

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS SHELACH 5785

Volume 16, Issue 38 25 Sivan 5785/June 21, 2025

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

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On the Tip of Your Tongue

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

“Mommy!” exclaimed Shimmy, as he came bursting into the living room shortly before supper. “You’re not going to believe this! You know the Hershkovsky family that just moved in down the block? Well Moishy just told me that they

weren't always frum! And you know what the father used to do before he kept Torah and Mitzvos? He -"

"Shimmy!" Mommy interrupted him. "This sounds like lashon hora! Remember last night that we agreed as a family to be extra careful with what we say, and that it should be a zechus for Tante Rina to find a shidduch?"

Still Huffing and Puffing

Shimmy paused to try to catch his breath, but he was still huffing and puffing in excitement.

"B-b-but the sign you put on the fridge says that we are mekabel to not speak about other people from 5 to 6 - and now it's 6:04!"

"Wait Shimmy, that doesn't mean..." Mommy started, but Shimmy was too excited.

"I need to call Cousin Pinny right away and tell him," he said. "Where's the phone?"

Shimmy skidded over to the phone, but stopped short when he realized that it was inside of a glass case that was locked with a padlock! This was new...

"Mommy, why did you lock the phone? Where's the key? I need to call Cousin Pinny!"

Calm Down for a Second and Catch Your Breath

"Shimmy, Shimmy," Mommy said. "Why don't you calm down for a second and catch your breath?"

Shimmy inhaled deeply and counted to ten, he realized that he wouldn't be able to make the call this second. Mommy motioned to the couch where they both sat down.

"First of all, Shimmy, just because we are being extra-careful with what we say from 5 to 6, it doesn't mean that we can just say whatever we want the rest of the day. Lashon hora is still one of the worst aveiros in the Torah. Do you know why?"

"Because we wouldn't want people to say bad things about us, so we shouldn't say bad things about other people?"

"Well yes, that is the Mitzvah of V'ahavta le'reicha kamocho (to love your fellow like yourself), which one is also transgressing when speaking lashon hora, among many other things. But Rav Avigdor Miller points out two things. First of all, when we say lashon hora we are forgetting that Hashem is always listening, and second Hashem loves all frum Yidden. And when one says lashon hora, he is speaking bad about someone whom Hashem loves! Imagine if someone was in front

of a king and while the king was listening, he said something bad about the king's best friend?"

"Hmmm, I would think the king might have that person killed," Shimmy said thoughtfully. "Wow I never thought about how bad lashon hora really is. But why did you lock up the phone? How are we supposed to make phone calls?"

Look at the Hook Above the Phone

"Shimmy," Mommy said. "Look at the hook right above the phone."

Shimmy looked and saw that hanging right above the glass box was a key.

"Is that the key to the padlock?" he asked.

"Yes," Mommy replied with a smile.

"Well then what's the point of locking up the phone if the key is right there?"

"Because the lock isn't meant to keep us from using the phone. The phone is a wonderful tool if used properly. However, this lock and key is there to remind us that before picking up the phone we need to pause for a second and think 'what am I about to say on the phone? Is it something that I am better off keeping quiet about?'"

"I like that idea," Shimmy said with a smile. "But what about when I'm with my friends? I can't put a lock on my mouth to remind myself not to say the wrong thing."

Something Even Better than a Lock

"But Shimmy," Mommy said. "Hashem already gave you something better than a lock. In front of your tongue, Hashem gave you a beautiful set of teeth and lips. Aside from being an incredible gift that helps us enjoy our food, any time we talk, we should feel our lips and teeth against our tongue, and it should remind us to think before we speak."

Shimmy ran the tip of his tongue along the inside of his teeth and lips. "Thanks Mommy!" he said. "I'm going to try to always use this to remind myself to think before I speak!"

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Reprinted from the Parshas Behalosocho 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior adapted from the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l.

A Free Spirit

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

The following amazing true story illustrates, if at least anecdotally, the power of dressing modestly.

"Chana'le", who lived in Poland in the early 1900's, had a lot of questions. She loved her parents very much. Her parents, who were followers of the Slonimer Rebbe adhered strictly to the Chassidic way of life. It would not be until 1917 that a religiously backed school for girls, called Bais Yaakov, would be established. Until then, during the heady years of the "Enlightenment," many an intelligent girl with a hunger for secular knowledge often sought intellectual stimulation in places not so kosher for a Jewish girl.

