**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas va’eschanan 5781**

Volume 13, Issue 48 15 Menachem Av/July 24, 2021

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

Past stories can be found on the website **ShabbosStories.com**

**The Question of Rav Moshe’s Kavod or Lack Thereof**



There was once a couple that was experiencing shalom bayis problems. Counseling and therapy sessions did not help and it was decided that a divorce was necessary. Inquiries were made and a date and time was set for the husband and wife to appear in Beis Din, however, the woman refused to attend. She was bitter. She felt she was terribly wronged in the process and insisted that she would not accept a get under any conditions.

The husband arranged for the get to be written in the Beis Din of R’ Moshe Feinstein zt”l, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and afterward, R’ Moshe appointed one of his talmidim to serve as a shaliach, a messenger, to deliver the get to the woman in the presence of two witness who were to accompany him.

**The Group Failed in their Mission**

The group set off for the woman’s apartment, located in one of the more seedier sections of Manhattan, but when they arrived, she refused to let them in and absolutely refused to accept the get. She yelled and screamed at them, but would not let them in. They had no choice but to come back to R’ Moshe and report that their mission was unsuccessful.

R’ Moshe was undaunted. In a flash, he grabbed his hat and coat and headed out the door, telling the messenger and witnesses to follow him. Together, they traveled back to the woman’s apartment, navigated through some unwelcome aspects of the city, and traipsed up four flights of stairs as the building elevator was not in service. R’ Moshe was not a young man and this trip was a bit arduous for him, but he never complained even once the entire time.

They knocked at the apartment door and a man opened it. It was her father. He saw the group of rabbis standing there in rabbinic garb and immediately let loose a barrage of insults, profanity and vitriolic words, in essence telling them to get out of here and his daughter was not going to listen to them.

**Rav Moshe Just Stood There Patiently**

R’ Moshe just stood there and waited for the man to finish. When he finally did, the Gadol Hador gently explained that if he would allow them a few short minutes, they would be gone right away. It took some more convincing but eventually, the man allowed the group into the apartment.

The woman emerged from a side room and recognized R’ Moshe. She listened to him calmly explain how tragic it would be for so many people involved if this situation would continue to linger, and how important it is for her to accept the get and move on in life. His words struck a chord, and it wasn’t long before she willingly accepted the get.

R’ Moshe led the group of men outside and they began to walk back to his home. One of the men could not contain his curiosity and asked, “Rebbi, please forgive me for asking, but why did the Rav have to come in person? He is a widely respected Rosh Yeshivah and the head of the Beis Din. He could have sent numerous people, an unlimited amount of messengers until the job was done; yet he went himself and was made to suffer the indignity of insults, the strain of traveling and the effort of climbing so many flights of stairs. It is surely beneath his kavod to do these things.”

R’ Moshe stopped walking and looked at the man. “I don’t understand your issue. Do you think that in these types of situations, I need to be concerned with my own kavod? What about kavod shamayim? What about the honor of Hashem Yisborach? If she were to not accept the get and later got married again, can you imagine the disrespect to kavod shamayim that would bring? Is there a greater level of indignity and insult than that?”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**The Anti-Semitic Baron’s Sweater Order**

**By Tuvia Bolton**



A story was told by the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak in his book Lekuti Diburim (Chapter 48).

In the Ukrainian town of Dovromisel was a large Jewish community, one of whom was Reb Chaim Shimon who made his living from producing heavy sweaters.   
   
 Sweaters were very important in the freezing Ukrainian winters and his were of such a high quality that even the aristocracy bought them for themselves and their households. But it was a major surprise to him when one day a cruel fellow by the name of Yan Bidnitzki, arrived with an order for two hundred sweaters for his boss, Baron Stefen Varbitzki!

The novelty was not the size of the order but rather that Bidnitzki and Varbitzki were rabid anti-Semites! These Jew haters buying from him would send a message to everyone that the sweaters must be really something special.

**Not Prepared for Such a Large Order**

Chaim Shimon wasn't prepared for such a large order so he sold the foreman all that he had, some thirty altogether, signed a paper promising to deliver the remaining 170 within a month and watched as Bidnitzki's wagon faded into the distance.

