

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS MISHPATIM 5783

Volume 14, Issue 23 – 27 Shevat 5783/February 18, 2023

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

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How Can You Solve a Serious Problem with 18 Cents

By Rabbi Mordechai Levin



In the early 1980s, a series of tragedies hit the Jewish community of Far Rockaway, NY. Although there were several suggestions offered as to how the community should respond to the tragedies, they could not unite on one mutually acceptable idea.

A delegation was sent to the Bluzhover Rebbe (Rabbi Yisroel Spira), ZT"l, 1889-1989, to seek his advice. The group representative began relating to the weak

and frail Rebbe all the tragedies that had recently befallen their community. The concern and anguish on the face of the Rebbe was clear to all present. A few predetermined suggestions were presented; every morning each Jew should give 18 cents to tzedakah, or all should accept not to talk during Chazaras Hashatz.

The Rebbe rejected each suggestion: can you solve such a serious problem with 18 cents? Can you ensure that no one will talk? An uncomfortable silence ensued. One attendee asked, “And what should we do?” Again silence.

Then the Rebbe lifted his eyes skyward and said, “We have a Father in Heaven, and when you beg from a Father, He responds.”

The Rebbe was asked, “Should we gather all the shuls together for a Yom Tefilla, a Day of Prayer?”

The Rebbe looked at the questioner with sharp eyes and said, “Don’t make a circus. Sit in your regular place in Shul and talk to the Ribbono Shel Olam like you are talking to a Father. Pour out your heart to Him and He will answer.

Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5783 email of Torah Sweets.

The Disappointing Shabbos Guests

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

The Meller* family of Ramat Gan, Israel, wanted to be involved in kiruv, helping Jews become more observant. They phoned a kiruv organization and offered to host unaffiliated guests for a Shabbos meal. The organization evaluated their request and decided to send a couple, a doctor and his wife, to the Mellers for dinner on the following Friday night.

A Most Pleasant Meal

The meal went well, the food was good, the conversation was pleasant, and the divrei Torah were meaningful. The couple was encouraged to come again, and a few weeks later the middle-aged doctor and his wife were invited again, and a third time. Each time when the meal was over, the Mellers, who lived on the fourth floor, escorted their guests to the stairway and said goodbye in the hall.

After their fourth visit, though, both couples walked down to the street together and said their goodbyes outside the building. Before the Mellers started

back to their apartment, they were shocked to see their guests flag down a taxi. They were terribly disappointed. Obviously, they were not reaching this couple. How could they openly violate the Shabbos just moments after they left a religious home?

To the Mellers, it seemed to be a clear slap in the face. After Shabbos they called the organization and reported that they were obviously not making progress if this couple didn't see anything wrong with taking a taxi right in front of their eyes on Shabbos. They asked to be set up with other guests, and their request was approved.

A year later, the kiruv organization called the Mellers to notify them of the sudden death of the doctor who had been their first Shabbos guest. The representative told them that the doctor's wife had really enjoyed their visits, and suggested that the Mellers pay a shivah call. The Mellers were saddened at the news, for the doctor had been a pleasant person, and they went to the shivah house.

“We Couldn't Get to the Hospital in Time”

While they were speaking with the widow, they asked if the doctor had been ill. “Not really,” she replied. “It's just that this time we couldn't get to the hospital in time.”

“What do you mean, ‘this time’?” Mrs. Meller asked.

The widow answered that her husband had died of his second heart attack. “Do you remember the last time we ate at your house?” she asked. “When we all walked down the stairs, my husband realized that he was having a heart attack, so luckily he saw a taxi and flagged it down, and we rushed to the hospital. We got there in time. With the second heart attack, we were too late.”

The Mellers were shocked as they realized they had jumped to a totally incorrect conclusion. And because of their misjudgment, they had lost contact with the family and had also lost the opportunity to bring the doctor and his wife closer to Yiddishkeit (Illuminations of the Maggid)

Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.