Chana'le was one of those girls who struggled with her Jewish identity. Her head swam with questions she wanted answered, but none of her sisters or her girlfriends felt any of the same needs. This made her feel very alone. Her parents were prominent members of the community and tried to answer her questions, but they knew, and Chana'le felt, that the answers did not satisfy her.

Notwithstanding Chana'le's questions about faith, she would never dress immodestly. Something deep inside of her Jewish soul, told her that dressing modestly was the just the right thing to do. Even though she thought the modern clothes were appeared more stylish, she took upon herself the mitzvah of tznius.

In those days, there were gatherings of people committed to the causes of the day — socialism, communism, fascism, etc. One morning, Chana'le wandered into one of these meetings. The meeting was meant for libertarians, people who sought freedom of mind and freedom of spirit. She told her parents about the meetings. Although her mother tried to discourage her from attending, the pull was too strong for her to resist.

The libertarian group began to meet more and more often, and Chana'le went to all the meetings. Even though the attendees at the meetings scoffed at Chana'le's traditional form of dress, she continued to attend nevertheless. Her parents were dismayed that she went to the meetings, but they were afraid to say anything or do anything that would chase her even further away.

One day, though, Chana'le set out and did not return. The family went to look for her, but an extensive search confirmed that she was not to be found. At her wits' end, Chana'le's mother ran to the Slonimer Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Weinberg, of blessed memory.

The Rebbe was sitting with a group of people discussing some important matters, when Chana'le's mother burst into the room. She was crying out of panic and fear and blurted out: "Which of you is the Rebbe?"

Her tone and manner were completely understandable under the circumstances, and seeing her distraught state, nobody protested her bursting in on the Rebbe.

Chana'le's mother burst out again: "You must do something! My daughter is missing and her life is in danger!" The Rebbe tried to calm her down and asked to hear the whole story. He then closed his eyes, concentrated deeply, and then asked her, "Was there any one mitzvah that your daughter was particular to fulfill even though it meant for her great sacrifice?"

Chana'le's mother thought for a moment, and then her eyes lit up. "Yes! Although my Chana'le had many questions about our practices, she was very careful regarding tznius! In fact, even on the hottest days, when it was uncomfortable to be wearing modest clothing, she always persevered."

Hearing this piece of information, the Rebbe asked the panic-stricken mother if she had any of Chana'le's clothing at home.

When she answered in the affirmative, the Rebbe told her, "Take a few threads from the neckline of a sweater of hers and roll them together to form "a wick. And then take that wick and use it to kindle a light for the candles on Shabbos. I hope this will help illuminate the spark in her neshamah. Besides that, daven very earnestly for her to return."

Chana'le's mother ran back home. It was almost Shabbos, and there was much to do. She searched Chana'le's room for her favorite sweater, and did as the Rebbe had instructed her.

After lighting the wicks, she cried bitterly as she said the traditional prayer said after candle-lighting: "May it be Your will... that You show favor to me... and that You consider us with a consideration of salvation and compassion... and that You make our households complete..."

Tears streamed down her cheeks and blinded her vision, as she begged Hashem to return her daughter to her. Somewhere in a nearby village, Chana'le was sitting with a group of her new friends when she felt something inside her — it was an unusual feeling in her soul, nothing like she had ever felt before. She began thinking of how her mother must have been crying and she felt the pull to return home. By Sunday, she had returned home — without any more questions.

Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5785 email of Good Shabbos Everyone. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "A Touch of Warmth."

Unexpected Guests in Baltimore

This past Shabbos, we had just finished Kiddush and were getting ready to wash when it suddenly started pouring outside. Through the window, we noticed an older couple caught in the rain. Of course, we invited them in. As they waited for the rain to pass, we chatted for a few minutes and learned that they had recently moved to the neighborhood and joined an Orthodox shul as part of their journey toward Yiddishkeit.

In my mind, I thought: if Hashem brought them to our door, maybe I should take advantage of the opportunity. So, I invited them to stay for the meal. I was a little surprised when they accepted right away without hesitation.

What followed was a meaningful and uplifting experience. They enjoyed our children's company, and we were fascinated by their story" how they had both been previously divorced and had recently married, and how they were finding their way toward Yiddishkeit together.

