

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS NITZAVIM- VAYEILECH 5784

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## \$58 For the Last Fifteen Minutes of a Gemorah Shiur



Our actions have long and far-reaching repercussions – both good and bad. Many years ago, the Rosh Yeshivah of the Philadelphia Yeshivah, Horav Eliyah Svei, zl, was in New York with his family. New York to Philadelphia is not a long trip. When one must take public transportation, however, it can be pricey – especially if a number of tickets must be purchased.

The local train was \$12.00 one way. It was slow and made numerous stops, so they would arrive in Philadelphia later than they wanted. Amtrak had a train that was more convenient, but also very expensive: \$70.00.

They decided that all would travel by bus except for one son, who would take the train. This way, he could arrive in yeshivah for the last fifteen minutes of shiur,

class. When they asked their father why he was spending \$58.00 for a mere fifteen minutes of shiur, the Rosh Yeshivah explained, “I do not want it to be recorded in Heaven that I refused to spend \$58.00 for fifteen minutes of shiur.

“I do not know what the schar, reward, is for fifteen minutes of Gemorah shiur, but I do know that if I do not spend the extra money, then all the schar I will ever get for fifteen minutes of Gemorah is \$58.00. I am not willing to exchange my Heavenly reward for a few dollars.”

Not only does this show the Rosh Yeshivah’s gadlus, greatness, it gives us a perspective on the far-reaching echos of our actions.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5784 edition of Peninim on the Torah.*

# Too Late to Ask Forgiveness

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**



Rabbi Yosef Dov Soleveitchik, the Rav of Brisk, was revered throughout Europe as a foremost scholar and Talmudic sage. One aspect of his character was known to shine even brighter than his scholarship – his humility.

Once, he stopped by an inn in the middle of a freezing night and asked for lodging. He had no entourage with him, and the innkeeper treated him with abuse. He did not disclose who he was, and after pleading with the innkeeper, he was allowed to sleep on the floor near a stove. The innkeeper, thinking that the man was a poor beggar, did not offer him any food and refused to give him more than a little bread and water for which Rabbi Soleveitchik was willing to pay.

The next morning Rabbi Soleveitchik did not see the shocked expression on the face of the innkeeper when a few of the town notables came to the inn. “We

understand that the Brisker Rav was passing through this town. Is it possible that he came by your inn last night?"

At first, the innkeeper dismissed the question – until the Rav appeared and the group entered to greet him warmly. In a few minutes the town dignitaries converged on the inn with their students and children all in line to meet the great sage.

Terribly embarrassed, the innkeeper, who realized that he had berated and humiliated a leading Torah figure, decided to beg forgiveness from the Rav.

"Rebbe," he cried, "I am terribly sorry. I had no idea that you were the Brisker Rav. Please forgive me."

The Rav replied. "I would love to, but you see that would be impossible."

"But why?" asked the owner in shock.

"You see," explained the sage. "You are coming to ask forgiveness from the Brisker Rav. That is not who you insulted. You debased a simple Jew who came for lodging – and he is no longer here to forgive you."

*Reprinted from the Parashat Re'eh 5784 email of Torah Sweets.*

# Truth on the Line

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, the Lodzer Rav was once confronted by two hysterical women who came to his home to seek a settlement of their argument.

The two women shared the same clothesline on which they hung their laundry out to dry. The line was stretched across a courtyard, from a hook outside one woman's window to a second hook outside the other woman's window. The two would normally take turns using the line, but this time there seemed to have been

some confusion, and both women were claiming ownership of the laundry which had been hung out to dry.

Unable to resolve their argument, they decided to bring the whole load of laundry to the home of the Rav, and let him determine its ownership.

### **Called in His Wife to Help Solve the Dilemma**

R' Eliyahu Chaim listened to the arguments of both women. After listening carefully, he instructed the women to leave the laundry on his table in a huge pile and go out of the room. He then called in his own wife, the rebbetzin.

“Do me a favor,” he requested her, “and please bring in a large batch of our laundry. First mark each item in a secret way so that the mark is not easily discernible, and then mix all of it together with the laundry that is on the table.”

The rebbetzin did as her husband requested, and brought in a recently dried load of laundry, which she marked carefully. She showed the Rav exactly where every item was marked and then she mixed her laundry together with the pile of laundry that already was on the Rav's table. The rebbetzin left the room through one door and the Rav called in one of the two women who had been waiting outside a second door.

### **Asked the First Woman to Pick Out Her Clothes from the Pile**

“Please select from this pile the laundry that is yours,” the Rav said. Carefully and diligently the woman picked out a shirt from this side, a sock from the second side, making sure to choose only those items she was positive were hers. She continued to select a good deal of what was on the table, but not one item that belonged to the rebbetzin. The Rav told her to put everything back in the pile and mix it all up again. Then he called in the second woman.

