

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI 5783

Volume 14, Issue 27 – 25 Adar 5783/March 18, 2023

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

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The Pair of Tefillin For the French Jew



Rav Nissim Yagen, zt"l

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I was living in Paris and I owned a small store, which was my source of income. One Friday, a very poor religious man arrived in Paris. He had no food at all. This man came into the store and begged me, "I have nothing for Shabbos, can you please help me?"

Not knowing why, I was overcome by a wave of pity. I opened the cash register, took out all the money that was there, which was the whole day's profit,

and I told him to use this money, not only for Shabbos, but for the entire following week. I told him to enjoy the money.

I have no idea why I did this for a stranger, as I was completely irreligious. A few days later, a Christian woman entered my store. She sat down and was not leaving. I asked her to leave but then she asked me the most shocking and ridiculous thing, she wanted to marry me!

“What Do You Want from Me?”

I asked her, “What do you want from me? I am a Jew and you are not. Leave me alone and find one of your own kind!”

She responded that she is very wealthy and is not lacking anything. She wanted to marry a Jew to become closer to Hashem.

I told her, “I am not a believer. I don’t believe in Hashem and I don’t keep any of the Mitzvos. Find someone else to marry!”

But it didn’t work! She told me that she was planning to convert. Finally, I agreed to marry her, but I told her to never talk a word about “Yiddishkeit” to me. And she agreed. She converted to Judaism and kept everything, and I continued living life as a goy.

She bought me a pair of Tefilin, but just as she agreed, she never mentioned a word about it. It just sat on the shelf. One day, I had to catch a train at 8:00 in the morning. It was 7:30 A.M. and I knew I still had some time to get to the train station. My wife turned to me, and for the first time since we got married, she said to me, “Please put on Tefilin.”

“Not Another Word About ‘Yiddishkeit’!”

I yelled at her. “What?! Not another word about ‘Yiddishkeit’! I was so upset, I took the Tefilin, and in a fit of anger, I tossed them out of the fifth-floor window. My wife saw this terrible sight and began to cry uncontrollably. She thought to herself that she was to blame for this disgrace to the Tefilin. After all, she had promised me that she wouldn’t say anything about them, and then she did. She apologized, and I went angrily to go catch my train.

My wife went outside to get the Tefilin. She kissed them, and respectfully placed them in the bookcase of the living room. All day long she cried and fasted, and Hashem saw her tears. That night I had a dream. I was standing on my balcony and it was about to come crashing down. I called my family for help, but no one heard me. Then I woke up.

The very next day, on my way to work, I suddenly became paralyzed and fell on the ground. No doctor could tell me what was wrong with me and why I suddenly became paralyzed. I went from hospital to hospital, but no one could figure out this

medical mystery. All the scans were normal, but I could not move! I was confined to a bed for twelve months, and I was still unable to move on my own.

One day, I told my wife, “I have taken an oath, that starting tomorrow, I will begin to put on Tefilin. Please bring them to me.”



She was in shock, and with excitement, she brought the Tefilin to me. That night I had another dream. Once again, I was standing on the balcony and it was about to come crashing down. But this time, when I called out to my family for help, they came to help me. Once I started putting on Tefilin, I soon made a complete recovery!

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There were no parking spots, so she stopped in the middle of the service lane. I exited the car, but things didn't go so smoothly. Like I said, my rolling bag was bulky, and it didn't fit easily through the car door. I struggled to remove it from the car, and it took a little time.

The person behind us on the service road started honking furiously. Now, I know people in New York are quick to honk for even a millisecond's delay, but I mean, he sees a lady struggling to take out a bag from the car, and he still honks?! It wasn't even just a polite honk, he had his hand on the horn, which was blasting my ears off.

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Who knows, though – maybe he had some emergency? Just then, a lady behind me pointed out to me that I had dropped something on the ground. I looked down, and saw my phone on the ground.

I didn't realize that it had fallen out of my pocket. I picked it up, and as I walked over to apologize to the honking car, he held both thumbs up and smiled at me. A flood of understanding washed over me. He had not been a rude, impatient honking driver at all! He had been honking to alert me that I had dropped my phone!

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The Young Frum Jewish Man with the “Ponytail”

Rabbi YY Jacobson told a story about a man who went to “great lengths” to care for his fellow Jew. A rabbi was in Uman visiting a grave when he saw a young man praying. The rabbi immediately noticed how strange the young man looked,

with long peot—sideburns and an extra-long reddish-blondish ponytail. The rabbi thought, “What kind of silly things are trending now? Who does this boy think he is with ridiculous peot and a pony? He went up to him and said, “What’s with the ponytail?”

