

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS BEHA'ALOSECHA 5782

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## Of Mentors and Cheesecakes

By Avrohom Birnbaum



One night, the phone rang in the Septimus home. “Hello, Mrs. Septimus, this is Shlomo Gissinger. A baalas teshuvah who baruch Hashem recently became frum will be getting married soon. I think it is vital to find someone who can teach her basic hashkafah, the halachos of tzniyus and the Jewish home.”

Mrs. Cirel Septimus suggested two very capable women whom she thought would be perfectly suited for the job. Rav Gissinger promptly followed up on the suggestion, contacting both women and arranging for this baalas teshuvah to learn with them and have them mentor her.

On Erev Shavuos of that year, the phone again rang in the Septimus home. This time, Mrs. Septimus’s daughter was calling. “Ma, I was walking near our house

and noticed Rabbi Gissinger walking around the neighborhood, apparently looking for a house.”

Inasmuch as the Septimus family had a long-standing relationship with the rav, Mrs. Septimus went outside, introduced herself, and offered to help. It turned out that the rav was seeking the basement home of Mrs. B\*, one of the mentors.

Rabbi Gissinger went to the house, knocked on the door, and personally presented her with a cheesecake in honor of Shavuos. He did the same for the other mentor as well.

It is mind-boggling that Rav Shlomo, who bore the burden of thousands of Yidden on his shoulders, had nothing better to do with his time on a busy Erev Shavuos afternoon than to personally deliver cheesecakes to two young women who taught one of the umpteen baalos teshuvah whom he and his rebbetzin had brought close to mitzvos. That was him; he had to personally show his hakaras hatov and he just did it in his humble way.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar/Shavuos 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Yom Tov Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book “At Any Hour: The Biography of Rabbi Shlomo Gissinger.”*

## The Beauty and Power of Humiliation

Humiliation has an extraordinary power behind it, allowing for one who has been humiliated to confer his/her blessing on someone in need – and achieve singular efficacy. The following story underscores this idea.

It was an evening dedicated to chizuk, strengthening, for women, covering the gamut of areas from emotional stress to spiritual ascendancy, with presentations rendered by well-known gifted speakers.

The lead speaker was an accomplished mechaneches, educator, who was both a knowledgeable and captivating speaker. She ascended to the lectern and patiently waited for the women to get settled, so that she could begin her talk.

Suddenly, a tall, thickset woman, whose wild eyes were filled with anger, came up to the lectern and began to berate the would-be speaker, “Years ago, you humiliated me in public. My life has been a miserable failure since that day. I will never get over the shame that you brought upon me. You are a murderer! You destroyed my life!”

She yelled all this in the presence of hundreds of women. The speaker calmly responded, "I am sorry that you feel this way, but I have no idea who you are. I do not remember ever meeting you and certainly not putting you to shame."

The attacker refused to be placated, "I remember vividly the day that you ruined my life. You will not get away with it. I want everyone to know what kind of evil person you are."

With these words, she grabbed the microphone from the speaker and screamed, "It is forbidden to listen to this woman. She murdered me by ruining my life. Her public humiliation of me destroyed whatever self-esteem I had. Look at me! She is responsible for the way I look!"

### **The Hostess Approached the Angry Woman**

By this time, one of the hostesses who had arranged the evening approached the angry woman and attempted to calm her down – to no avail. This woman was in serious pain, and she was not leaving. She pushed the woman away and continued with her harangue. The assemblage was torn.

On the one hand, the speaker was a distinguished, accomplished woman, who had reached out and helped many. On the other hand, the woman who was hurt came across as very angry, but otherwise sincere.

The speaker appeared devastated. She had just been publicly excoriated, humiliated, raked across the coals. She broke down in tears. Suddenly, she looked up and asked, "Please get Rachel."

The organisers called for Rachel, who, after a few minutes, walked up to the podium, "Rachel, you do not know me, but I am a good friend of your mother. Actually, we grew up together. I would like you to know that, during this moment of my travail, when I have sustained a terrible humiliation and did not respond, I am granted the power of efficacious blessing. I know that you have yet to be blessed with a child.

