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Story #1305

The Team of Story And Prayer

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

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Shmuel Tamir and Rabbi Aryeh Levin

In 1977 there was a movement in the Israeli Knesset to try to pass a bill that would legalize abortion. Spearheading the campaign was the Minister of Justice [under PM Menachem Begin from 1977-1980], Shmuel Tamir.

When the rabbis and most all Torah-observant Jews in Israel and throughout the world heard that Israel was trying to legalize killing fetuses in the womb, there

was tremendous consternation and concern. Leading rabbinical authorities and leaders in Israel decided to send a delegation of prestigious rabbis to speak with Shmuel Tamir, to try to dissuade him from going ahead with this terrible idea. Included in this delegation were Rabbi Michael Stern, the highly respected rabbinical authority of Ezrat Torah [a district in Jerusalem], and Rabbi Raphael Levin, the son of one of the most beloved rabbis in 20th century Israel, Rabbi Aryeh Levin. ^[1]

The Hope that Shmuel Tamir Would at Least Listen to the Words of Reb Raphael

The thinking behind the selection of R. Raphael Levin was because many of the members of *Etzel* [Irgun] and *Lechi* [the Stern Gang] had great respect for R. Aryeh Levin. ^[2] The hope was that Shmuel Tamir, a prominent Israeli independence fighter for the Irgun, would at least listen to Reb Raphael Levin, the son of Reb Aryeh.

Two days before the meeting, R. Raphael got on the phone and called each of the rabbis in the delegation and begged and pleaded with them that they should storm the gates of heaven with prayer; they should supplicate and pray before the Heavenly Throne that they should somehow be successful in their incredibly important mission of dissuading the minister from this terrible destructive idea.

Two days later the delegation sat with Shmuel Tamir in his office. At one point, R. Raphael spoke up. "I am the son of R. Aryeh Levin."

The eyes of Shmuel Tamir lit up in delight. Facing everyone in the delegation, he exclaimed: "Ah, he was our beloved rabbi,". Then, turning his gaze towards R. Raphael, he said, "What do you want to say? Please. Go ahead."

Recalling the visit of a Secular Couple Many Years Before

R. Raphael spoke up, saying, "I would like to share with you a short story. When I was much younger, a secular couple knocked on our door one day. They wanted to speak to the great man, my father, *HaRav* Aryeh Levin. My father invited them in and sat them down, whereupon a large argument ensued between the husband and the wife.

It turned out that the wife was expecting a child, and the husband, who was in medical school, didn't want to bring the child into the world. He felt it would impede his studies, and anyway, in general he didn't want a child at this time.

The wife equally strongly wanted the child and they couldn't come to an agreement. They decided to consult my father -- everyone respected Rabbi Aryeh Levin, even the secular.

My father listened to both sides. He sat with them for over an hour, trying to persuade the husband that they should bring the child into the world. He emphasized that the child would only bring *nachas* [pleasure, satisfaction], and would have a major positive impact on the family.

By the end of the hour the father was persuaded; he agreed to let the fetus live, that they would bring the child into the world and raise it with love."

Upon concluding the story, R. Rephael leaned across the desk toward Shmuel Tamir, looked him in the eyes intently, and said quietly, "Not long after this disagreement the couple had a baby boy. They called him Shmuel. He grew up to be the important person whose name is Shmuel Tamir. ^[3] It was you!"

Challenged to Call His Mother Immediately

Shmuel Tamir was utterly shocked. "I never heard this story," He insisted. R. Raphael quickly responded. "Call your mother, Call her right now!"

On the spot, Shmuel Tamir picked up the phone and called his mother. At first, silence. Then his mother stuttered and then she mumbled, "You have to understand, times were different then etc. etc."

Mr Tamir slammed the phone down, looked up at the silent rabbis, and said firmly, "You have nothing to worry about. This bill will never hit the Knesset floor as long as *I* am the Minister of Justice."

