

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TETZAVEH 5784

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## The Key that Wouldn't Open the Nobleman's Safe

By Yehuda Z Klitnick



**Home of the Rebbe in Husyatyn**

Graf Gulchovsky possessed numerous towns and villages across Austria and was a very wealthy individual. In Galicia, he also held seven towns. Because he was an Ohev Yisrael and respected Jews, he hired a large number of them, who helped his firm succeed. In times of need, the Graf was there to support the Yidden no matter what.

Due to his wealth, he was able to join the Austrian Parliament, the Reichstag, and he grew close to King Franz Yossef. The son of the Holy Rizhiner, Harav Yisrael Friedman, the Great Rebbe Rav Mordechai Shraga of Husyatin, was niftar on 22nd of Iyar in 1894.

### **The King was Saddened by the Death of the Rebbe**

Articles about the Rebbe, who was also well-liked by the Goyim, appeared in newspapers all over the nation. The King received the sad news. Graf Gulchovsky was called by the King, who was present at the Reichstag conference during this period. When the Graf replied negatively to a question about whether he knew the Rebbe from Husyatin, the King was taken aback to learn that Husyatin was one of the towns in his territory.

The King started telling tales of the Rebbe's brilliance and his radiant holy face, saying he would never forget such a face. The Graf pledged to get to know the Tzadik's family. The Graf himself visited Husyatin accompanied by a group of Jewish laborers.

Upon reaching Husyatin, they discovered that Harav Yisroel, the son of the Rebbe, had assumed his father's role. The Graf requested a formal appointment with the Rebbe's son because he was eager to meet him. The Graf told the Rebbe throughout the encounter how much the King admired his father. He told the Rebbe that many Jews worked for him and that he always assisted the Jews.

### **The Rebbe Thanked the Graf for His Kindness to the Jews**

The Graf was commended by the Rebbe for his kindness toward the Jews and for his good comments. After expressing his admiration for the Rebbe, the Graf promised to always be at his disposal. After they parted ways, the Graf sent a driver and an aristocratic wagon to the Rebbe's home to support the Rebbe on his travels. The Rebbe used this wagon, which the Chassidim recall.

One year, the Graf summoned all of the notables and dignitaries from the region to a massive birthday celebration. The Rebbe received a personal invitation to the celebration because he was close to the Graf. The Rebbe replied that he couldn't attend the celebration but that he would see the Graf in his garden later because he knew there would be too much drinking and partying.

The Graf was quite happy, and a meeting was scheduled. The Graf was anxious but also very excited about the meeting. He addressed the Rebbe with great warmth. The Graf was trying to show the Rebbe something spectacular, but he was at a loss for ideas. At last, he realized that somewhere among his valuables was a very costly gift he had received but had never shown anyone. With the unique key

in hand, the Graf trusted his servant to unlock the safe and retrieve the pricey antique jewelry for the Rebbe.

The servant should not take long to bring the antique jewelry, the Graf apologized to the Rebbe. The Graf requested that the Rebbe stay, so he complied, saying he would wait until the servant returned. Meanwhile, the servant was unable to open the box and thought he was given the wrong key.

### **The Graf was Shocked by the Key's Failure to Open the Lock**

The Graf was sure that this was the right one and excused himself to try and open it. The Graf was shocked that the key did not open the box. He returned to the Rebbe and apologized and asked the Rebbe to wait until he checked out if this was the correct key or not!

The Rebbe answered that it was getting late and he needed to return home. He thanked the Graf for his time and willingness to share his precious gift with the Rebbe. The Graf was quite disappointed because he wanted to impress the Rebbe by showing him the great treasure. Regretfully he thanked the Rebbe for coming and promised the Rebbe that he was always available to help him and all the Jews.

Meanwhile, Graf was puzzled as to why the box didn't open. He was positive that this was the correct key. The Jewish workers were keen to later relate that they went along with the Graf to open the box and to the dismay of the Graf and the others; the key was the correct one and the box opened up. The Graf took out the piece of jewelry and showed it to Jewish workers.