The Rav told her, as well, to choose the laundry that was hers. As she picked up each item, she announced in a defiant tone that it was unquestionably hers. She went through the entire bundle of laundry, exclaiming that each article - even those put in by the rebbetzin - was hers. The Rav realized that this was the woman who had been lying, for she was taking items that were definitely not hers.

### **The Final Disposition**

He then called back the first woman and told her to select once again what was hers. The rebbetzin then came in and took the marked laundry that was her own. And the lying woman finally left with what was really hers - a very small amount of the laundry. (Around the Maggid's Table)

*Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Around the Maggid's Table.”*

# The Sfas Emes and the Soldier



At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a war between Russia and Japan. Sadly enough, many young Jewish people were drafted into the army. A group of bochorim came to the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter) and they asked him for a brachah. He bentched them that they should not have to go out to war, but to one bachur he said, “Wait a minute.”

The Sfas Emes went into his room, and came back with a book. It was a little manual on how to do brissim. The Sfas Emes said to him, “Here, learn how to make a bris, and I bentch you that even when you go to the army, you should come back b’shalom.”

The boy began crying, and said, “Rebbe, please bentch me that I shouldn’t have to go to the war at all.” But the Sfas Emes was already talking to somebody else.

The boy got drafted and went to basic training. One day a general came to inspect the troops, his eye falls on the Jewish boy and he says, “I want to talk to you in private.”

He takes him to his office, takes a pistol in his hand and says, “Is it true that you only eat kosher food?” The young soldier says, “Yes.” He holds the pistol to his heart and he says, “Hey, you are a soldier of the Czar of Russia, and the Czar

doesn't want you to be hungry, the Czar wants you to eat all the food you can get your hands on. So, I'm ordering you to eat non-kosher food."

Trembling, the boy answers, "I'm sorry, I'm a servant of G-d, not of the Russian Czar."

The general paces furiously up and down the room and then he comes up to him again and says, "I heard you keep the Sabbath." He answers, "Yes." He says, "You are crazy! You are a soldier in the army of the Russian Czar! The Czar needs you to work every day!" This young man knew that this is the test of his life. He says, "I'm sorry, I'm a servant of G-d," while the general holds the pistol against his heart.

Suddenly the general smiles and puts down the pistol and says to him, "Listen to me, nobody knows, but I'm Jewish. My wife just had a baby and I need a mohel to do the bris. I'm not religious, but one thing I know: A mohel has to keep Shabbos and eat kosher food. So, I just wanted to test you to see if you really eat kosher and if you really keep Shabbos.

"But now that I see that you do, I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll sign you out from here and say I need you and take you with me. And after you do the bris, I will give you civilian garments and you can just run home."

*Reprinted from the Seuda Stories of Shabbos Chayeinu, Parshas Re'eh 5784*

## Shabbos and a Bowling Alley

One Friday afternoon Chaim was on the subway, leaving plenty of time to arrive at his destination before Shabbos. Suddenly, there was a screech . . . the train came to an abrupt halt, technical difficulties. He looked at his watch, there was still ample time to get to his destination.

Apparently, the technical difficulties were quite complicated, and after an hour-and-a-half they still had not been solved. At this point Chaim was starting to get nervous; the hand of his watch was moving quickly and soon Shabbos would be here. Finally, after two hours the train started to move again, with only a short time left until Shabbos.

### **Just Fifteen Minutes Until Sunset**

Chaim made a quick calculation and realized that he was not going to make it to his destination. With about fifteen minutes until sunset, he ran out of the subway station and entered the first building he saw: Tony's Bowling Alley. Chaim asked to speak to the owner and was introduced to Tony. Chaim explained to him that soon it would be a Jewish holy day and he would be prohibited to carry anything. Chaim wanted to know if he could leave his bag with him.

Even though he was not Jewish, he gladly agreed, and Chaim deposited his belongings, including \$300, in his office. Meanwhile, Chaim tried to figure out where he was. He found a place to daven, and then walked to the home of a friend, who lived about forty blocks away. Chaim's good friend was a little surprised to see him but he and his family made him feel welcome in their home.

After the beautiful Shabbos came to an end, his friend drove him back to the bowling alley to retrieve his valuables. Everything was topsy-turvy inside. It seemed like a storm had hit and everything was thrown all over. Chaim began to realize that he might not get his valuables after all.

### **“I Am Sure It Is Because You Observed Your Holy Day”**

Finally, he found Tony, who had a look of amazement on his face. He explained to Chaim that there had been a robbery in the bowling alley. He took him into his office which had been thoroughly ransacked for any valuables. He said, "They took everything, but did not touch your bag. I am sure it is because you observed your holy day. The Jews are a holy people; may G-d bless you."

He handed Chaim his bag with the three hundred dollars sitting safely where he had left it.

