

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYEITZEI 5786

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## The Loyal Chasan



**Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian**

Before he became one of the greatest *mashgichim*, R' Eliyahu Lopian was a young *talmid chacham* learning in Kelm. There, under the guidance of Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv, the *Alter of Kelm*, every detail of character was refined, every decision weighed through the lens of *yiras Shamayim*.

R' Lopian's *shidduch* was arranged with a young woman from a fine family. She was known for her *tznius* and *yiras Shamayim*. The engagement was set, the plans in motion. But before the *chasunah* could take place, tragedy struck. The *kallah* fell seriously ill, her condition uncertain.

Her family, fearful that R' Lopian would feel trapped or obligated, sent word to him through intermediaries that he was free to withdraw. They explained that she might never fully recover, and it would be unfair to tie him to such uncertainty.

When the message reached R' Lopian, he became visibly pained. After a long silence, he said quietly, "In Kelm, we are taught that loyalty is not conditional. When a Jew gives his word, that word is sacred. And when Hashem sends a test, the test itself is holy. She did not choose to become ill — why should she suffer a second time by being abandoned?" He refused to break the engagement. "If Hashem decreed that she will live, we will live together. And if not, then let it be as He wills."

Weeks passed, and the young woman's health began to stabilize. Doctors were cautiously optimistic. She regained strength, and the marriage eventually took place. They built a home of Torah, *mussar*, and boundless *simchah shel mitzvah*. Years later, she became the devoted *eishes chayil* who stood beside him through poverty, war, and the challenges of building Torah in England and then Eretz Yisrael.

Once, many decades later, a student asked R' Lopian why he had waited so steadfastly through her illness, why he had been willing to risk a lifetime of uncertainty.

R' Lopian smiled softly and replied, "I waited for her — because she waited for me. When I was still a struggling young man, she believed in me, not for what I had, but for what I might become. Hashem sent me the chance to show that same faith in her. A *shidduch* that begins with loyalty to one another — and to Hashem — will always be blessed."

In later years, when giving *mussar shmuessen* about *chesed* and *bitachon*, R' Lopian would sometimes allude to his own story. "Every act of faith," he would say, "becomes a stone in the foundation of one's *bayis ne'eman*. A home built on truth and selflessness stands forever."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5786 email of The Weekly Vort.*

## The Bread Comes Full Circle

During the dark days of World War II, as the Nazis y's tightened their grip across Europe, a young Jewish couple from Poland fled eastward with their infant son. They had no papers, no money, and no plan — only emunah that Hashem would guide them to safety. After weeks of hiding and hunger, they crossed into Soviet territory and reached a small village in Kazakhstan.

Exhausted and starving, they knocked on the door of a humble peasant woman and begged for a morsel of bread for their baby. Seeing their desperation, she shared her last loaf with them and refused any payment. "Someday," she said softly, "you'll repay it to someone else in need."

Years later, after the war, the family rebuilt their lives in Eretz Yisroel. The baby grew into a successful businessman in Tel Aviv. One day, he noticed an elderly woman sitting on the curb, weeping. She explained in broken Hebrew that she had come from Russia to be near her children, but her only son had died soon after her arrival, leaving her alone and destitute.

Moved with compassion, he brought her home, fed her, and later provided for her needs. One evening, as they spoke over tea, she reminisced about her past — about her village in Kazakhstan, and how, during the war, she had once given her last loaf of bread to a starving Jewish couple with a baby. The man froze. The year, the place, the story — it was him. The bread she had given decades earlier had returned to sustain her in her old age. Literally, *shlach lach'mecha al pnei ha'mayim....*

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5786 email of The Weekly Vort.*

# The Borrowed Pen

By Yoni Schwartz

The Chazon Ish's tragic death left the Jewish world in shambles. There was a certain non-religious person who only knew the Chazon Ish, zt"l, by his real name, Rabbi Karelitz, from when he still lived in Europe, and he did not realize what a great person he truly was. When he read in the paper that Rabbi Karelitz had died, he called the family and said that he had known him back in Europe and was surprised to read that he had moved to Israel. He and the family began talking, and one thing led to another. Eventually, it came out that the Chazon Ish still owed him money from when they were in Europe.