### **"May Hashem Bless You with a Child"**

"In the merit of the travail that I have just experienced and my lack of response to the baseless degradation that was hurled at me, may Hashem bless you with a child. Ana Hashem, please Hashem, may my shame be a zechus, merit, for Rachel bas..."

The woman's actions stunned all those within hearing distance. Whoever was privy to what had just taken place was flabbergasted. They had never seen such magnanimity. During these few moments, the accuser stood quietly.

One of the woman organisers asked her, "Do you know the name of the speaker?" (She felt that the speaker might be the victim of mistaken identity.) "I

do not know what her married name is today, but when I knew her, her last name was Cohen,” she replied.

When the organiser heard this, she took the microphone and declared for all to hear, “Our speaker’s maiden name was Chain – not Cohen. She must have a strong likeness to the woman who humiliated this woman years ago.”

When she heard this, the accuser thought for a moment and said, “I guess I made a mistake.” She neither apologised nor sought to make amends. She just walked off the stage and ignored everyone staring at her. Clearly, she has been the victim of serious emotional trauma which had left her slightly unhinged.

The entire room broke into an uproar over the extraordinary act of chesed which the speaker evinced. She maintained her cool; not only did she not lose it, but she had the presence of mind to realise that, at this moment, her humiliation could be used to help a woman in need.

One year later, Rachel bas... gave birth to a healthy child.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5782 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum’s Peninim on the Torah.*

# Coincidence and Miracles

By Rabbi David Bibi



**Israeli Air Force fighter mirage jet planes during the 1967 Six-Day War.**

In our class this past Shabbat on Yom Yerushalayim, we were discussing the miracles of the 6-day War and ventured into the Yom Kippur War.

One of the greatest legends relating to the 6-day war emanates from Rabbi Berel Wein. It is quoted by almost every Rabbi giving a class on the subject.

I know I have quoted it. It can be found in the writings of Rabbi Benjamin Blech, Rabbi. Chaim Jachter and Rabbi Efrem Goldberg who writes:

“This sweeping military victory against all odds continues to defy explanation and leaves experts confounded. R' Berel Wein tells the story of a cadet at West Point who asked why the Six-Day War was not part of the curriculum. The high-ranking teacher silenced the questioner and demanded he speak to him following the class. The soldier approached the general and again wondered why Israel's victory in the Six-Day War wasn't studied. The teacher explained that the Six-Day War is not studied because at West Point, they study strategy and tactics, not miracles.”

We all accepted this as fact. We must have forgotten that Rabbi Wein also writes, “Legends abound about great events and great people. We are loathe to accept just the dry facts as they are, and we attempt to embellish them with more romantic and exotic flavors that grant color and emotion to what would otherwise be just a dull historic event or biography.”

### **A Harmless Inspirational Story**

That is all of us except Rabbi Gil Student who writes: “This story seems to have come from R. Berel Wein, although I'm not sure whether he started it—he may have heard it from someone else. On its own, it is a harmless inspirational story that most people would happily repeat without confirming. I don't think less of any of the above rabbis for repeating it.

“However, it seems like something that can be checked easily so I reached out to the head of the Department of History at West Point Military Academy. Col. Ty Seidule kindly confirmed that they do, in fact, teach the Six Day War. He checked and found that it is included in the curriculum as far back as a 1977 textbook and is still taught today.

“He explained that in the 1967 war, the Israelis did almost everything right while the Arabs, particularly the Egyptians, did almost everything wrong. Col. Seidule designed and edited the current digital text used at West Point, The West Point History of Warfare, which includes a lesson on the 1967 and 1973 wars, written by Prof. George Gawrych of Baylor University.

### **G-d Acting within Nature to Achieve His Will**

“While the above story seems factually wrong, its theological premise can be rescued. The assumption is that the Six Day War was a supernatural miracle that cannot be explained in strategic terms. However, that is only one kind of miracle. In another kind of miracle, G-d acts within nature to achieve His will.”

