**Shabbos Stories For**

**Parshas re’eh 5785**

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**A New Member in the Family**

**By Rabbi Boruch Brull**

In the early 1980’s, R’ Paysach Diskind and his grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt”l, enjoyed a few weeks each summer at Camp Ohr Shraga in the Catskills. Paysach cherished the hours he spent learning with his grandfather each day.

One morning, Rav Yaakov informed Paysach that he would not be able to learn with him the following day, as he would be attending a berit milah in Brooklyn. He planned to leave camp that evening, have someone drive him to Monsey, New York, where he would spend the night, and then wake up early the next morning to travel to Brooklyn for the milah.

“Whose bris are you going to?” asked Paysach.

“I am going to a bris for a baby who was born to a family who are gerim (converts). I really do not know the family well, but since I was asked to be sandak, I feel that it is only proper that I should go,” said R’ Yaakov.

Paysach was stunned. His grandfather was almost ninety years old and in poor health. Why would he plan a long trip to attend the simchah of a family he barely knew? Paysach asked his grandfather to elaborate.

Rav Yaakov explained. “Initially, when the father of this baby called me and asked me to be sandak, I told him to ask his own Rabbi. The man told me that his Rabbi was Rav Avigdor Miller, and that he had already called him before calling me. Rabbi Miller had suggested that since the father knew me, albeit slightly, he should ask me to be sandak. If, however, it would be difficult for me to attend, he would feel privileged to accept this honor.

“Well,” continued Rav Yaakov, “had anyone else asked me to be sandak, I would have certainly declined. I would have insisted that they ask their own Rabbi, as traditionally the honor of sandak goes to one’s own Rabbi. However, this man might not understand protocol, as he was not born Jewish. He might be confused and slighted as to why his Rabbi would send him to me, only to have me send him back to his Rabbi. In the back of his mind, he would believe that he was getting the ‘royal run-around,’ that no one really wanted to be sandak for his child because he is a ger. I cannot let him think this. In this situation, I must accept, even if it is difficult for me.”

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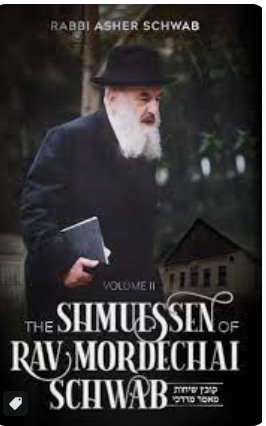
**Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky**

Rav Yaakov put the feelings of this family ahead of his own comfort. Unquestionably, his actions made this family proud to be part of such a special Jewish nation. (For Goodness’ Sake)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Pinhas 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Kiddush Hashem in**

**an Unlikely Place**



Rivky Ehrenfeld had a packed house on Shabbos, the kind of happy chaos created by a busy family with children and einiklach running underfoot. She had planned to attend a friend’s Kiddush in shul that morning, but as often happens, Hashem had other plans. She was too busy to leave the house, so she decided to walk over and say mazel tov in the afternoon, around shalosh seudos time.

Rivky walked from her home in central Monsey to lower Monsey, visited her friend, and then set out on the return trip. As dusk settled over the streets, she passed an old Revolutionary War cemetery located at West Maple Avenue and Saddle River Road, and something strange caught her eye. The front of the cemetery was strewn with hundreds of white tissues, unmistakable in the fading light.

Rivky paused, unsettled. Maybe some neighborhood kids had been there, horsed around and scattered the tissues there. It struck her how unseemly it looked, but she lingered only briefly before hurrying on, any thoughts swept away by the usual Motzaei Shabbos bustle.

After Havdalah, Rivky sat down to check her messages. Scrolling through her groups, she came across one featuring inspiring stories of kiddush Hashem. The title of one video jumped out at her: “Kiddush Hashem in the Cemetery.”