Amazing, *yeshuat HaShem keherev ayin*.

On their way out, R. Michael Stern questioned R. Rephael. "I don't understand something. You knew this story two days ago, right?"

R. Rephael smiled. "Yes. I did."

"So why did you call each of us to insist that we *davven* (pray). It must already have been clear that the story would be a "slam dunk"."

R. Rephael's powerful reply astonished the entire delegation, and made a lasting impression.

"Slam dunk *ahin* (there) slam dunk *aher* (here); story this way, story that way. Without *tefilah* (prayer) we are nothing. *Ferkert* (on the contrary), the reason that the story had impact is only because of our *tefilah*!"

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*Source:* Freely Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a transcript of an email report by Rabbi Shlomo Landau, "Why 'Pro-Choice' never made it to the Knesset floor."

*Biographical note* [excerpted and adapted from the excellent profile on [Lehi.org.il/en/levin-rabbi-aryeh](http://Lehi.org.il/en/levin-rabbi-aryeh) (plus one sentence from the Jerusalem Post)]:

Rabbi Aryeh Levin [1885 - 9 Sivan 1969], studied at the Yeshivas of Volozhin, Slutsk and Slonim, he was known for his scholarship and genius. In 1905 he emigrated to the Holy Land, where he became the spiritual director of Talmud Torah Yeshivat Etz Hayim in Jerusalem, a position he held for the rest of his life. In the

five decades plus since his passing, he has become a legendary figure -- remembered both as the “Father of the Prisoners” for his loving and supportive devotion to the members of the Jewish underground imprisoned by the British during the Mandate period, and as the “*Tzadik* of Jerusalem” for his limitless generous acts of kindness, and his love and tolerance of all Jews.

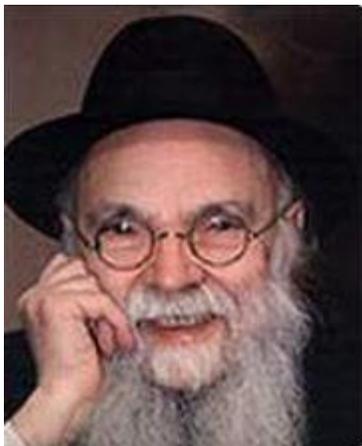
[1] You can read all about him in English and it is certainly worthwhile to do so!--in the book “A Tzaddik in our Time” by Simcha Raz (Feldheim 1976)

. [2]Especially those arrested by the British and incarcerated in the Russian Compound jail in Jerusalem. For them he was known as “the Father of Prisoners” because of his extraordinary dedication to their welfare and their souls.

[3] The original family surname was Katzenelson.

*Reprinted from the Parsha Vayishlach 5783 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

## A Love for Hakaras HaTov (Gratitude)



Rav Avraham Pam, zt”l, excelled at the Middah of Hakaras HaTov, being appreciative and thankful for the good and the favors that others have done for him. When he would attend a convention, he made a point to thank the cooks for their work. He did not call for them, but rather, he went to the kitchen to personally tell them how good their food was.

When Rav Pam was approached in the early 1970’s to become the Rosh Yeshivah of a prominent Kollel in Eretz Yisroel, he turned it down, despite the fact

that it would be a promotion in his status, both in Ruchnius and financially. When he was questioned about this, he responded, “How can I leave Yeshivah Torah Vodaath? I owe so much to the Yeshivah! I learned here, and the Yeshivah gave me a position when I needed one.”

Rav Pam was in great pain during the last five years of his life. Yet, he never complained about his situation. At a Seudas Hoda’ah, a Seudah of thanks, he strengthened himself to speak to the people there.

He said, “A Seudas Hoda’ah is a time for everyone to reflect on the gratitude that they owe Hashem. I myself know how much appreciation I owe Hashem for everything that He does for me. We should be ashamed of our complaining over small problems when we have so much for which to be grateful!”

