SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS SHEMINI 5785

Volume 16, Issue 30 28 Nisan 5785/April 26, 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

"But I Didn't Know!"

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

"The court calls the case of the City of Jerusalem vs Tzadok Ben Ami," announced the courtroom clerk. "Judge Berkowitz presiding."

Tzadok "Hatzadik", dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit and missing half of his beard, approached the defendant's table. He looked hopeful at the fact that the judge was wearing a yarmulke and had peyos. "Tzadok," said the judge, reviewing the documents. "It says here that you are accused of digging a hole under the Jerusalem train station. How do you plead?"

"Not guilty, your honor," Tzadok said proudly. "It wasn't my fault."

"What does that mean?" asked the judge sternly. "Did you or did you not do it?"

"Your honor," explained Tzadok. "Bilaam's donkey came to me in a dream and then I found a map of the city in the morning that had the train station on it. So, I knew if I dug a hole under the train station I would find the hairs of Bilaam's donkey."

"What on earth are you talking about?" the judge asked, thoroughly confused.

"Oh, you don't know about Bilaam?" Tzadok said. "It's in the Torah. I think it's in Parshas Noach or something, because that's where all the animals are. He had a donkey which could talk. I've spent my entire life looking for the donkey's hairs."

The judge pinched himself to make sure he wasn't dreaming.

"Tzadok, first of all, Bilaam is in Parshas Balak, not Noach. Secondly, why on earth would you want to find the hairs of his donkey?"

"Because I had a dream about the donkey," Tzadok repeated.

"So Tzadok, am I correct in understanding that you are admitting to digging a hole under the train station?"

"Yes, but like I said, it wasn't my fault."

"Tzadok, destroying city property is a serious crime, are you aware of that?"

"It is?" Tzadok asked. "But I didn't know that, so I'm innocent, right?"

"Um no," said the judge. "Actually, that makes it worse."

"But your honor," Tzadok said. "I would never commit a crime if I knew it was wrong. I'm a good man. I'm a tzaddik! I even have the letter tzaddik on my hat!"

The judge looked down at the paper in front of him. "You have quite the rap sheet, Tzadok," he said. "You don't seem to learn your lesson. It says here that last year you released a gorilla from the zoo and he hijacked a bus?"

"But your honor!" Tzadok exclaimed, close to tears. "I never would have done any of those things if I knew they were wrong."

"Tzadok, do you know what this week's Parsha is?" asked the judge.

"Um... Balak!" Tzadok guessed hopefully.

"No, no," said the judge. "It's Parshas Vayikra. And do you know what Parshas Vayikra is about?"

"Krias Megillah?"

"No, no. It's about korbanos. Have you heard of korbanos before?"

"Oh yes! I once started building a mizbeiach in the park in Ramat Eshkol! And another time I tried building a Beis Hamikdash on Rechov Shmuel Hanavi. I would love to bring a korban to Hashem."

"Yes, I see," murmured the judge, consulting Tzadok's rap sheet again. "So you know about korbanos. Do you know that if someone isn't sure whether he did an aveirah he needs to bring a much more expensive Asham Talui than the Chatas he would bring if he knew for sure that he did an aveirah?"

"Really?" asked Tzadok. "But it's not his fault."

"Yes it is," said the judge. "A person is responsible for his actions. And that includes knowing what he is and is not allowed to do. Tzadok, you are constantly committing crimes and appearing in this courtroom. Other judges have been more lenient, but you do not seem to learn your lesson. I think you need to spend some time in prison."

"But you honor!" exclaimed Tzadok. "I've already been in jail awaiting trial for almost nine months! It's not fair! All I did was dig a hole! What's so terrible about that?"

"Not fair?" asked the judge. "The Torah gives a more severe punishment to someone who isn't clear about whether he did something wrong because that person doesn't have the proper remorse. "You clearly don't see what was wrong with this crime and the previous crimes you committed. I hereby sentence you to twelve months in the Jerusalem Prison, and you must attend the Mesillas Yesharim shiur given by Rav Volender, the prison rov, every morning. Case closed."

And with a bang of his gavel, the bailiff led Tzadok out of the courtroom and back to the prison.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l.