As soon as he was out of sight Chaim Shimon set to work making the remaining sweaters. He hired extra help to be sure that they were finished before the time and personally checked each one several times to be certain they were of the highest quality. The Baron and his foreman would be looking for even the slightest flaw as an excuse to make trouble and he didn't want to take any chances.   
 Sure enough, three weeks later the remaining 170 were ready, examined and reexamined, loaded on the back of two wagons and on their way, with Chaim Shimon, to be personally delivered to the Baron one week early.   
 But when he arrived, he was in for a rude surprise. Before he could enter the castle grounds, Bidnitzki the foreman, came out waiving his fists and screaming curses and insults! And when Chaim Shimon tried to announce that he came to deliver the order, Bidnitzki angrily screamed that the Baron canceled it, gave him orders to take the money back, and said the Jew can take his sweaters and jump in the lake!

**Tried to Protest and Request a Meeting with the Baron**

When Chaim Shimon tried to protest and ask for an audience with the Baron, Bidnitzki became so furious that he pulled his pistol from his belt, cocked it and aimed it at him! And he would have pulled the trigger if the gentile wagon drivers that were bringing the sweaters hadn't jumped down and stopped him.   
  Chaim Shimon, totally confused and broken, had no choice but to turn the wagons around and head back for home. But as soon as he left the Baron's castle grounds, he decided that rather than admit defeat he would spend the night at a nearby town and calm down. He told himself that there must be some sort of blessing or hidden here! Maybe G-d would send him a miracle! He had to think positively!   
 The winter was beginning to set in and the peasants in the town were feeling it. Now with no proper sweaters they were cold. So it came to them as a big surprise and disappointment when Chaim Shimon told them that the Baron had turned him away. Why would he do such a thing? The Baron was a maniac but he wasn't stupid. It didn't make sense, with cold serfs and servants the Baron himself stood to lose a lot of money! It didn't take long for the news to spread until even the servants in the castle were talking about it and one of them was the Baron's oldest and most trusted servant.

**The Story of the Baron**

Now is the time to say a few words about the Baron.

Baron Varbitzki was known for his crazy whims and sadistic outbursts of anger. When he was making one of his drinking or hunting parties with the other landlords in the area he would gather all his servants and serfs, some five hundred of them, sit before them on a sort of throne, order them to sing songs praising him, then arbitrarily pick one of the crowd and order one of his henchmen to administer to the poor fellow 10 lashes in public amidst the singing! Then after the lashing the victim had to crawl to the Baron and thank him!

Interestingly, the Baron's father, from whom he inherited his fortune and title, had been very kind to everyone and actually liked the Jews. In fact, he even had a Jewish foreman but his son fired him when he took over after his father's passing, put Bidnitzki in his place and then evicted the Jews from his lands.   
 When this old servant was bringing the Baron his tea the next day, he decided to risk the Baron's wrath, take his life into his own hands and ask him why he cancelled the sweaters.

**Confusion about the Cancelled Sweaters**

"Cancelled? sweaters? What sweaters? They are only due in a week from now. I didn't cancel anything." The Baron was totally surprised by the question.   
 "But, my lord" The servant replied, "The Jew did bring the sweaters. In fact, right now he's in the next town saying that foreman Bidnitzki told him that you canceled. And, well, the people, your loyal subjects, really need those sweaters and are very disappointed. They're freezing and don't want to work."   
 The Baron stood to his full height, pounded his fist on the table and yelled "Canceled? I CANCELED?! I want to see that Jew and I want to see that black hound Bidnitzki! I want them both here...NOW!!!"

In a short time, both were standing before the Baron who was sitting on his throne-chair before them whip in hand and shaking with rage. He pointed to Chaim Shimon and said "Talk!"

"Your majesty, although it means a big financial loss to me but I am even more bothered by what flaw did the Baron see in me or my sweaters that he canceled them!"

"I canceled!?" the Baron thundered. "Who told you that I canceled? I, Baron Varbitzki, NEVER CANCEL!! Who said I CANCELED!?!"

