

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TZAV 5785

Volume 16, Issue 28 14 Nisan 5785/April 12, 2025

Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

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## Green Light, Red Light

By Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov



**Rav Yosef Elyashiv**

Let me share with you a story about R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l. One day, he entered a taxi, and the driver, noticing the rabbi's beard, immediately turned to him with a question. "Rabbi," he said, "I've been wondering, why is religion so restrictive? You can't do this, you can't do that—you can't do anything! What's the point of all these restrictions? I just don't understand this whole religious thing."

R' Elyashiv, sensing the driver's confusion, decided not to answer immediately. He waited patiently, and as they drove along, he said nothing. Then,

as the cab came to a stop at a red light, Rabbi Elyashiv saw an opportunity and turned to the driver. "Let me ask you something," he began. "How do we know when we will reach our destination?"

The driver responded, "It will take some time, of course. We have to stop at a few more red lights along the way."

Rabbi Elyashiv then asked, "Why do we have to stop at these red lights? Who decided we need them? If there were no red lights, wouldn't we get to our destination faster?"

The driver, now perplexed, replied, "Rabbi, you know very well that red lights are essential! Without them, there would be accidents. We need them to ensure everyone knows when to go and when to stop. They are there for our safety."

Rabbi Elyashiv smiled. "May your ears hear the words coming out of your mouth." He continued, "Just as we need red lights to protect us on the road, so too do we need restrictions in the Torah. These limitations are not to hinder us, but to protect us. Without boundaries, if everyone did as they pleased, there would be chaos and harm. The red lights keep us safe; the Torah's restrictions safeguard our well-being."

He turned to the driver with a gentle tone and explained, "Now do you see why the Torah gives us these restrictions? It is not to limit us, but to help and protect us. The Torah's guidance is like the red lights—it keeps us from harm and ensures our spiritual safety."

What may initially seem restrictive is, in fact, a form of protection, safeguarding us from dangers we might not even recognize. The Torah, much like the red lights on the road, is there to guide us and ensure we reach our ultimate destination safely.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va'eira edition of the TorahAnyTime Newsletter.*

# **The World and the Mitzvos**

**By Aharon Spetner**

Avrohom Yitzchok Stern headed to Stern's Bakery after cheider. Totty had to work late, but didn't want to miss learning together, so today they were going to learn together in Totty's office. As Avrohom Yitzchok approached the bakery he looked over at the new building that had recently been built across the street. There was a long line of people waiting to enter.

“GRAND OPENING: Pete’s Kosher Bake Shoppe Extreme!” read a brand-new sign in front of the building. “The ONLY place for Orthodox Jews to buy their baked goods!”



*Illustrated by Miri Weinreb*

Avrohom Yitzchok frowned. He didn’t like the sound of this. He quickly crossed the street and entered Stern’s Bakery. Waving to the cashier, he headed through the “staff only” door, past the giant ovens where challos were being baked, around the chocolate chip cookie and donut machines, and through the door to the next room.

Avrohom Yitzchok didn’t even stop to look at the different experimental pastries being made in the experiment room as he quickly rushed towards the hallway leading to the corporate offices.

“Hi Avrohom Yitzchok, your father is waiting for you,” said Totty’s executive assistant cheerfully.

“Thanks,” said Avrohom Yitzchok as he walked into Totty’s office.

“Avrohom Yitzchok, what’s wrong?” said Totty, looking up from his desk and noticing his son’s worried face.

Avrohom Yitzchok told Totty about Pete’s Kosher Bake Shoppe Extreme.

“Totty, the sign said that they have the best pastries in the world,” he said. “And they have seven experiment rooms and they say that they managed to invent a

donut that only has half a hole in it! Totty, they're going to put you out of business. What are you going to do???"

"Avrohom Yitzchok, sit down," Totty said warmly. "First of all, parnasah is in the hands of Hashem. He is the One who decides whether or not my business succeeds, not some goy named Pete who decided to sell his used car dealership and open a kosher bakery."

"But Totty, donuts with half a hole! How are you going to compete with that?"

"Open your Chumash to Parshas Bo," said Totty. "I want to show you something."

Avrohom Yitzchok opened his Chumash and Totty pointed to a posuk.

"Hachodesh hazeh lachem rosh chadashim," Totty read. "This month is the first of the months for you. Now why is that? Rosh Hashanah is in Tishrei. Now turn to the beginning of the Chumash and look at the very first Rashi."

