**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Va’era 5784**

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**The Special Shot Glass**



A young man who wanted to travel to Germany on business came to ask R’ Moshe of Lelov for his blessing. Instead, R’ Moshe opened his desk drawer, handed him a small wooden shot glass, saying, “Take this cup with you when you leave on your business venture. It will bring you protection and success.”

The surprised young man took the cup and packed it with his belongings. He borrowed money to buy merchandise, and set off on the road alone. En route, he was attacked by a fierce bandit. With a trembling heart, the young man handed over his purse.

“Now I have to kill you,” said the bandit, brandishing his sword, “so you do not go running to the police.”

The young man begged for his life, to no avail. Suddenly, he remembered R’ Moshe’s wooden shot glass “for protection.” He thought, “What does one do with a shot glass?”

He turned to the bandit and said, “You would not refuse the last request of a dying man, would you? I have a flask of whiskey in my bag. Let us drink a glass together before I die!”

**Whispered a Silent Prayer**

The bandit could not refuse. The young man filled the wooden shot glass with liquor from his pack. As he did, he whispered a silent prayer, “Holy Rebbe, you blessed me with protection and success. Please, I need protection now, more than ever.”

R’ Moshe’s holy visage swam before his eyes. The young man felt as though R’ Moshe was standing right in front of him. A sense of great serenity enveloped him. He was certain that Hashem was with him. The smell of the whiskey intoxicated the robber. He grabbed the shot glass and downed its contents in a single gulp. The young man quickly, with all his strength, rammed the shot glass deep into the robber’s throat.

It wedged there and the bandit began to gasp for air. He stumbled around helplessly, and finally fell lifeless to the ground. Afraid that the rest of the gang would soon appear, the young man lifted the corpse onto his wagon and covered it with straw. He then emptied the robber’s bag into his own, regaining his stolen funds, and set off.

**Found the Townsmen Standing Around a Large Poster**

“Once I get to a Jewish settlement, I will figure out what to do,” he thought. At the very next village, he found the townsmen standing around a large poster. It was a notice from the king promising a rich reward to whoever helped to capture a dangerous highwayman, dead or alive.

The young man immediately recognized the description, and headed for the local authorities. He showed them the dead highwayman in his wagon, and received the reward. He now had the reward money, his own money returned, and the spoils he found on the robber. In the blink of any eye, he had become a wealthy man, all through R’ Moshe’s blessing and his little wooden shot glass.

When the Jews of the town heard of this miracle, they offered a tremendous sum for the shot glass – even the local authorities wanted to purchase it for their museum – but the young man refused. He drove his wagon to the local fair, purchased the highest quality goods, and returned to his town to make a hefty profit.

As for the shot glass, he passed it down to his descendants as a family heirloom. The tzaddik R’ Shimon Biderman, a descendant of R’ Moshe of Lelov, heard the story many years later and was shown the shot glass by one of the man’s descendants.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 email of The Weekly Vort. Excerpted from the book “A Chassidic Journey” by Irvin M Asher and Shalom Meir Valach.*

**Twelve Seconds**

**By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson**



Avremi Fizm is eight and a half years old. He lives in Sderot, southern Israel, at the border of Gaza. His parents and grandparents are the Chabad Shluchim in Sderot.

Some weeks ago, he came to the United States to explain to thousands of people at a special Chabad audience what it's like to grow up in Sderot when thousands of rockets are launched incessantly at your homes and schools, gardens and backyards and streets, and you have 12 seconds to run and find cover. 12 seconds that can distinguish between life and death.

**The Other Times When He Didn’t**

**Not Always Getting to the Bomb Shelter in Time**

He spoke of the thousands of times in his eight short years when he made it to the bomb shelter after hearing the sirens, and many other times when he could not find cover and had to fall to the ground and protect his head with his hands. Avremi addressed the thousands of guests at the international banquet of Chabad Shluchim.

“I want to ask you for a small favor,” he said. “Close your eyes for twelve seconds. I’ll ask to turn off the lights and… let’s begin.”

…11… 10… 9… 8… 7… 6… 5… 4… 3… 2… 1…

But then he shocked his audience. Instead of sharing the depth of the fear and anxiety during those 12 seconds, he told the audience how over these years of experiencing these 12 seconds thousands of times, he discovered the power and potential contained in 12 seconds. What can be achieved in 12 seconds?

“I’m sharing this with you,” Avremi said, “to inspire growth and for the sake of learning—cherish these 12 seconds!”

