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Exactly 79 Years Ago...

By Rabbi Yosef C. Golding



Reb Yosef Friedenson

A few weeks ago, on *Simchas Torah* at Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Queens, a 12-year-old boy, bedecked with a large Talis over his head, ascended the Bimah and began to belt out the *pizmon/song* of *Ein Adir KaHashem*, during the fourth *hakafah*. His voice was strong, on tune, and the entire shul joined him, joyously.

But some of the people watching and listening had tears rolling down their faces...

In a small shul in Monsey, Mr. Friedenson gets up to dance for his *hakafah*, and while he holds the Sefer Torah tightly in his arms, his mind takes him back to

another time and another place. This is when he prepares himself for what can only be described as the “highlight” of the entire day. Midway between the fourth and fifth *hakafah*, the lively group suddenly quiets down and awaits “the story.” Mr. Friedenson stands up at the *bimah* and in his inimitable manner recounts a fascinating and inspiring incident that occurred to him in the Starachowitz concentration camp, many years earlier.

Somebody Remembered that Today was Simchas Torah

“I will never forget that year. We were in the smithy shop preparing to work for the day, but for some reason, we had not been assigned any work to do. This was unusual but we were not complaining. Somebody remembered that today was Simchas Torah, and we all began singing the appropriate songs. Then, someone started the *niggun*, ‘*Ain adir k’Hashem, v’ain baruch k’ben Amram.*’ (There is none as powerful as Hashem, there is none as blessed as [Moshe] the son of Amram). This is a traditional *niggun* that is usually sung when we dance with the Torah on Simchas Torah.

“Anyway, we were singing the part of this *niggun* that says, ‘*Ain z’chayah k’Torah, v’ain chachameha k’Yisrael.*’ (There is no merit like the Torah, there are no men of wisdom like those in [Klal] Yisroel), when suddenly the camp commandant, a somewhat civil German by the name of Bruno Pape, walked into the room. He looked at us singing and he seemed to become angry. ‘What is this? Why are you singing? Do you have it so good here that you can sing?’ Everybody stopped quickly. We were frightened. Pape was relatively civil – but he was still a German.

“‘Friedenson,’ Pape called to me, ‘tell me, what are you singing?’ I stepped forward, obviously chosen to be the spokesperson of the group. I explained that today was our holiday and that we were praying in song, a song pertaining to the holiday.

“Were You Praying for the Downfall of the Fuhrer?”

“‘You were praying or you were singing?’ asked Pape. ‘Were you praying for the downfall of the Fuhrer? Is that what your song is about? Translate the words for me.’ I did as he asked and I explained the meaning of the words to him. When I came to the part that there are no men of wisdom like the scholars of Israel, he derisively exclaimed, ‘Are you Jews so wise? *Du glaube in das?* Do you believe in this?’”

Mr. Friedenson paused for a moment to wipe his brow. The strain was tremendous, but the look on the faces of the men and children as they listened to his words was worth all the effort. Like a lion, he gathered up his strength and continued.

“I remember, there was a boy of seventeen or eighteen, just a Jewish boy, not even from our religious group. He jumped up and said in German, ‘Yes, Herr Commandant, I believe! *Ich glaube!*’

“Ich Glaube, Yes! We Believe”

Pape then began asking each of us in turn if we also believed in this. He went from person to person, starting with me. You have to understand that we were not afraid to say the truth to him, because we knew he was good to us. Each and every person in the shop said, ‘*Ich glaube*, Yes! We believe.’

“Pape looked at us and excitedly gestured with both arms while exclaiming, ‘You Jews are amazing. I don’t know how the Fuhrer will ever be able to defeat you!’ and he walked away. It was an incredible moment of pride and faith.”

Mr. Friedenson finished the story and broke out into a huge smile. “How right he was and how fortunate we are today to be able to learn Torah in re-established centers of Torah and *Chassidus* throughout the world. We must never be afraid and we must always believe. Nu, what can I say ... ‘*Ainy z’chayah k’Torah v’ain chachameha k’Yisrael*’”

The Tears Were Tears of Joy

...Back in Kew Gardens Hills, just a few weeks ago, the reason for the tears was because this 12-year-old singing at the Bimah was **the great grandson of Reb Yosef Friedenson**, exactly 79 years after the above story. The tears were tears of joy.

Yes *RBSH*”O, ***ICH GLAUBE!*** I BELIEVE!

