

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS NITZAVIM- VAYELECH 5783

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The Boy Who Rushed to Take Off His Tefillin



Every yeshiva has different rules and ways of doing things. One of the interesting ways of doing things in our yeshiva has to do with tefillin. You see, every bochur in our Beis Medrash, is expected to leave his tefillin on after davening Shacharis, and continue learning in his tefillin for a designated amount of time before removing his tefillin. It's an established and expected way of doing things.

We noticed that one of the newer bochurim was having a hard time adjusting to this. Shmuel would not only remove his tefillin right after Shacharis, but he was in such a rush, that we barely started Aleinu and Shmuel was already unwinding his

straps. Not just unwinding! It was as if he was looking to set a record of the fastest removal of tefillin!

We didn't know what to make of it, because a few of us explained the rules to him, and he seemed to be openly violating them. One day, our Rebbe finally called Shmuel over to talk to him. We all thought, boy is he going to get a shmooz from Rebbe!

Shmuel's Explanation to the Rebbe

After Shmuel returned from speaking with Rebbe, we couldn't control our curiosity, and asked Shmuel how it went. He sheepishly replied, "It was no big deal. I just explained to Rebbe why I rush to take off my tefillin every day."

We asked him, "Why?!? Why do you do that Shmuel? We ourselves have been wondering."

Shmuel replied, "I really didn't want to share this with anyone, as it's kind of personal, but since I'd like to clear my name, I will tell you. You see, I'm allergic to leather. If I wear the leather straps for a long time, I get a terrible reaction on my skin. I can wear it for davening, but I have to quickly remove it."

Wow, we never would've thought of that!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Spoler Zeide's And the Jewish "Gypsy"

The man, a follower of the great tzadik, the Spoler Zeide, came to him weeping bitterly. "Rebbe," he cried, "what am I to do? Stolen property was found in my courtyard, and I am being accused of being a thief. My lawyer tells me that I will not escape with less than three months in prison."

The Zeide listened and replied, "I will be a better lawyer for you, and you will receive only one month in prison."

Argues that He is an Innocent Man

"But, Rebbe," the man continued, plaintively, "I am an innocent man. Why must I be punished for a month?"

"I will tell you a tale of a similar incident which occurred to me, and you will understand. Once I was staying at the home of a very hospitable Jewish customs officer. I became friendly with another guest there, and when the Shabbat ended, we

made plans to continue our journey together. Unbeknownst to me, the other man had stolen some valuable pieces of silver from the house.

“As we proceeded down the road, we heard the sounds of a carriage approaching very fast. The man asked me to watch his pack for a moment and he disappeared in the mass of trees. The carriage stopped in front of me and I recognized the customs officer and a gentile officer.

Accused of Being a Thief

“Seize him,” the Jew cried. “He is the thief!”

“And before I knew what was happening they threw me into the back of the carriage and we drove away. When I recovered from the initial shock, I tried to explain that it was not I, but the other man who had stolen the silver, but they scorned my words. It was obviously nothing would avail, and I accepted it as the will of Heaven.

“I was thrown into a cell full of frightening criminals who found my appearance an occasion for great mirth. They pulled at my sidelocks and beard, and I could only entreat the One Above to rescue me from their evil clutches. They tried to extort money from me, but when they saw I had none, they set out to beat me.

“The first one laid into me as two others held me down. As soon as his hand touched me, he cried out in pain. His hand swelled and gushed with blood. The thieves and murderers who surrounded me took conference with one another. One said I was a sorcerer, another claimed I was a saint; regardless of their opinion, they all agreed to leave me alone.

The “Gypsy” Jew was Imprisoned for Being a Horse Thief

“When the immediate danger had passed, I looked around at the other prisoners. One, called “Gypsy” turned out to be, instead, a Polish Jew who had been imprisoned for horse-stealing. I realized that I had been incarcerated precisely in order to help this pathetic man repent. Little by little we spoke and I gained his trust. He related a sad tale of being orphaned and then falling in with a band of Gypsies, whose ways he adopted. “One morning the man came to me in a state of terror. He had dreamed of his dead parents who told him to do whatever I would instruct him. They said if he refused, he would die in his sleep. From that moment on he was the most willing penitent.

