

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYAKHEL 5785

Volume 16, Issue 26 22 Adar 5785/March 22, 2025

Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

For a free subscription, please forward your request to keren18@juno.com

Past emails can be found on the website – ShabbosStories.com

Rav Elchanan Wasserman And the Missing Spark

By Rabbi David Bibi

Based on a story heard from Charlie Harary



Rav Elchanan Wasserman, z"l, the great rosh yeshiva of Baranovitch, once traveled to America to raise desperately needed funds for his yeshiva. The town had fallen into extreme poverty, and even the local baker refused to extend further credit. His students urged him, "Rebbe, there's no choice—you must go to America. We've heard the streets are lined with gold, and there are wealthy Jews there who can help us."

Despite his reluctance to leave the beit midrash, Rav Elchanan agreed. As he was preparing to leave, someone rushed into his office, breathless with excitement.

“Rebbe, it’s incredible! We just found out that one of the wealthiest Jews in New York used to be from Baranovitch! He owns a massive button factory—he’s a multi-millionaire!”

Rav Elchanan’s eyes widened. “Really? Who is he?”

When they told him the name, he was surprised. “I knew him! We grew up together! We were in cheder together!”

His students were ecstatic. “Rebbe, this is divine providence (hashgacha pratis)! If you meet with him, just a small donation from him could support the yeshiva for years!”

So, Rav Elchanan set off on his arduous journey, enduring a long and difficult voyage across the ocean. Upon arriving in New York, he sought out a synagogue, as was the custom of Yidden in a new place. There, he inquired about his old friend, but the response was discouraging.

That Man?...He’s Completely Gone from Yiddishkeit

“Rebbe, I don’t know how to tell you this, but... that man? He’s completely gone from Yiddishkeit. Assimilated. We’ve tried for years to get him involved in supporting Jewish causes, but he has no interest. If anything, he’s against it.”

Despite their warnings, Rav Elchanan insisted on going. He secured an appointment and arrived at the man’s lavish office. When he gave his name to the secretary, she went inside to inform her boss.

Suddenly, the wealthy factory owner burst out of his office, eyes wide with disbelief. “Rav Elchanan?! From Baranovitch?! I can’t believe this! Come in, come in!”

He welcomed Rav Elchanan with warmth, seating him in his elegant office. But as the rabbi looked around, his heart sank. The walls were covered with paintings, Broadway posters, and photographs of events, sports games, and parties. The man caught Rav Elchanan’s uneasy glance and chuckled.

“Rebbe, I know what you’re thinking. But this isn’t Europe. This is America. Here, we appreciate the finer things in life. Look around—I’ve made it. I have wealth, culture, success. Baruch Hashem, I am very blessed!”

Rav Elchanan smiled slightly and responded, “I actually came here for something important.”

“Of course, Rebbe! Tell me what you need! I’m happy to help!”

“I heard you own a button factory.”

The man laughed. “That’s right! The biggest in the country!”

“Wonderful,” said Rav Elchanan. “You see, my coat has a loose button, and I just can’t seem to find a good one. Do you think you could get me a proper button?”

The businessman blinked in confusion. “Rebbe... You crossed an ocean to ask me for a button?”

Rav Elchanan nodded. “Is that too much to ask?”

Shaking his head, the man quickly called for his tailor. He instructed him, “Take the rabbi’s coat to the factory and put on the finest buttons we have!”

A few minutes later, the coat was returned, adorned with premium buttons. Rav Elchanan tried it on and smiled. “Very nice. You really do have good buttons.”

The businessman laughed. “Okay, Rebbe—now tell me. What do you really need?”

“Nothing. That was it. Thank you for your time.”

With that, Rav Elchanan left.

The Hidden Truth Revealed

That evening, as Rav Elchanan was learning in shul, a black limousine pulled up outside. A chauffeur stepped out and asked, “Is there a Rabbi Wasserman here?”

The driver escorted him to the businessman’s elegant home, where he was welcomed into a room filled with luxurious furnishings. The businessman, now pacing anxiously, turned to him and said:

“Rebbe, I couldn’t sleep all day. I couldn’t work. I kept thinking... YOU came all the way from Baranovitch... for a button?! I don’t believe it. I need to know the real reason you came.”