In the middle of the meal, they told us, "**You won't believe how special this is.**" The wife shared that she had been in a serious car accident just two nights earlier. Their car was totaled, and although she wasn't injured, she was deeply shaken. She hadn't been in a place "emotionally or practically" to prepare Shabbos. **They had planned to go home from shul and eat tuna fish sandwiches for their meal.** And then the rain started. And suddenly, they were invited in and welcomed to a full Shabbos seudah.

They were deeply moved by the gesture and felt Hashem's presence guiding them. They shared how the warmth of the Baltimore community has strengthened them, and how they continue to be amazed and touched by the kindness of the people around them.

It reminded me that Hashem places opportunities right in front of us to connect and we shouldn't hesitate to grab them.

Reprinted from Rabbi Shraga Freedman's June 5, 2025 email.

A Blast from the Past (2002)

A Jewish Story

By Ida Dick

My story could have been a typical Jewish American immigrant story, if there is such a thing. Arrive, struggle, assimilate, achieve, assimilate some more and then live with the inevitable consequences. But the story has a different ending...

Still under the dark pall of war-torn Europe, we (a family of seven) left Russia and came to America in 1951, led by my father, of blessed memory. To my father, coming to the States meant that we could now, finally, live as Jews, the way he did in Poland before the war. However, I distinctly remember our friends coming into our house and saying to my father: "Pinchos Yair, America is different!"

“I Lived in Several Worlds”

Growing up I lived in several worlds. During the day it was public school, where I was so different. When I came home it was to our very European, Jewish home with all the memories. At night, I escaped into the world of books.

I knew that I was Jewish, but I equated being Jewish with traditional, irrational, complicated and antiquated rituals. Jewishness merged with the darkness and confusion of the war we had left behind. Surely, being a Jew in America would be better, brighter, and easier. I did feel something whispering to me, but I ignored that.

My husband, Rob, is the first American that I ever dated. I remember going to his house for my first Thanksgiving Dinner. Thanksgiving was a holiday that was easy to explain and keep. Put a turkey on the table, some cranberry sauce, a few sweet potatoes and....Voila! A holiday. I was amazed. This was easy.

“My Husband and I Were Establishment”

I was ready to start on my American road. There were a few things that I did not leave behind. We did have a kosher home. We did put mezuzos up on all the doors. We did join an Orthodox shul. But with the rest, we compromised.

My husband and I were establishment. Rob was and continues to be a computer wizard in financial services and international stock exchanges. I ultimately became an executive recruiter in finance. Cogs in Corporate America, we moved through a succession of suburbs.

These moves forced us to make choices. Where should we live? Where was the shul? The school? The kosher butcher? Through each of these questions, my

Judaism asserted itself. In our moves, I made sure that we were walking distance to the shul. We sent our children to a Conservative Day School. We were confident in what we were giving our children.

When we rented our vacation homes, I made sure that I brought up all the food so that it was kosher. We had Shabbos dinner every Friday night and went to shul almost every week.

We looked at our lives and said: "We are Jewish and we can still reap the best of America." Amongst our friends we were Mr. & Mrs. Judaism and Family.

The surprises began when our son and two daughters went off to college and became part of the college social scene. When they came home, their Jewish practices fell right back into place, but away was something else.



Rabbi Moshe Herson and Rabbi Shmuel Lew

When our three children graduated, they were Americans dedicated to their careers. Like the original immigrants, they were prepared to give up the details of their Judaism to get ahead. Whatever Judaism they learned, whatever Judaism we lived, was easily pushed aside.

Dismayed, I wondered how this had happened. Weren't we Mr. and Mrs. Judaism? So why were we now being forced to justify our practices and, as a result, Judaism? The questions were endless and I became determined to find the answers. It wasn't enough to serve them latkes, kreplach and gefilte fish. It wasn't enough to feel it in my bones; I needed to be able to put it into words. And even action.

I started to think about my parents and what had sustained them. I saw my father putting on tefillin, wearing tzitzis, not eating in restaurants, not working on Shabbos. It was a given. He didn't talk about it he just did it.

Rob and I had bought into the American way. We had pointed our children toward financial and social success. At the time we had thought we were pointing them to religious success as well. After all, hadn't we provided them with a solid Conservative Jewish education, including a term in Israel?! Weren't we members of an Orthodox shul?! Didn't our home look Jewish?! Hadn't we kept Judaism in our hearts?!

I turned to my old friends, books. The Jewish books I read were all good for me, but how could I pass it along....

