

# תשפ"ד · Bnos 5784

## Parshas

Vayechi

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה העומדים בין בים ובין ביבשה המקום ירחם עליהם ויזיאו מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאלה השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן:



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# Story

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## WHO STOLE THE COIN?

It all happened about a hundred and thirty years ago. About one hundred distinguished rabbis from all over Europe came to a conference to discuss important issues of the times, as well as various points of halacha. The host of the gathering was none other than Rabbi Avrohom Shmuel Sofer, best known as the Ksav Sofer z"l.

The conference took place as scheduled and brought great satisfaction to the participants. On the last day, the one hundred rabbis sat together for a farewell banquet. Speeches were heard and halachic points were debated around the huge table. Suddenly, a hush fell over the guests as the Ksav Sofer stood up. His look told them that he was about to say something of special interest.

"Before we take leave of each other," the Ksav Sofer said so all could hear, "I wish to show those present an exceptionally rare gold coin from the period of the Second Bais Hamikdosh." Whispers rippled through the hall as the Ksav Sofer held up the coin. "This is a half-shekel coin and, to the best of my knowledge, it is the only one in the world. It is as priceless as it is rare." Several of the rabbis stood up and went over to see the half-shekel with their own eyes. They touched it, felt it, and soon the coin was being passed from hand to hand around the table. The Ksav Sofer sat down in his place at the head of the table beaming with pleasure at seeing his guests' interest in the coin. After several minutes, the excitement subsided. The rabbis completed their meal and prepared to say Birkas Hamazon. It was then that the Ksav Sofer remembered the coin and, turning to the person sitting next to him, said, "Have they finished looking at it yet?"

The rabbi sitting next to him shrugged his shoulders and turned to ask the person sitting on the other side of him. He, too, did not know where the coin was. Finally, one of Rabbi Sofer's assistants made an announcement. He said that the coin still hadn't been returned, and asked that now, with the meal about to end, it please be returned. No one made a move.

The assistants, sure that not everyone had heard the announcement, called for quiet in the hall and repeated the request. Still, no one moved. The rabbis looked at each other, then at the Ksav Sofer. Something was terribly wrong. The Ksav Sofer turned pale. He stood up and asked, "Please – the coin has still not been returned to me. Perhaps it fell on one of the tables?"

A search of the tables and the floor underneath was made, yet the coin was still not found. Confusion reigned. All those present realized that the coin couldn't have just disappeared.

Someone must have taken it ... and kept it. The elder rabbis began feverish consultations about what to do. Something like this had never happened before – that a coin disappeared during such a distinguished rabbinical conference – and not because it was lost. What would people say?

If the coin had been worth only a small sum, or even if it had been worth thousands of zlotys, the matter would have been kept quiet. But the value of the coin was priceless. "Rabbosai," the Ksav Sofer called out to those assembled, "I beg of you! This is a very unfortunate occurrence. The coin you all saw is the only one in existence. I beg of you to find it, for if not, I will have no choice but to give instructions that each person here search the clothes of another." They all sat there open-mouthed. The matter was fast becoming quite serious. What a chilul Hashem there would be were it to become known that at the conference of the most esteemed rabbis in Europe a valuable coin was stolen, and that all the rabbis were searched!

Several long minutes passed. The hall rocked with the sounds of the rabbis talking, yet the coin was not returned to its owner. "There is no choice then," announced the Ksav Sofer. "I command each person present to search the clothes of his fellow so that the good name of all the Torah leaders of Europe will not be besmirched."

The rabbi prepared to begin their humiliating task, when just then, from the back of the hall, came the voice of an elderly rabbi who served as the leader of a small community in Hungary. "Begging your pardon," he said softly, "but it is not seemly to conduct such a search. Please, make another search of the hall. Perhaps the coin fell and rolled under the table?"

The elderly rabbi's voice trembled with emotion. Everyone looked at him, but he said no more, and waited patiently for the Ksav Sofer to speak. "Let it be as our venerable guest suggests," said the Ksav Sofer. "Search the hall." Thus, the distinguished rabbis of Europe found themselves bending down under the table, lifting up the corners of the rug, searching every inch of the floor, even sifting through the food remnants to check and see if perhaps the coin had rolled there. But nothing was found. "If so," announced the Ksav Sofer, "all options have been exhausted. We must proceed with the search."

The rabbis again began their preparations for the search, deciding who would search whom, when suddenly, everyone saw the elderly rabbi stand up on a chair and cry out, "Please do not do this! It is a desecration of Hashem's Name. Perhaps you can try looking again? Perhaps ...?"

By now, the patience of those present was fast reaching its end. “We have searched more than enough. The time has come to conclude the matter, despite the unpleasantness involved.”