Granting Wealth to a Rebbi:

The following story depicts how tzadikim provide great blessings for the world: In the times of the Ruzhiner Rebbe zy"a, there lived a melamed named R' Menashe who taught Torah to young children in a small village near Ruzhin. R' Menashe was a devoted, wonderful rebbi, but he was also extremely poor. He was so impoverished that he didn't even have enough money to properly feed his growing family.

As his children grew older and were nearing marriageable age, he began to worry how he would be able to marry them off. R' Menashe would travel to Ruzhin every year on Hoshana Rabba, and he would bask in the holy atmosphere until after

Simchas Torah, when he would return home. This year, he decided that he wouldn't leave Ruzhin until he got a bracha from the Rebbe for sufficient livelihood to cover his basic expenses and to marry off his children.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe was accustomed to daven in a private room on the side of the bais medrash, where he would seclude himself and engage in his holy avodah. The chasidim would gather near the door to his room, hoping to have the zechus of hearing the Rebbe's tefillos. On Hoshana Rabbah, R' Menashe was standing near the door during the recitation of Hoshanos when it suddenly opened a crack. The Rebbe looked at the chasidim standing there and, when he saw R' Menashe, he motioned for him to come closer.

R' Menashe nervously approached the door and the Rebbe said to him, "L'chaim, R' Menashe. It has just been decreed that you will become very wealthy. The wealth will come to you in an unexpected way. L'chaim. I bless you that you should not forget your brethren even when you are rich!"

After davening, dozens of chasidim who had heard about the Rebbe's bracha came over to wish R' Menashe "mazal tov" on the wealth he was about to receive. None of them had any doubt that the Rebbe's words would be fulfilled. Some businessmen offered to be his partner in business but he did not accept any offer. The Rebbe had told him that his wealth would come in an unexpected way, so he did not want to accept a standard business arrangement.

On Motzoei Simchas Torah, several wealthy men approached him and offered him a ride on their fancy carriages — as is befitting a wealthy man — but he also refused this offer. He began to walk home with his traveling bag slung over his shoulder, with a heart full of joy because of the good tidings he had received. As he walked, it began to rain heavily. He looked for a place to seek shelter from the elements, and saw a small roadside inn, which he hurried to enter.

There were about 50 Russian soldiers staying in the inn at that time. They playing cards and drinking whiskey when and one of them suggested they play a different game. He suggested a game where everyone would try to say the most outlandish lie, and the one with the best lie would get a 100-ruble prize, which they all would chip in for.

One of the soldiers said, "Yesterday, I saw a donkey with eight legs!" A second soldier tried to outdo him and said, "A month ago, my neighbor's cow gave birth to a calf with two heads and a donkey with eight legs!" This went on for a while, with each soldier trying to tell a lie that was more unbelievable than his friends' lies. However, the judge kept saying that none of the lies were outrageous enough, as all of them could possibly happen.

R' Menashe was standing on the side and built up the nerve to step forward and say that he wanted to join the competition. The soldiers eyed him hatefully, enraged by the fact that a Jew dared to interrupt their conversation. The judge,

however, told him, "You know what? Let's make a deal. If you win, you can take the 100 rubles. If you fail, however, we'll give you 100 lashes." Menashe was unfazed and said he was ready to start. The judge quieted the crowd and told him to begin.

Menashe looked at the judge and said, "First of all, I want to tell you that I recognize the judge. Did you know that he is a Jew?" These words caused a great commotion. Everyone began to scream, "That's a lie!" Suddenly, they realized that the Jew had succeeded in telling a lie that none of them believed, and that they had to give him the 100 rubles.

The judge was very impressed by the Jew's wisdom. He gave him the money and asked him to come visit him in the army camp, where he was the commanding officer. He also handed him a pass, confirming that he had the right to visit him in the camp. He signed the pass with his name, Anatoli Ivanov.

Two weeks later, R' Menashe went to the camp and showed his pass to the guard. He was allowed in and shown to the commander's room. Ivanov was happy to see him and said, "I know that Jews are not only smart, they are also trustworthy. I am in command of 5,000 soldiers who faithfully serve Czar Nicholai. Recently I noticed that the soldiers are getting weaker. It is clear to me that the person in charge of providing them with food is a fraud and a swindler and does not buy good food for them. Therefore, I want to hire you to be in charge of buying the soldiers' food."