Avrohom Yitzchok turned to Parshas Bereishis.

"Rashi says that the Torah really could have started with 'Hachodesh hazeh lachem'," he said.

"Exactly, said Totty. "The Torah started off by telling us how Hashem created the world, but it really could have skipped until the first mitzvos were given to Klal Yisroel.

"Now, before I continue, I want you to take a look at this."

To Avrohom Yitzchok's surprise, Totty pulled out a bag with the words "Pete's Kosher Bake Shoppe Extreme" on it and emptied it out onto his desk. But instead of the delicious-looking pastries that had been advertised, a few burnt pieces of dough was all that was there.

Someone knocked on Totty's office door.

"Come in!" called Totty.

"Mr. Stern," said a young man, opening the door. "Pete's Kosher Bake Shoppe Extreme just filed for bankruptcy. The store is closed and they are out of business."

"Thank you for the good news, Heshy," Totty said, before turning back to Avraham Yitzchok. "You see, a used car salesman can't just build a building, call it a bakery, and expect to succeed. Pete didn't know anything about baking pastries. All of his 'bakers' were just retired mechanics, and his 'experiment rooms' didn't even have any ovens in them. That's not really a bakery, is it?"

"So too, Hashem created the world, but there would have been no point in it had we not been given the mitzvos. Just like a bakery is not a bakery if they don't actually bake bread and pastries, this world is not a world if there are no mitzvos for the Yidden to do.

"And that's why, just like Rosh Hashanah and Sefer Bereishis are about the creation of the world, Chodesh Nissan and Sefer Shemos are about the creation of the true purpose of the world."

Avrohom Yitzchok smiled. “Thank you Hashem for giving our family parnasah. And thank you Hashem for creating the universe and giving us mitzvos which make this world a successful creation.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*

## **The Karliner Rav and the Poor Widow**

A widow once came to Rav Aharon of Karlin zy”a and cried that her daughter was engaged but the groom warned that if he was not given the dowry on time, he would not go ahead with the wedding. Rav Aharon immediately gave her his Shabbos candlesticks. She sold them for a lot of money, which she used for the dowry.

A few days later, she came back and said that her daughter was unwilling to get married without a nice wedding dress. The Rebbe got up and went over to the drawer where he kept all of his money. He had exactly 18 silver coins saved up, and he gave it all to her.

After she left, the Rebbitzen walked in and asked, “Aren’t there at least 18 poor families in our town? You could have given one silver coin to each poor family and thereby benefited many people. Why did you give it all to one woman for a need that doesn’t seem all that important?”

Rav Ahaon replied, “When I stood by the drawer, I had the same thought. But I told myself: If I really care about those other families so much, why didn’t I think about them until now? Why didn’t I give them this money yesterday?”

“I then understood that these thoughts were coming from the yeitzer hara. It is true that he may have had a good point, but I don’t want to listen to the yeitzer hara even if he is right, as this certainly won’t lead to any good outcome.”

This can be explained with a moshol: The lion, the king of the jungle, got sick, and all of the other animals searched for a cure for his illness. They knew about a certain type of grass that could be used to heal the lion, but it only grew inside tiny holes in stones and none of them could reach it.

Finally, the snake said that he could wiggle into the small hole and take out the grass. The lion, however, would not agree. He said, “I would take the medicine from the hand of any other animal but not from the snake because he will mix his poison into the medicine...”

*Reprinted from The Way of Emunah – The Collected Torah Thoughts of Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum – Parshas Pekudei 5785*

# A Special Story of Mezhibuzh



*The historic old shul of Mezhibuzh*

This story was related by Rav Yosef of Mezhibuzh in the name of his grandfather, the Degel Machaneh Efraim zy”a, and explains why the Baal Shem Tov zy”a chose to live and set up his holy court in the city of Mezhibuzh.

In the city of Mezhibuzh, there lived a distinguished man named R’ Berish Bialis. He was a talmid chochom and upstanding person who spent his entire day learning. He was a wealthy man but he did not personally run his business. Rather, his wife ran their large fabric store while he sat and learned.

At that time, the Baal Shem Tov’s fame was starting to spread. Rav Berish, however, was a misnaged and he never went to see the Besh”t, who was living at that time in the city of Brody. His wife, on the other hand, traveled occasionally to Brody to purchase fabric, and she would go to visit the Baal Shem Tov. She gave him gifts and a lot of money, and he blessed her with success. The brachos were fulfilled and she got wealthier and wealthier.

