

## INTRODUCTION

People generally know me as a *rosh yeshivah* (dean of a rabbinical seminary). After all, that's what I've been for over three decades. A *rosh yeshivah* of a high-level yeshivah generally has to be a good administrator, a high quality Talmudic scholar, and a spiritual figure. But I don't kid myself. I know I'm not a spiritual model for my students, nor do I ever make out that I am.

Back in the seventies, I added some of the greatest Jewish religious scholars of our day to my staff, men like Rav Shmuel Auerbach and Rav Shlomo Fisher. They are geniuses and saints. I am clearly not a man of their caliber. I was speaking back then with another *rosh yeshivah*, someone I have the highest regard for. He asked me, "How can you bring people like that in? Don't you realize you're going to be overshadowed?"

I told him, "That's the difference between you and me. You see it as a career. I'm in it for the sake of Heaven."

If there is one experience in my life that I have to single out as being formative, I would say that it was something that took place not long after I got married. I was a student at Beis Hatalmud at the time, absorbing the teachings of my mentor, Rav Leib Malin. He had founded Beis Hatalmud a few years earlier, gathering together in one place some of the finest Talmudic minds to have survived the Holocaust. Beis Hatalmud was located then in a ramshackle synagogue on Jerome St. in East New York. Rav Malin ran it on a shoestring budget.

I walked in one morning and saw Rav Leib himself, repairing a toilet. He noticed the look on my face, and realized that I thought that what he was doing was not in keeping with his dignity.

He sat me down and told me the secret of life. He said, "Let me tell you something I heard in the name of Rav Simchah Zissel of Kelem."

"G-d keeps very exact accounts of what we take from this world. We don't get anything for free other than life itself. Any person who is the least bit honest with himself understands how unworthy he is. At the same time, he's running up a big debt. Nothing is free, not a sip of water, not a breath of air. How do we stand a chance?"

"There's only one way. You have to view life as a big, luxury hotel. They're charging you left and right. It's great, but there's going to be a huge bill when you check out. There's only one guy who enjoys the delights of the hotel without paying. That's the waiter."

"The waiter is devoted to serving others. He's always smiling and ready to help. He is at the beck and call of the guests. He runs to help one, and then runs to help the other. But when he takes a break, he can go into the kitchen and make himself a sandwich with two thick steaks in it. Nobody looks, nobody cares, nobody charges him."

“That’s what you have to do. Be a waiter. Devote your life to serving others. Do whatever has to be done. Then at the end, you won’t be hit with a big tab.”

Since then I’ve tried to be a waiter. Much of my career has been devoted to getting funding for my institutions. What people don’t realize is that I’ve raised huge sums for other yeshivahs, ostensibly my competition. But I’ve never had the illusion that my yeshivah was the only show in town, or that it should be. It’s enough for me that it’s the best.

Not long ago, I was in Bnei Brak, the most religious city in Israel. I gave a lecture to a thousand people at the Ramat Elchanan synagogue. Afterwards, some people close to the venerable sage, Rav Eliezer Shach, came over to me.

Rav Shach – may G-d grant him many years of good health – is over a hundred years old. He was feeling low that night. These fellows asked me to come over to cheer him up. I had known Rav Shach ever since I came to Israel over forty years earlier, and we were good friends.

I went into Rav Shach’s room. He greeted me and asked me what my lecture was about. I said, “Rav Shach, let’s be frank with each other. You don’t want to know what I lectured about, and I don’t want to know what you lectured about. I came here because you want to shoot the breeze.” His laugh was worth a million bucks to me.

So if you have to be the plumber, you be the plumber. If you have to be the court jester, you be the court jester. You do whatever has to be done.

## REB NOCHUM

One of my students, Yitzchok Hirshowitz, moved from Itri to the Mirrer Yeshivah to hear the *shiur* (lecture in Talmud) of Reb Nochum Pertzowitz. Reb Nochum and I were great friends. He calls me up one day several months later, and in the course of the conversation he says, "I have a terrific student, a fellow named Yitzchok Hirshowitz. You don't have guys like that." He obviously had forgotten Hirshowitz's origins.

I told him, "What are you talking about? He's one of mine. He learned from me."

Reb Nochum took Hirshowitz from Itri without my permission. I personally didn't mind that he left. He needed the polish that Mir could give him. Reb Nochum told Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (his father-in-law and *rosh yeshivah* of the Mirrer Yeshivah) what happened, and Rav Chaim told him that from then on he was not to take student from me without permission. He started asking my permission, and I would grant it. He was one of the greatest geniuses I ever knew.

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On another occasion, Reb Nochum commented on my generosity of spirit in letting my best students – the group that included Gelber, Nowogrodski, Eisenthal – go to the lecture he would give on Saturday nights. I told him that I was like the woman who King Solomon judged. She was willing to part with her son as long as he would survive. These boys are my sons. I don't care if they go to somebody else as long as it's for their good. I told him that he's got an approach to the study of Rashi that they won't get from anybody else.

Reb Nochum told this to Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, and he was very pleased. I used to ask Rav Chaim to come give a talk some time at Itri, but he would always have some excuse. "My Hebrew isn't so good," or something like that. But after he heard this, he came right away.

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When one of my best students got married, the wedding took place here on the yeshivah campus. His father-in-law-to-be, a prominent scholar, told me that he was going to honor Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz with *siddur kiddushin* (officiating at the wedding). I told him, "Just a minute. I'm the one who's paying for the wedding, and *you're* giving out the honors? I'm going to take that honor for myself."

At the wedding, I had the master of ceremonies announce, "Rav Elefant honors Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz with *siddur kiddushin*." I know my place...sometimes.

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Reb Nochum used to come here to give a lecture once in a while. But when he got sick I stopped inviting him. He had to interrupt his lectures every twenty or thirty minutes to step out. I thought it would be embarrassing for him to come here, so I stopped calling him.

At that time I had gotten a new car -- a big, white, American Plymouth. Reb Nochum called me up and said, "I see that since you got your fancy Plymouth, you don't have any more use for little people like me." I had somebody drive me over to him in that car right away, and I brought him here. He gave a lecture, but he had to step out a number of times. Afterwards he told me, "You were right. A person should suffer his humiliations in his own home, not at somebody else's place."

We used to get together and talk often. Boy, could I make him laugh. I was the first one to realize he was ill. I came over to his house one night at 1:30AM and he was already asleep. I told his wife, "If he's asleep this early, something's wrong."

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Reb Nochum learned with Reb Leib Malin in Shanghai. He pointed out to me that Reb Leib's influence on him was different from Reb Leib's influence on me. When I came to Reb Leib, I didn't know a thing. He shaped me. But Reb Nochum had already studied under Reb Boruch Ber by the time he got to Reb Leib, so Reb Leib couldn't quite fit him into his mould.

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I once told Reb Nochum that he makes a mistake in the way he delivers his lectures in Talmud. He presents his original ideas straight off, at the outset of the lecture. I told him that's not the way you do it. You have to build up some tension. First you go over the conventional way of understanding the subject under discussion, step by step. Then you point out the weaknesses and difficulties in the conventional approach. Only then do you present your original way of looking at it.

I took one of his lectures and I restructured it my way. It was a new creation, and he recognized that, but he said he didn't have the patience to do it that way.

When I began learning, I never studied the Orders of *Noshim* and *Nezikin*. I started with *Kodashim* and stayed with that through all the years that I had my kollel. But that had to change once I opened my yeshivah. Younger students had to hear lectures in *Noshim* and *Nezikin*. I virtually never gave a lecture in those Orders without first going over it with Reb Nochum. I didn't have to consult with him about *Kodashim*. But in *Noshim* and *Nezikin*, I would always be afraid that I wasn't talking to the point until he reassured me.

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When I was in Beis HaTalmud, I didn't want to be Reb Leib's study partner. I knew he would overwhelm me in *Kodashim*. I studied with Reb Shmuel Kharkover. After a number of years, Reb Leib would sometimes come to me with questions in *Kodashim*. I knew all of the notes of the *Bach* on *Kodashim* by heart.

I don't mean to brag, I'm just telling it like it is. I'm reminded of the time Rav Yechezkel Abramsky had to testify in court in London as an expert witness. They wanted to ban *shechitah* (ritual slaughter). The judge tells him, "Rabbi, please present yourself." Rabbi Abramsky started talking at length about his position in the

rabbinical world and his expertise in *shechitah*. The judge interrupted him and asked, "Rabbi, doesn't your faith teach modesty?"

Rav Abramsky replied, "Of course it does, your honor, but I'm under oath."

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#### RAV YOSHE BER SOLOVEICHIK (OF JERUSALEM)

Rav Yoshe Ber wasn't a trailblazer like his father, but he mastered his father's legacy. He learned *Kodashim* through so many times, he would have needed Divine assistance *not* to know it thoroughly.

We used to be good friends. When I first moved to Jerusalem, he and his crowd used to learn in the Baba Tama Synagogue in the Bucharian Quarter. He had a brother named Chaim who went crazy. He's still alive, if you can call it a life. Rav Amram Blau wanted to take Chaim as his son-in-law; he'd do anything to have a connection with the Brisker Rov. But the Rov wouldn't allow Chaim to marry – he knew he was unbalanced, and he was of the opinion that it was forbidden for him to marry. Chaim knew this, and he couldn't forgive his father. He would come into Baba Tama when his father was there, and curse him out loud.

But Chaim was a genius. He wrote a book on *Yoma* which he called *Kol HaKosuv LeChaim BiYerushalaim*. I saw it. He had brilliant stuff in there, but you could tell from it that he was off. Right in the middle of a beautiful piece, he would stick in completely irrelevant things about what happened that day. It's a shame nobody ever thought in terms of photocopying back then.

I once told Rav Yoshe Ber that it was his good fortune that his brother Chaim wasn't fit to be a teacher.

We were good friends. I used to drop by his house at night. But we had a falling out because he once said something I considered insulting about Reb Leib. I told him I didn't understand how he could talk that way. He himself had been a student of Reb Leib's. His father paid Reb Leib to learn with him back in Brisk. I closed the door on him, and that was it for years.

When Reb Leib passed away, I wanted him to be buried next to the Brisker Rov. Rav Yoshe Ber thought it would be inappropriate because Reb Leib considered himself more of a disciple of Rav Yerucham Levovitz than of his father. I ran over to the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) to present my case, and I prevailed.

Years later, there was a member of the Knesset with whom I was friendly in the hospital. His name was Adi Yafeh, and he was a crony of Pinchas Sapir, the Minister of the Treasury. I went to visit him at Bikur Cholim Hospital, and who should be in the bed next to his but Yoshe Ber Soloveichik. He and Adi got to be good friends. That's what happens when you have two people lying in bed next to each other after heart attacks. Yoshe Ber and I started talking as if nothing had happened between us. He was telling me how sick he was. We talked for maybe an hour. I felt good about it

because I don't like staying on bad terms with people. Three days later he passed away.

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THE RELIGIOUS ZIONIST

Someone once wrote Reb Leib a letter condemning me for having connections with the Chief Rabbinate. He said I was a Mizrachi sympathizer. Reb Leib answered, "There are only two things Elefant knows – Torah, and how to raise money for Torah. He doesn't know what Mizrachi is. If he's chummy with the Chief Rabbinate, it's not for ideological reasons."

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RAV CHATZKEL

When I first came to Israel and lived in Bnei Brak. I became very close to Rav Chatzkel Levinstein, the *mashgiach* (spiritual mentor) of the Ponevezh Yeshivah. He felt indebted to my wife's family because he had lived for a number of years after the War in an apartment her grandfather, Rav Avrohom Horowitz, owned in East New York.

When the Mirrer Yeshivah was located in a shul on Ashford Street in East New York right after the war, girls used to come on Simchas Torah to watch the boys dancing from the balcony. You could see the girls, there was practically no *mechitzah*. My wife's grandfather, Rav Horowitz, began to protest loudly, but Rav Chatzkel got angry at him. He told him to keep his nose out of this, it was not his business. He went on to say that he was the one who was in charge of the yeshivah, and on Simchas Torah, this was acceptable. "The older students have to find their match," he explained. Rav Horowitz was a righteous man, but Rav Chatzkel was practical.

He and Rav Shach were among the first acquaintances I made in Israel. I'll never forget the first conversation I had with Rav Shach. I told him, "I won't be able to hold my own with you if we talk about Shas (Talmud), but I will if we talk about *Avi Ezri* (the book authored by Rav Shach)." That won him over.

Rav Shach had one copy of his latest volume in his house at the time, and he gave it to me as a gift. But he had forgotten that he had once given that copy to Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, and Rav Isser Zalman had written notes in the margins. When I discovered that I couldn't keep it, and I gave it back to him. That was another instance I regret not having made a copy.

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Back in those days, Rav Chatzkel had two main disciples, Rav Dan Segal and Rav Yisroel Kalmanowitz. He thought I had the potential to be a *tzaddik* (saintly personality) like them. THIS IS LOSHON HORA ON RAV CHATZKEL. I had a big bushy beard back then, and I kept all the Brisker *chumros* (halachic stringencies). It was the Zionists who corrupted me. So Rav Chatzkel paired me off with Yisroel Kalmanowitz. We learned the entire Tractate *Sotah* together. We really learned well. Whatever I know of *Sotah* to this day comes from that time.

Yisroel Kalmanowitz is a really special person. The Gerrer Rebbe once said of him, "He's a Litvak, but he has a *heiligge ponim* (holy countenance)." Kalmanowitz and Hillel Zacks used to play handball back in Brooklyn. They beat everybody in the neighborhood, even the goyim.

There was a time when I wanted to have Rav Dan Segal and Rav Yisroel Kalmanowitz join the staff of Itri, but Rav Shach was opposed to it. He loves them both, but he said they were too ascetic for the yeshivah.

So I was there in Bnei Brak studying with Kalmanowitz under Rav Levinstein. After three months, he didn't see any change in me. He began to realize that he might be the wrong address for me.

Until that time, he had never given me permission to go to Jerusalem. I was dying to speak with the Brisker Rov, but I had been to him only once. Rav Chatzkel saw that that was where I belonged, so he let me move on the condition I would come to Bnei Brak every Shabbos. He gave a talk in Ponovezh and he made me sit in the front row. But he saw that the traveling back and forth was tiring for me, and that he wasn't getting anywhere with me, so he relented altogether.

Rav Chatzkel looked like Eliyahu HaNovi (the prophet Elijah). Just seeing him was an experience. He wasn't in the habit of kissing people, but he would kiss me every time I came. There was a time when people were spreading some stories about me. He told one of the people involved, "Leave Elefant alone. He's devoted many nights to Torah."

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#### RAV ELYA'S TRIP TO HEBRON

It was the Sunday of the Six Day War. That was the fifth day of the war, and it was all but over by then. Goldie was in the States doing fundraising. I wanted to be prepared for any eventuality. I wanted to have extra money in case we had to continue under Arab rule, G-d forbid. I was staying with Rav Aharon Cohen, the *rosh yeshivah* of the Chevron Yeshivah. Rav Chaim Brand used to come to study with me at Rav Cohen's house. When he would show up and I was asleep, Rav Aharon would tell him, "Don't disturb him now. He's sleeping." He really took care of me.

Back then, Rav Dov Yaffe, who today is the *mashgiach* of Kfar Chasidim, was like my stepbrother. In those days he had the idea that he had to become a Brisker lamdan, and he wanted to join my kollel. He showed up one day, but I thought I wouldn't be fair to him if I accepted him. It wasn't his calling. He was meant to be what he became – a great *mashgiach*.

I knew Rav Elya Lopian from my early days in Jerusalem. He used to visit Jerusalem occasionally from Kfar Chasidim. Rav Elya called me that day at the end of the war, NOT CLEAR TO ME WHERE RAV ELYA WAS WHEN HE CALLED and told me that he wanted "to visit Avrohom Ovinu (our father Abraham)." I asked him if he wanted to visit the Kotel, and he said no, just Avrohom Ovinu. Rebbitzin Chanah Shimonovitz used to care for Rav Elya then – he was over ninety already. When she

heard that I was going to take him to the Cave of Machpelah, she began to shout at me that he wasn't up to it. I said, "What are you shouting at me for? This wasn't my idea. I'm just the chauffeur." Those were the days when I still drove. All Israel was in peril.

We left in two cars on Sunday morning. NOT CLEAR TO ME FROM WHERE. Rav Elya sat next to me in my Ford Falcon. Rav Elya Mishkovsky's mother, the daughter of Rav Itzele Peterburger, was in the other car. It was a blazing hot day. I had to stop for Rav Elya every half hour, and I wasn't much of a driver. We left Kfar Chasidim at 6:00 in the morning and we didn't get to Jerusalem until 5:30 in the afternoon. SO THE TRIP ORIGINATED IN KFAR CHASIDIM. THEN YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WERE DOING IN KFAR CHASIDIM FOR SHABBOS. Throughout the ride, Rav Elya kept talking about what a *chizuk emunah* (intensification of faith) the Six Day War was.

I was worn out by the time we got to Jerusalem. Who do we see on the street when we get there but my friend Yankel Yellin. He joined us and took over behind the wheel.

It was still dangerous to visit Hebron. Remember, this was Sunday, and Hebron had only fallen the previous Thursday. But Rav Elya was adamant. He had to visit Avrohom Ovinu.

We arrived in Hebron shortly before sundown. There was an officer standing guard at the Cave of Machpelah. He wouldn't let anybody in because there was a curfew in effect.

Rav Elya had traveled all day just to pray there. I couldn't let him down. Rebbetzin Chanah was there with us, too. She said if Rav Elya couldn't go in, he might have a heart attack. That really put me in a good mood. I told her again that this wasn't my idea.

All of a sudden, I see Rabbi Shlomo Goren's car pull up. He was chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces at the time. I knew Rabbi Goren, and I called out to him that Rav Elya was here waiting to get in. He didn't even glance at me. It's a miracle he didn't shoot me. He was at the pinnacle of his career at the time.

I went over to the officer in charge. I told him, "That's Rav Elya Lopian over there. He desperately wants to go inside."

"That's Rav Elya?" he said. "He's my rabbi." This was a religious fellow who used to learn with Chaim Brand in the Pressburg building in Givat Shaul. He said, "I'll take care of everything." He cleared away an area for Rav Elya. I told him that Rav Elya wanted a *minyán* (a quorum of ten men) to say the afternoon prayer, and he took care of that, too. All the way back, too, all he talked about was *chizuk emunah*.

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RABBI GOREN

Moshe Dayan was no great fan of Rabbi Goren. He once asked me, "Rabbi, I can understand authorizing the use of a helicopter to find corpses of soldiers so that their



widows can remarry. I'm not religious, but I respect those who are. But why did Goren need a helicopter to go up to the top of Mt. Sinai?"

I told him, "Dayan, you don't understand. He flew to Mt. Sinai to give back the Torah." He laughed so hard his eye almost popped out.

## RAV ASHER FREUND

When I got married, I did nothing but study Torah, and I didn't realize that my wife was also somebody. I treated her like a *shifchah kenaanis* (a slavewoman). "Goldie get me, Goldie give me, Goldie stand, Goldie sit." I noticed she was going off her rocker a little bit. So Rav Asher Freund came into my life, because she needed somebody to go to for guidance. Then she got him to come to me, and he said I had a *neshomoh* (soul) as high as the Arizal's (Rabbi Isaac Luria, the great sixteenth century kabbalist) or something like that, and that I'm the most capable guy in the world. He took me out to the fields to talk with G-d. I went through the whole Breslover regimen. What I got out of it was that I stopped being a dictator. I became a little bit normal. I realized that my wife also has needs. Her needs are things like going to pray at the Western Wall and Rachel's Tomb. Before Rav Freund, I wouldn't let her go to places like that. She had to be with "Mordechai" all day. Rav Asher saved my life because Goldie would have gone crazy. I emancipated her, me and Lincoln. I guess you could say that it was Rav Asher who made me such a big feminist.

One day I'm sitting with him and I see this crowd waiting outside. Dozens of people were waiting to be able to spend a few minutes talking with him. I told him, "Rav Asher, this really gets me down. I know how to learn (i.e., I understand Talmud) ten-thousand times better than you, and nobody stands in line to see me."

He starts laughing really hard -- that's when I saw how truthful he is -- and says to me, "I'll tell you what to do. Just leave your door open and let every miserable soul come in to you. They'll come, you'll see."

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That reminds me of something remarkable. At the funeral of my father-in-law, Rabbi Nochum Dovid Herman, an *amuda dinura* (pillar of fire) appeared. At least 500 people saw it. Some of them asked me for an explanation. I told them that it appeared because he used to cheer people up with his jokes everyday. Those people who were unfortunate came to him, and they left feeling a bit better. That's why there was an *amuda dinura*.

When my father-in-law was in intensive care before he died, he started saying, "It hurts, it hurts." One of the doctors present asked, "Where does it hurt?" He said, "My side." The doctor asked, "Which side?" He said, "The Lower East Side."

He was always joking. One day a fellow stops him on the street, a real *nebach*, and tells him, "Rabbi Herman, you're looking really young." He said, "It's like the *gemara* says -- being in the rabbinate shortens your years."  
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THE FOLLOWING BELONGS IN SOME SECTION ABOUT THE BRISKER ROV

THE BEIS HALEVI AND THE INNKEEPER

I'll tell you a something I heard from the Brisker Rov. When Shechem violated Dinah, it says that the sons of Jacob were incensed "for he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with a daughter of Jacob, and such a thing is not done." The phrase

“and such a thing is not done” seems unnecessary. Rashi explains that it implies that all the nations of the world had restricted themselves from sexual immorality since the time of the Flood, and Shechem violated this restriction. But the Rov asked that it still isn’t clear why this point added to the brothers’ sense of indignity.

He answered with a story about his grandfather, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveichik, author of the *Beis Halevi*. When Rav Yoshe Ber was printing his book, he had to do a lot of traveling through a lot of Polish towns. He wasn’t an impressive looking man. He was a little fellow with a scraggly beard who wore a simple fur hat when he was traveling during the winter.

Most of the Polish inns in those days were run by religious Jews who rented them from Polish noblemen. One freezing night when he was on the road, Rav Yoshe Ber stopped at an inn managed by a *chossid* of the Koidenover Rebbe. This *chossid* was a prominent and wealthy man. He knocked on the door, but at first they didn’t want to let him in. They were busy preparing a festive meal in honor of the *yohrzeit* (anniversary of death) of the Rebbe’s father, and they didn’t want to take care of any more guests. But Rav Yoshe Ber knocked and knocked and pleaded that he would die if they didn’t let him in, so the manager relented, and led Rav Yoshe Ber to a bench next to the oven in the kitchen. It was nice and warm there, but it was not a place to seat a guest, much less a dignified person.

After the tables were set with the best tableware, and the delicacies had been laid out, the Koidenover Rebbe arrived. He and his followers began their celebration, singing songs and drinking wine, when all of a sudden the Rebbe noticed Rav Yoshe Ber sitting there in the corner next to the oven. Rav Yoshe Ber was certainly no *chossid*, but the *chassidim* held him in high esteem. The Rebbe got up, ran over to him, and brought him over to sit next to him at the head of the table. He poured Rav Yoshe Ber some vodka and asked him what he was doing next to the oven, and Rav Yoshe Ber told him the whole story about how he nearly froze to death before he could get in.

While all this was going on, the innkeeper was bewildered. He sees this little old guy being pampered by the Rebbe. He went out of his box. Then he found out it was Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveichik, the original Brisker Rov himself.

When the celebration was over, the innkeeper went straight over to Rav Yoshe Ber and said how sorry he was. “Had I only known who you were...”

But Rav Yoshe Ber would not forgive him. After a lot of begging, he still didn’t relent, but he said that the innkeeper should come to Brisk for a week. He had the guy study some books on how to behave properly toward your fellow man.

Then he explained why he was being so harsh. He said the explanation was implicit in a Rashi, which happened to be on the Torah portion for that week. “All the nations of the world had restricted themselves from sexual immorality.” He asked the question the Brisker Rov posed above – why was it that this point aroused the indignation of the sons of Jacob, even more than the fact that Shechem had “lain with a daughter of Jacob”? Rav Yoshe Ber went on to cite the *gemara* about someone who is guarding somebody else’s gold, and he gives it to somebody else for safekeeping, but he tells the second fellow that it’s silver, not gold. Then, if the gold gets stolen, the second

fellow only has to pay for the equivalent amount of silver, because that's all he took responsibility for. But if the second fellow actively damaged the gold he was given, he must pay the actual value of the gold. There it's not a question of how much responsibility he undertook. He simply has no right at all to damage other people's property whether it's gold or it's silver.

The brothers reasoned, if you'd be allowed to go around raping girls, then Shechem might have had the excuse that he didn't realize that it was Jacob's daughter. But everybody had accepted limitations on sexual immorality. Nobody went around raping. So "I didn't realize" was no excuse. Shechem was fully responsible not only for rape, but for raping the daughter of somebody special.

Rav Yoshe Ber went on, "You thought I was just some little Jew with a scraggly beard. You didn't know I was the rov of Brisk. But you're not allowed to be callous to *any* Jew. You're not allowed to insult *any* Jew. So you're fully responsible for having insulted the *Beis Halevi*."

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#### PRAVDA

My father-in-law was the rabbi of an important shul, the Clymer Street Shul in Williamsburg. It was across the street from the police station. That used to frighten me. I was always scared of the police. The shul was diagonally across the street from the Satmar *beis hamedrash*. My father-in-law was close with the Satmarer Rebbe. They had one thing in common – they both hated the State of Israel. Having the Satmarer Rebbe as a neighbor gave my father-in-law more fortitude, so he once got up and spoke out against Weizmann and Ben Gurion and things like that. His congregants wanted to toss him out. When he finally *was* thrown out, the Satmarer helped him out.

One morning, not long before the wedding, I was davening in my father-in-law's shul, and Rav Reuven Grozovsky came over to me. Rav Reuven davened there to make a point. He wanted people to see that he was a supporter of my father-in-law. Rav Reuven said to me, "Do you know why *Pravda* is called *Pravda*?" *Pravda* was the official newspaper of the Soviet government. The word means "truth." He went on and said, "It's because they wanted to be consistent. If they would have called it *Lies*, there would have been a little bit of truth in it."

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#### RAV LEIB SHACHAR

Rav Leib Shachar was an Alter Mirrer who was called "Rav Leib Maleritter" after his hometown, Maleritte in Poland. He was the kind of genius who would walk into a tree and say "I'm sorry." His son, Rav Berl, is a rosh yeshivah today in Edison, NJ. Rav Leib was the son-in-law of the Radziner Rebbe, Rav Yerucham Leiner. Rav Yerucham was a nephew of Rav Gershon Leiner, the *Baal Hatecheiles*. Rav Yerucham and I both lived in Boro Park, and I used to learn *Minchas Chimuch* with him every Shabbos. He was a sweet old man.

At that time, around 1948, there was a meeting of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (governing body of the Orthodox organization Agudath Israel) in Israel, and I asked

him why he didn't attend. He said, "I'm a Poilisher. In Poland, Brisk was emulated. So if the Brisker Rov is sitting now in Jerusalem and he doesn't attend, how can I attend?"

His son-in-law, Rav Leib Shachar, wore *tzitzis* with *techeiles* because that was the custom of his father-in-law. He was as brilliant as an Einstein. All he did in the States was learn in *Beis Hatalmud*. We used to ride the subway together back to Boro Park from East New York every evening. It must have been at around seven o'clock, when the trains were full. We would talk about the Talmud we had studied that day. He was incapable of anything other than discussing Talmud. He would get very emotional about it. He'd get up on the subway, start talking loudly, and gesticulate with both hands. I'd tell him, "Reb Leib, there are other people here," but he didn't know the difference. He would just keep right on, as loud as ever, and people wouldn't have the faintest idea of what he was talking about. I just couldn't convince him that there were other people around.