R' Menashe immediately thought that this must be what the Ruzhiner Rebbe had predicted, and he accepted the job. From then on, R' Menashe's life totally changed. During the week, he lived in the army camp, where he was in charge of the food. Everyone saw how honest and trustworthy he was, and the soldiers regained their strength. While he now had sufficient parnassah, he wondered why the Rebbe's blessing had not been fully fulfilled, as he still was far from wealthy.

A short while later, Czar Nikolai had a foolish idea enter his head. He announced that all the soldiers of the army would need to train to march a long way with heavy loads because he eventually wanted to hold a big march in his presence, and everyone would march a long way with a heavy rucksack on their shoulders. Commander Ivanov took pity on the soldiers and, knowing that they would not be able to withstand it, decided to ignore the order and not to train them to do this. Indeed, all the soldiers in other camps got this training, but Ivanov's camp remained the only one that didn't do it.

Ultimately, the order came from the Czar that on a certain day everyone must report to a designated place.

The next day, when Menashe arrived at the gates of the camp, Ivanov greeted him with a sullen face. He told him, "I have to tell you goodbye."

Menashe asked him what happened, and the commander told him, "I did not listen to the Czar's order to train my soldiers to march a long way with heavy loads.

When the Czar sees during the parade that the soldiers serving in my camp are dropping like flies at the very beginning of the parade, he will surely remove me from my post, and he might even execute me as punishment for not listening in him."

R' Menashe suggested to him that he fill the soldiers' bags with straw, which does not weigh much, so that they could easily walk on their feet the whole way. The commander was very happy to hear his suggestion. He immediately gathered all the officers and soldiers and made them swear a solemn oath that they would not tell anything about this idea.

When the big day arrived, Czar Nicholai arrived with a large entourage of high-ranking officials. After the trumpets sounded, the soldiers began to march with heavy packs on their backs. After just a few minutes, they all began to fall down. The Czar face turned red with anger, and he decreed that they all be sent to a prison camp. But when Commander Ivanov's unit started marching, they walked all the way with their heads held high.

The Czar was so happy to see that at least one commander obeyed him that he did not think to check what they had put in their sacks. He promoted Ivanov to the position of general. As a sign of gratitude, Ivanov appointed R' Menashe to be in charge of providing all the food for all the soldiers in the Russian Army. Now, he became extremely wealthy, as the Rebbe had promised. He did not forget the Rebbe's words, and he always remembered his poor brothers and gave tzedakah with an open hand.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.

The Sword of Pharoah will Have No Power Over You!

Little six-year-old Eliezer was very excited. He had travelled a few weeks with his father to go and see the Rebbe Reshab. The day had arrived; they had finally reached their destination. That night they were the most distinguished guests as they had travelled the furthest.

Little Eliezer stood at the door with his father to go into the Rebbe. The moment finally arrived and they entered the Rebbe's study. The Rebbe spoke to Eliezer's father and gave him a Beracha. He then turned to Eliezer and asked him, "What is your name?"

"Eliezer."

"What does Eliezer mean," asked the Rebbe.

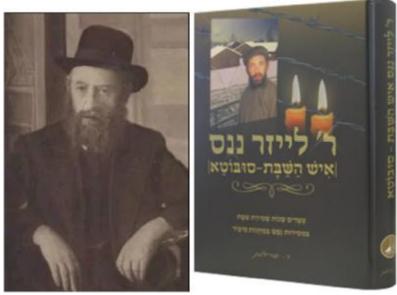
"Ki Elokei Avi Be'ezri vayatzileini micherev Pharaoh," the boy replied. (Because the G-d of my father was my assistance and saved me from the sword of Pharaoh. This is the explanation Moshe Rabbeinu gave when he called his son Eliezer.)

"How do you know," asked the Rebbe?

"I heard how my brother were reviewing his Chumash classes," replied Eliezer.

The Rebbe bent over to young Eliezer and whispered into his ear so his father shouldn't overhear. "So it will be, the sword of Pharaoh will have no power over you."