The young man started to tell his story. When he was a little boy in Monsey, he couldn’t sit still in school. All he wanted was to be outside riding a scooter. His parents had very high expectations, and they couldn’t handle his personality. His grandparents took him in. The boy would ride his scooter all around town, and when the electric scooters came out, he begged his grandma for one and she quickly agreed.

His Religious Grandparents Accepted Him

He spent his days scooting around. He didn’t attend yeshivah, and though his grandparents were religious, they accepted his eccentric personality and showed him they loved him no matter what, raising him as their own. Years passed, and the boy grew up and decided to create a business. When he succeeded financially and his business started to manage itself, he realized something was missing in his life. And so, with the confidence instilled in him from his caring grandparents, he set out to find what it was.

The rabbi interrupted the story, saying, “But what does that have to do with the pony?” The man answered, “I started to volunteer with Mekimi, an organization that helps children during their hospital stays. I had visited this young girl who was in the hospital for her cancer treatments, and she was in the early stages of losing her hair.

The Young Girl was Devastated and Embarrassed

The wig places couldn’t match her unique hair color, and she was devastated and embarrassed. Her hair is a reddish blond, just like mine. It’s been almost six months, and I have two weeks left, when I’ll finally have enough to cut for a wig for her. I didn’t want my parents to be ashamed that their eccentric son was walking around with a ponytail, so I decided to travel for six months while I grew it out.” While he traveled, he became more and more religious; he prayed, he learned, he got closer to Hashem. He found fulfillment in helping this young girl save her dignity and self-esteem.

It’s so easy to judge a book by its cover—to judge our children for not meeting our expectations or strangers for their odd appearances. But if we really learn to accept and be kind to our fellow Jews, becoming two halved pieces of a shekel, they may go above and beyond in paying it forward and caring for others.

Being Connected

By Rabbi Sholom Ber Avtzon

A Jew once came to the Heilike (Holy) Ruzhiner (Rabbi Yisroel Friedman, 1796-1850. The tzaddik asked him if he came for a brocha?

“No,” was the reply.

“How is your family?” asked the tzaddik.

“Boruch Hashem we are all healthy,” the man answered.

“And how is your livelihood?” inquired the tzaddik?

“Boruch Hashem,” replied the person.

“Since Boruch Hashem everything is in order, may I ask, why did you come here?”

“I came because I want to become your chossid and be connected to you,” the individual answered.

“May I know what prompted you to make this decision?” asked the Ruzhiner.

“With pleasure,” the man said, and he began relating the following story.



The Ruzhiner Rebbe's 19th Century Palace in Sadigura

As I mentioned I am Boruch Hashem quite successful and some years ago I hired a manager. After a short time, I realized that he is very talented and capable and I began giving him additional responsibilities. My business thrived and he ran the store, while I was able to learn almost the entire day. The only exception was that I would go to the fairs and buy the merchandise. But as the tzaddik knows, that

takes a lot of time. In addition to the many days, I spend at the fair, there are a few weeks of traveling back and forth.

So, I was thinking that since I rely on my manager for everything else, I should rely on him for this responsibility as well. When I mentioned this to my friends, they all tried to convince me otherwise. They argued, that although he is reliable and honest, the amount of money you will be giving him to purchase all the merchandise is more than his yearly salary! That may be too great of a temptation, and we fear that he may never return.

“I Followed My Intuition”

However, I knew in my heart that he is as honest as they come, and I followed my intuition.

The trip normally takes between three and four weeks, but when five weeks passed and he didn't return, my friends began telling me, “We warned you and you brought this misfortune upon yourself!”

The store ran out of merchandise, and I didn't have the money to purchase new items and replenish the shelves. Very quickly I went from being wealthy to a poor person.

Yet in my heart I felt that something happened to him, as he definitely is as honest as can be.

Last week the manager came to me in a dream. He informed me that on the way to the fair he began feeling ill. Knowing that he has a relative nearby, he went to his town to recuperate. However, as the days passed, he realized that his end is coming near, so he thought on how can he return the money to me.

He Trusted the Rov of the Town

After some thought he decided to give it to the Rov of that town and request of him to return it. I gave the Rov your name and your other information, but evidently he didn't try very hard to find you.

