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The Tzaddik Who Wanted To Break into Jail



The famed tzaddik of Yerushalayim, R' Aryeh Levin zt"l, used to visit various jails and spend time with the prisoners, offering them comfort, encouragement, to simply brighten their darkened lives.

One Shabbos, as R' Aryeh arrived at the gates of a jail, the British sentry on duty would not allow him to enter. There was a curfew that day, and R' Aryeh was ordered to get home immediately.

A Jewish policeman standing nearby pleaded with the sentry to make an exception for R' Aryeh. "Why prevent an elderly man from performing an act of kindness?" he said persuasively. "This man comes every week on a voluntary basis, purely to gladden the hearts of the prisoners."

The sentry found this hard to believe. Why would an old man walk so far purely to visit prisoners? Surely he received some compensation for his work, and in that case, he'd better find himself a different line of work! While the British sentry and the Jewish policeman were arguing, R' Aryeh stealthily made his way around to the side of the building, checking for an opening of some sort in the wall surrounding the jail.

Eventually, he found a small foothold sticking out of the smooth rock. Like a young agile boy, R' Aryeh used the tiny foothold to climb to the top of the gate. There, he leaped down inside the prison grounds.

The British sentry saw what had happened. "You are right," he said grudgingly to the Jewish policeman. "This man must be a volunteer. A man who did this job for pay would never go to such lengths to get inside the jail. This man is determined to visit the prisoners no matter what!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5783 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

Reprinted from the

Like Equals

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



Rav Yitzchok Scheiner

During a visit of R' Chaim Dov Sorotzkin, a relative of Rav Yitzchok Scheiner, to the rosh yeshivah's house, he brought along his cousin, R' Matis Goldberg, a noted photographer of gedolei Yisrael. Their meeting that day lasted

several hours, and when it concluded, R' Chaim Dov could see that his cousin was somewhat overwhelmed by everything he had seen and heard.

R' Chaim Dov asked him why he was so taken aback.

"I'll tell you why he impressed me so much," R' Matis replied. "You remember how he was talking about Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz? He spent a lot of time talking about what a gadol he is — and then he uttered a line that really made me sit up and take notice."

"What line was that?"

"We Will Never Be Like Him"

"Rav Yitzchok said: 'The three of us will never be like Rav Michel Yehudah. He is a kadosh. He was born in Vilna and learned in the best European yeshivos. We will never be like him. I was really into chess when I was young. I even followed some of the best players and could describe the games they played in detail. But Rav Michel Yehudah wasn't like that. He was kulo kadosh!'

"Did you catch that? The rosh yeshivah was equating himself with us! 'We will never be like him.' Those were the words he used, making it sound as if we are all equal and playing for the same team when we aren't even in the same ballpark.

"And he didn't do it only once. Throughout the conversation, Rav Yitzchok included himself along with me and you, as if we are his equals in every way. Never mind the fact that he is among the gedolei hador and a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. Even without all that, he's almost a hundred years old! We're still kids compared to him. And yet he put himself in the same sentence with us."

Rav Yitzchok epitomized humility, never viewing himself as any more significant than anyone else.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 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.*

Rebbe Shlomo of Radomsk

By Rabbi Dovid Caro

It was a sad story that this penniless Chassid wrote to his Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk. His daughter was of marriageable age, and he did not know where to begin to find all the money needed for a dowry and a wedding. All this was written out in the kvitel note which he handed the Rebbe.

The Tzaddik read it through, and exclaimed, "what is this I read here about your being 'a poor man'?! You had better leave my house at once, for our Sages teach us that 'a pauper is accounted as if dead,' and I am a Kohen, and the Halacha is that a Kohen may not be defiled and become Tamei by exposure to the dead!"

A Case of a Mes Mitzvah, a Dead Body

The man ran out from sheer fright, but the Tzaddik called after him, "Come now, come back in! This must surely be a case of a mes mitzvah, a dead body who is attended to by nobody, in which case a Kohen is allowed to defile himself."

Those present laughed at the seeming joke, little suspecting that there were more to come. The Tzaddik addressed himself another time to the poor fellow, "you are worrying about marrying off your daughter? Tell me: do you have bread to eat?"

"To be honest," stammered the pauper, "I haven't."

"But you do say the Beracha of Hamotzi over bread every day, don't you? So where do you get the bread from?"

"Most of it comes from my wife. She works, and earns a little."