Rav Elchanan looked at him and replied, “You have a kushya (a question) on me? Now, let me ask you a kushya.”

Some People Spend Their Entire Lives Chasing Buttons

“Hashem created the entire universe. He placed a chelek Eloka mi’mal—a spark of Himself—inside every single Jew. And yet, some people spend their entire lives chasing buttons—material things that seem important, but in the grand scheme of eternity, are meaningless. So tell me, my friend...you have a kushya on me? I came from Baranovitch for a button? You came down from the Kisei HaKavod for buttons?”

The man was stunned. He sat in silence, his hands covering his face. Then, slowly, tears began to flow.

As the story goes, from that moment on, he reconnected with his neshama. He learned Torah with Rav Elchanan every day until the rabbi returned to Europe, and he became a significant supporter of Torah institutions for the rest of his life.

Contributed to this email by Rabbi David Bibi, compiler of the popular weekly parsha sheet – Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Cover Up



Isaac Schwartz is a plumbing-fitting salesman who often travels around the United States. As part of his business, Isaac is involved in bidding on large contracts to supply giant corporations. Isaac is a religious Jew, however, during his business trips he removes his yarmulke, so people have no idea that he is a religious Jew.

Several years ago, Isaac traveled to Chicago to take part in a bid for a large mid-west conglomerate. Isaac packed his samples and his brochures as he had done hundreds of times before. He felt like he was forgetting something as he left the house.

Nevertheless, he was in a rush and so there was little time to think about what he had forgotten. As he boarded the early morning flight, he sent up a prayer that his trip would be successful and that he would arrive and return safely.

Once in Chicago, Isaac rushed to catch a cab to the corporate offices. The bidding was grueling and it lasted throughout the day. Finally, as the day grew long and the sunset approached, Isaac headed back to his hotel room. Exhausted from the traveling and the negotiations, Isaac settled into his comfortable hotel room. Suddenly

Suddenly, he realized that he had not yet davened (prayed) mincha (the afternoon prayers). He reached into his coat pocket for his yarmulke and it was not there. He reached into his pants pockets and then his jacket pockets once again it was nowhere to be found. He searched his bags, but he simply could not find his yarmulke. He paced the hotel room right and left wondering what to do.

As he passed by the large mirror in his hotel room, he noticed something on his head. He stopped in his tracks! He looked again and he felt his face turning red. He reached his hand on top of his head and felt the small piece of cloth; he had found his yarmulke.

He now knew what he had forgotten to do when he left his house. He had forgotten to take off his yarmulke! He had gone the whole day spending hours in negotiations wearing his yarmulke. His face burned with embarrassment.

The next day, he received a phone call with some great news. The corporation had accepted his bid and they wanted him to sign a very lucrative supply contract. The president of the company told Isaac that they saw that he was a religious Jew and therefore they felt they could trust him. (Told by M. Zuckerbraun who heard it from R.B.Y.Grayden-some names and details have been changed)

Reprinted from the Parshat Tetzaveh 5785 email of Good Shabbos Everyone.

The Anti-Semite and the Happy Jew.

Rav Meilech Biderman once said a story. An anti-Semite once entered a restaurant. He was in good spirits, but his heart soon turned to rage when he saw a Yid was also in the restaurant. His only relief was to taunt him.

In a loud voice he announced, “Waiter, I am in a generous mood tonight. Serve your best appetizer to everyone present. I’ll pay the bill. I want you to serve it to everyone, but not to that Jew!”

Everyone cheered, and after they ate their appetizers, they came over to thank him. The Yid also approached this anti-Semite, and he thanked him as well. The anti-Semite was confused. Why was the Jew thanking him? He was trying to disgrace him, not help him. He decided to try once again.

He raised his voice so everyone could hear, “Waiter, serve your most expensive main dish to everyone present.” Then the Rasha pointed to the Yid and said with hatred, “Serve it to everyone, except to that Jew sitting over there.” Everyone cheered again, and the waiter began serving the crowd the expensive main dish.

After enjoying their meals, everyone came over to thank him, and he was content. But then, once again, the Yid stood up and joined the line to thank him as well! It just didn’t make sense. He decided to try a third time.