“Slowly, I instructed him in the Jewish religion. He stopped eating forbidden food, began to recite prayers, and begged the Al-mighty to forgive his errant ways. After several weeks passed, he even began sleeping near me and became completely attached to me in word and deed.

“A few days later I dreamed that Eliyahu told me to flee from that place and go to the town of Zlotopoli where I would be offered the position of beadle of the

town. But then I remembered the “Gypsy,” and my promise not to abandon him. But, I reasoned, if a miracle could come about for me, it could come about for him, too.

“I told the repentant man to follow me. When we came to the first door, we saw it was open. He held my belt and we passed through the door together, and continued into the black night, with no thought as to where we were going. Many hours later, we stopped at the house of a Jew who told us that we had found the path to Zlotopoly.

“Three days later, we arrived in the town, and I was appointed to the position of beadle. So, you see, don’t complain about the judgements of G-d, for they are very deep and beyond the understanding of men. Just be strong in your faith, for I can assure you that everything that happens, no matter how it appears, is only for the good. And, as I promised, you will sit in prison no more than one month.”

Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Teitzei 5783 edition of L’Chaim weekly.

Toras Avigdor Junior

Ugo the Ugly is Caught

By Aharon Spetner

Lythbourne, Valundia (5229 – 1469)

“Hear ye, hear ye!” came a voice, crying in the distance. “Ewald,” called a woman who was carrying a large basket of fish. “What is going on?”

Nearby, a man looked up from the well.

“It sounds like a royal proclamation,” replied Ewald. “Come, Fiorella, let’s go see what it’s all about.”

Fiorella put down her basket of fish and hurried with her husband to the town square, where a crowd was gathering. As they approached, they heard the clattering of horse’s hooves coming towards them.

“I was right, Fiorella,” Ewald said. “Look, it’s the royal horses!” Fifteen large horses rushed into the town square with riders carrying royal banners and the flag of Valundia. It was an impressive sight.

The horses came to a stop and tossed their manes impressively. In the center, sitting atop the largest horse was a royal knight in full armor, carrying a large scroll.

“Hear ye, hear ye!” he cried loudly. “In the name of his majesty the king! It has been so declared, and duly ordered, that the thief who is known as ‘Ugo the Ugly’ shall be put to death!”

The townspeople gasped. They had heard of the atrocious crimes committed by Ugo the Ugly - was he hiding in their town?

Whoever Delivers Ugo the Ugly Thief will be Handsomely Rewarded

“Furthermore,” the knight continued, “the man or woman who shall deliver this thief to the hands of the royal guards, shall be handsomely rewarded by the king himself!”

No sooner had the knight finished reading the royal proclamation than a farmer stumbled into the town square, dragging a man behind him, bound in ropes and mud all over his face.

“I caught him!” announced the farmer. “He was in my barn, trying to steal my chickens!”

The knight leapt off his horse and looked at the man, who was struggling to get free.

“How do we know that it is he?” asked the knight.

“Well, I just told you, he was trying to steal my chickens!” the farmer said, somewhat annoyed.

“Ewald!” Fiorella exclaimed excitedly. “That is the very same man who stole our fish last week!”

“And last week he killed and ate one of my sheep!” another man said angrily.

The King’s Knight Decrees Death by Hanging

“Well, that is enough evidence for me!” the knight said. “By order of his majesty the king, I order you to death by hanging! The execution shall take place at six o’clock this evening!”

Another gasp filled the town square.

Immediately, two of the guards took off in the direction of the royal palace, while the others tied up their horses and began building a large-gallows.

A few hours later the townspeople gathered once again to witness the execution. Ugo the Ugly was led up to the gallows and the executioner prepared the noose.