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We learned that Rav Leib (Shachar) had lymphatic cancer. He was still ambient but he was terribly ill. Some of us who were close to him made an appointment to speak with one of the specialists at Mt. Sinai Hospital who were on his case. Reb Leib (Malin) went, along with the Amshinover Rebbe, Reb Yerucham Leiner, Reb Shmuel Kharkover, and me. The Amshinover was known as Reb Shimmaleh *Oheiv Yisroel* (the lover of Israel). He was a very unassuming man. They took me along to be the spokesman because I knew English. They wanted advice.

The doctor we spoke to was a Jew, a very respectable man. One of those present asked, "Doctor, is there still hope?"

The doctor looked at all the bearded Jews in front of him and said, "You gentlemen are asking *me* this? I'll tell you a little story. Just a few weeks ago a lady was here with a big tumor. Two weeks ago she left without any malignancy at all. I can't give you any medical reason why. You probably have some sort of answer."

A bit later I went with Goldie to Denver to raise money for *Beis Hatalmud*. It was the first time I had ever flown. I got a phone call from Reb Leib (Malin) telling me to come back right away because of Rav Leib (Shachar). I was present in the hospital room when he died. Reb Leib's (Malin) alter ego, Rab Chaim Vissoker, was also there, but he was a *kohen* so he ran out of the room when he saw the end was approaching.

Rav Leib said *Shma Yisroel* with fervor right before he passed away.

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## RAV SHLOMO FISHER

Rav Shlomo Fisher is a member of my faculty and one of the most brilliant Talmudists of this generation. He was born and raised in the heart of Meah Shearim, but he has connections with Religious Zionist institutions. I once came into Rav Shach, and he started calling Rav Shlomo a *kalyekker* (someone not firmly devoted to the purest Torah ideals). I was annoyed, but I didn't say anything. This happened a

second time. I said to myself then, "If this happens again, I have to do something about it." It happened again. So I went into Rav Shlomo's room here in the yeshivah, and I took out a letter written by the Steipler in which he calls Rav Shlomo "*pe'er hador*" (the glory of the generation). Next time I went to Rav Shach, he said again that Rav Shlomo is a *kalyekker*. I said, "Rav Shach, listen to me. The Steipler is also a *kalyekker*." He looked at me like I was crazy, but then I showed him the letter. I never heard any more complaints about Rav Shlomo. I told this to Rav Shlomo and it didn't mean a thing to him. The only thing he cares about is understanding the Torah.

Then there was a time when a member of my own staff came to me with similar objections. He wanted me to get rid of Rav Shlomo. He quotes Bialik, Nietzsche, and all sorts of other things that are generally unacceptable in yeshivos. I told him, "You're right, but I've got one problem. You and me, we can teach these boys here how to understand Talmud. But there's a lot more to education than that. Who's going to teach these kids about purity, humility, and integrity? You? Me? That's what we need Rav Shlomo for." The guy chuckled and agreed with me.

## RAV CHAIM OZER AND THE LODZER ROV

One of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski's life's dreams was to compose a *sefer*. When he finally did, he went to Rav Elya Chaim Meisels, the Lodzer Rov, to get a *haskamah* (letter of approbation). He asked Rav Meisels how come a man of his stature didn't compose a *sefer* himself. This was before Rav Elya Chaim's work on the *Sefer HaMitzvos* had come out. Rav Elya Chaim got up as if he was mad because of the question, and walked into another room. Chaim Ozer was concerned at having upset him. Rav Meisels came back with ledgers full of lists of widows and orphans whom he had helped. He said, "This is my *sefer*. All my life I was like you. I thought the important thing was to write a *sefer* on the Rambam. But as I got older I realized this *sefer* is more important."

Rav Chaim Ozer had one daughter, and she died. Until she died he didn't know what forgetting was. And after that happened, he also began to think that writing a *sefer* wasn't so important. He became more and more involved in the needs of his community and caring for the poor. I heard part of this story from Reb Leib and part of it from Shaya Portnoy

## DAVID MASLANSKY

I got married at the age of nineteen and a half. We had an apartment in East New York, right near Beis HaTalmud. It belonged to my wife's grandfather, Rav Avrohom Horowitz. He was a Novardoker, a student of Rav Yoizel Horowitz. He didn't have a rabbinical position. He had a long beard, but he would always wear a brown or blue hat, never a black one, so people shouldn't think he was a rabbi. He had a store for pillows and bedding which he ran together with his wife. A fellow named Mandel opened up the same kind of store right down the street from him. That didn't faze him. When his wife wasn't around, he would tell customers, "Go to Mandel. His merchandise is better."

He was a well-respected man in the community. People used to come to him to arbitrate disputes, even the local blacks.

Rav Aharon Kotler was in Israel when Rav Horowitz's body was brought here for burial. He was staying with his brother-in-law, Rav Yitzchok Ben-Menachem. Rav Aharon had a high fever at the time but he insisted on going to the funeral. Rav Yitzchok's wife, Sarah, got upset with me. She thought I was pressuring him to go, but I told her I wasn't. When we were in the car, I asked Rav Aharon how come he was going. He said, how could he not go? Rav Horowitz was the Chofetz Chaim of America.

The apartment was at 975 Blake Avenue. Peddlers had their pushcarts there. You could get anything you wanted from the pushcarts -- fruit, vegetables, housewares, you name it. My wife's grandfather was instrumental in having that market close down on Shabbos.

I was taking a walk on Blake Avenue with Rav Leib one Shabbos. The place smelled of fish. I could see that Rav Leib didn't like all the dirt that was still around. I suggested, "Let's walk on Sutter Avenue," which was parallel to Blake. He said, "No. Let's walk on this avenue. In *Tana DeBei Eliyahu* there's a story of a man walking with Eliyahu HaNovi (the prophet Elijah). They saw the carcass of an animal in the street. It smelled. The fellow held his nose, but Eliyahu HaNovi didn't. They went further, and they passed by a guy dressed real fancy. Then Eliyahu HaNovi held his nose." He went on to say, "Here we smell rotting fish, but we smell Shabbos, too. Sutter Avenue is a clean street but it stinks of *chilul Shabbos* (desecration of the Sabbath)."

When I moved into my grandfather-in-law's apartment, I went into the closest shul, the Elton Street Shul, to daven minchah (the afternoon prayer). The rabbi there was Rav Chinitz, a big lamdan. His grandson, Zelig, did some ghostwriting for Max Fisher. A little old *shnorrer* (beggar) comes over to me in shul, shabbily dressed. I look at him and give him a quarter. He was offended. He says, "I don't take donations." He had found out that I was married to Rav Horowitz's granddaughter. It didn't take a few hours before we had a visit from him. His name was Dovid Maslansky. He was a very eccentric guy. He was born in Mir, but never attended the yeshivah there. Rav Yitzchok Elchonon and Rav Yossele Slutzker had both blessed him that he should live a long life.

He lived alone in a room in the neighborhood. He used to eat at my wife's grandfather's house for years and years, so when he heard that grandchildren moved in, he came right over. We were privileged to inherit him. He was very capricious. When he came to United States, he had all his teeth pulled out. He had heard it was hard to get food, so he figured that without teeth he wouldn't need so much food. He had all kinds of criticism of mankind, but he never took a penny that wasn't his. He used to carry sacks of old shoes on his back for fifty cents a sack. He dressed very cleanly, but his clothes were shabby. His jacket and pants weren't even distant cousins.

He would come over to us for a meal, eat with gusto, and say, "This meat is older than I am." He was only eighty-five. He would continuously insult the food, and that annoyed me, but I kept quiet. He would always pay for the food he ate. We didn't want to take his money but we had charity boxes in the house and he put money in them. This is a man who had nothing at all, but he had his daily meal.

One day when my mother was very ill, I was nervous and frustrated. Maslansky started to give me the business about how the meat is nothing more than a big chunk of salt, and I threw him out of the house. Goldie started to cry; she made me run after him to bring him back, and I did. She said to me, "You have to understand that hospitality means more than just providing food. That man is alone in the world. He needs someone to shout at." I liked that very much, and I told it to Reb Leib. Maslansky and I became great friends. He came every single day for a meal. Other religious people threw him out but I kept him.



Beis HaTalmud always finished very late on Rosh Hashanah. He came into our shul after having davened elsewhere, and screamed in agony that he was hungry. Goldie ran home with him ~~home~~ to feed him.

One Sukkos, we built a sukkah in the yard behind the building. You had to climb out through the window to get into the sukkah. It was hard for an old man to do that. So I said, "Dovid, I'm not going to give you a meal if you don't go into the sukkah." He got mad and went home hungry. Goldie got mad at me and told me we could have given him food that you don't have to eat in the sukkah -- the man has to eat. I had to run after him to catch him or Goldie wouldn't talk to me for two weeks. From her I learned what hospitality really is.

When we moved to Israel, we wanted to take him along, but he wouldn't come. He said that a person who had desecrated Shabbos wasn't fit to go there. He carried on Shabbos because he was afraid that if he died on the street he would need his papers on him so people should know who he was. He ate without a hat. One time he was sitting on a stoop and eating cherries without a hat on his head, and he sees me and he put his hat on right away. He had real respect for rabbis. For a long time I didn't realize what great fear of sin he had, more than all of us.

One Erev Yom Kippur he came over to use the phone. He called some nephew or niece to tell them not to cook on Yom Kippur. He got so overcome by emotion that he started speaking as if some *tzaddik* (righteous person) were giving a *mussar shmuess* (talk on ethics). That's what Sabbath desecrators were like once upon a time.

We wound up staying in the States two or three years longer than we intended because of Maslansky. We were worried about him. Once we got to Israel, we thought of returning because of him. Then we heard that he was hit by a car and killed at the age of ninety.

#### ROSH HASHANAH IN EAST NEW YORK

One Rosh Hashanah, our guests included Rav Avrohom Horowitz, Shmuel Kharkover, and Aaron Zavlotsky. Aaron lived in Williamsburg, and he was a Mirror as well as a Baranovitcher. They all wanted to spend Rosh Hashanah in Bais Hatalmud with the Mirrors. Levi Krupenia was there, too. They all stayed at my house. What a crowd I had.

You could see the awe of the Day of Judgment on Rav Avrohom Horowitz's face. Reb Avrohom Pam told me that he came from Williamsburg to daven in Beis Hatalmud just because of Rav Horowitz. He looked like a man standing trial for murder. Pam didn't have a beard yet in those days. Shmuel Kharkover was a comical type, and he would make Rav Horowitz laugh at the table. Rav Avrohom would first laugh and then cry for having acted frivolously on the Day of Judgment. I told Shmuel, "You're killing the guy." He said, "I feel that in order to pass the Day of Judgment, I have to give Rav Avrohom a few moments of enjoyment." That's what my table was like on Rosh Hashanah.

I blew shofar at Beis HaTalmud in those days. Yosef Liss was a Gerrer who became a Mirrer and a Brisker. He was one of the people who edited Reb Yerucham's *Chever Maamorim*. I knew him because he was friends with Reb Leib. Liss had been close to the Brisker Rov when he was in Jerusalem. He was an expert in shofar blowing. Reb Leib asked him to come to East New York to teach me all the Brisker *chumros* (halachic stringencies). I was nineteen or twenty; I had strength. I told Reb Leib that I was willing to blow if the *makri* (the one who prompts the shofar blower) had *kavanos* (mystical intentions to enhance the shofar blowing) for me. The *makri* was Reb Leib.

I had a shofar fitted for me that I used all the years I blew in East New York. I wanted to bring the shofar with me when I came to Israel and I asked Reb Leib for it, but he wouldn't let me. I had to leave it in Beis Hatalmud.

#### RAV SHACH- CHOFETZ CHAIM

I once visited Rav Shach with a friend of mine ten or twelve years ago. I was in a bit of a hurry, but Rav Shach had a story he really wanted to tell me so he held me back. In the *Biur Halachah* in *Hilchos Shofar*, the Chofetz Chaim writes that the shofar should be blown from the right side. He writes that he heard a source for this from Reb Meir Simchah. It was a verse in Tanach (the Bible). Rav Shach made a big to-do about this. He told us the reason Chofetz Chaim did this even though he didn't cite other contemporaries. He wanted to make sure that people didn't think he was angry at Reb Meir Simchah. It was at the time that the Russian government passed a law that Russian had to be part of the curriculum of the Volozhiner Yeshivah. All the *gedolim* (leading Torah figures), held a big meeting to decide whether they should accept the law and keep the yeshivah open, or not accept it and close the yeshivah down. The Lubavitcher Rebbe of the time attended, too. He was close with all of the *gedolim*; he was like a Litvak. They decided to close the yeshivah. The Chofetz Chaim addressed the gathering to say that the yeshivah should close. Reb Meir Simcha made a comment to the effect that a little Jew from a little town shouldn't get involved in an issue like this; he dismissed him.

The Chofetz Chaim was very close with Reb Chaim Soloveichik. Reb Chaim told him, "Don't feel bad. Your book, *Shmiras Haloshon*, is a more important work than his *Or Sameach*." GET FROM RAV NOSSON THE STORY RAV SHACH TOLD ABOUT R MEIR SIMCHAH ARRANGING A GET.

Rav Shach concluded, "That's the reason I think the Chofetz Chaim cites Reb Meir Simchah. He wanted to show the world he's not mad at him even though he insulted him." Rav Shach made a big deal of this point. (This is the authentic version of the story. Another book mentions it, but distorts it.)

Walking out I asked my colleague what he thought was the reason behind Rav Shach's excitement. He suggested that it was because Rav Shach was a very elderly man, and he was already living in a different sphere. These were the kind of things that were on his mind, and he wanted to get feedback from us about it.

I got home, and I got a call from Hillel Zacks' oldest brother, Hershel. He asked me to do him some favor with the government. I made the necessary phone calls and then I called him back. He was a grandson of the Chofetz Chaim. I mentioned to him that I had just visited Rav Shach and he told me this interesting story. He said, "My father asked the Chofetz Chaim exactly that question, and the Chofetz Chaim gave exactly the same answer that Rav Shach gave." I figured that there was no way I could make Rav Shach happier than with that bit of information.

The next day I was at a wedding in Bnei Brak, so I hopped over to Rav Shach. I walked in and there seemed to be nobody in the house besides him. I wanted to set him up a bit, and I started to say I had something to tell him. I wanted to make it really dramatic. He said, "Out with it already." So I tell him and he jumps up as high as the chandelier and hugs me and kisses me. He said, "You've added a piece on to my life."

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Around that same time, I paid another visit to Rav Shach, and he moves me up a chair and brings me a glass of tea. There was nobody else around, so I'm pretty sure he's the one who gave me the tea. He stood up on a chair to get me an ashtray. I said, "Why are you doing such a job on me? What is it you need from me?" I always kibbitzed him. He pulled his chair a bit closer, and I pulled my chair a bit closer, and he said, "I'm thinking, I'm already an old man. What am I going to say for myself when I appear before the *Kisei Hakovod* (Throne of Glory)?"

I said, "What's with you, Rav Shach? You wrote the *Avi Ezri*. You have Ponovezh, you have Bnei Brak. You're a *kol yachol* (omnipotent) man. You break governments and make governments."

He gave a little smile and said, "All that I do for myself. But what have I done for Him? I'm thinking that it might be that I suffered insults. I could have completely destroyed someone who had wronged me, but I destroyed him only partially."

I told him, "You mean so-and-so, don't you?" He got upset that I mentioned somebody specific, but it was no secret to me.

He goes on and says, "Take you, for instance. You have a good head and know how to learn, but all you have is people hounding you. You have thousands of students. I wouldn't mind being where you are 'over there'."

I said, "Rav Shach, do you really mean that?"

He said, "Sure." Rav Nosson Kamenetsky was there.

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Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was here in 1980. There was a convocation of the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah (the governing body of Agudath Israel, the Orthodox political organization). In Rav Nosson Kamenetsky's book about his father, there's a picture of me taking Reb Yaakov to the meeting. For many years he talked to me as my friend.

Reb Yaakov spent a Shabbos in the yeshivah on that visit. It was full then, 280-300 boys. Everybody went in one by one to have a private talk with him. Everybody saw him. All of his grandchildren who were studying in Israel were here that Shabbos. I gave them the cafeteria.

Rav Yaakov thought Goldie was terrific. When he was a rabbi in Toronto, he tried out for the position at Torah Vodaas (in Brooklyn) that he eventually took, and he stayed at Goldie's house for many Shabbosos. He knew her really well.

Reb Yaakov had tremendous enjoyment from the students of the yeshivah whom he met that Shabbos. He said they were the most mature boys he ever met. At the end of Shabbos he said to me, "I've known you for forty years. You have such *zechusen*, I wouldn't mind being with you in your *daled amos* (in close proximity with you in the World to Come)." Then about four or five months later, Rav Shach said the same thing to me. When Rav Shach told me he was serious about it, I said, "It's funny. Reb Yaakov said the same thing to me."

#### RAV DOVID LIFSHITZ

My father-in-law and mother-in-law saved Rav Dovid Lifshitz from the Nazis. Rav Dovid was one of the top men on the faculty of Yeshivah University, an excellent speaker. He was here for *Yomim Noraim* (the high holidays) a few times. He explained to me once that my father-in-law and his family saved them from the door of Gehinnom.

Rav Dovid was the rav of Suvalk, Poland, a very important community. He was a young man, but he inherited the position from his father-in-law, Rav Yosef Yosselovitz. Rav Yosselovitz was a *Chovev Zion* (early religious Zionist) and a great *talmid chochom*. He used to have the first article in the important European Torah journals. His grandson-in-law, Rav Nosson Kamenetsky, gave me a recently published volume he wrote on Talmud.

Rav Dovid was a grandson of the author of *Olas Shlomo on Kodashim*. His wife was a brilliant woman. It was a pleasure to talk to her. Just before she passed away I spoke to her on the phone for 45 minutes. She was as smart as they come. We used to talk a lot when my mother was sick at Presbyterian Medical Center. I was seventeen or eighteen then. No, it was after I got married, so I must have been nineteen. I stayed with them for Shabbos to be near my mother. We were like one family.

The general practice in Eastern Europe was that when the Nazis would get near a town, the last to leave would be the rabbi. Nazis were at the door of Suvalk. The Rebbetzin ran away with the girls. While they were running, one of the little girls fell and died. The Rebbetzin had a dead child on her hands, so she returned to Suvalk to bury her. They were all stuck in Gehinnom.

Rav Dovid was my father-in-law's rebbe in the Mirrer Yeshivah. Rav Dovid was a friend of Reb Leib and all those alter Mirrers. My father-in-law was not in New York at that time, but in Burlington, Vermont, but somehow Rav Dovid got in touch with

him. In New York there were 500 like my father-in-law, a dime a dozen. In Burlington he was like one male in Moscow. That's a Yiddish expression.

My father-in-law was a prominent rabbi, an impressive looking man. He once delivered the invocation opening a session of Congress. He got to work getting affidavits, he went to Washington, and he saved them. It was the last possible minute to get out. When Rav Lifshitz and his family landed at the airport in New York, there was a big delegation of rabbis there to meet him. They were prepared to accompany him to the city, to have him speak, but he said, "No. I'm going to Burlington to say thank you to the man and the community that saved my life." It was that shul and all of its prominent members who helped save him. So he apologized to the rabbis from New York.

He was a great speaker, and he gave a fiery sermon. My wife told me he could make tears come from the walls. People wanted to give him a lot of money -- he didn't have a nickel -- but he said he wouldn't take charity from the people who saved his life. The Lifshitzes lived in Washington Heights where Rav Dovid taught in YU, and his daughter Shulamis went to Bais Yaakov in Brooklyn, which was an hour way by subway. So she boarded with Goldie's family, and lived in the same room with her for years. It was like one family.

#### GOLDIE DATING

When I went out with Goldie the first time, I had a reputation as a funny guy. When my mother was very sick with cancer, I learned in Beis Hatalmud. They didn't have a dormitory. My friend Naftali Kaplan was with me then. He looks like Humphrey Bogart with a beard. We heard that Rabbi Herman owned an apartment on 975 Blake, near Beis Hatalmud. He got it from his father-in-law, Rav Avrohom Horowitz. Rav Horowitz wouldn't talk on Shabbos or during the entire month of Elul. My father-in-law told me that when he went to study in the Mir, he visited the town of his own father-in-law, Maltch. It was a little village populated mostly by goyim. The Jews there told him that when Rav Horowitz went up to the *sefer Torah* on his bar mitzvah, he declared that from that day on, he would never speak *loshon hora* (malicious talk).

When Rav Horowitz came to America, he established a little organization of laymen to encourage Shabbos observance and concern itself with other religious matters. He called a meeting, and the only one who showed up was Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Herman. Rabbi Herman said, I have a son, and Rav Horowitz said, I have a daughter, and the rest is history.

So he had that apartment two blocks from shul where Beis Hatalmud was. Rav Boruch Ber Lebovitz had slept there. Rav Reuven Grozovsky had slept there. Rav Chatzkel Levinstein had slept there. When I got married, I rented that apartment from my mother-in-law. But she took care of it before then, too.

Gershon Wiesenfeld, Naftali Kaplan and I rented that apartment for a dormitory. PICTURE OF THE 3 OF THEM AT CHASUNAH FOR BOOK. Mrs. Herman wanted sixty a month and I wanted fifty-five, and we bickered. This is before I knew she would be my mother-in-law. She used to come in to check the cleanliness. We

weren't too hygienic. We had our socks all over the place. The guys would throw them under the beds in honor of her visits. But it would have been hard to keep apartment clean in any case because it was right in the middle of a market full of pushcarts. The only one who wasn't afraid of her was me. My attitude was, we were paying rent, so it's not her business if we throw socks under the bed. The old houses in East New York had a stoop inside on the first floor, and people kept their empty milk bottles in that foyer. A good *baalabusta* (homemaker) would take them out when she had three or six. We let fifty of them accumulate. We waited until there was no room to walk. She sees the milk bottles and says to me, "What's the matter with you, you broke your hands?" I knew how to answer her. I was already fighting.

When I got married, I threw my roommates out, and brought my wife in.

The night we came to my future mother-in-law to rent the apartment, my father-in-law realized that three of the best young Talmudic scholars in America were coming by, so he made sure his daughter was dressed nice.

I was pale and gaunt because my mother was very sick, and I had fasted a couple of days in a row. I was staying in the hospital with her at night. I was the head talker, the businessman, as usual. I turned Rabbi Herman off a little, I wasn't dressed well and I was fasting. My wife later told me that after we left her father asked her which of these guys would you want. She said maybe Kaplan, but not Elefant. It didn't turn out like that.

My shadchan was Shmuel Kharkover. Goldie had a crush on Shmuel. She taught him English. He was a charming, good-looking guy who sang and played violin. She told me that she wanted to marry him even though he was forty-five and she was eighteen, but he was my shadchan. He mentioned my name to Mrs. Herman, but on the basis of past experience with me and the apartment, she wasn't enthusiastic. But my father-in-law was interested, so Goldie and I met.

Rav Leib didn't know I was dating. I didn't date her much -- twice or three times. The reason I was interested in getting engaged so young was that my mother was deathly ill and I wanted her to live to see me to the chupah. I had my two sisters and a brother get married around then for the same reason. It didn't bother me that my mother-in-law didn't want me.

Before I met Goldie, Reb Shmuel had my father-in-law-to-be invite me up for cholent one Shabbos. He was interested only in having a son-in-law who was a scholar. Reb Leib didn't know anything about this. My father-in-law had all of the rosh yeshivahs and big rabbis in the neighborhood over. There was Rav Naftoli Trop's son, Rav Avrohom Trop, and Rav Avrohom's son-in-law, Rav Henschel Lebowitz. There was Rav Boruch Ber's son-in-law, Rav Yitzchok Turitz. There were many faculty members from Torah Vodaas there. It was a very honorable group. I spoke for about 25 minutes in Yiddish, and everybody was impressed. It would have been inappropriate for me to speak with Goldie in that setting, but I took a glance through my left eye, and I was satisfied. It went well. Even my mother-in-law started to change her mind a little bit.

We had a date one night at her house. I asked Goldie if she wanted to go downstairs for some fresh air and she said okay. We made up that we would not tell anybody that we were dating. Reb Leib would have certainly objected because I was so young. We get downstairs and we bump into the guy with the biggest mouth in the neighborhood, a human loudspeaker. I told him, "Can I ask you a favor? Could you please not tell anybody you saw us?" He said, "Don't worry. Nobody will know a thing." The next morning the whole city knew.

Goldie wanted to hear someone's opinion about me before she went out with me. She wasn't so interested in me then. Shulamis Lifshitz was her roommate, so she told Shulamis to take a peek WHEN? and tell her what she thought. Shulamis told her to go for it.

### YALE ISAACS

While I was doing fundraising in Chicago for the kollel in the early sixties, I met a fellow named Yale Isaacs. He was a Holocaust survivor from Bialystok, a tall guy who was seriously crippled, probably because of polio. He worked for a big finance company called Winter and Hirsch. CHECK SPELLING. He specialized in an area called factoring. He was a genius at it, but I don't understand much about it. We got chummy and he gave me quite a bit of money. He put up collateral for me when I needed to take out a large loan.

Isaacs' dream was to see Ben Gurion. I had no problem arranging that for him. IT SOUNDS LIKE THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID. IS IT RIGHT? One night we're sitting in Siegel's Restaurant in the Loop. I had accumulated a nice sum of money. We had a cocktail, and I said, "Yale, maybe you can invest this money for me."

He took my hand and said, "Rabbi, I can't take your money. Within the next five years I'm going to jail."

I looked at him in shock and asked him why. He said, "When I came to America I had nothing going for me. I went to school, got a CPA, and a job with Winter and Hirsch. I went up the ladder and became wealthy. But Hirsch was deteriorating. He was on drugs and started stealing from the company. The company is already bankrupt, but the banks don't know it yet." They still had credit with the Chicago banks.

I said to him, "Why don't you just quit?"

He said, "If I quit it would be like blowing the whistle on a friend. This man saved me when I had nothing. I can't repay him by sending him to jail."

It happened a lot sooner than five years. Six or eight months later there were both criminal and civil cases against him. When banks lose money, they're vicious. It was in all the papers. Everybody dropped him except me.

At around this time, I needed a lot of cash quickly. The court had put a lien on all of Yale's assets, but he still had money in his safe deposit box. He was living on that before he went to jail. He went to the box to get the cash for me. The manager of the

bank happened to see him taking money from the box, and he knew the court put the lien on him. So he blew the whistle on Yale. Federal agents came and took away the box.

Yale Isaacs went to the federal penitentiary in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He had nothing in the box and a lien on all his money, so his wife Elaine and his two daughters didn't have anything to live on. I went to their big house in Highland Park and told her, "Yale's in trouble, and I know you need money. I'm going to help you. I'm not giving you charity. Yale gave me lots of money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and now he needs it. Consider it a loan." She didn't say a thing. I gave her \$2,500 a month for as long as her husband was in prison, and that was a nice sum in those days.

He served time for the criminal offense. For the civil offense he had to pay six million dollars. Rav Nosson Kamenetsky would go to visit him in jail, and I would call him from here in Israel. I had permission to speak to him once a week. He was there a nice couple of years, and it was no picnic for him.

