

SHABBOS STORIES

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An Inspiration for A Secular Boy



Shlomo Werdiger, a businessman with intense yirat shamayim—fear of G-d, relates a time that he was showing a secular family around his office.

Usually, the children would be mesmerized by the design of sports apparel. This family had a son who asked a million questions, but less about sports, and more about how a Jew in the sports apparel business makes it work. He wanted to know if I went to games like the Super Bowl and when he confirmed that I did, he asked if I ate kosher food. Of course, I told him, recalling some of the different venues and events at which our group was accommodated, in terms of kashrut and other relevant halachot. He was fascinated.

A few weeks later, my secretary put through an unfamiliar caller. I took the phone to hear a man saying that I owed him fifty thousand dollars. I wasn't sure who

was speaking and what he meant, so I waited for him to continue. The man identified himself as Jason and explained that his son came by a few weeks ago asking questions about kosher at different stadiums and games, and now, he has a new fixation.

He is becoming a bar mitzvah, and he keeps saying, “Mr. Werdiger had kosher food at the Super Bowl and the World Series and the NBA finals...can’t I at least have a kosher bar mitzvah?”

An Honor for My Family to Have a Share in this Incredible Merit

Jason explained that he had tried to make his son happy, and a kosher caterer had charged him fifty thousand dollars more than the alternative. I wasn’t sure how serious Jason was, so I told him that it would be an honor for my family to have a share in this incredible merit. We would cover the costs of the kosher caterer.

He laughed and explained that he was a wealthy man. The venue alone is costing him over a million dollars. After a short pause, he lowered his voice. “I just wanted you to know that my son is having a kosher bar mitzvah-” Here, the man’s voice cracked, “and it will be the first kosher affair in my family in generations.”

Shlomo’s unwavering devotion to Hashem’s commandments helped inspire a change in a whole generation.

Reprinted from the Parashat Ki Tisa 5784 email of Jack Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Rav of Vienna’s Son

By Yair Weinstock

Gimpel the Shadchan would not be put off. R’ Shlomo’s son, Yitzchak, was a very talented, handsome and brilliant talmid chachom, who was the pride of his father, the Rav of Vienna. R’ Shlomo insisted that his son was still young and not ready for marriage, but Gimpel was persistent. He was offering a match with the daughter of R’ Shimshon, one of Vienna’s wealthiest and most respected citizens.

The persistence was driven by R’ Shimshon’s insistence on having the prized Yitzchak as his son-in-law, and it didn’t hurt matters that every month he raised the amount he was offering as a dowry for his daughter. Gimpel told R’ Yitzchak he could not refuse, for R’ Shimshon was offering as a dowry the estate that belonged to Prince Siegmund, which R’ Shimshon had purchased.

It was a beautiful building in the forest, surrounded by pools and gardens. Gimpel told R' Shlomo that his brilliant son could sit and learn undisturbed there, with servants to attend to the house. R' Shlomo promised to think it over, but because he was not quick to respond, R' Shimshon assumed he was not interested, and married his daughter off to another talented young man.

Many Offers Had Been Made

Not long afterwards, Yitzchak turned 18, and his father decided that he would more carefully scrutinize the many offers that had been made, and choose the best from among them.

One sunny day, after Yitzchak had participated in a lively Talmudic debate about a topic which his father had taught, he decided to take a walk in the large garden that bordered the palace near his neighborhood. He leaned his head on one of the tree branches and sank into thought about what they had just learned.

From one of the benches in the park, a pair of dark eyes gazed at him. Princess Wilhelmina, the king's only daughter, had gone for a stroll and was struck by the image of the young Jewish lad walking back and forth. She was struck by his appearance and his apparent depth of thought. She tried to call him to engage him in conversation, but he did not hear her.

She kept staring at him, until she was convinced that this young man would be the best husband she could hope to have. When he left, she had her servants follow him into the Jewish ghetto, until they found out who he was. They revealed that he was none other than the son of the city's rabbi.