This statement was amazing to everyone who heard it, because it was coming from an individual who was suffering from constant pain!

Towards the end of his life, when it became too difficult for him to walk to the Yeshivah Minyan for Davening, a small group of people would come to make a Minyan for Shabbos in Rav Pam’s home. After Mussaf, Rav Pam would publicly thank the Baal Korei, the Baalei Tefilah, and all those who had come to take part in the Minyan. This was even though everyone who had come felt privileged just to be there and have the opportunity to observe Rav Pam up close. Rav Pam lived his entire life with an attitude of gratitude!

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

## **The Rabbi and the Airport Director**

Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, zt”l, had an incredible ability to answer people on their level and in a way that they could understand. Whenever he would meet people who were not observant Jews, he would search for some common link between them, whether from their community or family, or from their interests. Rav Eliyahu would then use this as a point of connection, and make people feel comfortable with him so that they could relate to him.

During his time as chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisroel, Rav Eliyahu was invited to tour Ben Gurion Airport in a group with other public figures. One of the airport’s directors participated in showing the dignitaries around.

When the group stopped for a break, this director approached Rav Eliyahu, and wanted to know if he could ask a question. The man said, “The matter won’t let me rest,” explaining why it was so urgent for him to discuss this now.



“Of course,” Rav Eliyahu said with a smile.

The director began, “Why does a person who asks a Rabbi a Halachic question have to act according to what the Rabbi tells him?” Before Rav Eliyahu had a chance to respond, the director said, “Don’t Rabbis make mistakes sometimes?”

“Yes, of course,” Rav Eliyahu answered. “Everyone can make a mistake, but it’s still worthwhile to listen to a Rabbi, because he often has a broader perspective and a deep base of knowledge on a topic, and he can see and know things that a regular person doesn’t.”

The director’s face clearly showed that he was not satisfied with that answer.

Rav Eliyahu continued, “Even though a person has free will, it’s a good idea to look for and listen to the advice of a Rabbi, rather than acting at random.”

But the director wouldn’t give in. “But why is someone obligated?” He persisted, “I don’t understand. Let the Rabbi say whatever he says, and let the one who asked do whatever he wants.”

Rav Eliyahu just smiled. “Wait. You’ll soon understand.”

The next stop on the tour was at the control tower. “This control tower has the same height as a fifteen-story building,” the guide informed the group. “The air traffic controllers sit at the top and supervise all the take offs and landings.”

The group looked out the windows that surrounded the room. The runways were spread out on the ground below. “The air traffic controllers use the height and

the wide field of vision to see all the planes taking off and landing. The pilots can only see what is right in front of them, so they must follow the instructions of the air traffic controllers.”

Rav Eliyahu turned to the airport director who had just been asking him questions. “Let’s imagine a pilot sees a clear runway and requests permission to land, but the controller denies the request. Instead, he sends the pilot to a different runway. Can the pilot ignore him, do what he wants, and land on the first runway?” Rav Eliyahu asked.

“G-d forbid!” the director cried. “The pilot must listen to the directions of the controllers. Their perspective is much broader. They see and know things the pilot can’t possibly see from his position!”

Rav Eliyahu responded with a smile. “Listen to your own words, straight from your own mouth! It is the same with asking a Rabbi for advice. He can see broader and clearer than the one asking the question, and that is why the one asking must listen and follow what he says!”

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

# Giant of Nobility

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



**Rebbetzin Sheila Feinstein and Rav Reuven Feinstein**

After the passing of Rebbetzin Sheila Feinstein, the wife of the rosh yeshivah Rav Reuven, in 2018, I went to be menachem avel the family in Staten Island, New York, as I had known her for many years. One of the daughters told me the following beautiful story about her mother.

Rabbi Ezra Langer,\* a rebbi in a yeshivah in Staten Island, was late one morning and driving faster than usual to get to school on time. In his haste, he could not stop in time at a red light and hit the car that had stopped in front of him. Embarrassed, Rabbi Langer got out of his car to meet the woman who was driving the expensive car he had hit.