One day a malach began pulling people out from Gehenim, and I too was pulled out. I asked the malach what was happening and he replied, “Today is Yud Tes Kislev, the Yahrzeit of the Maggid of Mezeritch. On such an auspicious day it was decided that all those who are connected to him are to enter Gan Eden and can continue their connection with him.”

I said to the malach, “I am thrilled that you are taking me out but I have no connection with the Maggid; I never met him.”

“That is true,” responded the malach, “However before you were born your mother went to him for a brocha, and as a result of his brocha you were born. That is your connection.

However, when I arrived at the gates of Gan eden they didn't allow me to enter. They said, while you didn't do anything intentional against your employer, yet nevertheless because of you his life was turned upside down.

I argued that I didn't want to die, you decreed it, so why am I being punished because of your decision?!

The heavenly court convened, and they gave me permission to inform you of how you can obtain your money.

Before he left I asked him, "Can you please inform me which tzaddik I should become connected to?"

He said, the only thing I am allowed to say is that whatever the tzaddik of Ruzhin says makes a tremendous impression in heaven.

"Rebbe, now you know why I desire to become connected to you."

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5783 Weekly Story email of Rabbi Sholom Ber Avtzon.

Breaking the Ice

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



R' Akiva Fox has been a rebbi in various yeshivos for years. He would regularly bring bachurim to meet Rav Yitzchok Scheiner. "When I would bring over boys to Rav Yitzchok from different yeshivos," R' Akiva Fox says, "he welcomed them and told them his story."

“I’m from the city of steel and graduated from Peabody High School,’ he would say. ‘I thought I would be a math professor, but I became a rosh yeshivah.’ Those were his opening lines, and they worked incredibly well to break the ice.”

R’ Akiva relates how one year there was an awkward moment as one boy, defiant of anything related to religion, introduced himself with his secular name. “Scott Glassberg* from Atlanta,” he said, shaking Rav Yitzchok’s hand.

Remembered What it was Like to be an American

Rav Yitzchok clasped Scott’s hand warmly in his own and replied, “So nice to meet you, Scott. I’m Yitzchok Scheiner from Pittsburgh.” Rav Yitzchok melted Scott’s heart with his disarming smile and warmth. One of the reasons he was able to do this so well was that Rav Yitzchok still remembered what it was like to be an American.

Not that he was still interested in the things that had captured his interest in his youth, but he understood the attraction they presented to teenagers. When people would ask him whether it was okay to take their kids to baseball games, he would reply, “I can still recall the names of the heavyweight champions from the boxing bouts when I was a kid. I still remember who won every fight. (Boxing was a huge sport in early 1920s America.) I can tell you the batting order of the Pittsburgh Pirates. These are things that you don’t forget for the rest of your life.”

The message was, “And since that is the case, why fill your child’s head with such inanities in the first place?”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Rav Yitzchok Scheiner – The life and leadership of the Kamenitzer Rosh Yeshivah.”

The Ill Woman’s Request for a Blessing



The Kapischnitzer Rebbe, zt”l

The Bais Yisroel of Ger, Rav Yisroel Alter, zt”l, was once walking

through the old cemetery in Teveria, when he stopped by the Keiver of Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, zt”l, 1888-1967, and he related this story.

A woman came to the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, and with tears in her eyes she asked for a Brachah. She was very ill, and she begged the Rebbe to give her a Brachah that she would recover and live.

The Rebbe sympathized with her and gave her a Brachah, but she wasn't content.

She cried, "Please promise me that I will recover!"

The Rebbe replied, "How can I make a promise like that?"

But the woman wouldn't back down. She said, "I will not leave until you guarantee me that I will get better and recover!"

The Rebbe saw that the woman would not give up, so he gave her a warm Brachah and promised her that she would recover. She was finally able to calm down, and she thanked the Rebbe.

After she had left, the Rebbe said to his Talmidim, "If she recovers, I will be overjoyed, but if she doesn't, it will be an embarrassment for me.

But the important thing is that I calmed her down for the time being."

After a short while, the Rebbe got news that the woman had a complete recovery! The Kapischnitzer Rebbe did not take credit for this, but rather, in his humility, he said that it was due to her firm faith in Chachomim.

The Bais Yisroel ended off the story, "But I say that she recovered in the zechus of the embarrassment that the Kapischnitzer Rebbe was willing to go through, just to relieve the pain of a Yid!"