Little Eliezer Naness grew up and even merited to study in the Yeshiva of his great Rebbe - Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson Zt"l – the Sixth Grand Rabbi of Lubavitch



The Rebbe Reshab and the Hebrew edition of Rabbi Eliezer Naness' book "Subotta"

But then the dark era of Communism started. Torah study and keeping Mitzvos were forbidden. It wasn't too long that Eliezer found himself in Siberia. Twenty years Eliezer was in Siberia but Eliezer was determined and come what may he never desecrated Shabbos. He wouldn't even go to work on Shabbos. Instead, he did an extra day's quota during the week. More than once Eliezer was brought to the court in Siberia for not following orders. The officers threatened to kill him. But Eliezer wasn't moved. He turned to the officers and said, "you can't kill me."

"What do you mean," asked the officers? "We kill people all the time!"

"But I have a promise from my Rebbe that you can't do anything to me."

On Shabbos Eliezer would run around in his room to avoid freezing in the icecold weather of Siberia that would reach- 40 degrees Celsius / -40 degrees Fahrenheit.

One Shabbos he collapsed. While he lay on the floor the Rebbe the Reshab came to him in a dream. "Not only what I said that the sword of Pharaoh will have no power over you, you will also merit to go and live in Eretz Yisrael."

Rabbi Eliezer Naness survived the horrors and the cold of Siberia and lived in his later years in Yerushalaim where he passed away at the age of 99. He penned his years in Siberia in the famous book 'Subotta

Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5785 edition of Rabbi Dovid Caro's Inspired by a Story.

How to Thank the Nurses



Rav Elya Svei, zt"l

Rav Paysach Krohn shared a great story. A Talmid of Rav Elya Svei, zt"l, had a child after seven years of marriage. His wife gave birth to a little boy who was born prematurely, and weighed just close to three pounds. The baby was placed in the High-Risk Unit of the Hodges Hospital in Milwaukee. After two and a half months, the family was told that their son was well enough to be taken home.

The Talmid wanted to buy the nurses a gift. Unsure of what would be appropriate, he called his Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Elya Svei, for advice. He was surprised when the Rosh Yeshivah said, "Don't buy a gift. Of course, you should

show your appreciation. However, my advice is, every year on your son's birthday, bring him back to visit the unit."

That is exactly what the family did for the first six years. Over the next few years after that, there was always another reason for not going back. However, the year of their son's Bar Mitzvah, he came with a Bar Mitzvah invitation and handed it to the head nurse, along with a warm letter of gratitude. He thanked everyone profusely for what they had done years earlier, and he brought a special cake for the staff.

A few weeks later, the family received a beautiful letter from one of the nurses in that unit. The letter read: "My name is Jodi Campanella, and I am a nurse in the High-Risk Nursery at Hodges Hospital where your son had an extended stay years ago. While at orientation, I heard all about your son and your wonderful family.

"A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting you when you brought an invitation to the Bar Mitzvah, along with a letter that you had written about our staff. It touched my heart. You reminded me of why I became a nurse in the intensive care unit. Candy and flowers are a nice sentiment, but what you and your family do is something that helps us make it through the rough days. My most sincere thanks, Jodi C., RN."

Rav Elya Svei taught that one does not have to show gratitude with lavish gifts. A sincere letter or a kind gesture is far more everlasting!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Rejected Request

Rav Dovid Ashear wrote a great story. A woman, we'll call her Mrs. Mandel, a widow, whose daughter was undergoing treatment in the Tel HaShomer Hospital, requested Shabbos accommodations in the Rachashei Lev Chesed apartment. When she called with her request, she added, "I know that I will cry a lot, and I would really prefer to be alone."

The director of Rachashei Lev, Rav Reuven Gesheid, usually gets many calls each week from several people, and tries to accommodate the men at one location and the women in the other multibedroom apartment. He told her that he could not commit to that request, but he said he will see what he can do.

Half an hour later, a girl called and said, "My relative is in the hospital and asked me to stay with her over Shabbos. Could I possibly sleep in the apartment near the hospital?"

Rav Gesheid did not think too long before he agreed. After all, how could he turn away this girl just because the other guest wanted privacy? He called Mrs. Mandel and informed her of the turn of events. He said to her, "We both have an obligation to help this girl. She is trying to do a Mitzvah. Who are we to stop her?" Mrs. Mandel was not very happy with the decision, but she realized that she had no choice.