*Reprinted from the November 10, 2022 website of matzav.com Originally published in Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Monsey Mavaser. (Excerpted from **Faith Amid the Flames: The Story of Reb Yosef Friedenson**, The Kiddush HaShem He Witnessed and Created; ArtScroll.*

The Boy Who Wanted to Sin

It is told that in the yeshiva of the ‘Ketzos Hachoshen (Rabbi Aryeh Leib Heller, 1745-1812)’ there was a boy whose heart was drawn after the nonsense of this world. One day he decided to leave the walls of the yeshiva to check out the nonsense and enjoy it Rachmana litzlan. Lucky for him he decided to first go to his Rav to say goodbye.

The ‘Ketzos Hachoshen’ knew through ruach hakodesh where this boy was headed and he said, “My dear boy, you should know that you are about to fulfill the posuk (Koheles 11:9) 'בילדותך בחור שמח' – ‘Rejoice young man in your childhood’”, and here he raised his voice, “but you must know that in the end you will also fulfill the – 'ודע כי על כל אלה יביאך האלקים במשפט' – posuk the of half other ‘but be aware that for all these things G-d will call you to account’!”

The shouting came from the depths of his pure heart and made a huge impression on the boy. In time he said that from when he heard these words, he lost all desire to act sinful, and he never sinned again.

Reprinted from the Parshas Lech Lecha 5782 parsha sheet of Tiv Hakehila

Judging Favorably #208

My Son, the Amateur Electrician Expert



My teenage son, Elie, is an amateur electrician. Even without any training he seems to have an innate talent in that direction. He’s always looking for something

to fix, and when we have an electrical problem in the house, he's right there to help me out.

However, I am not as enthusiastic as he. I'm always afraid of the danger, but he is so confident and so successful that it's hard for me to say no. When the vacuum cleaner wouldn't start last week, I knew Elie would want to try his hand. I thought it looked like something for an expert, but he was sure he could fix it so I gave in.

In no time at all he had it back together again and said that it was working fine. "Just a blockage that was easily fixed."

Company was coming that evening and the rug needed to be vacuumed so I was thrilled that he had come to the rescue. By the time I got to the rug, it was late afternoon. I plugged the vacuum cleaner into the socket and pressed the button, but it wouldn't start!

I knew it! Why did he insist when I told him it needed an expert? We should have just taken the machine to the repair shop! Our company will be coming soon. What am I going to do now?

One of the other children was watching my frustration. As soon as he realized the problem, he interceded. "Mommy, try another socket. Don't you remember? That one doesn't work!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5783 email of The Weekly Vort. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet.

Looking for a Pauper Without Hope

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman told a story in Torah Wellsprings about a wealthy Jewish businessman who wanted to give some charity so he will have merit in Olam Habah. The wealthy Jew decided to give his money to a pauper who was without any trace of hope.

He began speaking with paupers, asking them how they manage, and none of them had lost hope. One was relying on a wealthy uncle who might help him. Another is planning to find a job, etc. He became frustrated. "Can't I find someone who has lost hope?" Then he saw someone dressed in rags, sitting on top of a garbage heap, rummaging for something to eat. Can there be anyone poorer than him? he thought. This person has certainly lost all hope.

He gave him a hundred silver coins. The pauper asked, “Why did you give me so much money?” The wealthy man said, “I made a vow that I will give a lot of money to the pauper who has lost all hope.” The pauper replied,

“Only a fool loses hope. I didn’t lose hope. I trust in Hashem, Who “raises the poor out of the garbage heap (Tehillim 113:7). If Hashem wills it, nothing can prevent Him from making me wealthy.”

The wealthy man realized that he will never find a person who lost all hope, so he dug a pit in the cemetery and hid his money there. The wheel of fortune turned. Eventually, this wealthy man became very poor, and he went from door to door, collecting food and money. He suddenly remembered that he once buried a large sum of money in the cemetery. So, he went to the cemetery and started digging, but then the police arrived. He was arrested and brought before the mayor.

He explained to the mayor that he was once wealthy, and now that he is poor, he collects door-to-door. He remembered that he hid funds in the cemetery, and he was digging there to retrieve them. The mayor asked, “Don’t you remember me? Years ago, you found me in the garbage heap, rummaging around for food. I told you that I trust in Hashem. I told you that if He wills it, He can make me wealthy. Now look at where my bitachon brought me!”

Because Hashem can do anything and everything, if we trust in Him, we will enjoy His salvation.