### **The Jewish Workers Understood Hashem's Reward to the Rebbe**

To their amazement, they saw that this jewelry was an antique cross that the Graf received from the Pope! The Jews now understood the divine hand of Hashem and didn't want to make the eyes of the Holy Rebbe impure. Hashem made a miracle that the box didn't open. Holy eyes can only see pure and holy items.

The Tiferes Shlomo of Radomskays: When a person guards his eyes, Hashem will guard him from all trouble and sorrow.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Beshalach 5784 email of Pardes Yehuda.*

# **“Es Vet Zain Gut!” It Will Be Well**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**



Many years ago, our Yeshiva established an audio Torah tape library. I looked in the Yellow Pages and found a company that sold tape labels. A very knowledgeable representative took my call. Clearly Jewish, she had a Brooklyn accent, and spiced her words with some Yiddish expressions. I felt comfortable dealing with someone who I believed, knew about Jewish institutions. I said I would call her back and asked for her name. She answered proudly, “Esther.” “Last name?” I inquired. After a brief pause, I received an answer that surprised me. “Scatteregio.”

## **But, She Had a Jewish Son**

“Scatteregio?” I repeated in amazement. Stepping where perhaps I should not have, I explained my perplexity. “Actually,” I offered, “I was expecting Cohen or Goldberg.” She paused, “You are right, I am Jewish and my first husband was Goldman.” Another pause. “But now I’m remarried, and it’s “Scatteregio.” She took a deep breath. “But I have a Jewish son, Rick, and he really wants to observe. In fact, he wants me to allow him to study in an Israeli Yeshiva.”

I knew that this was not destined to be a telephone call only about tape. For half an hour, I talked about the importance of Yeshiva, and how Rick could be her link to her past and connection with her future. I never knew what kind of impact my words made. I remember leaving my name (Mordechai) and talking about my namesake's influence on an Esther of yesteryear. I ended the conversation with the words "Esther, es vet zain gut!" (Yiddish for it will be well!)

### **Took My Children to a Local Park**

Ten years later, during the intermediate days of Passover I took my children to a local park. Many Jewish grandparents were there, watching the next generations slide and swing. An older woman wearing pants and smoking a cigarette was holding the hand of a young boy who was wearing a large kipah and had thick payot.

As one of my children offered to play with the little boy, I nodded hello and smiled. With tremendous pride, she began talking about her grandchildren. "Do you know my son Reuven? He was studying in a Far Rockaway yeshiva until now and just took a job in the city."

"Wonderful," I said, "but I don't know your son."

She told me about the struggles of making a living, and I had no choice but to listen and smile. Instinctively I responded, "Es vet zain gut!" Things will be fine.

Her eyes locked on me. She stared in disbelief.

"Mordechai?"

"Esther?"

### **Her Grandchildren Were Truly Her Nachas**

We just shook our heads in disbelief, and to my amazement, she told me that Rick did go to Yeshiva, these were his children, and they were truly her nachas (pride and joy).

I never will know if my words helped turn Rick into Reuven, but I am sure that the words, "es vet zain gut" assuring someone that things will be all right, was a statement not easily forgotten. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Beshalah 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# From Tattoos to Torah

By Mordy Mehlman



**Roi Marcel Assaraf**

Last week, I had the great zchus of having private interview with Roi Marcel Assaraf, the legendary tattooed Israeli who miraculously survived the Hamas attack, and subsequently became a Baal Teshuva together with his wife Yonah. I was mesmerized by him and his story, and would like to share it with you.

Roi owns a successful hair salon in Tel Aviv, and is married with two daughters. He had little connection to religion, and as he told me, “My entire life was one big party, devoting all my energy and essence to having fun. I had my entire body painted with tattoos as form of art, but in reality they represented the frivolities of life which I now realize are meaningless.

How did his life take such a sudden turn, and what lessons does Roi have for us?

On that fateful October 7<sup>th</sup>, he and his wife were at the Nova Music Festival, and while filming it in the early morning hours, notice smoke and missiles coming in their direction. Visualizing his precious daughters back home, he instantly decided to leave, raced with his wife to their car and drove as fast as they could down the highway.