Harry Walker is a Modern Orthodox Jew who is an agent for public speakers. He introduced me to Gerry Ford. This is when he was House Minority Leader. I went to visit Ford and I noticed that he had a direct line to President Nixon. That was enough to get me to contribute five grand to his campaign fund, and we became friends.

I spoke to Ford on behalf of Isaacs. He got him out on probation to a halfway house where the conditions are much better than in jail.

By the time he got out he was mad at the whole world. He had helped a lot of people, but Kamenetsky and I were the only ones who remembered him.

Yale Isaacs asked Goldie and I to come to the States to be character witnesses on his behalf at some point. We went to court in Chicago. Today I'm an after-dinner speaker and good at it, but then I wasn't a performer. But Goldie was always good. She's her father's daughter, and he knew how to speak. She came up to the judge and said, "Your Honor, this man had everything against him. He was an immigrant. He was a cripple. He was a Jew. Hirsch gave him a break, and he became a rich man. He couldn't blow the whistle on him. That would be against what the Bible stands for. In the Bible it says you have to be loyal to your friend. Do you think that this man who gave so much charity could commit something criminal? Yale Isaacs was acting as a moral person. His problem is that he is too moral." The judge was blown away. Yale appreciated it.

Back in the late fall of '72 I got a call from Isaacs. Goldie and I must come to see him immediately. It was cold and snowing in Chicago. I told him, "You're out of your mind. It's the beginning of the semester and I have to give my lectures in Talmud."

He says, "I'll send you a ticket."

I said, "Don't do me any favors. I can take care of my own ticket." We get into Chicago. It's snowing, and there's a big limousine waiting for us. It took us to



Highland Park. We came into the house and the whole family was there. They all got together in our honor. Yale got up, put his arm around me, and said, "My family wants you to know that never will I give another dime to charity. Everybody dropped me." He had been a very charitable, kind, guy. He went on and said, "Everybody, that is, except this man beside me, Rabbi Elefant. He doesn't know that I know he gave Elaine \$2500 a month to keep her going. He's the only guy who called me and had someone see me every week. I have to do something as a token of appreciation. Normally he should be a partner of mine, but I'm stingy." He takes out a big envelope. There was a cashier's check in it for one million dollars.

## REB LEIB AND SUJIHARA

I saw a documentary about how the students of the Mirrer Yeshivah were saved during the Holocaust. It gave over the whole story. The only thing that was missing from it was the role played by Reb Leib Malin. The documentary focused, of course, on the role played by the Japanese consul in Kovno, Sujihara. He had a wonderful little girl. She stood at the window and watched all of the Jews standing outside the consulate. These were people who were destined for the camps. They were crying, despondent. The little girl asked her father what was going on, and he explained to her. She told her father that he had to help those people.

Reb Leib didn't know about that part, but I believe it. It sounds true. Sujihara gave the thousands of Jews visas to Japan although he wasn't authorized to.

The fellow who made the connection between the Mirrer students and Sujihara was named Gedaliah Zupnik. I once went to Kansas City to raise funds for Beis HaTalmud when I was a student there and I met Zupnik.. He told me that Reb Leib sensed that Sujihara was somebody who would be willing to help save Jews, and he encouraged Zupnik to befriend him. Sujihara was completely straight. He was not a man you could bribe. Zupnik started visiting him, going over to his house.

Zupnik introduced Reb Leib to the consul, and he started getting the visas. There was some expense involved for every visa, but Reb Leib didn't have any money. He went to the Mirrer rosh yeshivah, Rav Leizer Yehudah Finkel. He had the dough. Rav Leizer Yehudah and the other *gedolim* (great Torah scholars) who were there were opposed to the Jews leaving. Lithuania was ruled by the Russians then. They thought that if the Jews left it would antagonize the Russians. They'd get offended; it would be as if the Jews were saying that the Communists aren't good enough for them. But you didn't say no to Reb Leib. He pushed it through.

When Sujihara went back to Japan, he was imprisoned for what he did. He lost his job and his daughter developed leukemia. They sent her to Israel for treatment and she recovered.

One of Sujihara's sons settled in Tel Aviv and got involved in the diamond bourse. About five years ago, he went bankrupt. The Jews who were saved by his father came to his rescue. They threw money at him and put him back on his feet.

When Reb Leib and the Mirrers got to Japan, their first stop was Kobe. It's right on the International Date Line, so there was a problem determining which day was Yom Kippur. The Brisker Rov said that because of the uncertainty, the Jews there had to fast two consecutive days. The Chazon Ish said that one day was enough.

In Kobe, the Japanese authorities wanted to put the Jews in concentration camps because of German pressure. But there was a Japanese professor there GET NAME who saved the situation. He ultimately converted to Judaism and studied in the Mirrer Yeshivah when it relocated to Jerusalem. He was very close with Rav Chaim Shmulevitz.

## THE CHAZON ISH AND RAV MOSHE ROSEN

Rav Moshe Rosen was a venerable old rabbi in Brownsville. He was very old by the time I met him over fifty years ago -- must have been in his nineties. It was a real privilege for me to get to know him. Rav Moshe had a truly saintly look about him. Reb Leib loved him because he loved anything that connected him with the way life had been in the old days.

Rav Moshe Rosen was once the rosh yeshivah of Mesivta Torah Vodaath. But then he decided he didn't want that position, so he got himself a shul on Bristol Street, a little place with nine and a half members, and spent all of his time there with his books. He wrote *Neizer HaKodesh* on *Seder Kodshim* and some other *masechtos*.

He once came to Lakewood for a rabbinical convention. Rav Aharon Kotler got up to give him his seat. I never saw anything like it.

When Rav Moshe was the rabbi of the Lithuanian town of Chveidan, he had a very illustrious congregant. The Chazon Ish lived there -- but in those days nobody knew who he was. Everybody thought he was eccentric. Rav Rosen was already writing and publishing books then. One of them was a popular one entitled *Divrei Sofrim*. The Chazon Ish was really disturbed by that book because he thought Rav Rosen was way off.

So this is the way the Chazon Ish handled the situation -- Rav Rosen told us this himself. He started to learn with Rav Rosen. He wanted to educate him. The book was published already, but he eventually got Rav Rosen to tear up the manuscript, and the manuscripts of some books he hadn't yet published. They learned together regularly, but nobody in the town knew. Even though the Chazon Ish was the teacher and Rav Rosen the student, when they walked out the door, Rav Rosen went out first. The Chazon Ish didn't want anybody to know.

One day when he was already in the States, Rav Rosen got a letter from the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish had lost the *Neizer HaKodesh* on *Zevochim* and he wanted Rav Rosen to send him another copy. That was a volume he had written after the two of them had learned together. I think he showed us the letter.

## RAV NOSSON KAMENETSKY'S SHEVA BROCHOS

Rav Dovid Lifschitz made *sheva brochos* (festive meal for bride and groom during the first week of marriage) at his house for his daughter and her husband, my friend Rav Nossan Kamenetsky. Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik of Yeshivah University was also there. In the recently published biography of Rav Yoshe Ber, there is a picture of him, Rav Nossan, and me at that *sheva brochos*. Rav Nossan gave a talk on a subject in the *gemara* as is customary. He gets very excited, even aggressive, when he discusses Torah subjects. Rav Yoshe Ber made some comment during Rav Nossan's talk, and Rav Nossan jumped on him. Rav Yoshe Ber said, "Rav Nossan, you're the *gemara*. I'm just Rashi. My remark was merely commentary." GET RAV NOSSON'S PERMISSION TO PRINT THIS ONE.

## YAKOV HERZOG AND ARNOLD TOYNBEE

Yakov Herzog was a brilliant man. He was the son of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac HaLevi Herzog. Yakov was the director-general of the Prime Minister's office, but he was really the man who made foreign policy from the time the state was founded. He was also a top Talmudic scholar, but his dream was to be a statesman.

When Rabbi Herzog was Chief Rabbi of Ireland, he sent Yakov to Palestine to study under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. Rav Isser Zalman quotes him the *Even HoEzel* twenty times. He calls him "*HaGrid*", which is an acronym of *HaGaon Rav Yaakov David*, "the genius, Rabbi Yakov David." He was a real intellectual.

We got to know each other and we hit it off. He used to call me "Rabbi Billy the Kid."

When Golda was Prime Minister, her favorite was Simcha Dinitz. Dinitz was responsible for Yakov Herzog's death. Dinitz was a streetfighter. He saw how capable Herzog was, and he pushed him out.

Golda Meir had a guilty conscience when Yakov died. She stood by and let Dinitz do what he wanted. I heard Golda's eulogy for Yakov. There were only two representatives of the yeshivah world there, Rav Beinish Finkel of the Mirror Yeshivah, and me. Her theme was "the man behind the scene." She said he was the greatest Israeli statesman of his time. Ben Gurion called him by the same title that Pharaoh called Joseph, *Tzofnat Paneach*, "decipherer of the obscured." She mentioned how accomplished he was as a Talmudic scholar.

At the beginning of Golda's administration, before Yakov was pushed out, I used to come visit him at the Prime Minister's office twice a week and we would study Talmud together. People didn't know why I went, and the rumor was that he was consulting me on matters of state. I didn't do anything to squelch the rumor.

Yakov Herzog was ambassador to Canada for a few years during the early sixties. He met the British historian Arnold Toynbee there. Toynbee was anti-Israel, and he was no great friend of the Jews. Herzog and Toynbee started arguing, and one of them challenged the other to a public debate. Herzog was anxious to do it, but he couldn't do something like that on his own; he needed Ben Gurion's okay. Ben Gurion didn't veto it, but he wasn't keen on the idea.

Yakov went to Rav Aharon Kotler. He and Rav Aharon were very close because when Rav Aharon would go to Dublin raising funds for his yeshivah in Kletzk (Lithuania), Rabbi Herzog would let him stay at his house studying Talmud, while he raised the money for him. They stayed great friends, and Rav Aharon got to know Rabbi Herzog's children very well. It's no coincidence that Yakov went to study under Rav Aharon's father-in-law, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer.

So Yakov asked Rav Aharon what he should do. He told him, "If you think you'll win, do it. Otherwise, don't."

Yakov told Rav Aharon that he was sure he would win, but still, he would agree to debate only on one condition – that Rav Aharon, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and Rav Yakov Kamenetsky would pray for him during the debate. All three of them agreed.

He won hands down. Even Toynbee conceded that in a letter he wrote to him. GET COPY OF LETTER FROM HERZOG'S WIDOW, COUSIN OF HIRSHOWITZ.

## THE US AMBASSADOR

When the Six Day War broke out, the parents of my students all wanted their sons to run, but I wouldn't let them. I felt that part of their education was to learn that they stay with their brothers at times of distress. Imagine how it looks to an Israeli. He's got five kids and he's going off to the front, and you're putting on your aftershave to go to America. And it's not so simple that it's halachically permitted to leave, either. I was very obstinate about this. I simply refused to let them go. The boys wanted to stay, too; it was the parents who were the problem.

I got a phone call from the American Ambassador, Walter Barbour. CHECK NAME AND SPELLING. The parents had turned to him. He was a big, fat guy, a homosexual bachelor. He'd heard my name before because Goldie and I were always getting visas for people and things like that. Barbour related the parents' concerns to me. I told him, "Mr. Ambassador, I just can't let them go." He asked why, and I told him, "You'll never understand it." He asked why again, and I said, "Because you're not a Jew. If you were a Jew like me, you'd understand it. We've been beaten through the ages, kicked and persecuted. Now I have to act on my obligations. These parents paid their kids' tuition and sent them across the Atlantic for me to educate them. I have to teach them what's right."

He didn't have much to say after that, and I stopped hearing from him. He saw that I'm not the kind of guy he could pressure.

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## SIR ISAAC

I was getting money from the United States government at that time through Public Law 480. PL480 was a law by which the US would sell excess agricultural products to underdeveloped countries, and take the local currency in payment. Israel was the biggest beneficiary of that law, but Israeli currency was worthless in the US. So the American government would distribute it in Israel for scientific and educational projects.

When I first heard of this, my adrenaline started pumping, so I went to Hubert Humphrey for a recommendation and things got started. I got some funding for my medical manuscripts project. I had a brochure made up calling it "the Dead Sea Scrolls of Medicine." It opened, "How modern is modern medicine?" It was very professionally done. Every Jewish doctor wanted Maimonides' medical writings on their shelf even if they wouldn't read it. I got a full-page write-up in *Time*.

Meyer Weisgal, a big fundraiser for the Weizmann Institute, got very excited about this project. Sir Isaac Wolfson was a huge supporter of theirs. He had a house built on the campus and lived his last years there. He would ask Weisgal, "Why should I get so excited about this place. I'm interested in perpetuating Judaism. What's Jewish about any of this?" Weisgal couldn't tell Wolfson that there's nothing Jewish about medicine. This book was just what he was looking for. He wanted to do it jointly with us under the auspices of the Weizmann Institute. So Rabbi Jason Green and I all of a sudden became directors of the Weizmann Institute. We had stationery, an office, the whole bit. The Weizmann Institute would take 60% of whatever I brought in, and we

would take 40%. Ben Gurion was already helping me with the research end of the project (see p. ). The Weizmann Institute would handle the publishing aspect.

Weisgal calls me one day and says, "I understand you're going to England. I'm going arrange for you to have lunch with Sir Isaac Wolfson, and you can tell him about the Maimonides project."

I davened (prayed) with Wolfson at the Portland Street Synagogue, a beautiful synagogue. They had wonderful cantor there who was backed by a choir. It was all very English. The men wore top hats, not that I did. They had a kiddush after davening that was like a smorgasbord at a fancy wedding.

Then Goldie and I went to the Wolfsons for lunch. You can imagine what that was like. Goldie helped me out with how to use the silverware. I talked to Sir Isaac about the antiquity of medicine and about how the tendency is to go back to the old treatises. I told him about what the Rambam wrote about cancer and how he tried to operate on it. He couldn't manage because the patient bled to death. They didn't have a clamp.

Sir Isaac was impressed. He gave Weizmann a serious sum of money, and I got my percentage.

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#### T. K. LAWLESS

One of the big dedicators of the Maimonides books was T.K. Lawless. He was a black man from Chicago, the biggest dermatologist in the country. He had nothing but money. He had a whole slew of cash registers in his office. This was a doctor's office, not a supermarket, but he wouldn't take checks from anybody. He was a bachelor and he felt very neglected. His father was a preacher on the South Side. The Julius Rosenwald Foundation paid for his education.

Rosenwald was with the American Council for Judaism, the anti-Israel group. Maria Cooper (see p. ) introduced me to him toward the end of his life, when he was in a wheelchair. He had a huge foundation for educating blacks. T.K. couldn't afford his own education, so the Rosenwald Foundation helped him. He did well. He gave away \$150 million on his deathbed.

Lawless was a bachelor. I had the method for raising money from bachelors down pat. They all have a soft spot for their mothers and their sisters. Lawless gave my institution about \$50,000 to have his name in a limited edition.

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#### MAIMONIDES AND MURDER

After I got the PL480 grants, I printed a couple of volumes. At around that time, I got a call from Ambassador Walter Barbour. He asked me if I could come to see him at the embassy. I figured I had nothing to lose, so I went. My friend Yankel Yellin drove me. He dropped me off at the embassy and headed straight for the nearby beach. He

wasn't interested in swimming. There was a guy there who sold fresh corn on the cob. Yankel loved it.

The ambassador told me the following story. Every US embassy has its own doctor. I don't recall the name of the embassy doctor in Barbour's time -- Yagler or something like that -- but he was a big doctor in Tel Aviv who treated society people.

One night, the doctor and his wife were walking home from the theater, and somebody shot and killed him. The police hushed it up. The story that got around was that the American embassy had the job done because this doctor knew too much about all the perversion that was going on there.

The doctor's wife suspected that that was what happened because it was clear to her that it was an inside job. She was a lady with a big mouth. She'd come in to the ambassador and start screaming, "You killed my husband." It was getting very embarrassing.

Ambassador Barbour felt that the problem was that this woman had too much time on her hands. He thought I might have the solution. She knew how to write. Barbour wanted me to hire her to help translate Maimonides' medical writings.

I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I'd be glad to help you. But I've finished the first two volumes and I need funding to publish more."

He said, "No problem. I'll get you another PL480 grant."

I went back to Jerusalem and I told this story to my confidant, S.Z. Shragai, the ex-mayor of Jerusalem and head of the Jewish Agency. I was a bit scared. After all, a guy got killed. Shragai said I was treading on dangerous ground and I had to be really careful. Then I talked it over with Teddy Kollek and he said I shouldn't do it.

But I couldn't turn the offer down. I didn't grow up that way. So I went ahead and did it. You'll notice that at the front of vol. III of Maimonides' medical writings it says "published through the generosity of the U.S. government."

But I spent the money in advance. After the book was published, I went to the ambassador and told him I needed to get paid. He said, "I'm sorry, Rabbi, but the PL480 funds have been depleted. There's nothing left for this year."

I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you mean to tell me that the American government doesn't have enough money to pay a little rabbi in Jerusalem whom *you* got to do the project? That just can't be."

Soon after that I spoke to one of the guys who worked in the embassy. He said the ambassador was worried that I'll raise a stink. I said that there's an easy solution for that. All he has to do is pay me what he owes me.

I went to the States soon after that and I was visiting the office of my friend Chatzkel Besser, who's affiliated with Agudath Israel. He's a man with connections, a good PR guy.



I called the Undersecretary of State in charge of Middle East affairs. His name slips my mind, short name beginning with a "U". GET NAME. A good friend of the Jews. I told him who I was and gave him a brief rundown of what the problem was. I made sure I made mention in passing of Yagler's murder. "Mr. Undersecretary," I said, "you can't expect me to believe that the US government can't come up with funds to keep the pledge of an ambassador to a rabbi who helped the United States government."

Besser bet me that nothing would happen. Twenty-four hours later, I was in his office again, and the undersecretary calls. "Rabbi," he says, "I'm very pleased to inform you that everything is arranged." Within minutes I got a call from Goldie in Jerusalem telling me that the embassy called to say that the money is there. Yankel Yellin drove me there to pick it up. I bought him a dozen pieces of corn on the cob.

#### THE GERMAN COLONEL

Chatzkel Besser introduced me to the West German military attache in Washington, Col. Horst Kruger. Besser saw that I was a fellow with the potential to do things for the Jewish community. He figured that I might do something original and creative some day with this connection. Kruger was such a nice guy. He was married, didn't have any children, and he was very sensitive about Israel and helped however he could. Besser and I told him we would help him become military attache in Israel. That was his dream. He had a lot of guilt about the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, on the last day of the Six Day War, I got a call from Germany. It was Col. Kruger. He said, "Rabbi, congratulations on the great victory."

Kruger eventually became the Assistant Minister of Defense in the West German government. After that he headed Lufthansa. I looked for him last time I went to Germany. I found out he divorced his wife, but he seemed to have disappeared. I couldn't find an address or a telephone number, nothing.

#### ..... JAKE, BARNEY, AND BILLY – THE GUYS FROM CHICAGO

When Rabbi Chaim Kreiswirth was rosh yeshivah in Chicago, he introduced me to a fellow named Billy Robinson. Billy introduced me to Jake Arvey, the biggest Democratic politico in Chicago after Daley, and a very wealthy man. Jake was very good friends with Bishop Barney Sheel from the West Side of Chicago. They were as close as brothers. Barney was a friend of all the Jews. What a great guy. You didn't have to be an expert in Catholic doctrine to figure out that he had a unique take on "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." He perfected the art of taking checks and giving back cash. The big Israel Bond meetings used to take place in his church. He was as good as a Jew, a very good friend of mine. He got along with Pope John because he was the ecumenical type, but Pacelli (Pope Pius) almost excommunicated him.

Billy Robinson got Jake Arvey and his whole set interested in my Maimonides project. But they wanted to check me out before they committed anything, so they sent a delegation to Israel headed by Billy.

This worried me, because what I had then didn't look impressive. I had the kollel, but that wasn't the kind of thing they were looking for. The people working on the Maimonides project weren't at an institution or anything like that. I shipped out jobs piecemeal. But I was friendly with the Minister of Education, Yaakov Moshe Toledano. He was no Talmudic scholar, but he *was* an intellectual. I had honored him by making him the chairman of the board of directors of my project.

I asked Toledano to make a reception at his house for this Chicago delegation. He was glad to do it, and he did a very classy job. When the fellows arrived, I told them that before they saw anything else, they had to meet my board of directors. It was enough. After the reception at Toledano's, they didn't need to see anything else.

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JOHNNY SEXTON

Not long after that, I was on a flight from New York to Chicago. I was talking with the fellow sitting next to me, telling him about my project, and he said, "I've got an idea for you. Why don't you go meet Johnny Sexton."

Johnny Sexton was the biggest dumping contractor in Chicago. When they build buildings, they need lots of sand, and they dig huge holes. Johnny bought these holes and sold them to companies so they could dump their garbage in them. That's a big business in Chicago. He was making three or four million dollars a year, and this is thirty-five years ago.

Johnny was three-quarters blind and wore the thickest glasses. He was an Irishman, and he grew up with the Jews on the West Side. He was a special man, a real do-gooder. He was president of the Jewish Home for the Blind in Chicago. I called him up, told him I was a rabbi, and told him about my project. He came to see Goldie and me, and we hit it off. He supported the project in a big way.

Johnny did business with Colonel Henry Crown of General Dynamics. Crown once sold him a big fleet of trucks. So he introduced me to him. I couldn't get in to a guy like Henry Crown on my own. Johnny took me in to him one day at about 4:30 in the afternoon when he was about to go home. We really hit it off. Henry would give me \$25,000 every time I came by, so I made sure I came by often. He was the main shareholder in the Hilton hotel chain which owned the Waldorf Astoria, so whenever the Presidential Suite was vacant at the Waldorf, Goldie and I would stay there.

Which reminds me, the day of Martin Luther King's march on Selma, Alabama, I was staying at the Waldorf with my friend Yankel Yellin. I remember watching it on TV and hearing them sing "We Shall Overcome." I love that song. Yankel took off his shoes and socks, and he was sitting there scratching his athlete's foot. In walks Teddy Kollek. No call in advance, nothing. Goldie was afraid I'd catch a cold so she sent a sweater with him. Teddy comes into this gorgeous suite and Yankel's there picking his feet. It was a sight for sore eyes. Teddy was impressed by the luxury of the suite. He said, "This is better than what the mayor of Jerusalem gets." I told him, "Listen, Teddy. You're just the mayor of Jerusalem. I'm the rosh yeshivah of Itri."

The chairman of Henry's company was an Irish Catholic named Patrick Hoy. Henry was always interested in discussing Jesus' Jewish roots with him. So I wrote a paper for him entitled "Jesus in the Talmud and the Bible." I still have it. I became quite an expert on the topic.

Henry Crown loved it. It allowed him to talk to his friend from a more scholarly perspective. Johnny read it and liked it, too.

Johnny Sexton came from a very colorful family. His brother gunned down one of the members of Al Capone's gang in court. But he was just the opposite, incredibly kind and charitable. He once visited Israel. He called us up to tell us he was coming, and then a few days later we got a call from the police. They told us Johnny was waiting for us at Mandelbaum Gate. He arrived via Jordan. Goldie and I spent the next few days driving up and down the country with him. Johnny and I sang "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" in the car. I had the time of my life.

Johnny got into a serious car accident. He was hanging between life and death. Goldie and I recited *Psalms* for him – Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said we should. When he recovered, he was convinced that it was our prayers that did it.

I happened to be in Chicago when he died. The last thing he did before he had his heart attack was to leave me a check for \$25,000 for the yeshivah I had for *Yerushalmis* (Jerusalemites), *Liflagos Reuven*.

They were going to make Johnny's funeral in a church. I called my friend, Judge Abe Marovitz, and asked him to tell Johnny's widow that I couldn't go to the funeral if it was going to be held at a place with a bunch of crosses, so they had it at a non-sectarian funeral parlor.

I spoke. I remember the theme. It was about how Aaron silently accepted the death of his two sons. It didn't bother me that he wasn't Jewish. He was a righteous man. If he was good enough to help me out during his lifetime, he was good enough for me to eulogize him. Henry Crown told me that he never did business with a more honest man.

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THE CHIEF RABBI AND THE POPE

Chief Rabbi Herzog went to see Pope Pius after the Allies liberated Rome to see if he could get him to help end the slaughter of the Jews. He went to the Vatican with his son Yaakov who became ambassador to Canada. Baruch Duvdevani also went along. He was the assistant head of the aliyah department of the Jewish Agency. He was a student of Rav Kook and Rav Aryeh Levin, a real scholar and a G-d-fearing Jew.

The Pope didn't help them at all. Both Yaakov and Duvdevani told me on separate occasions that as soon as Rav Herzog walked out of the Vatican, he said, "A mikveh, a mikveh." (A ritual bath for removal of ritual impurity.)

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MICKEY MOUSE

I took Yankel Yellin to Los Angeles with me on one of my trips to see David Shapell. I promised Yankel that if he came with me I'd take him to Disneyland. He wanted to see the choo-choo trains, everything.

The first time I met David Shapell, I didn't know what I was going to talk with him about. He wasn't familiar with kollels. When I went in to see him, there was a bottle of Crown Royal on the table. He asked me, "Rabbi, are you a drinking man?"

We started drinking from whiskey glasses. Crown Royal is something you drink straight. You don't make cocktails out of it. After we'd gotten started, I said, "Mr. Shapell, I'll go you two for one." We finished about a bottle and a half, and he'd had enough. I got a million dollars from him that night.

David liked Yankel, and Yankel told him that I promised to take him to Disneyland. So David sent us there in his Cadillac with his driver. Before we went on the rides, Yankel had to get his peanuts and cotton candy. He went on all the rides. When we got back, David asked him how he liked it. He said he had the time of his life. David was pleased with that because he really liked Yankel. Then he asked me how I liked it. I told him I was also very impressed, but by the way they rake it in. Shapell loved that.

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#### THE MASHGIACH FORGETS

Rav Chatzkel Levenstein invited me to a *sheva brochos* (festive meal held for a bride and groom during the week following their wedding) for Rabbi Yigal Rosen. Yigal married his granddaughter. Rav Chatzkel knew me through my wife. When he came to New York after the War, he stayed in the apartment in East New York that belonged to my wife's family.

When the meal ended, they wanted to honor Rav Chatzkel by asking him to lead the *bentching* (Grace After Meals). Rav Chatzkel couldn't remember the *bentching*. He started it a few times but it wouldn't come to him. Another guy would have gotten embarrassed. Not him. He was serene. He said to me immediately, "You see, Mordechai, what can befall a man?" Five minutes later he reminded himself. If it would have been me, I would have wanted to hide my face.

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#### A TURNING POINT

When I went to high school in Yeshivas Ner Israel in Baltimore, my best friend was Feivelson. We were in Brooklyn once together right after the War, when the Mirrer Yeshivah was located in East New York, in the XXX Street Shul. It was Elul (the month preceding the High Holydays) and we went in to daven *maariv* (to say the evening prayers). The *shaliach tzibbur* (cantor) was Rav Moshe Yehudah Blau, the fellow who published all of those old manuscripts. He had a voice that was so sonorous it scared me. It moved me to want to repent. It felt like thunder to me, like the Revelation at Sinai. I'll never forget that scene. It was at that moment that I made my decision to devote myself to studying Torah. I was fifteen years old. My head had been in chemistry. I wanted to study it in the university. I used to go to movies all the

time, they didn't have dirty ones back then. There was a theater in Williamsburg called the Model where they showed three features for a nickel. It was hard for my father to give me that nickel, but my mother thought it was a bargain. She wanted to get me out of the house. She wished there were six features.