"What a fine business!" cried the Rebbe. "His wife supports him! Shouldn't we be warned by the example of Adam, whose wife gave him something to eat? And this fellow says that his wife supports him! Tell me how does your wife earn her income?"

"She goes to all the courtyards [in Hebrew: chatseiros] of the squires in the area, sells fruits and vegetables, and earns a little from that." the poor man replied.

"If so," said the Tzaddik, "we have a verse in the Torah (Devorim 1:1) which lists place names, and there it says 'vachatseros vedy zahav' - that if she goes to chatseiros, she will no doubt encounter vedy zahav (literally, "ample gold"). Go home in peace, my good man, and Hashem will help you, and your wife will prosper with vedy zahav – plenty gold."

Unable to Answer His Wife's Question

But when he came home and his wife asked him what he had brought back from the Rebbe, he did not know what to answer. After sometime his wife came home with a package, and said, "Look here. I found this thing today lying about in the mud." They opened it, and found three hundred rubles, quite a sum in those days.

Half of it they set aside for their daughter's dowry and the wedding expenses and with the rest the happy man set up a little business in which he prospered for the rest of his life.

After the passing of Rabbi Shlomo of Radomsk, this Chassid came to visit his son and successor as Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Yissachar, and told him the above story.

"My father," said the Tzaddik, "was a remarkable man. Every expression of his supernatural powers and his divine inspiration he managed to clothe in jests and witticisms, so that no one should detect that there was anything extraordinary afoot.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5783 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.

The Rebbe and the Kingston Avenue Hat Store Owner



The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt'l, circa 1950s

The following story was retold by Rabbi Sholom Ber Avtzon. On Kingston Avenue, between Eastern Parkway and Union Street, in Brooklyn, NY, there was a store called Mr. Mikes Hat Store. Mr. Mike was a very friendly and pleasant individual who served the community.

In the 1950's, when this story took place, Lubavitch was not yet a large community, and Mr. Mike developed a warm relationship with many of the local chassidim.

During those early days, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt"l, would walk up Kingston Avenue on his way to visit his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, who lived in an apartment two blocks away from 770, on the corner of Kingston and President.

A Gesture of Respect?

As the Rebbe passed by Mr. Mike's store, he would raise his hand in a gesture of greeting, like a salute, and touch his hat. Day after day, the Rebbe would pass by and salute and Mike would wave back. After a while, however, Mr. Mike noticed that the Rebbe didn't salute the other Jewish storekeepers as he walked by. He would just nod.

Like many of the Jews who lived in Crown Heights at that time, Mike was not really "observant," and usually went bareheaded in his store. He began to wonder if perhaps the Grand Rabbi was politely trying to give him a message. Perhaps he was pointing towards heaven and reminding him that there is One above, and we should conduct ourselves accordingly. Perhaps he was touching his hat to suggest that it might be a good idea for someone selling hats to wear one.

As this thought passed through his mind, Mike suddenly felt a tremendous appreciation for the Rebbe's sensitivity. If the Rebbe was in fact trying to tell him something or send him a subliminal message, it was in a very friendly and respectful way, without embarrassing him in front of others, leaving it up to him to decide if his gesture was merely a greeting, as most people would think, or perhaps it was something more.

Put on the First Cap that Came to Hand

Mike decided that more likely it was the latter, and that the Rebbe was showing him great respect. So, one day he decided that with all the hats and caps he had in the store, he would also begin to wear one in order to cover his head, and see what the Rabbi's reaction would be. Immediately, he put on the first cap that came to hand.

The next day, he waited for the time that the Rebbe would pass by, which might have been around 6 pm. He looked through the window to see what the Rebbe would do. Sure, enough as the Rebbe passed by, instead of raising his hand in a salute, the Rebbe greeted him as he greeted all of the other storekeepers with a nod. Mr. Mike was tremendously happy to see that his intuition was correct. His respect and admiration for the Rebbe intensified greatly.

After a period of time, which could have been weeks, months or even years, Mr. Mike finally picked himself up and went into 770, and asked if he could meet with the Rebbe. He had no concept of what Yechidus with the Rebbe meant. He just wanted to meet the Rabbi he had come to admire so very much. He was given an appointment right away.

Entering the Rebbe's room he said, "Rabbi, I didn't come to ask a question or ask you for anything in particular, or even request a blessing. I just want to express my friendship for you and give you a hug, if you will allow me."

