

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS BEHALOSECHA 5786

Volume 17, Issue 39 21 Sivan/June 6, 2026  
Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

## Your Bar Mitzvah

By Joey Haber



There's a young man in the community—he's 19 years old. A truly wonderful kid. But he's had his ups and downs when it comes to religious observance. At times, he was distant from Jewish practice, struggling with putting on tefillin and other sorts of thing.

Over the summer, and even more so when we returned to Brooklyn, he kept reaching out to me. "Rabbi, I want to meet with you. I really want to talk." And I kept pushing it off. Not because I didn't care, but because—well, life is full of distractions. It's easy to say, "I'm busy," and to let things slide. It's easy to let the urgent crowd out the important.

Eventually, I told him, "Let's meet Thursday afternoon, 3:30, the day after Yom Kippur. Come to my house." He said, "No problem, Rabbi. I'll be there." And sure enough, he arrived at 3:25. For a teenager, showing up five minutes early is practically a miracle, especially on a block with terrible parking.

We started talking. I knew he had started putting on tefillin again and was keeping Shabbat a bit more consistently, though it was still a struggle. He said, “I’m trying. I’m here because I want to grow. I want a connection. I want to talk.”

I said, “Great. Come upstairs to my office.” But, as he had walked in, I noticed that he hadn’t come wearing a kippah. “Would you mind if I got you one?” I asked. “No, not at all,” he said. “

“I’m sorry—I forgot to bring one.”

I walked over to my bedroom, which is on the same floor. In the closet, there’s a shelf—higher up—where we keep a small container of extra kippot. Old ones, spares, just in case. I reached up, pulled one out, and walked back into my study.

As I opened it up, I saw something that stopped me in my tracks. It was *his* bar mitzvah kippah.



I am not exaggerating. I’m telling you this exactly as it happened. I honestly still think it sounds made up. I don’t even know why I have that box of kippot—this is a rabbi’s home. We wear kippot. We don’t need a stash of old ones. And if you’re visiting, most people bring their own anyway.

And yet—there it was. *His* kippah.

This wasn’t coincidence. This was Hashem whispering to this young man: *I see you. I know you’re trying. I’m holding your hand.*

You’re not in this struggle alone. And this isn’t a fight you’re meant to lose.

This is a fight you’re meant to win.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bamidbar 5785 email of the Torahanytime Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik*

# Rav Chaim and the Grasshopper

By Rabbi David Bibi



The following is a remarkable story about Rav Chaim Kanievsky. The Torah speaks about kosher grasshoppers, but knowing the sugya and actually recognizing it in reality are two different things.

Rav Chaim was learning the sugya. He knew the Gemara, the halachot, the words — but he had never seen it in a way that made it fully clear. I was thinking about this because when we were in Israel, we took the children to the Biblical Museum near Bet Shemesh. My grandson Yosef loves bugs. He was playing with grasshoppers, looking at the simanim, the identifying signs and he even ate one. That kind of exposure gives a person a different understanding. Rav Chaim didn't have that.

And then suddenly, a grasshopper flew into his room and landed on his shtender. He examined it, studied the features, and the entire sugya became clear. A few minutes later, it flew out. Then as his wife later explained, he had another question — and it came back. It happened twice.

But when the story was told to the Steipler Gaon, Rav Chaim's father, he didn't focus on the miracle. He focused on the person. When a person lives inside Torah — when Torah fills his mind, his time, his speech, his priorities — clarity comes from Heaven. The world begins to serve the Torah he is learning.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Emor 5786 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# When Going Nowhere is Going Everywhere

**Rabbi Fischel Schachter** tells the following story with his signature blend of humor and heart: It was Chol Hamoed Pesach. Now, Chol Hamoed with a large family is anything but “chol.” It’s packed. It’s hectic. It’s loud. Baruch Hashem! So, there I was, erev the second days, trying to survive the Pesach whirlwind when my wife - how shall I put this politely - “suggested” that I take the kids out for a while.

Now, I know how this works, so I preemptively turned the request into a command to myself. I clapped my hands together and announced, “Everyone into the van! We’re going on an excursion!”

“Where?” the kids asked. “You tell me,” I said cheerfully, “where do you want to go?” That was a mistake.

The older kids groaned, “If we see the Prospect Park Zoo one more time, we’re going to turn into monkeys!” Another yelled, “Not the Aquarium again!” And then, I had a brainstorm. I quickly swerved and turned onto the Belt Parkway.