A few weeks later, she called Rav Gesheid again. This time, she was elated and said, "My son just got engaged! Thank you, Rabbi Gesheid! Thank you!"

Rav Gesheid was cautious and replied with a "Mazel Tov," and then he asked, "but why are you thanking me? I wasn't involved in the Shidduch."

Mrs. Mandel exclaimed, "You were the Shadchan! The girl you allowed to share the Shabbos apartment with me was the sweetest girl I ever met. Every time I wept, she came over and comforted me. She spoke so softly and with such wisdom. Right away, I wanted her for my son, and Boruch Hashem, it happened!

"I thought I would be better off having my privacy and sleeping alone. But what I thought was going to be a discomfort and inconvenient, was exactly the way Hashem sent the longawaited Shidduch for my son!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

Taken For a Ride

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

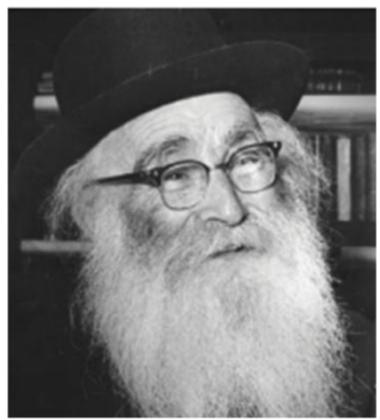
It had not been expected. Reb Yaakov Tzvi Zusman was a well-respected shochet in the community that is now known as Neve Yaakov on the outskirts of Jerusalem. But one day, without any previous indication of heart trouble, the young man suffered a massive heart attack and died.

His wife, Leah, was devastated and completely overwhelmed by sorrow and her feelings of inadequacy in coping with the daily struggles of survival. Among those who came to console the young widow was the famed saddik of Jerusalem, Reb Aryeh Levine.

He spoke with warmth and sincerity, offering to help in any way, and Leah was extremely grateful but never expected much to come of it. However, the morning after shivah, Reb Aryeh knocked on their door and offered to take the two

young boys, the older of whom was six, to shul to recite kaddish in memory of their father.

The children were thrilled to be going to shul with such a kind and famous man and before long settled into a routine where Reb Aryeh would pick up the children early every morning and take them to shul. Incredibly, he did not want the young mother to over-tax herself and so he would also dress the young boys in the morning so that she would be able to take advantage of some extra precious moments of sleep. Binyamin, who was only six years old, will never forget how much he loved walking to shul in the Batei Brodie neighborhood. He would hold Reb Aryeh's hand and feel secure, knowing that he was being looked after.



Reb Aryeh Levin

One morning Reb Aryeh fell ill and was unable to pick up the boys. In his place he sent Yoel Brand to bring the boys to shul. Reb Yoel arrived at the house on time and managed to get the boys up and out. But halfway down the street, Uri, the younger brother, stopped and refused to walk any further. Binyamin tried his best to convince his younger brother to move on but the little boy was adamant.

Reb Yoel was beginning to question why he had gotten himself into this situation in the first place but reminded himself that he was doing a misvah. He tried every tactic he could think of but nothing was working. The little boy just looked

down with a frown on his face and big sad, brown eyes. Reb Yoel felt terrible but he had tried everything and Uri wouldn't even tell him what was wrong. Exasperated Reb Yoel finally blurted out, "I don't understand it. You walk when Reb Aryeh picks you up. What's the problem?"

Uri looked up with tear-filled eyes and, revealing his childish innocence, said, "That's because every morning when Reb Aryeh picks me up, he carries me on his shoulders." Reb Yoel smiled. He should have known better. Of course, Reb Aryeh would have figured out how to find his way into this poor child's heart. He bent down and offered a ride. It was not Reb Aryeh's piggyback ride – but he took it anyway. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Touched by a Story")

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Overcoming an Act of Disrespect

By Yoni Schwartz



Rav Moshe Feinstein

One day in Mesifta Tiferes Jerusalem, the Yeshivah of Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT"L, there was a certain din Torah taking place. While in his office, Rav Moshe issued a certain ruling. Later, he got a very angry phone call from Rav So-and-So (not his real name), angrily telling him that his ruling was wrong and foolish because

it went against the Gemara. Rav Moshe listened with patience and when Rav Soand-So finished, Rav Moshe asked with his soft voice, "Which Gemara are you referring to?" Upon hearing the question, Rav So-and-So immediately hung up.