This time, he stood on top of the bar and announced, “Drink as much as you want. I will pay. Drink any brand you want. It’s all on the house. Everyone can have. Everyone, that is, except for the Jew!”

The cheers were louder this time. When they had all drunk to their heart’s content, they lifted the Rasha up and sang songs of gratitude to him. When they finally put him down, the Yid went over to him, and thanked him as well.

The cruel man finally asked, “Why are you thanking me? I humiliated you. The people who ate and drank thanked me, but what are you so grateful about?”

The Yid replied, “I am grateful to you because I am the owner of this restaurant!”

This story is a reminder that when things appear to be bad, it really never is. There is always a silver lining, and everything is always for our benefit. This is similar to the Purim story, how things seemed to be so bad, but in just one moment, everything turned around and it was good for the Yidden!

Reprinted from the Parashas Tetzaveh-Purim 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

The Astonishing Wrong-Line Blessing

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Several years ago, thousands of Jews were crowded into the huge *shul* at 770 Eastern Parkway, the shul of the Chabad Chassidim in Brooklyn, New York to hear the Lubavitcher Rebbe speak. Not only religious Chassidim but all sorts of Jews were there. Even those who didn't understand a word of Yiddish were hypnotized by the awesomeness of the man.

Mr. David Asulin came to see for himself and, although he didn't exactly believe all the stories, he was glad he came. He had been born in Morocco. There everyone believed in *tzadikim*; unique Jews who were very G-dly. So, all this wasn't completely new to him.

In fact, since he moved to France twenty years ago and became comfortably settled there, he had almost forgotten about the *tzadikim*. This was his first visit to America, where he was going for business. His friends had told him that if he wanted an unforgettable experience he must see the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He did, and it was just as they said.

After about two hours of listening with ten-minute pauses between topics, many people stood up and formed lines to the Rebbe, which eventually became one line. When they reached him, he gave each one a bottle of vodka.



Mr. Asulin didn't understand that the bottles were only for those people that were making celebrations (such as weddings or bar mitzvahs) throughout the world; he thought that everyone was entitled to a bottle. So he got in line as well!

When it came his turn and he was face to face with the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled, gave him a large bottle and said in French, "This is for the wedding."

He was amazed; how did the Rebbe know he speaks French! That was astounding, it verifies all the other stories he had heard. The Rebbe certainly has uncanny powers of perception! But on the other hand, he decided, what the Rebbe said to him in French also proves he isn't infallible. David had been happily married for years. What he said about the wedding was clearly wrong!

A week later he returned to France. When he showed his wife the bottle they had a good laugh over what the Rebbe said. But when he visited his local Chabad House in Cartel, Rabbi Chaim Malul didn't agree with David's conclusion. Instead, he assured him that in time he would see that it was no mistake.

David laughed to himself. "The Rebbe is such a nice man, and very dedicated. So, what if he made a little mistake." And then David promptly forgot the entire incident.

Months later he happened to open the cabinet where he had put the bottle and it reminded him of his experience in Brooklyn. "You know," he said to his wife, "It's a shame that this bottle from the tzadik should remain unused. Let's make a party, invite all our family and some friends, and give them all to toast *L'chayim*. It will be fun for everyone and a blessing as well. I'm sure they will all come."

They began making plans. At first they thought of making the party at their home, but at the last moment decided it would be less trouble to move it to the small wedding hall of the local shul in Rancee (near Paris) and to have it catered by a local kosher restaurant.

The day of the party arrived and the guests began arriving in good spirits. A small band played happy music and people were exchanging greetings and handshakes. But as they were sitting down to begin the meal, the rabbi of the synagogue entered the room with a smile, looked around for David, and when he found him took him aside and whispered something in his ear.

David turned to the crowd and said: "The Rabbi needs nine men to join him to make a *minyan*. He says it will take only a few minutes. Who wants to come? I for one am going."

In no time he had the required number following the Rabbi to the next room for what they thought would be prayer, but they were in for a surprise.

In the room stood a bride, a groom and a *chupah*; it was a wedding! But, surprisingly, the couple was all alone. In fifteen-minutes the entire ceremony was over.

David and the other men shook the groom's hand, wished the newlyweds '*Mazal Tov*,' and gingerly asked where the wedding meal would be (they also were wondering why there were no guests but were embarrassed to ask).