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THE SECRETARY TELLS THE TRUTH  
MOVE THIS TO FILE 3 WITH THE OTHER SIMON STORY.

When I was trying to raise money for my TENS machine, I had a really important meeting in Canada. I brought Christian Barnard along. I was making a presentation in front of some very heavy hitters. Part of it was a story of my life, my CV, and in the course of it, I referred to my relationship with Bill Simon.

There was a guy there whom I could tell was against me from the start. He had made a fortune with Barnard's cosmetic company. He gets up and says, "Aah, Simon doesn't even know who you are."

I said, "How do you know?"

He answered, "I talked to him."

I said, "Yeah? I refuse to go on until I get a phone."

I called Simon's office and the secretary gave me a difficult time. He's not in, he's busy, all the old stories. I said, "Listen. Tell him that I'm going to hurt him. I'm very mad at him. I'm going to tell secrets from back in our schooldays."

Simon got to the phone real fast. I let everybody there hear. I put on the speaker. He starts with, "Oh, how are you, Rabbi?"

I said to him, "Mr. Secretary, did you tell this guy you don't even know me? That's not nice. We Jews call that chutzpah."

"Listen Bill, tell the guy the truth. You can say you don't love me. That I'll understand. But I don't want to have to start saying things about you that you wouldn't want people to know."

Boy, did he say he knows me.

I told the guy at the table who started up with me, "From now on, I don't want to hear a word out of your mouth." That shut him up.

## BYRON AND MARIA

Byron Janis is a Jew from Pittsburgh whose name is really Janovitz. He's one of the world's greatest pianists, in the class of Vladimir Horowitz. He's married to Maria Cooper, Gary's daughter. She looks and sounds just like her father. HERE ADD STORY OF MARIA IN CAB FROM OTHER FILE. I met Byron because he was stricken with arthritis. My trans-cutaneous electric therapy system (TENS) was good for him. It's not invasive. It triggers the production of endorphins through electrical stimulation.

I was introduced to Byron by Dr. Arthur Sackler. He was a wonderful psychiatrist who became an entrepreneur. Money was more interesting to him than psychiatry. Sackler published over 100 medical journals. He died on a plane and left a fortune, had the biggest collection of Chinese art in the world. Sackler was a Jew from Flatbush, lived on Eastern Parkway and spoke Yiddish. When I first knew him I was trying to be fancy, but then I opened up with him and everything became all right. He was completely estranged from religion, but he liked the Jewish connection with me.

Sackler had a friend named Tex McCrary who was also a friend of Byron's. He had been a secretary in Eisenhower's cabinet. He was married to a Miss Rheingold, a model who advertised the beer. When the plane flew over Hiroshima to drop the bomb, McCrary was the one who pushed the button.

Sackler was impressed by the discovery made by my scientist, Ivor Capel, of the Marie Curie Institute in London. He worked with pain. One of the things he hit on was electric stimulation. At a certain frequency the brain triggers endorphins. We're not talking about electric shock treatments, but low frequencies that have to be administered exactly. Sackler was very impressed. He showed me an article that he had written long ago in which he observed that when they gave shock treatments, it released endorphins. He didn't realize that this could be channeled and put to use.

For the first ten months of this TENS project, I had to come up with \$100,000 plus expenses for the researcher in Houston. Sackler took care of that for a nice couple of months.

Sackler was very close with Byron and Maria. He introduced me to them, and I used the TENS machine on Byron. I helped him, and we got to be great friends. He would play the most beautiful music for me. Maria is not Jewish, but she's a beautiful soul. I used to visit their house. Maria knew all about *kashrus* (the laws of keeping kosher). I'd sit down on the couch at their house and make myself at home.

I introduced the Janises to Moshe David Niederman. He heads a Satmarer organization called Rav Tov that saves Jewish children from Iran. He doesn't speak English properly, never went to school, but he's a very charming guy. He's been to Afghanistan and Iran, all over. He's a good friend of Bruno Kreisky because they're both anti-Zionist.

He once needed immigration papers in order to get somebody out. Maria and Byron knew every consul and ambassador in the world through their social circles, so I introduced them to Niederman. Where I can't do something myself, I try set it up so it can happen. They became very close. Niederman has something like fourteen children, so every week he has a bar mitzvah or *bris* (circumcision ceremony). Maria used to go with him to every *simchah* (celebration).

Gary Cooper was a big anti-Semite. He fought for Indian rights in the US, but he didn't care much for Jews. Maria's mother was also wealthy and an anti-Semite. She had inherited the money from Gary. I told her to treat her mother well, so she'll get the money because she's an only child.

Byron and Maria introduced Niederman to William Safire. Safire would write about cases he was working on. Niederman introduced me to Safire, and Safire introduced me to the owner of Nabisco, and he helped the yeshivah out.

## URI GELLER

Byron Janis was Uri Geller's closest friend. I met Uri at his villa in London. He's an arrogant bastard, a pompous ass. Byron introduced me to him. Geller has a dozen bulldogs running around. I told Byron to explain to him that elephants and dogs don't mix.

I'm in good company with my fear of dogs. Back when I was studying in Lakewood, over fifty years ago, I was walking one night from the *beis hamedrash* (study hall) to the dining room with Rav Aharon Kotler. All of a sudden, a big collie comes along, stands on its hind legs, and leans itself on Rav Aharon with its front paws. The dog was standing face to face with him. Collies are gentle dogs, but Rav Aharon was paralyzed. He said, "Elefant! *Tu eppes* (do something)!"

I said, "Rosh yeshivah, I wish I could. I'm just as scared as you are."

So I wouldn't go into Geller's house until I was sure that the dogs were tied up. If I would come in and one dog would give me a bad look, I'd faint. So Maria checked, and I went in.

Then we sat down and talked business. Geller made his money searching for oil in Mexico, and I had some experience in the oil business in South Africa. I wanted him to bend a spoon. I brought along a few spoons to make sure he couldn't play any games. He bent them, all right. They were my spoons, he couldn't monkey around with them.

Then I asked him, "Uri, can you get the spoon to bend back?" He said he couldn't. So then I said, "It looks like your power is limited. You can only destroy, you can't build." He was very annoyed by that statement.

Byron was called in the piano world "the Chopin of our age". He looked like him and played like him -- a real Chopin man. I went with Byron to visit the villa where Chopin lived in Paris. There was an old woman there, I think she was a descendant of Chopin. The people who ran this place gave Byron the velvet frock coat Chopin wore when he played, and his death mask. All the big people then had clay death masks made of themselves.

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH HAS TO BE INSERTED SOMEWHERE ELSE:  
An English writer once said every institution is the image of its creator. I have both a *lamdan* (high-quality Talmudic analyst) side to me and a *shaygetz* (irreligious) side. Thank G-d that side of me didn't manifest itself in my students. I once went to the *Beis Yisroel* (Rabbi Yisroel Alter [1894 -1977], Grand Rabbi of Gur, one of the leading rabbinic figures of his day). He was my pal. He chose one of his followers to be a member of the Knesset. I told him, "What did you do that for? The man is a gangster." He said, "Reb Mordechai, if I need a *shaygetz*, I should take from you?" He had homegrown.

#### BACK TO GELLER-JANIS

Byron and Maria told me the following story. They're level-headed people and they wouldn't lie to me. They were sitting one night in their apartment on Park and Fiftieth, right opposite the Regency. Uri Geller came to visit. Byron's son from his first marriage was also there, a nineteen-year-old boy. They were talking about Chopin, and the death mask was on the table. Byron was talking about what an unhappy life Chopin had. Then the mask started crying; tears were running from its eyes. If anybody else had told me this story, I wouldn't believe it. It was Geller's power of metaphysical suggestion. Byron's son went berserk. They had to take him to the hospital that night. Since then he hasn't recovered completely. I QUESTION WHETHER WE SHOULDN'T SUGARCOAT THAT A BIT MORE.


On another occasion, Byron, Maria, and Uri went to a Greek restaurant. On the table were place mats with a picture of the Acropolis on them. Byron had a little model of the Acropolis on one of his two pianos at home. Uri Geller was staring at this picture on the place mat. All of a sudden, that statue appeared in the Greek restaurant on the place mat!

Byron might have a bit of Uri Geller in him himself. He told me he went to Princeton, and they took him into the library. Lots of manuscripts rolled up on shelves there. He went to the music section. He says he looked up on the shelf and said, "That's a Chopin manuscript." They pulled it down, and it was another version of one of Chopin's great piano pieces. They gave it to him, and he played it and published it.

#### MESHI ZAHAV

Byron told me a story about a time he was with Uri Geller, and a friend of his got lost. I don't remember all the details, but the bottom line was that Uri Geller did one of his metaphysics acts and found out where she was. Normally I wouldn't have believed it,



but something like that once happened to me. It was when I first came to Israel and I lived in Bnei Brak. I lived on Rechov Dessler next door to Rabbi Shlomo Brevda. He was dead sick all the time. I used to go in four times a day to be make a *minyana* (quorum of ten men) for *vidui* (deathbed confession). He was always dying. I told him once, "Shlomo, don't think that dying is so easy. *Der neshomo darf arois gein far dem* ('the soul has to depart for that,' the Yiddish equivalent of 'you've got to kill yourself for it')." 

Across the street from us was a guy named Schwartz. He was an older bachelor with sideburns and no beard. He eventually married a young girl. He was even weirder than me.

Someone from the neighborhood was missing. They said Schwartz was a telepath and they asked him to find the lost woman. I wanted watch him in action because I love these things. It took him half a day. He just sat there and thought. He said she was on Allenby Street, and they found her there.

When I came to Israel, there was a Jew named Meshi-Zahav who read palms. There was a big dispute as to whether it was forbidden to consult him because what he did was magic. I asked somebody -- I think it was Rav Shlomo Zalman -- and he said I could go. He was pretty open-minded about these things. I went to Meshi-Zahav's house in Mekor Chaim (a Jerusalem neighborhood). There, when you build a house, the earth sinks. There is so much change of climate in Israel. It's drastic. In New York, if you want to go for a change of weather, you have to drive for three hours to the Catskills. Here you cough, and you're in Bnei Brak and the weather is different. When I used to live in Bnei Brak, Rabbi David Povarsky used to walk with me Friday night. That was back when it was not built up and there were orchards all around. There was one corner there next to an orchard, and it was always freezing. If you want to go to the Dead Sea from Jerusalem, it's just half an hour away, and it's a different world.

I saw a book that explained this phenomenon, I don't remember the title. The Talmud in Tractate Gittin says that a vast number of Jews used to live in Israel. It asks how the land could have held that many, and answers that the Bible refers to Israel as "the land of the deer" -- which implies that just as the hide of a deer has elasticity and can expand, so, too, the land expands miraculously to hold more people than it could naturally. When all those multiple millions lived here, there were tremendous distances between places that are close to each other today. When the people left, the land shrank, but the changes in climate and terrain stayed.

When I went to Meshi Zahav I wanted to know what the future held about my having children. I went to him. I was 26 or 27 at the time. I didn't tell anybody I was going, and I took a bus over there and went in to him. I was smart enough not to give him any information about who I was, and he had no idea. He asked me my first name and my father's first name. That was no military secret, so I told him. He told me right off the bat that I have no children and I have five brothers and sisters. Then he looked at my palm, blew me away. He told me about an incident that happened when I was a kid, the whole story. I was sorry I didn't take Goldie. He said I would have children, but he was wrong. Could be I didn't want kids strongly enough.

A few weeks ago, two *yungeleit* (the yeshivah equivalent of graduate students) were here with their two little girls. I watched the fathers being busy with them and running after them the whole day. And I said to Goldie, "You'll pardon me for saying this, but maybe it's best that we didn't have children. I'd be in a mental asylum. It's a full time job. I have children through my students - it's cheaper, and easier, and I don't have *tzar gidul banim* (the pain of raising children).

## NACHMAN ELBAUM

There's nobody crazier than Nachman Elbaum in the world. I'm normal compared to him. He's a famous travel agent. He appealed to me. He never did anything straight, so I always bought from him. I loved it.

Once when I was working for the Weizmann Institute, they had a big dinner in Chicago which I had to attend. It was important for our medical manuscripts project. The travel expenses alone cost \$2,500. I get to Rome on a stopover, and all of a sudden TWA is on strike. Everything was paralyzed. People were sleeping on the floor of the airport.

I was frantic. I had to get to Chicago or else the whole project was at risk.

Alitalia was flying to the States, but you couldn't switch from one airline to another just like that. So I called Nachman Elbaum collect at his office in Manhattan and told him my problem. He sent a telex to TWA saying that I was a diplomat on a secret mission, and that's why I wasn't carrying a diplomatic passport. He said that it was in the urgent interests of mankind that I get to my destination.

All of a sudden, a well-dressed man comes over to me and says there's a spot for me on the next Alitalia flight to New York. I see them ushering an Italian priest off the plane. He's screaming bloody murder. I made a point of not staring at the guy when they escorted me on to the plane.

\* \* \*

One time Elbaum runs to catch me at Kennedy. He says that I have to bring the *Beis Yisroel* (the Grand Rabbi of Gur) a certain kind of apple that they don't have in Israel. I figured he'd give me a kilo. All of a sudden they marched in with twenty boxes of apples and I took them. I had to pay overweight, but I didn't mind.

He could never give me my ticket in advance like other agents do; he always said the ticket would be at the airport. So one time I get to airport and there's no ticket and no Elbaum. I tried to get hold of him, but I couldn't. Believe it or not, I went without a ticket. It's against IATA, but I convinced the guy to let me go. I told him I'd get the ticket later.

## YAKOV NEEMAN

Yakov Neeman was my lawyer. He worked with me in my dealings with David Shapell. When Yigal Horowitz was Minister of Finance, he came to my house and asked me if Neeman would make a good director-general. I vouched for him and Horowitz took him. Gold was over \$800 an ounce at that time, and South Africa was producing 80% of the world's supply. This was when I was very tight with the South African Finance Minister, Owen Harwood. After I had awarded him an honorary doctorate (see p. ), he said he would arrange a loan of 250 million dollars for Israel. He was really excited with Israel.

I told this to Horowitz, Minister of Finance. I told him I wanted 7 ½ % for my yeshiva as my commission. Neeman was standing there. He's got a big mouth when he's in a bad mood. He heard 250 million and he turned against me. He said that he was the one who set up the loan. I told him, "Look, Neeman. I was the one who recommended you for this job, but you're nothing but a jerk. You're a nothing and a liar. You never thought of this, and if I don't get my percentage, you don't get anything either."

Neeman got indignant and said, "You're going against the state?!"

I told him, "I could compare my bank account with yours, and there's a lot more money in yours. You're loaded. Don't give me this 'good of the state' business." He goes on with Zionism and the state, and I told him, "Don't sell me that. I'm already a Zionist." I told Yigal, "Either you do this on my terms, or you won't get a dime," and he didn't. Neeman was able to dominate Horowitz. He came to regret that.

I wouldn't take Neeman's phone calls after that. I saw him in the airport in Switzerland. He stuck out his hand and I left it hanging in the air. When he became Minister of Finance, somebody told me he'd love to talk to me. I figured maybe it was worth my while, so I bent over backwards and decided to talk to him. I gave him lots of ideas about taxation laws. I was good at that stuff.

## NACHMAN LEVY

Nachman Levy is a big officer with the police. He wrote me a note saying that he was terribly upset that I didn't keep my appointment with him yesterday. The Rebbetzin came in and asked me what to do. I told her to tell him to go to hell, and went back to sleep. When I woke up, I took a better look at the letter. Levy wrote that I hadn't behaved correctly. I picked up the phone to this guy and said, "You embarrassed me in front of my bride." That caught him off balance. I said, "I'm married fifty years and I don't want to pick anyone else now. You said I don't keep appointments. How could you say such a stupid thing, you animal? I told you I would *not* meet you without my lawyer, Dan Avi-Yitzchak. You never made a firm appointment. You're a liar."

Levy says, "Is that the way you talk to me?"

I said, "They say this is a democratic state."

He says, "Next time you're coming to us."

I told him, "That's what you think. You're going to come to me -- if I let you in."

Avi-Yitzchak heard about this conversation. He called up Levy and said, "You don't know who you're starting up with. You're lucky you weren't there in person, he would have hit you. You won't win, man."

Today three police cars pulled up and three prominent officers got out. People get scared, they get diarrhea. But it says in my Bible, "*Lo saguru mipnei ish* (do not be afraid of any man). I wish I were afraid enough of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* (Master of the Universe). People like those cops don't scare me.

#### ARAB JEWISH CO-EXISTENCE

I was in the hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a month. The Detroit area is full of Arabs. When I saw them cleaning the floors there in the hospital, I got scared that they would kill me. It was at the time when they caught some terrorists in a car in Bethlehem. They were on their way to blow up a school I founded that has 800 children. The fellow who masterminded it was named Sa'id. He used to work for us at the yeshivah, a quiet, nice guy. He belonged to Hamas. G-d helped us -- their car broke down in Bethlehem. It was a miracle.

They faxed me the article from the paper to the hospital. Teddy Kollek found out where I was from my wife and called me up. Everybody in the hospital was impressed that I got a call from Teddy.

When it was time to leave Detroit, I bought a ticket to New York. There was an Arab girl at the counter. I asked her in Arabic if she spoke Arabic, and she responded by asking me in Hebrew if I spoke Hebrew. I'm the type who has to talk to everybody. We had a conversation already. She was interesting. She had been the head secretary of the military medical committee in charge of Judea and Samaria. She said, "Why is it that here in America we can talk so amicably to each other? Why can't we do that in Israel?" I told her I don't know, but I think it's the Arabs' fault more than ours. We had a long conversation, but to make a long story short, she gave me a first class ticket for economy price.

#### YIGAL ALON

Yigal Alon was Minister of Absorption. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend, Zolnick??? Shachar. Shachar was the fellow who trained Idi Amin. I didn't know Alon well. I heard he spoke Yiddish, so I started to speak with him in Yiddish. I told him that I was disturbed because I heard they wanted to give Bet Safafa [location of the yeshivah] to the Arabs. I said that I was very emotionally attached to Bet Safafa, and if they would give it away, I'd stay with Hussein.

Alon told me, "If we'd have known you'd stay with the Arabs, we would have given them Bet Safafa a long time ago."

## EZER'S BIRTHDAY

When Begin made the Camp David agreement, he got a poor deal financially. People were upset. He should have made a profit on it, but he didn't even get back expenses. After all, he did it for Carter's sake.

Ezer Weizmann said – and this was reported in the paper -- that Begin should be the one to do the peace agreement, but when it came to the payoff they should have sent Elefant.

Ezer had a birthday party at my house when he was Minister of Defense. He insisted on it. I was afraid to do it here in the yeshivah, with all the drinking and women guests. I told him he'd drive me out of my mind. He said, "I promise you everything will be decent."

So I threw the party, and all my neighbors were there. Ezer drank like a fish. He always drank whiskey. He was half drunk, really like a goy. I always drink with ice because of my migraines because the ice contracts the arteries. Ezer tells me, "*Im ein kerach, ein Torah.*" (A play on the words of the Mishnah, "*im ein kemach ein Torah*" - if there is no flour, i.e. food, there can be no Torah" – with the word *kerach* [ice] taking the place of *kemach* [flour].)

I spent a lot of time that night with Simcha Ehrlich, the Minister of Finance. Ezer said, "It's my party, why are you hanging around with Ehrlich?"

I said, "Ezer, forgive me. You can give me a tank or a Phantom. What would I do with it? My students don't know how to operate those machines. Ehrlich is the man who has what I want."

## THE POPE

I have a talmid in the yeshiva named Yigal Levy. He's a beautiful boy with a face like an angel's -- a pure soul. His father is the biggest psychiatrist in Rome and the head of the Orthodox community. The Italians are a beautiful people. Italian Jews have their own unique *musach* in *tefilah* (rite of prayer). Yigal wanted to go to university to learn psychiatry like his father, but I didn't let him. c 12

Professor Gavriel Levi loves me. He's a man who's dying to learn Torah, and I gave him a great idea. He didn't have a strong background in Talmud but he sensed the depth that was there and wanted to be able to get at it himself. I advised him to study one piece of the Brisker Rov's book on the Rambam everyday. He's been grateful to me ever since.

Professor Levi learned the works of the Brisker Rov with another guy, a cardiologist named Gianfranco ???. He used to be the physician of the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Rabbi Toaff. Gianfranco wrote a book on the implements used in the Holy Temple. Just recently he wrote another book on *kashrus* of animals.

I don't *shnorr* (ask for money), so people like to make cocktail parties for me. One day when I was in Rome, Gavriel Levi said he would make a reception for me. This was about five or six years ago.

He made the affair, and all the important Jewish personalities in Rome were there. One of them was a white-haired, aristocratic, gentleman named Professor Saban who taught mathematics at the local university. He's the official head of Jewish community, not a religious man. We had a couple of drinks, and he told me that I should get to know the pope because he's an interesting guy. He said that the Pope saved a Jewish child during the Holocaust. I didn't believe it. He went on and he said that he had met the Pope once or twice and the Pope's best friend was a Jew named Biegelow???. He wrote a book called *My Friend the Pope*, or something like that.

One day I was walking in the Jewish ghetto of Rome with Professor Levi and we bumped into Biegelow. He's a Polish Jew who speaks a perfect Yiddish. This guy Biegelow is the Pope's age. The Pope's mother was a governess for the Biegelows, a very wealthy Jewish family. So Biegelow and the Pope grew up together. When the Pope became cardinal, he saved this guy. THAT HAS TO BE CLARIFIED. John Paul is very centrist, not a reactionary like Pacelli (Pope Pius). He has a lot of guilt over the Catholic role in the Holocaust.

Biegelow sees the Pope every day. John Paul made him move to Rome so they could keep up their friendship.

We were in a hurry and so was Biegelow. Levi promised me we'd get together again, but I never went back. I'd love to sit down with him. I have tremendous interest in these things, and I'd like to get to know him.

I flew to New York after that and I stayed with a cousin of mine, Gitty Shoenberger. She's a charming girl, very high class, who lives in Kew Gardens and has a home like

you never saw in your life -- the kind of place I would like for myself. I love to stay there, it's like going back to my childhood. She makes food -- you could go crazy. It's my home away from home, and I spent Shabbos there like I always do.

After the cholent -- and it was good -- I asked her to give me a book. I didn't want to learn Torah then because if I did that I wouldn't fall asleep. But after the cholent and beer and whiskey, I wanted to go to sleep, so I asked for a book. She gave me *Hassidic Tales of the Holocaust* by Yaffa Eliach.

The book was just what I needed at the time, little stories, nothing intellectual. G-d had me open the book to page 142. There was a story there about a religious woman from Cracow who waited many years before she had a child. Her husband was sent to the camps toward the beginning of the war, and she felt she would go, too. She had a Catholic friend, her dressmaker, who didn't have a child. She went to this friend and asked her to take the child, with the understanding that if she came back, she would take her child back. In case she didn't come back, she gave the dressmaker envelopes to give to cousins in Montreal and in Washington.

The dressmaker took the child. The Jewish woman got a crucifix and had the dressmaker hold it while swearing that she would do as agreed. As often happened in these situations, the Catholic got attached to child. She had promised she wouldn't take him to church, but she did.

After the war, she saw nobody was coming back, and she was dying to adopt the kid and baptize him, but she was a nice lady and her conscience bothered her, so she went to her priest. The priest was none other than our friend, the Pope. She asked him what the right thing to do was. He told her not to keep the child; it's morally wrong. So she sent him to Washington. The family he wound up with is religious. I know them.

I read this story and I was enchanted. It was the exact story Professor Saban had told me in Rome down to the last detail. But there was one point there that Saban hadn't told me. The Bluzhover Rebbe was a very charming man. He survived the camps and lived to be about 100 years old. I saw him once or twice. At the end of this story it says that the Bluzhover Rebbe said that the Pope was privileged to become pope because of this story.

I made up my mind that I had to meet Pope John Paul. I had to figure out how to get to him. Giulio Andreotti was Prime Minister of Italy for decades. He's a very smart man. Kissinger wrote that he's the greatest statesman in the world. He is a good friend of mine. I got to know him through Rafaelo Fellah (see p. ).

Andreotti is a very religious Catholic. The next time I was in Rome, I asked him to arrange an audience with the Pope for me. The Pope was going to South America that day, but Andreotti still managed to pull it off. That was extraordinary. With all the protocol and red tape, it usually takes six months.

I knew that the Pope had a strong interest in things Jewish. John Paul was the first Pope to visit a shul in Rome, the first ever. I saw the video of it. It was Yom Hashoah

(Holocaust Memorial Day) when he went. They chanted the service in the beautiful melodies of the Italian liturgy. John Paul was so moved he asked the rabbi if he could kiss the Torah. The rabbi should have known better, but he said, "Sure you can." The congregation sang Ani Maamin and John Paul actually sang along with them.

I had a present prepared for him. I had the story about him from Eliach's book written up with beautiful calligraphy, with letters that resembled the script of a Torah scroll. I had it rolled up to look like a Torah scroll, with a cloth cover. It was beautiful.

So I went to see the Pope. I wanted to hear what he would say about the story I read about him and ask him a few other questions. I told Andreotti I would be uncomfortable in a room with crosses, so he took care of that. They sent a car for me and drove me there.

When I got there, there were some Jordanian Christians in the room with him. When they walked out, I came in. The first thing I did was to give him his present. He automatically said *Shma Yisrael* in Hebrew with the proper pronunciation of the Names of G-d. It blew me away.

I have a big mouth. I asked him why the Catholics didn't save more Jews during the Holocaust, and mentioned that Pacelli (Pope Pius) was an anti-Semite. He was twisting and turning. But he's a very charming man. Another thing I asked him was why they solicit customers. We dissuade people. I called myself the Chief rabbi of Bethlehem because, after all, there's no rabbi closer to Bethlehem than me. He has cancer of the liver, but they keep him alive and he really moves around.

I told John Paul what the Bluzhover Rebbe said about him. He said that what he did was no big thing; you have to be human. Then he said that when he comes to Israel, he'll visit me. G-d forbid. That's all I need. I spent forty-five minutes with him. That's a lot.

Afterwards I got a phone call from the Israeli ambassador to Italy, Pazner. He tells me, what a chutzpah to go to the Pope without telling him. It told him, "Jerk, I'm an American citizen and you can go to hell," and then I hung up on him.

The Pope is a sincere man. Many of the other higher Catholic clergy I've known are crooks. Like Cardinal Cody in Chicago. He was a *gonif* and an adulterer. He was Mayor Daley's buddy, and mine, too.

#### TRANSLATING MAIMONIDES

Back in the early sixties, I had the idea to translate Maimonides' medical writings into English. My big man for that was Professor Zussman SP? Muntner, chairman of the medical history department at Hebrew University. He went to school with the Pope. Ben Gurion loved Muntner and he introduced me to him. Ben Gurion wanted me to publish Maimonides' medical writings in Modern Hebrew, but I wasn't interested in Hebrew. BG agreed to have the yeshivah take 50% of whatever I raised, and I had him sign a contract to that effect.



Which reminds me, Ben Gurion asked me why I called my yeshivah ITRI, Israel Torah Research Institute. He was mad at me. He said I should have called it a Hebrew name like Dekel or Shoshanah or something like that. I told him that one year there was a drought, and the chief rabbinate said that everybody should pray for rain. There was one little Jew in Me'ah She'arim who didn't want to pray for rain. They asked him why not. He said, "What's the difference if it rains here or not? It's just another potato. The main thing is that it has to rain in America." BG didn't like that one.