The family asked, "What's your name again?" to which he replied. They said, "Ah, Baruch Hashem! He was looking for you for a long time but couldn't find you. He left your money in an envelope, and it has been sitting here for years. Thank you."

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, the Chazon Ish's great-nephew and one of his primary talmidim, was once in a similar scenario. One time at a wedding, he was asked to write the *kesubah*, and somebody lent him a pen. When he wanted to return it afterward, he couldn't find the man who had lent it. Two years later, he bumped into him by chance and said, "Baruch Hashem that I found you," then took out the pen from his jacket pocket - which he had been carrying for two years - and handed it to him.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Noach 5786 email of Torah Sweets.*

# The Expired Annuity



**The Ponovezher Rav**

For many years until his death in 1969, the Ponovezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kaheneman, zt”l, would visit Miami Beach, Florida, each year, in order to raise funds for his Yeshivah. Rav Berel Wein, zt”l, who was a Rav in a Miami Shul during that period, developed a close relationship with the Ponovezher Rav, and on many occasions, he would drive him around to the homes of wealthy members of his congregation to collect money.

The Ponovezher Rav had a magnetic personality, and his love for every single Yid was clear and apparent at all times. As a result, these wealthy individuals enjoyed the time spent in their homes with the Rav, and looked forward to his visits while the Rav was in town.

Rabbi Wein recalls that there was one man in his congregation, a widower with no children, who had retired years earlier and moved to Miami from New York City. This man had been a successful attorney until a number of medical issues stopped him from working. The doctors were not very optimistic about his recovery, and the man decided to retire and move to Miami.

He purchased an annuity (a financial product that pays out income, a reliable means of securing a steady cash flow for an individual during his retirement years, and to alleviate fears of outliving one’s assets) that would last until the age of ninety, bought a beautiful home and awaited the inevitable, living in comfort.

Fortunately for this man, the inevitable was very long in coming, and at the age of eighty-eight, he was still energetic, and sharp. He was also an outstanding member and donor to the Miami community. The Ponovezher Rav developed an attachment to this gentleman, and the two would engage in hours of conversation. Rabbi Wein would drive the Rav to the man's home at least two or three times each winter, and the wealthy retiree would always conclude their meetings with a check of no less than \$5,000 each and every time.

However, Rabbi Wein became aware of a change in the man when he turned ninety and his annuity ran out. Now, he had no more income, and aside from his home, he had very few assets. Rabbi Wein wasn't even sure if the man had any cash available for necessary staples. So, when the Ponovezher Rav came to town and asked him one morning if they can go visit his elderly friend, Rabbi Wein was uncharacteristically hesitant. He explained to the Rav that the man's situation had changed and he barely had enough money to live. He didn't feel it was appropriate to visit him at this time and expect a donation, but the Ponovezher Rav wouldn't hear of it. "Of course, we must go visit him! Now, especially, he would want us to come see him!"

The two got in the car and drove out to the man's home. They rang the bell and the man opened the door. When he saw who was standing there, his face immediately fell and turned white. He began to stammer that perhaps it was not a good time for visitors, but the Ponovezher Rav just smiled, shook his hand warmly and kissed him on the cheek.

They sat down together inside and the man began telling the Rav how his income had dried up and he was sadly unable to write out even a small check to the Yeshivah. The Ponovezher Rav stopped him in mid-sentence and said, "My dear friend, you don't need to worry. For so many years, you took care of the Ponovezher Yeshivah. Now, the Ponovezher Yeshivah is happy to take care of you!"