When the groom answered that no meal had been arranged, David joyously announced, "then you are invited to ours." Instantly David's informal party became a real wedding party. The band played merrily and the men began to dance on one side of the room with the groom, while the women on the other side danced with the bride.

When the dancing finished they all sat down to eat. In the middle of the meal David stood, held up the Rebbe's bottle, cleared his throat for silence and told the story of the Rebbe saying it was "For the Wedding," since he finally understood that the Rebbe wasn't mistaken at all.

"What!" exclaimed the bride. "That bottle is from the Lubavitcher Rebbe for my wedding?" and she burst into tears, tears of sheer joy. When she calmed down she explained.

This was her second marriage. Her first ended in a bitter divorce that, coupled with the fact that she decided to be an observant Jew, resulted in a major rift in her family and none of her relatives showed up. No one came from her husband's side either, but his reason was more simple. He was a convert to Judaism and so he had no Jewish family.

She felt so alone and uneasy that a few weeks previously she decided to immediately act on the suggestion of an acquaintance that she write to the

Lubavitcher Rebbe, asking in the letter for some sign that the marriage would succeed.

"And here you are with the Rebbe's blessing!!"

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article in the Ki Teitzei 5777 (2017) email of *Good Shabbos Everyone*, as posted on *ShabbosStories.com*.

Why this week? The 11th of the Jewish month of *Nissan* (this Friday) is the anniversary of the birth of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1902.

Reprinted from the April 17, 2024 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.

The Greatest Glory

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

Shmuli was so excited. Tonight was the chanukas habayis of the new Horki Beis Midrash and none other than Chaim K - the famous young singer - was going to be performing! Chaim K was only one year older than Shmuli and he had the most amazing and beautiful voice in the world. People were already saying that he was going to be 'the next Jewish music superstar' to take over the Jewish music world!

“Oh, how I wish that I could be Chaim K,” thought Shmuli as he stared at the boy singer’s picture on the cover of his latest album, ‘Panim el Panim’. “Then everyone would be saying these things about me!”

As Shmuli stared at the album cover, he imagined it was his face on the cover and he was the one belting out songs like ‘Lo Yirani Ha’adam’ and ‘B’nikras Hatzur’. He imagined throngs of people shouting his name and cheering as he took a bow on the stage.

“Shmuli, how’s your homework going?” came Totty’s voice from the door.

Shmuli jumped. He was so lost imagining that he was Chaim K that he forgot he was supposed to be finishing his Navi homework.

“I’m uh it’s going well!” Shmuli stammered.

“Okay!” said Totty with a smile. “I just wanted to make sure you would be done in time so you could come with me to the chanukas habayis!”

Shmuli hurriedly put down the CD cover and went back to his homework. “I bet Chaim K doesn’t have to do his homework every night,” he thought. “Oh how I wish I was him.”

The Greatest Glory

Shmuli and his friend Yossel bounced up and down with excitement as the last speaker finished thanking every single member of the Horki board by name. “This is it!” squealed Shmuli. How would Chaim K come out? Would he just walk? Run? Would he come out dancing?

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!” called the announcer, “The ONE, the ONLY, Chaim K!!!”

The music started playing as Shmuli and Yossel stood on their tiptoes to get their first glimpse of the singer. But Chaim K didn’t dance, run, or even walk. In fact, he couldn’t stand at all. A man - maybe his father - was pushing him out on a wheelchair!

“He’s in a wheelchair???” Shmuli wondered out loud.

“Yes, of course,” whispered Totty over the blasting music. “Didn’t you know? He has been in a wheelchair his whole life. He can’t even move his hands - his mother has to feed him. Boruch Hashem we have working hands and feet that allow us to walk, run, dance, and take care of ourselves!”

Everyone enjoyed the concert and afterwards, Shmuli walked home with Totty, carrying the bag with a book and a new music CD that had been given to each boy.

“Shmuli,” said Totty. “Is everything okay? You seem quiet. Did you enjoy the concert? Did he play the songs you like?”

“Oh yes, Totty,” said Shmuli. “The concert was wonderful. He even sang my favorite song, ‘Chag LaHashem Machar’. But I’m all confused. Until tonight I

wanted nothing more than to be Chaim K. It was all I could think of. I imagined being on the CD covers and on stage singing for everyone with a beautiful voice.