Realizing that the Rebbe Also Appreciated Him

The Rebbe smiled, stood up from his chair and walked in front of his desk. He stood a few inches away from Mike. Mr. Mike got up from his seat and placed his arms around the Rebbe and gave him a hug. To his astonishment, the Rebbe in return gave him a big heartfelt hug of his own. Mike realized that their feelings of friendship and admiration were mutual. His joy and happiness had reached an all-time high.

Leaving his room, Mike decided that he could no longer remain the same as he had been until then. He said to himself, "This great Rabbi genuinely loves me just because I am a Jew. I guess there must be much more to Judaism than I thought. Perhaps it has meaning and purpose. Maybe I should really begin being more observant."

That Friday afternoon, Mr. Mike closed his store for Shabbos for the first time, and never looked back.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5783 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

From Where will the Car I Need Come From?

We gave birth to a son. The next day I had to go to the hospital since my wife and newborn were being released. The release took about half the day. The night before I had planned to reserve a rental car from the rental car agency in my neighborhood for a few hours the next day, but because I was exhausted, I fell asleep.

How does it work?! We inform the company that rents by the hour of the specific time that I want a car and they make sure in advance that there will be a car near the house so that you can get in and drive without delay.

In the morning I remembered that I had not reserved a car and I went to call the company. But then I remembered that this was before davening, and we do not do anything before davening as brought down in halacha, so I decided that after davening I would call to reserve a car.

After davening I hurried to my shiur, and I thought to myself that I would take care of it right after the shiur, and this is how I pushed it off until after the shiur. But by then it was already a bit late to reserve a car, and one needed more mazel than seichel [intellect] to find a car in my neighborhood. After the shiur I straightened up the Bais Medrash a little. I finished straightening up when a man I knew came into shul and asked if I would open the kitchen for him so he could make himself a cup of coffee.

Asked: “Where Are You Rushing Today?”

Despite my rush, I opened the cabinet for coffee and while stirring the coffee he asked, “Where are you rushing today?”

I told him that I had to reserve a car or check where there was a car in the area so that I could get my wife and newborn from the hospital. He took out the keys for his car from his pocket and held them out for me and said, “I will be here in the neighborhood for about four hours, so the car is available for your needs for four hours!!!”

I was very happy, and I told him that I did not want to make the reservation before davening and also before the shiur and behold! whoever listens to the voice of Hashem never loses out!!!

His car was a large, spacious, and very comfortable vehicle. Excitedly, I picked up my wife and little prince from the hospital, after learning a valuable lesson that whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, worldly responsibility is removed from him.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5783 email of Tiv Hakehila.

The Sundial

R' Elchonon Wasserman often said that a mitzvah may seem small to us, but we have no idea of its effect in the Upper World. R' Elchonon illustrated this concept by describing a sundial.

“A sundial,” he taught, “is a circular instrument with a hand that indicates the passage of time. When the shadow moves two inches, that indicates that an hour has

passed. Another two inches, another hour, and so on. In this world, two inches indicate an hour.



“Yet in heaven, the same hour means that the world has revolved around the sun for a thousand miles. In this world, a mitzvah may seem to have only two inches of merit, but in the Upper World, it spans a thousand miles.

“The impact of aveiros is identical. Deeds – good or evil – may seem small to us, but only because we do not realize their effect in shomayim.” (A Fire in His Soul)

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Results of the Chutzah “Prank” Question



Rav Moshe Feinstein

There were once two young boys who were going through a rough time in their childhood and they made a lot of trouble, and one thing they would do was make prank calls.

One day, one of the boys decided that he was going to call the Gadol HaDor, Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, and make a prank call on him. The boy thought up some obscure question, and late one night, he called up Rav Moshe.

Rav Mosh Listens to the Boy’s Prank Question

The Rebbetzin answered his call and told him that Rabbi Feinstein was not available to talk unless it was an emergency. The boy replied that it was. Rav Moshe came to the phone and patiently listened to his question.

After just a few seconds, Rav Moshe realized what was going on. Rav Moshe asked the boy what he was learning in Yeshivah. Rav Moshe then asked the boy a difficult question on that Gemara, but the boy had trouble understanding.

Rav Moshe repeated over the Gemara again and again, teaching it to this boy, and then repeated his question on it. After quite a few times, the boy finally understood the question, and Rav Moshe told him that he should ask his Rebbe this question in Yeshivah the next day.