Suddenly the sound of trumpets were heard, as two royal riders in splendid purple and red coats road into the townsquare, followed by a large ornate chariot.

“Behold!” they cried. “His majesty, the king!”

The townspeople all bowed as King Marzander IV descended from his royal coach.

As the king watched, the knight announced: “In the name of his majesty the king, the execution of the evil Ugo the Ugly shall now commence!”

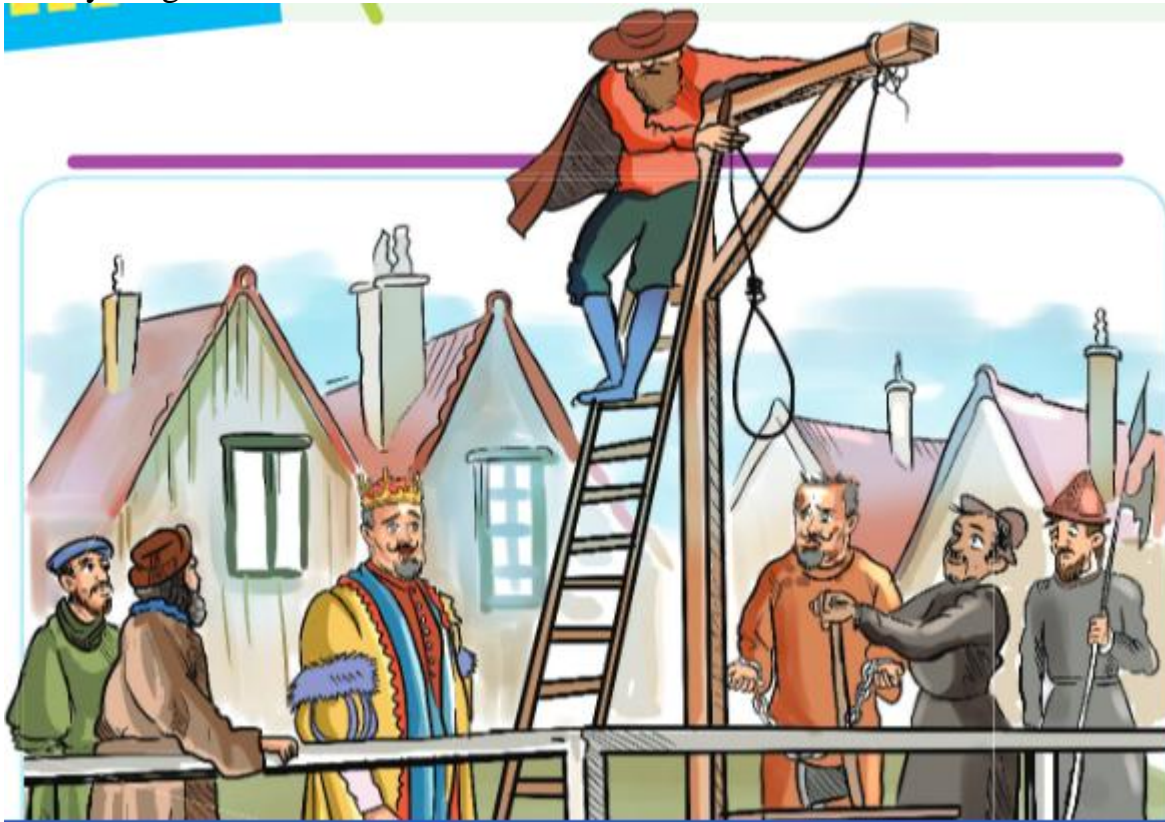
The executioner did his job, and everyone cheered. But the King had a look of concern on his face as he looked at Ugo hanging from the gallows.

“Remove the mud from his face!” he ordered sharply.

Quickly, the executioner took a rag and wiped the mud off of Ugo’s face. Screams of shock filled the air.

