



a way to pay for the upcoming wedding. With no choice, he borrowed the money for the wedding. But, anyone who seeks a loan must bring a collateral to ensure that, if the borrower can't pay, the creditor will nonetheless get his money.

Not having a house of his own, Yisrael's chavrusa had no collateral to use for his loan. Therefore, who did he turn to? He turned to his devoted chavrusa, Yisrael, who trusted him and was always there to help.

### **Now, His House was Being Taken Away from Him**

However, within a short time, his chavrusa wasn't able to keep up the payments, and the bank came around to collect the collateral—Yisrael's house. So, in addition to his five older daughters all awaiting their shidduch, Yisrael was now having his house taken from him.

Some while later, Yisrael attended a relative's chasunah in Yerushalayim. There, one of his relatives, knowing the challenge he was facing, tried convincing him to meet the Gerrer Rebbe, the Beis Yisrael (Rav Yisroel Alter, 1895-1977), who lived not far from the wedding hall. At first, Yisrael was hesitant, as he wasn't from that school of thought, yet the relative persuaded him that no harm can come from going there, so he agreed.

### **The Rebbe Offered Him His General Advice**

When he met the Beis Yisrael, Yisrael poured out his heart, explaining everything that he was facing. When he finished, the Beis Yisrael asked him: "Did you thank Hashem already for what you've gotten up until today?" Without giving him a chance to respond, the Rebbe offered him his general advice:

Davening is comprised of two primary facets—thanking Hashem and requesting from Hashem. How do you split them? Sixty percent of your davening should contain thanking Hashem, while only making requests during the remaining forty percent.

Yisrael accepted the Rebbe's advice and departed. Within sixty days of changing his davening, his twenty-eight-year-old daughter got engaged, and within an additional four months, two more of his daughters got engaged. Shortly after, the chavrusa's mother passed away, leaving him a big inheritance that was able to redeem Yisrael's home, and everything was settled.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar 5784 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.*

# The Tree, the Princess and the Lion

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

A parable is told about a very poor person who couldn't eke out a living; whatever he tried failed. He decided to visit the sar hamazalos (the angel appointed over mazal) to ask him what he should do to find his mazal.

As he was walking to the sar hamazalos (the angel of good fortune), he saw a beautiful, large tree, but the tree had no fruits on it.

## Ask the Sar Why I Can't Grow Fruit

The tree said, "When you talk with the sar hamazalos, mention me as well. Ask him why I have such a bad mazal, and can't grow fruit."

"No problem," the man replied. "When I meet with the sar hamazalos, I'll ask him."

The man walked further and met a princess who was banished from her palace. She also requested, "When you meet with the sar hamazalos, ask him why my mazal is to be cast out of the castle. Ask him what I should do to return to my greatness."

"I will do that" the man replied, and he walked further. He met a lion. It was lying on the ground, ill and in pain. The lion said, "When you meet the sar hamazalos, ask him what I can do to cure myself."

"I will do so," the man promised, and he went to the sar hamazalos.

## Returned with Answers for the Trio

When he returned, he had answers for the trio. He saw the tree and said, "The sar hamazalos told me that there's a box filled with gold and diamonds near your roots, and that is blocking the nutrients in the ground from reaching your branches. When someone will dig up the treasure, you will bear fruit."

The tree pleaded, "Please dig up the treasure. You will become wealthy and I will be cured."

"No! No!" the man said. "I don't have time for that. I am too busy looking for my mazal."

He walked further and found the princess. "I spoke with the sar hamazalos. He said that you will return to your greatness when you marry. Your husband will be the king and you will be the queen."

The princess pleaded, “Please marry me. I will return to the palace, and you will become the king and very wealthy...”

“I’m really sorry,” the man replied, “But I am too busy for that. I need to find my mazal.”

Then he met the lion. “Did the sar hamazalos tell you what I should do to be cured?” the lion asked.

“Yes he did”, the man replied. “Your remedy is to eat the brain of someone who throws away every opportunity that comes his way.”

[Guess what unfortunately happened?]