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

The Rav and the Harried Mother

Rav Yitzchak Aizik Sher’s deep appreciation of a mother’s function was evident during an occasion that took place late one morning. Rav Yitzchak Aizik had a heart condition that required him to take a daily walk, and he did this, accompanied by one of his Talmidim.

As they were walking one day, a young woman pushing a baby carriage, who was obviously in a rush, almost pushed her carriage into them, and would have knocked them over. People were shocked at this. The young man accompanying Rav Yitzchak Aizik muttered, “What right does she have to walk like that? Does she think she is the only one on the street?” Rav Yitzchak Aizik remained silent until his student had calmed down a little. He then said, “I am speaking now to myself. If you

want to listen in, however, you may. I wonder how much I achieved today for myself and how much I accomplished for others. Rather than waste away in bed all day, I arose in the morning, and got dressed. It was cold this morning, so it was a bit more of a struggle.



Rav Yitzchak Aizik Sher

I went to Shul to Daven, because I need a Brachah from Hashem for good health and Parnasah. I ate breakfast to nourish myself. I then learned Torah for my Neshamah. Now it is 11:00 a.m., and I have done absolutely nothing for anyone but myself!

This young woman, however, probably slept very little during the night, because she had to get up many times to take care of her baby. By the time she fell back asleep, she had to get up again, so that she could wake her husband for Davening. She then prepared lunches for her children to take to school. She woke them and dressed them, prepared breakfast, said goodbye to them, and then returned to take care of her baby.

As soon as things quieted down, she received a call from the school principal asking if she could come in to substitute for a teacher who was absent. She needed the money to help support her family, so she said, ‘Yes,’ and ran to school. Now, should I, who have done nothing for anyone other than myself all day, criticize this woman who has already done so much Chesed for others? Can you even imagine doing such a thing?!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Veyera 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

A Time for Tears

A distraught father came to Rav Yitzchak of Vorka, zt”l, and cried, “Rebbe, I can’t take it any longer. My son is critically ill. For all I know, by now, he could be on his death bed. Rebbe, please Daven that he has a full recovery and lives!”

The Rebbe Began to Sway Back and Forth

The Vorkar Rebbe closed his eyes and began to sway back and forth. A few minutes went by, and the Rebbe opened up his eyes, looked at the father and said, “I’m so sorry to tell you this, but I was not successful in my Tefilah. I tried, but the Heavenly gates are sealed closed. My Tefilos were not able to penetrate Shamayim. Quickly, return home. You are needed there.”

The father lowered his head and began to weep profusely, but what more could he do? He had Davened. He had gone to the holy Vorkar Rebbe, who had also Davened. Shamayim had given its response. He returned to his coach and left for home.

Only a half hour had gone by, when he heard the sound of another wagon quickly approaching him. He turned around and was surprised to see the holy Vorkar Rebbe quickly coming up behind him. He stopped his coach, and allowed the Rebbe to catch up.

Overwhelmed with Sadness

The Rebbe climbed down from his wagon and said, “Please come down. I have something to say to you,” and he motioned for the man to sit down with him on the side of the road. The Rebbe looked at the man and said, “When you left, I was overwhelmed with sadness. It broke my heart that I was unable to help you, or in some way, to ease what you are going through. I then realized that while I could not bring a way to help your son recover from him illness, I could at least cry together with you. This is why I came to find you.”

The Rebbe and the Man Sat on the Ground and Cried Mournfully

The Rebbe proceeded to weep uncontrollably. The man sat next to the Rebbe on the ground and cried mournfully. Ironically, the father realized that the Rebbe was crying with greater intensity than even he was crying. This motivated him to cry even harder.

A short while went by, and the Rebbe motioned to the father to stop crying. He smiled and said, “You can go home. Your son has been healed! The illness has now turned around, and your son will live!”

Stunned, the father asked, “What happened?”

The Rebbe responded, “The gates of Shamayim were closed to Tefilos, but the Heavens opened up to our tears! The Gates of Tears are never closed, and our Tefilos have now been accepted!”

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

More than Just Providing a Poor Family with Groceries

By Mordechai Levin



A student of Rav Elazar Shach, ZT”L, the great Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovez Yeshiva and the Gadol Hador (Leader of his Generation), was once approached by the Rav regarding a Ponovezh Kollel member who literally did not have money to feed his young family.