“But then I saw that he’s in a wheelchair and can’t even use his hands and feet! That made me rethink things. I thought it would be worth anything in the world to have people saying that I would be the next Jewish music superstar, but I don’t think it would be worth anything. I’d much rather be Shmuli Goldbaum the nobody with working hands and feet!”

“Shmuli!” exclaimed Totty. “That reminds me of what Rav Avigdor Miller says in this week’s parsha!”

“What?” asked Shmuli. “He says not to be a singer?”

“No, no,” answered Totty. “But in this week’s Parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu says – “And now, if I have found favor in your eyes.” Rav Miller says that it is perfectly normal for a person to want kovod. Everybody wants to be famous and well-liked and respected like the big-name singers out there. But actually, the only true kovod that we really want is for Hashem to be proud of us! No other kovod from people shouting your name or talking about you would make you truly happy. Only the kovod that comes from Hashem being proud of you will give you joy forever.

“So, you’re not ‘Shmuli Goldbaum the nobody’! You do plenty of mitzvos and learn well in Yeshiva. That means you are ‘Shmuli Goldbaum the somebody’! And it doesn’t matter if nobody knows that. Hashem knows it and that is all that it takes to make the Neshama happy in this world and the next!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teaching of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

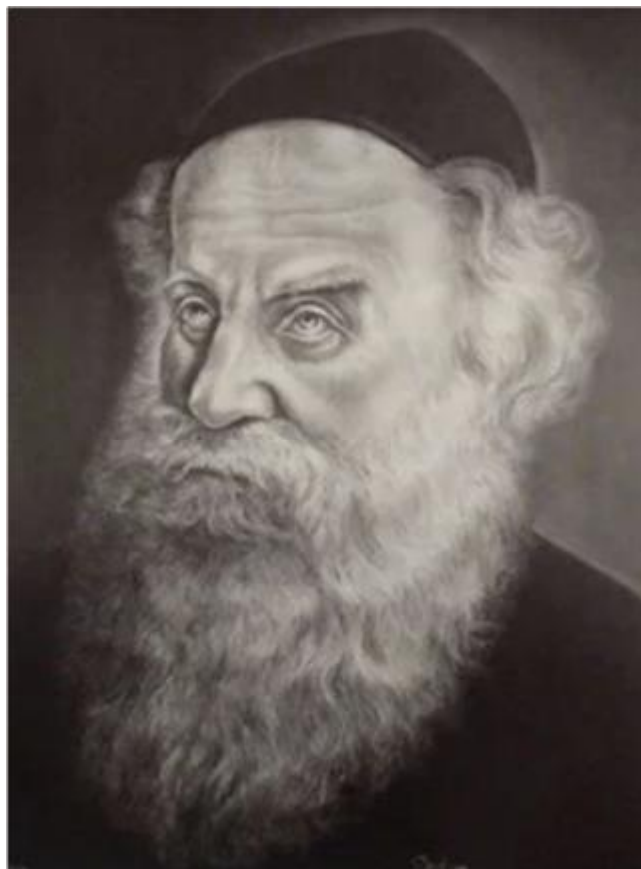
The Reward of Not Eating Traif

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz

Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi was very active in spreading Torah across Russia during the 1700’s. The Russian government arrested him. His arrest caused a big commotion and alarmed many as the Jewish community was unsure if he was kept alive. When in prison Rabbi Shneur Zalman was brought only non-kosher food daily. Nevertheless, he remained unwavering in his position, refusing to take a single bite, despite his immense hunger.

Some time went by and the Rav had still not budged. His unwillingness to eat was worrying the prison warden.

“If I get you kosher food, will you eat it?” asked the warden.



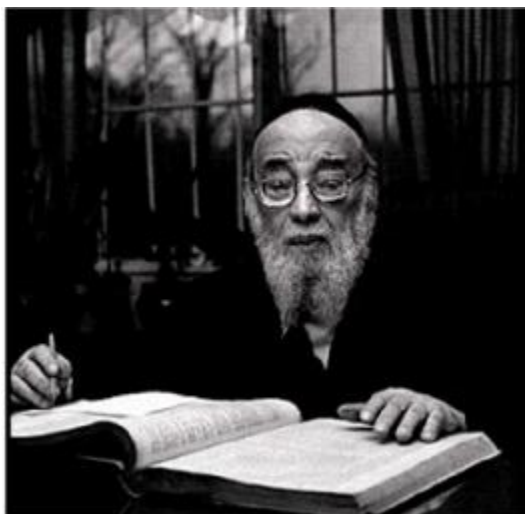
The Rav replied, “Yes, but only if it is cooked by a Jew, and you personally take it from him and bring it to me!”