In 12 seconds, Avremi said, you can smile from ear to ear toward a fellow human being. In 12 seconds, you can uplift another soul with a loving word or gesture. In 12 seconds, you can recite a blessing with another Jew. In 12 seconds, you can embrace your fellow Jew, bring them joy and offer support and love. In 12 seconds, you can give him or her back their soul and breathe new life into them. And in 12 seconds, as you lay on the ground and protect your head, you can pray that the rocket does not fall on an innocent human being.

**The First Thing that Traditional Jews Say Every Morning**

In the Jewish tradition, the first thing we say when we wake up every morning takes 12 seconds, and consists of 12 words. The first thing we upon opening our eyes is, “Modeh ani Lefanecha Melech Chai V’Kayam she’hechezarta bi nishmasi b’chemla raba emunasecha—I thank you, living and eternal King, for You have graciously returned my soul to me, abundant is Your faith in me.” You have given me another day. Thank you.

In our personal lives, the enemy within often sends rockets of destructive thoughts and feelings into our hearts. Self-loathing, anger, fear, shame, insecurity, guilt, negativity, toxicity. We have less than 12 seconds to decide if these thoughts will take us over and wreak havoc in our mind and relationships, or our life is too dignified and precious for us to allow ourselves to be derailed from love and light.

“Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened.” Thank you, Avremi, for this priceless and life-changing lesson. We love you.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayechi 5784 email of The Torahanytimes.com Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.*

**His Cheilik (Primary Self)**

**By Shmuel Botnick**



Rav Nota Greenblatt was in Palo Alto, California, where he had spent the bulk of the day writing quite a number of gittin; those in the field can describe just how exhausting an experience that is. Upon completion of the last get of the day, Rav Nota paid a visit to the Palo Alto Kollel.

There, he delivered an impromptu shiur with his classic brilliance, a whirlwind of Rambams and Raavads spinning like leaves on a windy autumn day. When the last of his questions was answered and the crowd dispersed, Rabbi Yitzchak Feldman, rabbi of Congregation Emek Beracha of Palo Alto, presented a question of his own.

**How is it Possible to Deliver Such an Incredible Shiur?**

“How is it,” he asked, “that the rav is able to spend hour after hour writing gittin and then immediately deliver such an incredible shiur?”

Here was Rav Nota’s response: “In the Shemoneh Esrei on Shabbos and Yom Tov we say, V’sein chelkeinu b’Sorasecha,’ a request that Hashem grant us our cheilek (portion) in Torah.”

Rav Nota paused. “What does it mean when we request our ‘cheilek’ in Torah?” he asked rhetorically. Rabbi Feldman was silent. “When we daven for our ‘cheilek,’” Rav Nota explained, “it means our ‘primary self.’ Meaning, we ask Hashem that, no matter what it is that we do, the Torah should be our true portion, it should be our foremost identity.”

Rav Nota completed this thought and then looked Rabbi Feldman in the eye. “My cheilek,” he said, “is in Torah.” It was a five-word explanation for a ninety-year phenomenon. No matter how weary, how traveled, or how busy Rav Nota was, he continued to learn. Torah was his cheilek.

**Visiting the Kollel During the**

**Middle of the Second Seder**

No story demonstrates this as cogently as the following. Rav Nota once walked into the Phoenix Kollel’s beis medrash while they were in the middle of second seder. The kollel was learning Beheimah HaMakshah — the fourth chapter of Maseches Chullin and they were in the heart of the difficult subject of ben pakuah. Rav Nota paused for a moment and listened.

He then produced his cellphone and placed a call. “Mrs. Goldstein,” he said, “this is Rabbi Greenblatt. I want to ask you a favor. Something urgent has come up. Can we postpone our appointment for two or three hours?” Rav Nota listened for a moment, nodded, smiled, said, “Thank you, Mrs. Goldstein,” and then rammed his phone back into his pocket.

He then sprang into action. “Ich daft dus lernen, I must learn this!” he cried. ““Siz shoin asach tzeit vuhs ich hub dus nisht gelernt! I have not learned this sugya in a long time!”

**Promises Not to Bother them with His Learning**

He sat down. “Bring a Gemara, please,” he requested, and a sefer was quickly handed to him. “I’m not going to bother you,” he called out to the students of the kollel. “I’m going to keep quiet.” He opened the Gemara and began to learn softly. But after a few minutes, he couldn’t contain himself. He began to talk, slowly at first, and then picking up speed and animation.