Muntner went to Indiana University with the Pope. He was from an assimilated German family. He got friendly with Pacelli. There was a fifteenth century pope named Johannes DiCapua THAT MIGHT BE THE NAME OF THE MESHUMAD, NOT THE POPE who had Maimonides' treatise on asthma translated into Latin. It was done by an apostate Jew. There is a Hebrew translation of the book [the original was in Arabic], but from a medical standpoint, the Latin manuscript is the best. The Catholics are big admirers of Maimonides because Thomas Aquinas relied a lot on him in his writings. I wanted to send Muntner around the world to raise funds for publication. Ben Gurion was the vice-chairman of the project. I made him sign a piece of paper saying that fifty per cent of the take was for the yeshiva.

I was once in Antwerp for a bar mitzvah. Rabbi David Lieberman, the local rabbi, sat next to me. His brother Yossel was my *chavrusa* (study partner) in Lakewood. Today he fixes televisions. He's a tremendous scholar.

I sat next to Rabbi Lieberman at the head table. He said he knew me from a long time ago in Chicago. He heard me interviewed on the radio by Dr. Morris Fishbein, the chairman of the American Medical Association about the medical writings. Fishbein was with the American Council for Judaism, the anti-Israel organization. When he got kicked out of the AMA, he was interested in making a comeback in the Jewish community. So I was his conduit. In return, he became the chairman of my Maimonides project. He was an intellectual. He knew everything in the world, but only superficially.

Ben Gurion had this dream to bring him to Israel – "anti-Zionist converts to Zionism." I told BG I would bring him. He said, "You're crazy."

I said, "BG, if I bring him, what will you do for me?"

"Anything you want."

I told him I would bring Fishbein and I did, in the flesh.

So Lieberman was in Chicago and turned on the radio in his car the day Fishbein interviewed me. Lieberman had heard of me from his brother. He told me that he thought I was a doctor because I was using all this fancy medical terminology. I had the laugh of my life.

I made a fortune on Maimonides' medical writings. Every Jewish doctor has the Oath of Maimonides in his office instead of the Oath of Hippocrates. I capitalized on that sentiment.

WE HAVE TO PUT A COPY OF THE TIME ARTICLE IN THE BOOK.

#### THE MANCHESTER ROSH YESHIVAH

Gerald Ronson is a big English millionaire, a friend of Netanyahu's. He comes from the East End of London and talks with a Cockney accent. He's a tough customer. I got to know him very well, and we got to be friends. He was convicted of insider trading in the Guinness scandal they had in England a number of years ago. They sent him to jail, but now they say they made a mistake.

Like I said, Ronson's a really rough guy. Before he went to jail he told me he's not scared of any of the guys there. He'll just bang their heads together.

Right before he went to prison, I arranged a Torah dedication ceremony for him here at the yeshivah. I was hoping it would help him during his time in jail.

Rabbi Yehudah Zev Segal of Manchester was one of the outstanding saintly figures of our time. I got to know him because he had a grandson who suffered from severe migraines and I arranged for treatment for him. I eventually bump into all of the *tzaddikim* (righteous people). Rabbi Segal wasn't my kind of guy, but I loved him because of how pure and righteous he was. He appreciated what I did for his grandson.

I was in London while Ronson's trial was in progress. I got in touch with Rabbi Segal and asked him to come with me to Ronson's house to give him a blessing. His students were outraged. They insisted that Ronson should go to Rabbi Segal. But Rabbi Segal said, "If Rabbi Elefant says I should go, I'll go."

We went to Ronson's house against the better judgment of the students. They came along, too. Rabbi Segal is a native Englishman himself. I think he might have been born in the East End, too. CHECK IN HIS BIOGRAPHY. He and Ronson started to speak in their thick English accents.

Rabbi Segal asked him, "Are you Orthodox?"

Ronson said, "I'm Orthodox here," and he pointed to his heart.

Then Rabbi Segal asked him if he kept Shabbos, and he said he didn't. Now, Rabbi Segal was of the opinion that he was obligated to voice his objections to this or else people might get the impression that he thought it was okay to be a Jew "in your heart." So Rabbi Segal and Ronson started to exchange words. Ronson's a vulgar guy who isn't about to let anybody else get in the last word. You can imagine how it went. It was a disaster.

When we left the house I was so ashamed of myself I wanted to put my head in the garbage can. The students all said I shouldn't take him, and I blew it.

My friend Bentzy Dunner drove me back. I went into my room and hid my head in my pillow. In the meantime, Bentzy had spoken to Rabbi Segal and he told me that Rabbi Segal wanted to talk with me, but I couldn't face him. Bentzy told this to Rabbi Segal. He asked Bentzy for my phone number and called me. He said, "I want to thank you for what happened this morning."

I said, "Thank me? Am I hearing you right?"

He said, "Yes. I never had the privilege of suffering humiliation for the sake of Torah before. Today it happened to me. I appreciate that deeply." He wasn't just trying to make me feel good. He really meant it.

I told him, "Still, I would never have wanted to be the one to bring it about."

\* \* \*

Chaim Weiss was one of the administrators of the yeshivah. His father, Sholom Weiss, was a lovely man. He managed the kitchen in the yeshivah. It used to really bother him when the boys used to break plates and things like that, but I never did anything about it. It ate him up.

Sholom Weiss was originally from Haifa. He was riding the bus there one day, and he had a massive heart attack, right there on the bus. Chaim called me from Rambam Hospital in Haifa. He said the doctors told him that his father had at best an hour left. He asked me to call Rabbi Segal.

I called him in Manchester, but his daughter didn't want to let me talk to him because he was sleeping. He was an old, sickly, man. I told his daughter, "Remember what I did for your son when he had migraines? Let me talk to your father. It's an emergency."

He came to the phone. I told him that I wanted to save somebody who was dying, and that I felt guilty about it because I could have eased his irritation. I told him the whole story and I gave him Sholom Weiss' name. I said, "The doctors say he's on his way out. Could you bring him back for me?"

An hour later Chaim called me. The doctors said his father took a sudden turn for the better. He lived for another twenty years with only about fifteen per cent of his heart functioning.

Rav Moshe Feinstein [the greatest authority in Jewish law of his time] writes in one of his books that a person should not insert his own private prayers in languages other than Hebrew into the standard liturgy. He notes that Rabbi Segal would do that, but said that other people couldn't follow his example. Rabbi Segal was an exception, he wrote. He could do anything.

\* \* \*

About twelve years ago, there were some bad feelings between Rav Shach and Rabbi Segal. This was the time when Rav Shach was agitating to have the Lithuanian branch of Orthodoxy part company with the Chassidic branch on the institutional level. Rabbi Segal, though of Lithuanian background himself, was sympathetic to the Chassidim and wanted to maintain unity.

Rav Shach heard that I was a friend of Rabbi Segal's, so he told me he wanted to talk with me about him next time I was in Bnei Brak. It wasn't too long before I was there, and Rav Shach asked me what I knew about Rabbi Segal. I told him, "I'll tell you the truth. Rav Shach, you are the most powerful man in this world. You build governments, you break governments. What you say goes. People say about you, '*kocho ug'vuroso molei olam* (his power and his might fill the world – the text of a blessing said over the wonders of nature, with reference to G-d).' But Rabbi Segal is different. His opinion counts over there in the other world."

Rav Shach's attendants were dumbstruck. They couldn't believe I had the nerve to say that to his face. But I didn't mean to insult Rav Shach and he wasn't fazed. He asked, "Do you really mean that?" I said I did, and after that he left Rabbi Segal alone.

## TED TURNER

I went to see Christian Barnard and Andre Petersee(?), the South African film producer, in Atlanta around the time the Information Scandal broke in 1980. South Africa had nothing but money and they wanted recognition. They were bribing all of the countries in the world. Taiwan and Israel were their only friends. They were the outcast nations, the pariahs. Israel was very close with South Africa. There were no secrets between them. South Africa had money and Israel had know-how. There was always a huge sum of South African money in the Bank of Israel for whatever Israel needed for research. Israel developed the Lavie jet fighter and gave the plans to South Africa.

So I went to visit these South Africans, and Ted Turner was there. He was a friend of Petersee's. I don't have academic knowledge. I'm a little animal, I learn from the street, but I know a thing or two. Ted Turner was starting CNN back then. Barnard, Petersee, and another guy who was there – I don't recall his name -- were patriotic South Africans, and they were talking to Turner about their country's image. Turner needed five million dollars. It's nothing for him today, but it was different back then. Believe it or not, he needed it. I'm telling you the truth. I never lie Friday afternoon. They all knew I had the money.

Petersee and Barnard were sure CNN would grow into a big thing. I wasn't so sure, and I didn't want to get too chummy. The five million was nothing, but I didn't have a good feeling about it. A lost opportunity. Now I see CNN in every hotel I go to around the world. I bumped into Barnard not long ago and he reminded me of what happened. I told him, "Chris, don't pour salt on my wound."

Turner is an anti-Semite; you can tell from the way he talks. Pietersee is Dutch Reformed. They just praise the Lord all day. I have a lot of evangelical friends from the Texas Bible Belt. They hold hands and pray. One day they tried to grab my hand and get me to praise the Lord with them. I told them, why talk to the son when I can talk to the Old Man? They're always mentioning the son.

Ah, the problem is there's only 24 hours in a day. You only live, 65, 70, 80 years. It's only the first 70 years that are hard.

I sometimes think about Methuselah. He lived 968 years. 300 years he worked hard. He coasted for the next 300. The last 300 years, he had *nachas* (satisfaction from life). We live 70, 75 years. When we get to 60 or 65 you got to clean the plugs, and then you need an overhaul. And after that, you realize you worked for nothing. Very frustrating. If I had another 400 years, I could put out a few *seforim* (books on religious topics) and do a couple of favors. I love to do favors.

## HOTEL NEW YORKER - FLATTO

I once went to America with Flatto, before he was extradited. He's a very charming guy who I got involved with somehow. He didn't speak Hebrew or English, so we spoke in Yiddish. He has a hoarse voice, like me. His name used to be Shaikovitz.

We stayed at the Drake hotel, a fancy place at 60<sup>th</sup> and Park Avenue, and he paid the bill. That's my general procedure.

As soon as we got to New York, Flatto got me into a taxi, and we went to Eighth Avenue and 45<sup>th</sup> Street, where the massage parlors and sex shops and *shmutz* (filth) is. There's a hotel there, the New Yorker. The point of this mission was for me to see this building so that Flatto could buy it with my money.

We picked up a friend of mine, a very bright guy, and the three of us went to see the New Yorker Building. It was a famous hotel in the Gay Nineties. Flatto told me he could buy this hotel for one million dollars. He saw it as worth more than that. The French value a property by replacement value, by how much it costs to put it up. It seemed to me that it was in a filthy neighborhood and wasn't worth a nickel. Why was it empty?

Flatto tells me that I'm not speculating. All he wants of for me to lend him the money. He asked for \$100,000 down. Big deal. Flatto was always hanging by his neck. It seemed to make sense, but my other friend advised against. I'm a friend so I lent him the \$100,000 anyway. "For the same money, take a partnership," Flatto says. But I didn't want to.

I didn't have an account in New York with that kind of money in it. But I had one in Bank Discount in Romema (a Jerusalem neighborhood). We were the biggest account in Jerusalem. This was in the early seventies.

So I called Bank Discount in New York, and I told them, "I'm Rabbi Elephant. Boom, boom. You should be scared when you hear that name. I've got a big account in Bank Discount in Jerusalem. I'd like you to bring me a check for \$100,000."

The guy I was speaking with was named Kahane. He told me, "Rabbi, you're not getting any checks. This bank is incorporated separately. Bank Discount here and Bank Discount in Jerusalem are two different companies. We have a sister relationship."

I call up the manager of Bank Discount in Jerusalem, Chaim Cohen. I told him, "I'm a little annoyed. I called your friend Kahane, and he doesn't want to give me a check. So I want you to call Kahane and educate him about who I am."

He calls up Kahane and says, The guy in the Drake Hotel is important to us. Just give him the money and service him. Kahane comes up with the \$100,000 bank check. Flatto's sitting there, and I said, "You see? I said he'd bring it to me. He didn't want to, but in the end he did."

I gave Flatto the money and I didn't ask for a partnership. He had to pay me back \$300,000. I had a *heter iska*. Getting back the money was like pulling teeth.

Flatto had a simple formula. He wanted 500 times what he paid for it. He sold the building six months later for ten million dollars. I'm a *shmeggege*. I could have been a partner in that. So I lost one.

A few years later I was sitting at a meeting in Miami Beach. There was a lawyer there named Phil Green whom I hate. He's married to a *shikse*. He gets up and says, "I'm sorry. I have to leave to an urgent meeting. My client just bought the New Yorker Hotel for 100 million dollars." I just about passed out. I could have owned it, but it doesn't help. These stories don't help later.

#### YINON AVIDAN

I had a student in the Haderah branch of the yeshivah named Yinon Avidan, back about 27 years ago. He's a bulldozer. He married an Ashkenazi girl from the illustrious Kaufman family. She is something else. I officiated at the wedding. Yinon has a brother-in law, named Yamin Akrish, a nice boy. He teaches in one of Avi Burstein's schools in Bet Shemesh. Bet Shemesh is mine, I built the yeshivah there. I gave it away. Some people sell yeshivahs to get money, but I don't. I sell sour pickles. It's against my grain to sell a yeshivah, so I gave it to them.

Yinon was a builder and doer. He helped me build Haderah. He nearly put me in the hospital with his pressure. I had to do everything he said.

Yinon wanted to build a school in his hometown, Hatzor, over twenty years ago. I introduced him to Simcha Ehrlich who was finance Minister then. He was a Galicianer (from Galicia, southern Poland) with a good head, but he had no particular area of expertise. He was a jack of all trades and a master of none. His wife said the best thing that ever happened to them was that he became Finance Minister because then he wouldn't mix in the family business. They had a big optometry business.

I had Ehrlich in my back pocket. His rival in the Likud was Yitzhak Modai. Modai was from a religious family. He was a lawyer and an economist, a real genius, but he was dreamy.

Every Sunday there was a cabinet meeting, and Modai would come to me afterward for therapy. He hated Ehrlich and he cussed him out everyday. He had a sharp mouth, sharper than Ehrlich's. Modai's wife was a former Miss Israel. Modai and Ehrlich were both originally with the Liberal Party, but Modai hated Ehrlich. He said he was a nincompoop, which is true.

Ehrlich couldn't take the pressure of always fighting with Modai, and found out that I was a close friend of his. In those days I got practically unlimited money from Ehrlich just to keep Modai off his back. One time I brought them both to my house up on the hill in Beit Safafa, and we made a *sulhah* (reconciliation).

I needed a generator for the yeshivah campus down at the bottom of the hill. When you come into the campus, there's a building filled with electrical stuff. There was an agreement that the Arab electric company supplied the part of Jerusalem where the yeshivah was located. It was primitive. The level used to drop. There was an advantage to it, because it's less problematic to use non-Jewish electricity on the Sabbath. But I needed a generator. I had the Minister of Finance and the Minister of

Energy at my house, so they arranged it, and three days later I got a nice big generator.

Yinon wanted money to build a school in Hatzor. I got eight million shekels for him from Ehrlich.

Then Rav Shach called me and said the people came complaining to him that I have a school in Hatzor where boys and girls study together. I got mad and called Yinon. The charge wasn't true, but Yinon has a lot of pride. He wouldn't come crawling to me, so we didn't talk to each other for twenty-four years.

One day not long ago, I finally found out the details. I didn't have a chip on my shoulder, so I called him up and said, "Yinon we used to be very close friends. We lost the enjoyment of that friendship for twenty-four years." And now we're the best of friends again.

#### THE VISHKER ILUI

There was a fellow on the Lower East Side, Rav Yaakov Safsel. They called him the Vishker Ilui (the genius from Vishka). He used to go over to Rav Boruch Ber Leibovitz's house in Kamenitz and lay down and make himself comfortable on the couch whenever he wanted to. He was a good friend of my father-in-law. He was about as big as a peanut, and wore his *tallis koton* on the outside. Boy, was he a sight for sore eyes. He used to carry a little shopping bag with chicken in it because he wouldn't rely on anybody's *shechitah* (ritual slaughtering). I once went to the Lower East Side with Rav Leib Malin to buy the *arba minim* before Sukkos. I saw Safsel and went over to him. He doesn't say good bye or hello, just asks me a *kashe* (Talmudic question) that he saw in the *Minchas Chinuch*. A year goes by and I don't see him. Then I see him again on the East Side before Sukkos. He comes over to me and says, "The answer is like this....," like he asked me two minutes ago.

#### RAV CHATZKEL

Back in the early seventies, when things were going really well for me, I went to see the great saint, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein. Rav Chatzkel had known me ever since I first came to Israel, about twenty years earlier.

I had a lot of people against me then, but I brought it on myself. I was flamboyant. I didn't have enough reserve.

But I hadn't come to that realization yet, so I asked Rav Chatzkel how come I had so many enemies. He showed me a page of the Talmud (*Tamid* 32a) where it says, if you want to be hated, be successful. Rashi in his commentary there elaborates on that. He says being successful means traveling in the company of government officials and kings. But if you want to be loved, act like a beggar. Everybody will pity you. That's how you make a career of being loved.



## LARRY KING

It was a hot night in New York when they had the big power outage a number of years ago, and I was in my hotel room. I like to listen to Larry King. He had Rabbi Noach Weinberg and Jerry Falwell on the show. King says to Jerry Falwell, "You know, I'm Jewish. According to your faith, I'm not saved; I'm going to hell. But we're very benevolent. We believe that anyone good has a share in the World to Come. You guys are always running around looking for customers. We like our product, but we don't look for customers." And then Noach chimed in. You know Noach. He put on a whole show. Falwell is a bright guy, but he was outgunned.

Rav Noach and I went to school together at Chaim Berlin. He's also a distant relative. One of his sisters is married to a cousin of mine in Brazil. Rav Noach dated my wife, but thank G-d they didn't hit it off.

Rav Noach came into my office in Jerusalem one day about thirty-five years ago. He said, "You want to sanctify the Name of G-d?"

I said, "How much is this going to cost me?"

He said, "About \$10,000." He wanted to find the twelve stones that Moses sank into the Jordan. That would prove to the world that what the Torah says is true.

He wanted me to call the famous archaeologist Yigal Yadin, which I stupidly did. Yadin literally told me I was out of my mind.

Rav Chaim Uri Freund, that wonderful Jerusalemite, was there. He told Rav Noach, "If Rabbi Elefant would have given you the money, it would have proved G-d's existence. It would have been a clear miracle."

## WHISTLING

I used to whistle through the spaces in my teeth. I was a real virtuoso. In my first year in high school, my teacher was Rabbi Karp, Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz' son-in-law. I used to whistle in his class all the time, but he couldn't detect any movement. My cousin Berel Moskowitz was pretty good at it, too. It drove Rabbi Karp crazy. He says to the class one day, "Whoever is doing the whistling, get up. I won't do anything to you. I'm just curious to know who's doing it." We didn't go for it. So he went around the class listening. He got to my seat and Berel did it. Drove him wacky.

## RAV MOSHE SHMUEL SHAPIRO

I'll tell you how I met Rav Moshe Shmuel. I didn't know him from a hole in the wall, but I was learning with Shalom Povarsky, Reb Berl's brother. He was a rebbe at Be'er Yaakov, Rav Moshe Shmuel's yeshivah. Everybody who hears him says they can see that I influenced him.

One day Shalom was talking with Rav Moshe Shmuel, and Rav Moshe Shmuel mentioned that he had learned with Reb Leib Malin in Bialystock. That's where both of them were from, but Reb Leib was older. Shalom told him that I had studied under Rav Leib, so he asked Shalom to ask me to send me something of my own. I had nothing typed, so I sent him the notes on my lectures on Bava Kama that Rav Yossele Zeinwirth took down. Rav Moshe Shmuel loved them. That's how we met.

## RAV SHACH AND KORACH

I sometimes get invited to speak at Ramat Elchanan in Bnei Brak. To get invited there, you have to be pretty high quality. Nobody's invited Friday night for *Kabbolas shabbos* except for me. Rav Berl Povarsky and Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi get invited *bein hazmanim*.

I speak there at least four times a year. I like to go there because I have a kind of mob hysteria. Big crowds get me excited. Rav Yechezkel Abramsky once came here to Itri for Yosef Kamenetsky's bar mitzvah. Within three minutes he was at the podium, delivering a lecture. His wife told him, "Chezkel, are you that hungry?"

He told her, "When I see students who want to study Talmud, I'm like an alcoholic who sees a bottle."

Rav Abramsky was a really wonderful man, a sensitive soul, and a real scholar. The Brisker Rov once said that everybody steals from his father, but Abramsky was the best because at least he didn't spoil it. I heard him say it myself. WE NEVER GOT TO KORACH.

## SAUL LIEBERMAN

Saul Lieberman was a son-in-law of Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, Rabbi Chaim Berlin's brother. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of Talmud, and he was a genuine intellectual. But he was very frustrated because he felt he should have been the first Chief Rabbi of Israel. It was out of this frustration that he went to the Jewish Theological Seminary. He altered the traditional text of the *kesubah* (marriage contract). He was thumbing his nose at the world of traditional Torah scholarship.

When Lieberman came to Israel, the Brisker Rov acted like he was his best friend. They asked him why, and he had a one-word explanation, "*Mishpochah* (family)." They were cousins.

One of the Rov's sons, I think it was Meir, got engaged to a girl from a family called Benedict. I was invited to the engagement party. The Brisker Rov was sitting next to Saul Lieberman. I saw it. On Lieberman's other side was the Mir Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Leizer Yehudah Finkel. At that time Lieberman was *persona non grata*.

There was a Jew who lived in Jerusalem back then named Solomon. He wrote a *sefer* called *Nesivos HaKodesh* on *Zevachim*. He was a big *tzaddik* (saint). He had been a

rabbi in Shanghai. He was the father of Rabbi Solomon in Petach Tikvah. This gentleman came to the Brisker Rov one day and says, "Rebbe, you're the big warrior against Zionism, but whenever you mention Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, you refer to him respectfully as *der feter* (the uncle)."

The Rov said, "What do you want? He's *mishpochoh*."

Solomon said, "So what do *you* want from all the Jews who admire Rav Kook, who had so much love for the Jewish people?"

The Brisker Rov got mixed up for a few days because of that.

\* \* \*

Leiberman was good friends with Rav Hutner. They were both students of Rav Kook, and they palled around in New York back in the fifties. They both used to go to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Library because there were lots of *seforim* (volumes of religious scholarship) there. Rav Hutner had a beard as black as coal back then. He wore a short jacket. Leiberman was once standing there in the library and who should come in but his friend, Rav Hutner. Leiberman says in Yiddish, "Here comes G-d's dog."

Rav Hutner retorted, "Better to be a dog of G-d than to be a god to dogs." Rav Hutner told me that one himself.

\* \* \*

When I was a young man, I was sitting on Shabbos with Goldie at a glatt kosher hotel in Miami Beach. Right in front of us were Elie Wiesel and Saul Lieberman. Leiberman was dipping his tea bag into boiling hot water, cooking on Shabbos. I was strongly motivated to tell him. Goldie was against it. I told her, "But Goldie, it's frum to tell him." I felt Lieberman didn't know what he was doing.

I was feeling antagonistic toward him. I went over to him and I poked him a bit. I said, "Saul, what you're doing is *bishul* (cooking)."

He didn't know me. He says, "There's no prohibition against coloring with foods."

I said, "You jerk, I'm not talking about coloring. I'm talking about cooking." So I did my duty as an Orthodox Jew.

His friend Elie Wiesel is what you call a career Holocaust survivor. When you see him he has a face that he turns on, and you see the Holocaust, you see Auschwitz in his face. He made a fortune on it. He is "Mr. Holocaust." I've met him on many occasions.

AN HONEST BUCK

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I once sat in the train station, waiting for a train, holding my hat in hand and I fell asleep. When I woke up I had three dollar bills and change in my hat. It was the first time I earned an honest dollar.

## HELPING OUT THE PRIME MINISTER

Yitzhak Rabin was one of the great statesmen of the twentieth century. He was a martyr and a saint, the embodiment of the noblest ideals of Zionism. Unfortunately, he had a drinking problem.

I have a friend who used to be an aide to a member of the Knesset. He knew the waiters in the Knesset dining rooms. One of them told him that at meetings, Rabin used to often have a glass in front of him with a slice of lemon on the rim, full of tea-colored liquid, but the resemblance to tea ended with the color.

A European journalist used to regularly see Rabin at parties. He told me that it was obvious that he overindulged. This fellow heard from an American colleague that when Rabin was in Washington having a *tete a tete* with President Jimmy Carter, he nodded off from having had too much to drink, right in the middle of the meeting. After that, Carter always viewed him with contempt.

During his first term as Prime Minister, back in the mid-seventies before he had to resign, Rabin traveled to Germany to participate in a memorial service for the Israeli athletes murdered by the Palestinians at the Munich Olympics. He put on a *kippah* (skullcap) and said *Kaddish* (the mourner's prayer).

On the flight home, Rabin naturally sat next to his wife Leah. Leah fell asleep, but Yitzhak was having too much fun for that. First class – free drinks, right? He had a few too many, and started getting friendly with a German stewardess. This young lady told an Israeli journalist about her experiences with the Prime Minister. The journalist's sense of social responsibility would not allow him to suppress the story – unless he was paid 100,000 Israeli pounds. I think that was around \$40,000 dollars back then.

Rabin heard I might have the money handy, so he sent one of his top aides to see me. I told the fellow I had the money all right, but I wouldn't give it to him because he would pocket it. I would only give it to the Prime Minister himself.

He came in person, and I gave him the money. I told my friend Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, about the incident, and he told me I handled it stupidly. Rabin was a very private man, to the point of being secretive. If he knew I had something on him, he would avoid me from then on. And he did. Teddy was right.

## MIGRAINES

Since the age of 47 I've had terrible migraines. One of the disciples of Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes in the introduction to a book that he wrote that he suffered from headaches that were so severe that he was sure that he wouldn't??? That's what my headaches were like. I started taking ??? for them, a drug that constricts the arteries. You're supposed to take one tablet at a time, but I took twelve. That's the way I am with pills. It's because of my name – *pil* is Hebrew for elephant. I got a massive heart attack at David's Restaurant in San Francisco because of these ??? pills. They diagnosed me as having angina pectoris. When I came back to Israel, I told Ben that I'm like him; we both have heart trouble. He told me to go to his cardiologist, Mendel Gottesman. I went to Gottesman whom I know very well, and he said, "You couldn't have had a heart attack. You give them. You don't have them." He put me through all the tests, the bicycle and everything else. He asked me to tell him everything I consume. When I told him about the pill, he said that the dose I take could kill a hippopotamus. As soon as I stopped taking it, everything was okay. There was no damage to the heart.

It's a good thing I don't have to take nitroglycerin. That dilates the arteries. I would die from the migraines. So what does someone do who has both migraines and heart problems? G-d must arrange it so you don't have both things.

I smoked too. For three years around then I didn't smoke. Paul Reichmann stopped, so he made me stop, too. He used to smoke four packs a day, but he was once on a plane, and a lady came up to him and said, "Mister, you stink from smoke." He was sensitive about causing other people discomfort, so he stopped smoking right then.

## THE FERTILITY EXPERT

Someone I know introduced me to a professor of anatomy at Cornell, John MacLeod, the world's biggest authority on male fertility. A fine man, lived very simply. I had great respect for him. He discovered that there's something in female urine called ??? which is a motivator for male fertility. Aristotle Onassis had a stud farm for racehorses, and MacLeod was his advisor. He introduced me to Onassis, and I got some treasury bonds for the yeshivah from him.