“My brother!” the king exclaimed. “My twin brother Lysandor! You! You were Ugo the Ugly, the worst criminal to ever plague the peaceful nation of Valundia?”

Indeed, Ugo looked exactly like the king! A tear trickled down the king’s face. Everyone, including the royal guards, watched awkwardly, too frightened to say or do anything.



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

“Take him down!” the king ordered suddenly. “Take him down this instant! It is a disgrace to the kingdom!”

Quickly, the royal guards lowered the body of Ugo / Lysandor from the gallows, covered him with a cloth, and loaded him into the back of the king’s chariot. The king quickly climbed inside and rode off, accompanied by the knight and the guards.

* * *

In Parsha Ki Seitzei, the Torah tells us that when a Yid chas veshalom needs to be killed by Beis Din, his body is not allowed to be left hanging on display overnight. And the reason is because we are made - in the image of Hashem. It is a terrible disgrace to leave a portrait of Hashem hanging dead for all to see. So, Hashem says “take him down, because he looks like Me.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

When we look at the faces of our friends we must think about how they resemble Hashem, and treat them with respect.

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5783 edition of Toras Avigdor Junior, based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

The King Has the Power

From Rav Elielech Biderman as

Written by Yisroel Besser



Rav Yitzchak Tuvia Weiss

The Gaavad of the Eidah HaChareidis in Yerushalayim, Rav Yitzchak Tuvia Weiss, was a child when World War II broke out. He lived in a small Slovakian town called Pesing, where the community leaders were uncertain as to how to proceed. They decided to send a child, who would not attract attention, to the closest big city to try to glean information about what lay ahead.

Bright young Tuvia was dispatched on this mission, and when he reached Pressburg, he saw only devastation and loss. He went to meet with the rosh hakahal, who had no good news to share. The rosh hakahal was very taken by the sincere, courageous young boy, and he offered him a chance at life — a coveted ticket on the Kindertransport to England.

Tuvia returned to Pesing to discuss the offer with his parents. Understanding the reality of the situation, they encouraged him to hurry and go. After a tearful farewell, he left and joined thousands of children on the voyage to England, his mother's cries of "Tuvia'le, bleib a Yid, remember that you are a Jew," ringing in his ears.

Here, Reb Meilech's voice seems to crack. "Remain a Jew," he says twice, and then concludes, "parents and their child parting from one another until techiyas hameisim."



King George V

When they arrived, the British government celebrated them, these children who had been snatched out of the jaws of danger and saved, and a large welcoming ceremony was held in a public park. The children lined up and, at one point, the king [George V] passed through the group of assembled children, studying the young people saved by his government.

Suddenly, a boy standing near young Tuvia Weiss began to shout, “Your highness, your highness,” throwing himself at the royal carriage. The guards attempted to push him away, but his frantic cries attracted the attention of the monarch, who summoned him closer.

“Honored king,” the child said, tears running down his cheeks, “I owe you my life. You have been so kind to give me this chance and I can never repay you. But your highness, my heart is heavy when I contemplate the fate of my parents who are still back home, the ground burning beneath their feet. The enemy is all around them, so what good is my life when they are in such peril? Please, your highness, help them too.”

The king was moved by the pleas of the young boy, and he asked for the details regarding the child’s family. Two weeks later, Rav Weiss related, that family had been located and brought to England as well.

The Gaavad of Yerushalayim reflected on what had happened. There were one thousand children there, and each and every one of them knew how incredibly difficult it had been to rescue them. But this child asked anyway, because he knew that the king had the power to do it, and with his sincere plea, he succeeded in moving the king! They all had the same chance, but none of the others believed they could do it, so none of them did it.

That’s Chodesh Elul! HaMelech basadeh. During these holy days, He is close by, the King visiting His subjects, and we have the chance to call out, “My king, dear king, hear my pleas... hear my pleas, and have mercy...”