Seeing a Judaism He Had Never Experienced

A friend of ours introduced us to Rabbi Moshe Herson, director of Chabad in New Jersey. Rabbi Herson called on Rabbi Shmuel Lew in London to try to influence David, who was in London by that time. After several months of learning with Rabbi Lew and seeing a Judaism he had never experienced, David decided to put his banking career on hold and study in yeshiva in Kfar Chabad, Israel. A summer course stretched into several years. At each of the holidays, he came home and shared with all of us the deeper perspectives he had learned.

Intrigued, we too began to tap into the worldwide Lubavitch network. Rabbi Lew's children in New York became among our closest friends and had a profound influence on us, and even more so on our daughter Stephanie. They influenced her to go to Bais Chana, where the young women don't just learn but also live Judaism.

The network of the Rebbe's institutions and emissaries stretches around the world. Jerusalem, London, New York, Morristown, Kfar Chabad. Bais Chana, Machon Alta, Machon Chana. And always, always Crown Heights!

A Twelve-Month Miracle

We were blessed. Within a twelve-month-period our whole family decided to keep Torah and mitzvos.

I feel enormous gratitude to the [Lubavitcher] Rebbe and his emissaries. Not only are we assuring that my father's grandchildren put Judaism first, but with G-d's help, there is now a realistic expectation that even my children's grandchildren will do so as well.

Reprinted from the May 31, 2002 (Parashat Behaalotcha 5762) edition of L'Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn.

The Rubber Shoes



The large rubber shoe factory brought prosperity and jobs to the town — but also a problem: it operated on Shabbos. The local Rav tried persuading the owners to shut it down for Shabbos, but they resisted.

“Rebbe,” they argued, “we’re required by law to close on Sunday. If we also close on Shabbos, the ovens will sit cold for two days, ruining production. We can’t afford that.”

Seeing he couldn’t convince them the Rav invited the Chofetz Chaim to speak with the owners. On the way, he warned, “Rebbe, be ready — they’ll bring up the issue of the ovens.”

“I won’t even discuss it,” replied the Chofetz Chaim. “If they’re smart enough to build such a factory, they can solve that. What they lack is an understanding of Shabbos. That’s what we must teach. Once they value Shabbos, they’ll find a solution.”

And so, it was. The Chofetz Chaim’s words inspired the owners deeply. Once they understood the true value of Shabbos, they somehow found a solution for the ovens — and the factory remained closed on Shabbos from then on. If someone is taught to really care, his alibis vanish into thin air! (“Give Us Life” - Mesholim of the Chofetz Chaim)

Reprinted from the Parshas Behalosocho 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

What a Pain!

By Rabbi David Sutton



Hacham Ezra Attiya and the Saba Kadisha

Rabbanit Bolisa Attiah was not a woman who complained. Thus, when she bent over in pain, low moans escaping her lips, her husband, *Hacham* Ezra, the revered *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Porat Yosef*, knew that this was serious, and he insisted that she visit *Shaare Tzedek* Hospital.

The doctor, an expert surgeon, was sympathetic but unyielding. “It’s gallstones, I’m afraid,” he said. “We’ll have to operate.”

These were grim words to hear in those days before antibiotics, when so many operations ended in infection and death. *Hacham* Ezra and Rabbanit Bolisa thanked the doctor for his advice and left the hospital, determined not to agree to the risky surgery.

For three days Rabbanit Bolisa suffered excruciating pain; by the fourth day, the pain was unbearable. *Hacham* Ezra sent their oldest son, Yitzhak, to speak with the doctor. He returned with the doctor’s final word: “There is no choice. We must operate.”

With a heavy heart *Hacham* Ezra accompanied his wife to the hospital. He left her in the ward and then he and a student journeyed together to the cemetery

on *Har Hazetim*. There, at the grave of (Hacham Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari, 1826-1930) the *Saba Kadisha*, the great and holy Chief Rabbi of Damascus and, later, Safed, he poured out his heart. “What do I have in this world except teaching and learning Torah?” *Hacham* Ezra wept. “And if, Heaven forbid, something terrible happens, I will not be able to learn anymore...”

Surgery was scheduled for the next day. With the dawn’s first light *Hacham* Ezra arrived at the hospital. It was far too early for visitors, and he pulled over a stool next to the doorway and recited *Tehillim*. A short while later the surgeon strode briskly up the stairs. He stopped short at the sight of the scholar.