The story was about two boys, now grown men, who had been learning in Monsey in 1971. Late one night, they walked past that very cemetery on West Maple Avenue and saw something white in the dark. For a moment, they thought it might be a ghost. One boy gathered his courage and walked over to look. It wasn’t a ghost it was Rav Mordechai Schwab! The next day in yeshivah, the boys asked him why he had been in the cemetery at one in the morning. Rav Schwab explained that because the cemetery was in the middle of a Jewish neighborhood and non-Jews would be coming to pay their respects, he didn’t want it to look unkempt, which could cause a chillul Hashem. So, he had gone there quietly at night to tidy it up.

Hearing this story, Rivky paused. She had just walked by that cemetery, and she, too, had been troubled by the litter she’d seen.She gathered her kids together and bundled them into the car. “There’s something we need to do,” she said, and drove them to the cemetery.

When they got there, she and her kids picked up all the tissues, ensuring that no one who passed by would think ill of the Jewish community.

Later, she would reflect on the way Hashem orchestrated every detail - her delayed plans, her walk down that street, seeing the video immediately after Shabbos. It was a reminder that a kiddush Hashem can sometimes be made with a simple decision to do something rather than walk away.

Any of us can choose to bring honor to Hashem’s name in our everyday lives. All we have to do is try.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of Rabbi Shraga Freedman.*

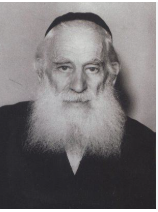
**To Break or Not to Break**

**a Study Partnership**

**By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg**

At one of the Yarchei Kallah gatherings of the Ponovezh Yeshivah, the Rosh Yeshivah, Reb Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, shared with the participants a personal story that took place many years earlier. When he was still a bachur in the Chofetz Chaim’s yeshiva in Radin, he had a chavrusah-shaft (a study partnership) with a bachur who at first he thought was just a few steps behind him.

But, as time went by, he realized that the bachur wasn’t just a few steps behind but a few stories behind him. Reb Kahaneman was way advanced in the sugya, and his chavrusah was still trying to grasp the very basics. He continued in the chavrusah-shaft until the day came when he just couldn’t go on. He felt that it would benefit both of them to break it off. So, he approached his chavrusah, and in a warm tone of voice, shared with him that he was parting the shaft.

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**Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman**

This was challenging for his chavrusah, but he accepted the reality. Late that night, as Reb Kahaneman was learning in the ezras nashim, he heard weeping sounds coming from the main beis midrash. As the clock was ticking, the noise grew louder and louder. Reb Kahaneman got onto his tippy toes and made his way quietly into the main beis midrash. There, he saw a figure from behind the Paroches with his face tucked into the Aron Kodesh.

“As I inched my way up,” described Reb Kahaneman, “I was shocked at what I saw. It was my former chavrusah. From between the cries, I heard him plea, ‘Only You, Hashem, know how much I want to learn, and how I desire to grow in my Torah learning.’ Hearing those words pierced a hole right through my heart.”

But what he heard next was the straw that broke the camel’s back. “Ana Hashem,” the chavrusah pleaded. “B’Rachamechah harabim — Please, Hashem, in Your infinite compassion, place a change of heart in my chavrusah so that he should continue learning with me.”

When Reb Kahaneman heard that, he knew that there were no two ways about it; he couldn’t leave such a mevakeish lingering without a chavrusah. He would have to build up the courage and find the strength to continue their bond, one way or another. The next morning, they were back to sitting in their same seats as they had been the day before. And although the learning didn’t go so easy for Reb Kahaneman, he knew that he was doing the right thing. That filled him with joy.

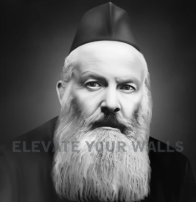
That encounter escalated the chavrusah to a different plane entirely. Once they started learning again, the chavrusah started to see fruit from his labor like never before. Day in and day out, they learned together, and each day he saw significant improvement. Before concluding the story, Reb Kahaneman said, “I cannot divulge who this bachur was, but one thing I can say is that before I deliver my shiur klali in the yeshivah, I check his sefer to see that my words are in line with his. He turned out to be one of the leading roshei yeshivah of this past generation.