“Tatty, are we going to the airport? Are we flying somewhere?” Noon on Chol Hamoed? No, we’re not flying anywhere.

So, what were we doing? We were going to the airport. Why? Because the AirTrain at JFK goes from terminal to terminal - and guess what? It’s free. You get a great view. It’s quiet. Quality time with the kids. And ... it’s free! Did I mention that?

“Listen,” I explain to the kids, “typically, you wait on line for four hours and pay twenty bucks to ride something for thirty seconds. This ride is longer and costs nothing. What more do you want?” They were skeptical. But their only alternative was going home to help their mother with the dishes, so they agreed. Suddenly, one of my kids asked loudly, “Tatty, you’re wearing your shtreimel and bekeshe ... you know, there aren’t going to be a lot of other Yidden at the airport right now.”

I retorted, “You’ve seen the way other people dress? I think we’re the least of anyone’s fashion concerns.”

And then - relief! We pull up to the platform, and what do I see? Yidden! Everywhere! Boro Park, Flatbush - we were all there. The platform was tile-to-tile covered in macaroons, orange peels, and matzah crumbs. I felt like I had just arrived at the Mirrer Yeshiva on Chol Hamoed. Baruch Hashem, I wasn’t the only one with this brilliant idea.



We boarded the AirTrain, and my kids were in heaven. They waved at every other AirTrain full of Jewish families. They were pointing at planes, giggling, clapping. It was a 10-minute loop around the airport, and we stayed on for over an hour.

At one point, the train stopped, and a man boarded. A real live pilot - wings on his uniform, rolling suitcase, the whole look. He stood there, taking it all in. You could tell he'd flown to distant war zones and survived typhoons, but this? This Chol Hamoed mob on the AirTrain? This was new. I quickly told one of my kids to give him a seat.

The pilot waved it off. "Nah, I've been sitting for 16 hours. I don't need to sit anymore."

I asked him where he flew in from. "China," he said. Then he looked at me and asked, "Mind if I ask you something?" Whenever someone says that, you always mind - but you can't say so. "Sure," I said, dreading the next question.

"Are these all your kids?" I smiled. "Nah. Some are in Israel. Some are at home helping my wife."

We started schmoozing. Then he asked, “So, Rabbi, which terminal are you heading to? Maybe I can help you find it.”

I hesitated. “Eh ... I’m not sure.” He offered to look at my ticket. I stammered, “You can’t. It’s ... an electronic ticket.”

I was spiraling. The more he asked, the deeper I was digging myself into this fictitious flight. Finally, I confessed. “To be honest, we’re not going anywhere. We’re just riding the AirTrain going around the airport. Been here about half an hour.”



**Rabbi Fischel Schachter**

There was a long pause. He looked at me confused and asked, “Why?”

“Well,” I hesitated before plunging ahead, “These kids don’t have TV at home. They don’t play computer games. They don’t even own their own phones. So it’s up to me to give them quality time, something wholesome and fun. It’s not easy finding places that meet our standards. So ... here we are.”

He nodded. Then he got real. “I fly the world. Three weeks out, one week home. Sometimes not even that. If I end a flight in Australia but live in Denver, by the time I get home, I have to head back. My wife left me years ago. My daughter sends me birthday cards out of obligation. I’m all alone.”

He paused. Then he said something I’ll never forget. “You know, Rabbi, you’re going nowhere ... but you’re really going everywhere. I’m flying all over the globe. I know exactly where I’m going. I have my itinerary for the next year and a half - departure times, arrival gates, routes, everything. But you? You’re

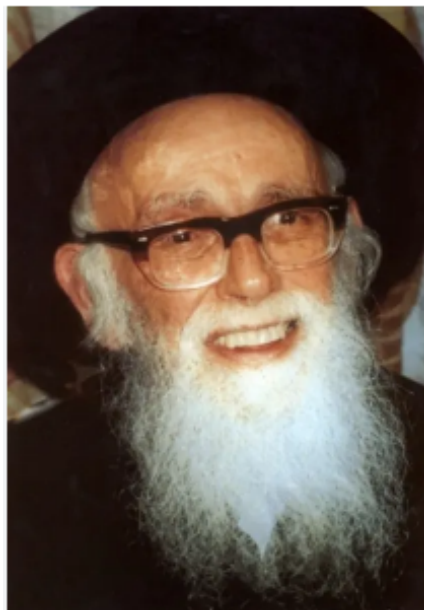
going around in circles on a little train with your children. And you're going somewhere. Because you have a life. You have a family."