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## **A Blast from the Past**

## **A Slice of Life**

# **The Ties that Bind**

**By Shaun Zeitlin**

Dad lives on Long Island, but owns and runs an auto body shop in a rough Brooklyn neighborhood, where he is probably the only Jewish person around. One day a coworker came in to tell him that his cousins were outside. Who could it be?

Dad came out and saw a group of Chasidic boys walking by carrying lulavs and etrogs. He was shocked to see not only white people in that neighborhood but ten young bearded men with black hats and suits! Dad asked them if they were lost or needed help, but they explained that they were on their way to an old shul to help make a minyan.

### **The Yeshiva Students Were from Israel**

The boys were Lubavitcher yeshiva students from Israel, but two spoke English. They thanked Dad for his concern, said they were happy to meet him, and told him they would stop in again. They did just that, and returned every week on Friday afternoons to put on tefilin with Dad.

Known as phylacteries, tefilin are the black little boxes that a man ties on his head and arm to focus his mind and heart on G-d. Dad hadn't done this mitzva since his Bar Mitzva, and these young men were happy to help him make the connection again.

Even the non-Jewish workers enjoyed these visits. Once when I called on a Friday, one of the non-Jewish mechanics quipped, "I am sorry, but Mr. Zeitlin is all tied up," referring to his wearing the tefilin. The students also put up a mezuzah on his store and brought jelly doughnuts for Chanukah and hamantaschen on Purim.

Dad started to look forward to the Lubavitchers' visit and to respect them. It was nice to see Dad in the living room on Shabbat afternoon reading the weekly L'Chaim publication cover to cover. One of the boys left to a yeshiva in Peru, but the other boys continued to visit.



### **A Strong Appreciation for Putting on Tefilin**

Dad developed a strong connection to the tefilin. He told Mom that he wanted a new pair of tefilin for Father's Day, and that's what he got. Each morning before work Dad puts them on and recites the blessing and the Shema from the card the students gave him. Even when he is traveling, Dad won't leave his tefilin behind.

One Wednesday in the summer, the Lubavitcher boys came in to put on tefilin, since they were going upstate for Shabbat. The next Friday the boys did not come, and Dad got nervous. Calling to find out what happened, he learned that the boys were in a car that had gotten into a terrible accident.

Three of the four boys were killed and one barely survived. The boy who survived was the boy he had befriended, so Dad took my brother and me to visit him in the hospital.

### **Asked the Young Man if He Had Put on Tefillin that Day**

We drove up to Nyack Hospital in Rockland County, New York. The young man was lying in bed with his mother at his bedside. He was very pale and looked very thin. His mother told us he was in extreme pain and had just had his spleen and some ribs removed in an effort to save his life. He smiled faintly when he saw my father and they began talking. His three best friends had been killed and he was very depressed from his traumatic experience. Dad tried to cheer him up, and during their visit, asked him if he already put on tefilin.

His mother said he was still too weak, and had not put on tefilin since the accident. Dad spoke to the boy and encouraged him to put on tefilin. He agreed, and told him where to look for his tefilin bag in the suitcase.

The scene was now reversed: Dad was putting tefilin on a yeshiva boy! It was amazing to watch Dad, with dedication and love, help the young man hooked up to tubes and machines put on his tefilin.

For the next month Dad called every day to talk to the young man, ask how he was doing, and also checked if he wore his tefilin that day.

Miraculously, the boy recovered, was rehabilitated, and returned to Israel where he is now married. Dad still speaks to him every so often, and of course, they always check up on each other's tefilin progress.

It's easy to get caught up in negative cycles in life. I'm glad Dad got caught up in a good, mitzva cycle.

*Reprinted from the Behar-Bechukosai 5761/2001 edition of L'Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Shaun was a student at SUNY-Albany and gabbai of the Shabbos House on campus. Reprinted from The Jewish Holiday Consumer.*

# Controlling Our Footsteps

By Rabbi David Ashear

One summer, a man from Israel came to collect tzedakah in Brooklyn. He was soon to get married, and he needed help raising funds in order to pay for the wedding expenses. The problem was the timing. Everyone was away, primarily either in New Jersey or in the Catskills. Especially with it being a Friday afternoon, the chances of coming out with a good amount of tzedakah was slim.