“You have no idea what’s awaiting you,” concluded the Ponovezher Rav, “by not succumbing to the challenges posed before you. By his determination and perseverance, he made it up to the top, and so can you. There is gold behind each challenge.”

Sometime later, Reb Simcha Kook, the Rav of Rechovot, spoke in Har Nof and recounted this story, as he had been present when the Ponovezher Rav had delivered this account. However, Reb Simcha added one point: “As I was returning home from that Yarchei Kallah, I escorted the Rav to his house. When I got to his front door, I stood in the entrance way and demanded that the Rav tell me who that man was. And he did.

“But,” concluded Reb Simcha, “I cannot disclose his name. Trust me — he was one of our greatest leaders, and that’s what I’m leaving you with tonight.”

But Reb Yonah Steinhouse, one of the participants at that shiur, wasn’t going to leave this story lingering like a wet towel. He, too, was eager to find out who the chavrusah had been. So, he imitated his rebbi, and at Reb Simcha’s door, he stood and insisted on knowing who that man was. Reb Simcha told him that it was the renown Reb Elchonon Wasserman.

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**Reb Elchonon Wasserman**

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5785 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.*

**Wrappers on the Ground**

**By Aharon Spetner**

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**Illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

**Monday morning, at recess**

“Hi Chezky,” said Avrohom Yitzchok Stern, as he approached his friend. “What’s wrong? You look upset.”

“I’m just really hungry,” said Chezky. “I didn’t have time to eat breakfast this morning and I lost the snack I was going to eat now.”

“Hungry?” said Avrohom Yitzchok with a huge grin. “You’ve come to just the right person! I’ll be right back!”

Chezky looked momentarily confused as Avrohom Yitzchok dashed back into the cheder and quickly returned with his bulging knapsack.

“Here!” exclaimed Avrohom Yitzchok, opening his bag wide. “These are from my father’s bakery - take as many as you like!”

“Wow!” said Chezky, amazed at the selection of yummy chocolate chip cookies, custard cream puffs, and cinnamon twists. “Is this left over from another Horki Dinner?”

“No,” laughed Avrohom Yitzchok. “But it’s still delicious. Please, take. Eat something. You’re starving!”

Hungrily, Chezky picked out a frosted donut, and a few cookies before making a brocha and starting to eat.

**Curiously Eying the Hoard of Treats**

Meanwhile, a few other boys had walked over, curiously eying the hoard of treats and Avraham Yitzchok graciously offered some to them as well.

As the boys chatted and enjoyed their snacks, they did not notice Rebbi Caplan approaching them from behind.

“Having fun, boys?” Rebbi Caplan asked gruffly.

The boys jumped at the stern tone coming from their normally-friendly Rebbi.

“What’s wrong, Rebbi? Did we do something wrong?” asked Chezky.

“Well,” Rebbi Caplan replied, still sounding upset. “I’m having trouble understanding. How could you boys sit here, eating and talking and not realize that you are dropping your wrappers all over the ground?”

The boys looked down uncomfortably at the large pile of wrappers that had accumulated at their feet as they ate.

“Do you think that the schoolyard is just magically cleaned up every day? What do you think Julio the janitor is going to say to himself when he comes out later to clean up? It’s a big chillul Hashem! A ben Torah should never throw trash on the floor!”

“We’re sorry Rebbi,” the boys said sheepishly, as they quickly bent down to pick up the wrappers and stuff them into their pockets.

**Later that afternoon**

As the final bell rang, Chezky headed out of the cheder building with a smile. Boruch Hashem, thanks to Avrohom Yitzchok’s generosity, he was able to learn well the rest of the day without his stomach rumbling.

As he walked out of the schoolyard, he saw two of the boys who had shared the Stern’s Bakery snacks with him earlier heading home while munching on some candies. Chezky ran a few feet to catch up with them so they could walk home together.