And with that, he walked out. I sat there with those words echoing in my mind. You're going nowhere - but you're going everywhere. *(Excerpted from Rabbi Yaakov Astor's column in the Monsey Mevasser)*

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar 5786 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.*

# The Pasak of Rav Shlomo Zalman

By Rabbi David Bibi



A similar lesson emerges from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. A boy had struggled for two years to learn his Haftarah for his bar mitzvah. One week before the event, they realized that Shabbat was Erev Rosh Chodesh, meaning the Haftarah would be different — Machar Chodesh.

The father was crushed. His son could not learn a new Haftarah in one week. He went to Rav Shlomo Zalman, who ruled that the boy could read what he had prepared and told the father to announce that he had paskened (ruled on a question of Jewish law) in this way.

When Shabbat arrived, the father walked into the synagogue and saw Rav Shlomo Zalman himself sitting there. “Rabbi, why did you come?” he asked.

Rav Shlomo Zalman answered, “Because someone might object, and your son will be standing there watching. So, I came so that no one will say a word. And I want to hear him read.”

This is not a miracle story. It is something greater — a human being protecting another human being, preserving the dignity of a child.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Emor 5786 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# The Kosher Hot Dog at Yankee Stadium

By Rabbi Reuven Semah



Rabbi Yaakov Bender says that years ago he was chatting with a group of local boys. Their day camp had taken them on a trip to Yankee Stadium, where a kosher hot-dog stand had just been opened. He asked them if they bought hot-dogs at the game. Of course they had, they said.

He asked a few more questions. They had waited on line for forty-five minutes, they admitted, and paid about \$8 for each hot-dog. They also conceded that because the line was so long, the workers had been pressured and the hot-dogs were raw.

So why wait? Why pay so much money for a raw hot-dog? Why miss forty-five minutes of a game they wanted to watch?

Because they felt that this experience, eating a hot-dog at Yankee Stadium while watching the game, would give them a sense of being like everyone else. They weren't paying for food; they were paying for that feeling they so craved.

No! says the Torah. You aren't like everyone else, but the opposite! The Torah cautions us here because the Torah is applying this message to each and every decision. You are more. You are elevated. You are exalted.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l, was once walking on Ocean Parkway, when a car pulled up near him. The windows rolled down, and from inside some hoodlums began to shout, "Jew! Dirty Jew! Cursed Jew!"

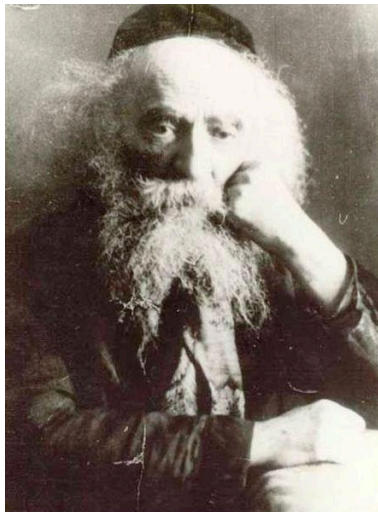
Rabbi Miller turned to beam at them. "Yes, I am," he said delightedly. "Thank you for reminding me."

There is nothing that makes us happier.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Emor 5786 email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

# Picture Perfect

**By Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.**



Rabbi Yosef Rosen of Rogachov was more than a Torah genius. He was a phenomenon.

At a conclave of the great leaders of European Jewry, a photographer circulated to take pictures of these awesome men. This was in the days prior to the candid camera, and in order to take a picture, one had to set up the apparatus on a tripod. Anyone who did not wish his picture taken could easily avoid it. Rabbi Rosen was one such person, and he repeatedly turned away from the camera.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin, although many years his junior, disapproved of this behavior, and boldly approached the Sage. "Permit me to suggest that the great *Gaon* has overlooked a *Midrash*," he pointed out with reverence.

"What *Midrash*?" Rabbi Rosen asked, startled at the notion that his renowned, breathtaking erudition was in question.

“The *Midrash* states that Hashem engraved the features of the Patriarch Ya’akob on the Divine throne. Why? Because Hashem knew that one day there will be no one left who will have a true Jewish appearance, and when he would long to see what a Jew looks like, he would look at Ya’akob’s image.

“Listen to me, Rogachover *Gaon*,” Rabbi Meir pleaded, sincerely. “There will come a time when no one will remember what a true Jew should look like. Allow them to record your image for posterity.”