**In our post Bet HaMikdash world**, we live in what the Rabbis call a time of Hester Panim – where Hashem hides His face. So, the miracles we experience relate

to the man behind the curtain pulling the strings. They relate to the miracles withing coincidence.

My friend Nathan at Sunday mornings class pointed out that we fail to understand the true meaning of coincidence. He pointed to its use in mathematics.

There are all types of lines. There are parallel lines that are lines on the same plane that never touch. There are perpendicular lines, lines that cross each other at ninety-degree angles. There are oblique lines, lines that cross that are not parallel or perpendicular, and there are coincident lines. Coincident lines are lines that lie exactly on top of each other.

### **The Definition of a Mathematical Coincidence**

Coincident lines are theoretically nearly impossible to occur accidentally. A mathematical coincidence is said to occur when two expressions with no direct relationship show a near-equality which has no apparent theoretical explanation.

Basically, there really needs to be someone behind the coincidence.

I think that's how we should look at coincidence.

We discussed that in reality the 6-Day War was a 6 minute war because during those first six minutes when the airfields of Egypt were all simultaneously destroyed it became nearly impossible for Egypt to send up any of the surviving planes.

### **The Israeli Air Force Takes Off with a Mission**

Rabbi Yosef Bitton writes: At 7:15 am on that Monday, the 26th of Iyar, all the planes of the Israeli air force took off with a mission: to destroy as many military planes and military airports of the Egyptian army. The Israeli planes were flying very low, 20 meters above the surface, and without electronic communication between them, to avoid being detected and attacked by anti-aircraft defense systems.

At 7.45am, Israel's air force attacked simultaneously eleven Egyptian military airbases, in Sinai, Suez, and El Arish. Israel first destroyed the runways with concrete-penetrating bombs so that no enemy planes could take off.

And once the runways were disabled, they destroyed the enemy planes on the ground. By 9:05 a.m. that morning, Israel had wiped out half of the Egyptian air force and rendered most of its runways inoperable.

The question is: how did this happen? Why the Egyptians did not shoot down the Israeli planes? How did it happen that all the Israeli air force planes reached their destination? Why they were not attacked by the Egyptian anti-aircraft artillery? What happened to the Egyptian planes, MIG, which Israel feared so much? How did it happen that all Israeli planes but one, returned safely to their bases?

### **Coincidences at that Very Hour**

**THE FIRST:** On the night of Sunday, June 4, 1967, the Egyptian Army High Command decided to make an inspection trip to the Sinai Peninsula to examine the

troops that were stationed there awaiting the orders to attack Israel. In that VIP delegation were, among others, the vice president of Egypt, the prime minister of Iraq, and the Egyptian minister of war. The Egyptians decided that the delegation would leave on June 5 at 7:00am, and subsequently the Egyptian military command suspended the activation of any type of artillery or anti-aircraft defense system between 7:00 and 8:00 in the morning, to prevent the planes of this important delegation from being attacked mistakenly by friendly fire.

Thus, while the Israeli planes were flying over the Sinai towards their destinations, the Egyptian defense systems were not operating. The order was that in an emergency situation the reactivation of the anti-aircraft artillery would have to be obtained directly from the Minister of War, who was at the time flying to Sinai.

At 7:45 in the morning, when the Israeli planes arrived at the enemy's military airbases, the Egyptian soldiers in charge of anti-aircraft defenses wanted to operate the anti-craft weapons but their commanders prevented that because they had strict orders from the Ministry of War. When they finally understood what was happening, it was too late. Israel had already destroyed half of the Egyptian air force.

**THE SECOND:** Knowing that the possibility of war was imminent, every morning the Egyptian air force carried out reconnaissance flights over the Sinai Peninsula with MiG 21 aircraft. These planes of Soviet origin were sleek and modern. To say the least, they were far superior to the old French Mirage planes that Israel had. These inspection flights began at 4:30 AM, and continued until 8:30 AM, with new shifts every 60 minutes.

The Egyptians had calculated that if Israel would ever choose to attack, it would be during the first hours of the morning, so they coordinated their flights for that eventuality. On Monday morning, the 26 of Iyar, 7:15 AM, the Israeli planes took off towards the Sinai Peninsula. At 7:30 AM, The MiG 21s should have been flying off the Egyptian air base en route to Sinai.