I knew a lot of childless couples here in Israel, so I brought MacLeod over to see if he could help them. He let me pay his way, but other than that, he wouldn't take a penny. There are people here who have children because I introduced them to John MacLeod.

The Talmud says that one of the questions a person is asked when he is judged in Heaven is, "Did you busy yourself with the commandment to be fruitful and multiply?" The Maharsha in his commentary on the Talmud asks, why does the Talmud phrase the question as "did you *busy yourself* with the commandment?" Why not "did you *fulfill* the commandment"? He answers that the wording implies that if a

person can't fulfill the commandment himself, he should assist others in its fulfillment, for example, by helping to marry off orphans or the poor. I like to think I fulfilled that aspect of the commandment by bringing John MacLeod to Israel.

## SWISS BANKING

### PUT THIS STORY RIGHT AFTER THE FIRST RASSCO STORY

When I convinced the South African government to buy Rassco, they were supposed to wire it to my Swiss account which I held with David Beck. (SEE STORY ON FLATTO-SHARON.) We're talking about 25 million dollars. I was supposed act as their representative and give the money to Rassco. The South Africans had a billion dollars on deposit in Switzerland in case of emergency. I don't know why they didn't give me the money out of that, but they chose to wire it to my account.

I come into to office of the vice-president of Bank Suisse – that's the biggest bank in Switzerland – and ask to make a withdrawal. The fellow's name is Zubner. GET FIRST NAME AND EXACT SPELLING. The first thing he asks me is what do you want the money for. The guy's demeanor struck me as that of a Swiss version of Adolf Eichmann. I said, "You're a Nazi bastard, and it's none of your business what I'm taking out my money for."

Abie Neeman was there in the office representing Rassco. He's a Likud lawyer and a very wealthy man. He owns a building in Tel Aviv called *Amot Hamishpat* where the biggest lawyers have their offices.

When I opened my mouth, Neeman just about fainted. Zubner turned white as a sheet. When I encounter anti-Semitism, I go wild. I kept calling Zubner a Nazi and I told him he probably killed Jews in the War. Then I picked up the phone and called Owen Horwood, the South African Minister of Finance. This is after we had given him an honorary doctorate. I said, "Mr. Minister, why do you send me to Nazis? Why do you bank with Nazis?" I said this right in front of Zubner. I told Horwood to tell him to give me the money right away or South Africa will pull out their billion dollars. We got the money like yesterday, no problem. Abie Neeman was in trauma for days afterward.

Two days later I was at a hotel in Zurich and I got a call from Zubner. He said he wanted to have lunch with me to apologize. I said I don't eat out with Nazis, and I hung up.

The Swiss are like the kid who killed his parents and asked for mercy because he's an orphan. A fellow I know, Zinger, Edgar Bronfman's right hand man said that when he arrived at the Swiss border from Germany, they stamped his passport "Jew" and sent him back. But the Jewish gold they took.

## GOLDIE AND THE TRAIN

Goldie and I were on a train going through Switzerland on our way to Israel in the early fifties. I go crazy over classical music and beautiful scenery, and there are plenty of both in Switzerland. We got to Lausanne, and Goldie went to the dining car to return a glass I'd used. Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, and I began getting nervous because she hadn't returned. I looked through the train and couldn't find her. I began to think that maybe she fell through between the cars. I had an ulcer then and it began to act up. I asked the conductor with the little German and French I knew if she could have fallen through. He said it was conceivable. I didn't need anymore than that. I went wild, but nobody even looked at me. The Swiss are like that. They wouldn't give you the sweat off their eyebrows. The next stop was Montreux. I got off and I didn't even remember to take my packages. I went straight to the *chef de gare*, CHECK SPELLING the stationmaster. All the people working there were wearing caps that looked straight out of a Nazi uniform. I saw these Germans with the caps and remembered that's what the Nazis looked like in movies when I was a kid. I communicated my problem and they just laughed. I took out a roll of bills and waved it. All of a sudden they became responsive. In fifteen minutes I was talking to Goldie on the phone.

What happened was that while I was sitting there waiting for Goldie, they announce on the loudspeaker in Swiss-German that they were separating cars from the train. They sent the diner to Italy. In that fifteen minutes it took them to get Goldie on the phone, they could have told me she was alive, but they didn't. When I got off the phone, the stationmaster asked me for money. I used words I don't normally use and spat on him. I knew they wouldn't do anything to me. I went into a tantrum. I didn't give them a thing.

But the ultimate chutzpah was that they charged my wife for the trip to Italy. I took a Swiss lawyer, Rappaport, and told him to get me the money back or I'll destroy this country. DID HE GET IT BACK?

#### CHRISTIAN BARNARD AND FRIENDS

I once helped out Christian Barnard, the man who pioneered the heart transplant. He told me that he had operated on every major Mafia guy in Sicily. If they like a doctor, they'll do anything for him.

I had a chance to find out. Somebody in Chicago had ripped me off. It was a situation where it would not have made sense for me to go to the police. I gave Barnard the fellow's name and he passed it on to his friends. In two months the debt was collected. They paid the guy a little visit.

On one of my visits to England, some of my old students came to see me. They said *The Godfather II* was playing on the closed circuit TV, do I want to see it? We turned it on. The three major characters were Lansky, Moe Green, and Sam Greenberg. Sam used to bring me glatt kosher sandwiches to my hotel in Chicago. I knew Moe Green, too. He owned Mercury records. And Lansky was a friend of my partner Robin in Miami. I never did any business with them but I knew them all. I called Goldie over and said, "Look at this. My friends are these three major Mafia figures."



THE NEXT TWO STORIES ARE TOO SKETCHY. I DIDN'T WORK ON THEM.  
MUST BE TAPED OVER.

JIMMY HOFFA

Jimmy Hoffa. I was in San Francisco by David Appelbaum. He was there and took a liking to me. Wants to contribute a swimming pool, but his name has to be on it. You don't want to associate with me? I couldn't take it; he wanted to give me 40 grand. I said it's not that; it's a school. We didn't hit off good, but I put up his name.

When I had Dayan we made a symposium. I told Chaim Brand to go home I invited Jack Introtta through Eichenstein. I asked Dayan permission, but he said no one else. He took a film. When I got to NY I called Jack and we passed him on to the special room for gamblers. Come to Vegas and we'll give you the take. I can't go to the casinos. But Rabbi Porush comes and he know the cheese is kosher. Jack do me a favor - take the loot and make me a check. We don't do it that way.

## THE CHEAPEST THING

Before I came to Israel, Reb Leib Malin advised me that the Brisker Rov had a strong interest in medicines. That was the way I could get to him. He tried pills, he tried powders, he tried them all. I'm like him that way.

I told people that my plan was to have a discussion on Torah subjects with the Brisker Rov everyday. They all said it was a dream, but I tried to make that dream come true. EITHER PUT THIS SOMEWHERE ELSE OR ELABORATE ON IT HERE.

I did my research, and I found out that the Brisker Rov was suffering from an ulcer. One day I brought him a new medicine for ulcers that just came out on the market. Reb Leib had told me that he was the type who wanted to know all of the ingredients of whatever drug he took. Reb Leib was right about that. The drug I bought him was manufactured in Germany. I read and speak German perfectly, self-taught. I once spent three days in Germany but I couldn't let my wife know about it. Someone once gave her a new Mercedes. She didn't want it because it was German so she returned it. I asked her for it, but she wouldn't give it to me.

So I read and translated the ingredients of this new medicine for the Brisker Rov. He told me, "That's just what I'm looking for." He had a little drawer in the right side of his desk. He opened it and took out two Israeli pounds, the amount I had paid. This was in '58 or '59. I declined to take the money, but then I saw that the Rov was getting angry with me. I couldn't figure out why. All I wanted to do was give him a gift. The Rov's son Meir was there. He kicked me under the table and indicated I should take the money, so I did. The Rov said, "I want to tell you. The cheapest thing in the world is money."

\* \* \*

I'll tell you something I picked up about the Brisker Rov. He was on vacation in the pine forests when war broke out. The only one with him from the family was his son, Rav Berel. He knew that to go back for his wife was suicide, so he decided that it was halachically forbidden. He had no money, so he went to some *Chassidishe Yidden* (Hassidic Jews) who were vacationing in the area in their *pensiones*. Everybody knew who he was, and they were all willing to give him money. But he didn't want a donation. He took a loan from a man, but in the course of the war, he lost track of him.

He couldn't sleep at nights for years thinking of that debt that he did not repay.

One day a Jew came up to him after *shacharis* (morning services) in his shul in Jerusalem. The Rov asked him his name. The Jew responded with the last name of the man who had loaned him money. He was the man's son.

The Rov was overjoyed. He invited the fellow to his house, and told him the whole story. Finally, he had found an heir.

That's the kind of man the Brisker Rov was. I'm not that way. If I owe money, I don't care so much. I'm more worried when people owe me money.

\* \* \*

I'll tell you another story about the Brisker Rov. An American rabbi I knew went to say goodbye to the Brisker Rov at the end of his visit to Israel in the fifties. I know what happened because a friend of mine was also present at the time.

This rabbi told the Rov, "I wish I could remain here, but the Jews in America need somebody to teach them Torah."

The Brisker Rov told him, "That shouldn't be a consideration in your decision. If you want to stay here, you should."

The American rabbi saw that the situation was getting serious. He said, "But how am I going to earn a living?"

The Rov said, "This reminds me of something that happened when I was a young man in Brisk, when my father, Reb Chaim, was the *rov* of the city. A *meshulach* (fundraiser for a yeshivah) once came to town. This fellow wasn't all that bright, but he was a good talker, and he was pretty successful. He managed to get a nice donation from someone, but he bragged about it to so many people, that in the end, somebody stole the money from him."

"The *meshulach* went to Reb Chaim crying, 'Rebbe, Rebbe, they stole my money. It's not the loss of money that bothers me. It's the damage to my reputation. The people back home will say that I'm a fool.'"

"Reb Chaim wanted to console the man. 'Don't worry,' he said. 'I'll give you a letter signed by the chief rabbi of Brisk himself saying that you were just as wise when you left this town as you were when you arrived in it.'"

"'But Rebbe!' cried the *meshulach*. 'What about all those rubles!?'"

#### BABAD HOTEL ON STRAUSS

Reb Leib Malin advised my wife and I to come to Israel to see the Chazon Ish because we were childless. Back in those days, I didn't think in terms of the Hilton. The fanciest hotel I knew was the Babad on Strauss St. near the police station.  
PHOTO OF BABAD HOTEL. FROM GERRERS.

That reminds me of the rich guy who comes to Israel and is looking for a five-star hotel. It's two in the morning and nothing is available. He ends up in a little place and he wants to know if it's clean. The proprietor tells him, "Sure it's clean." In the morning the proprietor asks him how it was. The man says it was very nice except there was a dead bedbug. The proprietor says, "Only one? And dead? So what's the problem?" The guy says, "You should have seen the funeral."

Anyways, the owner of the hotel was a man named Babad, a direct descendant of the *Minchas Chinuch*. It was Shavuot when I got there, and the Gerer Hassidim were swarming all over the place like bees because it was the *yohrzeit* of their rebbe, the *Imrei Emes*. These people had no manners. They would stand on tables. Emily Post didn't mean anything to them. They drove me crazy. They stepped in my plate. Mr. Babad told me stories all *yomtov* about the *Minchas Chinuch*. It was a pleasure to listen to him.

After Shavuot I was invited to Bnei Brak to Rav David Povarsky, and my stomach started hurting me. The Steipler and Rav Shlomo Berman lived nearby, and Rav Shach lived downstairs. They weren't famous then. People wouldn't even stop to say hello to the Steipler in those days. I was something of a novelty to all of them, and I was sick. They all *paskened* I should call an ambulance on Shabbos, but I was a Brisker *machmir* then. I'm not a Brisker anymore. So I went to the hospital at night, after Shabbos, and called Professor Frei, a famous doctor. He was German and didn't know Hebrew. He examined me and said, "*Dis mann is geferlich krank.*" **MUST GET THE SPELLING RIGHT ON THAT.** I got scared, so I asked for some chewing gum. Why chewing gum? When my mother knew she was dying she asked for chewing gum. She said, "As long as I'm conscious of chewing, the *malach hamovess* (Angel of Death) won't take me." **RABBI, CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THAT A BIT?**

I called my friend from my Lakewood days, Ezra Novick to say *vidui* (deathbed confession) with me. I was sure this was it. That night they brought Paula Ben Gurion in on the same floor of the hospital as me. She's crazy. I didn't know her then. She was carrying on. That made my sickness even worse.

In the morning they took a test and saw it was salmonella. I had eaten some spoiled fish at the hotel. They cleaned out my stomach, and I left the hospital three days later. The doctors told me I had to go to Zfat to rest up. Who do I meet in Zfat but Babad. He continued the same story about his ancestor that he left off with. I made a face and said, "I love you and your stories, but why did you give me the fish you inherited from him?"

SIMON MANN

I got a call from David Kimche **OR IS IT WITH AN I AT THE END?** three years ago. And he tells me, "Rabbi, I want you to meet two of my friends. He's a little bit of a *goy*, but she wants to marry him, so I want you to help them out. Jewish him up." They came to me. His name was Simon Mann, a major member of MI6.

Simon Mann was very charming, a big fighter and hero. Very English. He opened up to me as a rabbi, and told me all about the things he does. He wanted to marry a lovely Jewish girl. They had lunch with us on Succos.

Simon had a problem. This woman wouldn't marry him unless he converted. It's a problem to convert if you're not *mekabel mitzvos* (willing to accept all of Jewish law as obligatory). I had a tutor teach him about Judaism, but I didn't give him any guarantees. Later on he introduced me to his boss in MI6, a fellow named Buckingham.

I told him about my dealings in Angola. These MI6 guys are all mercenaries. Most of the time they have nothing official to do, so they fight for whoever pays them. Simon tells me that he and Buckingham were hired by the Luanda government to fight Jonas Savimbi. Now remember, I was on Savimbi's side. He told me that if I mentioned his name to Savimbi, Savimbi would kill me.

Mann used to get on a British government plane to meet me in South Africa and go to Angola from there. He used to bring me Havana cigars from Angola. Simon was a tough guy who used to ride a motorcycle. He told me everything going on. I used to report some of it to Savimbi. He couldn't figure out where I got my information from.

So Kimche introduced me to him and begged me to help him become Jewish.. We became great friends. Then I got sick and in the meantime he broke up with his girlfriend. He's still fighting in Angola. He makes something like \$500,000 a year. He's a top commander over there. I once asked Simon, "You think if you took me I could make some good money there?" He said, "Rabbi, either you'll frighten them away, or you'll get killed. Don't do it."

Buckingham and Simon got paid in cash from Luanda, and they had rights to some of the Cabinda oil. Savimbi had the diamonds.

#### THE FREEDOM FIGHTER

Let me tell you how I got involved in Angola.

P.W. Botha is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, and an old Boer. He liked me because the Dutch Reformed are the only Christian sect that stresses the Old Testament. The Afrikaaners have a big bible in Afrikaans and they read a portion every day at lunch. Other Christians read the New Testament. So the Dutch Reformed respect the Jews. I'm not sure if they like them or not, because they collaborated with the Nazis in the war, but they respect them. One night back in 1981 I got a phone call. The president, P.W. Botha, invited me to come to Durban. They were having their Independence Day parade, and Botha invited me to be his guest. He wanted me to stand next to him at the parade. It was a big honor.

I went up there with the Minister of Finance, checked in at a hotel called the Royale, and went to the parade. I had a migraine in that heat. I went to the party afterward and drank some whiskey. I was sick for days afterward. Whiskey dilates the arteries, IS THAT RIGHT? DOESN'T IT CONTRACT THEM? and that doesn't help a migraine.

It was a beautiful parade, looked like something the Israeli army would do. Botha was beaming with pride. P.W. called me in one day. He was generally inaccessible, but I could get in any time. He was a tough old boy. He says to me, "South Africa helps Savimbi because he fights the communists in Luanda. Rabbi, I want you to go to Angola. You can stay in my suite and make a few bucks for your school. We want Savimbi to be received by Reagan as a freedom fighter. Not a terrorist, not a guerrilla, but a freedom fighter. He's fighting the communists. But first you have to take a look at the goods you'll be selling. You do the job right, there's no limit to what you can get." The Luanda government was headed by a guy with a beautiful name, Eduardo de Santos. He had Cuban mercenaries fighting for him.

I put on my African safari outfit. GET PICTURES OF RABBI W/ SAFARI OUTFIT AND WITH SAVIMBI. They flew me in on a small plane that can fly under radar, because there was fighting going on there the whole time. I was accompanied by the chief of South Africa's security forces and an eight-man film crew which was going to film Savimbi. Nobody was allowed to know our exact destination.

We got to Angola and landed on an airstrip. From there we had to go to the jungle. They call it *jumba*, which literally means elephant in Swahili. The place was full of lions, mosquitoes, and everything else you associate with a jungle. I don't know where I got the guts to do this. Depending on how the war is going, you either take a helicopter, or if they're shooting, you use a jeep. We took a jeep that time, and rode thirty or forty kilometers of rocks and sand. I was sore for weeks.

They put me up front – after all, I'm the rabbi– and the film crew in back. I remember the driver was staring at me smoking, so I gave him a pack. He tells me, Savimbi's guys don't smoke or drink. They're very religious Catholics.

I got to Savimbi's camp and I met the man. He is a fat guy. The South African army sent glatt kosher food along with me, but I didn't eat anything. I just drank Coca Cola – not Diet Coke – so that I should have some energy. I wouldn't even drink the ice they had there. I just used it on the outside of the can. It was water from the jungle with who knows what in it. I get to what Botha called "his suite." By the standards of the jungle it's a suite. No bathroom. A carpet on a sand floor. A shower which consisted of a pipe with a few drops of water coming out of it. I had my ice pail and my Coke. I was scared to go outside because I was afraid that a lion might take a bite out of me. When I came back to P.W., I told him about the accommodations. He laughed like hell, and said, "That's where I stay in when I go there."

While I was in Angola, I saw all kinds of animals. One morning I saw a huge herd of elephants. There must have been 500 of them. It was a very emotional moment for me. I told the fellow with me in the jeep that they were my relatives.

P.W. asked me what Savimbi was going to pay me, and I said I asked for \$500,000. Botha looks at me and says, "What kind of Jew are you? Diamonds, Rabbi. You should have asked for diamonds."

I said, "Mr. President, why didn't you tell me this before?" Savimbi was sitting on the world-famous gems of Angola. When I got robbed later, in '86 or '87, I owned a fortune in diamonds there, but at that time he paid me a \$500,000 fee. I arranged the whole thing for him. I even attended the press conference in Washington. I really wasn't astute enough then. He got tons of arms from the States. I should have taken a percentage of all the arms he got instead of a one-time fee. No wonder Botha called me a dumb Jew.

#### AN EVENING WITH PRESIDENT BOTHA

The South African government assigned a fellow to take me around, Rene Scuman. He was a fine man, a very classy guy, a real Afrikaaner. He escorted me all over. The night before that parade I mentioned before, he came to see me at the Royale. I told him I wanted to see the president. He said I'm crazy. I said I wasn't interested in his opinion of me, and I ordered him to take me to the president who was at another hotel. He takes me to the president without an appointment. His knees are shaking. When P.W. opened the door and saw me, he hugged me. When I came into his apartment he took off my yarmulke and put it on his head. I told him, "Mr. President, without that, I'm going to be excommunicated." Then he put his felt hat on my head. He was in a festive mood. I came in his living room and his daughter Roseanna? Rosemarie? was there along with his wife. Botha took out a bottle of Johnny Walker and asked me if I'm a drinking man. I told him I don't want to put him to shame, but I'd go two to one with him, and I did. He was highly impressed with me.

He was telling me about all the Jewish kids he went to school with. He was selling me the soap about the Jews. I asked him why the Afrikaaners collaborated with the Nazis. He said, "Rabbi, it wasn't *for* the Nazis. It was *against* the English." That was a good answer. He's a smart guy.

Roseanna? Rosemarie? is a religious woman. I bought her a gift. I ordered a copy of *Chronicles*, the stories of the Bible in newspaper form. I've given that as a gift to a lot of people. They love it.

#### THE ROULETTE PLAYER

How did I meet Botha? South Africa has always had very tight currency controls. I made a point of studying their currency control laws and finding loopholes in them. I flew in to South Africa once to see my friend Norman Bernhard. He was the rabbi of the Oxford Synagogue. He was a member of the PFP, the anti-apartheid party, and he talked a little too loud. In those days the Nationalists were in, and they eventually asked him to leave the country. Norman was an American citizen. I was with a rich Israeli named Udi Zeidman. I had stayed with his father in London. His father was very irreligious – a real goy – but they would get me kosher food.

Ezra Tisona used to stay with Udi's father. There were eleven Mafia guys in Israel, and Ezra was one of them. Olmert used to fight them but he's a bigger gangster than they are. Ezra Tisona is a world famous gambler and he always wins roulette games. Half the time he's jail. He's a genius and a very charming guy.

Ezra wasn't allowed to play in any casinos in London. Near the Hilton in London there's a big, fancy, casino owned by a Jew, Cyril Stein. He lost his gambling license. I wouldn't go into a casino.

One night a guy comes from Israel, a friend of Tisona's, whose wife needs an operation. He has to come up with \$35,000. Tisona couldn't play roulette, because the house pays for that, but he could still play *sheshbesh* (backgammon), and he made a living from the Arab sheikhs. So this little guy comes from Israel, and he's a friend of both Tisona's and Zeidman's. This was interesting for me. I like to see the world, and this was a different part of the world from what I'm used to. Tisona told the Israeli, "I'll take you to the casino to win the money, but as soon as you have the \$35,000, you have to get out and don't ever come back again. I was sitting outside the casino in a Rolls Royce. Tisona stood next to the fellow smoking a pipe and told him in Hebrew what to do. He had the money in fifteen minutes. The guy went home and his wife had the surgery. AND NOW WE'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW HOW THE RABBI MET BOTHA.

#### AVRECH

After that stop in London, I went to South Africa. I was learning the currency control laws so I could figure out how to get money out of the country legally. My friend Bernhard introduced me to the head of currency controls, an Afrikaaner named Jan whose last name eludes me. Jan was under the Minister of Finance, Horwood. Horwood was an Englishman, a big fellow, as nice as they come. Jan tells his boss, there's a rabbi here from Israel, a friend of Bernhard. Within a matter of weeks, Horwood and I were best friends.

The Horwoods started talking about making a visit to Israel. It had to be a meaningful visit. The Israeli government was very opposed to apartheid, so they couldn't extend an official invitation. Begin was a *shmobagel* who didn't understand the situation, and Peres was against them altogether. I told him, "I have a great idea, Mr. Minister."

He said, "Don't call me 'Mr. Minister.' Call me Owen." I didn't want to. I explained that there was once a great rabbi in a Lithuanian center of learning, Rav Yerucham Levovitz. He told his children always to address him with the formal Yiddish word for "you," *ir* (which is the rough equivalent of "thou" in contemporary English). He told them never to use the informal "you," *du*. That's because it's a lot easier to say "you can go to hell" than it is to say "thou can go to hell." I went on to say, "It's the same thing with us. Let's say I get angry at you. I'd have no trouble saying, "Owen, go to hell," but I can't say, "Mr. Minister, go to hell."

I told him I could make his trip to Israel meaningful. I would give him a spiritual doctorate. I would bestow the title "avrech" on him, the same title Pharaoh gave Joseph.

I made an affair at the Plaza hotel. Everybody was there except the government ministers. Begin didn't let the ministers come. I needed somebody official to be there, so I asked Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, to come. Teddy came and slept in his car till minister showed up.

I got very close to Horwood and eventually helped South Africa get a strong foothold in Israel. Begin was in at the time, but everybody knew that Peres would be more hostile to South Africa once he got in. He might break off relations altogether. So I advised the South Africans to get a foothold in the country by investing in a big company. I got Begin's colleagues in on the deal. Yaakov Meridor was among them. He was leader of the Irgun before Begin. He was a big entrepreneur and a big gangster. I got South Africa to put up \$11.8 million to take over Rassco, the building company. I was supposed to get a share of it, DID YOU? WHAT HAPPENED TO IT? and so were Meridor and his friends. The South Africans needed the okay of the Cabinet to take that money out of the Treasury, but they wouldn't get it, because Harry Schwartz of the PFP would vote against it. The South Africans took the money out of their Treasury and made a loan to the richest man in South Africa, the guy who owns Rothman Cigarettes. IS IT OPPENHEIMER? Horwood had a document written up that said to Israeli??? To Rabbi Elephant, we're giving you a loan of 11.8 million dollars. THIS HAS TO BE CLARIFIED. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE RICH GUY EXACTLY? The loan is guaranteed by the Exchequer, so I don't have to pay it back. All I had to do is buy them their share of Rassco with it. I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW HE MET BOTHA.



## THE TRANSPLANT

"Yedidiah Silver" was a smart and disciplined fellow who had been a student at my yeshivah. He grew up and got married and became a teacher in the yeshivah for high school age students. He wrote a book on the laws of Shabbos.

One day he comes into my house and says that he has a kid who has a nephrological problem and needs a transplant at a special pediatric hospital for kidney problems, but until he puts down \$40,000, nothing happens.

I said, "You're not an orphan, Yedidiah. Go to your family."

He was apologetic. "I'm sorry," he said. "I only came because the *rosh yeshivah* (he addressed me in the third person) used to say that we're like children to him."

That hit me like a ton of bricks. I said, "Be in touch tomorrow."

I went to Rav Shach and told him the story to see his response. He said, "You have to treat him as you would your own child." So I wanted to get him the money. I went to a Polish Jew who lived in Minnesota, Joe Numero. His name must have originally been Nemerov, or something like that. He was a multi-millionaire. He created Therma-King, the refrigerated railroad car company. He married a non-Jewish woman and had a house in Minneapolis on a lake. It was scenic and beautiful, and as big as Grand Central Station. When I'd go somewhere in the house, I wouldn't know how to get back. Joe was crazy about me. He used to give the yeshivah a hundred grand a year.

I told Joe about the problem with this kid and he was delighted to help. He arranged and paid for everything. Joe and Yedidiah became very close. Joe kind of adopted Yedidiah as a son and left a hefty sum in his will for Yedidiah's kid. But the first operation wasn't a success because the child's body rejected the kidney. Yedidiah came back to me for another forty grand, so I spoke to Joe again. He got him the money. Joe was the president of the Variety Club and they provided some of the money. He was a very wise person who it was a pleasure to speak with.

So Yedidiah was taken care of. He couldn't leave the States because of his son's medical problems, so he moved to New York. He called me from time to time.

I was once in New York for some other reason, and I was sitting in a Chinese restaurant, a big place in Flatbush, with Barnetsky,??? a fundraiser from Lakewood. Rabbi Malkiel Kotler, the *rosh yeshivah* of Lakewood asked me to teach him the tricks of the trade.

I noticed an old friend of mine from when I was a kid in Boro Park, Lefkowitz, sitting at another table. Lefkowitz sees me and jumps over. He asked me to come over for Shabbos so we could talk about old times. I said, "You give all your money to *Ateres* (another Jerusalem yeshivah). Why should I come to you?"

He says, "Cut it out."

I told him, "Okay, I'll come. But I want p'tcha, and there has to be kishke in the cholent."