Chaim Shimon glanced at the foreman. "WHAT?" The Baron yelled, "That black hound!?" And with a flick of his hand sent his whip cracking across Bidnitzki's face drawing blood.

**Realizes that the**

**Jew is an Honest Man**

"I'll deal with you later!' he hissed at the foreman. "And you" he pointed his whip at Chaim Shimon. "You also deserve to be lashed also! Yes! Lashed for believing this black dog Bidnitzki that I would cancel my word! But I see that you are an honest man. You brought the sweaters a week early! I like that! Even if you are a Jew. Now let's have a look at those sweaters."

The Baron got off his throne and accompanied Chaim Shimon out of the palace. As soon as the servants and serfs standing outside saw the Baron they began singing and blowing trumpets as always. Chaim Shimon opened the canvas on one of the wagons revealing the merchandise, took one out and presented it to the Baron.

"Beautiful!" The Baron said as he examined it. "Come, let us put them all into the storehouse. And, oh yes, please bring the bill, I have decided to add a small amount to each sweater for your trouble."

But as they were putting them on the shelves the Baron happened to pick up one of the original thirty sweaters that the foreman had brought back and said, "Interesting, this is different from the ones you bring now."

**Denies that the Inferior**

**Sweaters are His Handiwork**

Chaim Shimon took one of the others off the shelf and exclaimed, "Why, these are not my sweaters! These are simple products that sell for, perhaps one tenth of mine.

"What?! Call Bidnitzki! Bring him here immediately!!" The Baron glared again at Bidnitzki with fire in his eyes "What is going on here!?" He sent one of his guards to bring the two farmers that accompanied Bidnitzki to buy the first 30 sweaters and when they stood before him, knees knocking in fear, he narrowed his eyes and said,

"If you two lie I will have you killed! If you tell the truth, I promise not to hurt you. Now tell me. What is happening here?! Why are these sweaters different?!"

The two farmers looked at each other nervously, cleared their throats several times and one of them spoke up. 'Well, your majesty, when we bought the sweaters from the Jew, well, you see, after we had the sweaters, our foreman Bidnitzki here told us to drive to the market."

**The Truth about the Dishonest Foreman**

"That's right, your majesty" the other farmer piped up. "He took the sweaters and sold them in the market for a higher price than he bought them. Then he took some of the money and bought these inexpensive ones for a tenth the price. So, he profited twice. Once from the sweaters and once from you.  And then he gave each of us a few pennies and warned us to keep quiet or he'd kill us. That's probably why he sent the Jew back yesterday, so you wouldn't find out.

The Baron motioned and two guards grabbed Bidnitzki and dragged him away begging for mercy, while the Baron just stood there stroking his mustache. He turned to Chaim Shimon and said. "Listen, I think I made a big mistake. My father told me to treat the Jews well, but, well now that I think of it, I fell under the spell of Bidnitzki. He began working on me years before my father's passing. He hated the Jews so much and he did me so many favors, or so I thought, that I listened to him. Now I want you to do me a favor, I want to accept my apology and I want to order two hundred more sweaters."

**Returns to the “New” Foreman**

Chaim Shimon returned home and three weeks later when he returned with the new sweaters he was received by the 'new' foreman; Aaron Yosef who had been the foreman under the Baron's father.

Aaron Yosef told Chaim Shimon that the in last the three weeks there had been a lot of changes. First, the Baron had the evil Bidnitzki publicly beaten almost to death and thrown into prison. Then he (Aaron Yosef) was restored to his place as foreman. And finally, the Baron personally made a visit to the Jews that he had expelled and invited them to return!

The story ended as the Baron asked Aaron Yosef to prepare a meal for three and bring it to his castle where he Aaron Yosef and Chaim Shimon dined together and reminisced about the Baron's father and his love for his Jewish subjects. 

*Reprinted from the Parshat Korach 5781 email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim  
Kfar Chabad, Israel*

**The Chief Rabbi of Constantinople’s Earthquake**

There is a legend that is told about the great Chacham and chief rabbi of Constantinople, Turkey, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Elifandry zt”l. Throughout his tenure in Turkey and before he moved to Syria, he was at the forefront of the battle against the Maskilim (Enlightment movement), who used their influence to destroy the religious values of the Turkish communities.