He apologized immediately, gave the woman, Mrs. Agatha Shepard,\* who was wearing a crucifix, his name and phone number, and said, “I am so sorry! I am a teacher in a local Jewish school and was rushing to get there in time to assist the children with their morning prayers. Please don’t call the police or your insurance company. This is all my fault and I will pay all your costs. Take your car to a body shop, get an estimate, and I will cover it.” After a brief discussion, Mrs. Shepard agreed.

### **Asked Her to Take Her Car to Mendy’s Repair Shop**

Two days later, when she called Rabbi Langer with the estimate, he felt that the amount was somewhat exorbitant. He told her that his friend, Mendy,\* had a body shop nearby, and that he could probably do the same job at a more reasonable price. Rabbi Langer asked Mrs. Shepard if she would be willing to take the car there for an estimate, but he assured her that he would not insist that the work be done there unless she was convinced that Mendy’s work was up to the highest standards.

Once again, Mrs. Shepard was amenable. Indeed, she took her car to Mendy’s and was very pleased with the work she saw he had done on other cars. Thus, she arranged to have her car repaired there. She called Rabbi Langer to inform him. He thanked her profusely for her time and effort on his behalf.

During the week, Mendy called Rabbi Langer to let him know that the car would be ready by Friday. He said that he is generally paid in full when the car is returned to the owner. He asked if he could be paid on Friday, and Rabbi Langer assured him that he would try his best.

### **Asked if He Could Pay Her with 12 Monthly Installments**

Rabbi Langer mustered the courage and called Mrs. Shepard. “I know,” he began, “that Mendy will finish the job by Friday and that he has to be paid when the job is done. As I told you, I am a teacher and I don’t have that kind of money to pay him now. Is there any way that you would be willing to pay him in full when you pick up the car and we can make a payment schedule? I can pay you the full amount over the next year and will send you a check on the first of every month for one-twelfth of the amount.”

To his astonishment, she agreed pleasantly. “It’s no problem,” Mrs. Shepard said, “I understand teachers’ salaries.” She picked up the car on Friday and paid the

full amount, and Rabbi Langer sent her a check every month as they had agreed. Frankly, he was amazed at how she trusted him and valued his word.

When the payment for the final check was due, he called and asked if he could come and pay it personally. Mrs. Shepard welcomed the idea. When Rabbi Langer came to her home and handed over the final check, he said to her reverently, “I am awed by the kindness and consideration you have shown me from day one. You didn’t call the police the day of the accident, you were willing to take your car to my friend’s body shop, you were willing to put up the money and let me pay you over the year — what made you trust me? You didn’t know me, and yet you have been so magnanimous.”

### **“You Were From Her Tribe”**

What Mrs. Shepard said shocked the rebbi, and shocked all of us who heard the story at the Feinstein shivah home. “I teach in the public school system and my principal is Sheila Feinstein. When I realized that you were from her tribe, I knew without a doubt that I could trust you.”

What a zechus to have known a person like that! The Rebbetzin was a walking, talking kiddush Hashem throughout her life.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeishev 5783 edition of the At the Artscroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - The Grandeur of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn.*

# **The Maharam of Rottenberg’s Dream Offer**

## **By Rabbi Mordechai Levin**

The Chidah, ZT”L, writes a fascinating story about the Maharam Mirottenberg, ZT”L. The government accused him of being a spy and threw him in jail. The Jewish people did all they could to get him released. After much negotiation, they settled on a huge sum in order to release him. However, the Maharam Mirottenberg forbade them from spending such a large amount on his release. In the end, the Maharam Mirottenberg remained imprisoned in a tall tower all alone until he died in solitary confinement. Even then, the terrible government did not allow his body to be removed for Jewish burial.