The students huddled around him as Rav Nota launched into a shiur that lasted for three hours, churning out sources and his own novel ideas as if he had spent weeks in preparation. The shiur ended and all present headed home, not quite believing what they had just witnessed.

And Rav Nota? He headed to his appointment, ever grateful to Mrs. Goldstein for her gracious patience. Torah was his cheilek, but, in a conversation with a young Memphian, Rav Nota revealed yet another perspective.

Josh Feingold was walking down Memphis’s Cole Road when he presented his rebbi with a question. “When the needs of the community are so great,” he asked, “how does one prioritize the study of Torah?”

Rav Nota paused. “Torah,” he then said, “is a kesser (crown).”

They walked in silence and Josh, not fully understanding Rav Nota’s answer, tried again. Rewording the question slightly, he repeated it. “How does one prioritize limud haTorah when there is so much to do for the community?”

“Torah,” Rav Nota repeated, “is a kesser.” And then Rav Nota repeated it once again. “Torah is a kesser.” It was a cryptic sentence, but the message was clear. When you recognize the primacy of Torah study, nothing can diminish its importance.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Rav Nota – The Story of Rav Nota Greenblatt” by Shmuel Botnick.*

**The Tzadik Who Didn’t**

**Want to be a Middleman**



When it started to become known that the Chofetz Chaim was a great Tzadik, people came from all over to see him and get a brachah from him. He commented, “How is it possible that in the place where Hashem, the King, can be found, and is available for every person to speak with Him, that people would instead come and seek out the brachos of His servant? Hashem is here for everyone, and He is readily available to hear everyone’s tefilos and requests. Why do people turn to someone like me instead of turning directly to Hashem? I certainly cannot help people on my own. Everyone should just simply turn directly to Hashem themselves!”

The Chofetz Chaim once visited a community, and he was greeted by a large throng of people. Everyone was waiting to speak with him, to ask him to daven for them and their families, and to get a brachah.

He looked at the people and said, “No father is pleased when one son sends his request to him through another son. The father wants that child to turn directly to him without anyone in the middle. We are all children of Hashem. Each and every one of us should turn directly to Him. If someone feels that because of his aveiros, that Hashem is angry with him, Chas V’Shalom! He should never think this way! I assure you that Hashem waits and desires your tefilos. He will forgive you as soon as you turn to Him. This is exactly what a father wants!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Half-Priced Ticket**

Rav Ephraim Wachsman said that if we know that Hashem is behind everything, it is much easier to deal with our challenges. Rav Wachsman related that many years ago, a friend of his, we’ll call him Eli, who was eighteen years old at the time, visited a museum in Eretz Yisroel.

When he went to purchase an entry ticket, the ticket seller told him, “You could pay half price. You’re under eighteen.”

Eli replied, “No, I’m eighteen. I want to pay full price.”

The man said, “No, you look younger than eighteen. The guard at the door will never realize. Just pay half. It’s okay.”

Eli repeated that he was eighteen, and he wanted to pay the full price, and that is what he did. When he handed his ticket to the guard, the man said, “Thank you. I just won 100 Shekels.”

Eli was confused, and the guard explained, “When you were approaching the ticket agent, he said, ‘Look, a Yeshivah boy is coming. He’ll probably try to lie about his age and pay less.’ I said, ‘No way. Yeshivah boys tell the truth.’ And you proved me right.”

Rav Wachsman observed, “That was a difficult test for Eli, but Baruch Hashem, he passed. Imagine if Eli had been told beforehand, ‘There are people betting on you to see if Yeshivah boys tell the truth.’ Would it even have been a question in his mind? He would have come confidently and stated with conviction, ‘I’m a Yeshivah boy. I always tell the truth. I’m always honest.’

In truth, this is how it always is. Hashem sends people to test our patience, just to see how we will respond. If each time we could remind ourselves, ‘It’s a test. Hashem sent him to me,’ we would be able to pass these challenges much easier!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**“Young Man, Maybe**

**After All There is a G-d”**

**By Rabbi Shalom Avtzon**



**The Alter Rebbe**

Some months after the passing of the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism), the Jewish community in Haditch received a letter from the Imperial Government. The Jewish community was informed that the cemetery that they were using was located on land that belonged to the Imperial Government. Since they had converted it into a cemetery without permission, all the graves there had to be removed to another location.