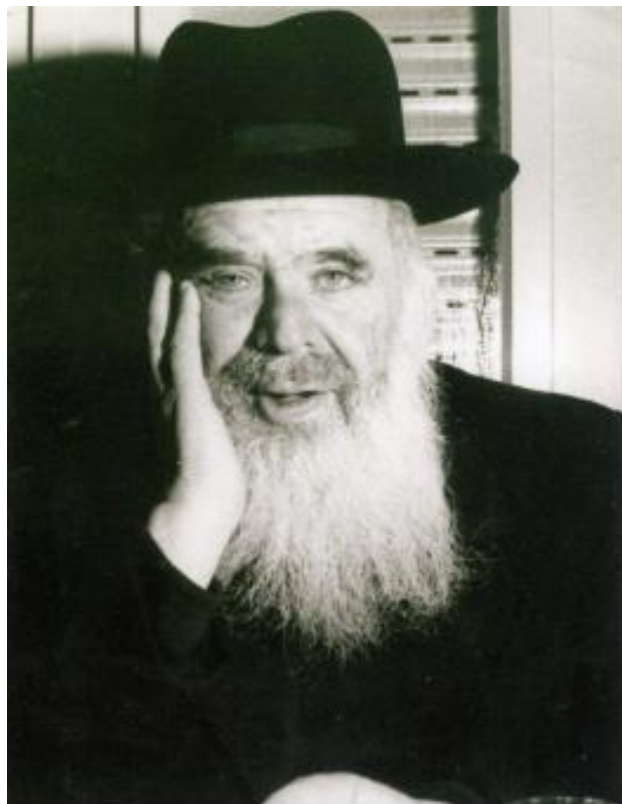
Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the new ArtScroll book – “Around the Year with Reb Meilech.”

A Time to Criticize or a Time to Praise?

A distinguished member of the Yerushalayim community; an individual who zealously upheld the Torah and Mitzvos – and made a “point” to see to it that others also did so – once came to Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, ZT”L, with a complaint concerning two yeshivah students.

Apparently, this man’s apartment was opposite Yeshivas Mir, allowing him to have an unobstructed view of what was going on in the area. He claimed that he saw two students perusing a secular newspaper in a store that was in the proximity of the yeshivah. He felt that a yeshivah bachur had no business reading such a paper and one who did should be taken to task.

“How,” he declared, “could someone commit such a dastardly act within the immediate locality of the yeshivah? The holy yeshivah is a place of refuge for elevating one’s Fear of Heaven. How can such bachurim be accepted in the yeshivah? The man continued ranting and raving as if these two boys had committed the biggest sin.



Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zt”l

The Rosh Yeshivah replied, “You are correct. We must address the situation and see to it that it does not occur again. However, let me ask you a question. You have been living in this area for quite some time.

“Have you ever taken the time to issue a compliment concerning the extraordinary diligence, of our students, who can be found learning until very late at night? Do you ever laud the study of character refinement

that exemplifies our yeshivah? What about the dignity and Fear of Heaven displayed by our students? Are you quick to recognize that?

“No! It is only when you something negative that you come running. Perhaps, if you will accustom yourself to seeing the good and positive and accentuating it – your criticism will be viewed as constructive – not disparaging.” (Story from “Peninim on the Torah”)

Comment: Rashi (on Devarim 24:9) attributes Miriam’s punishment to speaking ill of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Targum Yonasan holds that her shortcoming was in wrongly suspecting Moshe of wrongdoing.

Rav Kalmen Pinsky, zt”l, says that the main sin of slanderous speech lies not in the speaking, but in the negative outlook that the speaker has, which serves as the precursor of his slanderous comments. Let us see the positive in others and avoid Lashon Harah.

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5783 email of Torah Sweets.

Risking Her Life to Free Her Fiancé from the Gestapo

By Rabbi David Bibi

Last night Chantelle and I attended a very small wedding ceremony in a restaurant in Manhattan.

Rabbi Abitan would always remind us that when something good occurred, we should chalk it up to zechut avot, the merit of those who came before us and I wondered at the zechut avot of this very special couple.