But the young man remained determined. "Is anyone going to either of these places and I can catch a ride?" Fortunately, someone was heading to the Catskills and agreed to take the fellow along.

## No Room for Him to Stay

Only once they arrived in the Catskills did the man realize the layout. There were a bunch of bungalow colonies, and there'd be no room for him to stay. It was now only a couple hours before Shabbos, and that didn't make it any easier. Where would he be for Shabbos? He knew no one and hadn't arranged a place to stay ahead of time.

“They’re having a Shabbaton in that hotel there,” one of the locals told the man collecting. Thanking him, he began heading for the hotel, hopeful that he’d be able to make a reservation. But that idea fell through. “I’m sorry, but we’re completely booked,” said the hotel manager.

### **A Musician Noticed that the Man was Crying in the Lobby**

At this point, the man had no place to stay and it was an hour before Shabbos. Sitting in the lobby and waiting the time out, he began crying. Until the musician who was scheduled to perform that Motzei Shabbos entered the lobby and took notice of the man. “Is everything alright?” After relaying his situation, the musician was quick to offer help. “You can be with me! I’m the only one in my room; why don’t you stay with me!” The fellow, of course, graciously accepted the offer.

Shabbos and the Shabbaton proceeded beautifully. At one point, in passing, the musician mentioned the name of the hotel owner’s, Mr. Yosef Weiss. As soon as the musician mentioned the name, the man from Israel perked up. “Mr. Weiss? I can’t believe it! Would it be possible to arrange for me to speak at Seudat Shelishit later today?” The musician couldn’t guarantee, but he said he’d try. Sure enough, he was able to get the man a few minutes to speak.

So, there he was, standing at Seudat Shelishit. “I’d like to share a store with you all,” he began.

### **His Name was Yosef Weiss**

“I came here yesterday and I didn’t know where to go. I didn’t have any place to stay. And I ended up here. Twenty-five years ago, my father was standing at the Kotel crying when someone came up to him. ‘Is everything alright?’ asked the fellow. ‘Nothing is wrong,’ my father replied. ‘I’m crying tears of joy and gratitude. After ten years of marriage, my and I were finally blessed with a healthy child. I’m here to thank Hashem for this miracle.’ The man who heard this was very touched. ‘You inspired me,’ he said. ‘If you ever need anything in life, come to me, and I’ll help you.’ He then told my father his name—Yosef Weiss.

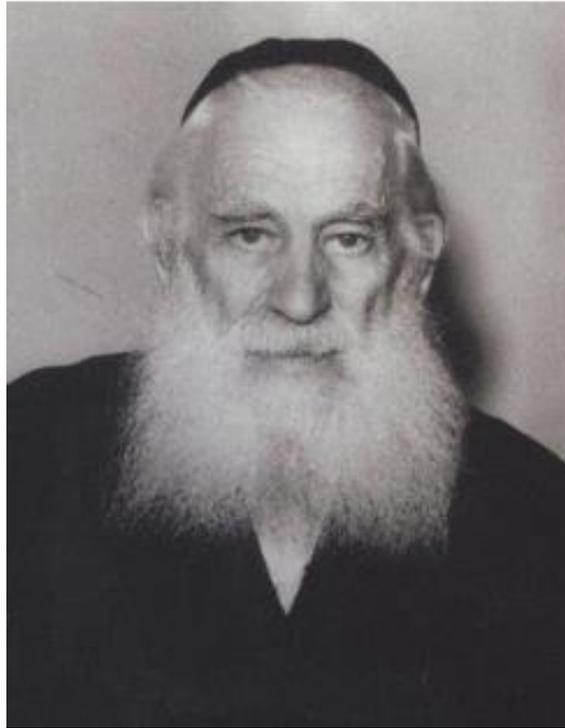
“Before I left Israel to come here, my father said to me, ‘I know Yosef Weiss once said he’s going to help me. He’s somewhere in America—I have no idea where—but if you need someone to help you, go to him.’ I thought to myself, ‘How in the world am I going to find Yosef Weiss?’ I came to Brooklyn, and I was directed to come here, to the Catskills. And lo and behold, who do I end up in front of? Yosef Weiss.’