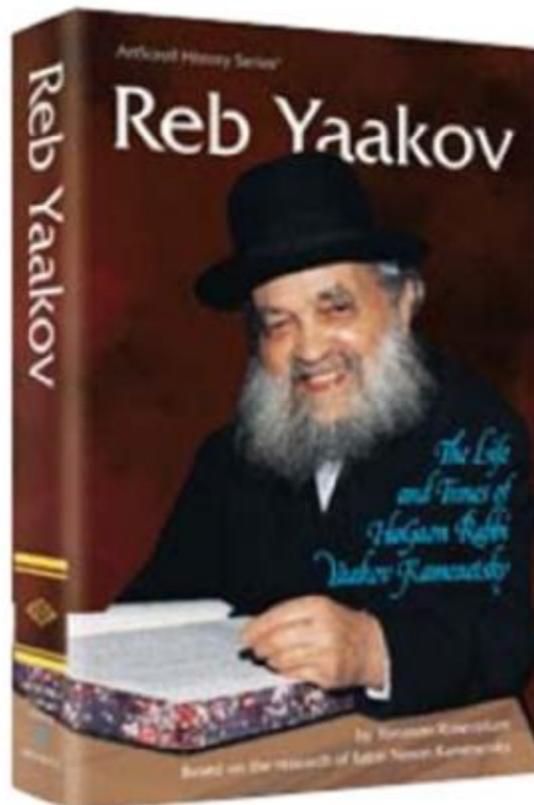
The Princess Wants to Marry the Rabbi's Son

When the princess told her father that she wanted to marry the rabbi's son, the king shuddered. Surely she must be joking! The king raged at her in anger and absolutely refused her. But she was determined, and had always been pampered and spoiled; when she did not get her way, she grew seriously ill. Her parents begged her to relent, but she would not listen. They could not understand how their daughter could humiliate them so dreadfully by choosing to marry a miserable Jew!

Soon the threat of death hung over her, and it was then that the king grudgingly surrendered and agreed to offer Yitzchak her hand in marriage. (To be continued next week.)

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.
Excerpted from the book "Tales for the Soul"

Rav Kamenetzky and the Pen



Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt”l, was known for his honesty in every area. When he was already older, Rav Yaakov was once asked how he had merited to live such a long life. He answered simply, “I have never told a lie.”

Rav Yaakov would have the same integrity when it came to other people’s belongings, even with items that were not so valuable. Rav Yaakov once met a young man that he hadn’t seen since his wedding, two years earlier.

Rav Yaakov was happy to see him, and he took out a pen and handed it to him. Rav Yaakov said, “This pen is yours. I borrowed it to fill in the details on the Kesubah at your wedding, and I forgot to return it to you. I’ve been carrying it since then until I would see you again, and now, I am so happy to return it to you!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

The Angry Driver

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz related a story on Tiv HaHashgacha, that someone presented to him:

“ I traveled outside of Eretz Yisroel to collect funds for a Chasunah, so that Jews from all over could help and join in with the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Kallah. When I arrived, I hired a driver to take me to the addresses of people who were happy to donate to this cause, and in exchange, the driver would receive a percentage of what I was able to collect.

A Convenient Arrangement without any Financial Risk

“It was a convenient arrangement because there was no financial risk. If I managed to get donations, then the driver would make some money too. But if I was not able to raise anything, then the driver would also not receive anything, and I would not go into debt by having to pay him a fee.

“We started the day pleasantly, and the driver dropped me off at the different addresses. I would get out of the car, knock on the door, and then I would daven that they would open it for me, and if they did, I would daven that they would give me a decent amount, and we continued on like this.

“As we drove, I suddenly saw a house up ahead, and something in my heart was drawing me to go and visit that house. I asked the driver to please stop by there, but the driver refused. He said that he knew the owner of that house, and he will not give anything, and even if he does give, it will just be a small amount, and it will be a waste of time for us to go there. He wanted to stick with the addresses on the list, and not waste his time.

An Angry Driver Who No Longer Wanted to Work with the Collector

“But I still felt an inner urge to go there, so I insisted that he let me off. The driver was very angry with me and said that if I insisted, then he no longer wanted to work with me. He was furious, and he dropped me off at the house.

“I walked up and knocked lightly on the door. A kind man opened the door and invited me into his living room. He apologized for the mess and explained that they had just moved in. In the middle of our conversation, he scolded his five-year-old son to get down from climbing on the table. When he called the boy by his name, I was surprised to hear that it was the same name as my righteous grandfather.

“I asked the man if there was a connection to the Tzadik with that name, and he replied that he had a strong connection to that Tzadik, and he named his son after him. I told him this Tzadik was my grandfather. He was very moved by this and he said that not long ago, he had promised to give a nice sum of Tzedakah to the family of this Tzadik, and right now, his grandson was sitting with him!

“He excused himself and shortly returned with a very decent amount of money. He explained that he had saved it for a very long time, and I told him that Baruch Hashem, this money would help me marry off my daughter in a respectable way. I was very happy, and wished this kind man well, and left his house.

“My driver was not there waiting for me. I called him, and he told me that he drove away, and that he did not wish to work with me anymore. I asked him what I owed him for the day that he spent with me. He said a small amount, which I later sent him, and that left me with the entire donation for me to have, and I didn’t have to split it! I saw from this that if it is decreed in Shamayim that someone will profit and another will not, then Hashem will cause him to run away from the money.