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The Power of "Jewish" Cookies



Rabbi Azancot told a tale about how a young man came to Rabbi Gamliel Rabinowitz to tell him his story of becoming a baal teshuvah.

A woman came to America after World War II and decided that after what she had endured, she would completely renounce Judaism. She got married and had children but didn't raise them with religion. She didn't fast Yom Kippur or abstain from chametz on Pesach.

Years later, just before Spring, her oldest child, Jerry, was in college, and he received a package from his mother. He opened it up and found a container with some triangular cookies filled with jam. He recognized them, as his mother made them every year in March, and he eagerly bit into one. He later brought the container to share with his friends while they ate lunch on the campus lawn.

Jerry's friend Joe took a cookie and said, "Hey, you're Jewish, like me!" "Jewish?" Jerry said, "I'm not Jewish." Joe asked, "Where did you get these cookies?" "My mother made them," Jerry answered. "Well, then, you're Jewish! These cookies are called hamantaschen, and the Jews make them for the holiday of Purim." Joe explained.

"Mom, am I Jewish?"

Jerry called his mother and asked, "Mom, am I Jewish?" His mother was surprised. "Why do you ask?" "My friend explained that the cookies you make are Jewish cookies that they bake for some holiday." The mother answered, "As a matter of fact, yes, we are Jewish. My mother used to bake these with me every year for Purim, so I always made them for my kids because I looked forward to eating them as a child."

Just from that little cookie, Jerry went on to investigate Judaism and soul-search his way to Jerusalem, where he made aliyah, years later as a kollel scholar. His mother had such lovely experiences as a child, baking cookies with her mom for the holiday, that the excitement and enjoyment never left her, and she couldn't give up the tradition of baking hamantaschen for Purim.

Reprinted from the Parashat Tetzaveh 5783 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Happiest Man on Earth

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

Eddie Jaku was born as Abraham Jakubowicz in Leipzig, Germany, in the year 1920. He grew up as a Jewish child in Germany where his father used to tell him, "Abraham, I want you to always remember that there is more joy in giving than there is in taking."

In 1938 on Kristallnacht, Eddie was beaten, almost to death, by ten SS soldiers. And then the series of trying events began. He was then sent to Buchenwald. He escaped Germany and went to Belgium. When Hitler invaded Belgium, he was

placed on a train to Auschwitz. He stole a hammer and screwdriver from the platform, and over the course of nine hours on the train, managed to unscrew the boards of the carriage and escape back to France and Belgium, where he reunited with his family, who also escaped from Germany.



Eddie Jaku

But in 1943, the Gestapo discovered the hiding place of the family and put them all on a train to Auschwitz. Dr. Mengele sent both of Eddie's parents to the gas chambers immediately; Eddie was sent to work. He was one of the few Jews who managed to escape the death camp, but then he was shot in the forest by a Polish farmer. He realized he had no choice but to return. And indeed, he returned to Auschwitz.

A Jewish doctor took the bullet out of his calf, and then he was placed on the death march in January of 1945. After a few days with no food and no water, Eddie realized he would not be able to continue on, but he also knew that if you stopped, you got a bullet in your head. Eddie noticed a ditch. He managed to escape into the ditch, and he survived in the ditch for six months on raw snails. Until he was poisoned by the water flowing in a nearby creek, and couldn't stand anymore.

Hoping that a Nazi Soldier Would Kill Him and Take Him Out of His Misery

He was deathly ill and began crawling to the nearby road, hoping that a Nazi soldier would detect him, shoot him and take him out of his misery.

But he then saw an American tank and the U.S. soldiers lifted him up, wrapped him in a blanket and sent him to the hospital. They didn't think he would survive, but he did. Six weeks later, he was out of the hospital.

He bought a ticket to go back to Brussels, hoping maybe somebody of his family survived. He found his sister, Henni, who had also survived Auschwitz. A few months later, he met another young Jewish woman, a survivor by the name of Flora. They got married and relocated to Sydney, Australia, and in 1950, their first child was born.

Happiness Came Back to Him with the Birth of His First Child

Eddie describes that until then, he was bitter and angry and depressed. But when his child was born, his happiness came back to him in abundance and he made a decision: "I'm going to live a happy life, full of gratitude and kindness. I'm going to be polite, sensitive, compassionate and empathetic, and I'm going to help bring kindness to the world."