That trip, Yosef Weiss went on to help the young man very generously from Israel. This is what it looks like for Hashem to control our footsteps and putting us in the places we need to be.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Acharei Mot 5784 edition of Torahanytime Newsletter.*

# Right on Time

## By Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein



*Everything among the animals that has a split hoof, which is completely separated into double hooves, and that brings up its cud — that one you may eat (11:3).*

The Biala Rebbe sees in this verse an allusion to the way a Jew should conduct himself. The words that brings up its cud suggest that a person should “chew over” his every action in his mind. The words that has a split hoof suggest that he should proceed cautiously, with half steps, being exceedingly careful in how he behaves.

### **An Opportunity to Meet One of the Wealthiest Members of the Jewish Community**

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rav, once went to London on a fundraising tour for his yeshivah, whose financial situation was critical at the time. During that visit, Rav Yaakov Rosenheim arranged a meeting for him with one of the wealthiest individuals in the London Jewish community.

This man had a very tight schedule, and he was scheduled to travel to a different city, but he agreed to meet with the Rav at the train station prior to his

departure. The train was set to leave at 8 a.m., and the meeting was scheduled for 7:45.

The Ponovezher Rav planned to daven early, in a shul that was located near the train station, and go directly from there to the meeting. But that night, he became deeply engrossed in a sugya that he was learning, and he stayed up until the wee hours of the night learning. When he went to sleep, it was already almost morning. When he woke up, it was already late.

### **What is His Best Option?**

If he would go to shul now, he realized, he would be late for the meeting. The Ponovezher Rav considered his options. On one hand, he wanted to daven with a minyan. On the other hand, he had to do what was best for the yeshivah. It did not take him long to decide that although he was trying to help the yeshivah, he could only make the type of efforts that were within the parameters of halachah. If meeting with a potential donor had to come at the expense of his prayer with a minyan, that was not the type of effort that was expected of him.

Having made his decision, he went to shul to daven. When davening was over, he looked at his watch and saw that it was already 9 o'clock. There did not seem to be any chance that the meeting could still take place, but he went to the train station anyway.

### **The Man Apologized for His Lateness**

When he arrived at the train station, an hour and a quarter after the scheduled time of the meeting, lo and behold, the man he was supposed to meet was arriving at exactly the same time! After the two shook hands, the man apologized for his lateness and explained that he had been delayed. He then presented the Ponovezher Rav with a generous check that adequately provided for the yeshivah for a long time afterward.

When the Ponovezher Rav returned to the yeshivah, he described the above incident in a speech he gave to the bachurim. "Had I given up on davening with a minyan," he said, "I would have been at the train station before 8 o'clock. Not only would I have lost the chance to daven with a minyan, but I would have also missed the meeting, for I would never have thought to wait until 9 o'clock for the person to arrive."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemini 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Aleinu L'Shabei'ach."*

# Feeding the Evil Spirits



Once, after a week of continuous efforts, the Baal Shem Tov succeeded in collecting the amount necessary to redeem a family imprisoned by a stubborn poritz, who had refused to free them until he received every penny that they owed him. They were finally set free late on Friday, so the Baal Shem Tov invited them to stay with him for Shabbos, for they would not be able to make it back to their town in time. They willingly agreed. At the seudas Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the Yid and asked, "So, what news have you heard today?"

## **Confused by the Baal Shem Tov's Question**

The Yid looked up in wonder: "But Rebbe, what news could have reached the dungeon in which we were imprisoned?"

"Then tell us something of your past," encouraged the Baal Shem Tov.

The Yid replied, "I can't think of anything worthy of telling about my life, but I just recalled a strange experience I had while I was imprisoned.