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

Yom Kippur Heroism at the Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz

It was bitter cold, and they were all starving. On one of the darkest nights in history, Malka Kleinman and her inmates at the Gross-Rosen concentration camp were surviving on their last reserve of willpower. Yom Kippur was around the corner and they were all planning to do the unthinkable: fast. When the fast began and they were forced to work, the hunger pains, bitter cold, and exhaustion only strengthened exponentially; every second felt like hours, but they kept pushing.

Finally, the stars came out and they all felt some relief. However, when they asked the Nazi for their food since they did not get it in the morning, she screamed at them in a rage, “If you can work all day without food, then you don’t need food now!”

This meant many of them could possibly not survive the night. Malka then did something unheard of. She stood up to a Nazi. “How can you expect us to work if

you don't give us to eat?" she asked. Furious at the defiant confrontation, the Nazi wanted her to suffer.

On that freezing night, the Nazi forced Malka to run around the camp barefoot on the snow while being followed by a Jeep, knowing that if she stops or falls, she's likely being shot. Sapped of all energy, Malka barely finished the lap. However, it was not over, as the Nazi wanted another lap. The pain was excruciating, each step drained her more and more - but she kept pushing. After finishing the lap, she was about to collapse. However, it was not over there. The Nazi wanted yet another lap.

She stood up, stiffened her slouched neck, and kept pushing because would not give the Nazi the satisfaction of winning, nor would she bow down to the pain. She did seven laps before the Nazi gave up and gave in. Speechless and awe-struck with respect for Malka's superhuman willpower, she decided to feed her entire bunk. Because of Malka, countless lives were saved. (Writer's Note: Malka is my grandmother and because of her refusal to give up, I am alive.)

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

Never Home on Shabbos

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

As many people know, on October 7th, the enemy was able to infiltrate almost every moshav and kibbutz that they tried to enter, only failing when they arrived at the settlements that kept Shabbos and whose gates were locked shut. Without question, more than we keep Shabbos — Shabbos keeps us. More than we protect Shabbos — Shabbos protects us.

In one kibbutz, there was a family who had started keeping Shabbos. It was the mother who was mainly interested in becoming more religious, while the father was more or less going along with his wife. Since they lived in a kibbutz that was not religious at all, none of their neighbors kept Shabbos, which meant that the atmosphere on the kibbutz wasn't very conducive to keeping Shabbos properly.

For this reason, the family began leaving their home and spending Shabbos in other communities. Prior to Simchas Torah of 2023, the parents decided that they weren't up to going away for Shabbos and Yom Tov that week, since the mother was expecting a baby soon. Instead of traveling to another community for Shabbos, they would host a religious family at their home instead.

On the morning of October 7th, they started hearing gunshots in the kibbutz and the sounds of people yelling at one another in Arabic. It was clear that something terrible was going on. Like most people who lived in that part of the country, they knew what they were supposed to do in the wake of an attack, and they quickly ran into their safe room, hoping and praying that they would make it through the day alive.

Surrounded by a Special Protective Cloud Called “Shabbos”

As the hours passed and the sounds of shooting still had not abated, they kept expecting the enemy to come crashing through their door. But no one came. No one even tried to see if anyone was there. It was as if the terrorists couldn't see their home, as if they were surrounded by a special protective cloud — a cloud called “Shabbos.”

Eventually, after many hours, IDF soldiers arrived and a fierce battle ensued. When it was over, the family was finally able to leave their home. They were incredulous when they grasped the full extent of the miracle they had experienced, when they realized how many people had been killed while they had been spared by the hand of Hashem. But even then, they still didn't know the extent of the miracle.

Over the next few days, maps and other intelligence were discovered on the bodies of the terrorists who had been dispatched from Gaza to kill as many people as they could. On one terrorist, a map was found that included every single house in that family's community — along with information about the family who lived there, such as how many people lived in the house and other relevant information that the terrorist would need to know.

Shabbos Has Protect the Jewish People Since the Beginning of Time

The information came from Arabs who had been working on the kibbutz and had been spying on the residents so they could pass on the information to Hamas. Next to the line on the map that included information about this particular family it stated, “They are never home on Shabbos.” And so, even though they were home that Shabbos, Shabbos protected them, just as Shabbos has protected the Jewish people since the beginning of time.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Angels in Orange: Uplifting Stories of Courage, Faith and Miracles from the United Hatzalah Heroes of October 7th” by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer.