The confrontation between the two air forces would have been inevitable. Israel expected its planes to eventually find the MiGs –which is why Israel dispatched nearly 200 aircraft, leaving only twelve planes behind– predicting that many would be shot down by the powerful Egyptian air force.

**A 15 MINUTE DELAY:** At 7:30 AM, the Israeli planes were entering the Sinai, ready to face the MiGs and anti-aircraft artillery in the following 15 minutes. But that did not happen. The Israeli planes arrived undisturbed at 7:45am and were able to bombard the Egyptian runways, preventing their enemy planes from taking off, and they managed to destroy the MiG combat planes on the ground!

If the MiGs had taken off at 7:30 AM as usual, they would have discovered the Israeli fleet and alerted the anti-aircraft defense forces. And they surely would have destroyed dozens of Israeli Mirage planes in battle.

**What happened? Why the MiGs were not in the Air?**

That very day, the 7:30 AM shift was delayed. They did not leave on time because the officer in charge was late. Muhammad Sidiqi Mahmud, the Chief of the Egyptian Air Force, organized a party for his pilots the previous night (Sunday, June 4th) to raise their morale. The party which included much dancing, food, and drinks; extended late into the night and this had delayed the officer and pilots by a few critical minutes.

**THE THIRD:** Despite Israel's request not to enter the war before June 5th, Jordan joined Egypt and put its army under the command of an Egyptian general Riyadh, to be more effective in the coordination between the two forces. The Jordanians had very advanced military equipment, provided by England, and at 7.30 am the Jordanian radars were filled with small dots that indicated the invasion of the Israeli planes crossing into the Sinai Peninsula.

Immediately they transmitted the emergency alert to the Egyptians. But something extraordinary happened: the Egyptian officials were not able to decode the alert message that came repeatedly from Jordan; and they were so frustrated that they disconnected the communication with the Jordanian intelligence service for a few critical minutes.

What happened? Why the Egyptians could not decode the urgent Jordanian message?

This emergency message announcing the Israeli attack was transmitted with a secret code, which was changed frequently. The experienced radar operator in Aman, Jordan, who detected the Israeli aircraft sent the emergency code: "anab" (in Arabic means "grapes"). But the previous night the secret code had been changed, and the Jordanian agent "made a mistake", and used the code of the previous day, which could not be identified as authentic by the Egyptian officers. When the Egyptian agents realized the possibility of a human error, it was already too late: Israel had already destroyed the enemy airports and the Migs on the ground.

Three strange coincidences that allowed success in those first 6 minutes and those forts 60 minutes and extended throughout 6 days.

The bulk of the class reviewed how miracles happen every day, but for them to happen, we must acknowledge them and participate. Nothing happens above without turning the switch below.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bemidbar/Shabuot 5782 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*



# Bedside Vigil



**Rav Shlomo Halberstam, zt'l**

About a year before he passed away, the Bobover Rebbe, Rav Shlomo Halberstam, zs"l, became so ill that the rumor spread that he had already passed away. The Rebbe's physician, who was a religious Jew, spent many hours at his bedside. He tried everything medically possible to cure the Rebbe, but to no avail. As he walked out of the sickroom to where the Hasidim anxiously waited for news of their Rebbe's condition, he was disheartened.

The doctor told them that he regretted to inform them that he had tried everything in his power to heal the Rebbe but unfortunately did not see any chance of recovery. The Hasidim refused to give up hope, however, and continued praying outside the Rebbe's room, waiting for any updated reports of the Rebbe's condition.

Later that evening, a second doctor who was also treating the Rebbe emerged from the Rebbe's room and spoke to the Hasidim who were still keeping vigil. "It is hard to believe," the doctor told them, "but the Rebbe is getting better. He is expected to pull through this crisis and survive."