"In the same dungeon, at some distance from us, there was a group of people who cried and moaned all week long. It melted my heart. However, erev Shabbos after chatzos, they would begin to dance and laugh loudly, and I too would burst out laughing. This went on for weeks, but this week, the crying and screaming was louder than usual, as was the roaring laughter and the wild dancing which took its place.

During the entire time, I was too terrified to approach and speak to them and ask the reason for all this. We just huddled together in our corner. Yet, knowing that

we were to be freed shortly, I gathered enough courage to shout a question in their direction, 'Who are you?'

### **The Kelipos Depend on the Sin of a Certain Tzaddik**

"A voice from the far end of the pit responded, 'We are kelipos (the impurities) whose existence depends on the aveiros (sins) of a certain tzaddik. He doesn't eat all week long, breaking his fast only on erev Shabbos. He prepares a mug of milk in the morning, and puts it aside to drink when he finishes davening Shacharis.

"All week long, we are so overwhelmed by the power of his tzidkus that we cry. Every erev Shabbos, however, we cause someone in his family to accidentally spill the milk, causing him to become angry. From this anger, we receive our chayus (evil strength). This week he was determined to overcome his anger, because he realized that by getting angry, he could lose all of the ruchniusdike achievement that he had reached during the week. He therefore decided to lock the closet where he put the milk and not to give anyone the key. And that's why we were so upset this week,' the voice explained.

### **Offered the Wife a Cheap Bundle of Wood**

'We didn't know how we would be able to make him angry, but we were not prepared to give up so easily. This morning, one of us appeared as a woodcutter, knocked on the tzaddik's door, and offered his wife a bundle of wood at a cheap price. Her purse was in the same closet as the milk, and she asked her husband for the key. Anxious not to keep the woodcutter waiting, she knocked over the milk jug. Sure enough, the tzaddik exploded into a rage, and that's why we had so much to celebrate about today.'"

All the chassidim at the Baal Shem Tov's seuda listened to this strange story in amazement. Suddenly, one of them fell down in a faint. He was known to fast the entire week.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Kedoshim 5784 edition of the Weekly Farbrengen.*

# Whom Should You Marry?

The Dubno Magid zt"l (Sefer Mishlei Yaakov) explains with a moshol: There once were three friends who decided to travel to a far-away land to study new forms of wisdom. They agreed that each one of them would go to a different place to see what they could learn there, and after a year or two they would meet and share what they learned.

## **The Binoculars, the Wagon, The Medicine**

At their reunion, the first friend said, "I learned how to make binoculars that can see for miles into the distance."

The second friend said, "I learned how to make a wagon that can travel long distances in a short amount of time."

The third friend said, "I studied medicine and learned how to make remedies for all types of diseases."

The first man took out a pair of his binoculars to show them how they worked. They were able to see all the way to the king's palace, where they saw that the princess had fallen ill and no doctors were able to heal her.

The second man immediately prepared a wagon to get their very quickly, and the third man provided her with the cure she needed.

## **The Overjoyed King**

Of course, the king was overjoyed. He asked the three men how he could repay them. He said, "All of my riches would not suffice to express my gratitude. Therefore, I am prepared to give my daughter as a bride to one of you. It is up to you to decide who should marry her."

The three men began to argue with each other. The first one said that he should marry the princess because he was the one who saw the problem first. The second one argued that he was the one who got them to the palace so fast, while the third one said that he had made the medicine.

When the princess heard the argument, she said, "You all did your part to help me and I would not have been saved without each of your contributions. However, I will not need binoculars or fast wagons in the future, but it is very possible that I will get sick again and will need medicine. Therefore, the man who provided the cure is the one I will marry."

The nimshol is as follows: Chazal say (Kiddushin 30B) that there are three partners in a person: Hashem, his father, and his mother. One may wonder who

deserves the most honor. If one were to look to the past, they all seem equal, as the baby could not be created without the contributions of each partner. But if one were to look towards the future, it becomes obvious that Hashem deserves the most honor as the person no longer needs his parents to live, but he still needs Hashem to grant him every second of life. Therefore, Rashi says that one must honor Hashem more than his own parents.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Kedoshim 5784 edition of The Way of Emunah from the thoughts of Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.*

# **The Blessing of An Extra Week**

**By Rabbi Meir Wikler**

Tikvah and Shimon were a perfect match. Their personal life challenges allowed them to appreciate each other all the more. Tikvah had been born with spina bifida. Thanks to Hashem, she received extensive support from her parents and community; thus, her disability was hardly noticeable, save for a slight limp. She was a perky, bright and talented young lady.