A Good Name

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

Shimmy and Yitzy Greenbaum made their way home after delivering food to their Tante Chaya, who had just had a baby.

“Look, Shimmy,” Yitzy said. “That’s the Toras Avigdor building!”

The two boys looked up at the huge building towering over their heads. “Wow, I’ve never seen it up close before,” said Shimmy. “Let’s get a closer look.” The two boys approached the skyscraper which had the Toras Avigdor logo on top, right underneath a giant golden plaque which read “The Holtzbacher Industries Edition”.

As they came closer they noticed that each floor of the building had a plaque with a sponsor’s name, and even the individual windows had sponsors.

“Yitzy!” Shimmy said excitedly, looking through a ground floor window whose plaque said that a sponsorship was still available.

“That’s Aharon Spetner, the author of Toras Avigdor Junior!” At the sound of his name, Aharon looked up from where he was working. Noticing the boys, he carefully laid down his feather quill next to the parchment and smiled at the boys.

“How can I help you?” he said. “Um...”

Shimmy stammered. “Well, we were just wondering, why does Toras Avigdor need such a massive building, just to print booklets?”

Offers to Show the Boys Around

“Why don’t you come inside and I’ll show you?” offered Aharon.

The two boys hurried inside the main entrance where Aharon was waiting for them in the lobby.

“Don’t you live in Eretz Yisroel?” asked Yitzy.

“I do,” answered Aharon. “But Anshel Holtzbacher flies me in each week so I can write the Junior on the Horki Rebbe’s old shtender, to make sure it has the maximum level of kedusha.”

“What’s this week’s Junior about?” asked Shimmy. “Is Tzadok Hatzadik going to be in it?”

“Well, his name will be mentioned,” Aharon answered with a twinkle in his eye. “Follow me.” The two boys followed Aharon up a golden staircase and into a room where hundreds of people sat typing while wearing headsets.

“This is the transcription room,” Aharon explained. “This is where we listen to Rabbi Miller’s shiurim and convert them into text for the booklets.”

On the next several floors were the Yeshiva Bnei Avigdor rooms where people sat learning while a video of Rabbi Miller giving a Gemara shiur played on a giant screen.

A Most Unique Vending Machine

“We have a beis midrash like this for every misechta in Shas,” said Aharon. The boys were amazed at all of the floors and rooms in the building. There was a room full of vending machines where, instead of putting in money, you just had to say something about the niflaos haborei in the food and it gave you the food for free!

Of course, there was the printing room, where giant printers were spitting out Toras Avigdor booklets one after another. And there was the mail room, where thousands of booklets were being packed into boxes and being shipped all over the country. Finally, they reached the top floor.

“This is Rabbi Pinchas Wolhendler,” Aharon said. “He is the CEO of Toras Avigdor, and the editor of the booklets. And this is Rabbi Moshe Horowitz. He is our director, who runs the day-to-day operations and helps raise the money needed to put out Rabbi Miller’s Torah.”

Rabbi Wolhendler and Rabbi Horowitz came over and gave the two boys a warm shalom aleichem.

“Who is that?” asked Shimmy, looking at a man with a long beard who was weighing golden words on a jeweler’s scale.

“Ah, that is Rabbi Amichai Markowitz. He is the founder of Toras Avigdor. His job is to measure each holy word that Rabbi Miller said and make sure that they are treated with care and put in their proper place in the booklets.”

“Amazing!” Yitzy said. “I never realized how much work goes into these booklets!”

“But kinderlach,” Rabbi Wolhendler said. “I want you to think about something. Look at everything around you. Toras Avigdor, Yeshiva Bnei Avigdor, everything here is ‘Avigdor’, and it’s reaching tens of thousands of Yidden all over the world. In Parshas Vayakhel it says ‘Hashem has called by name Betzalel’

The Importance of a Good Name

“The Torah is telling us the importance of a good name. Rabbi Miller spent his whole life devoted to teaching Yidden how to serve Hashem and now, even after his death, his name is spreading further and further throughout Klal Yisroel.”

“Let’s get practical, boys,” Rabbi Markowitz said, looking up from his scale. “Every day this week, I want you to take five minutes to think about what you are doing for Hashem and how you are making your name greater by serving him.”

“Also,” chimed in Rabbi Horowitz. “At least once a day remind your father to sign up for a monthly donation to Toras Avigdor. Even \$10 a month gives you the tremendous zechus of spreading Rabbi Miller’s Torah to more and more people.” Have a Wonderful Shabbos and a Freilichen Adar!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, adapted from the teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

The Danger of Rehashing One’s Sins

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The Chazon Ish, (Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953) zt'l, once asked his sister, the Steipler Rebbetzin, to lock the door and not open it for anyone.