When 20 terrorists started firing machine guns at his vehicle, he instinctively pushed his and his wife’s head down while screaming Shema Yisroel. To this day

he doesn't know how the car stayed on the road without him looking out the front windshield, and he miraculously reached Jerusalem and his daughters that same morning. He instantly realized they were saved by Hashem, and decided to change his life. He now wears a yarmulka, his wife covers her hair for Shabbos, and they have adopted a religious lifestyle including shmiras Shabbos, taharas hamishpacha, and wearing tefillin daily.

### **Praising Hashem for Helping Them Survive**

He wants his story spread around the world to strengthen other Jews and praise Hashem for helping them survive. In addition, he is already working on a book that will list the countless miracles Hashem performed for him and others on that day.

Roi and his family are now headed for a life of Torah, something that would have been unfathomable before October 7<sup>th</sup>.

It sounds hard to comprehend, but understandable with the pintele Yid – the flame of Yiddishkeit that every Jew possesses in their heart, no matter their level of religiosity. No Jew is ever too far from Hashem, as the Kotzker Rebbe explains in next week's parsha: It should begin "Lech el Paroah" (Go to Paroah) and not "Bo el Paroah" (Come to Paroah).

In reality, a person never "goes" to or from Hakodosh Baruch Hu, because it is impossible to distance oneself from One who fills the entire world. So, Hashem was saying "Come with Me, since I am with you wherever you go."

The most challenging part of my interview with Roi was when I asked him how he and others came closer to Yiddishkeit after witnessing all the death and destruction, rather than giving it up altogether and losing whatever little Emunah and bitachon they had.

### **Overcome by a Love of Hashem and a Deep Desire to Grow**

His amazing answer: "On October 7, 15 of my good friends were butchered to death, and two more are hostages in Gaza. Until that day, my life was empty, just occupied with nonsense that seemed like fun. After the tragedy, I felt reborn, and I heard the call from Hashem. Every day I hear voices calling to me and steering me on the proper path. Before that day, I had at times attended Torah classes, but was always afraid to give up my fun. Now, my fears of the unknown strictures of Judaism have been overcome by a love of Hashem and a deep desire to grow."

Throughout the interview, people in the restaurant lined up for brachos from Roi, who was brought to America by Rabbi Eli Gewirtz of Partners in Torah. I honestly felt inadequate and humbled in comparison to this great man who has a bright future for himself, his family, and all of Klal Yisroel.

*Reprinted in the January 11, 2024 edition of The FJJ (Flatbush Jewish Journal).*

# **The Young Man “Without” Peyos**

The Landaus were concerned about their daughter Miriam’s growing frustration in finding her intended match. Miriam was 21 years old, a successful teacher in a school in Yerushalayim, and very popular amongst her circle of friends in their Bayit Vegan neighborhood.

## **A Neighbor’s Suggestion**

When Rabbi Landau mentioned the latest suggestion proposed by a neighbor, Miriam simply did not feel like meeting the young man. Not that she wasn’t interested in getting married; she just wanted to make sure that the young man was “in the ball park” of what she sought in a future mate. She did not want to experience another evening of disappointment and frustration. Miriam did not turn down their neighbor’s suggestion... she just asked her father if he could informally meet the young man first.

“You already know in your sleep what kind of boy I am looking for,” Miriam told her father. “Meet him first, and if you think it’s worthwhile for me to meet him, then I will...”

Miriam then reminded her father, “And please don’t forget to make sure that he doesn’t have peyos hiding behind his ears!” Rabbi Landau smiled; he knew his daughter’s likes and dislikes well. He felt Miriam’s suggestion was fair, and called their neighbor to arrange to meet the young man at his yeshivah.

First, however, Rabbi Landau asked for information about the boy – Yehoshua Mandel – and found that “on paper” all the facts seemed to fit perfectly into the prototype of whom Miriam wanted to marry. Rabbi Landau met Yehoshua in the yeshivah dining room, and the two went outside for a walk. They spoke about a variety of topics, and after twenty minutes, parted ways.

## **Noticed that Yehoshua Had No Peyos Behind His Ears**

Yehoshua left to attend his afternoon seder. Rabbi Landau waited on the sidewalk as Yehoshua turned to enter the yeshivah. Perfect, he thought to himself, as he scrutinized the boy’s head – no peyos behind the ears.