As Chezky came closer, though, he noticed that the boys’ candy wrappers were dropping on the ground as they walked.

“What’s wrong with you??!!” Chezky exclaimed angrily, surprising the two boys. “Can’t you see that you’re making a chillul Hashem? Is it so hard to put the wrapper in a garbage can?! Didn’t you hear a word that Rebbi said earlier?!”

As Chezky continued to yell at his classmates, his face turned red and he was almost shaking with anger. How could someone ignore what Rebbi had said just a few hours earlier? What was wrong with them?

**“Is Everything Okay?”**

Just then, Rebbi Caplan approached. “Is everything okay, Yechezkel?” he asked.

“No!” shouted Chezky, unable to control himself. “Look at those boys how they are leaving a mess, just after Rebbi told us not to drop wrappers on the floor!”

“Yechezkel Shraga,” said Rebbi Caplan softly. “You need to calm down. A Yid should never get angry like this.”

Chezky paused, looking up at his Rebbi with surprise. Wasn’t Rebbi on his side? “But didn’t Rebbi get angry at us today? And when we were learning the parsha you said that Moshe Rabbeinu got angry at the Bnei Yisroel for letting some of the people from Midyan live after the war. So, I’m just being like Rebbi and Moshe Rabeinu. You should be proud of me!”

“That’s a great question, Yechezkel,” Rebbi Caplan said with a smile. “Here, let’s go get you a drink of water and I’ll explain it to you.”

After sipping some water, Chezky felt calmer.

**Only a Display of Anger**

“Yechezkel,” said Rebbi Caplan. “Sometimes parents and rebbeim need to show disappointment to their children and talmidim. But that’s not real anger. When Moshe Rabbeinu “got angry” it means he put on a display of anger so that the Bnei Yisroel would understand that they had done something wrong. But he didn’t become angry – he showed anger!

“Real anger is very dangerous because it makes you lose control. An angry person always forgets about Hashem – that’s why the Gemara says that an angry person is like someone who does Avodah Zarah.

“And also,” continued Rabbi Caplan with a smile, “most of the time, especially when you are dealing with your friends, a friendly word and a kind reminder will do a lot more. If you want to help your friends, do it with self-control.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Matos-Masei 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*

**Why the Rabbi’s**

**Garbage Bag Broke**



Rav Fischel Schachter said that he was once taking a bag of garbage through his backyard to throw it away in in the garbage can, when for no apparent reason, the bottom of the bag ripped open, and garbage spilled all over his yard. He was frustrated, but he went to get a broom to clean it up.

When he came back with the broom, he saw that some animals had come out and were eating from the garbage that had spilled, and he realized that Hashem had wanted these animals to have Parnasah, and have what to eat that day. He waited for them to finish, and he then swept up the rest.

He went to get a hose to wash away the crumbs that were left, and when he came back, he saw that some bugs had come out and were eating from the crumbs, and he realized that Hashem wanted the bugs to have Parnasah, and this was their food. He waited until the bugs had finished, and he then sprayed the yard with water to wash it down a little from the mess.

He went to put the hose away, and when he came back, he saw some birds had come to drink from the water he had sprayed, and he realized that Hashem wanted these birds to have water to drink. He then understood why his bag of garbage had to break open in the first place. It was so that Hashem could provide for all of His creations!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Miracle of the Funeral**

**for the Simple Yid**

Rav Meilich Biderman related a story. Every year, on the seventh of Adar, which is the Yartzeit of Moshe Rebbeinu, the members of the Chevrah Kadishah have a custom to fast, and at nighttime they would gather for a special Seudah. The purpose of this fast is to atone for their Aveiros, in case they didn’t treat a person with the appropriate respect while preparing him or her for burial.

At this Seudah, speeches are given to encourage each other to be even more careful in the future with the Mitzvah of honoring the deceased. At one of these dinners in Yerushalayim, a speaker related the following story:

One Friday afternoon, a woman called the Chevrah Kadishah’s office and told the secretary that her husband had just passed away. The secretary told her that it was too close to Shabbos, and so the funeral will be held on Motza’ei Shabbos, immediately after Shabbos ended.

