

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS CHUKAS 5785

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## Preserving Heavenly Protection

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



**Yerachmiel Tilles**

The famous Chatam Sofer, Rabbi Moshe Schreiber, related the following story about Rabbi Shmuel-Eliezer Halevi Edeles, best known as the Maharsha (an acronym of his name):

In the early 1600's, in the era of the Maharsha, there was a famous Jew who was known to be a sinner. When this man died, prior to his burial, one of the disciples of the Maharsha publicly shamed him. That night, the deceased came to the disciple in a dream and said to him: "I summon you to a Torah trial before the Heavenly Court, for you shamed me."

The young man woke up very disturbed and related his dream to his father. His father reassured him, telling him that “dreams are meaningless”<sup>1</sup> and the like, and the young man calmed down. The dream, however, repeated itself for three nights and the young man was so terrified that he became ill from it. The family decided to go to the Maharsha and ask his advice.

When they arrived, the Maharsha instructed the young man to remain for the night at his home as a guest. He then gathered his own family and instructed them that should the young man wake up in terror, which was likely, to call for him. This indeed happened. In the middle of the night, the young man woke up terror stricken and the family immediately called for the Maharsha to come.

The Maharsha approached the young man’s bed and began talking to the spirit of the dead man: “What do you want from this person?”

“He shamed me!” answered the dead man.

The Maharsha said to him, “But surely you deserve to be shamed?!”

The dead man replied, “No, I don’t deserve it. I wasn’t a completely evil person. Once I saw a Torah scholar fall into a river and almost drown. I endangered myself and saved his life. Since then, we became close friends. We made a Yissachar-Zebulun partnership<sup>2</sup> between us. I supported him well throughout my life.

“When I passed on and came to Heaven, they received me with great honor, as if I had been a great Torah scholar. They made no mention of my sins, for anyone who saves a soul, it is as if he has saved the entire world.

“Furthermore, I have a great portion of the Torah learned by the scholar and I am thus considered a Torah scholar myself. So, I am summoning the young man to court, to be charged with shaming a Torah scholar....”

The Maharsha minced no words in his reply to the dead man: “The truth is that despite all you have said, you carry a great burden of sins. However, the reality is that it is impossible to prosecute you; your good deeds created a strong partition between you and the main prosecuting angel and all the other heavenly prosecutors.

“But you should know that your transgressions were not erased. You are only protected from them by your two special good deeds. To bypass your protection, the prosecuting angel wants to ensnare you by convincing you to persecute this young man until he dies. Then he will prosecute you measure for measure.

“While it is true that you saved a Torah scholar, you now wish to kill a Torah scholar. If you do so, it will remove the partition of merit that is protecting you. Then you will become vulnerable and be held liable for all your sins.

“Therefore, I advise you not to take this foolish step and destroy yourself. Forgive him and all will be good for you as well.”

The dead man accepted the Maharsha’s advice, and the young man returned to good health.

### Notes

1. The last chapter in the first tractate of the Talmud, Brachot('Blessings'), devotes several pages to dream interpretation, including "most dreams are meaningless" and how to relate to the ones that are not.
2. Yissachar and Zebulun were the 5th and 6th sons of Leah. The tribe of Yissachar had the most leading Torah scholars of all the tribes, while the tribe of Zebulun included a large number of successful merchants, including many that did business overseas. The merchants of Zebulun took upon themselves to support financially the scholars of Yissacher, and thereby shared in the merit of the latter's Torah study.



**Illustration of the Maharsha**

**Source:** Modified and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles, from "Wonders," a weekly publication of inner.org, the website of the teachings of the American-born Kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh.

**Why:** In the final episode of the Baha'lote'cha Torah reading, Miriam speaks words to shame her younger brother, Moshe (although solely to her older brother Aharon, not publically like in the above story).

**Biographic note:** Rabbi Shmuel-Eliezer Halevi Edeles (5315 – 5 Kislev 5392 / 1555- Nov.1631) became especially famous for his explanations of the Talmud, both on Halachah (the legal element of the Talmud) and Hagadah (the ethical part of the Talmud). His commentary became so popular, that it is printed in all the standard editions of the Talmud, and is regarded as a "must" for all Talmud scholars. His house was always open for the needy; his door was inscribed, "No stranger shall stay overnight outside; my door is open for every guest." [based on Chabad.org]

*Reprinted from the Parashat Baha'lote'cha 5785 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# The Secret Note

Rabbi Yosef Weiss



Mrs. Frankel gazed up at the ancient stones before her. She had dreamed of this day, when she would be able to stand and pray before the Kotel in Yerushalayim. Now, in 1967, she and a friend were finally here.