Last year, Eddie celebrated his one hundredth birthday, and following that birthday, he decided it's time to write a book. He published his first book and he titled it, "The Happiest Man on Earth." It became an international bestseller. One story of that book touched me so deeply.

It was shortly after the Holocaust. He'd just lost most of his family. He was living in a flat in Belgium, and he opened a newspaper where he began to read about two Jewish girls who tried to commit suicide. They jumped off a bridge in Brussels. They tried to fall on a barge, but instead fell into the water. They survived, they were arrested, and they were put into a mental hospital.

Eddie decided, "I have to help these two girls." And despite the fact that he had nothing – he lost almost everything – he went to the hospital. The conditions were appalling, and he met these two girls and he realized that they are perfectly

normal and balanced, intelligent and wonderful people. But they lost their entire family. They had been in Auschwitz and Birkenau.

“These Girls Don’t Belong Here”

Everybody was murdered and they simply didn’t want to live. They did not have the stamina, the desire to continue to live, so they decided to take their lives. Eddie met with the head of the hospital, and said, “These girls don’t belong here. Let me take care of them. Let me nurture them back to health. Besides that, the conditions here are horrific for anybody. If you come in normal, you leave three months later mad.”

The man let him take them. Eddie raised them along with his sister, and he encouraged them. He fed them and he nurtured them. And being also a survivor of Auschwitz, he empathized with them. And finally, he managed to give them back that hope, vigor, inner fortitude and resilience they needed, and they went on to marry Jewish husbands and build beautiful families. Eddie, for life, maintained a connection with them.

Experiencing the Reality of What His Father Had Told Him

“Then I finally managed,” Eddie writes, “to experience what my father told me as a youth. ‘Abraham, there’s much more joy in giving than there is in taking.’ When I saw these two beautiful girls come back to life, I realized that even in the depths of darkness, you can see miracles. And if you don’t see miracles, you can become the miracle and you can create the miracle by giving life and hope and kindling a flame of love and faith in the heart of darkness.”

Just this past year, Abraham Jakubowicz, Eddie Jaku, returned his soul to its Maker. On October 12, 2021, 6th Cheshvan 5782, this 101-year-old hero of the Jewish people, hero of the world, passed away in Sydney.

But Eddie, the flame that you and your generation kindled in the midst of the deepest darkness will continue to burn forever and inspire us for eternity.

Reprinted from the Parashat Vayakhel 5782 TorahAnytime.com Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.

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But it didn’t work! She told me that she was planning to convert. Finally, I agreed to marry her, but I told her to never talk a word about “Yiddishkeit” to me. And she agreed. She converted to Judaism and kept everything, and I continued living life as a goy.

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His Religious Grandparents Accepted Him

He spent his days scooting around. He didn’t attend yeshivah, and though his grandparents were religious, they accepted his eccentric personality and showed him they loved him no matter what, raising him as their own. Years passed, and the boy grew up and decided to create a business. When he succeeded financially and his business started to manage itself, he realized something was missing in his life. And so, with the confidence instilled in him from his caring grandparents, he set out to find what it was.

The rabbi interrupted the story, saying, “But what does that have to do with the pony?” The man answered, “I started to volunteer with Mekimi, an organization that helps children during their hospital stays. I had visited this young girl who was in the hospital for her cancer treatments, and she was in the early stages of losing her hair.

The Young Girl was Devastated and Embarrassed

The wig places couldn’t match her unique hair color, and she was devastated and embarrassed. Her hair is a reddish blond, just like mine. It’s been almost six months, and I have two weeks left, when I’ll finally have enough to cut for a wig for her. I didn’t want my parents to be ashamed that their eccentric son was walking around with a ponytail, so I decided to travel for six months while I grew it out.” While he traveled, he became more and more religious; he prayed, he learned, he got closer to Hashem. He found fulfillment in helping this young girl save her dignity and self-esteem.

It’s so easy to judge a book by its cover—to judge our children for not meeting our expectations or strangers for their odd appearances. But if we really learn to accept and be kind to our fellow Jews, becoming two halved pieces of a shekel, they may go above and beyond in paying it forward and caring for others.

Being Connected

By Rabbi Sholom Ber Avtzon

A Jew once came to the Heilike (Holy) Ruzhiner (Rabbi Yisroel Friedman, 1796-1850. The tzaddik asked him if he came for a brocha?

“No,” was the reply.

“How is your family?” asked the tzaddik.