A Renewed Desire to Succeed in His Torah Learning

The boy hung up and could not believe what had just happened. The next day, this boy went to Yeshivah with a renewed drive to succeed. For the first time that year, he felt that he was actually able to understand what his Rebbe was teaching!

And suddenly, also for the first time that year, he raised his hand in class, and asked Rav Moshe’s brilliant question. The Rebbe was stunned. He thought for a moment and told the entire class what a bright question it was. This boy felt like a million dollars.

The Rebbe spent an entire week trying to come up with an answer to this complex question, and soon after, this boy was a new person. After feeling that sensation of enjoyment in learning Torah and how good it felt, his life took a new direction. He was now on a path to greatness, all because of Rav Moshe’s incredible level of humility.

Rav Moshe did not yell at this boy for his unbelievable Chutzpah and lack of respect to the Gadol HaDor. Rav Moshe saw past his own honor, and was able to transform this boy into a Mentch, with a new chance to have a great future!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’ Torah U’Tefilah.

Thinking of His Sisters' Plight



Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zt"l, related to one of his sons that, when he was a youth, the Yerushalayim community was suffering through a debilitating famine. There was no food, even for those who could afford to pay for it –let alone for those, like the Auerbach family, who lived in abject poverty.

He remarked that, when he returned home from the yeshivah and noticed that all there was to eat was some stale bread, he decided to return to the yeshivah to continue learning.

He ruminated, “My sisters have nothing else to eat and no other means for soothing their hunger pangs. I can return to the yeshivah and, in a short while, be so engrossed in learning that the joy I will experience will help me to mitigate my starvation. My sisters do not have that option. He returned to the yeshivah and left his portion for his sisters.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5783 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum's Peninim on the Torah.

The Very Ill Girl's Korban

A few years ago, a terrorist packed his car with 100 kilos of explosives and parked it near a supporting pillar at the Cinemall in Haifa. It did not explode. Had his intentions achieved fruition, the tragedy would have been cataclysmic. Not only would it have destroyed the pillar, but it would have also caused a conflagration when the other cars in the lot would have ignited. This is one of the most popular malls in the area, and it was full at the time. We cannot even begin to contemplate the extent of the

tragedy had that bomb gone off. An alert passer-by noticed smoke coming from the car and summoned the police, who brought in the bomb squad and diffused the bomb.

Everyone – even Ehud Olmert, then Prime Minister – recognized that they were spared by Hashem. This was clearly a miracle.

The Doctors' Grim Verdict

Now, for the rest of the story. Several weeks prior to this occurrence, a teenage girl in Haifa, who had been complaining of stomach pains, went to the doctor and, after a battery of tests, was diagnosed with a malignant tumor that had metastasized. The doctors gave the grim verdict: They could do nothing other than give her pain meds to make her comfortable. She had mere weeks to live.

The girl did not give up; her parents did not give up. They might not have been observant Jews, but hope is a value that is inherently Jewish. They pleaded with the doctors to try something –anything –at least to make an effort to save their daughter's life.

The doctors finally agreed and scheduled surgery for the next day. Feeling that their chances for success were very low, they assigned a young, inexperienced surgeon, with the feeling that it would be good practice for him. Since he had nothing to lose, the surgeon really could not go wrong.

Recognizing Her Imperfection

They say that there are no atheists in a foxhole. The night before the surgery, the non-observant girl began to plead with Hashem. She said, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu, I am not perfect, and I probably do not deserve any favors from You. In ancient times, when we had a Bais Hamikdash, a sinner would confess and offer a korban and achieve penance. Today, we have no Bais Hamikdash, no korbanos, no Kohanim, but I still want to bring a korban."

At that moment, she walked into her closet, removed all of her immodest clothing and carried it out to her yard. She made a pile and struck a match, creating a large pyre of burning clothing. She cried out, "Hashem, this is my korban!"

The next day, the girl went to the hospital in her nightgown and robe. She had no other clothing. Her entire wardrobe had been elevated to korban status. She had the surgery, and, lo and behold, the tumor had not metastasized. It was totally contained – and benign.

She had just been the fortunate recipient of a miracle. When she shared the story behind the miracle with her friends, they, too, wanted to reap the benefits of dressing modestly. The next day, they all came together, brought out their immodest attire and made a bonfire!