A couple months later, Rav So-and-So was about to publish a sefer and wanted a haskama (endorsement) from Rav Moshe. Not only did Rav Moshe give him an ordinary haskama, he gave him a special, very strong haskama. As he was about to leave Rav Moshe's office, Rav Moshe asked him, "By the way, which Gemara were you referring to?" He responded, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Rav Moshe responded, "When you called a few months ago saying my ruling contradicted the Gemara."

He responded that he never called him. It turned out that somebody who didn't like his ruling was upset and impersonated Rav So-and-So to frustrate and get back at Rav Moshe. Afterwards somebody asked Rav Moshe, "At the time you gave the haskama you didn't know that it was an imposter who called you. How did you give it to him?" He responded, "It doesn't matter. When I said Krias Shema that night, I forgave him completely. I have no ill feelings against him; even if it was him, it doesn't matter."

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of Torah Sweets.

Doing a 180

A married couple recently revealed how they turned their backs on their violent neo-Nazi past – after discovering they were both Jewish. The one-time skinheads grew up as part of a hate-filled white power gang in Warsaw, the capital of Poland and once the site of the largest Jewish ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe. But now they are devout members of an Orthodox Jewish synagogue.

The truth about their roots had been buried by their parents to escape persecution from first the Germans and then the Soviet-controlled post-war government. Even when the couple started spewing anti-Semitic slogans and attacking Jews, their parents still kept silent about their heritage. Pawel and Ola Bromson met at school when they were twelve and married at eighteen.

By then they were heavily involved in the neo-Nazi movement that was rife in Warsaw's concrete jungle housing estates. Just 350,000 Jews remained in Poland after the war, a tenth of the population from before the Holocaust, and many fled in the quarter of a century that followed. For those that remained, parents often decided it better to keep their true faith a secret.

But Ola remembered something her mother once let slip about her Jewish heritage. And when she checked at Poland's Jewish Historical Institute she learned the truth – that not only was she a Jew, but so was her husband. She was in shock.

'Something told me to do it. It was unbelievable. 'It turned out that we had Jewish roots. It was a shock. I didn't expect to find out that I had a Jewish husband.' She said she did not know how to tell Pawel the truth. 'I didn't know how to tell him. I loved him even if he was a punk or skinhead, if he beat people up or not.'

When she did, a disbelieving Pawel confronted his parents. He said he had been a skinhead and a nationalist '100 per cent'. 'It was all about white power and I believed Poland was only for Poles. That Jews were the biggest plague and the worst evil of this world,' he said.

It was difficult to describe the emotions he felt at learning he was Jewish, he said. 'My first thought was what am I going to tell people? What am I going to tell the boys? Should I admit it or not? I was angry, sad, scared, unsure.' He was unable to look in the mirror, he said, because he hated what he saw – a Jew. But as he came to terms with his identity he approached Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, who became a mentor to the couple.

Pawel (now Pinchas) added that he does have regrets – 'but it's not something that I walk around and lash myself over'. 'I feel sorry for those that I beat up but I don't hold a grudge against myself,' he explained. 'The people who I hurt can hold a grudge against me.'



Pawel Bromson today

Today, the couple are active members of the Jewish community in Warsaw. Pinchas is studying to work in a slaughterhouse killing animals according to the Jewish Kosher requirement and Ola is working in the synagogue's kitchen as a kosher supervisor.

Rabbi Shudrich paid tribute to them for having the courage to turn their lives around. 'The fact that they were skinheads actually increased the amount of respect I have for them,' he said. 'That they could've been where they were, understood that that was not the right way, then embraced rather than run away the fact that they were part of the people who they used to hate. 'I think also it says on a personal level, never write somebody off. Where they may be 10 years ago doesn't have to be where they are today. And the human being has this unlimited capability of changing and sometimes even for the better,' he added.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5785 email of Good Shabbos Everyone.