The Rav asked how much the annuity had paid him for all the years, and then assured the elderly man that as long as he lived, the Yeshivah would continue making payments in that exact amount! The man ended up living until the age of ninety-six, and for the final six years of his life, he indeed received a check every quarter in the amount he was used to.

Rabbi Wein later learned that the bulk of the money came from the Ponovezher Rav's personal bank account and allowed the man to live out his years in comfort, peace of mind, and with dignity. When the man passed away, he made his final donation—he left his beautiful home to the Ponovezher Yeshivah!

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

# The Impossible Task

Rav Mottel Slonimer, zt”l, writes (Ma’amar Mordechai p.342) that sometimes it seems impossible to overcome the Yetzer Hara and to change one’s ways, and indeed it is impossible without Hashem’s help. However, if we only try, then Hashem will help us.

He notes the following story: Two Tzadikim once made a pact with each other that whichever of them passes away first would come to his friend in a dream and tell him what happened in his judgment in Shamayim. A while later when one of the Tzadikim was Niftar, as promised, he soon afterward came to his friend in a dream to reveal what had happened to him.

He said, “When the court reviewed all my deeds, they saw that everything was perfect except for one Aveirah that I had, and that was the sin of taking a bribe.”

He explained, “Once, when I was serving as the head of the Bais Din, one of the people involved in the case I was judging placed money into my pocket without me knowing about it. I later found the money but I didn’t know that it was related to the court case from earlier, and I used it assuming it was money that I had placed there and forgotten about.



“For this, I was told that I would need to go to Gehinom to be cleansed, but I told the court that I didn’t want to go there, so instead, they brought me to a very large building. They told me that instead of going to Gehinom, I would have to demolish this building, and they handed me a small hammer to use. They said, ‘Tear down this building with the hammer, and when you finish, you will go straight to Gan Eden.’

“I was devastated. It seemed that I would be working on knocking down the building for many years, as it was a very large building and I only had a small hammer to work with. But then I thought to myself, ‘Didn’t I wear a Talis and Tefilin every day during my lifetime, and learn Torah and keep all the Mitzvos, only because I chose to do Hashem’s will?’

“Well, right now, it is Hashem’s will that I break a large building with this small hammer. If so, what is there to be upset about? This is the will of Hashem, and I will do it with joy— even if it will take me many years to accomplish! With a heart full of Simchah, I raised the hammer and hit the building with all my might, and to my great astonishment, the entire building collapsed! I was then swiftly brought to my place in Gan Eden.”

Rav Mottel Slonimer teaches that this reminds us that at times it can seem like it will take forever to change ourselves, but we only just need to put up a little fight with the Yetzer Hara. Things may only seem impossible, but they aren’t. It is very likely that one strong blow against the Yetzer Hara will topple him, and we can grow into the person we have set out to be!

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

# My Heroic Jewish Mother

**By Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

I was searching for an inspiring story that would capture what Jewish mothers have relinquished throughout the ages— quietly and heroically – so that their husbands and sons could learn. While we have a plethora of stories and vignettes, most are about rebbetzins, holy women who grew up in Torah homes, imbibing Torah values. What about the non-

Bais Yaakov bred women whose fidelity to Torah learning was emunas chachamim based? Then I realized that I did not have far to search. I lived that story. It is the story of my mother. My mother was a Holocaust survivor who had lost everything: family, home, stability. Despite her catastrophic losses, after the war, she and my father came to Chicago where they raised three children, of which I am the oldest.

My parents sent me to Telshe, Cleveland, because that was what my rebbe suggested. They adhered tenaciously to what rebbeim suggested. They did not hesitate, even though it meant my being away from home for long stretches. Five years later, a week before my brother’s bar mitzvah, everything changed. My

mother's world came crashing down. My father suddenly became ill. Within two days, he had passed away, leaving everyone shocked and devastated.

Horav Chaim Stein, zl [Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe], attended the funeral. Following the burial, the Rosh Yeshivah returned with us to the house where he sat down and spoke with me in an attempt to ease the crushing grief. As he was about to leave, he turned to my mother and said words that took her breath away, "Leibel must return to the yeshivah immediately following the bar mitzvah."