Our Father in Heaven

The Admor, Horav Yochanan, zl, m'Rachmenstrivka, had a large following of chassidim. These were successful men who were blessed with great material bounty. Conversely, the following of his brother, the Admor of Horav David, zl, m'Tolna, was not as large, and, for the most part, it was comprised of chassidim, many of whom lived in abject poverty.

The Tolna explained the reason for this disparity: “My brother has a large following. As a result, one must wait to get in to petition his blessing. Even when a chassid finally enters his room, he is only permitted to stay for a minute. Therefore, when a chassid leaves, he feels that he has waited hours just to see the Rebbe for a minute. He perceives that he has not even been able to express his problems adequately.

“Thus, when he leaves, he says to himself, “I have no one to rely on other than my Father in Heaven. He then goes home and davens to Hashem –Who listens to him.

“I have a much smaller following, which allows my chassidim to spend time with me, discussing all their challenges. When I give my blessing, they mistakenly think that it is sufficient. Thus, they do not pray to Hashem. Without prayer, the blessings I give have no efficacy. The supplicant must personally plead his case to the Almighty. אימרמש

Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5783 email of Peninim on the Torah.

Never Too Late to Celebrate a Kiddush

Reb Shlomo Fisher of Bnei Brak celebrated the engagements of two of his daughters in one year. One daughter was 32, the other was 29.

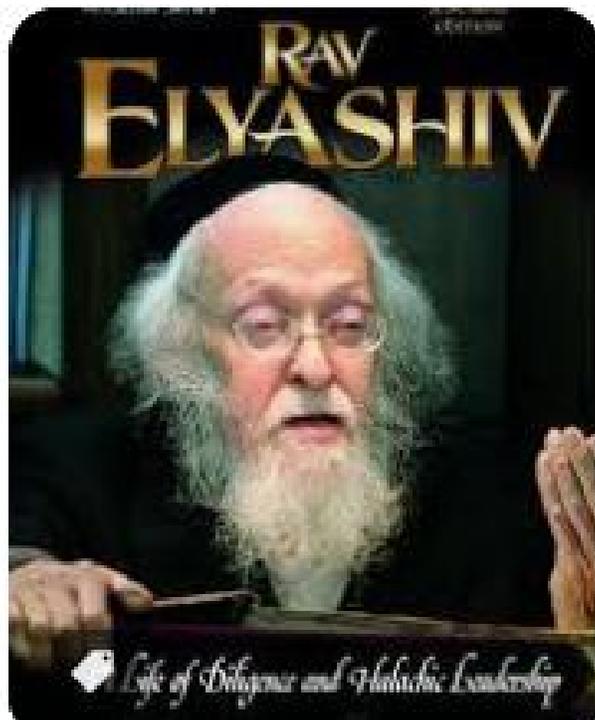
This is what happened: Reb Shlomo remembered that he had never made a kiddush for these two daughters. One was born on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, and the other was born three days before Rosh Hashanah. These are busy times, and he didn't manage to organize a kiddush for them.

He thought that perhaps because there wasn't a kiddush for his daughters, they were having difficulty finding their shidduch. So, one year on Simchas Torah, he bought chasan Bereishis, which customarily comes along with hosting a Kiddush, and he dedicated that kiddush to thank Hashem for his daughters' births (thirty years earlier)

A week after the kiddush, both of his daughters became kallos! One explanation for this miracle is the brachos he received from people for his daughters. The Midrash (Koheles Rabbba 3:3)

Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5783 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

The Tears and Prayers of a Motherless Woman



Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt”l, was known for his tremendous Hasmadah, diligence in learning Torah. Rav Chaim Aryeh Zev Ginzberg relates that as a result of this, it was difficult to engage Rav Elyashiv in small talk.

Rav Ginzberg said, “Many years ago, I did manage to do so when I attended the wedding of one of his granddaughters, and I used the opportunity to ask some questions about his family history. There is a famous story surrounding the circumstances of Rav Elyashiv’s birth.

His mother, the only daughter of the Leshem, a famous Mekubal, was married to a tremendous Torah scholar. The couple was married for a long time and had no children. After exhausting every effort to have a child, Rav Elyashiv’s mother agreed to travel from Lithuania to Warsaw, to consult with one of the world’s leading medical specialists in the field.

