בס"ד

Chayolei Tzivos Hashem
Handbook Series

Handbook

THE STORY TELLER

The Unsung Heroes

In the middle of a fierce war, the army was advancing and needed to cross the rushing river Dunai. There was no time to build a bridge, and it was crucial to get across the river. The general ordered the soldiers to continue marching forward. Being obedient, the soldiers continued marching into the water. They continued until they were submerged and row upon row of soldiers piled up under water until they built a human bridge and the rest of the soldiers could cross the river on top of them. They sacrificed their lives for their cause even though they would not receive any recognition. They were not given any medals for their bravery, and were not even recognized, they just did what needed to be done, without thinking about "What's in it for me".

There is a niggun called the Dunai Niggun, that Chassidim would sing which expresses this feeling of giving totally of ones self for the cause, and not caring about recognition or reward.

Introduction

Boys enjoy listening to a story - provided it is a good story and well told. For the storyteller, there's a special satisfaction in feeling the breathless attention which the boys give as the the plot unwinds.

But how to tell the story?

The start is important. The attention of the listeners must be caught in the very opening statement.

Jump right into your story: "Our boat was overloaded and we were quickly drifting into trouble. Ahead of us waves were ripping every which way, it seemed inevitable that we would be caught. 'Hold her off!" Chaim shouted. 'Look out! Watch that oar!" But before he had finished we were in the midst of what seemed like a gigantic whirlpool…" You get the idea?

Then there's the ending, in which there is to be no questions about; threads must be gathered together, all business disposed of. All obscure points are to be made clear so that there is no doubt in the listeners' minds as to what happened to every character presented.

To do this you must learn the story - not by heart but by scenes and action.

So read it again. Then read it a third time. By then, the plot will stick in your mind, and you'll be familiar with the characters.

Sit down for a minute and think over the relationships between the different characters, and the part that each one plays in the plot. If there are points that aren't clear to you, go back to the story and look it over.

When the story is fixed in your mind, tell it to your alarm clock or to the bookshelf in your room, out loud. Your first telling may be rather dry. Never mind. Tell it a second time, and even a third time, each time adding a little more life, a little more color. Try to match your voice to the characters and the moods that run through the story.

Your first reaction may be, "Aw, I can't tell a story!" you may have the idea that you lack the necessary imagination and the power of putting words together into a complete picture. Don't let that discourage you. Few people have a natural knack for storytelling, but almost anyone can develop it if he sets his mind to it.

At your next meeting, dive right into the story. Don't be afraid of not being able to do it well enough.

Storytelling is largely a matter of courage. Once you've taken the plunge, you'll find each succeeding story easier and easier.

Before starting, be sure your audience is comfortable. Don't let attention be divided between the story and a cramped leg or an uncomfortable seat. Allow a couple of moments during which everyone may find a comfortable position. Start when the crowd is silent, not until then.

Deal with minor disturbances as they occur. If low talking is heard in the outskirts of the circle, pause until quiet is restored.

If some disturbances take place during the recital of your tale, ignore it if possible. If this cannot be done, treat it lightly or pleasantly. The audience will attach exactly the same importance to it that you do. If you take it as a joke, they will; if you get fussy about it, so will they.

If you follow these basic guidelines, you are already on the right track, and maybe even in the process of becoming a master storyteller!

Good luck!!!

Burning Passion

In a distant army base deep in Siberia the soldiers each had their turn to stand guard at the front of the base. This was a dreaded job because it was freezing cold, and you must stand in one spot the whole night. One morning, the captain was doing his rounds and ordering the changing of the guards. He came to the guard at the front of the camp, and ordered him to go and change places.

The guard tried to move his legs however they had become numb from the cold. He could not move! His feet had frozen to the spot where he was standing for so many hours, and he could not lift them. When the captain saw that he was not following orders, he became furious.

"Why are you just standing there? I ordered you to move!" screamed the officer

"I have been loyally standing here the entire night, my feet have frozen to the ground" replied the soldier. He was hoping that the officer would praise him for his extreme dedication to the cause, to the extent that he didn't move away even when his feet were literally freezing into ice. Instead, what he received was a further screaming.

"When you joined the army, you did so with a burning passion for the cause of fighting to protect Mother Russia. If that fire was still burning inside of you, you would not have frozen here!"