A week later, Miriam and Yehoshua met. Six weeks later, they were engaged; the wedding took place two weeks before Pesach. The following Sukkos brought the young couple to the Landaus. On the first night of Yom Tov, as Yehoshua left to



learn in a local yeshivah, Rabbi Landau noticed tufts of hair growing behind his ears. He couldn't help but ask Miriam about this – after all, it had been SO important to her NOT to marry a boy with peyos tucked behind the ears.

Miriam burst out laughing, as she explained: “Yehoshua has had peyos behind his ears since he was a young boy. The day he was to meet you for the first time, he needed a haircut. Normally, his roommate in the yeshivah gave him haircuts. But that day his roommate wasn't there, so Yehoshua went to a barbershop. Before he noticed what was happening, the barber had accidentally trimmed one of his peyos! The barber apologized, but it was too late. Yehoshua asked the barber to trim the other one as well, as he was too embarrassed to meet you with only one.

**“Once I Got to Know Yehoshua,  
I Realized How Silly I'd Been”**

“He kept the peyos short until after the wedding, as he would have looked unkempt trying to grow them back. After the wedding, when Yehoshua told me he would grow the peyos back again, I had to laugh. It was something that mattered so much to me before we met, but mattered so little after we were married. I had always associated longer peyos with overly serious, somber personalities. Once I got to know Yehoshua, I realized how silly I'd been.”

Hashem arranged for Yehoshua's roommate to be elsewhere on the day he needed to have his hair cut prior to meeting R' Landau; for the barber to trim one of his peyos so that Yehoshua had the other one trimmed in order to even out the error. If his peyos had been long as usual, Miriam would have never agreed to meet him! (Einei Hashem)

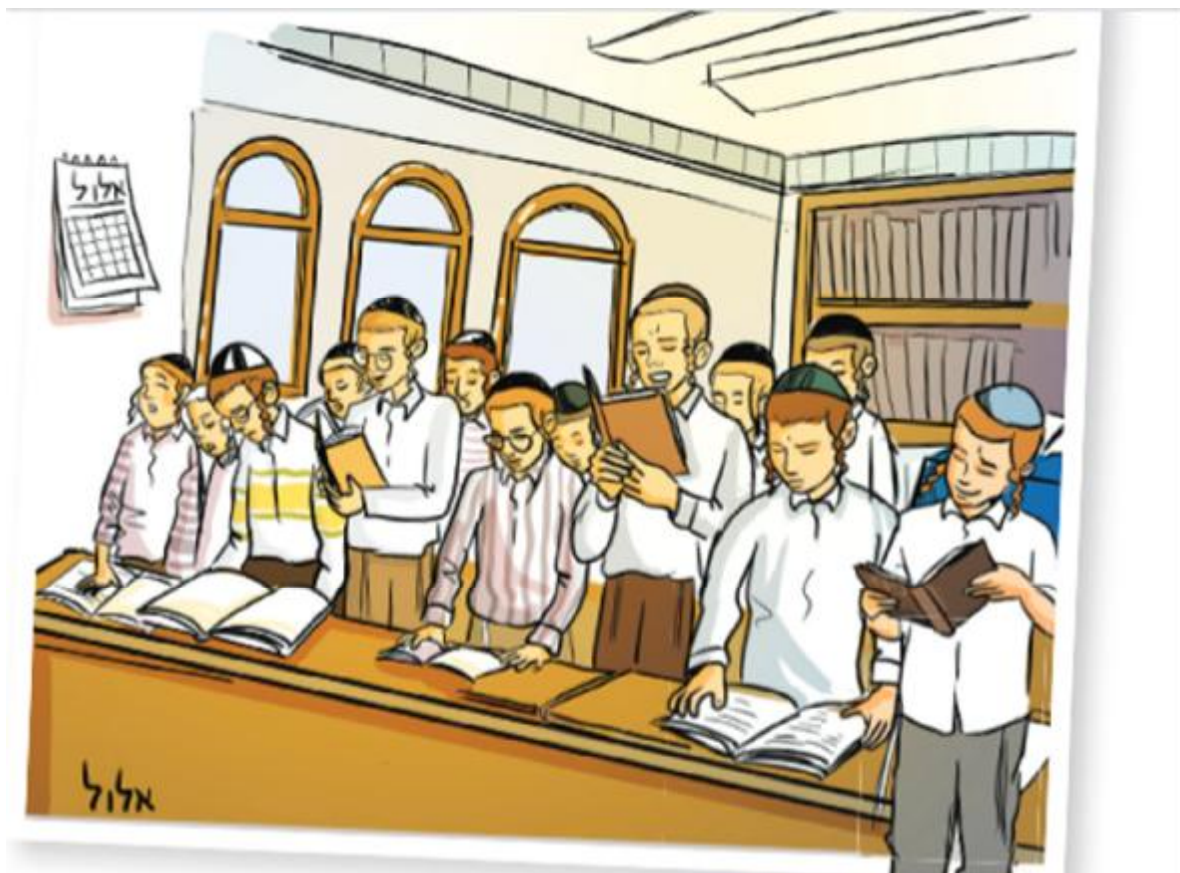
Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