Rabbi Rosen yielded to the younger Rabbi’s wisdom, and this is why we have his photograph today.

*Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Smiling Each Day” by Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski.*

## The Great Desire to Daven Mincha

Rav Boruch Brull relates a story. “Shmuel Yehuda Lefkowitz was a nineteen-year-old student at Yeshivas Ner Yisroel in Baltimore, who also attended the University of Baltimore Law School in the evening.

As he drove to college late one afternoon, he circled the area many times before finding a parking spot several blocks away from the law school. Walking quickly through the streets of downtown Baltimore to get to his class on time, Shmuel Yehuda noticed the sun was beginning to set, which signaled that time was running out for him to daven Minchah.

He searched for a secluded area where he would be able to daven without being disturbed. This was not easy, as downtown Baltimore is a crowded and busy area full of professionals and tourists, as well as homeless people.

As the sky began to darken, Shmuel Yehuda was happy to discover a vacant building. After checking it quickly for anyone who might be hiding there, Shmuel Yehuda decided that it looked like a safe place where he could daven. He found himself a quiet corner, closed his eyes, put his feet together, and began davening Shemoneh Esrei.

After a few moments, he sensed someone had approached behind him. Shmuel Yehuda did not flinch. He stood, immersed in his Tefilah, and concentrated on the meaning of each and every word. Suddenly, Shmuel Yehuda felt the stranger’s hand groping around in his back pocket, and then taking his wallet! The stranger then turned and ran from the deserted building.

Unfazed and deep in prayer, Shmuel Yehuda calmly completed his Shemoneh Esrei. The moment he finished davening Shmuel Yehuda took off at high speed and chased the pickpocket robber. A strong and muscular young man, Shmuel Yehuda was also fearless. He spotted a man running out of the building. He quickly caught up to him, tackled him to the ground, and without hesitation, he took back his stolen wallet from the man's hands.

As Shmuel Yehuda began to walk away, he turned to take one quick glance at the man before him. As he looked into the man's face, Shmuel Yehuda's anger disappeared and was replaced with pity. The man lying before him was poor, hungry, and crushed.

In Shmuel Yehuda's eyes, there was only one thing left to do. He put his hand into his wallet, removed all the money it contained, and handed it to his attacker. He then hurried on to college, leaving the pickpocket with a stunned look of disbelief on his face. Shmuel

Yehuda's parents repeat this story with pride. Their son's compassion for a homeless person, even someone who robbed him, took over all his other emotions. All that remained was his desire to help a downtrodden individual!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

## Hashem's Love

Rabbi Shomo Landau tells of a story about a father of large simple family. One Friday, the father was headed to the grocery to purchase a large order of groceries for his family for Shabbat, when on his way he checked his wallet and saw it was empty. After racking his brain, he remembered that he had larger than usual out of the ordinary expenses the past few weeks, a broken washing machine, emergency dentist appointment for his daughter...

He hastily called up a few local money lending gemachs, and some friends and family, but they were unable to help him. He felt so lost and desperate, but then he remembered he could always ask his Father when he needed help. He rushed home to pray.

When he walked through his front door, his family looked at him with surprise. They had expected him to come with boxes of groceries. He greeted everyone warmly and headed his study to talk to his Father in Heaven. For almost a half an hour he poured his heart out to Hashem and told Him that he was giving

Hashem the issue to deal with. After a half an hour of serious prayer, he left his study with a renewed sense of hope and confidence.

His children crowded around him excitedly yelling. “Daddy, Daddy, you missed it. We won! While you were in the study the workers from the grocery showed up at our door with everything you can imagine. Challah, fruits and vegetables, drinks, meats...Everything!”

He remembered the promotion a local grocery store had had a few weeks ago for customers who purchased a certain amount of groceries. His prayers had been answered. Less than a half an hour later there was another knock at the door. Their upstairs neighbors were at their door with foil covered pans and containers. They explained they were invited out at the last second for Shabbat and they did not want the food to go to waste. What an answer to his prayers.

During *Bnei Yisrael's* time in the desert Hashem delivered *maan* to their doorsteps every morning. “*Pokeach et Yodecha Umatbia Lekal Chay Ratzon—Hashem opens up His Hands and feeds all the living.*” Hashem is the ultimate provider for his children, because He has unconditional love for us. He is waiting for us to connect to Him.

Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar 5786 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

*A Blast from the Past (June 13, 2003)*

# Getting Through Prison and Beyond

By Raphael Avrohom Goldberg

Having grown up in a Jewish home with a father who is a reform cantor, I was not prepared to spend ten years of my life in a New York state prison. I don't think many of us are, regardless of our backgrounds. I committed a crime and rightfully so had to be punished. I fully understood that, but the punishment was frightening nonetheless.

From Rikers Island through my state confinement, I migrated towards other Jewish inmates and found a measure of camaraderie. More so I was reintroduced to Judaism. I had strayed after my marriage and while I always went to shul on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, that was the extent of my involvement in synagogue

life. I began to go more often in prison, and began to pray regularly. The solace I found made prison bearable.

Of course, there were friends and family that morally supported me but the Jewish community in general and the Lubavitch Organization in particular became a major source of amenity. I wasn't personally known to anyone in the Lubavitch community but I was accepted because I was Jewish, and even given aid and support for that reason alone. The Lubavitch philosophy seems to be that any Jew in need is worth helping.

During my time of incarceration, I began to conduct Shabbat services, and of course all holiday services as I read Hebrew and had a smattering of knowledge as to the requirements. I found the time devoted to these activities to be more than stimulation; I was more than just reintroduced to Judaism. I found a spiritual awakening and rebirth that told me I could not only make it through prison, but make it through anything. And that is what happened.

I was later diagnosed with cancer and my belief in G-d, my prayer and the counseling and letters from Rabbi Shmuel Spritzer of Lubavitch as well as the support of the few other Jewish inmates got me through it. I was in effect a new person, putting the past of my transgression from Judaism behind me.

I am out now and follow the religion even more than I did while inside. I walk to shul every Shabbat, I light Shabbat candles, do the "borei pri hagafen" blessing on wine and "hamotzee" on bread each and every week at my little home and will not let non-kosher food enter my house. I happen to keep kosher outside, also, and that is new to me. I am still in contact with Rabbi Spritzer who has arranged for me to go to weekly Torah study classes given by Lubavitch.

Incarceration has created many obstacles for me. I am having a problem finding a job. I am told that my experience and knowledge is "the best I have ever seen" and as soon as my incarceration is discovered I am shown the door. I found that obtaining quality housing was very difficult as well.

I won't lie and say I don't feel the rejection. I do. It is only human and that is one fault I will always admit to. I am human. To cope I turn to my belief, I turn to G-d, and I turn to the Jewish community for support and while the skeptic will laugh, I find that I am better. I find that I can get through anything, and I do. I am not a quitter but there are times I need the impetus to continue to do things like job-hunting due to the expectation of rejection. My morning prayers give me the stimulus that I need.

Why am I writing this? I have been helped by so many people who have led me back to Judaism. My life has become calm and serene and so much more manageable. I want to give back and return the love that I have received. If I touch one person, I have succeeded. All I can say is that I am an offender, I spent ten

years in prison and I was as skeptical as anybody could be. I am a new person. G-d works.

I wish anyone reading this the very best, and a speedy release. I am not unusual. G-d helps every person who turns to Him. Try it. You won't be sorry.

*Reprinted from the archives of L'Chaim (Issue #773 – June 13, 2003), a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization which reprinted Mr. Goldberg's article that initially appeared in Reaching Out, a bulletin for Jewish prison inmates.*

# The Merits of the Baal Teshuva



**Rabbi Dr. Chaim Dovid Bernhard of Pietrekov (1770s - 1858). Credits: GFDL**

My father, the Kretchnifer Rebbe shlita (Gilyon Divrei Torah 5773) states that this pasuk is hinting to the power of teshuva and how it can turn darkness into light. As is well-known, Rav Dovid of Lelov zy”a brought the famous Dr. Bernard back to Yiddishkeit. Dr. Bernard did teshuva and eventually became a rebbe and renowned tzadik and was known as Rav Chaim Dovid Doctor of Pietrikov zy”a.

At the end of his life, he became sick and the Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk zy”a came to visit him. The Radomsker Rebbe heard him sigh, and he was certain that he sighing about his early years, before he did teshuva. In order to comfort him, he said, “Hayomim harishonim yiplu. The early days will fall away.”

Rav Chaim Dovid told him, “Heaven forbid, the early days should remain forever because when one does teshuva out of love, his intentional sins are transformed into merits. Furthermore, now that they are mitzvos, they lead to other mitzvos, as on mitzvah leads to another.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5786 email of The Way of Emunah:  
Collected Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.*