As the two friends stood in silent contemplation, Mrs. Frankel noticed a woman approaching, carrying two shopping bags. The woman held her hand out, and Mrs. Frankel understood that she was homeless, completely dependent on the goodwill of others. The two friends gave the woman a bit of money, and she continued on her way.

The afternoon was passing, and the two visitors decided to pray Minhah. Shortly after they began, Mrs. Frankel noticed that the poor woman had also begun to pray Minhah. When praying was done, Mrs. Frankel stood there for a few minutes, idly watching the poor woman, who was just completing her prayer.

The woman rummaged through her bag and took out a stub of pencil. She then ripped a piece off the bag and began to write. After finishing, she folded the paper and wedged it into a small crevice between the bricks of the Kotel.

As she turned to go, the paper she had wedged in the wall fell out onto the floor. Another woman standing nearby saw the paper fall, and she bent down to put it back. As she held it in her hand and lifted it toward to stones, the paper suddenly unfolded.

Mrs. Frankel stared. The handwriting was ill-formed and childish. But what shocked her the most were the words on the paper. This poor, homeless woman, who owned almost nothing, had scrawled on the paper, “Hashem, I love you.” She may have had very little in the way of material possessions, but she was nevertheless completely content in her relationship with Hashem.

That note was meant to be read.

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

# Don't Be Fooled!

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

Tzadok “Hatzadik” stretched and yawned widely as he woke up in his cramped prison cell. He sat up, said Modeh ani, and reached down to wash negel vasser.

“Why are you washing your hands so many times?”

Tzadok jumped, startled, and looked up to see a familiar face sitting on the previously empty bed in his cell. “Dudu? Dudu Manor? What are you doing in prison? I thought you were a member of the Knesset [the Israeli Parliament] now. When did you get here?”

“Oh, I am in the Knesset now. But you know, sometimes Knesset members have to spend some time in prison. I was arrested late last night. They brought me here when you were already sleeping.”

“Well, it’s so nice to see you,” said Tzadok, putting on his tzitzis. “And to answer your question, it is a mitzvah to wash your hands three times when you wake up in the morning. But I wash my hands seventeen times because it’s a segulah I invented. Come, let’s go to shacharis.”

“Shacharis?” asked Dudu, bewildered. “But it’s not my bar mitzvah.”

Tzadok laughed. “Come on, it’s fun!”

With nothing else to do, Dudu followed Tzadok to the prison beis midrash. After shacharis, the prisoners sat down to listen to the Mesilas Yesharim shiur given by Rav Volender, the prison Rav.

“So, the Ramchal is telling us how easy it is to do aveiros,” Rav Volender was saying. “If we are not careful, we may end up doing terrible things without even realizing it, such as damaging someone’s property or stealing, as many of you know.”

“What I did wasn’t stealing!” Dudu blurted out. “I just took a million shekel from the money that the government was going to use to build the new orphanage in Yerushalayim. I did it so I could give one percent of it to tzedaka. It was a mitzvah!”

Silence ensued as everyone stared at Dudu.

“Dudu,” Rav Volender said. “First of all, you need to give ten percent of any money you make to tzedakah.”

“Ten percent???” Dudu exclaimed. “That’s crazy! Then the poor people are stealing from me!”

“Dudu, I can explain the laws of tzedaka to you at a later time,” Rav Volender said. “But let’s read the next line of the Mesilas Yesharim: - the Ramchal is saying that the yetzer hara is extremely skilled in trickery and the only way to escape from him is with great wisdom and insight.”

“But I’m very smart,” Dudu insisted. “I wouldn’t even have gotten caught if someone didn’t overhear me talking about it in the elevator.”

“Dudu, do you know what this week’s parsha is?”

Tzadok leaned over. “Beshalach,” he whispered in Dudu’s ear.

“Why it’s Beshalach!” Dudu said, puffing out his chest. “As a leader of the Jewish people, it is my job to always know what parsha it is.”

“No, Dudu,” Rav Volender said, shaking his head. “It’s Parshas Korach.”

“Oh, is that the one where the snake bit Chava because she went to Achashverosh’s feast?”

“No, Dudu,” Rav Volender repeated. “Korach led a rebellion against Moshe Rabbeinu. But how could he do that? He saw the nissim Hashem did through Moshe.

He was at krias yam suf and Matan Torah. How could he argue when Moshe said that Hashem chose Aharon to be the kohein gadol?