Needless to say, there was great joy and relief when the Hasidim heard this wonderful news. The first doctor who had seen the Rebbe earlier that day was present when the announcement was made of the Rebbe's improvement. Immediately, the Hasidim surrounded him and asked, "How is it possible that you told us just this morning that there was no hope for the Rebbe's recovery and now he is expected to live?"

The first doctor replied, “How can you compare my visit with the second doctor’s visit? I went in to try to heal the Rebbe early in the morning, while the other doctor went in many hours later. Do you know how many prayers and chapters of Tehillim were said for the Rebbe’s recovery between our two visits? Had I been the doctor to see the Rebbe after all those prayers were said, I could have been the messenger to help heal the Rebbe!”

We all know that the power of healing comes from Hashem and that doctors are only His messengers. But what we sometimes fail to realize is that we, with our heartfelt prayers, can help effect miraculous recoveries. (For Goodness’ Sake)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bemidbar/Shabuot 5782 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

## *Shalom Bayit, to What Degree?*



The main reason the ritual of *Sotah* is done is to alleviate a husband’s suspicions, to give him a sense of peace knowing his wife has remained faithful to him. The *kohen* would write an oath on parchment as well as the name of Hashem, and he would submerge it in water, so the ink can flow freely and dissolve into the water.

Hashem is willing to go so far as to erase His holy name for the sake of *shalom bayit*. We learn from this how important it is to have peace in the household, but to what degree? How far can one go to preserve the peace?

There was once a man who called Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein with a question. He explained that his wife tends to do things with care, though very slowly, and when he gets back from *kollel*, he has to wait a long time for lunch. At times, the

hunger is quite intense, and on this particular day, he was so hungry, that he went to a meat restaurant, simply unable to wait to eat.

“Today, of all days, when I got home, my wife says to me, ‘Dear husband, I made a surprise for you,’ and on the table is a plate of cheese blintzes, which I love.” The man added he was not supposed to eat in a restaurant, knowing his wife was preparing him lunch, and on top of that, not eating the blintzes would lead to his wife being even more upset. He called Rav Zilberstein asking for a *heter—halachic allowance* to eat the dairy blintzes citing *shalom bayit*.

### **A Small White Lie for Shalom Bayit is Okay**

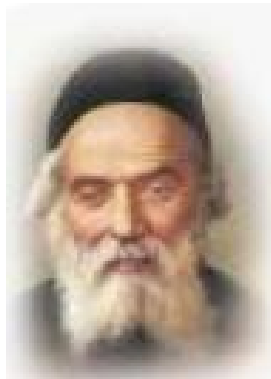
The Rav responded, “For *shalom bayit* you could tell her that you ate meat at a *Pidyon Haben*, even though there was no *Pidyon*. However, permitting dairy after meat is out of the question. A small white lie for *shalom bayit* is okay, but transgressing other prohibitions is not acceptable.”

Hashem may be willing to erase His name on behalf of *shalom bayit*, but we must be very careful not to take advantage and use “keeping the peace” as an excuse for serious transgressions.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Nasso 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

# **The Kohen's Brocha**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Levin**



The caretaker of the Beis Haknesses of Batei Nathan in Yerushalayim, Rav Avrohom Shimon Lipschutz, ZT”L, was married for twenty years, but did not have any children. He wrote to the Chofetz Chaim, ZT”L, asking for a Bracha, and enclosed some money in the envelope.

Weeks later he received a reply. The Chofetz Chaim wrote: "I received your letter. I don't usually give Brachos, as I don't see myself as worthy to do so. I also don't accept money, and I wanted to return it to you. However, from your letter, I discerned that you are a Talmid Chochom (Torah scholar), and I am afraid to embarrass a Talmid Chochom.

"Therefore, I gave your money to the yeshiva, and enclosed is a receipt. Additionally, I will give you a Bracha, a Birchas Kohen (a Kohen's blessing) that is my gift from Shamayim, that you should be blessed with a healthy child."

Within a year, Rav Lipschutz's wife gave birth to a healthy son, and together they went on to have numerous children.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5782 email of Torah Sweets*

## Proving that Hashem Runs the World



**The Rambam**

The Gaon Rav Leibel Kovner, zt"l, was the great-grandfather of the Brisker Rav. On the day he was hired for the position as the Rav of Kovna, one of the Maskilim of Kovna, who was pursuing a path of 'enlightenment' in Judaism, decided to test him.