We were friends from when we were twelve, thirteen, years old. I used to live on 11<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> an Italian and Jewish neighborhood, great neighborhood. Lefkowitz

and I would get off the subway on Broadway in Williamsburg. He used to go to yeshivah, and I went to the movies. The theater was called the Model. They showed three pictures for a nickel. I went to as many as I could, and then I went to play baseball. I used to buy a lunch. It was a great life.

The school used to send postcards to my father saying I was truant. So I had to get a kid to go by the house and pick up the postcards so my father shouldn't get them. My father was a nice man, but he was tough with me. He knew I was a wild Indian. He was trying to channel me, to harness the power of the atom.

One day my father was on the train and met my teacher, Rabbi Cohen. He's over ninety now. He lives in Netanya. A sweet guy. He liked me. I used to read chemistry books in his class. He knew my father from Hungary. So on the train he asked how Mordechai was feeling. The boys in the class had told him that Mordechai was in the hospital, he said. My father knew right away that the "bandit" was at work. He said to Rabbi Cohen, "Mordechai hasn't been in the hospital till now, but he will be soon." He got home and threw me out of the house. I moved in with cousins for half a year. When I passed my father on the street, I wouldn't say hello to him. He came over and asked why I didn't say hello. I said, "You threw me out of the house, and I should say hello?"

So I spent Shabbos with Lefkowitz, and we had the p'tcha and all. Lefkowitz doesn't talk about *divrei chol* (mundane matters) on Shabbos, so it wasn't until Saturday night that we started to chew the fat. It got late. It was summer and I had to go back to my hotel to see Joe DiMaggio. He was leaving the next day for Washington. I told Lefkowitz I had to leave.

He said he also had to go to sleep. He had to drive an Israeli whose kid needed dialysis to the hospital in the morning. A thought popped into my head. I asked if the Israeli was Yedidiah Silver. Lefkowitz said, "How did you know?"

I said, "Get him on the phone for me. Don't say a word about me." Yedidiah recognized my voice as soon as he heard it and started to cry. I said, "Yedidiah, do me a favor. I'm going to put Mr. Lefkowitz on the line, and you tell him about me and Joe Numero." I did not tell people the story. When Lefkowitz heard, he started to cry, too. Then Mrs. Lefkowitz cried. The only one laughing was me. I asked Lefkowitz, "Would the other *rosh yeshivahs* you know have done that?"

#### THE ART EXPERT

Ed Fitoussi is the biggest expert in the world on French Impressionist paintings. He's the son of a very close friend and business associate, Sylvain Fitoussi. At the age of twenty-three Sylvain was vice-chairman of Occidental Petroleum, Armand Hammer's company. They're North African Jews. Very sophisticated. The father went to Harvard with Ted Kennedy. They lived in Neuilles, Avenue Spontini 16, the classiest neighborhood in Paris.

I stayed at their house once. Ed was studying finance at the time at one of the top schools in Paris. He wanted to talk about Judaism with me one night, but then he couldn't make it. "I have a date with the daughter of the finance minister of Lebanon," he explained.

He had to learn the market in New York. I told him I had a friend, a very smart guy, who was a big man on Wall Street. I'd arrange for my friend to teach him the market. I had an apartment in New York at the time, and I told Ed he could stay there.

THE NEXT 3 PARAGRAPHS SHOULD BE STUCK IN SOMEWHERE ELSE

I was involved in venture capital with a machine that could help people hooked on smoking, drugs, and alcohol through electrical stimulation. It was called TCET -- trans-cranial electrotherapy. I put together the company. I invested four and a half million dollars, and my partner invested another thirty million plus. This machine stimulated the brain to produce endorphins. This is the best way to get a person off drugs. It's natural.

A scientist in London, Ivor??? Eric??? Capel, worked for the Marie Curie Institute, a research institute for pain and cancer. I met him because of my migraines. He's the one who developed this machine. If I could create a natural flow of endorphins, it would take care of the migraines. It worked. I was a chronic migraine sufferer, so this machine interested me. Capel did a good PR job on me.

I became a venture capitalist. I put together a company. I got investors. But my partners in Texas blew it. They didn't know how to work with the FDA. The FDA is not only scientific; it's also political. The FDA had already allowed us to market the device, but they still hadn't endorsed it as being effective. My partners said I shouldn't mix in, so I didn't. That was a mistake.

So Ed Fitoussi came to New York and stayed in my apartment. One day the phone rings and the son of the owner of Cartier wants to talk with him. That's the kind of people he hung out with.

One Shabbos the owner of Perrier called him. He answered the phone. I didn't say anything. My wife got angry and really laced into me. She told me I have no more respect for Shabbos than a goy (non-Jew). I told her I'm not a missionary. I invited the guy, I have to give him my home. He has his bathroom and his telephone. He does what he wants to do.

She couldn't take it. So she ran to a neighbor, Shlomo Mandel who ran NAME OF SCHOOL. He would stay with us in Jerusalem in the summer with his family and ten of his students. Goldie told him she's sending him over a kid named Fitoussi, and he has to make him into an observant Jew. He did.

Ed Fitoussi's area of expertise was Impressionist paintings. He was a very brainy kid. You couldn't work on his emotions. I saw that he was attracted to the works of the Maharal (Rabbi Yehudah Loewy -- sixteenth century philosopher and kabbalist). So I set him up with Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, the expert in Maharal.

I got him married off to a very special woman. She's from a famous Sephardi family, Ben Amram. She was private secretary to Yair Tzaban when he was Minister of Absorption. He now learns Torah nineteen hours a day.

Ed studies Torah for four weeks straight, and then flies to America for two or three days to make some money as an art expert. Then he comes right home. He never wants to earn more than he needs.

\* \* \*

I'll tell you how I got involved with the Fitoussis in the first place. I knew a guy in Paris, Claude Geismar, one of the richest men in the world. He's still alive. He married an Israeli girl, Tami Rappaport. He's from Alsace-Lorraine. His family owns Geismar, the largest manufacturer of railroad equipment. It's located in Colmar. I met him through an architect whose wife was an El Al stewardess. She knew Claude's wife. When this architect saw how well connected I was, he figured he'd introduce me to Claude because there might be something in it for him. There was.

Claude Geismar was looking for a guy like me because he wanted to give a large contribution to a yeshivah. I came to Paris, called him up, and got invited. He became a committed Jew. Had a non-Jewish wife and daughter. Stopped having any contact with them.

Geismar is a very bright guy, a Harvard graduate. He was once the chairman of OPEC. That's how I met Fitoussi. He had been Geismar's right hand man. Armand Hammer wrote about them in his book. Armand and Claude were not a good *shidduch* (match). They were both too domineering.

So I went to visit Geismar in Paris. I started talking business with him but he stopped me. He said, "Listen, Rabbi, I'm taken care of for Shabbos. I don't need any more money. I'm not looking for business advice. I'm looking for a rabbi who I can give money to for a school." I got the message fast.

When he met Goldie he was impressed. He told me he likes me, but he never knows if I'm telling the truth or not. He looks at Goldie and he knows that there's someone who can be trusted.

#### HUMPHREY AND GOLDA

Goldie and I were very close to Hubert Humphrey. We were like family. He gave me \$15,000 to build the third floor of the Shapell College building.

I called him up when he was running against Nixon for President. I told him I'll pray for him at the Wall. He said, "Rabbi with all due respect, see to it that Goldie prays for me."

\* \* \*

Before Humphrey was vice-president, he was majority whip in the Senate. He once came to Israel for a twenty-four hour visit. Kennedy sent him to take care of some aspect of the Palestinian refugee problem. He had to have meetings with Eshkol and Golda Meir and all the higher-ups.

I had a friend from Chicago named Abraham Lincoln Marowitz, a federal judge. He gave me a lot of money to start out my kollel. We named it after his mother. He was a bachelor who related strongly to his mother and sisters. I can always spot a bachelor. That's characteristic of them.

Marowitz was very close with Humphrey. He warned Humphrey that if he doesn't go to see his little institution in Israel he'll kill him. Humphrey came to Israel and called me bright and early Sunday morning from the King David. He said, "You'd better get down to the King David, because I'm with your Israeli boys here, and they have me on a tight schedule. I'm here for twenty-four hours and they're not going to let me visit a little yeshivah." 'Yeshivy' is the way he pronounced it. "If they see you in person, they'll have a better idea of what's going on. You have to be here."

I came. Humphrey hugged me and the people there didn't know who I was. We rode around together and had a good time. He said he's impressed in Israel by both the old people and the young people. It struck him that they were very much alike.

We made up that he would come to the yeshiva in the evening when he was finished with his business, and then he would have dinner at Golda Meir's house.

By the afternoon, Humphrey was on his last appointment, the Foreign Ministry next to Romema, where the kollel was. We made up that he would visit the kollel when he finished there, before dinner at Golda's house. I stayed with him the whole day. I came into the Foreign Ministry with him. He went into Golda's office. She was Foreign Minister. I waited outside and talked with Ashdar,??? the Ambassador to Australia who happened to be there at the time. All of a sudden little Golda opens the door -- she's as ugly as hell -- and says, "Excuse me, Rabbi. The Senator came here on important business. You're making him crazy with your little yeshivah."

To me this was an opening to blast her, and I really wanted to blast her. I said, <sup>in Hebrew</sup> "Excuse me, Madame Foreign Minister. Israel is a very small country geographically when you look at the map. But we draw as much attention as a nation of hundreds of millions of people. This is our beloved country. It's same way with my little yeshivah."

Humphrey is a Smiling Jack, very outgoing, so he says right in front of Golda, "Rabbi, what did you tell her?"

I didn't want to tell him. I had no interest in embarrassing her. But Humphrey insisted. So I translated. The old girl is sitting right there. Humphrey started to laugh so hard that he had to hold his belly. She got redder and redder, and got mad as hell at me. She wouldn't talk to me for years. We were in Chicago together at a reception and she wouldn't talk to me.

At the time I had only one friend in the Israeli government, Yitzchak Navon. He was Ben Gurion's secretary. I met him every Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon in the Transportation Ministry. Navon used to order coffee for three, the two of us and BG, who would be in a room nearby. I hadn't met BG yet then but I would see him going in and out. Golda knew I knew Navon -- I don't know how -- and she called Navon to say I should apologize to her. I said to Navon, "To hell with her. She's an anti-semite and I won't talk to her." He couldn't convince me. I hate anti-semites.

So when she and Eshkol were taking Humphrey to dinner, they passed by my kollel. Humphrey came in and spoke to me for a half hour and took pictures to show Marowitz that he had been there.

I went over to Eshkol to apologize for not inviting him in. He was Minister of the Treasury at the time. I said I wouldn't invite Golda in because she's anti-religious, so I couldn't invite him in either. But I would like to bring out tea or coffee. They both stood outside. People were hanging out the windows in the street to get a look. Humphrey came and left. It was a nice experience.

## THE TORAH DEDICATION

### PICTURE OF GOLDA WITH TICHEL

Golda came here to the yeshivah over ten years later when I dedicated two Torah scrolls in memory of the two sons of General Meir??? Zorea. They died in the Yom Kippur War, and I thought it would be a good idea to do something for Tzahal.

Zorea was a tough fellow. Used to mouth off to Ben Gurion. He was from Kibbutz Maagan Michael. He was as anti-religious as Tommy Lapid, but he was my friend. WHY DOESN'T HE GET THE SAME TREATMENT AS AN ANTISEMITE LIKE GOLDA? He was the head of the Land Registry at the time.

I went ahead and made the dedication here in the yeshivah on Chanukah. Everybody who was anybody in Israel was there. I sent two kinds of invitations. One was printed. The other was personal. Those were sent to the people I really wanted to come. The ones I really didn't want, I didn't send any invitation to.

I got a phone call from a woman named Lou Kadar. She was Golda Meir's secretary. She said, "Rabbi, we would like to inform you that the Prime Minister wants to come to the ceremony." She heard a loud silence at the other end of the line. She said, "I see that you're hesitant."

I said, "The Prime Minister happens to be a woman. I'm very religious. What if she reaches out to shake my hand? She can come, but she can only sit in the women's section. She can't make a speech and she can't shake my hand." Golda wanted to come. She felt a lot of guilt about how the Yom Kippur War turned out. She didn't want to be left out of something like this.

Lou Kadar said, "The Prime Minister is very practical, and she comes from a strictly Orthodox family." She went on to tell me that when Golda got a doctorate from Yeshivah University, she got up and said that she became Prime Minister because when her father was in the Russian army, he would not eat any food that was not kosher. The secretary said, "You'll hear from us."

A half hour later Golda called. She told me, "Rabbi, I want you to know that I will conduct myself like a modest daughter of Israel."

She came wearing a *tichel* (head covering worn by married Orthodox women). I have pictures of her with a *tichel* on. She was upstairs in the ladies' section for two and a half hours.

Chaim Herzog was the master of ceremonies. Teddy Kollek was also there. Zorea didn't show up. He got chicken. He was afraid people would say he turned religious. David Ofer, chief of police, came. His son was also killed in the Yom Kippur War. It was a very dramatic situation. A choir from Bnai Brak performed, all kids with *peyos* (sidecurls). Golda was crying. Someone read the eulogy David said over Jonathan in the *Book of Samuel*. Chaim spoke; Teddy spoke. Rabbi Lau's father-in-law, Rabbi Frankel, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, also spoke.

Golda was walking out of the building by way of the door which led to the women's section. Chaim Herzog pointed this out to me. We told her she should walk out by way of the main entrance. She said, "No. It's not proper for a man to walk behind a woman." After she walked out, she called me over. She said, "Bygones are bygones. The door is open to you. I was very moved."

After the ceremony, Yigal Yadin walked over to me and said, "It's Chanukah. It's a time of joy. How can you make a convocation of mourning with all these songs?"

I told him, "You're a world-famous archaeologist. Imagine if there would be an archeological discussion going on here, and I put in my two cents worth. You would want me to mind my own business because I don't know anything about archaeology. It's the same thing when it comes to your opinions about Jewish law." Chaim Herzog loved it. "You couldn't have gotten him better," he said.

## THE NEW MINISTER OF THE TREASURY

After Sapir, Rabinovich came in as Minister of the Treasury. He wasn't as rough as Sapir. He was softer. But he didn't honor Sapir's promises.

The day Sapir was to resign, he called me at 6:00 in the morning. He said, "You'd better get here today." Sapir wanted to give me in writing all the promises he had made, so I could collect from the next minister. I went with Goldie. I saw the whole government there in the room. He gave me a *petek* (note). He ran the government on his *peteks*. Sapir was a genius. He used to come see Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz of Yeshivah University on his visits to Israel. Rabbi Lifshitz would sometimes stay with me. Reb Dovid had been the rabbi in Suwalk, Poland. Sapir was from Lomza, which was nearby.

I came to Rabinovich one day after he had taken over as Minister of the Treasury and told him he owed me some money. I was blunt about it. I wasn't too refined in those days. He was annoyed. He said, "Go fly a kite."

I found out he had to be in Washington the next week to see William Simon, the Secretary of the Treasury. I had given Simon a doctorate. (More on that later.) Rabinovich asked if I gave him *semichah* (rabbinic ordination). He wanted to make fun of me giving degrees. I told him I'll give him one, too, if he gives me what Simon does.

Rabinovich hadn't seen the world like Sapir. He was very innocent. He thought America is not only a superpower; it's everything. He thought meeting Bill Simon was a matter of life and death. But in America, the Secretary of the Treasury cannot give you a dime. He's a technocrat. He writes contracts for money that is allocated by Congress. Simon couldn't give me five cents.

My relationship with Bill Simon was based on Nixon's legal fees. Nixon was hung up with Watergate. I paid the first \$140,000 of his legal fees because Simon asked me to. Rabbi Baruch Korff is the one I gave the \$140,000 to. My quid pro quo was that Simon would do anything he could do for me within legal limits.

I went ahead and told Simon that I would like to give him an honorary doctorate from the Israel Torah Research Institute. He needed my doctorate like a hole in the head. He's on the Olympic committee, a multi-millionaire, a Catholic with a bunch of kids. He was Korff's friend because Korff was his ghostwriter. I figured the doctorate would be good PR for us. He agreed to receive it and we had an elaborate and well-publicized ceremony.

Bill Simon came to the Jerusalem Hilton with half the government to get his doctorate. He came as my guest, not as a guest of the Israeli government. If they wanted an appointment with him, they had to ask me.

I wanted to give him an original academic title. I invented a new one, *Avrech*, the title Pharaoh conferred on Joseph. I called Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. He wasn't a political power yet back then, but he cut an impressive figure. He put the golden necklace on Simon, just like Pharaoh did for Joseph. When an American government official leaves his position, he has to give the government all of the gifts he received while he was in office. Bill Simon complied with that law – with one exception. He kept that golden necklace.

I was once at Simon's house when the phone rang. It was Henry Kissinger. Simon tells him, "I'm sitting here with a rabbi, not a Jewish anti-Semite like you."

So I call Simon and confirmed with him that Rabinovich was coming. I said I had one favor to ask of him. The first question he should ask Rabinovich is, "Do you know my friend Rabbi Elefant?" And when Rabinovich leaves, he should tell him to give me his best regards and give me his unlisted number.

I had friends in Rabinovich's entourage who were present at the meeting and they told me what happened. Rabinovich walks in. They need to talk about 2.2 billion in aid. They need to



talk about the situation in the Mid-East. But the first question Simon asks is, "Do you know my friend Rabbi Elefant?" Every five minutes, Simon would interrupt the conversation and ask, "How is the rabbi feeling?" He enjoyed every minute of it. It was easy for him to do. It didn't cost him any money.

After Rabinovich said he wouldn't honor Sapir's note to me, I wouldn't come to the phone when he called. I wanted to take care of him.

At that time I had a Yemenite secretary, Rachel Yispan,. She was smart and efficient. I knew Rabinovich would call, so I told her that when he calls she should put him off by about a month and a half. He went up the wall. He called back again and again and she kept saying, "There's nothing I can do. The Rabbi is very busy." Arnon Gafni, his director-general, called and said, "Stop playing games. You won. You have him convinced you own Simon. He'll make a deal with you. Come on over." I said, "I will not come to you. Rabinovich comes to me." He did.

#### FLATTO-SHARON

Samuel Flatto-Sharon, the French gangster turned Knesset member, came to me at the time I was granting William Simon his degree. He owed me two million dollars. I had loaned it to him and his partner Pilz. They built Dizengoff Center. The first floor was built with my two million dollars.

Flatto asked me to arrange it that he should appear with Simon and make it look as if he's giving a donation when all he's doing is paying me the money he owes me. I didn't know he was a gangster then. I wasn't particular about how he paid me back as long as he paid me. At the end of the day, he got a photograph of himself giving me a check with Simon there. But it wasn't a real check. He gave me nothing.

I told Simon the man had trouble in France. He asked me what kind of trouble. I told him, "Income tax. Same as everybody else." Simon said - and I'm quoting him verbatim, "He screwed the French government? He couldn't have screwed anybody better." Simon didn't care. But later on, when Flatto-Sharon was extradited from Israel to France, he wasn't so easygoing about it. He said to me, "Rabbi, why did you hang me up with this kind of guy?" I had to apologize. I told him I had no idea that anything like that would happen.

Around that time I had to go to France. I see a newspaper there on the stands with the picture of Flatto-Sharon, Simon, and the check. But I was cut out of the picture. The article said something about Jews and Zionists. Flatto-Sharon was trying to play up the idea that he was a big man in France before the extradition request was announced. He dug his own grave. That picture made the French people really angry. They said, "That crook. Not only did he rob us blind, but he also tries to pretend to be a big philanthropist." So they applied for extradition.

Flatto owed me two million dollars. My lawyer told me that the security that Flatto gave me for the two million was very weak. The roof of Dizengoff Center at that time was far from becoming a reality. I had to retrieve my money.

I called my friend Sammy Flatto. We were still friends. We're great friends because we're born on the same day. He even came to my house once for the seder. Good looking and charming guy. He speaks Yiddish. His name used to be Shaikovitz. I told Flatto someone wants to lend me three million dollars, but I have no need for it. All it took was for him to hear that sum. I got my lawyer and we all went to Geneva. It was the weekend of Entebbe, in July 1976. I was supposed to meet my investor there, and this guy would lend the money to him instead of to me. It was all a game. I set it up with a friend in Zurich, David Beck. He was a trustee. A trustee holds the money for both people. That's how they do it in Switzerland. I had worked with him a lot.

It was a very hot time then. People were dying in France from the heat wave. Flatto-Sharon flew in with his right hand man, Paul Said. I told them I was going to bring the investor. I went to Zurich to get Beck. He came back with me to the Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva. Beck introduced himself as the man who's lending three million dollars. This was an act. Beck says to him, "Mr. Flatto, I can't do this without some kind of security." Flatto was so hot on the three million that he said he had paintings in Geneva. There is a place in Geneva that's underwater. It's extraterritorial -- all the black property in the world is kept there. It's a no-man's land. It's referred to as under "international surveillance." The procedure is that, for example, you put up a Picasso painting worth a million dollars, and you can borrow against it. The bank has the right to sell it if the fellow doesn't pay back. Flatto had five or six million dollars worth of paintings there. This was the security he was going to give on this so-called money he was supposed to get. The whole thing was a bluff. I contrived to get him to sign mortgages on the paintings. At the end of the day he said he had to go somewhere and left the all the work to his colleague, Paul Said, and told him to sign the mortgages. Said was a hard-nosed businessman. He didn't want to sign without seeing the money but Flatto told him to sign anyway. I convinced him. I said, "You don't trust me." I called Flatto-Sharon and said, "Sammy, your man doesn't trust me. We're going to have to sever relations." Said signed on the paintings. They never saw the money.

When Flatto-Sharon got back to Israel after Entebbe, he would call me every day and I kept saying, "It's coming." I told him finally to come to Jerusalem and we'll talk. I said, "Sammy, I gave you two million bucks, and I had no coverage. This is how I got my coverage. Wouldn't you do the same in my place?"

I had him in my hand because I had all the paintings. Dali, Chagall, Kiesling, you name it. My lawyer loved paintings and he used to joke with me. There was a Toulouse-Lautrec of a bare-breasted woman and the lawyer said, "Rabbi, it's not appropriate for you. Let me have it." It was only worth \$400,000.

About a year later I sold the paintings. I got more than Flatto owed me, and gave him the change. And there was quite a bit of change. Flatto respected me because I outsmarted him. Years later I happened to take a look at his autobiography. On the first page he wrote, the smartest and holiest man in the world is Rabbi Elefant.

THIS CHAPTER SHOULD OPEN WITH A REPRODUCTION OF THE INSCRIPTION  
IN THE GREEN BOOK.

#### PAUL AND MUAMAR

Paul Reichmann supported many hospitals in Toronto. After the Canary Wharf fiasco, a Libyan doctor there told Reichmann that Muamar Kaddafi has a company called Afeco???. His expertise was to buy companies that failed, refinance them, and take a piece of the action. For example, the president of Fiat is Giovanni Agnelli, a famous, wealthy man. He had some financial trouble, so he met with Kaddafi. Afeco is very well funded with oil money. Some people like to buy failing companies. It's speculative thing, but if it goes, it goes. Agnelli took some money from Kaddafi, I don't know how much, and he gave Kaddafi 15%. He turned around Fiat. Kaddafi's 15% was worth a fortune. I was on a plane going to South Africa and they showed a documentary on the flight in which they asked Agnelli why he took money from a terrorist like Kaddafi when he could have taken it from the Japanese. He said you don't know what the Japanese are like. Kaddafi may be a terrorist but business he does like a businessman. The Japanese have no compassion. If you're down, they'll kick you down further. It was the Japanese who wouldn't allow the Reichmann's to make an arrangement with the banks.

I once saw Paul Reichmann in London at the Four Seasons sitting in a meeting with seven or eight Japanese. He thought they were wonderful, but then he found out.

Paul Reichmann had a Libyan doctor in Toronto who told him to he could get to Kaddafi by providing him with what he wanted. Kaddafi was interested in getting those two guys accused of the Lockerbie bombing off the hook. There were sanctions against Libya at the time. No planes were landing there. If Mubarak wanted to go to Libya he would take a car because he wouldn't violate the sanctions. Nobody wanted to come. Kaddafi could still sell oil, but there were lots of limitations.

The idea was that Reichmann would help Kaddafi in public relations. He was such a big man that everybody thought he owned Washington.

Reichmann called me, so I introduced him to Ambassador Max Kampelman, a Jewish fellow, a big lawyer, close to the Democrats. He was a friend of Chaim Herzog. I became a friend of his. The President at that time was Bush. This doctor told Reichmann he has to help Kaddafi get the two guys off the hook, or at least to a country less hostile to him than England or the United States. In return, Afeco would bail out Canary Wharf. Reichmann still owned eleven per cent of it. Real estate had gone down and interest rates had gone up, so Paul was put into a squeeze.

One night I was at the Helmsley Plaza and I'm listening to the radio with one ear before I fall asleep. They start talking about Paul Reichmann, the rich man who never was. He was both honest and shrewd. He built a reputation that he's more than Rockefeller, so the banks never even asked for a balance sheet. They were dying to give him money. Banks are there to give money. That's how they make their money. And that's what they wanted to do for him.

He started off buying buildings in New York. He had fifty million dollars and he bought for \$750 million. The banks were happy to give it to him. Buildings were empty then. The banks kept rolling him because everything he touched turned to gold. He rolled over fifty billion. The minute real estate went down, it was like putting a pin in a balloon. He owed a lot of interest on the loans. So he crashed because of the overhead. This talk show host on the radio said that Reichmann's good fortune was due to the fact that the banks never asked him for anything. All they wanted to do was to give him money. He was a king. Had it continued that way he could have owned half the world, because he's very, very smart.

After they wrote the first book about the Reichmanns, I asked Paul if he read it. He said, "Rabbi Elephant, you want to pour salt on the wounds?"

Paul called me because he knew I was well connected in Washington. He asked if I was willing to help. I said, sure. He didn't ask me to introduce him to Kaddafi. He didn't think I could do that. He wanted me to talk to people in Washington and convince them that it doesn't pay to alienate Kaddafi. This was no easy task. The US State Department is generally single-minded and not forgiving. They are relentless. If someone wrongs them, they'll haunt him till he dies.

Our first step was to have the doctor in Toronto let Kaddafi know about the idea. But for the loose ends, I needed someone who spoke both Arabic and Italian. I had a friend in Italy called Rafaelo Fellah. He was a substantial businessman. He recently ran for the European Parliament. There's a big Libyan Jewish community in Italy. Most of them are wealthy merchants. Kaddafi drove the Jews out of Libya after the Six Day War. I notified Fellah that I can get him to Kaddafi. He never dreamt he would meet him. I had him contact the Libyan ambassador in Italy. We informed the ambassador that Reichmann might be able to help with these two guys who were wanted. The quid pro quo was that Kaddafi would invest in Canary Wharf. The doctor spread the word in Tripoli, and Fellah tied up the ends with the ambassador, so we got rolling.

The ambassador got us an appointment with Kaddafi. But I didn't dare go to Libya. It would have been in violation of the sanctions. If you spend a single dollar there, they can take your passport away.

I notified Reichmann that I couldn't go. But Reichmann is a Canadian. No problem with them. Canada had no sanctions. I couldn't go myself, but I opened the door for them. Paul didn't want to go himself. He wanted his brother Albert to go.

I took Albert to Italy. We spent quite a while there. Kaddafi sent in his right hand guy to deal with us, but he very much wanted to meet us himself. He had a party to attend in Djerba, in Tunisia. The President of Tunisia was going to meet him there. Even Kaddafi didn't fly. He had to drive, because Tunisia complied with the sanctions.