One day, the local Poritz decided that he could make some money by selling the Rabbanus of the city. He announced that whomever paid him the most would be the Rov. Rav Berish’s wealthy wife jumped at this opportunity and purchased the

Rabbanus of Mezhibuzh for her husband for a large sum of money. The Poritz gave her a contract saying that her husband was the sole Rabbi of the city, and he assumed the position.

She built a new shul with a beautiful beis medrash for her husband and arranged a festive and memorable Chanukas Habayis ceremony, which impressed all of the residents of the city. Just a few days later, after the people began davening in the new shul, Rav Berish became sick. His wife brought in expert doctors to treat him, but his condition got worse by the day and he appeared to be near death.

Mrs. Bialis decided that he must travel to Brody to obtain the Baal Shem Tov's bracha. She informed her husband that whenever she was in Brody, she met many people who said that whenever a sick person's name was given to the Baal Shem Tov, he would daven for that person, and he would be healed. Rav Berish, however, was unconvinced.

He said, "Even if I would know for certain that this illness was going to kill me, I would not go to the Baal Shem Tov because I don't believe in him at all!" Days passed and the sickness got even worse. Rav Berish told his wife, "If you believe in the Baal Shem Tov, you can go to him yourself and ask him to daven for me."

At first, she did not want to go and leave her husband alone. However, when she saw how sick he had become, she agreed to go alone, on condition that he promise to do whatever the Besh't would say. He gave his word that he would obey whatever the Baal Shem Tov asked of him. She quickly traveled to the Besh't and asked him to daven for her husband.

The Baal Shem Tov told her, "For this, I personally have to go to Mezhibuzh."

He asked her to hire a carriage for him, and she did. When he got to Mezhibuzh, he went straight to Rav Berish's house and saw several men walking out the front door. He asked them, "How is the patient doing?"

They replied, "He is on his deathbed." When the Besh't heard this, his face crumbled and he remained in his carriage for several minutes, deep in thought. He then got down from the carriage and entered Rav Berish's home. He opened the door and placed his hand on the mezuzah. He stood in the doorway for several minutes, looking at the face of the sick man.

He then said, "Rav Berish, is this how you greet a guest? It would be polite to give me shalom!" Rav Berish began to lift his right hand in greeting, but the Besh't told him, "It is not polite to give shalom while you are laying down."

Rav Berish exerted himself, little by little, until he was in a sitting position. The Baal Shem Tov then took his hand off of the mezuzah and went to stand next to the bed. He then pulled up a chair and sat down. After a few minutes, he said, "Rav Berish, there are two Heavenly complaints against you.

The first complaint is why you became a Rov. Why do you need to be a Rov? You can solve this problem by giving up the Rabanus. The second complaint is that

you abandoned the old bais knesses. It is true that you built a new one, however the old bais knesses, where people davened for close to 300 years, came with a complaint against you for leaving it abandoned.”

The Baal Shem Tov continued, “You should know that the old bais knesses is situated exactly opposite the Bais Hamikdosh Shel Maaloh. It is only proper that people should daven there. Therefore, the only solution is for me to move to Mezhibuzh and set up my court here.”

Rav Berish agreed to give up the Rabbanus, and he was healed from his sickness. The Baal Shem Tov moved to Mezhibuzh and davened in the old shul, which is known until today as the Bais Medrash of the Baal Shem Tov.

*Reprinted from The Way of Emunah – The Collected Torah Thoughts of Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum – Parshas Pekudei 5785*

# Bedtime Stories

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



**The Pnei Menachem**

Little Leah was growing up in a Chassidishe mishpachah. Like most five-year-olds, she had her little routines, and when she woke up in the middle of the night, she always knew where to go—to the comforting embrace of her parents’ bedroom. That’s where the world felt safe, where she could drift back to sleep, enveloped by their presence.

One cold, dark night, Leah woke up and ran to her parents' room, only to find it... empty. The beds were untouched, the lights were off, and there wasn't a trace of her beloved father and mother. The house felt eerily quiet. She called out, "Mommy! Tatty!" but was answered with silence.

A wave of fear gripped her. Where could they be? She began wandering through the house, her small feet padding against the cold floor, her sobs growing louder as she searched each room. Yet her parents weren't anywhere to be found. The house that had always been her haven now felt unfamiliar and vast. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she whispered to herself, "I just need someone... someone to help me fall asleep."