Rav Shlomo Eliezer took them head on and would not budge an inch, in preserving the tenets of Torah-true Judaism. The Chacham was once invited to the Bar Mizvah of the son of a wealthy individual, who also invited some of the more prominent Maskilim of the city.

During the lavish meal, a scientific conversation broke out among the assembled, and a few of the “enlightened” members were pontificating on the topic of earthquakes and the scientific reasons why they occur. Each person presented his data and much talk of fault lines and underground plates, was bandied about. The Maskilim enjoyed the attention, proving their superior knowledge to the rabbis of the old guard.

Suddenly, Rav Shlomo Eliezer stood up and declared, “You think you understand why earthquakes occur? You think you are safe from earthquakes? Believe me, if Hashem wanted to split open the earth and swallow up all you wicked people, He does not need your reasoning to make it happen!”

Just as the Chacham uttered these words, a terrible hue arose from somewhere in the city as an earthquake took place and caused a great deal of damage. The people were shaken up by the power of the Chacham and even the Maskilim were terrified of him after that story took place.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**The Abandoned Nest – Unlikely Date**

**By Former Bronx Girl**

****

**Baby robins in a nest crying for food**

It seemed too unlikely a shidduch to succeed. He’d grown up in Denver, Colorado, and I’m from the Bronx. True, there’s more to a good marriage than having a geographical location in common, but lifestyle and attitudes are definitely shaped by where a person grows up.

Allow me to explain. My husband grew up loving the great outdoors. He had grass and trees and a backyard. He could see the Rockies in the distance. He loved all animals, large and small. I, on the other hand, was afraid of the outdoors. Going outdoors was dangerous, especially after dark. I didn’t see mountains from my window, only other apartment buildings. Jogging was unheard of in my neck of the woods. The only fish I ever saw were in the store where my grandmother ordered whitefish and pike from the fishmonger to make gefilte fish. I never owned any pets except for a parakeet that went by the original name of Pretty Bird.

But Hashem had His plan, and the girl from the urban jungle married the Denver Boy Scout. I clearly did not share my husband’s love for animals when we first got married. I discovered early on that we diverged in approach even when it came to bugs. In my husband’s worldview, you captured any bugs that got into the house and put them outside. Why kill them? I, on the other hand, strongly believed in squishing them as quickly as possible.

When we had children, my husband’s love of the natural world was passed on to them. On road trips he would point out every animal and bird along the way like a tour guide. To him, each creature was as exciting as the Grand Canyon or the Palace at Versailles. “Oh, look!” he’d say with unbridled enthusiasm. “There are cows (or horses or sheep).” He never tired of spotting animals in the fields.

**Visits to Zoos and Hikes in the Wood**

He loved pointing out red cardinals and blue jays or explaining how hawks hover in the air looking for prey. When we went on trips to the zoo I couldn’t tell who enjoyed it more, the kids or my Denver-born husband. We took hikes in the woods, and he would point out the various animal footprints hidden to the untrained eye. I always hoped that we wouldn’t encounter the creatures they belonged to! Nowadays, with all of our children out of the house, I am his sole audience. I just smile.

Truthfully, cows don’t do anything for me, if you know what I mean. With time, though, I guess something must have rubbed off on me because when our kids asked for a pet I relented. However, I drew the line at a dog or any other fourlegged creature, bunnies included, that needed to be walked or taken to a vet. Thus began a steady parade of small living things over the years. There were the two hamsters, Sammy and Farfel (We thought they looked Jewish). Then we had turtles that just kept on growing. Every time we increased the size of the tank they grew right along with it, so we always had to buy bigger and bigger tanks. When I finally wanted to get rid of them, I wound up paying—yes, paying—a pet store to take them off my hands.

**How About the Tree Frogs in the Terrarium**

The tree frogs lived in a terrarium with some lizards that could only eat live crickets. The male members of the family would get them from the pet store and feed them to the little reptiles. Sometimes the crickets would get loose. When that happened I was not happy.

