someone who had a global perspective that embraced modernity, history and the future. I decided to seek the advice of the Lubavitcher Rebbe - about whom I had heard so much from my Chabad colleagues and acquaintances.

In 1976 I came to New York but I had not realized that to see the Rebbe one had to make an appointment many months in advance and at first I was turned away. Only when I wrote a letter to the Rebbe in which I made the argument that my questions impacted the larger Jewish community - and which I insisted be presented to him - did he invite me to wait until he finished his appointments for the night when he would make time to see me.

I will never forget meeting the Rebbe. I recall that he got up from his chair as my wife and I came in, greeted us and insisted that we sit down. At that moment, I realized that we were going to have a real conversation - this was not going to be just a symbolic encounter.

**The Meeting was an Amazing Experience**

Indeed, the meeting lasted about fifteen minutes, during which time I felt that he was looking right inside me and communicating with me on a level that transcends the mind, getting straight to the heart and the essence of being. In addition, I sensed a kindness and warmth - all at once I was in the presence of a great man, an intellectual genius, a leader of the Jewish people, but also a grandfather who cared about me. In short, it was an amazing experience.

I asked him about the responsibilities that I faced and the limitations that I felt, which seemed overwhelming. How could I manage it all? What should I give up - my business or my Torah teaching? Where should I direct my energies?

His answer to me was that I should give up nothing and continue working in business while still teaching Torah. I do not remember his exact words, but the gist of it was that my being in business increased my ability to bring people closer to Judaism; my profession increased my influence and was a vehicle of*kiddush Hashem*--of sanctifying the name of G d. He stressed that I would have greater impact if I was involved with both business and Torah.

**The Rebbe’s Advice Didn’t Seem Realistic**

I was still very young, and I couldn't imagine how I could continue to do both. So, I burst out with: "I don't think that this is realistic. I'm already up to here … I feel very humbled and very honored that you would even talk to me this way, but it just isn't realistic!"

I remember clearly his response to my outburst. He said: "I'll tell you what your difficulty is - you think that human interaction is like a chemical reaction. But it isn't. In a chemical reaction, there are two elements which interact with each other, and they result in a third compound.

"But people aren't chemicals. When people interact, the result is a nuclear reaction. A nuclear reaction occurs at the core and then it radiates in a spherical, rather than a linear, way. As the outer rings of your sphere get bigger and bigger, the number of people you are touching gets bigger and bigger - indeed, there is no limit.

"When you touch the heart of one person, there is a nuclear reaction because that person in turn touches so many other people. So, each person you touch - even if it is a moment's interaction - represents a nuclear reaction in terms of impact. That's what it really is."

He was right of course, and way ahead of the research that, since then, has proven his words to be true. For example, the Framingham Heart Study showed that people's mood affects others three times removed - that is, one's friend's friend's friends. We impact people not just with our words but with our moods and our energy.

I remembered this whenever I stood in front of a class of fifty people. I contemplated that these fifty could in turn be impacting at least one hundred and fifty others. This meant that, both in my work as a rabbi and as a business person, week after week I was affecting tens of thousands of people without realizing it. That's what the Rebbe tried to get across to me. He was talking about the huge amount of holiness that I had the potential to bring into the world.

I got it. Indeed, he changed my entire mindset when he said, "Don't underestimate what each person is capable of doing. Just remember that when you touch one person you are causing a nuclear reaction." And that's something that I've never forgotten.

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*Reprinted from the Parshat Korach 5781 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed. Source*: Compiled by Yerachmiel Tilles from JEM-Living Torah

*Connection*-Seasonal: Sat. night-Sunday is the 27th yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**Ezer Weizman’s**

**Shabbat Memories**

**By Rabbi David Sutton**



A story is told of a time when the authorities in Israel were poised to change the status quo in Jerusalem and permit driving on Shabbat on roads that until then had closed to traffic on Shabbat. A delegation of representatives came to Ezer Weizman, who was then Israel’s Minister of Transportation and later became the country’s President.

The Minister told them there was nothing he could do, and the decision was final. The representatives left the office, but one of them stayed behind. Some fifteen minutes later, that representative joined his colleagues downstairs and happily reported that the decision was reversed; the status quo would be maintained.

He told them that realizing there was nothing more he could say to convince the Minister to change his mind, he sat down and began singing with great emotion Kah Echsof, one of the zemirot of Shabbat which was written by Rav Aharon Karlin, and whose words and melody are beautiful and soul-stirring. As he sang, Ezer Weizman began to cry. He told the man that he remembered the days when as a child he sat on his grandfather’s lap on Shabbat while his grandfather sang this beautiful song. These memories inspired him to reverse the decision and maintain the status quo vis-à-vis Shabbat in Jerusalem.

We never know the kind of impact that the Shabbat table has – the aromas, the songs, the warmth, the words of Torah, and the family bonds that are forged. Let us make an effort to spend quality time with our families at the Shabbat table, recognizing how this could impact each and every one of us for a lifetime.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5781 edition of iTorah.com*

**The Kopishnitzer Rebbe’s**

**Surprising Advice**

**By Rabbi David Sutton**



It is told that a hasid came to the Kopishnitzer Rebbe to ask for help, as his daughter had become engaged to a non-Jewish man. The Rebbe advised him to throw a festive party to celebrate the engagement.

The hasid was shocked. Why should he celebrate his daughter’s engagement to a non-Jew? He asked the Rebbe for an explanation, but the Rebbe simply said, “Look, you didn’t intervene earlier, and now it’s too late – they’re engaged, so you might as well celebrate, with lots of liquor.”

The man followed the Rebbe’s advice. At the party, the groom’s family became drunk and started cursing and insulting Jews. The girl was very offended and called off the engagement.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5781 edition of iTorah.com*

1. Author’s note: The Rebbe Rashab was *nistalek*after he contracted this dreaded disease. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Rebbe’s fever reached 42 degrees Celsius (which is 107.6 Fahrenheit), [↑](#footnote-ref-2)