After quite a while, a wealthy Jew [named Alexander ben Salomon Wimpfen] decided to personally ensure the release of the Maharam Mirottenberg's body. After expending much time, effort, and money he successfully won the release of the body. He earned the great honor of personally burying the great Maharam Mirottenberg. Then, the next day he died! The Jewish world couldn't understand how one who had worked so hard to earn the release of the Tzaddik's body could deserve such a fate.

A few days later, the wealthy man came to his friend in a dream. He told him that the very night after the Tzaddik was buried, the Maharam Mirottenberg came to him in a dream.



**The gravestone of the Maharam of Rottenberg and Reb Alexander ben Salomon Wimpfen, the man who redeemed the body of the Tzadik from prison.**

As a way of thanking him for his great deed, he offered him a choice of two fates; He could choose great wealth for himself and his descendants forever, or die immediately and be guaranteed a place in Olam Haba. The rich man told his friend that he chose the second choice, and that's why he died the day after the burial. His friend asked him what does he have in Olam Haba, and he answered that he is next to the Maharam Mirottenberg in Gan Eden!

**Reprinted from the Parshas Mikeitz email of Torah Sweets.**

# A Night for a Night

By Rabbi David Bibi

Many years ago, a rabbi, who is well-known today left Toronto as a young man to come study in New York, and while he was here, he became close to the Bobover Rebbe. This man was a diligent student and also very involved in doing kind deeds. He volunteered often to go to Mount Sinai hospital where he was a regular, visiting with people and helping as he could do Bikur Holim. One Friday night he was at the Bobover Rebbi's Tisch (table).

A man came in and told those present that unfortunately, his father-in-law had just passed away and they needed someone if possible to volunteer to watch over the body for the night. This young man said he would do it.

## He Called His Parents After Shabbos

After Shabbat, he called his parents in Toronto to tell them about an interesting and eerie and a very spiritually fulfilling night. They asked him what the name of the niftar was and he told them that he was Rabbi Ephraim Schwartz. They asked if this was the same Rabbi Schwartz, who was the head of such and such a Yeshiva And he told them that in fact, yes it was.

So, his mother says to him. About 20 years ago, this same Rabbi Ephraim Schwartz, came to Toronto to collect money for his Yeshiva, "and we were asked to house him. At the time I had a one-year-old and had just given birth to twins, so my house was in a bit of an uproar. Those days, I hardly got to sleep at night. So, on the night the rabbi was there, I went to sleep as usual figuring I would wake up in a few hours to rock and feed. Instead, I woke up to the sun shining through my window and wondered what happened to the babies.

## The Rabbi Had Stayed up Through the Night

I went into the living room, and I saw Rabbi Schwartz, holding one of the twins and feeding them. He said to me that when he heard the babies get up and he knew how tired I must be. He thought that if he can help me through one night's sleep, it would be so helpful so he decided to get up and hold and feed the babies, And she tells her son that the baby he was holding was none other than him,

Look at the world that we live in and the miracles that some may call coincidences. Every day is a miracle. We need to simply open our eyes and see.

May we blessed with miracles and merit to see Mashiach speedily in our days.

*Reprinted from the Shabbat Mikess 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# The Importance Of Good Middos



**Rav Eliyahu Moshe Shisgal**

The Alter of Kelm, zt”l, Rav Simchah Zissel Ziv, was one of the main Talmidim of Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt”l, who was the founder of the Mussar movement. The Alter devoted his life to teaching his students how to perfect their Middos. He would say that being great at Torah learning without good Middos was wrong.

The Alter was once traveling to small towns and villages to raise funds for his Yeshivah in Kelm, and he saw all types of people on his trips. One thing he noticed that they all had in common was their respect for a Talmid Chacham. Everyone knew of the greatness of the Alter of Kelm. Because he had so refined his Middos, it was clear to everyone that he was different, and wherever the Alter went,

he was welcomed with great respect and admiration.