What Leah didn't know was that her parents had stepped out to a wedding, deciding to quickly run and say mazel tov. They had arranged for a neighbor to check in on Leah, but at this late hour, the neighbor wasn't there. Leah was alone. Then her eyes caught sight of a small piece of paper stuck to the fridge. On it was written a phone number.

Leah had heard her parents talk about this number once. It was a number they said was only for the direst of emergencies. The kind of number you call when there's no one else to turn to. With trembling hands, Leah picked up the phone and dialed. The phone rang. And rang. And rang. Each ring felt endless to the frightened little girl. Finally, just as she was about to hang up, someone picked up.

A warm, calm voice came through the receiver. "Who is this?" the voice asked gently. Leah took a shaky breath. "It's Leah. I'm home alone, and I'm scared. My parents aren't here."

There was a pause on the other end. Then the voice spoke again, full of reassurance. "Don't worry, Leah. Your parents will be home soon. You'll be okay."

"But I'm scared," Leah countered. "And when I'm scared, my parents usually tell me stories. That's what helps me fall asleep."

The man on the other end of the line, with much sensitivity and warmth, didn't hesitate. "Then I'll tell you a story." And he did. He told her a beautiful story, weaving a world of comfort and imagination for the little girl. Her tears slowed; her breathing calmed. And then, as he began the second story, the line grew quiet. Leah was finally falling asleep, clutching the phone, her fears fading into the night. Now relaxed, she hung up the phone and went back to bed.

The next morning, Leah ran to her parents, her face alight. "Mommy, Tatty," she exclaimed, "I was scared, but I called the number on the fridge, and the man told me stories until I fell asleep."

Her parents exchanged puzzled glances. "What number?" Leah pointed to the refrigerator, and when they saw the number, their faces went pale. That number served as a direct line to one person: their Rebbe, the Pnei Menachem, the Admor of Ger. They asked Leah to repeat what happened, hoping it was a child's dream.

But Leah's details were too vivid, too real. Their little daughter, in her moment of need, had called the Rebbe himself. Overcome with a mix of awe and embarrassment, they rushed to the Rebbe's house to apologize. How could they have allowed such a thing to happen? The Rebbe simply smiled, his face radiating joy. "There's no need to apologize," he said. "Baruch Hashem, the stories worked. That's what matters."

The Pnei Menachem taught them what it means to truly care for another Yid. Even a little girl in the middle of the night. Even when she calls unexpectedly. Because to him, every Yid mattered, no matter how small. And Leah? She would carry that night in her heart forever, the night a tzaddik made her feel safe, simply by telling her a story.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel 5785 email of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "One for the Books")*

# Defender of Orphans

**By Rabbi Ron Yitzchok Eisenman**



My father-in-law [Binyamin Zev ben Shlomo/Willi Herzka] was one of those saved from the Holocaust via the Kindertransport.

The Kindertransport was a rescue operation that brought nearly 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi-occupied Europe to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940.

Although, thankfully, with the help of Hashem, he would be reunited with his parents after the war, he never forgot the hardships of being without parents, and he was a source of comfort to the underdog for the rest of his life.

This one story illustrates his kindness.

It was back in the 1970s.

The three Goldman boys had lost their father suddenly over six months ago.

The boys, Baruch, 15, Yosef, 13, and Moishe, 11, were now faced with the prospect of coming to Shul every Shabbos without a father.

Each Shabbos, as they entered the Shteibel in Queens where their father davened, they knew that all eyes were staring at them.

The necessity for the boys to recite Kaddish for their father complicated the situation.

Men would give them instructions on how and when to say Kaddish with an authoritative and commanding voice.

"Say Kaddish louder," one man would say, and a second later, another "expert" would demand, "Do you have to shout the Kaddish? Do you think we are deaf?"

Maybe the boys sometimes behaved like boys; maybe they argued a bit too loudly; however, they were orphans.

Yet, few, if any, of the men in the Shul ever bothered to take any of them under his wing and show love and compassion.

That is except for one man.

Willie, as he was known, knew the pain of being an orphan.

He was separated from his parents at age nine and was placed on a Kindertransport, which transferred him from his home in Vienna and brought him to a non-Jewish home in England.

He ended up in an orphanage in England where he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah alone, being taunted by some of the older boys and not knowing if his parents were alive or dead.