The father of the chatan during the ceremony read a short note from the Head of the Jewish Community, Mr. Dubinsky, in Nice France written in Elul 5704 – that's the equivalent of September 1944. It was during Elul that year that France was liberated from the Nazi, yimach shemam. Nice was liberated by the resistance on August 28th and the Americans arrived on the 30th.

The Wedding of the Grandparents of the Chattan

Two weeks later this note was read celebrating the first Jewish wedding – the wedding of the grandparents of the Chattan. Translating from the Yiddish: “I want to express my joy at being present and to welcome this young couple, This is an historic wedding, the first Jewish wedding following the “flood”, the bloody flood which nearly drowned the Jewish people of Europe.

The interest is even greater as the groom nearly fell as a sacrifice to the Gestapo and already found himself under their nails, but his bride with a thousand dangers in every step through her dedication and courage saved him from their hands. I say to them from the depths of my heart, Mazal Tov and wish this endearing couple fortunate life for you and Am Yisrael, Amen.”

The Rest of the Story

Well as you can imagine, I needed to hear the rest of the story.

The young man who was to be arrested by the Gestapo was born in Austria to a well to do family. Shortly before the War he found himself in Montecarlo. He spent an evening gambling in the casino and as he left the Casino, he encountered a man climbing the wall of the bridge and about to jump. He ran to him, grabbed him, held him and brought him back.

The distraught man was also from Austria. He begged to be allowed to end his life. Why asked the young man.

The older Austrian answered that he had lost everything in the Casino and could not face his family.

The young man opened his wallet and told the older man that money was no reason to end a life. He begged the man to take all of his own winnings. The older man was overcome by the kindness of the younger one and the two formed a bond.

The war begins, and the Germans after a short and powerful assault beginning in May 1940 capture and subjugate over the course of six short weeks, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Two Different Paths in the War

The Older Austrian takes his role as an office for the Third Reich involved in procurement and production of war materials. The younger one becomes part of the resistance in France.

Then in the spring of 1944, the young man is arrested and is help by the Gestapo in Lyon, France.

Many of you will recall the infamous monster, Nikolaus Barbie, a German officer of the SS and SD who worked in Vichy France during World War II. He became known as the "Butcher of Lyon" for having personally tortured prisoners—primarily Jews and members of the French Resistance—as the head of the Gestapo in Lyon.

Setting her own fears aside, the fiancé of the arrested young man comes up with a plan. She had heard the story of the Austrian on the bridge who and was able to track him down. She travelled under false papers and met with him and risking her own life begs him to help.

The Jewish Girl Voluntarily Enters the Gestapo Headquarters

They come up with a plan and build a story detailing that the arrested man is an integral part of Germany's war machine. The Austrian officer volunteers to go to Lyon on his own, but she doesn't trust that he won't walk away if things get tough so she insists on joining him. This 22-year-old Jewish girl steps into the Gestapo headquarters and although she is met with a confrontation over the release is able to walk out with her fiancé before he would have been sent to almost certain death at a concentration camp.

Rabbi Abittan would often quote Shelomo HaMelech from the book of Kohelet: Cast thy bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days...