The Jewish community was shocked and distressed. It was disrespectful to move one from his eternal rest. They replied that they were sorry for any misunderstanding; however, they used the plot as a cemetery with permission of the local authorities. As evidence, they sent a copy of the permits from the local jurisdiction where it stated clearly that the provincial government bequeathed that parcel of land to the Jewish community of Haditch for this specific purpose.

The Imperial Government replied, “Yes, we see that the provincial government gave you permission, but they mistakenly permitted you to use land that is not theirs. Their parcel is a short distance away and you can reinter your loved ones there. However, they must be removed from the place where they are now buried.”

**The Imperial Government Refused the**

**Offer of the Provincial Government**

The provincial government acknowledged that it was their mistake and apologized. They then offered to swap a larger parcel of land to the Imperial Government in order not to violate the dignity and sanctity of the cemetery. However, it was to no avail. The government was firm in its decision: All graves must be removed! However, out of their understanding that it wasn’t done intentionally they will extend the time frame in which this has to be done.

The Mitteler Rebbe, Rabbi Dovber - son and successor of the Alter Rebbe, was informed of the situation, and he was asked what does he prefer to do? Does he want to send someone to move his father or should the community do it?

The Mitteler Rebbe heard that one of his father’s former Chasidim who was no longer religious was an important official in the Imperial office that has the final say on this matter. So, he decided to send a Chasid to beg that person to leave the Jewish cemetery as is, and accept the provincial government’s offer of swapping parcels of land.

**Sent on a Special Mission to Petersburg**

The chasid, Reb Moshe Vilenker, had been a friend of this official when he had studied with the Alter Rebbe. So, he was chosen to discuss and plead with him about this important matter.

Reb Moshe immediately travelled to Petersburg and went to visit the official. Seeing Reb Moshe, he immediately recognized him and granted him an audience. However, as soon as Reb Moshe entered his office he said, “I realize you came to request something of me. But that is not the ways of chasidim. First you will come to my house this evening, where we will have a farbrengen (Chasidic gathering). After that, you can present your request.”

Saying that, he wrote down his home address and told Reb Moshe that he is looking forward to meeting him at the designated time.

Reb Moshe arrived at the designated time, hoping that he will be successful in his special mission. They sat down at the table, sang the Alter Rebbe’s melodies, and reminisced about their time with the Rebbe. The officer then said, “You notice that I have a beautiful mansion; I am wealthy and have whatever I desire. But you should know the truth is I don’t really enjoy it, not even for a moment.

“Yes it sounds strange, but let me tell you why. Even when I was a student by the Rebbe, I had my doubts about G-d, and that is what ultimately caused me to leave and eventually become what I became. However, one time, without explaining his reasons, the Rebbe instructed me to go visit the tzaddik, Reb Aharon Karliner.

**Didn’t Get a Private Audience with Reb Aharon Karliner**

“Reb Aharon’s custom was that he didn’t have private audiences with people, as the Rebbe did. But whoever came to him would sit in the study hall, say Psalms or study and wait until Reb Aharon gave him an answer. After I was sitting for some time, Reb Aharon entered the study hall from his room that was adjoining it, and said, ‘Young man, Young man, maybe after all there is a G-d.’

“When he said this, no one in the room took it as if he answered his question and everyone remained in their place. A few minutes later, he came into the room for a second time and repeated the exact same words. When Reb Aharon repeated himself a third time, I realized he was talking to me and informing me, that notwithstanding my questions and doubts, there can still be a Creator.

“So, every time I sit down to enjoy something that is forbidden by the Torah, those words come back and haunt me. But I don’t have the strength and will power to give up everything I have.”

**“What is the Reason for Your Coming to Visit Me?”**

Some hours later, he said, “Now that we farbrenged, please tell me what is the reason for your coming to visit me?”

When Reb Moshe informed him of the dilemma and showed him the legal papers, he immediately replied, “Only for the Rebbe’s sake will I agree to accept the offer of the provincial government.”

(The Alter Rebbe passed away in Piene. Chasidim suggest that the reason the Alter Rebbe expressed a desire to be interred in Haditch was that he wanted to help all the Jews buried in Haditch that their eternal rest not be disturbed. And that was accomplished only because he too was there. So, he did a favor for other Jews even after his passing.)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 edition of L’Chaim, The yahrtzeit of the Alter Rebbe was last week on the 24 Teveth. Rabbi Avtzon is a veteran educator and the author of numerous books on the Chabad Rebbes and their Chasidim.*

**Leaving the Palace**

**By Aharon Spetner**

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**Illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

“Chiya!” said Effy, running over to his friend. “Did you hear about the fundraising campaign for Irgun Ken Yirbeh V’chen Yifrotz?”