Rav Shach immediately arranged for groceries to be delivered to the family’s home, but he did not stop there. He decided that in order to facilitate extricating the

family from the dire situation, he must find work for the wife. Upon researching, he had learned that the wife had skills as a teacher but couldn't find a job.

Rav Shach traveled to Yerushalayim to the offices of Chinuch Atzmai, the network of religious schools in Israel. He asked them to find a teaching position for the young lady, all the while extolling her skills and abilities. He pounded his fist on the desk, demanding that they find her a job immediately.

Unable to Say No to the Great Rav

The Chinuch Atzmai administration realized that they couldn't say no to a request from the great Rav Shach. They quickly researched the schools in her neighborhood and found one that had a teaching position opening. They then presented Rav Shach with a completed form that showed the name of the school where she was now officially employed, the classroom number, and the subject matter that she was to begin teaching the very next day!

Rav Shach returned to Bnei Brak and immediately sought out his student, handed him the official employment form, and told him to deliver it right away to the Kollel member's home.

The student was astounded! His elderly Rebbi, the Gadol Hador, had expended so much effort for one needy family?! He asked Rav Shach, "Does one really have to go to such lengths for Chessed (kindness)?"

Without Chessed, One's Torah Learning is Worthless

Rav Shach answered, "Know this: if one learns Torah but doesn't do Chessed, his Torah is worthless (*lo shaveh klum*); for what purpose is he alive (*vilomo lo chayim*)?"

Comment: We are taught that Avraham excelled in Chessed. Our Sages say that one must strive to have his actions reach the great levels of the actions of our forefathers. Yet, is it even possible to attain such greatness? Maybe it's not, but a person must set that level as a goal. Let's push toward greatness, and not be satisfied with mediocre efforts.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeira 5783 email of R' Mendel Berlin's Torah Sweets.

A Determination to Pass Hashem's Test and Get 100%



Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn tells us about Rabbanit Linda Tawil who was reading a book written by Nachman Seltzer for Artscroll in January of this year. The story told in the book dates back to the 90s. The story is told through Rabbanit Nava Ben Moshe. Rabbi Krohn called Mrs. Ben Moshe to verify all the details. A little background, Nava started a Kiruv organization called Maor focusing on the women of the Los Angeles area community. Her husband is Yair, a local businessman.

One day Yair suggests to Nava that he take off from work and they spend the day together. He suggests that they go to a restaurant and explains to her delight that he has pre-arranged everything with regard to the children, the car pools and has cleared her day in advance.

Asks His Wife to Pick Up a Couple of Cold Drinks

Yair comes back home at 11AM to pick her up. She joins him in the car and they drive off. As he is passing a market, he pulls over and asks Nava if she wouldn't mind running in and picking up a couple of cold drinks. She is puzzled and asks why, aren't they going for lunch? He explains that it's early and maybe they can take a walk first before lunch.

She runs into the store and two minutes later walks out, but neither the car nor her husband are there. Where's Yair?

Now this is before cell phones, so there is not much one can do. At first, she assumes he was parked in a red zone and a police officer may have sent him around

the corner. But a couple of minutes later and still no Yair. Now one starts to worry. Did he get car jacked? Or, Heaven Forb-d, was there an accident? Where could he be? And anger builds! Didn't he say he wanted to spend time with me today? And now he disappears.

Exasperation and Worry Take Over

I can just imagine saying, I pray he's not dead, but if he isn't, then I am going to kill him. Exasperation and worry take over and five minutes is like forever when you're standing there and don't know.

At that moment Nava caught herself and said aloud, Nava, you know everything in life is a test. So, she looked up and she exclaims, "Hashem, if this is a test then I'm going to pass it and get 100%". And as she stood there waiting she kept repeating. "If this is a test Hashem, I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100. No matter when he shows up, whatever it is I'm going to be thankful that he's OK and I'm not going to be angry."

Another five minutes go by which felt like hours and finally Yair returns. Nava opens the passenger door. She hands her husband the drinks which aren't too cold anymore and she sits down with a big smile. Yair starts to apologize. He realized that he forgot something at his office so he drove the two blocks and asked someone to send the secretary down. She took too long and then he got stuck in a traffic jam trying to get back around the corner. He felt so terrible and he was so sorry because he should've been back in a couple of minutes. She continues to smile and tells him not to worry and they go have lunch, they have a wonderful day and that's the end of the story.

Sharing Her Story of Fighting to Maintain Her Control

The next day while talking to the women in a class for her kiruv organization, she shares the story of her fight to maintain control and not get angry along with the realization that verbalizing the statement made the tool so much more powerful.