The warden found a reliable Jew named Reb Mordechai to cook the food. Reb Mordechai was curious about who he was cooking food for so he left a small note at the bottom of the food jar.

When the jar was returned, he saw some food left on the bottom and a return note had been left. He read the note and to his joy discovered that the Rav was still alive! Through these notes, Rav Shneur Zalman was able to communicate with his community, informing them how to get him released from prison. The Jewish community did as he had instructed. They pulled some strings, and shortly after, the Rav was safely released, all because he remained firm in refusing to do the sin of eating treif.

Reprinted from the Vayigash 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

A Dispute at the Chupah



Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman

There was a boy who went to study in the Yeshiva Ner Yisrael, in Baltimore. The boy developed a very close relationship with the Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman. He even had a private session that he learned with the Rosh Yeshiva. The boy wanted to get married but the right girl never came his way.

Finally, after a good few years he became engaged being one of the last boys of his class in Yeshiva to become engaged. After telling his Rebbe the exciting news he told his Rebbe that it was obvious that the Rosh Yeshiva, his close Rebbe, would officiate at his wedding.

The Rosh Yeshiva asked the boy to give him the date of his Chassuna. When the Rosh Yeshiva checked his calendar he saw that he had to travel that day with his Rebbitzen to Chicago. He told his beloved student that sadly he will not be able to attend his wedding but in heart he will be there.

As imagined, the boy was devastated. When he came home to New York he told his father that sadly, his Rosh Yeshiva wouldn't be able to attend. His father decided to go up a flight of stairs and visit his revered neighbor, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. The man told Reb Moshe that although his son studied at Ner Yisrael, since the Rosh Yeshiva would not be able to attend, he would like to invite Rav Moshe to officiate at his son's wedding.

The boy went back to Ner Yisrael to study until shortly before his Chassuna. Before he left he went into his Rosh Yeshiva to bid farewell and receive his blessings. The Rosh Yeshiva gave him his warm Berachos. He then asked him what day was

his Chassuna? The boy reminded his Rebbi the date and that the Rosh Yeshiva had explained that he couldn't attend.

The Rosh Yeshiva excitedly told his student that the trip to Chicago had been cancelled and he looks forward to attending the Chassuna. The boy traveled home and shared with his father the exciting update. But his father wasn't so excited. He told his son that he had in the meantime invited Rav Moshe to officiate. A big argument broke out, the boy blaming his father for inviting Reb Moshe on his own accord. The father and son didn't know what to do.



Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

Finally, the father said they should both go upstairs together and speak to Reb Moshe. They knocked on the door. Rav Moshe opened up, gave one look at father and son, and said, "it's fine I'm coming as a guest. Please honor Rav Ruderman." Both father and son were taken aback how Rav Moshe had worked it out but at the same time also very relieved.

The wedding day arrived. Rav Ruderman is sitting at the head table next to the Chassan getting ready for the Chupa and suddenly Rav Moshe walks in. Without thinking twice Rav Ruderman turns to the Chassan and his father and says, "Rav Moshe is the Gadol Hador. He will officiate."

But Rav Moshe wouldn't hear of it. He was adamant that Rav Ruderman officiates. But Rav Ruderman was just as adamant that the Gadol Hador officiates. The hall was electric. Everyone standing in awe watching these two humble Torah giants arguing that the other officiates. Finally, Rav Ruderman called out to Rav Moshe, "Rav Moshe is older and therefore he will officiate." Rav Moshe replied, "if I am older then the Rosh Yeshiva has to listen to me and the Rosh Yeshiva will officiate." And Rav Ruderman officiated the Chuppah at the command of Rav Moshe.

Reprinted from Rabbi Dovid Caro's Parsha Ki Sisa 5785 email of Inspired by a Story.