There were those who eyed the elderly rabbi suspiciously. It was safe to assume that the only person who was against the search was the very person who had stolen the coin.

Suddenly, the elderly rabbi said, “I will tell you why I am against the search.” He took a deep breath. “It is because I myself brought a similar coin to this gathering and I know you will suspect that this is the coin lost by our esteemed rabbi and teacher.” Then, to the astonishment of

all, he took out of his pocket a coin identical to the one missing.

There it was – the missing coin – in the hands of one of their fellow rabbis!

“It was in his pocket,” they murmured.

Everyone looked at the coin and at the rabbi in deep shock. Until then, the Hungarian rabbi had been known as a true tzaddik and an important halachic authority. Everyone sighed over the fact that in his old age the elderly sage’s behavior was casting a shadow over his whole life.

The elderly rabbi, who apparently realized that those present were looking at him in disbelief, repeated, “This is not the coin that disappeared. This coin belongs to me.” Everyone stood there staring at the rabbi, not knowing what to think. There were those who judged him favorably, assuming that he had done something foolish in his old age.

But most of those present treated the new claim with scorn and derision. They knew that the coin in question was the rare half-shekel coin from the Second Bais Hamikdosh era, of which there was only one in existence. In any case, the rabbi’s guilt was as plain as the writing on the wall.

As they were standing there in confusion, upset and angry, a youth of about fifteen, a cook’s assistant, quickly made his way from the kitchen to the center of the hall. He went straight to the Ksav Sofer and said, “I found the coin!”

One hundred pairs of eyes stared at him. He threw the coin up in the air and everyone saw that it was exactly like the one held by the elderly Hungarian rabbi! It’s hard to describe the shock that hit everyone. They all felt their knees tremble. They realized that a terrible thing had happened there in the hall, something that had practically no explanation. In the silence, it was easy to hear the youth speaking. “I searched through the garbage and found the coin amongst the scraps of meat.”

The Ksav Sofer told everyone to sit down again in their places. He asked the youth to sit on his left. The youth declined, out of respect, and remained standing. The Ksav Sofer then turned to the elderly rabbi and asked him to sit on his right. To the rabbis assembled around the table he declared, “It seems clear to me that Hashem has presented us with this terrible situation so that we can learn a great deal more than what we learned all the days of the conference. Please, my distinguished guest, tell us your story.”

The elderly rabbi, whose eyes were filled with tears of relief, spoke with difficulty. “I came here from the town where I live, with a rare coin in my pocket, which I had planned on showing you, my dear friends and colleagues, right at the closing moments, as is our custom. “When our esteemed leader, Rabbi Avrohom Shmuel Sofer, stood and held up a similar coin, I was naturally quite surprised and slightly disappointed at seeing that the coin in my hand was not the only one in the world. I listened as our great rabbi and teacher said that his was the only coin in existence and decided not to tell anyone about my coin so as not to contradict his words and embarrass him in front of everyone.

“Then, when they announced that the coin was missing, and the decision was made to search all the rabbis, I realized the magnitude of my predicament. I knew that once the coin was found in my pocket, not a single person here would judge me favorably and believe what I said – that the coin belonged to me. I knew that I would look like both a thief and a liar. Therefore, I opposed the search, hoping that in the meantime the coin would be found. “This was not to be, and so I endured some of the most terrible moments of my life, when I was suspected wrongly. I am certain that the great humiliation and terrible shame that were my lot atoned for all my sins. Thus it is easy for me to forgive with a full heart anyone who mistakenly suspected me and did not judge me favorably.” All those present felt moved by the elderly rabbi’s heartfelt words. He continued, “However, it is my wish that what you witnessed today remain forever engraved in your hearts and

that you pass it to your communities and to the members of your families. We are commanded to judge each person favorably – not only when there is good reason to do so. Even at those times when a person’s guilt seems one hundred percent certain, try to extend yourselves to find a point of merit, and may my example bear witness like one hundred witnesses.” Then the elderly rabbi said, “I ask of you only this: Imagine my feelings if this wonderful youth had not found the coin. Would a single one of you have believed me? Would anyone in my community have believed me? Would anyone in my family have believed me? Imagine the shame and humiliation I would have felt until the day of my death.” All eyes filled with tears. The guests thought about the terrible sin that might have accompanied them till their deaths - the sin of suspecting the innocent – and shuddered. Then they all remembered the youth who had saved them from that sin. “What made you search through the refuse?” the Ksav Sofer asked him.