“Boruch Hashem we are all healthy,” the man answered.

“And how is your livelihood?” inquired the tzaddik?

“Boruch Hashem,” replied the person.

“Since Boruch Hashem everything is in order, may I ask, why did you come here?”

“I came because I want to become your chossid and be connected to you,” the individual answered.

“May I know what prompted you to make this decision?” asked the Ruzhiner.

“With pleasure,” the man said, and he began relating the following story.



The Ruzhiner Rebbe's 19th Century Palace in Sadigura

As I mentioned I am Boruch Hashem quite successful and some years ago I hired a manager. After a short time, I realized that he is very talented and capable and I began giving him additional responsibilities. My business thrived and he ran the store, while I was able to learn almost the entire day. The only exception was that I would go to the fairs and buy the merchandise. But as the tzaddik knows, that

takes a lot of time. In addition to the many days, I spend at the fair, there are a few weeks of traveling back and forth.

So, I was thinking that since I rely on my manager for everything else, I should rely on him for this responsibility as well. When I mentioned this to my friends, they all tried to convince me otherwise. They argued, that although he is reliable and honest, the amount of money you will be giving him to purchase all the merchandise is more than his yearly salary! That may be too great of a temptation, and we fear that he may never return.

“I Followed My Intuition”

However, I knew in my heart that he is as honest as they come, and I followed my intuition.

The trip normally takes between three and four weeks, but when five weeks passed and he didn't return, my friends began telling me, “We warned you and you brought this misfortune upon yourself!”

The store ran out of merchandise, and I didn't have the money to purchase new items and replenish the shelves. Very quickly I went from being wealthy to a poor person.

Yet in my heart I felt that something happened to him, as he definitely is as honest as can be.

Last week the manager came to me in a dream. He informed me that on the way to the fair he began feeling ill. Knowing that he has a relative nearby, he went to his town to recuperate. However, as the days passed, he realized that his end is coming near, so he thought on how can he return the money to me.

He Trusted the Rov of the Town

After some thought he decided to give it to the Rov of that town and request of him to return it. I gave the Rov your name and your other information, but evidently he didn't try very hard to find you.

One day a malach began pulling people out from Gehenim, and I too was pulled out. I asked the malach what was happening and he replied, “Today is Yud Tes Kislev, the Yahrzeit of the Maggid of Mezeritch. On such an auspicious day it was decided that all those who are connected to him are to enter Gan Eden and can continue their connection with him.”

I said to the malach, “I am thrilled that you are taking me out but I have no connection with the Maggid; I never met him.”

“That is true,” responded the malach, “However before you were born your mother went to him for a brocha, and as a result of his brocha you were born. That is your connection.

However, when I arrived at the gates of Gan eden they didn't allow me to enter. They said, while you didn't do anything intentional against your employer, yet nevertheless because of you his life was turned upside down.

I argued that I didn't want to die, you decreed it, so why am I being punished because of your decision?!

The heavenly court convened, and they gave me permission to inform you of how you can obtain your money.

Before he left I asked him, "Can you please inform me which tzaddik I should become connected to?"

He said, the only thing I am allowed to say is that whatever the tzaddik of Ruzhin says makes a tremendous impression in heaven.

"Rebbe, now you know why I desire to become connected to you."

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5783 Weekly Story email of Rabbi Sholom Ber Avtzon.

Breaking the Ice

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



R' Akiva Fox has been a rebbi in various yeshivos for years. He would regularly bring bachurim to meet Rav Yitzchok Scheiner. "When I would bring over boys to Rav Yitzchok from different yeshivos," R' Akiva Fox says, "he welcomed them and told them his story.

“I’m from the city of steel and graduated from Peabody High School,’ he would say. ‘I thought I would be a math professor, but I became a rosh yeshivah.’ Those were his opening lines, and they worked incredibly well to break the ice.”

R’ Akiva relates how one year there was an awkward moment as one boy, defiant of anything related to religion, introduced himself with his secular name. “Scott Glassberg* from Atlanta,” he said, shaking Rav Yitzchok’s hand.

Remembered What it was Like to be an American

Rav Yitzchok clasped Scott’s hand warmly in his own and replied, “So nice to meet you, Scott. I’m Yitzchok Scheiner from Pittsburgh.” Rav Yitzchok melted Scott’s heart with his disarming smile and warmth. One of the reasons he was able to do this so well was that Rav Yitzchok still remembered what it was like to be an American.