“And you know what Korach said? He said that he knew Hashem told Moshe to pick Aharon, but that it was only because Moshe pressured Hashem into doing that. Can you imagine such a silly thing?

“And do you know why that happened? Because even though Korach was a very great man, he wasn’t careful about watching out for his yetzer hara. And he let himself be convinced of something that was clearly wrong.”

Dudu put an ashamed look on his face. “I see,” he said. “Fine. I’ll give ten percent of the money I stole to tzedaka.”

“No, Dudu!” Rav Volender said. “That’s your yetzer hara talking again! You can’t give any of that money to tzedaka because it’s not yours! Hashem doesn’t want your stolen money - you need to give it all back!”

Dudu looked around. “I didn’t hear my yetzer hara talking,” he said. “How can I escape something that I can’t hear and see?”

Rav Volender smiled. “By doing what you’re doing right now. Continue coming and studying Mesilas Yesharim with us every day, and you will learn how to know when your yetzer hara is talking and how to defeat him.”

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

## Rebbi Chanina ben Dosa’s Vinegar Solution



One Friday afternoon, Rebbi Chanina ben Dosa saw that his daughter was sad. He said to her:

“My daughter, why are you sad?”

She said to him: “A vessel of vinegar was switched with a vessel of oil, and I tried to light a fire for Shabbos.”

She wanted to light the oil in honor of Shabbos. However, she accidentally got vinegar, which doesn't create a fire, and there was not enough time to get oil. He said to her:

“My daughter, what does it matter to you? He Who said that oil should light, He will say to the vinegar to light! Hashem is the one Who makes oil light on fire. Hashem can just as easily make vinegar light on fire.”

This vinegar light stayed lit the entire day of Shabbos until they lit the Havdalah candle from it, because it was still burning at the end of Shabbos!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Beha'aloscha 5785 email of Chayeinu Weekly. Stories compiled by Tzvi Schultz.*

# The Half-Hour Friday Night Seuda

By Yoni Schwartz

Rav Yisrael Salanter, ZT”L, would travel to many small towns in France and Germany doing kiruv (outreach). On one trip, a wealthy talmid (student) of his said that he'd very much appreciate it if the Rav would come for the Friday night seudah. This talmid would host lavish and very long Shabbos meals, sometimes lasting six hours. Rav Salanter agreed to come on the condition that the meal would last no longer than half an hour.

On Friday night, Rav Salanter showed up. They started the meal, and about thirty minutes later, it was over. Afterward, the talmid felt slightly uneasy, since he wasn't used to such short Shabbos seudos.

This talmid's chef was a widow struggling to support her only child. After the meal, Rav Yisrael apologized to her: “I know that usually you work at a more leisurely pace on Friday nights. I'm sorry for rushing you today.”

She responded, with glassy, tear-filled eyes, “Rebbe, this was the greatest night of my life. Normally, I'm stuck here until midnight. I have one twelve-year-old son who is in yeshiva all week, and Shabbat is the only time I can see him.

“On Friday nights, he stays up late to have a quick meal with me before I fall asleep from exhaustion. This is the first time since my husband died that I've been able to spend a proper Shabbos meal with him. Thank you.”

That's when Rav Salanter turned to his talmid and said, “You see why the half-hour meal was a much greater Mitzvah than the six-hour meal.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Beha'aloscha 5785 email of Torah Sweets.*

# Rav Elchanan Wasserman and the Vicious-Looking Dogs



Rav Lazer Abish writes that in 1937, Rav Elchanan Wassermann, zt”l, set out on a trip to America to raise the necessary funds for the Baranovich Yeshivah. He traveled all around America for these funds.

At one point, while he was staying in the home of Rav Zalman Levin, he had Rav Shmuel Greineman, the principal of Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, going around with him as a translator. When they arrived in upstate New York, they passed a wealthy looking home, but Rav Shmuel walked right by it, not giving it much attention.

Rav Elchanan questioned why they were skipping that home, and said, “There is a Mezuzah on the doorpost.”

Rav Shmuel answered there were two vicious looking dogs at the gateway, preventing any visitors from entering, and that was why he was avoiding it.

Rav Elchanan responded that he was going to approach the house, despite the terrifying dogs. He opened the gate and headed toward the front door. Sure enough, the dogs came charging at him, but as soon as they got to him, they immediately paused. He persisted, and went up to the front door, and asked for a donation.

The shocked man who answered the door asked, “How did you get in? Didn’t the dogs ‘greet’ you at the entrance?”