She said to the secretary, “My husband left a request. Immediately following his burial, he wants people to sing Bar Yochai over his fresh grave. The secretary said, “We will do that. If this is what your husband wanted, we will fulfill his wishes.”

During that Shabbos, a leading Torah scholar of the generation passed away. Thousands of people attended his Levayah, so the Levayah of the widow’s husband was deferred until after the Levayah of the Gadol. The Chevrah Kadishah wasn’t able to begin the Taharah for the body until late that night, and when they finally finished and were ready for the Levayah, it was already one o’clock in the morning. By that time, there were only nine men still present to attend the second funeral.

This couple never had any children, and they didn’t have much family either, and now, there wasn’t even a Minyan to escort this Yid on his final journey. One member of the Chevrah Kadishah went to a certain Bais Medresh where people learn around the clock, and searched for someone who was willing to join the Levayah. No one was available, other than a Maggid Shiur.

At first he said, “I came here to prepare a Shiur for tomorrow morning. Try to find someone else.” The Chevrah Kadishah man tried, but he soon returned saying that he couldn’t find anyone else at such an hour. So, the Maggid Shiur climbed into the Chevrah Kadishah’s van, to join them for this Mitzvah. After all, as he himself pointed out, the purpose of learning Torah is to learn in order to fulfill the Mitzvos.

The Levayah was completed at two o’clock in the morning, when the secretary remembered the deceased’s final request. “Does anyone have a Siddur with the Bar Yochai song, because the deceased asked that it should be sung over his fresh grave.” No one had a Siddur that had it.

“Does anyone know the song by heart?” No one did. One person commented, “Maybe I know it by heart, but at two o’clock in the morning, in the cold, on Har HaZeisim, I don’t know anything anymore.”

It seemed that the man’s final request could not be fulfilled. Just then, the Maggid Shiur remembered that he had the text with him. He took out a piece of paper from his pocket. It had Bar Yochai on it, and they all sang together.

On the way back, the Maggid Shiur told the Chevrah Kadishah the incredible Hashgachah Pratis, Divine Providence, that had just occurred. He said, “On Shabbos, I usually Daven Minchah early, in a Shul near my home. This week, I missed the early Minyan, so I went to Daven at a different Shul, which is further away from my house. As I was walking to that Shul with my son, he noticed a page of Sheimos on the ground, and pointed it out to me. I picked it up, intending to put it into a Sheimos box in the Shul, but I forgot to do that, so that page has been in my pocket until now. This is the page that has Bar Yochai on it!”

The other nine men in the van were all astonished at this wonderful demonstration of Hashgachah Pratis. Seeing their amazement, the Maggid Shiur added another detail. “That’s not all. I also usually learn in my house on Motza’ei Shabbos. Tonight, I needed to prepare a Shiur, but there was too much commotion in my house, and I couldn’t concentrate. That’s why I went to the Bais Medresh. If I had been at home as usual, you wouldn’t have found me to be the tenth man to make the Minyan.”

One man remarked, “If such a story would have happened to a Chassidic Rebbe, people would speak about it for generations.”

Another man wondered, “Well, perhaps this man was a hidden Tzadik.”

The secretary said, “I’ll check into exactly who he was tomorrow.” After several inquiries, he discovered that the deceased was a regular Yid. However, he would go to Meron on Erev Rosh Chodesh to Daven by Rav Shimon bar Yochai, and he also sang Bar Yochai before reciting Kiddush every Shabbos.”

The speaker concluded, “We learn from this episode to treat every deceased Jew with the utmost respect, because every Yid, even a simple one, is precious to Hashem. This is a story of an otherwise simple person, but Hashem performed miracles for him so that his final requests should be fulfilled, because every Yid is special to Hashem!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**You Will Always Gain**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

A yeshivah in Israel once rented a bus to take the students on an excursion. Whoever wanted a seat on the bus had to pay in advance and was given a ticket with his seat number on it. On the day of the trip, Binyamin\* boarded the bus and found someone else sitting in his seat, the one he had paid for. This other student had not paid for a seat at all.