The hall fell silent, waiting to hear his answer. The boy was embarrassed at first, but after a slight hesitation, his thin voice could be heard: “The truth is, I saw all the rabbis looking at this rabbi ... and I saw that everyone was so positive about it ... but I thought to myself that it couldn’t be that a rabbi would steal the coin! That’s exactly what I said to myself: It couldn’t be that a rabbi stole it! I believed the rabbi who said the coin belonged to him ... because that’s what he said .. and it couldn’t be that he would lie. So I decided that even if no one else believed him, I would. I went to the big garbage pail, I dumped everything on the ground, and I started to go through it by hand until I found the coin, and then I ran to the rabbi ... Wait a minute – why is everyone crying? Honored Rabbi, did I do something wrong?” All the rabbis sobbed at the simplicity of the youth and his innocent faith. Several of them buried their heads in their hands, embarrassed to look their colleagues in the eye. “Do you know why we’re crying?” said the Ksav Sofer to the guileless youth. “It is because your sincere words are a rebuke to us all, for we did not think as you did. Chazal tell us, ‘From all my students I have grown wise’ yet I never imagined,” said the Ksav Sofer, “that a youth of fifteen would teach us more than anyone else. What is your name?” he asked.

“Meir Zvi Cohen,” said the youth. “Now listen to what I am going to say,” the Ksav Sofer said to the boy. “I owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude. You not only saved me and all these great rabbis from the grievous sin of suspecting the innocent, but you have also taught us a lofty level of judging everyone favorably. I want to repay you. Thus, I will bless you in front of everyone here that in the merit of your saving us, you and your descendants will be saved from every trouble and misfortune; that the soton will have no power over you, and that you and your descendants will merit long life and will never, ever lack for anything.” The Ksav Sofer rose from his place and warmly embraced the youth. That’s when he smelled the odor that clung to the youth from his search through the garbage. Yet the Ksav Sofer was not repelled by the smell nor by the dirt and continued to hug the youth. As he did so, he murmured a cryptic sentence in the boy’s ear: “The refuse will wash off, but it will always be ready to come and save you from trouble.” Few heard those last words. The conference drew to a close and the attendees dispersed, filled with emotion, to their various communities.

The youth grew up and went through World War I. He married and established a large family, with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Then came the Second World War. The family was scattered, sent to various work camps. The youth in the story was by then an old man of 95.

He hid in the last ghetto along with five other elderly Jews. The Germans killed everyone except him; he was saved through very strange circumstances. There was a German truck full of garbage. He jumped into it and buried himself under the garbage. The German driver drove the truck to a garbage dump in a desolate place, far from human habitation. From that moment on, until the end of the war, the old man survived on scraps of garbage that were thrown onto the dump. He only found out that the war was over months afterwards, when he overheard a conversation between two garbage truck drivers.

After the war, he made aliyah. To his great surprise, he discovered that his entire family – including all his children and grandchildren – had also survived and made aliyah. Meir Zvi Cohen died at the age of 100. He merited long life, as did his descendants.

(Our Heroes, by Chaim Walder  
Feldheim Publishers)

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# Parsha Quiz

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**See how much  
you know!**

1. How long did Yaakov live in Mitzrayim?
2. How old was Yaakov when he died?
3. What did Yakov Avinu request of his son, Yosef?
4. Who were the two sons of Yosef?
5. Which of the Shevotim is considered like two tribes?
6. Whom did Yaakov bless with his right hand?
7. Who said the Posuk "Hamalach Hagoel"?
8. Who is the famous descendant of Ephraim?
9. Who is the famous descendant of Menashe?
10. Who blessed the shevotim?
11. Which two were called brothers in battle?
12. Who is compared to a lion cub?
13. Who is the business man, Zevulun or Yisochor?
14. Who is the famous descendant of Dan?
15. For how many days did the Mitzriyim mourn the death of Yaakov?
16. Where did Yaakov's sons bury him?
17. How long did Yosef live?
18. What is the name of Yosef's grandson born in Yosef's lifetime?
19. Translate "Chazak".

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# Recipe

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## Puff Pastry Deli Twists

### Ingredients:

2 sheets Gefen Puff Pastry

20 to 22 smoked turkey or beef facon strips

1/2 cup Gefen Sweet 'n Sour Duck Sauce

1 egg, lightly whisked

2 tablespoons Gefen Sesame Seeds

sweet chili sauce or mustard, for serving

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. Lightly flour a work surface. Gently roll out one puff pastry sheet. The wide end of the rectangular dough should be facing you.

3. Spread duck sauce onto the pastry, leaving a quarter inch of empty space around the border. Arrange turkey or beef facon strips on top of the duck sauce so they are almost touching each other but not overlapping.

4. Slice the pastry into strips in between the meat strips.

5. Gently twist each strip and place on a baking sheet. Brush with egg and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

6. Repeat with the remaining pastry.

7. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until the twists are browned.

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# Middah of the Week

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Dan L'kaf Zechus

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**We want to hear from you!!**

Questions, comments, or suggestions?  
Email us at [bnos@agudah.org](mailto:bnos@agudah.org).

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