Not that he was still interested in the things that had captured his interest in his youth, but he understood the attraction they presented to teenagers. When people would ask him whether it was okay to take their kids to baseball games, he would reply, “I can still recall the names of the heavyweight champions from the boxing bouts when I was a kid. I still remember who won every fight. (Boxing was a huge sport in early 1920s America.) I can tell you the batting order of the Pittsburgh Pirates. These are things that you don’t forget for the rest of your life.”

The message was, “And since that is the case, why fill your child’s head with such inanities in the first place?”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pekudei 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Rav Yitzchok Scheiner – The life and leadership of the Kamenitzer Rosh Yeshivah.”

The Ill Woman’s Request for a Blessing



The Kapischnitzer Rebbe, zt”l

The Bais Yisroel of Ger, Rav Yisroel Alter, zt”l, was once walking

through the old cemetery in Teveria, when he stopped by the Keiver of Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, zt”l, 1888-1967, and he related this story.

A woman came to the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, and with tears in her eyes she asked for a Brachah. She was very ill, and she begged the Rebbe to give her a Brachah that she would recover and live.

The Rebbe sympathized with her and gave her a Brachah, but she wasn't content.

She cried, "Please promise me that I will recover!"

The Rebbe replied, "How can I make a promise like that?"

But the woman wouldn't back down. She said, "I will not leave until you guarantee me that I will get better and recover!"

The Rebbe saw that the woman would not give up, so he gave her a warm Brachah and promised her that she would recover. She was finally able to calm down, and she thanked the Rebbe.

After she had left, the Rebbe said to his Talmidim, "If she recovers, I will be overjoyed, but if she doesn't, it will be an embarrassment for me.

But the important thing is that I calmed her down for the time being."

After a short while, the Rebbe got news that the woman had a complete recovery! The Kapischnitzer Rebbe did not take credit for this, but rather, in his humility, he said that it was due to her firm faith in Chachomim.

The Bais Yisroel ended off the story, "But I say that she recovered in the zechus of the embarrassment that the Kapischnitzer Rebbe was willing to go through, just to relieve the pain of a Yid!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Power of "Jewish" Cookies



Rabbi Azancot told a tale about how a young man came to Rabbi Gamliel Rabinowitz to tell him his story of becoming a baal teshuvah.

A woman came to America after World War II and decided that after what she had endured, she would completely renounce Judaism. She got married and had children but didn't raise them with religion. She didn't fast Yom Kippur or abstain from chametz on Pesach.

Years later, just before Spring, her oldest child, Jerry, was in college, and he received a package from his mother. He opened it up and found a container with some triangular cookies filled with jam. He recognized them, as his mother made them every year in March, and he eagerly bit into one. He later brought the container to share with his friends while they ate lunch on the campus lawn.

Jerry's friend Joe took a cookie and said, "Hey, you're Jewish, like me!" "Jewish?" Jerry said, "I'm not Jewish." Joe asked, "Where did you get these cookies?" "My mother made them," Jerry answered. "Well, then, you're Jewish! These cookies are called hamantaschen, and the Jews make them for the holiday of Purim." Joe explained.

"Mom, am I Jewish?"

Jerry called his mother and asked, "Mom, am I Jewish?" His mother was surprised. "Why do you ask?" "My friend explained that the cookies you make are Jewish cookies that they bake for some holiday." The mother answered, "As a matter of fact, yes, we are Jewish. My mother used to bake these with me every year for Purim, so I always made them for my kids because I looked forward to eating them as a child."

Just from that little cookie, Jerry went on to investigate Judaism and soul-search his way to Jerusalem, where he made aliyah, years later as a kollel scholar. His mother had such lovely experiences as a child, baking cookies with her mom for the holiday, that the excitement and enjoyment never left her, and she couldn't give up the tradition of baking hamantaschen for Purim.

Reprinted from the Parashat Tetzaveh 5783 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Happiest Man on Earth

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

Eddie Jaku was born as Abraham Jakubowicz in Leipzig, Germany, in the year 1920. He grew up as a Jewish child in Germany where his father used to tell him, "Abraham, I want you to always remember that there is more joy in giving than there is in taking."