Willie watched over the three boys with compassion, becoming their official protector.

Willie was a physically powerful man, able to lift air conditioners- which he installed and maintained for his livelihood- with his bare hands.

His arms were muscular, and when there was a need for someone to do Hagbah on a particularly heavy Torah, all eyes turned to Willie.

One day, one of the men felt the younger of the three had overstepped his boundaries, and in a rage, he threw the boy out of Shul as he stated, "And don't you dare ever come back!"

Willie observed the entire incident and ran after the young orphan.

When he caught up to him, he put his large arm around his shoulder and guaranteed his protection if he agreed to come back with him to Shul.

"I know how you feel; I was also once in an orphanage. I know the pain of loneliness."

The boy agreed and returned with his defender to Shul.

My father-in-law then announced, "I know how it feels to be without parents. Our Torah commands us to be extra compassionate with his Yesomim. For now on, whoever bothers any of these three boys will have to answer to me!"

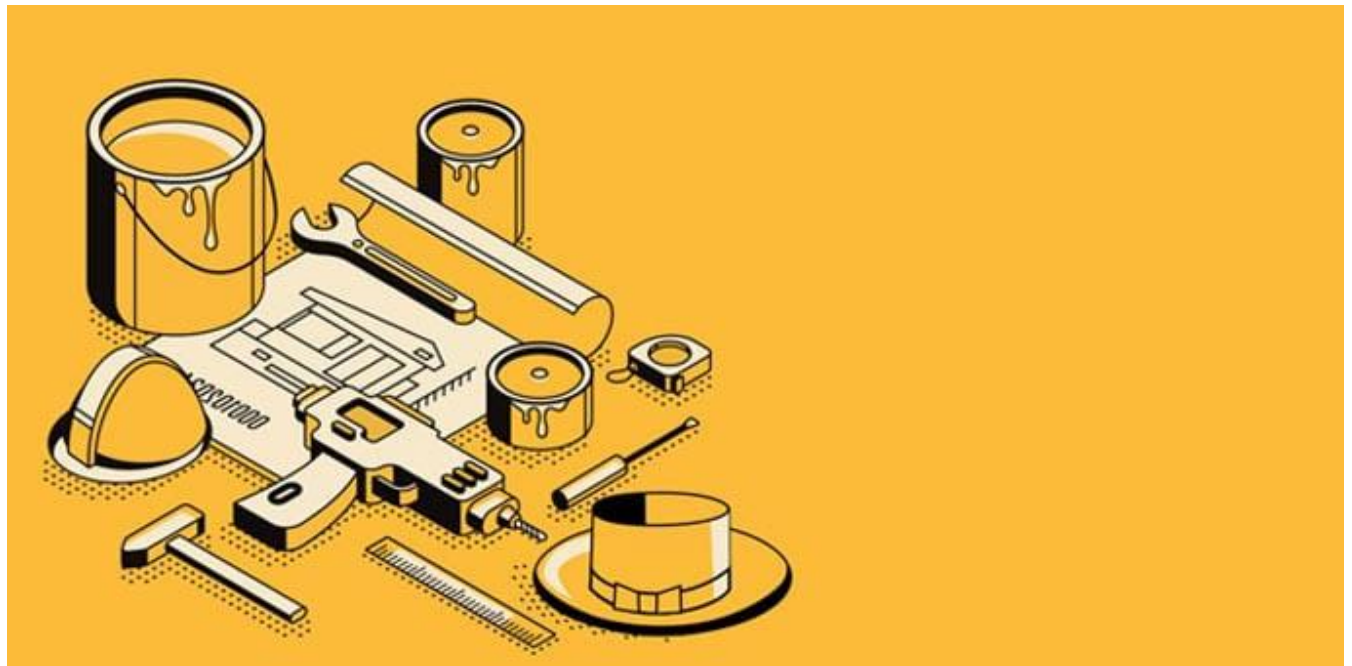
That young man remained in Shul and went on to become a well-known Rav who was known for his compassion and kindness.

Yehei Zichro Baruch [on the 19<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit of Mr. Herzka.]

*Reprinted from the March 24, 2025 Short Vort*

# The "Forced" Blessing

By Asharon Baltazar



**Art by Rivka Korf Studio**

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rothenberg-Alter will forever be remembered as the brilliant founder of the Ger Chassidic dynasty.