One of the ladies in her class was considering koshering her kitchen and she came to the decision go forward with taking everything to the mikveh a month later. So, on mikveh day for her dishes, this woman is committed to take everything. She pulls the ladder into her kitchen to pull down piece by piece and suddenly one of the rungs gives way and she finds herself sprawled out on the tile floor not knowing if her leg is sprained or broken. At that point she's the woman who has fallen and can't get up. As she crawls towards the phone to call for help, she is very upset.

She turned to God and she said, "I'm going out of my way trying to kosher my kitchen and this is what you do to me? Maybe I shouldn't bother to do this. Maybe it's not meant to be." And as she reaches out for the phone and lifts the receiver, she remembers Nava's story and reverses her position with G-d. Instead of

complaining, she exclaims, OK Hashem if this is a test so be it I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100.

She reaches her husband. Later at the hospital, they braced her leg and she returns to her house to dishes on the counter in a job partially done. Instead of giving up, she's going to move forward. She decided to call a few of her friends and ask them to help with the trip to the Mikveh. And they all agreed. The friends joined her in the house. They pulled everything down and together they went to the Mikveh. After toveling everything, they brought everything back to the house and that was the end of the story.

Fast Forward 25 or 30 Years Later

Fast forward 25 or 30 years later and Mrs. Tawil is reading the story from a book written so long ago and it has a tremendous impact on her. She was so inspired by the idea of verbalizing the statement, "HaShem if this is a test then I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100."

Rabbanit Tawil was scheduled to go on a speaking tour for 12 days in Argentina where she would speak at various Synagogues, schools and clubs to a large cross section of the Jewish women and girls.

Arriving in Bueno Ares. She gave her first lecture on Wednesday morning discussing the tests of life, and concluded with the stories from the book suggesting how helpful it might be to verbalize the plea, just as Nava and her student did when confronted with a difficult situation and how this could a person pass the test.

A Saturday Night Concert that Is Not for a Good Jewish Girl

The next morning Thursday, a girl came up to her after the lecture and explained that she had been at the lecture the previous morning. "I just need to tell you. I was at your class yesterday and heard what you said and thought about it. This Saturday night in Buenos Aires there's going to be a concert by a very famous female singer and it's going to be the concert of the year but it's a very provocative and racy scene and the reality is, it's no place for a good Jewish girl. I realize that and I said to myself although I have a great ticket, I want to go, but I have to accept that this is a test from Hashem and if it is a test, I'm going to pass it and I'm going to get 100". And she continued, "therefore I'm committing myself not to go to this concert."

With this additional success story, on Thursday evening and Friday morning and on Shabbat, Linda Tawil told Nava and her student's story and added this one about the concert. On Saturday afternoon a bunch, of girls came up to her and said, you know we also have tickets for tonight show and it's really the concert of the year and everybody wanted to go but we realize that this really is not a place for us to be

and we all said aloud, “if this is a test that I’m going to pass the test and I’m going to get 100.”

And what was amazing, was that the class she gave Saturday night turned into an oneg Shabbat with so many girls came whose original intention was to go to the concert. They all decided not to go. Peysach Krohn told me that we can only imagine the chizuk and strength it gave Linda to hear the stories and to hear what these girls were able to do because they were able to verbalize the fact that they were facing the test.

Received Numerous Letters and Notes from Many Inspired People

And Rabbanit Tawil shared that in the weeks following she got letter after letter and note after note from person after person describing the situation they were in and how they said to themselves. That, if this is a test Hashem, they were going to pass it and they were going to get 100%.

Each letter, each text passage, each note, each DM, brought tears to her eyes when she read of the individual tests that each person faced and how they were able to overcome them.

So, she called Rabbi Krohn and she asked him to tell the story on TorahAnytime and she asked that people write to her and tell her about the different tests they faced and how they were able to overcome them.

Recognizing the Tests that We Face Every Single Day

And even the rabbi said, that when he heard it, it was so powerful, realizing that we face tests every single day of our lives and every minute and he thought it could be so helpful for people to verbalize and push themselves to succeed.

So, in South America, this really caught on; they made keychains, they made necklaces and they made bracelets as reminders. Some printed posters and they put them up all over the place, so they should remember to say, HaSHame, if this is a test that I’m going to pass the test and I’m going to get 100%

Try it and send your success stories to Linda Tawil at Withahundred@gmail.com.

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