Rav Elchanan responded that dogs see the Tzelem Elokim, the image of Hashem that is within every person. Many people lose this image along the way in life, but Baruch Hashem, I managed to keep it clean, and the dogs respected it. That is why they didn't harm me."

Rav Abish commented, "This serves as a great lesson. Even dogs can feel the intrinsic value that is within our Neshamah. Even though at times it may not be seen, it is something that can be perceptibly seen, even by dogs. Although we can't see it, we must remember that this is a very real thing!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas B'ha'alos'cha 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

## Measure for Measure

There was a couple who came from dignified families, and many years after they were married, they were not yet Bentched with children, R"L. They tried every treatment, every specialist, and many Segulos, but nothing helped. They remained childless for decades.

Until, suddenly, Hashem's salvation came to them, and they had a child! The father revealed to a close friend the secret that brought about the birth of their child.

There was a man in America who had a very hard time making a living, and he did not have enough money to pay tuition for his fifteen-year-old daughter in high school. After the school administration sent notices and warnings to the parents, with much embarrassment, this girl was told she had to leave the school. This girl and her parents suffered great pain and shame from this, and it was widely discussed among their friends and relatives.

When this man heard about what had happened, he was very bothered by it, and he was moved to action. Although he was not a wealthy man, he and his wife came up with an idea, to try to take on the Mitzvah of paying the tuition for this girl.

He approached the principal of the high school, and from the outset, he stipulated a few times that this must remain a secret between them, and that no one can know about this. The two of them sat at the desk in the high school principal's office, and they calculated how much tuition was owed for the teenage girl to finish high school, and the amount was \$7,000.

It was impossible for him to come up with this sum at one time, but he took upon himself to pay the school twenty-five dollars every week until the amount was paid off. The agreement was written up and signed by this man and the principal, and in this way, the entire tuition would be paid off.

Immediately, the principal sent a letter to the girl's family saying that things had changed, and she would be able to return to class right away. No one ever found out what caused this turn of events. Almost immediately after this incident took place, this couple was rewarded, and they learned that they were expecting a child!

*Reprinted from the Parshas B'ha'alos'cha 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

# The Rich Miser and The Woodcutter

By Yehuda Z Klitnick



Moshe, a wealthy man living outside Jerusalem, had a very serious problem: he was a miser, unwilling to give any tzedaka. One day, a poor man, secretly from hidden righteous tzadikim, sought a donation. Moshe, as usual, refused him entry. The tzadik pleaded, promising not to ask for money, and Moshe allowed him entry.

The Tzadik then sternly declared: Heaven is angered by your stinginess; your fortune will be given to Rabbi Avraham, the woodcutter of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Avraham was also a very righteous person and always went out of his way to help another Yid. He would drop off chopped wood at a poor person's door autonomously.

Moshe recognized that it was a righteous man standing before him, but couldn't resist his selfish desires. He reasoned, if my wealth must go to Rabbi Avraham, I will make sure that neither of us will benefit!

The tzadik left, and Moshe fled to the forest with his fortune. He hid it in a large tree. A storm uprooted the tree, carrying it to Jerusalem, landing on a fisherman's property. The fisherman, initially frightened, rejoiced, planning to sell the wood to Rabbi Avraham.

That Friday, when Rabbi Avraham went to buy fish for Shabbos, the fisherman offered him the tree at a good price. Rabbi Avraham inspected it, agreed to the price, and bought the tree. Rabbi Avraham hauled the tree to his home. When he began to cut up some wood he was astonished to find the tree to be hollow inside.

He soon found a large treasure in the trunk of the tree. He danced with joy to Hashem that he will now be a rich man. Meanwhile, Moshe the Miser's fortune faded, and he became a poor person and Moshe was forced to wander with his wife begging for money and food.

When they came to Jerusalem to beg for money and food, Moshe decided to go visit Rabbi Avraham the woodcutter. Moshe searched all over and asked where Rabbi Avraham the woodcutter lived? When he was told where Rabbi Avraham lived, Moshe went to his home.

Rabbi Avrohom was a very warm-hearted person and he invited Moshe and his wife to stay with them for a few days until after Shabbos. At the Shabbos Table, Moshe and his wife began to cry hysterically as they noticed the beautiful leichters, and gold plates on the table. They were so familiar to the ones that once belonged to them!

Rabbi Avrohom asked them "why were they crying?"

They answered: "these items once belonged to us!"

When Rabbi Avraham asked them "how did they lose their belongings?" They told Rabbi Avrohom the story of the hidden Tzaddik who told them that their wealth would go over to Rabbi Avraham, and they hid their fortune in a tree so that no one should enjoy the wealth.