**Rabbi A Leib Scheinbaum**

My mother's response was utter shock, "How can the Rosh Yeshivah ask this of me? I am a widow with three children and a small dry goods store. Who will help me? I need my son!"

But the Rosh Yeshivah was firm, "Unless you give me your word that Leibel returns, I will take him back with me now, and he will sit shivah in the yeshivah." My mother broke down. Her husband was gone, and now her son would have to leave. Her world had collapsed. And yet, through the tears, she acquiesced and said, "I will do what the Rosh Yeshivah asks. Please take care of my son."

And so, I returned to yeshivah. My mother and sister stayed home— alone -- since my brother soon followed me to yeshivah. Every Shabbos, Kiddush and seudah were somber, but proud, experiences. My mother, as did many other mothers, gave up so much. I have no doubt that the nachas her neshamah now experiences in Gan Eden – the joy of knowing that, as a result of her sacrifice, her children and her many descendants continue to devote themselves to the learning and dissemination of Torah. Her story is not just mine. It is the story of countless Jewish mothers who gave up the comforts of this world, so that their sons would build the next.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sora 5786 email of Peninim on the Torah, a publication of the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.*



# **The Kalover Rebbe and the Blood Libel**

**By Yehuda Z. Klitnick**

Rabbi of Kalov, Harav Yitzchak Eizik Taub, the founder of the Kalover Chassidic dynasty, performed a miraculous event among many, and rescued his flock of sheep from bloodshed and the acquittal of an innocent individual [named Chaim]. The situation was so dire because of one of the young Gentile inhabitants of Kalov who served as both a shepherd and a caretaker of Chaim's garden.

Subsequently, the Gentile boy vanished unexpectedly, prompting a search for him in every possible location, yet his whereabouts remained unknown. Chaim visited the Gentile boy's parents, believing in his heart that he would return to his parent's home, but he was not found there either. Nevertheless, his hope was not entirely extinguished, as he was deeply concerned that the boy might have followed his Gentile friends, leading to a search throughout the surrounding area, but to no avail.

A few days later, the boy's father approached Chaim with a troubled heart, and issued a grave warning, stating that if his son was not returned soon, his [Chaim's] fate would be as bitter as that of a thorn bush. Suddenly, a profound darkness enveloped Chaim, and his world became obscured as if thunder had struck on a clear day. He hurried to the Kalover Rebbe and recounted all these events, expressing his distress in hopes of receiving guidance and wisdom to save him from the torment of his soul, for who could predict how far this situation might escalate?

The Rebbe after reading Chaim's Kvitel, reassured him, advising him not to fear or be disheartened, but to place his trust in the Lord, for surely He would command His mercy and locate the boy. The boy would soon be found.

However, as a few more days elapsed without any sign of the boy, a violent commotion arose in the city, and numerous Gentile men assaulted Chaim, demanding that he return the boy to his parents or they will replace a life for a life. All the Jews residing in the city were also filled with great anxiety regarding the peril looming over them, as they anticipated a pogrom could follow soon!

Rabbi Yaakov Fish, a family member of the Rebbe, entered the Rebbe's sanctuary to invoke mercy for Chaim and the entire Jewish community, which was in distress, as the boy had been missing for six days. The Gentiles were grinding their teeth and defaming the Jews with blood and its repercussions. Who will rectify

their actions?

The Rebbe responded, saying, "Listen to my instructions, prepare your wagon and embark on journey. Take along a friend on the cart and head towards the city of Nirbatir, both of you keeping vigilant throughout the journey, look both to the left and right, until you locate the boy who is lost. Once you will find him he will be in distress, you should calm him and take him along in the chariot and inquire about the identities and who influenced his heart to escape from his master. Once you have concluded your conversation, ensure he swears to disclose all this in the courthouse, and make sure that nothing he has shared with you will be forgotten.