He asked Rav Leibel if he can prove that Hashem runs the world.

Rav Leibel replied, "Sure! Please bring me a Rambam from the shelf."

The man brought over the Rambam, and Rav Leibel opened up to Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah. He read the words of the Rambam, "The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom, is to know that Hashem preceded everything, and He created everything and caused it all to be in existence."

Rav Leibel said, "There is your indisputable proof, right here in the words of the Rambam. Not only that, but even the Raavad, who constantly argues on every disputable point in the Rambam, remains silent in agreement.

Even all the commentaries who always ask questions on the Rambam, like the Magid Mishnah, the Kesef Mishnah, the Lechem Mishnah, and the Mishnah LaMelech, don't utter a single doubt on the words of the Rambam in this instance. Is there no

greater proof than this that Hashem runs the entire world?!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

## The Segulah for a Very Sick Child



Once, a woman was in desperate need of a Brachah for a very sick child, R"L, and she went to the Chofetz Chaim for help. After hearing her painful story, the Chofetz Chaim told her that if she accepted to do two things, everything would be fine with her child.

The woman said that she was willing to do and take on almost anything that might help her, and she waited anxiously for the Chofetz Chaim's instructions.

"The first thing you must agree to do", said the Chofetz Chaim, "is to make sure that the Shabbos table is set with a tablecloth and Leichter on Friday before

Chatzos, midday.” The woman was relieved. That wasn’t too difficult, but she waited for the second instruction.

“Second”, continued the Chofetz Chaim, “from the time the candles are lit, there can be no more work done in the house by anyone.” The woman readily agreed, and as a result of her new efforts L’Kavod Shabbos, she saw the miraculous and complete recovery of her child! The Chofetz Chaim taught her that Shabbos is indeed the source of all Brachah!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

# Break Your Limits

By Rabbi Yaakov Ash



With its abundance of retirement homes for the elderly, Miami Beach, Florida is often called with macabre humor, “G-d's Waiting Room.” Retirement isn't as notorious as heart disease or cancer, but it's still a major killer. Studies show that people who don't retire but stay involved in their work, at the level that befits their age, have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their golden years.

Our Sages teaches that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last moment. The Midrash moreover tells the story of the Roman Emperor Hadrian.



He was once passing through the city of Tiberius, in the land of Israel. Hadrian noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig tree.

“Saba, Saba!” called out Hadrian. “Old man, why are you working so hard? When you were young, you had to make a living. Now it's time to relax. Anyway, you'll never live to enjoy the fruits of your neighbors!”

The old man retorted, “My task is to accomplish whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as He sees fit.”

### **How Old Are You Saba?**

“Tell me, please. Saba,” continued Hadrian, “how old are you?”

“I'm 100 years old.”

“100 years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?”

The old man had what to answer to that too. “If I merit to eat the fruits of my labor, that will be well and good. And if not, my efforts will benefit my children, just as I have benefited from the toil of my forebears.”

“If you ever eat those figs that you're planting,” Hadrian said, “surely come and let me know.”

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man filled the basket with figs and traveled up to the palace. “The emperor wishes to see me,” he announced to the guards. The guards followed suit, and led him before Hadrian's throne.

“Who are you?” asked Hadrian.

### **A Basketful of Figs as a Gift for the Emperor**

“Does the Emperor remember how years ago, in Tiberius, you passed by an old man tending his figs. G-d has granted me the pleasure of eating those figs that I planted, and I brought the Emperor a basketful as a gift.”

Hadrian turned to his servants and said, “Take the figs from this elderly man and refill his basket with gold dinars.”

His courtiers questioned the emperor's generosity. “Why such a lavish gift for an old Jew?”

Hadrian replied, “His Creator honored him with longevity. Is it not proper that I too should accord him honor?”

G-d has no waiting room. Every moment of our lives is a gift that must be maximized to the limit.

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