Binyamin headed toward the person in charge to ask him to remove the boy from his seat. One of the rabbis saw what was happening.

“Vatranus,” he instructed, “giving in on your rights, is a very virtuous middah.”

The boy said, “But Rabbi, I paid, and he didn’t.”

The rabbi replied, “Vatranus is not when you are 99 percent right and the other party is 1 percent right; it’s when you are 100 percent right and you still give in.”

Although we hear many stories about the great segulah of vatranus, it’s never enough. We always need chizuk in this area, because it’s so hard to give in — especially in the heat of the moment. R’ Bergman\* told me there were two boys in his yeshivah who constantly argued with each other. It bothered him a great deal, and it was having a negative effect on the rest of the yeshivah.

One day, he called a meeting with these boys and taught them the unbelievable segulah of giving in and making peace. “Give in to each other and make shalom and then you can ask Hashem for whatever you want.”

The boys were moved by the rabbi’s plea, and they agreed to make peace. About five weeks later, one of the boys came back to the rabbi to thank him. “Hashem answered the tefillah I made that day,” he said. “I asked Hashem to bring my unmarried thirty-year-old brother his shidduch. The very next day the shidduch was suggested and now, five weeks later, we are about to celebrate the engagement!”

The following year, R’ Bergman made a bris milah for his first (and, as it turned out, only) son in the yeshivah. The second of the formerly squabbling boys came to him at the bris milah and said, “Hashem answered my tefillah.”

He explained: “R’ Bergman had four girls and expressed his desire to have a boy. I prayed to Hashem that day for the rabbi to have a boy and, baruch Hashem, here we are celebrating the bris milah.”

The power of vatranus is amazing. R’ Elimelech Biderman told a story about one of his own talmidim, which took place not long ago. The man and his wife rented a hall for a sheva berachos they were hosting on Leil Shabbos. They came on Friday to set up and saw that the venue was already prepared for a different sheva berachos.

The wife told her husband, “Let’s just be mevater without telling anyone anything, and leave now. Being mevater always gains.”

The husband agreed, and they found a different shul that let them use a room for their simchah. The woman later shared that her father was scheduled to undergo surgery to remove a cancerous growth that same week. When the surgeons opened him up to remove it, they saw that it was gone!

The husband told R’ Biderman that he remembered a similar story R’ Biderman had told just a couple of weeks before, which gave him the chizuk to be mevater, and now he experienced a yeshuah as well.

“However,” he added, “in your story, Rabbi, the people were already fighting and then one party gave in. In my story, we gave in before the fight even started! You see from here that the segulah of being mevater works even if there never is a confrontation.”

It is absolutely true that being mevater always gains. We don’t always get to see the immediate benefits of it, but we can rest assured that Hashem appreciates every effort we make when being mevater and He will reward it at the proper time.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5785 email of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living Emunah 8” by Rabbi David Ashear.*

**The Importance of Gratitude**

It is told that Rav Yisrael Gustman, who served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Jerusalem, would water the plants and bushes outside his yeshiva each day. When asked about this practice, he explained that he survived the Holocaust, spending a considerable amount of time hiding in fields. He felt a deep sense of gratitude to bushes and plants for helping him escape from the Nazis, and he thus felt it was appropriate to personally care for the yeshiva’s garden.

If this is the Torah’s attitude when it comes to plants, then it certainly applies to family members and friends. If Moshe owed a debt of gratitude to the waters of Egypt, shouldn’t we show appreciation to our spouses? If Moshe was to show respect to dirt for the service it provided him, shouldn’t we respect the people who work for us? If Moshe felt grateful to a wicked nation like Midian, shouldn’t we be profoundly grateful to our parents, siblings, friends and neighbors?

*Reprinted from the Parashat Matot-Masei 5785 of Jack E. Rahmey’s email based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*