Rabbi Yaakov Fish hurried to follow the Rebbe's instructions and commenced his journey at noon. By the dead of night, they discovered a young boy lost in a field, exhausted and weary. He was glad to see a wagon and ran towards them. They placed him in the chariot and nourished him until his spirit was revived. When asked his name, Rabbi Yakov gave a sigh of relief, that Baruch Hashem the boy was located and is alive!

The young boy regained his mood and strength, and after asking him questions, he recounted that his Gentile friends who are wicked individuals, had approached him, and we drank, and became intoxicated. They came up with a plan for me and they persuaded him to turn against his Jewish masters who were subjecting him to arduous labor.

They appealed to his heart, urging him to flee to a large city, where he would amass wealth and not be deprived of any worldly pleasures. "And you will become a man," they said, and then abandoned him, leaving him to wander alone. I regret that I listened to them as since that time, he has found no rest for his feet, drifting from one exile to another. He ate very little food until he stumbled and his strength was depleted.

The Gentile boy declared that a curse should befall the five Gentiles who had robbed him of the rest and peace of mind he once enjoyed under the protection of the Jew. He hoped to return to his previous situation. They made him swear to testify and recount everything about this vision in the courthouse the following day, ensuring he would not omit any details.

He affirmed, "I will comply with your request." And so it transpired. They detained the Gentile instigators in prison. Chaim then hosted a grand feast to express gratitude to Hashem for all his doings, and then went to Kalev to thank the Rebbe.

*Reprinted from the Parsha Chaya Sara 5786 email of Pardes Yehuda.*

# Schlepping Buckets

By Aharon Spetner



**Illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

Brrrr, “It’s freezing outside!” Totty said, slamming the front door behind him against the howling wind and rain.

“Hi Totty!” said Shimmy, taking Totty’s soaking coat and running to hang it up in the laundry room. “Mommy is making hot soup for supper.”

“Here Totty,” Basya said, handing him a cup of hot tea. “You look freezing.”

“Thanks,” Totty said. “You wouldn’t believe how crazy it was driving in this wild weather. Why, just two blocks ago...”

Totty’s voice trailed off as the house plunged into darkness.

“MOMMY!!!” howled little Yaeli, scared. Totty used the light of his cellphone screen to make his way to little Yaeli and pick her up.

BWOOOFMMM! Suddenly the lights in the house came back on.

“That’s strange,” Shimmy said, peering out of the window. “The neighbors’ houses are all still dark.”

“That’s because I hooked up the house to a backup generator,” said Yitzy, walking into the room. “We should have electricity for at least the next five hours.”

Everyone walked into the kitchen, to see Mommy pulling out the largest pots they had and filling them with vegetables.

“What are you doing, Mommy?” asked Shimmy.

“Think about all of our neighbors whose houses are dark and cold. I’m making enough hot soup to feed everyone on our block.”

Basya took Mommy’s cellphone and started calling all of the neighbors, inviting them over for hot soup. Soon, the Greenbaum home was filled with dozens of families and their children. Everyone helped Mommy serve hot soup until everyone was warm and full.

Two hours later, the power returned to the neighborhood and everyone went home. The Greenbaums went to bed exhausted, but happy that they could do such a wonderful chessed for their neighbors.

\* \* \*

“Basya,” said Mommy the next day after school. “Can you please wash the kitchen and dining room floors?”

“I hate washing the floors,” Basya said. “Can’t I do something else?”

“Basya,” Mommy said reproachfully. “I spent the entire day cleaning our house from last night’s mess. Do you know how hard it is to clean crusted split pea soup from the crevices of our couch? I am just asking you to do one thing.”

Basya reluctantly headed to the kitchen and began filling buckets of water so she could begin washing the filthy floor. There was smushed carrot under the cabinets, potato spread around under the table, and pieces of hardened celery seemed to have become one with the porcelain tiles.