Unfortunately, he told her what other professionals had told her over the years, that she would never be able to bear children. Returning home heartbroken and depressed, she wanted to spare her father, who lived with them, the terrible news.

Quietly, she went to the shed in the back of the house, and began weeping tears of agony and frustration.

All of her years of pain and longing were expressed in those tears. When her father heard her crying, he went to check on her and she shared with him the harsh prognosis.

The Leshem gave her a Brachah that not only would she have a child by the following year, but that this child would serve as the “light of the generation.” A year later, her only child was born, the future Gadol, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv!”

Rav Elyashiv Confirmed that the Story was True

Rav Ginzberg reported, “At the wedding I attended, Rav Elyashiv confirmed that this story was true. I then asked a follow-up question. Why didn’t the Leshem give his daughter the Brachah years earlier, and spare her the pain and suffering of going to all of the medical professionals and hearing the agonizing diagnosis over and over again?”

Rav Elyashiv explained that only after all options were exhausted and all avenues were closed off would his mother’s Tefilah be effective. Once she felt that her only hope was from Hashem, her Creator, the Tefilah became a different type of Tefilah, which made her worthy of Hashem’s Brachah.

This, in essence,” Rav Ginzberg said, “is what the Gemara in Sotah states when discussing why the Imahos were initially barren, ‘Hashem desires the Tefilos of Tzadikim.’

According to the Mabit, Hashem wanted the Shevatim, and thereby Klal Yisroel, to be the product of a higher level of Tefilah. Similarly, meriting to have a son of the caliber of Rav Elyashiv required a higher level of Tefilah as well!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Va’era 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

Accidents are Not Accidents

By Rabbi David Bibi

On Thursday afternoon a friend came to visit. He told me a remarkable story. About a year prior his car lease ended and, on a whim, he went out and bought a two-seat sports car. With a bunch of kids at home, his wife wasn’t too pleased with his selection. Not only was it impractical, but it was definitely a more dangerous a car. He noted that with Hashem’s help he was never in an accident and hoped to continue that way.

But only days passed and he was stopped at a light on Ocean Parkway when out of the blue, he was rear ended by a driver not paying attention. The unexpected hit knocked the wind out of him, but being the tough guy most of us try to be he refused the ambulance's invitation to the hospital, sent the car off to be repaired and sucked up the pain which remained for the next few weeks.

Déjà vu All Over Again

The car was back, good as new and a few months passed and he was stopped at a light in Manhattan and then ... boom. Again, he was hit from behind. Again, he decided to let things be and moved on without any checkup. But only a few more months passed and as Yogi Berra would say, it was Déjà vu all over again. Stopped at a light and then ... boom. His wife pleaded with him to get rid of this unlucky car. One would think, three strikes and you're out. But he again sucked up the symptoms of whiplash and went about his business and kept the car.

And then a few weeks ago, again on Ocean Parkway, he approached the light. He was in the right lane with ten cars ahead. He noticed the left most lane had only three cars and the center lane, perhaps six, but he was in no rush and stopped in his place. Then he saw an approaching car in his rear-view mirror and it looked like it wasn't slowing down. He tried to move over from the right lane towards the center, but the approaching driver had fallen asleep and although he knew he would be hit, the angle of the hit sent his car spinning.

An Insurance Argument Ensued

When it stopped, he realized that he wasn't so easily walking away from this. Hatzalah arrived, pulled him from his car onto a stretcher and took him to Maimonides. There they determined he had a collapsed lung. One doctor suggested an MRI to check his head but the insurance argument ensued. They would need special approval and by then the patient wanted out. A community member who is a patient advocate stepped in and was able to arrange the MRI and convinced my friend to stay. The test showed nothing as a result of the accident, but it did show a huge tumor pressing against his brain. Though symptomless, he was in terrible danger.

He was sent to experts in Manhattan and operated on and they were surprised that the tumor caused no damage. Apparently as a natural lefty, it was leaning on a part of the brain that lefties don't use in the same way as the rest of us. He was also told that had he gone a few more weeks, he would have been in terrible danger and they also wondered what would have happened in they caught this a year ago. They all realized that this is something rarely caught. Who would do a brain scan without reason?