In 1938 on Kristallnacht, Eddie was beaten, almost to death, by ten SS soldiers. And then the series of trying events began. He was then sent to Buchenwald. He escaped Germany and went to Belgium. When Hitler invaded Belgium, he was

placed on a train to Auschwitz. He stole a hammer and screwdriver from the platform, and over the course of nine hours on the train, managed to unscrew the boards of the carriage and escape back to France and Belgium, where he reunited with his family, who also escaped from Germany.



Eddie Jaku

But in 1943, the Gestapo discovered the hiding place of the family and put them all on a train to Auschwitz. Dr. Mengele sent both of Eddie's parents to the gas chambers immediately; Eddie was sent to work. He was one of the few Jews who managed to escape the death camp, but then he was shot in the forest by a Polish farmer. He realized he had no choice but to return. And indeed, he returned to Auschwitz.

A Jewish doctor took the bullet out of his calf, and then he was placed on the death march in January of 1945. After a few days with no food and no water, Eddie realized he would not be able to continue on, but he also knew that if you stopped, you got a bullet in your head. Eddie noticed a ditch. He managed to escape into the ditch, and he survived in the ditch for six months on raw snails. Until he was poisoned by the water flowing in a nearby creek, and couldn't stand anymore.

Hoping that a Nazi Soldier Would Kill Him and Take Him Out of His Misery

He was deathly ill and began crawling to the nearby road, hoping that a Nazi soldier would detect him, shoot him and take him out of his misery.

But he then saw an American tank and the U.S. soldiers lifted him up, wrapped him in a blanket and sent him to the hospital. They didn't think he would survive, but he did. Six weeks later, he was out of the hospital.

He bought a ticket to go back to Brussels, hoping maybe somebody of his family survived. He found his sister, Henni, who had also survived Auschwitz. A few months later, he met another young Jewish woman, a survivor by the name of Flora. They got married and relocated to Sydney, Australia, and in 1950, their first child was born.

Happiness Came Back to Him with the Birth of His First Child

Eddie describes that until then, he was bitter and angry and depressed. But when his child was born, his happiness came back to him in abundance and he made a decision: "I'm going to live a happy life, full of gratitude and kindness. I'm going to be polite, sensitive, compassionate and empathetic, and I'm going to help bring kindness to the world."

Last year, Eddie celebrated his one hundredth birthday, and following that birthday, he decided it's time to write a book. He published his first book and he titled it, "The Happiest Man on Earth." It became an international bestseller. One story of that book touched me so deeply.

It was shortly after the Holocaust. He'd just lost most of his family. He was living in a flat in Belgium, and he opened a newspaper where he began to read about two Jewish girls who tried to commit suicide. They jumped off a bridge in Brussels. They tried to fall on a barge, but instead fell into the water. They survived, they were arrested, and they were put into a mental hospital.

Eddie decided, "I have to help these two girls." And despite the fact that he had nothing – he lost almost everything – he went to the hospital. The conditions were appalling, and he met these two girls and he realized that they are perfectly

normal and balanced, intelligent and wonderful people. But they lost their entire family. They had been in Auschwitz and Birkenau.

“These Girls Don’t Belong Here”

Everybody was murdered and they simply didn’t want to live. They did not have the stamina, the desire to continue to live, so they decided to take their lives. Eddie met with the head of the hospital, and said, “These girls don’t belong here. Let me take care of them. Let me nurture them back to health. Besides that, the conditions here are horrific for anybody. If you come in normal, you leave three months later mad.”

The man let him take them. Eddie raised them along with his sister, and he encouraged them. He fed them and he nurtured them. And being also a survivor of Auschwitz, he empathized with them. And finally, he managed to give them back that hope, vigor, inner fortitude and resilience they needed, and they went on to marry Jewish husbands and build beautiful families. Eddie, for life, maintained a connection with them.

Experiencing the Reality of What His Father Had Told Him

“Then I finally managed,” Eddie writes, “to experience what my father told me as a youth. ‘Abraham, there’s much more joy in giving than there is in taking.’ When I saw these two beautiful girls come back to life, I realized that even in the depths of darkness, you can see miracles. And if you don’t see miracles, you can become the miracle and you can create the miracle by giving life and hope and kindling a flame of love and faith in the heart of darkness.”

Just this past year, Abraham Jakubowicz, Eddie Jaku, returned his soul to its Maker. On October 12, 2021, 6th Cheshvan 5782, this 101-year-old hero of the Jewish people, hero of the world, passed away in Sydney.

But Eddie, the flame that you and your generation kindled in the midst of the deepest darkness will continue to burn forever and inspire us for eternity.

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