“Basya, you’re doing such a wonderful job!” Mommy said warmly, walking into the kitchen half an hour later.

“Hmmm thanks,” Basya grumbled as she lugged yet two more buckets of water across the room.

“Come on now, Basya. It can’t be that terrible.”

“I feel like Rivka Imeinu,” Basya complained. “I understand that we had to feed the neighborhood last night, but why do I have to schlep these heavy buckets of water? It’s too much!”

“Are you really comparing yourself to Rivka Imeinu?” Mommy asked.

“Well yeah, she also had to schlep water,” answered Basya.

“Had to?” asked Mommy. “First of all, Eliezer came with ten camels. Now a thirsty camel can drink as much as thirty gallons of water. That’s 300 gallons! It would take you thirty trips with these two five-gallon buckets to carry that much water, and that’s not including the water for Eliezer and his men. And Rivka wasn’t schlepping water across a small kitchen - she had to bring it all the way from the busy well to where Eliezer and his men were standing with the camels!

“And let me ask you a question, Basya. You said we had to feed the neighbors last night?”

“Well yeah, it was chessed - and we have to do chessed.”

“Basya,” Mommy said. “The very definition of chessed is doing something you don’t have to do. We didn’t have to feed our neighbors last night. They weren’t going to starve or freeze to death. We did it because we wanted to do something nice for our fellow Yidden. And Rivka didn’t have to bring water for Eliezer, his men, and his camels. But she wanted to even though she didn’t have to. She was a real baalas chessed and doing this chessed is what gave her the zechus to be the mother of Klal Yisroel.”

Basya thought about this. Then she smiled and picked up the buckets of water with renewed energy. “Sure, Mommy told me to wash the floor,” she thought. “But I’m going to make it sparkle - she didn’t tell me to do that. And this way I’ll be doing chessed just like Rivka Imeinu.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sara 5786 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*

# Two Inspiring Stories for the Shabbos Seudah

Compiled by Tzvi Schultz

## In the *Zechus* of *Shabbos*



**Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman**

In 2006, *Maran HaGaon* Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman visited Lakewood, NJ. At that time, there were many *choilim* in the community, far more than usual.

This was brought to the attention of *Maran zt”l*, and he was asked how the town could be *zoiche* to a *yeshuah*.

Horav Aharon Leib zt"l replied that everyone should be *mekabel Shabbos* thirty minutes early and that this would be a *segulah* for the *cholim*. The town residents readily embraced this *segulah*.

That *Shabbos Kodesh*, *Hatzalah* did not receive a single call. On a typical day, they would receive about forty calls, but on that day, there were none.

That is the *zechus* of *Shabbos*.

## Humility at All Costs



**Rav Moshe Feinstein**

Rav Moshe Feinstein's family related a remarkable incident that took place after Rav Moshe *psakened* a famous *shailah* as permitted. There were *rabbonim* who disagreed with his *psak*, as often happens in *galus* where, as the saying goes, "We have no *navi*."

A follower of one of these dissenting *rabbonim*, a man with bad *middos*, stood up publicly against Rav Moshe's *psak* and even degraded him personally. Rav Moshe, true to the *Torah's* command, "You shall not fear any man," did not sway from his *daas Torah* and held his ground.

Not long after, this man was caught by the American authorities for a minor crime. His court case was imminent, and he faced a very harsh sentence. He turned to Reb Moshe — not to apologize for having humiliated a *gadol hador*, but to request that the rabbi write a letter to the judge in his favor, as even non-Jews respected the rabbi's word.

Immediately, Reb Moshe took out a paper and pen. He wrote such a warm letter that one would have thought it was for a close friend. He handed it to his adversary, and the letter ultimately saved the man from a harsh verdict.

His family was astonished. They asked him how he could so wholeheartedly help someone who had besmirched his name only a short while earlier.

"If I am in a position to help this man," he explained, "how can I refuse to extend a helping hand to a fellow Jew in need?"