There was a Libyan restaurant in Rome, Lise, a good kosher restaurant run by an Orthodox Jew. This is where we used to meet. The Libyan ambassador, Reichmann, Fellah, and myself. Very spicy food. We went there every night. Then Kaddafi's number one troubleshooter arrived and he would join us. A young fellow. He took a real liking to me. He told me that when Kaddafi was a young man, he used to live in the same building as an old Jew, and he used to turn his lights on for him in Shabbos. Kaddafi doesn't hate Jews. He hates Israel. But at this point he was dying to make a deal with Israel.

I kept Peres posted on all my dealings with the Libyans. I didn't want to go meet Kaddafi without the government knowing about it in advance. They were liable to call me a spy, a traitor. I asked the Ministry of State if they were interested. They checked out the situation and said they weren't. But they had been informed.

So Kaddafi came to this place in Djerba with his right hand man who had met us in Rome, and Reichmann and I went to see him. He was as charming as he could be. He's also thoroughly crazy, always sits in a tent. He speaks a good English with a heavy accent. He relates to religious people very strongly. He wrote *The Green Book*, a crazy book about his notions of democracy. He autographed a copy and gave it to me. He doesn't refer to me by name. He just calls me "the Rabbi." It has Albert's name in it. It's a collector's item.

Reichmann went ahead and started negotiating with Kaddafi. I would get a piece of the action for having made the contacts. I didn't participate in the actual commercial negotiations, how much Afeco would give, what price, all those things.

But we had a job to do. Kaddafi needed us as leverage for the two guys. So I went to ambassador Kampelman. He was ambassador to Russia once. Chaim Herzog introduced me to him years ago. He's a wise man. He said it was a wonderful idea, because we could ask from Kaddafi in return even recognition of Israel.

It was this prospect that convinced me that meeting with Kaddafi was the right thing to do. He's not exactly my kind of guy, but I felt that there were enormous possibilities here. Besides, it was clear that my meeting with him was just business. Nobody would mistake it for my endorsing him. It was just pragmatic.

Kaddafi was afraid to give up these fellows because he's definitely the guy who sent them. Under police pressure they would start singing and implicate him personally.

By now it's 1993 and Clinton is in the White House. Kampelman had considerable influence with the Democrats.

We tried very hard to push it, but it didn't go. Clinton listened. He was for it. But the reactionary civil servants in the State Department frustrated it. It's a hard thing to arrange, takes a lot of time. In the meantime Reichmann got frustrated because he couldn't wait for the money, and Kaddafi got frustrated because there was no progress with his two guys. Things didn't go well. It wasn't consummated.

JOHN TOWER

OPEN THIS SECTION WITH REPRODUCTION OF LETTER TO TOWER

Richard Parker, my lawyer, wanted to convert to Judaism. He had met me and other Jews and he liked Judaism. He knew a lot of Bible, and he thought all the Jesus stories were a lot of "hay." He wanted me to help him convert. But his wife, who was half-Jewish, was ambivalent about the idea. I told him, "Rick, I can't help you become a Jew unless you keep *Shabbos* properly." He wanted to, but she didn't. So he went to the Conservatives. I make sure that when I call him, here it's Saturday night, and there in Texas it's *Shabbos*, because to me he's not Jewish. He understands that. He's a very intelligent guy. He goes to *shul* Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He makes a seder. He's come to Israel many times. But to me he's still not a Jew.

Richard Parker was legal counsel to John Tower for seven years. Tower was chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. A Texan. Certainly not a violent anti-Semite, but I'm sure he wasn't overly fond of Jews. He was a professor at some university in Texas. Bush nominated him to be Secretary of Defense, but Congress didn't approve the nomination because he was a womanizer and a *shikker* (a drunk).

I walked into Tower's office one day and I give him a Bible from Israel with a decorative cover. I said, "Mr. Chairman, this is a gift." He knew me through Richard. He says, "Rabbi I want to pick your brain. Why does Israel send us animals like Arik Sharon to represent them? You once sent us Moshe Arens. A soft-spoken, cultured, classy guy. Why don't you keep sending us people like him?"

I said, "Mr. Chairman I want to tell you that your analysis is wrong. It's true, Sharon is an animal. But Ambassador Arens didn't vote in favor of the Camp David Accords. Arens is very principled. You can't buy him with glory. You can't buy him with money. Arens believes you can't give away an inch of Israel. Sharon is a different sort. If Reagan will just parade around with him in public, you can buy him."

"I'll give you an example of what I'm talking about, Mr. Chairman. A woman once came to the rabbi and said, 'Rabbi, I can't live with my husband anymore. Every morning he gets up and goes to the synagogue to pray. He comes back home, eats breakfast, and runs back to the synagogue to recite Psalms and study Talmud. By the time he comes back, it's late at night. I can't take it. I want to go out and have a good time once in a while.' The rabbi tells her, 'My daughter, what your husband does, it sounds a lot like what I do.' 'You don't understand, rabbi,' says the lady, 'For you it's a living. But my husband really means it!'"

Senator Tower got a good laugh out of that. I went on and said, "If you listen to me, you guys have to change your policy here. If President Reagan marches Begin down Fifth Avenue when he comes, he'll give not only give you Palestine. He'll even give you the milk he nursed from his mother. His prime concern is not to go down in history as a terrorist."

Tower said, "Those are pretty wise words." I had given Tower \$10,000 toward his campaign. He had a fundraiser the next Friday, and President Reagan was going to be there. He asked me to come and to tell Reagan the story of the rabbi and the woman.

I came back to Houston at the chairman's request. The fundraiser was called for early afternoon, but Reagan came late. I didn't know when *Shabbos* was going to begin. I'm sitting there waiting for Reagan, and he was delayed. I didn't know what to do. And Tower insisted I stay. It was getting late. I took all my stuff out of my pockets and I gave it to Richard, my lawyer. I eventually walked back to where I was staying. It was a two-hour walk. There was really plenty of time but I didn't know that. Reagan came and I told him the story. He nearly cracked up. He may not have been a big intellectual, but he was sharp.

When Congress refused to confirm Tower's nomination as Secretary of Defense, I wrote him a letter. I have it around here somewhere.

## JOE DIMAGGIO

### PICTURE OF DIMAG WITH YARMULKE AND NOTE TO RABBI

I called Sholom Spitz in Queens the other day. I gave him the phone number of Joe Dimaggio's secretary, Nick Nicolozzi, and I asked him to wish Joe Dimaggio well from me. Five minutes later he called me back to say that they announced on the radio that he died.

Joe and I were very good friends. I met him through a man from Miami named Kovins. A wealthy man, big in the construction business. He met Dimaggio through Nicolozzi, who had worked in a Sheraton hotel he owned in New Jersey. To make a long story short, I became a partner in the Sheraton. It was a 520-room hotel. Joe, Kovins, and I each had a third. I didn't buy it. I had made a deal and got it as an agent's fee. There were halachic problems involved concerning the operation of the hotel on *Shabbos*, so I wanted to unload it, and I talked Joe into it.

Joe Dimaggio had a suite on the fifth floor of that hotel called "The Joe Dimaggio Suite." Rav Zelig Epstein, one of the great Talmudists of our day, came to see me when I happened to be staying on the fifth floor of that hotel. We're walking along the corridor when out steps Joe. So I introduced Rav Zelig Epstein to Joe Dimaggio. He knew who Dimaggio was. He's a very intelligent man.

Two years ago when I was sick in bed, I got a letter from Joe. There was a picture of him in the paper with a big yarmulke. He sent the accompanying article. Mel Allen died, so he went to the memorial service in the synagogue. Joe writes me, "I did it for you, Rabbi." He wore the yarmulke just for me.

Joe was from the old days. He was born in America, but he had a European sensibility. He never went to school but he had style and he was smart. He wasn't good looking, but he had great charm. He gave me an autographed copy of his autobiography. He hated the Kennedys. He claimed they killed Marilyn Monroe. It wasn't a normal husband and wife relationship between them. He was like Marilyn's patriarch.

They didn't make big money in baseball in his day, but he would do a lot of advertisements. Joe loved a dime because it wasn't a nickel. He's from a place called Hackensack and he came up the hard way.

I saw the respect people would give. It was like they give Rav Shach (one of the most esteemed rabbis in Israel). I said to him, "You're nothing but a little wop. I'm the chief rabbi of Bethlehem. They don't give me the kind of respect you get. And they pay you fifteen or twenty thousand dollars just to come to a party." It was said in a spirit of good humor. Joe wasn't offended. He said, "One day I'll explain it to you."

Once I was at the hotel in New Jersey, and he said to me, "Rabbi, I have to go to the Superbowl. Come along." I didn't know what Superbowl meant at the time. Naturally, I paid for his ticket. He loved that. He took me into a fancy hotel on Wilshire Boulevard, into a big ballroom. All the chairmen of the big companies were there. Carl Icahn was there. They had come in for the Superbowl. Joe was paid to just be there. He walks in, and they all stand up for him, just like for Rav Shach. I can't imagine what went through their minds when they saw me together with Joe. He said to me, "You see, I'm not just a little wop."

One Sunday morning he comes in to my hotel room -- it's right across from his -- and says, "Rabbi, turn on the TV at 2:00 today." I asked him what's going to be on. He says, "You'll see." He went to Washington on the shuttle. He was invited to meet Gorbachev by President Reagan. Reagan had been a baseball announcer and he was a great fan of Dimaggio's. Reagan asked him to sign a ball for Gorbachev. Joe tells him, "No problem, Mr. President. But let's make that three baseballs, one for each of us, and all three of us will sign them." This is all on TV.

He comes back at night and shows me the ball. I said, "Joe, give it to me." He said, "Are you crazy? You know what that's worth?" He did give me ten balls with his autograph. I gave them to children of friends. They would go wild over them.

When Joe was on that trip to Washington, he was on the White House lawn. Everybody gathered around Joe and left Reagan standing alone. I saw it on television. But Joe was so smart. He stepped back and stood next to Reagan. He didn't want to show that he's above Reagan. He was humble.

I would sit with him in the lobby of a hotel and people would stand in line to get his autograph. He was really an aristocrat. He was a pleasure to be with.

#### THE GIRL FROM LONDON

When I had the kollel, we had a number of secretaries. We had some good ones, but they had to leave. Some got married, some gave birth. I once had an English secretary, a religious girl named Felicia. She was a very fine person. My wife and I introduced her to a single fellow who studied in the kollel, and they seemed to hit it off.

There was a period when I went to England for a few days at a time, two or three times a year. I used to do business there. I used to stay at the Churchill Hotel. At the time it was owned largely by the Bronfman family. I knew Barbara, the divorced wife of Charles Bronfman. I got her off smoking, but that's a different story.

I once had to go to New York before one of my trips to London. I stayed with a family I knew. The lady of the house was a capricious type. She was very strict about meal times. You either ate when she wanted, or you didn't eat at all. I wanted to eat when I wanted, so she didn't give me anything to eat. Three days I was there. I didn't eat and I was hungry. I took a night flight to London. You land in London in the morning. I ordered a kosher meal but I didn't get it because I didn't order it soon enough. On the plane I was so hungry I was ready to eat the seats.

I got to London. There were no glatt kosher restaurants in London at the time, but there was a kosher restaurant, Bloom's. I figured I would buy some bread and herring, eat, and go about my business.

The English cabs had a window between the driver and the passengers. The English cabbies all like to talk. But they can't hear you because of the window. So you have to yell to talk to them. In New York if a cab driver starts talking and you're not in the mood for conversation, you can tell him to shut up. But in London people are polite. You can't do that. And a lot of the cabbies there are Jewish.

So I get into a cab and tell him to take me to Bloom's Restaurant in Golders Green. It's about an hour and ten minute ride. I figured I'd smoke a cigarette, close my eyes, and relax until I got there. I hoped the driver wouldn't engage me in conversation. It was the last thing I wanted.

But my driver started talking. He said, "You a rabbi?"

I muttered, "Yeah, I'm a rabbi."

"You from Israel?" he asks.

"Yeah, I'm from Israel."

"Would you by any chance know Rabbi Elefant?"

I went out of my box. But I was so frustrated and hungry that I started to curse Rabbi Elefant. I said, "Yeah, I know him, but don't mention that man's name to me. He is a terrible man."

That cabbie got awfully annoyed about my talking against Rabbi Elefant. So I asked, "What do you have to do with Rabbi Elefant?"

He said, "My daughter Felicia is his secretary, and she tells me he's such a nice man. How can you talk that way about him?" Then he starts telling me his life's story. It turns out that he's Jewish and his wife isn't. She never converted.

He goes on to say that Rabbi Elefant even fixed up the daughter with a boy, a very religious boy with a beard. As if I needed to be reminded. When I found out she wasn't Jewish, I went out of my mind. I asked him, "How did your daughter get to be so religious?" He explained that she had many Jewish friends in her neighborhood. She thought that if her father's Jewish, she's Jewish.

I realized that the Master of the Universe put me in this cab so I would find out about this. We get to Bloom's restaurant and I ask myself, how will I tell him I'm Rabbi Elefant? He might have a heart attack.

So I pulled out my passport and knocked on the window. The cabbie caught on right away. He was so bewildered he almost drove into the restaurant. I went into the restaurant and got my herring, and he took me to the Churchill Hotel. I asked him to come up, but he wouldn't. He slept in that cab for three days, waiting in case I needed to go somewhere. He took me everywhere I had to go and wouldn't take a cent for it. He said it was the least he could do for Felicia's boss.

The first thing I did when I got to the hotel was to call Goldie and tell her that Felicia wasn't Jewish. We didn't know what to do. I suggested that she call Rabbi Amram Blau's wife, Ruth, the famous convert. She was very helpful. We got together a *beis din* (rabbinical court), and we converted her. We told her boyfriend but he didn't care. Today they have eleven children.

## DENMARK AND THE SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

About seven years ago, I get a call from Pik Botha, the South African foreign minister. He once threw his wife down the stairs and crippled her. He was a drunk. He came to Israel with



President DeKlerk, CHECK IF IT'S 2 WORDS before Mandela took over. I was friendly with his wife. He had a guilty conscience about her. His wife was an Evangelical who loved to hear about Jewish history and Bible so he asked me to visit her and talk to her. There's a Rabbi Katz in Pretoria, and an elderly Lithuanian rabbi. She used to go to ask him questions. So I knew all about Pik's life. He was important to me. I played him and P.W. Botha -- they're all Bothas there -- against one another when I needed something. Each one knew the skeletons in the other's closet.

Pik's right hand man was Victor Zazeroch,??? a Polish boy from Dubnov. His father was a pilot in the RAF who saved a lot of Jews. He was a sincere friend of the Jewish people. Victor was a close friend of mine. He had problems with his marriage and his kids, and I helped him out.

Pik wanted to come see me here in the yeshivah with Victor. But the Shin Bet (Israeli Secret Service) wouldn't let him because the yeshivah was in an area with lots of Arabs. So I went to the King David with Goldie. I come there, and he says, "Rabbi, you're the only guy who can take care of this problem of mine. All of the countries in the world are taking off their sanctions because South Africa is already talking about one man one vote. The only one holding back is Denmark, because there's a woman in the parliament who hates South Africa. She's a major member of the Foreign Relations Committee. This is a problem costing us hundreds of millions of dollars. You're the only guy who can take care of it."

I'll tell you how he knew that. There was once a series of meetings between Alexander Haig and some top officials in the State Department. They were deliberating about how to handle South Africa. When this conference was going on, I was sitting there with Pik Botha and he said, "Rabbi, let's see you get hold of Al Haig." I said, "What will you give me if I do?" He promised me the world. I picked up the phone and called Al Haig. I said, "Please don't be too harsh on South Africa. They're good to the Jews." Haig is a nice guy. He said, "I promise you, Rabbi." Botha went crazy.

So we were sitting there in the King David, and I told him that I said I have no contacts in Denmark, but I'll try anyway. I asked him what was in it for me. He said, ten million dollars. My wife said right away that I should take it in writing, but I didn't.

I went back to my office and I thought of one of my students named Naftali Storch. His mother was a professor at Bar Ilan University. He's Danish. He's a great-grandson of the lawyer who won the international case in The Hague about Greenland belonging to Iceland or Denmark. I called Naftali into my office. It turns out that he's related to everybody, the editor of the biggest newspaper in Denmark, the chief rabbi. His uncle had just retired from being chairman of the Danish foreign relations committee.

Naftali gave me the name of his uncle, so I went to Denmark. This is about 1989, before they repealed apartheid. Denmark is a beautiful place. There's no anti-semitism, nobody goes to church. The Danes are a very cultured people. I stayed at the home of Rabbi Winkler, the head of the Jewish community. He was a student of Reb Elchonon Wasserman, the great Lithuanian Talmudist who was murdered by the Germans. Rabbi Winkler's house is located on the street where the Nazis had their headquarters.

After a big Shabbos meal at the Winklers, I decided to take a walk to try to lose weight. I went to Longalinge???. That's a pier with lots of history. It was where the Danes sent off the Jews to Sweden from. It was cold, so I put on a thick, turtleneck sweater. I didn't look like a *rosh yeshivah*.

Along the way I had to go the bathroom. I saw a big wine company with a fellow standing in front. So I went over and said I'm a rabbi from Israel and I need to use a bathroom. I come out and the fellow sits me on the couch and offers me coffee. I couldn't take the coffee he made on Shabbos, so I asked for a Coke. We talked about all sorts of things, what a rabbi from Israel is doing in Denmark.

I went further along the Longalinge. I was very moved because I love to see things about the Holocaust. It got dark and cold and I didn't know where to go. On the pier, there were some two-story buildings, offices of shipping companies. I saw a light in front of a building, and knocked on the door. A big tall guy came out, a fellow with a kind face who spoke eloquent English. I told him I'm a rabbi from Israel and I'm stuck. I don't have any money on me because it's my Sabbath. He takes me in right away. He gave me Coca Cola to make *havdalah* (the ceremony which marks the end of the Sabbath) and I *davened maariv* (said the Evening Prayer). He said he would drive me back, and asked me what I was doing in Denmark. I had a strange feeling that I could trust him. So I told him the whole story of the problem with the sanctions. He said, "Don't worry, Rabbi. I'll take care of it." He knew the member of parliament who was the cause of the trouble, and he had some dirt on her. I asked him what he wanted. He said, "When you go to South Africa, do me a favor. I want a permit from the department that regulates fish there to export a certain kind of fish." I agreed. He drove me back and said he would get to work on my project. I kept in touch. In three days, he had made some progress and I was sending reports to South Africa, and by the end of the week it was all arranged. The sanctions were off. Pik Botha couldn't get over it. That night this Danish fellow gave me an enormous salmon to give to Rabbi Winkler. It was as big as the Leviathan.

So I got ready to go to South Africa to get paid. The government in South Africa spent half a year in Johannesburg and half a year in Capetown. That was supposed to keep the English and the Afrikaaners happy. Johannesburg is in the Dutch Transvaal, and Capetown is English. DOUBLE CHECK THAT. They move all the records and offices. It's crazy. I went to Capetown and I stayed with an architect, an Orthodox Jew named Elliot. He adopted a black girl and converted her to Judaism.

Pik gave me a check for a million dollars. It didn't go so easy. I asked, "Pik, what's with the rest?"

He said, "We've got a problem, Rabbi. We're getting a black government now. Things aren't the way they used to be." I said, "Mr. Minister. You made me a promise and you're going to keep it." He messed me around. I finally got another million out of him. I had a big fight with him. I told him, "Mr. Minister, I do not like this. Nobody cons me."

I came back the next day. I prepared for this. I told Victor, Botha's right hand man, "You know what the Bible says about the splitting of the Red Sea? It says you'll never see a phenomenon like that again. You watch now when I open Pik's door and see what happens." I literally kicked the door open. Pik went pale. I told him, "You made a promise and I came through, and you will pay every cent or else your career will end in a very unfashionable way. I'll tell everybody you threw your wife down the stairs, who you sleep with, and how much booze you drink. I need that money for my school. You made a deal. You shook hands like a gentleman and you're going to pay up."

He said, "what do you suggest? I don't have that kind of money."

I said, "Let's go to the president. Let him arbitrate." He agreed to that. We went to DeKlerk. He told Botha, "You made an agreement and you have to keep it." They owed me eight million. They agreed to pay a million a year.

But then the Mandela government took over. They're not anxious to pay. I'm working on it now.

## THE PARROT

Goldie and I stayed at the home of a family named Donner in South Africa. Gorgeous house. Full of antiques. I stayed there because I like to stay at the best. He put us on the second floor, but he forgot to have the phone connected in our room. I had a lot of phone calls, and I

had to run downstairs every time the phone rang. I was running up and down for a while, and every time I picked up the phone there would be nobody on the other end. I finally realized what was going on. They had an African gray parrot. These parrots come from Botswana and they're the most talkative parrots in the world. They live for a hundred years. This parrot did an exact imitation of a South African phone ringing. I got so mad at the parrot that I said, "Shut up, you parrot," and went back to sleep.

Two days later, I was sitting and talking to the Donner kids. All of a sudden, the parrot says, "Rabbi Elephant, shut up." The Donners were used to it, but we went crazy.

## Changing Horses in Midstream:

Nixon:

I was at the Statler Hilton Hotel in 1962. I got a call from Leonard Garment. He gave me the business, says, "My name is Laibel Garment," so that he'll sound Jewish. Nixon wants to come see me. This is after Nixon had lost twice, to Kennedy, and to Pat Brown for governor of California. Nixon had a law office not far away. Leonard Garment was Nixon's right hand guy. Leonard Garment is a Jewish fellow. I told him to come down and talk to me without bothering Nixon so we'll see what all this is about. The hotel is opposite Madison Square Garden. I met him in the coffee shop downstairs. He told me Nixon was a political aspirant again and wanted to run for president. He knew of my connections in Israel. I worked for the Weizmann Institute as a fundraiser at the time. I signed their stationery. They wanted to fly Nixon to Israel, make him look like a friend of the Jews. We'd take pictures. It would be a good start for Nixon's campaign.

I asked, "What's in it for me?" Garment said, "This is what we'll do. We're not tax-exempt because we're a political organization. Nixon has big friends like Bebe Rebozo. We'll bring the big boys to your school and make an evening. They'll contribute to your school and it will be tax-exempt. In those days there were 95% tax brackets. So every dollar they contributed cost them only five cents. Then when I would get the money, a percentage would go back to the Republican party. This was allowed because there were no controls at that time. I liked the part about the money. But I had to do the first part, too.

I told Garment that I was a very good friend of Humphrey at that time, and I'm not a man who changes horses in midstream. But then I opened my big mouth and added that Nixon is a two-time loser. Garment left after saying he was sorry.

He went back to Nixon and told him what I said. A few minutes later I got a phone call. The man on the other end of the line said, "Hello, this is Richard M. Nixon. Rabbi, I appreciate what you said about not changing horses in mid-stream. But I don't like what you said about a two time loser." And he hung up on me.

That night I slept peacefully because I didn't think he stood a chance.

When Nixon won six years later, I was here in Israel. They put me to bed for ten days with cold compresses. All I could think of was, how could I undo what I had done?

A while later I got money from the Agency for International Development (AID). There was a program called "Hospital and School Administration" under their aegis. They had 2.2 billion dollars to distribute.

Hospital and School Administration would give money to undeveloped countries for culture, education, and hospitals. It was against the law for them to give to a religious institution. But our institution in Haderah was technically not a yeshivah. It was called the Haderah Institute. Old man Otto Passman was the chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee. He had 2.2 billion to sign away. He was an old congressman from Monroe, Louisiana, and he was very powerful, with Congressional seniority. He was considered the second most powerful man in the American government, right after Nixon, because he held the pursestrings. He was a real farmer, couldn't even speak English right. He was a coarse man with no children. Until he got to Washington, he had never seen a Jew in his life. He had one hobby -- antique watches. A watch to him was like a baby. He laid them on velvet as if he were putting them to bed. He would do anything for them, even give away the US Treasury.

I had a friend named Efraim Reich, brother of Shmuel Reich with whom I grew up in Borough Park. He was European, didn't speak English. Efraim Reich's business was antique watches. He had heard about Passman, and understood he was a man worth cultivating. He started selling him watches at a discount. That was the key to his heart. People began to notice

that Zev Wolfson, the famous philanthropist, was getting friendly with Passman. People also began to notice that some schools in Israel were getting American foreign aid. Reich introduced Wolfson to Passman. Wolfson would come to Reich's store to buy antique watches and give them to Passman for nothing.

Shmuel Reich, Efraim's brother, was working for me at the time. He was building our campus in Haderah. He had been looking for a job. The Klausenberger Rebbe had thrown him out. But the Klausenberger Rebbe never really threw anyone out. As he once told me, "I never throw them out. I throw them ~~to~~ to you." He sent me Shmuel and a few others. Good guys all of them.

Shmuel was very pleased with the job I got him. He came to me one day saying he can get me millions of dollars for building. He was going to get me millions of dollars. I thought he was dreaming. His brother is friends with Otto Passman, he said, and he'll get me a big grant. I thought this was all stupidity. This was 1970 when we built the dorm in Haderah.

Shmuel arranged for his brother to give Otto Passman watches on my behalf. I was pleased that it was Efraim giving the watches to Passman because if there would ever be an investigation, it would focus on him, not me. Passman was involved in Koreagate, a scandal involving bribing Congressmen back in 1976. He was investigated and indicted. Passman was smart. He went to Monroe, Louisiana, for the trial because he was also being tried for tax evasion. The law is that you can't try a man in two cities. So he had the trial in Monroe where he owned every cop in the city. Surprise. He got off.

He was a smart fellow. He was no Jew lover, but he was crazy about watches like I am for *seforim*. He was addicted. When the Congressional investigation started, they never called on me. They only called on Efraim Reich. Passman was stupid enough to write thank you notes to him on Congressional stationery. Reich kept the letters.

Passman became a great friend of mine. All told, he allocated thirteen or fourteen million dollars to our institutions.

One day I came to the Israeli Minister of the Treasury, Pinchas Sapir and asked him for matching funds for that thirteen million dollars. In those days, the Israeli government would match foreign funds brought in by educational institutions. Sapir went wild. He was ready to kill me. There was a limited amount of American foreign aid allocated to Israel, and I had already gotten my hands on a significant share of it. "You're are stealing money from AID which we would have gotten, and you want matching yet!" he shouted. I said to myself, "Sapir, someday I'll teach you a lesson."

Some time later, when I was in the States, I heard that Sapir was due to arrive the following Monday. This was a Thursday. I called Passman. He said, "Oh, hello, Rabbi," and I said, "Mr. Chairman, how are you? And how are your children?" It was understood that I meant the watches.

"How are you doing?" he asked me.

I said, "To tell you the truth, the Minister of Finance in Israel is not treating me right."

"Is that true?" said the Congressman. "I'll let him have it. He's got an appointment with me on Monday and I'll cancel it."

Adi Yako ??? was Sapir's assistant in charge of disbursing money to institutions. A very refined and cultured gentleman. I get a call at 10:00 PM from Adi. Sapir is steaming, he says, he wants to kill you. He wants to see you. Be prepared.

Sapir sent me a limousine Thursday night complete with bar and TV to take me to the Waldorf. I got there at midnight. I went to Sapir's room. As soon as I opened the door a crack, I began to hear it. "You bit the hand that fed you!" and on an on. I let him let off steam. He yelled in English, Hebrew, French, Polish, and Yiddish. He was really a very nice man. Then

he sat down with me to talk *tachlis*. "What do you want?" he asked. "All I want is what I'm entitled to by law, matching funds," I said. He swindled me a little, but I got it.