Here in my office, he sat and aside from a scar which his hair would again cover, he was perfectly fine against all odds. For whatever reason, he had this growth in his head. And by some strange happening he was hit a number of times from the back. Heaven was begging him to take the trip to the hospital, get that MRI and overcome what nature had delivered.

Each accident must have resulted in some why me. Each accident was looked at as if judgment was being rendered and delivered. But then he knew that each came as an act of mercy to offer deliverance and a cure. Elokim was in fact Hashem. Life is filled with many questions. Every once in a while, we get a peek into the answer. Those hints and visions are there to help us get through all the other whys. They are a reminder behind Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeynu, Hashem Echad!

Reprinted from the Parashat Va'era 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Of Bagels and Locks

By Rabbi Yosef Weiss

David Greenspan grew up in the Bronx, New York, the product of an assimilated Jewish home. When he reached adulthood, he joined the family's bagel business, which had been in the Greenspan family for generations. After David's father passed away, though, David realized that he wasn't all that interested in bagels after all. He was good with his hands and he wanted to put them to use.

After taking some evaluation tests, David was told to become a locksmith. He studied hard and soon discovered that he had found his niche. Bagels were out, locks were in, and David soon had a job in the locksmith business.

The pay was good, but David really wanted to strike out on his own. He was constantly on the lookout for a good opportunity, a place where he could establish himself.

A Store in Monsey Caught His Eye

One day, David was driving through Monsey, New York. He eyed the layout of the stores in one section of the town. There was a window business there that seemed to catch his eye...was this the chance he had been waiting for?

David mustered up all his courage and entered the store to ask if he could rent out a small corner for his new locksmith business.

The store owner was agreeable, and before long, David's new business was setting up shop.

David was now in a very religious area. He figured that the local population would probably make up the majority of his customers, so an ad in the local Jewish circular would be a good idea. He arranged for the ad to be placed, and a few days later, he received his copy in the mail.

David thumbed through the circular until he found his advertisement. "Looks good," he murmured to himself. Absently, David continued flipping through the pages, taking note of the other businesses that were established in the community.

Lost and Found

Suddenly, a short section at the back of the circular caught his eye. "Lost and found," the headline proclaimed, and underneath was a series of columns.

David began to read the items listed.

"Found: Gold bracelet. Please call..."

"Found: Large sum of money. Please call..."

"Found: Diamond earring. Please call..."

David couldn't believe his eyes. Were these people actually trying to return such valuable items? And there were so many of them! Whatever happened to "finders keepers, losers weepers?" Here, David saw an entirely different attitude, one based on helping others instead of only taking for oneself.

David figured that if this is what religious Jews were like, it was a group that he wanted to be a part of. Before long, David began to wear a kippah, and he is now well on his way in his return to his Father in Heaven. (Visions of Greatness III)

Reprinted from the Parashat Va'era 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Personal Miracle with Rabbi Shimon Baadani

By Yosef Farhi

My father-in-law, David Darwich, was very close to R' Baadani. R' Baadani would come to visit my father-in-law on the holidays. Every Sukkot Hol Hamoed, the family members would get together to greet the Rabbi in my father in law's Sukkah and to receive a blessing.

At the time, my sister-in-law, was not having shidduchim suggested to her. Probably because people saw that the older sister, my wife, married an American

boy, me, they figured that the second daughter, as well, who also grew up abroad and did Aliyah only as a teenager, wanted a shidduch from abroad, and not the typical Israeli boy. Being that I was married to the older sister, I was very involved, for a full year, in trying to find her shidduch, but nothing was coming up. She asked her father if the Rabbi could bless her to find her shidduch.

Admired the Decorations of the Succah

The Rabbi asked, “Who decorated this beautiful Succah?” My father-in-law said that it was this daughter, who was waiting for her shidduch. The Rabbi blessed her, saying, “Decorating the Suckah is a Segulah to get married/have children. I bless you that you will find your Hattan within the year.” Of course, we were all excited to hear that.