Moshe then asked how did the fortune end up by Rabbi Avraham? Rabbi Avraham told them the story of the fisherman, and the gusty winds carrying the tree to his property. They learnt a powerful lesson that when Hashem wants something to happen, He will make a flood and bring an item from one place to another in order to fulfil that decree.

When Rabbi Avraham offered to return to Moshe his belongings, Moshe and his wife refused as they accepted the decree of Hashem, and would not go against the wishes of Hashem. They now wanted to atone their evil ways of not giving Tzedaka!

The Shabbos was very uplifting for everyone. They felt closer to Hashem. That Motzei Shabbos, Rabbi Avraham told his wife to bake a fancy cake for Moshe and his wife. She put inside 100 gold coins. When they will open it, they will have

money to live. The cake was appealing to them and they accepted the cake. Moshe and his wife thanked Rabbi Avraham and his wife for their hospitality and an uplifting Shabbos.

Meanwhile, as they were to leave Jerusalem, there was a tax collector at the border, who collected a tax from all those leaving Jerusalem. Now since Moshe had no money to pay he offered the cake instead of the money, and the tax collector who saw that the cake was beautiful, accepted it, and he let Moshe and his wife to go on their way!

Meanwhile, Rabbi Avrohom was preparing to make a wedding for his son, and the tax collector who was a close friend of Rabbi Avraham, decided to give him a present for the wedding. He brought the beautiful cake to the home of Rabbi Avrohom to serve at the wedding.

Rabbi Avrohom noticed that the cake was the same one they had baked for Moshe, and he cut open the cake and saw that the 100 Gold coins were still there! The dumfounded Rabbi Avraham saw with his own eyes that Hashem's decree was so strong that any money that belonged to Moshe, even if it was given to Moshe as a present, would come back to Rabbi Avraham. No matter how hard he tried to give Moshe some of his money back, it still came right back to Rabbi Avraham! The fortune of Moshe was destined from Hashem where it was to end up.

Rabbi Avraham who was a righteous person, decided he must nullify the decree on Moshe. He prayed to Hashem to find a way to do this. One day, he felt that he received a message from heaven, that his prayers were answered.

Rabbi Avraham was excited that he went about searching for Moshe. Finally, after a while he caught up with him. They sat down to talk and Rabbi Avraham related to Moshe that he feels that the decree on him can be removed. Moshe became relieved, and asked what should he do now?

Rabbi Avraham told him "You have suffered much humiliation through your wanderings. If you agree to open your heart to needy people, I will lend you money to begin your business dealings. Hashem will give you success, and will become wealthy again!

Moshe could not believe how a stranger would be so kind to him, and his heart softened, and promised to open his doors to all needy people. They drew up a contract for the loan, and Moshe pledged in writing that he repents on his being a miser.

They parted ways, and in a short time, Moshe made some good deals and was able to repay Rabbi Avraham. He had enough to begin giving tzedaka, and as time went on he became wealthy again, and his doors opened up for all needy people. Moshe learned a valuable lesson. When Hashem says something will happen, it happens. But, Hashem has mercy when one does Teshuva with fullness.

Many thoughts are in the heart of man, but only Hashem's counsel will endure. The counsel of Hashem will stand forever, the thoughts of His heart throughout all generations. For He spoke and it came to be; He commanded and it stood.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shlach 5785 email of Pardes Yehuda.*

# **Rabbi Yisrael Najara zt"l: The Camels and the Donkeys of the Arab Robbers**



Rabbi Yisrael Najara, lived in Zefas and was a contemporary and student of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Ari Hakadosh. He liked to walk along the river in the valley below the town. There he would compose the tunes and songs through which he expressed his love and awe to Hashem.

Once, he was attacked by a band of Arab ruffians, who upon discovering that their captive had neither money, nor wealthy relatives who would pay a ransom, promptly decided to kill him.

Grudgingly, they consented to his request to be allowed to say his final prayers and play one last tune. As he played his flute, the donkeys and camels of the thieves rose on their hind legs and began to shuffle, as if dancing to the music. The robbers became terrified at the sight and fled.

Rabbi Najara, meanwhile, had become so absorbed in his music that he was oblivious to what was happening around him. Strolling back towards Zefas, he continued to play his flute. The townspeople stood mesmerized as he entered the city, followed by a procession of dancing donkeys and camels.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shlach 5785 email of Rabbi Dovid Caro's Inspired by a Story.*