Married to Feigele, daughter of Reb Moshe Lipshitz, a wealthy magnate from Warsaw, Yitzchak Meir was then known as the "Genius of Warsaw." After several years of intense study, he founded a yeshivah, admitting only students who were exceptionally learned and sharp. Masterfully taught, his classes required a keen

mental grasp coupled with a profound knowledge of Torah. Not everyone was able to understand.

Offers for rabbinic positions poured in but he rejected them all. Even when his father-in-law suffered severe setbacks in business and thus lost all of his wealth, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir refused to accept the yoke of rabbinic leadership. He never paused his learning or teaching and relied on the meager income from his occasional role as a bookbinder.

With time, the room housing his yeshivah became too small. Students continued to show up at the doorstep, wanting to learn from the famed rabbi, and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir began to consider expanding. Ultimately, he decided not to. Transplanting the entire yeshivah for renovations, even temporarily, constituted an unwarranted interruption of Torah learning.

Yet the growing crowds of students found it more and more difficult to wedge themselves into the tight confines of the study hall. One day, the rabbi was heard to say, “If only someone was capable of completing construction on a larger space in a single day, I would be immensely pleased.”

To everyone, it was an impossible dream. But not for Reb Yekel.

Reb Yekel began to brainstorm and an idea quickly evolved.

In Warsaw, there lived a certain wealthy contractor. He was not a Chassidic man, nor was he particularly G-d-fearing. Reb Yekel met with him and described, in dramatic terms, the cramped yeshiva conditions. Though he'd heard of the “Genius of Warsaw,” the contractor remained unmoved by the yeshivah's circumstances. He calculated a lengthy timeframe and a high cost on a sheet of paper, handed it to Reb Yekel, and waited for a response.

Reb Yekel gave it a fleeting glance, and handed it back with a nod, and said, “Remember, the timeframe isn't to be taken into account.”

The contractor's eyebrows rose uncertainly. “Meaning?”

“Meaning,” said Reb Yekel without batting an eye, “the work has to be finished in one day.”

The contractor nearly fell off his chair. Fixing Reb Yekel with a frosty stare, he said, “No one can finish this work quicker than me. It is impossible.”

The harsh tone didn't sway Reb Yekel, and he returned the stare. “Tell me, how many years are you married?”

Caught off-guard by the personal question, the contractor stammered a number.

“And children?”

At those words, the contractor deflated. “Sadly, none.” His voice trembled.

“Well then,” said Reb Yekel enthusiastically. “We have a deal. You renovate the yeshivah within 24 hours and the great rabbi, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, will bless you with offspring!”

(Perhaps it's too obvious to note, but Reb Yekel never spoke with Rabbi Yitzchak Meir about such an arrangement. This was a spontaneous promise on Reb Yekel's part.)

A spark of hope ignited in the contractor's eyes. Hands were extended and shaken, and a date was set.

Within days, the final stages of the plans were drawn up and palettes of building materials sprung up around the yeshiva. The contractor marshalled an army of workers. When everything was ready, Reb Yekel told Rabbi Yitzchak Meir that construction was to start the following day, exactly in the manner he prescribed—to be completed in a single day.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir's class took place somewhere else the following morning. In turn, the workers swarmed the tiny yeshivah and began renovations at a rapid clip. Orchestrated by the contractor, walls were torn down, cement was mixed and spread, and new floors were planted. Despite the brisk pace, the work stretched throughout the entire day and continued into the night, not winding up until the early hours of the morning. When only an hour remained to the 24-hour deadline, the windows were finally installed. Even as the last few minutes ticked closer, workers were still seen fussing over details.

Where a pitiful room once stood, a magnificent hall, amply furnished, now supplanted its place. One would be hard-pressed to say it was built in just one day.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir arrived and immediately toured the unrecognizable structure, admiring it from every angle. "Amazing," he kept muttering. "Absolutely amazing."

Reb Yekel seized the chance to reveal his impulsive promise to Rabbi Yitzchak Meir.

"Rabbi, I agree it's indeed beautiful, but the price is quite expensive! We pledged—in your name—a son for the contractor."

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir's delightful expression curled into a thoughtful frown. For a minute, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir was silent, seemingly lost in thought.

"Hashem will help him," he finally declared, and stepped inside his new yeshivah building.

And indeed, within the year, the contractor invited Rabbi Yitzchak Meir to act as sandak at his son's circumcision. Adapted from *Sichat Hashavua* #997

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org*