Rabbi Shimon Baadani

The year almost passed, and nothing happened. Not one single guy dated her, and her friends were all getting married before her, one by one.

It was getting close to summer break, and I was going to fly in to New Jersey to spend a month of the summer with my parents. R' Baadani told my father-in-law that it might be a good idea for her to fly to America with us and join us on our visit, to stay at my parents' house. “Something might happen. She might see someone, or someone may see her.”

It sounded pretty bizarre. But the Rabbi said, so we listened.

When in New Jersey, I approached shadchanim, but they said that it is hard to find a boy from the Syrian community who would want to marry a girl that lives in

Israel. The Syrian community is very close knit: many want their married children to stay close by – close to home. They prefer a local shidduch. Shadchanim felt it was a waste of time even to meet her, telling me that there were so many local girls who were not finding their shidduch here. They felt that they should help those local girls before making an effort to find a boy for my sister-in-law from Israel, who wanted to live in Israel.

Getting a Lot Nos

I felt awkward getting so many nos, not even getting one meeting. It wasn't easy getting no after no, while I was on my own vacation, spending time with my own family, in New Jersey. We tried to make the best of the trip, to be distracted by going around touring and shopping, which my sister-in-law enjoyed... But nothing was happening for her, regarding her shidduch.

A few nights before flying back to Israel, my younger sister, who is a hairdresser, who at the time was also waiting for her shidduch to come from who-knows-where, said to me, “Yosef, there is a wedding tonight in town. I know that you know the people, even though you are not so close to them. I know that you were not invited. But you should go over there, stop by, show your face, with your wife and sister-in-law,... you might meet someone. It's a long shot, but its minimum Hishtadlut, once you are already here!”

I felt awkward coming to a wedding that I was not invited to, and even more awkward, bringing my wife and sister-in-law who were also not invited. As I knew the Hattan as a really nice guy, I was sure that if he knew I was in town, he would be happy if I would just show up at his wedding, especially if we would not sit down or eat anything. We would just show up, and wish a Mazal Tov.

More than Just Confused

My wife thought it sounded crazy. My sister-in-law was, by this time, more than just confused. All these things together – being at my parents' house, going, uninvited to a wedding, was just, so not her. Not exactly sure if this whole thing made any sense, even as hishtadlut... But R' Baadani said we should try all this for my sister-in-law, so we were trying. Or, more precisely, I was trying.

We showed up at the wedding, uninvited, the three of us. It was definitely awkward. I tried so hard to be the best son-in-law I could be, going over to people that were connected to people, asking if they had any ideas for my sister-in-law.

Nothing.

As we drove back to my parents' house, I apologized to my sister-in-law, saying I know this whole thing is just to listen to the Rabbi. The tickets were not cheap, the efforts were a lot for me, and as much as I tried to make her feel at ease at my parent's house, this whole thing was simply awkward, and we were flying

back to Israel two days later, with no results. All because of what R' Baadani told my father-in-law.

We came back to Israel, exhausted. I felt that I was the only one in a position to help her, as I was the only connection for this sister-in-law to a boy from abroad. And everything I tried got us nowhere. Almost two years of trying.

Worrying About Your Yetzer Hara

I returned back to learn for the Elul zman. One day, in Asseret Yemei Teshuva, I was not feeling that great. I came back home, plopped down on the couch and opened a Sefer. The first words I saw when I opened the Sefer were from the Rebbe from Pashische. "You have to look at your Yetzer Hara, as if he is standing above you with a sword in his hand, ready to chop if your head. If you can't view the Yetzer Hara like this, it means, he already chopped off your head!"

Wow! Maybe I was not that sick. Maybe it was my Yetzer Hara. I went back to yeshiva.

As I walked in the door to the Yeshiva, in walks an old Chavruta (study partner) who went back to US and got married, but just came to visit Israel for Sukkot, with his wife. He was happy to see me, and I told him I just got back from the states, myself, and I mentioned a little about my trip. He said he was learning in BMG, the Yeshiva of Lakewood. I asked him if he knows of any boys for my sister-in-law. He mentioned, yes, that there is a boy. I said, it is so funny, that you mention that name. That boy is the brother of the one whose wedding we went to, the wedding that I brought my sister-in-law to.