“*Hacham* Ezra? What are you doing here?” the surgeon asked. “The operation isn’t scheduled until much later, and visitors aren’t allowed in for some time.”

“I don’t mind. I will sit here and say *Tehillim*.”

With a respectful nod, the doctor turned into the hospital. Not long afterward he stood by the bedside of Rabbanit Bolisa, wanting to check her one last time before she was prepared for surgery.

He stared down at the patient. Pulse, blood pressure, color; everything was normal. The pains had disappeared.

The surgeon consulted with another doctor and the ward’s head nurse, and then turned to Rabbanit Bolisa.

“I’m postponing the surgery. I want to do another x-ray, since it seems the situation has changed, and the x-ray department is very busy. You can go home now, and come back tomorrow for the x-ray.”

Still weak from her ordeal, Rabbanit Bolisa knew she couldn’t get home unaccompanied. “How will I return to my house?” she asked.

The surgeon smiled. “Your husband, the *Hacham* is downstairs waiting for you.”

When Rabbanit Bolisa told *Hacham* Ezra the news, his eyes lit up with joy. The Rabbanit’s eyes, though, were filled with tears.

“Why are you weeping?” he asked her.

“I know why I am cured,” she answered, her voice thick with emotion. “Last night, as I lay in the hospital bed, the *Saba Kadisha* came to me in a dream. He said, ‘Why are you causing your husband such sorrow? Why are you preventing him from learning Torah? Go home and get better!’”

And, as the next day’s x-ray clearly showed, Rabbanit Bolisa had indeed listened to the *Saba Kadisha*: she was completely healed, and went on to live with her husband for many more healthy years. (Stories of Spirit and Faith)

Reprinted from the Parashat Naso 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi’ Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Ein Od Milvado

By Rabbi David Bibi



The former U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv

Rav Eliezer Pressman zt"l was a great talmid chacham from Bnei Brak. One day, his rebbetzin received a call from the U.S. Embassy. Reb Eliezer had been left a large inheritance, and only needed to come to Tel Aviv to sign. But he refused. He feared the environment of Tel Aviv would compromise his standards of modesty and shemiras einayim.

His rebbetzin politely asked if someone from the embassy could come to Bnei Brak. They laughed. A few days later, another call: a delegation of U.S. senators wanted to meet a "very religious Jew." Could her husband be available? She agreed—so long as it was bein hasedarim. The ambassador came, along with the senators—and the documents. Rav Eliezer signed at home.

As they left, an embassy official said, "Even if you were the president's son, we would not have done this for you. We've never done this before."

But Heaven had.

R' Aharon of Karlin was once traveling with his students when they were caught in a violent storm. The wind howled, the rain came down in sheets, and the

wagon threatened to overturn. Panic spread among his followers. But R' Aharon simply began singing aloud, "Ein Od Milvado—There is nothing but Him." As the words filled the air, the storm began to quiet. Within minutes, the winds died down. The students watched in awe as the world returned to calm—not by meteorological pattern, but by spiritual intervention born of bitachon.

Reprinted from the Parashat Beha'alotecha 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Broken Dish

By Rabbi Reuven Semah



Rabbi Shimon Finkelman tells a true story. It happened on a Friday night in the home of Rav and Rebbetzin Chaim Kanievsky zt"l. After the seudah was over, as one of their guests was helping to clear the table, in his haste he dropped a dish and it shattered. The young man felt terrible. Seeing this, Rav Chaim said a Dvar Torah that he hoped would calm him.

Why must the Torah tell us that when Aharon lit the Menorah he did exactly as Moshe told him in the Name of Hashem? Would we have thought any differently had the Torah not told us this?

Hassidim answer that Aharon was surely very eager to perform the lighting of the Menorah. But despite his eagerness, he was in full control of himself and did not do the misvah in haste. He performed the lighting slowly and carefully from start to finish, so that not one drop of oil spilled from the vessel as he was carrying it to the Menorah.

"So, you see," said Rav Chaim, "Aharon's self-control was the exception to the rule. The average person who is overcome with emotion as he begins to perform a misvah might not be able to control himself to that degree. He might very well spill some oil. People who are eager to help clean up are also not always in full control, because they are excited to help out. So don't feel bad that a dish broke."

With these kind words, Rav Chaim succeeded in calming his guest.

Reprinted from the Parashat Beha'alotecha 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.