Shimon suffered from diabetes. He was a serious yeshivah student, and they both shared the same goals and values. After their wedding, the young couple settled in Boston, where Shimon learned in a Kollel. They had finally found complete joy and happiness in their young lives.

## **A Most Ominous Diagnosis**

Ten months later their bubble burst. Shimon, who had not been feeling well of late, received an ominous diagnosis. His liver was functioning at about ten percent of its normal capacity. The only treatment was a liver transplant.

Tikvah's father flew to Boston to help the young couple wade through the myriad medical appointments and decisions. He realized that Shimon's chances of receiving a transplant were quite slim. First, he would have to be placed on a waiting list. Then, assuming his turn came up, the donor would have to be a proper match for Shimon. And even after the transplant, there would still be a possibility of organ rejection.

The complications ahead of them seemed staggering. Tikvah's father was a source of strength for the young couple. He told them, "I know the future looks very bleak, but we must never lose our trust in Hashem. We do not understand His ways at times, but we must always remember that everything He does is for the good, part of His plan, even when we don't see it right away."

Shimon was taking powerful drugs to keep him alive until a donor could be found. During one of Shimon's hospitalizations, his doctor entered the room one Thursday night and announced that Shimon would be discharged shortly. Tikvah's father, visiting at the time, asked if Shimon could stay another week, as he realized Shimon's chances of receiving a new liver were greater as a hospitalized patient.

### **The Doctor Allowed Shimon to Stay For One More Week**

Though the doctor could not justify Shimon remaining any longer in the hospital, he allowed Shimon to stay for one more week. The following Tuesday, the doctor brought them the incredible news that a donor had been found for Shimon! Grinning from ear to ear, the doctor told them, "You are even more fortunate than you can imagine! We are planning to give you not only a new liver, but also a new pancreas!"

His enthusiasm was lost on Tikvah and Shimon, who stared at him uncomprehendingly. The doctor explained: "Shimon is a diabetic with liver failure. Pancreatic transplants are never performed for diabetics because the risk of complications from the powerful immunosuppressant drugs that a transplant patient has to take is too great. But since we're going to give Shimon a new liver and he will need these drugs anyway, giving him a new pancreas as well entails no additional risk. If the transplant is successful, there is hope that Shimon's liver disease and his diabetes can be cured with a single operation!"

### **The Insurance Company Did Not Agree to Pay for All of the Treatments**

Shimon and Tikvah's jaws dropped open. They were overwhelmed. But that was not all. The doctor further explained that this kind of surgery had never been performed before, and their insurance company did not agree to pay for all of it. The liver transplant alone would cost the insurance company \$250,000, with the pancreas transplant costing an equally exorbitant amount.

The insurance company felt it would be cheaper for Shimon to live on insulin for the rest of his life. Since the hospital wanted credit for performing the first combined liver and pancreas transplant, they had agreed to waive all charges for the pancreas transplant!

All the hashgacha pratis Tikvah and Shimon had just experienced was indeed incredible, but it paled in comparison to another factor. Shimon's name came up during the last week of his over-extended hospitalization. Not only did his name come up while he was still in the hospital, giving him a priority status, but he was also chosen just seven days before the rules governing the waiting list were changed!

According to the new standards, Shimon would never have even come close to qualifying for a new liver! Shimon's double transplant was successful, and he recuperated in record time. He emerged as a whole and healthy young man, cured of his liver dysfunction and diabetes. Tikvah thought she was compromising when agreeing to marry Shimon. But Hashem's plan took them on a journey that made Shimon even healthier than before. (Zorei'a Tzedakos)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*