One morning I noticed a lizard tail sticking out of the mouth of one of the tree frogs! It reminded me of “Chad Gadya.” That time I was really not happy! Our next pets were birds. Someone who knew we were the neighborhood animal lovers gave us a pair of parakeets (or budgies, as they are also known) that they didn’t want anymore.

We were told that they were a male and female. The kids hoped we would have a budgie family one day but, alas, that did not happen. In time, both birds passed on to the next world. After the second one died my husband dutifully buried her (I think it was the “her”) in our backyard.

That day when I came home from work I found four-year-old Naftoli (now a father of three) digging with his little shovel. When I asked him what he was doing, he told me he was looking for “Shira,”the budgie. It broke my heart but I was determined not to get a replacement. By then I’d had more than my fill of pets.

**The Day My Son Naftoli Found a Snake to Keep as a Pet**

Naftoli was also the one who found a snake and wanted to keep it at home. This was not even in the realm of consideration. My kindly neighbor told him he could keep it in her garage. Naftoli visited “his” snake until we insisted that he let it go back to its mother in the grass.

So it came as no surprise that my husband was thrilled when we moved to Monsey. He could see the Catskill Mountains from our street, and while not as majestic as the Rockies, it was better than no mountains at all. He was elated when a deer walked onto our property. When the deer enjoyed our newly-planted hostas for lunch, he just bought deer repellent to keep it away from the plants. When the deer’s buddies chewed on our bushes, he put up a fence.

Wild turkeys made their appearance, as did rabbits and groundhogs. Nothing could make him happier; he was in his element. One spring, a mother robin built her nest on top of a column supporting the overhang in front of our house. We watched in wonder as she painstakingly gathered twigs, bits and pieces of discarded newspaper, tissues and other materials to weave her nest. Then we waited.

**Some New Guests – Three Little Robins**

One day we saw one little bird head pop up, then another and another. Three little robins. Robins are not terribly pretty as babies. They have oversized googly eyes, spindly necks and no feathers. But we watched in fascination as the mom repeatedly flew off and came back to drop worms into their little open mouths. Around the same time we happened to have a family simchah. My married daughters were with us for Shabbos. Since they had inherited their father’s love of nature, we excitedly showed them and the grandchildren the robin’s nest.

That Shabbos, though, something strange happened. The mother robin disappeared and was nowhere to be seen. The baby birds were literally crying to be fed. Even I, the hardened, Bronx-bred parent, felt sorry for those baby birds. Where was their mother? Why didn’t she come and feed them? The hours ticked by and still no sight of her.

My oldest daughter couldn’t bear the tension anymore. She climbed up and gave the birds a few drops of water from an eye dropper. We later found out that was the wrong thing to do but she was frantic. On Motzaei Shabbos my second daughter started to make phone calls to the ASPCA, wildlife services or any other agency she could think of.

She finally reached an animal hospital that said they would take the baby birds. She was instructed to make a batch of scrambled eggs and drop bits of that into their sad little beaks from a tweezer. Water, she was informed, was not good for them. Who knew? The girls gently took down the nest and placed it in a cardboard box covered by a towel.

**Deposited with some Three-Hugger Types**

One daughter sat in the backseat holding the box carefully on her lap while her sister drove. Every time a baby bird peeped, it received a tiny omelet. The birds were deposited with some tree-hugger types who promised to nurse them until they were ready to fly off on their own. With this mission accomplished and the birds in good hands we breathed a sigh of relief.My husband could rightfully take credit for my girls’ sensitivity to tzaar baalei chayim. I was just glad that there weren’t any more motherless birds around. It was really painful to watch.

A few springs have passed since then. My husband still takes the bugs outside while I still kill them. Robins and other birds, including honking Canadian geese, often fly overhead. The deer and the groundhogs share our property. I must admit that over the years I have developed a deeper appreciation for Hashem’s creatures than when I lived back in the Bronx.

Every year, when the robins make their reappearance on our lawn, I wonder what ever happened to that mother bird. Why did she suddenly abandon the nest? Was she killed? While we will never know, I am left with a sense of awe at how Mother Robin knew on exactly whose doorstep to leave her babies!