## **Cozying Up**

**By Aharon Spetner**

Mendel was so excited. Now that he was in sixth grade, his class would finally get to daven Mincha with the older boys in the cheder's beis midrash. The beis midrash was originally the main Horki shul before the new building was built - the Horki Rebbe used to daven there every day! Countless stories were told about the mofsim that the Rebbe performed in this holy room.

Mendel and his classmates made their way to Mincha full of excitement. They slowly walked into the holy room filled with awe. They found their new seats and trembled when the chazan began korbanos.



**Illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

“Ashrei yoshvei veisecha!!!” Mendel and his classmates screamed along with the older boys and the rebbeim. It was such an incredible feeling, davening in this place of kedusha. Mendel didn’t take his eyes from his siddur, scared to even look around for one second. During Shmoneh Esrei, it was so quiet you could have heard the hairs falling out of Tzadok HaTzadik’s beard, had he been there!

“That was the best Shmoneh Esrei of my life,” Mendel told his friend Heshy as they made their way to the schoolyard after davening ended. “I don’t remember ever having so much kavanah.”

“Me too,” agreed Heshy. “I could feel the kedusha of the holy beis midrash flowing through me - I bet my tefillos went straight to the kisei hakavod!”

Five months later

“Mendel,” said Heshy, as the boys made their way to mincha. “I’ve brought my new Flybar SuperDisk 5200 to cheder today!”

“You mean the frisbee that flashes as it spins and plays music as it flies?” whispered Mendel excitedly as they entered the beis midrash.

“Yeah, I already loaded the new Jimmy Newbrush album on it,” Heshy replied, opening his siddur. “Did you hear the new song, Lecha Noveia?”

“No, my sister was telling me about it, though - I can’t wait to hear it.”

There was a loud “clopp” on the bimah and the boys looked up to see their rebbe, Rabbi Tannenbaum, glaring at them. The boys quickly stopped talking and looked into their siddurim.

It was hard for Mendel to concentrate during davening, as he kept thinking about Heshy’s SuperDisk.

And it didn’t help that during chazoras hashatz Heshy was moving his head in circles, pretending to be a frisbee. He couldn’t help but giggle, until he got another stern look from Rabbi Tannenbaum.



**illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

After davening, the sixth graders all rushed to be the first out of the beis midrash so they could have an extra fifteen seconds to play during recess.

“Wait, boys,” Rabbi Tannenbaum demanded.

Everyone froze at the sound of Rabbi Tannenbaum’s gruff order.

“Sit back down in your seats,” he said.

Everyone quickly returned to their seats in the beis midrash.

“What’s going on with you boys?” Rabbi Tannenbaum asked, his voice softer. “Do you remember the first time you walked into this beis midrash? You were shaking with excitement and wonder at the opportunity to enter such a holy room.

And now? What happened? Boys are whispering during davening, making silly faces, giggling? What changed?"

Everyone sat sheepishly as Rabbi Tannenbaum continued.

"When Klal Yisroel received the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu warned them not to get too close to Har Sinai, because getting too close to a place of such kedusha was punishable by death. That's important to remember, because a beis midrash is also a place of kedusha. It's not on the same level as Har Sinai, where we couldn't come physically close to it, but at the same time we cannot act in a beis midrash the way we would act during recess in the schoolyard.