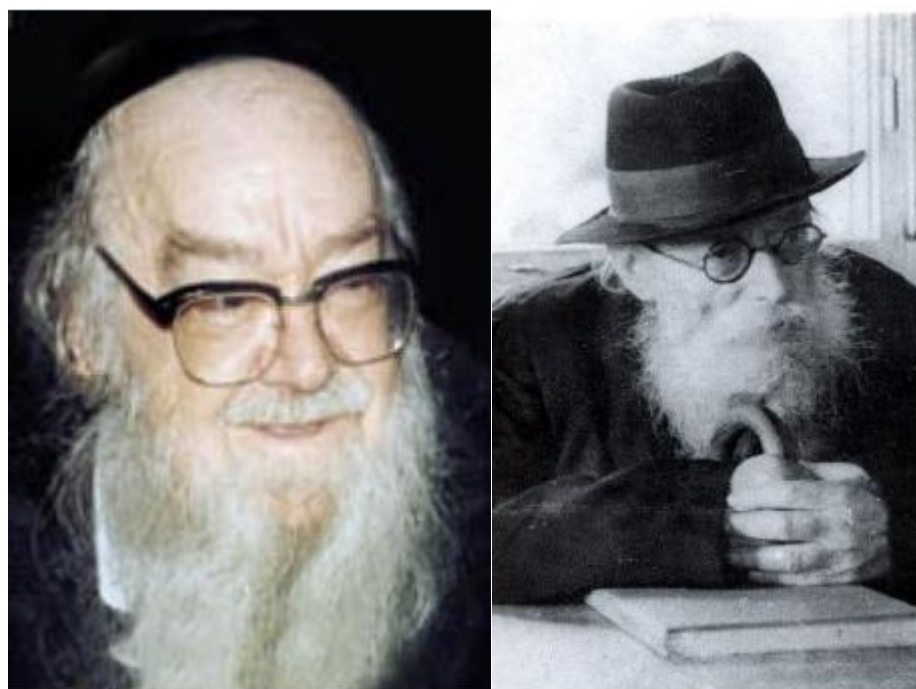
The Rabbi would explain that one should always be ready to do a good deed and never to expect a reward for it. For, someday, you will surely find your reward waiting for you.

The young man who was saved was a baal chesed – a person of kind deeds – who continued to go out of his way his entire life and certainly did countless good deeds before and after the war, but it was the sympathy and empathy he had for a stranger in need, the Austrian he encountered on a bridge in Montecarlo, undoubtedly orchestrated by G-d, which would be instrumental in saving his life and releasing him from the fire of the Holocaust.

And his wife would set an example of what it truly means to have mesirut nefesh, to be willing to risk everything and anything for someone else. What an inspiration for a couple entering into marriage and a lifetime with each.

Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5783 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

A Time to Make Others Laugh and Serve Hashem with Simcha



Rav Shalom Schwadron, zt”l (left) and the Chazon Ish, zt”l

Rav Sholom Shwadron, zt”l, would deliver Mussar Drashos that were filled with humor, and he would make jokes that would poke fun at behaviors that were

destructive. Some people thought that this was inappropriate Leitzanus, lightheaded joking around, and they told him that it wasn't proper to speak in this manner.

Rav Sholom wasn't certain if they were correct or not, so he went to ask the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz), zt"l. The Chazon Ish said, "Give me an example of what you say at your Drashos."

Rav Sholom Shwardon stood up, took a Shtender, and spoke exactly as he would before many people. The Chazon Ish laughed and said, "You should always speak that way. With your humor, you will save Bnei Yisroel!"

The Chazon Ish continued and said, "In Lithuania, there were great Talmidei Chachamim, and they were outstanding Yirei Hashem too. But nevertheless, many young people fell to the Haskalah movement, because the Maskilim, the so-called 'enlightened ones' incorporated joy, while we didn't. We need a lot of Simchah today. We must serve Hashem with Simchah!"

Their Side of the Story

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter zt"l used to say, "Before I learned about Mussar and self-improvement of our moral and ethical character, I used to get upset with everyone except myself. Once I began studying Mussar, I realized that I was angry at everyone, including myself. After a while of learning Mussar, I realized that I was angry at myself and no one else."

The harder it is to judge someone favorably, the more reward we earn. But it's not a zero-sum game. It's not that you must look at someone else who's doing something wrong and say, "He's doing a mitzvah!"

That's judging someone one hundred percent favorably. Even if it's sixty percent or forty percent or twenty percent.

"He's not doing something right, but he doesn't know better." Or, "He knows better, but the pressure he's under must be unbelievable," that too is judging someone favorably.

Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5783 edition of the Torahanytime.com Newsletter.