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chukat 5781 website of Hidabroot.com*

**Anything for a Minyan**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

           The Sephardic Mekubal, Rabbi Mordechai Leviton, resided in the city of Aram Soba over 250 years ago.  All his life he was careful to attend minyan three times daily. As he grew older and was no longer able to brave the elements to go to shul, he asked the people of the town to join together at his home for a minyan, and they readily complied.

But one day a terrible storm broke out. Explosive cracks of thunder rumbled through the air while streaks of lightening lit up the sky. The time for Minhah drew near and Rabbi Mordechai began to wonder whether the people would come together today for the minyan. At first only a few people showed up, among them his loyal and devoted student Eliyahu.

           He asked his student to go and gather the rest of the minyan. A few moments later a sopping wet Eliyahu appeared with the unfortunate news that the people were just not willing to get drenched. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Mordechai bent down near his bed and reached underneath it. Eliyahu could not figure out what his Rabbi was doing. Rabbi Mordechai stood up with a small bundle in his hands. He placed it on the table in front of Eliyahu and started to cry.

           Eliyahu was startled to see that the package was filled with money. He looked around his Rabbi’s dilapidated apartment and wondered why he had not used this money to fix up the place and make it look a bit nicer.

“Eliyahu, I had been saving this money for a very important purpose. I planned on using it to pay someone to learn Mishnayot in my memory after I pass on to the next world.” He now looked up at Eliyahu with tears in his eyes. “But instead I want you to use it now. Tell those who refused to come for the minyan that I will pay them for their efforts. Let them brave the elements and come here to pray.”

           Eliyahu looked at Rabbi Mordechai and realized just how important this minyan was. Moments later he returned with the last few individuals. Rabbi Mordechai offered the money but no one dared to touch it. It was an honor just to be there. (ArtScroll - Touched by a Story 3)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Beha’alotecha 5781 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Rebbitzen Beileh Meislik – Part 1**

**By Shlomo Zalman Sonnenfeld**

Rebbitzen Beileh Meislik lived each day of her life with complete bitachon in Hashem. Despite the extreme hardships and tragedies she experienced, words of praise and thanks to her Father in Shomayim were always on her lips. As a young woman, she received a brocha from the Chernobiler Rebbe that she would live to a ripe old age and would merit to go to the Kosel HaMaaravi. Despite all odds, her unswerving emunas chachomim remained steadfast, and the Rebbe's brocha remained a constant reality throughout.

Beileh Meislik was born in pre-Communist Russia, into a large family steeped in Torah and yiras shomayim. As a young girl, Beileh was known as “die kleine tzaddekes,” because from the time she was able to speak a few words, she never put any food in her mouth without saying a brocha. She would retort to those who called her with that name, “What sin did I do today that you call me only the little tzaddekes?”

**Her First Purchase was a Small Siddur**

At 12 years old, she apprenticed herself to a seamstress. Part of her first pay went to buy herself a small siddur. Since her father would not allow his children to be educated in the secular Jewish public schools, nor could he afford private tutors, Beileh spent her money on hiring private tutors for herself to teach her Torah. She was a sharp-witted and capable girl, and when she reached age 16, she had already opened her own sewing business and hired apprentices of her own.

Beileh married her father’s youngest brother, R’ Yehudah Leib Meislik, who became known as the “Avrohom Avinu” of Kiev. He was an extraordinary tzaddik, who remained in Communist Russia in order to help his fellow Jews hold fast to Yiddishkeit. With her wedding gift money, Beileh bought medical equipment and medicines, and turned her home into “Beileh’s clinic” – a popular infirmary and first-aid station, saving doctor's fees for many poor families. This first act was a portent to how they would run their home together, with a total commitment to chessed.