### **"So, What Happened?"**

"Now I know that you boys are aware of this, because on Rosh Chodesh Elul, you showed the proper fear of the kedushas beis midrash. Nobody talked, everyone davened, nobody even looked outside of their siddur. So, what happened?"

The boys looked at each other. This was a good question. What did happen? Why didn't they feel the same way as they did back in Elul?

"I'll tell you what happened," Rabbi Tannenbaum said, as if reading their minds. "You got used to it. You come here every day, and soon you became so familiar with the beis midrash that you lost the feeling of fear and respect of a makom kadosh.

"This is a very important lesson that you're hearing right now. Often the first time we do something special, it means a lot to us and we properly respect it. The trick is to never stop thinking about that. To always remember the kedusha of Hashem and to act properly when we walk into a shul or beis midrash as if it were our first time."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

### **Takeaway:**

It's not good to "cozy up" to kedusha – we get so used to it that it doesn't affect us. That's why Hashem told us to be careful and not get too close to Har Sinai.

### **Let's Review:**

- What was the difference between the first time the kids davened in the beis midrash and the way they davened months later?
- What trick did Rabbi Tannenbaum teach them?

*Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior adapted from the Torah teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l.*



# IDF Soldiers Saved By Mincha Prayers



IDF soldier Malkiel Ben Yosef told 103FM interviewers how *davening Mincha* saved his life and his platoon in the central Gaza town of El-Bureij.

“I realized that sunset was approaching, and I hadn’t prayed *Mincha* yet,” he said.

“The force halted, and I told myself, ‘This is my last opportunity to pray *Mincha*; otherwise, I’ll probably miss it.’ I stood to *daven*, facing Yerushalayim, and while I was *davening*, I saw movement in an open field nearby where engineering vehicles had already passed. About 15-10 yards away, I saw the movement of something metal from the ground.

“At first, I didn’t understand what this movement was. I thought it might be an animal or something. After a second, I realized someone was coming out of the ground with an RPG.

“That second, I shouted for everyone to pay attention because the guys there weren’t far from me, and I started shooting at him. I realized he was a terrorist who was heading towards the rest of the force. From what I understand and realize, he didn’t know that I was there on the side. As soon as I shouted, he turned towards me with the RPG, and I and the friends around me managed to take him down before he could fire the RPG,” Ben Yosef said.

*Reprinted from the January 28, 2024 website of Matzav.com*

# The Chasid Who Attended His Son's Wedding to A Gentile Woman

**By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**

A chassid of Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zy'a had an only child, who they loved dearly. This son didn't grow up with fear of heaven, and he became engaged to a gentile woman. When the parents told Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz, the Rebbe requested that they bring their son to him. Being that he was brought up in a Chasidic home the son believed in Chasidic Rebbes, so he agreed to go. But he made it clear to his parents and later when he spoke with the Rebbe that he wouldn't drop his plans.

The Rebbe spoke with the young man for a while, and then the Rebbe said, "All I ask is that when you get dressed for the wedding, wear a talis kattan under your clothing." To the father, the Rebbe said, "And all I want from you, is for you to go to the wedding."

The young man agreed to the condition. It was a tiny sacrifice, and as a bonus, his father would be at the wedding.

## **The Father Reluctantly Agreed to the Rebbe's Request**

The father didn't want to go to the wedding. However, the Rebbe's request as strange as it sounded was sacred, and he attended the wedding.

At the wedding the guests had too much to drink, and encouraged the groom to drink too. He didn't want to drink because he was brought up in a Jewish home and knew better, but he couldn't say no to their constant requests.

After drinking some hard drinks, he felt hot. He took off his jacket and unbuttoned his shirt. That's when everyone saw that he was wearing tzitzis. "He fooled us," the drunken crowd reeled in unison, pointing to his tzitzis. He's still a Jew!" They began to lynch him. His father managed to pull him away from the mob and out of the hall. (It was now understood why the Rebbe asked the father to be at the wedding). The mitzvah of tzitzis, once again, saved this Yid from sinning.

*Reprinted from the January 28, 2024 email of Torah Times. Excerpted from the Treasures of Emunah – Stories of Faith. Copied with permission from Machon Be'er Emunah*