Soon afterwards, a girl knocked at their door. When no one answered, the girl began pounding on the door. The Steipler Rebbetzin said, "If I don't open the door, she will soon break the door down."

The Chazon Ish replied, "Tell her to go to Rav Wolf," who was then the principal of the girls' high-school.

Soon afterwards, Rav Wolf came to the Chazon Ish and told him the girl's story. She came from a religious family, but transgressed severe sins when she was in the army. Her sins made her feel extremely low, and she wanted to commit suicide.

The Chazon Ish replied, "Tell her to forget about what happened. She shouldn't think about her sins. Tell her that the Gemara says that thinking and rehashing in your mind the sins you've committed in the past is worse than the sin itself.



The Chazon Ish

She followed that counsel and calmed down. Eventually she merited marrying and building a beautiful Jewish family. It is doubtful this would have occurred had she remained stuck with her remorse. This is one of the areas where the yetzer hara tricks us. It's important to pass this difficult test, to forget about the past faults and just move on. Later you can make time for teshuvah.

Reprinted from the March 7, 2024 email of the Torah Times. Copied with permission from Machon Be'er Emunah.

When “Bad” Things Are “Good?”

Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman



Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz

One man, a student of Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz zt”l, the late Mashgiach in Kaminitz, remembers the time when the yeshiva was forced to flee and take up quiet residence in a small town under Russian occupation. With the Communists on the search for yeshiva students, tension was in the air. One day, the police abruptly entered the town, throwing everyone into a state of panic, including the yeshiva students.

When Rav Baruch Ber learned of his students’ reaction, he was disturbed. “We cannot lose ourselves,” he said. “We need to strengthen our emunah in Hashem.” As such, he established that they should recite each day the Thirteen Ani Maamin. And indeed, the students followed suit. Together, the yeshiva poured out their worried hearts to Hashem, trusting that He would take care of them.

A few days later, the police arrived and arrested the entire yeshiva. It was horrible, the officials taking the students in groups to prison. But while the police may have been able to take away the physical liberty of the students, they had no sway over squelching their spirit. In unison, the students hummed the encouraging words of Yeshaya HaNavi, “Utzu eitzar v’tufar daber davar v’lo yakum ki imanu Kel—They [our enemies] devise a scheme, speak a plan, and it will not be

successful, for our G-d is with us.” The quiet energy was palpable between the students, their spirits aflame despite the terrifying circumstances they were walking into.

The next thing they knew—they were transported to Siberia. Yet they sang their way to Siberia, lulling to themselves the same tune. Our enemies will attempt to harm us, but it will be to no avail, for Hashem is on our side.

Three days later, the Germans entered the town and massacred them all.

It is axiomatic that everyone G-d does is for our good. Something obviously good is easily felt as good. But what about something that is not readily apparent to be good? The answer is the same. Everyone G-d does is for our good. Nothing changed, except one thing. We don’t understand how it is good. It is good, and that is a fact. A fact that unto itself we can take comfort in. Our comprehension may be deficient and we cannot wrap our minds and hearts around it, but that doesn’t change the fact. It is good because G-d is good and knows what He’s doing. And do we really know what is for our good? Our understanding or lack thereof doesn’t change that truth. Hashem has a plan and He knows what that is, even if we’re in the dark about it.

The Tale of the Lubavitcher Chassid

A group of Chassidim were once traveling together on a train, each of them recounting the incredible mofsim (miraculous wonders) their Rebbes had done on behalf of others. A Lubavitcher chassid of the Rashab (Rav Sholom Dovber Schneerson) was amongst the group, though he remained sitting silently throughout it all. Finally, he was cornered with the question. “And you, what about your Rebbe?” they inquired. The chassid then began.

“I had a large sum of money and I wanted to invest it. I asked the Rebbe if a particular business was a good idea, and he said yes. Three days later, I went to him and asked the same question again, and he assured me that it was a good idea. So, I invested the money. “And so...” eagerly asked the surrounding chassidim, “what happened?” “I lost the whole amount.” The chassidim dropped their jaws. “So, where’s the mofes?” wondered the chassidim, confused. “I remained a chassid,” he replied.

When things don’t go our way, our task at that point is to remain a chassid of the Ribono Shel Olam. Whether we see how something is good or not, we know that Hashem is our Father and what He does for us is good.

It’s not always for us to see or understand. But it is always for us to hold steadfast in knowing that it is good because Hashem is good. That alone is our greatest comfort, even amidst the cloudiest and darkest of nights.

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