**Threatened by a Drunken Cossack**

After only two years of marriage, WWI broke out, and soon after, the communist take-over of Russia. During a pogrom in Mozyr, a drunken Cossack burst into their home, and found Reb. Meislik crouched behind a cabinet. He was about to attack her, when, despite her terror, she rose up, and said, “I want you to know that to harm a defenseless woman is a terrible sin. If you attack me, that awful sin will hound you for the rest of your life. G-d will avenge me and a bullet will split your head open. Think twice! If you are strong, and you refrain from harming me, then I promise that you will come through this war safely, and you will come home to your family with a clear conscience.”

**The Power of the Rebbitzen’s Blessing**

Unbelievably, this wild Cossack relented, and knelt before her, mumbling, “Mamushkeh, if you promise me that I will see my children again, I’ll not only leave you alone, I will stand guard so that none of my comrades bother you either.” And so it was. A few years later, this Cossack came knocking on their door in Kiev, after having tracked them down, and thanked her profusely, for he alone among his comrades had miraculously returned alive.

When they were forcibly sent to live on a collective farm, they were faced with great challenges of keeping Shabbos and other mitzvos. Rabbi Meislik served as a guard, which allowed him to keep Shabbos. Reb. Meislik was an expert nurse, which not only permitted her to keep Shabbos, but allowed her to excuse Jews from work on Shabbos “on grounds of health.” She would teach Yiddishkeit to her women “patients,” and would be present at the daily milking “to preserve hygiene,” thus ensuring a supply of chalav yisroel milk.

After WWI, when they returned to Kiev, her father and husband ran a secret yeshiva in their carpentry shop. Once, a Jewish communist officer caught them learning Gemara, and started writing up charges against them. Reb. Meislik came out, and with a smile said, “Welcome comrade! May I ask what you are writing?” He answered her, “What business is it of yours?” She responded, “Oh, but it is my business, because my grandfather and yours learned Torah together.” “Where was that?” he asked. “At the foot of Mount Sinai!” He laughed at her coldly, and kept on writing.

**The Rebbitzen Affects the Heart of the Jewish Communist**

But she kept on talking to him, “I want you to tear up that report right now and leave these Jews alone. You are about to throw sixty Jews into jail and condemn them to Siberia! The memory of what you have done will hound you for the rest of your life! Isn’t goyishe anti-Semitism enough for the Jews to bear, without you coming to add more?” She, who had once softened the heard of a blood-crazed Cossack, was able to break this Communist, until he tore up the papers. This same man later would join the shiurim, and warn them of upcoming inspections.

The Meisliks lost 6 young sons in Babi Yar, and their eldest daughter, who was a nurse on the front lines in Kiev. Their only surviving daughter, Basyah, was a young girl, sick in the hospital, when the Nazis bombarded Kiev. They were evacuated with her on a freight train, deep into Russia, thinking they would return. They spent the War years in Samarkand, where they lived with disease and in poverty.

Once, when the Rebbitzen was recuperating from a deathly illness, a Jewish man offered her treifeh food, as she needed to regain her strength and had no food in the house. She answered him, “Thank you for your goodhearted offer. But do you think that our Father in Heaven is so powerless that He needs a piece of your treifeh meat to make me well? If Hashem wants to make me strong again, can’t He do that without the help of treifeh meals? If it has been decreed that I will live, then I will get better without tainting myself with sin; and if it has been decreed that I must die, then I want to leave this world with an unstained mouth, clean of treifeh.”

**Their Last Child Becomes Very Ill in Samarkand**

In Samarkand, their daughter Basyah once became ill, and the doctors despaired of her recovery. While Rabbi Meislik said Tehillim with tears running down his face, she wrung her hands and said, “Ribbono Shel Olam, what do we have left in the world except this little girl? We called her Basyah after Your Holy Name! My six sons went to their death in the valley of Babi Yar; my daughter Lipshe (a nurse) disappeared in the battle of Kiev. If You take even Basyaleh from us, what will we have left? What reason would there be to go on living?” Their daughter suddenly awoke, saying that she saw her Zeideh (who had already passed away) come in and tell her ‘Granddaughter! Be strong and healthy, for the sake of your poor Mama and Tatteh. They are old and they have nothing in the world except you. So be healthy.’ She then fell asleep again, and thereafter recovered completely.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5781 email of The Weekly Vort. Excerpted from the book Voices in the Silence.*