“No, why?”, asked Chiya. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard of that organization.”

“Here, take a look.” Effy shoved a flier into Chiya’s hand.

“Have you ever dreamed of being one of the Leviim who were zoche to carry the Aron on their shoulders?” Chiya read out loud. “This is your chance to be just like the Bnei Kehos!”

“Wait,” Chiya said, turning to Effy, confused. “I’m not even a Levi, and neither are you.”

“Keep reading,” urged Effy.

Chiya continued. “Ken Yirbeh V’chen Yifrotz is a new organization which aims to help all mosdos Torah with running their fundraising campaigns. By giving to this wonderful tzedakah, you are carrying the future of Klal Yisroel on your shoulders.”

Chiya looked even more bewildered. “Effy, I’m just a kid. I don’t have any money to donate.”

“Just keep reading until the end,” Effy said.

**An All-Expenses Paid Trip to Hawaii**

“Ken Yirbeh V’chen Yifrotz is holding its first annual raffle, with hundreds of prizes. In addition, anyone who sells ten or more tickets will be entered into a drawing to win a free, all-expenses paid trip to Hawaii!”

“Wow, Hawaii - that sounds incredible!” said Chiya. “I see it says the winner gets to stay at a private mansion which will be completely kosher, there is a secluded private beach on the property, and look at this - a helicopter ride over the crater of an active volcano!”

“I know!” gushed Effy. “And every ticket we sell gets us another chance to win!”

Chiya, Effy, and their friends spent the next several days busily selling as many tickets as they could. They called uncles, aunts and cousins. Chiya even got his bus driver to buy a ticket on the way to cheder.

**A Phone Call for Chiya**

A few weeks later, during supper, the phone rang.

“Chiya, it’s for you,” his mother said.

Chiya stopped eating his noodle soup and hurried to the phone.

“Hello?” he said. “Wait, what? Really? Oh wow, thanks! Okay, goodbye.”

The next day, on the way to school, Chiya’s friends all rushed over to him.

“Chiya, is it true?” asked Effy.

“Did you really win the raffle?” said Avi.

“You’re going to Hawaii!” Eli exclaimed.

“Uh... well yes it’s true that I won,” said Chiya. “But I’m not going to Hawaii.”

“What?” all three friends said together. “Why not?”

“Well after I got the phone call letting me know that I won, I was thinking about it. And I called them back and asked if instead of going to Hawaii I could trade the trip for the 21-speed mountain bike that was 3rd prize in the main raffle.” Chiya pulled out a flier with a picture of the bike. “Look, it’s a great bike!”

“Chiya, what got into you?” asked Effy. “We were talking about this trip for weeks.”

“I can’t believe you’d trade a trip to Hawaii for a bike,” said Eli.

“Well,” Chiya explained as they approached the cheder. “I was thinking about going on the trip, and how I had never even left Eretz Yisroel before. And I realized that I’m going to miss all of the Yidden that are here. There aren’t many Yidden in Hawaii, you know.”

“Okay, but we’ll all still be here when you get back,” Avi said.

**Moshe Rabbeinu’s Great Pleasure**

**was to be with Other Frum Yidden**

“Yes, I know, but in last week’s Parsha it says Moshe Rabbeinu ‘went out to his brothers’. And I remembered what my father told me from Rav Avigdor Miller that it was important for Moshe to see his brothers, his fellow Bnei Yisroel. That it is such a pleasure to be surrounded by frum Yidden.

“We are so lucky to live here in Yerushalayim where we are surrounded by shomrei Torah uMitzvos. Often, when riding the crowded bus home from cheder I think about my cousins in Cincinnati who don’t have the opportunity to be constantly surrounded by frum Yidden like I do. And when I realized that going to Hawaii would mean giving that up - even if only for a week - I decided that I didn’t want to do that. And besides, the bike will last me longer than a week - and I’ll have the pleasure of getting to see frum Yidden everywhere I ride it!”

“I never thought about that,” Eli said.

“Yeah, I’m just so used to seeing Yidden everywhere,” added Avi.

Effy was quiet for a moment. Then he spoke.

“Chiya,” he said. “You’re right. It is special to be surrounded by Yidden all the time. It’s really special that you gave up a trip to Hawaii for that.”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

**Takeaway:**

We should appreciate our holy brothers and sisters, the Bnei Yisroel.

Moshe Rabbeinu left a luxurious palace, just to be with his brothers.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*