The girls were now left with nothing presentable to wear. No problem –that is what malls are for. They all went together to celebrate their newly-accepted modesty –

by shopping for new clothes. When that terrorist bomb was set to go off, those girls were at the mall, shopping for new, modest clothing!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5783 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum's Peninim on the Torah.

The Agunah Who was Told to “Go to Warsaw”

One day, she awoke early with a nebulous feeling that something was very wrong. Maybe it was just that everything looked so desolate in the stark grayness of the morning. She got out of bed and looked around the one room dwelling. The children were sleeping soundly, huddled under the ragged blanket like a litter of kittens in the one bed they shared.

She never expected that her husband would leave, and without warning... She opened the heavy wooden door and allowed her eyes to wander across the empty yard. The fear in the pit of her stomach made her nauseous, and she walked inside and sat down on a chair. It was true – he was gone.

Travelling to the Rebbe's Court

The next day it was a little easier to think, to plan. She would travel to the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch. Only the holy Rebbe would know how to help her out of this terrible situation. Sympathetic neighbors watched her little ones, and even lent her the money for the trip, and soon she was sitting nervously on the train traveling to the Rebbe's court.

When she alighted from the train, she had no trouble finding the Rebbe's synagogue, but gaining a private audience with the Rebbe was another thing altogether. Some had been waiting for days, some for weeks, some even longer. Finally, one man told her, “Your best chance is to write the Rebbe a letter. Explain the whole situation, and he will surely answer you.”

The poor woman, now even more distraught, wrote the letter. The Rebbe's shamash (assistant) took it and promised to present it to the Rebbe at an opportune moment. Not more than a couple of days passed when the woman was called to the shamash. “Come quickly,” she was told, “The Rebbe has answered your letter.”

The woman came running to the Rebbe's residence. “Here,” said the Rebbe's shamash, “here is your answer.” She unfolded the sheet of paper and on it was written but one sentence: “Go to Warsaw.”

What could it mean? she wondered. And how in the world would she get to Warsaw? It was wartime; she had no money; she had small children.

Perplexed, she returned to her town and showed the Rebbe's answer to the Chasidim there. "If the Rebbe says, 'Go to Warsaw,' then go to Warsaw you must," they concurred. They gathered money for the woman and soon she was sitting on the train to Warsaw.

Questioned by a Chasid in Warsaw

When she arrived in the metropolis, she had no idea where to go or what to do, for the Rebbe had given her no further direction. Suddenly, she was stopped by a Chasid.

"What do you need?" he asked. She replied that she had come to find her husband. The Rebbe had sent her to Warsaw, but she had no clue where to begin her search. "Go to -- Street. There is a factory where many immigrants go to work. You will most likely find your husband there."

With nothing to lose, she made her way to that street and asked to speak to the foreman. He was a kind-hearted man and, after hearing her story, allowed her to search through the list of workers. Her eyes widened with shock as her husband's name leaped up at her from the page. She went to him and pleaded with him to return home with her. He remained adamant until she told him how she had managed to find him. If the Rebbe had sent his wife to him, then he would return home with her.

She decided it was only right to return to the Rebbe's court and thank him for the miracle he had done for her, and so she traveled there once more.

Fell into a Dead Faint

This time, as well, she was not permitted to enter the Rebbe's chambers. "Wait until the Rebbe comes out to pray, and then approach him," she was told. So, she waited by the door, mentally composing the words she would use to thank the Rebbe. Suddenly the door opened. Upon seeing the Rebbe's face, she fell down in a dead faint.

The Chasidim surrounded her, all wanting to know what had happened. When she was revived she told them, "When I saw the Rebbe's face, I realized that the chasid who had suddenly appeared and helped me on the street in Warsaw was the Rebbe!" Word of this amazing happening spread like wildfire. The Chasidim calculated and figured and determined the exact time that this strange meeting had occurred.

It had been on a day when the Rebbe had not prayed publicly with the minyan as usual. The Chasidim had been concerned about his welfare, and one young student had gotten up the nerve to climb up a tree and peer into the Rebbe's room. He put his face near the window, and looked in. There stood the Rebbe, looking like nothing he had ever seen. The Rebbe's face was aflame and his eyes were peering into the distance, totally unseeing. The boy was so overcome by the sight that he lost his balance and fell to the ground.

This story was related by the one who had been that young student during World War I and had himself witnessed the events described here.

Reprinted from the Parshat Vayikra 5783 edition of L'Chaim.