Coming to Israel for Sukkot and a Break from Dating

I had brought up the name of my sister-in-law to him already, while he was learning in Israel, but he turned it down, then, saying that he preferred a girl from the community. But the Chavruta said, I know that, but he has been dating in US, for a while, and still nothing worked out for him. I think he will be coming to Israel to visit for Sukkot and taking a break from dating. Maybe he will be willing to give your sister-in-law a try.

The boy came to Israel for Sukkot. He said he would try dating her. He told her that he felt that he wanted someone from the community, someone from nearby. She told him, it is so funny - I was at your brother's wedding. He was shocked! He told his parents, and they looked for her in the pictures according to what she said that she wore, and this made the boy feel that my sister-in-law is not just an Israeli girl from Israel. She was actually at his brother's wedding! Within a short time, they were engaged and married.

I felt that I gave my Neshama for this sister-in-law. When a person dies, one of the questions they ask in the Heavenly Courts, is עסקת בפרייה ורבייה, did you busy

yourself with being fruitful. The word עסקת , means busy yourself, because it is not that they will ask you if you had children. They will ask you, “Did you try to make a shidduch? Did you deal with making a marriage, did you help build a family?” (Shabbat 31a; see Maharasha)

Some of my friends and family, commented, that maybe I was trying too hard to help my sister-in-law, doing too much hishtadlut. I answered, I don’t know. But if R’ Baadani said to do something, I know that I can rely on him, that this is the proper hishtadlut! And he was right on time! Exactly Sukkot, a year later, and exactly to be in NJ, for the wedding of the brother of her Hatan!

Reprinted from the Parashat Va’era 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

What Hashem Wants

By Rabbi Yisroel Besser



A fundraising event into which Rav Dovid Feinstein had invested time and energy was scheduled to be held in a certain home. A few weeks before the event, askanim from that community came to tell him that they did not think that this was the right home to host the event, and they explained the reasons why.

Reb Dovid told them that he would not consider changing locations and potentially hurting the would-be host. They persisted. After all, they argued, he himself had worked so hard for this event, so why would he jeopardize it?

Reb Dovid shared his philosophy to fundraising, and to life, with them. “We have to do ours and work hard,” he said, “and then the Ribbono Shel Olam will do His. If something is against the Torah, against what Hashem wants, then there is no

way that it is considered the hishtadlus we have to do. Since hurting another person's feelings is forbidden, I clearly do not have to do that to be successful.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.
Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Reb Dovid.”*

With Keen Insight

Someone close to Reb Dovid immersed himself in a fundraising campaign for a friend in great distress. This talmid of Reb Dovid made it a personal mission to raise funds for this person, who accepted the money — and then, not long after, he slipped away, leaving the community and a life of shemiras hamitzvos behind.

It was heartbreaking for this askan, who had invested time, heart, and money in the cause, and persuaded so many others to give as well. He felt betrayed, and he shared his pain with his rebbi,

Reb Dovid. Reb Dovid listened carefully as the talmid unburdened himself.

“Did you do what you did for him?” Reb Dovid asked softly. “You did not. You did what you did for the Aibishter’s ah kindt, Hashem’s child, and that will last forever, nothing changed. You did a heilege thing.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’era 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.
Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Reb Dovid.”*

Respecting Another Opinion

Rav Dovid Feinstein gave a shiur at the Agudah convention one year, sharing the halachic approach to understanding brain death. A very dedicated askan was in attendance, and though he was not very learned, he felt that Reb Dovid’s psak was wrong and he began to argue.

At one point, he stood up and started to shout passionately, feeling that Reb Dovid was being too lenient. No one was quite sure how to react — except Reb Dovid.

He bowed slightly toward the askan and said, “And now, rabboisai, you heard another opinion.” Then he continued with the shiur

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’era 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.
Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Reb Dovid.”*