Rav A.L. Scheinbaum writes about Rav Eliyahu Moshe Shisgal, zt”l, who was someone that emulated what the Alter of Kelm represented. Rav Shisgal was a unique individual who represented the Torah and sterling Middos.

## **A Letter Sent to the Rabbi’s Widow**

Shortly after he passed away, his Rebbetzin received the following letter. “With tears rolling down my face, I must relate how your late husband saved my family from much pain. Six years ago, your husband visited my store. I can’t remember why he came. I just remember him coming through the door, and it suddenly hit me, ‘This is the man I should talk with. He will listen to my problem. He will help me.’”

## **Son Intends to Marry a Non-Jew**

“Earlier that week, my son had announced that he was getting married to an Italian girl, R”L. The event would take place in a few months, and the girl’s family had approved the match. It was a done deal, and there was nothing I could do about it. My son was a young man, twenty-four years old, independent, and had a mind of his own. I, myself, was far from being

‘Mr. Religious,’ since I only attended the synagogue twice a year.

“Rav Shisgal agreed to meet with my son in a week’s time. He left the store, and I waited every minute of that week, until the meeting would take place. Finally, the week passed, and your husband once again visited my store. My son was there waiting. He was doing me a favor by meeting with the Rav.

“Your husband suggested that they go for a walk around the block, and together, the Rav and my son left. It took all of fifteen minutes. When they returned, my son said nothing. The Rav said goodbye, and that was it.

“The next morning, my son came over and said to me, ‘Dad, if we

have such a great man among our people, I cannot marry out of the faith.’ The subject was closed, and our family’s ordeal had ended! So, you see, your husband saved many people from heartache. My son went on to marry a nice Jewish girl, and just last week, they registered their little daughter in an Orthodox day school. With Rav Shisgal gone, we have lost a good public-relations man for Judaism. Who can replace him?”

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

## A Perfect Host

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



**The Steipler Gaon and the Rambam**

When Rav Shabsi Frankel proudly showed the Steipler Gaon his monumental revised edition of the Rambam, the Steipler smiled broadly and glowingly declared, “The Rambam and his commentators will wait to greet you in Gan Eden!”

Reb Shabsi used his means to assemble the various manuscripts that would help to improve the accuracy and quality of the Rambam. Tens of scholars worked diligently for many years on the project. But perhaps what is most amazing about this undertaking is the fact that during all those years Reb Shabsi never held himself higher than his colleagues and employees. He always made them feel important and integral to the success of the project. The following episode illustrates his refinement and humility.

Stored in his home were many manuscripts worth millions of dollars. Acquiring these documents from universities and collectors was a process that took many years.

Once, Reb Shabsi was sitting at his table working with another respected talmid hacham on a recently purchased manuscript. For hours on end they labored, analyzing the nuances in the scripts and comparing them to one another. This intense process required endless patience and a skilled eye.

Noticing the need for some refreshments, his wife brought two cups of coffee, one for her husband and the other for a guest he had brought to observe and help out with the new manuscript. Although Reb Shabsi saw the coffee being brought in, his guest did not, and when it was placed down on the table he inadvertently turned around and to his horror knocked it over onto the priceless manuscript. Not only would it cause a loss of thousands of dollars, but now the documents were rendered completely useless!

Reb Shabsi jumped out of his seat and ran into the kitchen. He most certainly was distressed that his valuable manuscript was ruined, but he did not want to cause his colleague any shame or embarrassment. And so, two minutes later he emerged from the kitchen with a fresh cup of coffee. “I figured since the first one spilled, you would probably want another one.”

The man smiled. He knew that what had happened had probably caused Reb Shabsi to be disappointed and upset. But he also knew that Reb Shabsi understood that it was an accident, an accident anyone could have caused.

The Steipler’s comment about the Rambam and his entourage had never rung truer. “The Rambam and his commentators will wait to greet you in Gan Eden!” But maybe not because of the reason we had thought. (Touched by a Story 3)

*Reprinted from the Shabbat Mikess 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*