*Reprinted from the Seuda Stories of Shabbos Chayeinu, Parshas Re'eh 5784*

## **The Fur Cloak**

In a drashah, Reb Chaim Vital zt'l spoke about bitachon, and asserted that if someone truly trusts in Hashem, Hashem will support him even if he doesn't work at all. One simple Yid heard this, and decided to put it into practice. The gentiles who frequented his shop mocked him when they found him learning Torah, instead of working. He told them that he closed the shop, and trusts that Hashem will provide.

A few days later, a gentile merchant came into his store carrying a heavy fur cloak, "I bought this for cheap, and I'll sell it to you." The Yid explained to him that his store was closed.

The gentile replied, "Even so, the fur is too heavy for me to carry around. I will leave it here. When you have money, you can pay me," and he left the store. The Yid tried to lift the fur to put it aside, but it ripped and many silver coins fell out. Hashem had granted him wealth because he trusted in Hashem.

A neighbor heard what happened, and decided that he too will stop working. Weeks passed, and he wasn't earning money. He asked Reb Chaim Vital for an

explanation. "Why did my neighbor become wealthy with his bitachon, while I didn't earn anything at all?"

Reb Chaim Vital explained, "When your neighbor trusted in Hashem, he didn't know how Hashem will help him. But you were waiting for the fur cloak..."

*Reprinted from the August 29, 2024 email of the Torah Times Media's Stories of Faith by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.*

# A Clean Conscience

By Rosally Saltsman



The synagogue at Eshel Hanassi, a agricultural school near Beer Sheva may draw a paucity of regular congregants, but its hobbit hole/igloo shape is full of amazing stories of *kiruv* and serendipity, a.k.a. *hashgacha pratit*.

Effi Eisenbach, and his wife Ronit, run the religious life and *hachnassat orchim* at Eshel. As necessity dictates, Effi is the resident rabbi, *gabbai*, and go-to guy and yes, he even cleans the shul, even though it should be cleaned along with all public venues of the school but it isn't.

So, every *erev Shabbat* and *chag*, Effi can be found sweeping and washing the floor, cleaning the pews, wiping down the *Aron Kodesh*, along with arranging the books and setting the timers.



It wouldn't be remiss to say that the cleaning of the shul was not among his favorite duties.

Then one *erev Yom Kippur*, he opened the shul door, ready to clean, when he encountered a shul that was not only already clean, but it was sparkling, shining, cleaner than he had ever seen it, or made it.

As he was trying to work out the mystery of who had cleaned the shul, he mentioned it to one of the cooks in the school's kitchens. And she admitted to having cleaned the shul herself. Upon further questioning, Sarah, the cook, told Effi that when she had lived with her family in Morocco, they were responsible for cleaning the shul. It had been their family's tradition. In a wave of nostalgia, she had gone to the shul to follow in her family's tradition, feeling there was no better way to usher in the holiest day of the year.

In doing so, not only had Sara given the shul a fresh look, she had given Effi a fresh perspective of what it means to keep the shul clean, and he never again resented the task.

After all, it too is holy work.

*Reprinted from the September 1, 2024 website of The Jewish Press.*

# The White Garments

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**

Two great tzadikim, Rav Mendel of Rimanov and Rav Yisrael of Apt (the Apter Rav) once wanted to learn from the great tzaddik, the Chozeh of Lublin. When they arrived in Lublin, they dressed in white garments as a sign of purity and humility. However, some locals were not pleased with their arrival, and they were suspected of being spies, and as such, thrown into prison.

## **Working on Their Yirat Shamayim**

The next morning, the two tzaddikim appeared before the judge. When asked why they were there, they explained that they were working on their Yirat Shamayim and had come to learn from the ways of the Chozeh of Lublin.

The judge, seeing them dressed in white, asked why they were dressed that way. In response, they asked the judge, "Why are you dressed in black?"

The judge, infuriated, demanded, "Do you understand before whom you are standing?"

Rav Mendel of Rimanov calmly replied, "We understand exactly who we are standing before—the Creator of the world—and that is why we are not afraid of anything you are saying."

At that moment, Rav Mendel of Rimanov removed his shtreimel (traditional fur hat), revealing his full countenance, and the judge, seeing the holy aura of the tzaddik, grew pale and quickly dismissed the case, pleading with them to leave.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ekev 5784 edition of the Torahanytimes Newsletter.*

# Shaking the Tree

**By Rabbi Avrum Mordche Malach**



Rav Uri of Strelisk, a renowned tzaddik, was known for his intense and passionate davening, which often lasted for hours. His prayers were so powerful and filled with so much emotion that even the non-Jewish farmers in the surrounding areas could hear his voice echoing through the fields.

The farmers, familiar with his routine, would sometimes remark to one another that it was getting late because they could hear the Jewish Rabbi already reciting, "Yachid Chai Ha'Olamim" toward the end of the morning prayers. Remarkably, they even knew how to quote this sacred phrase.

One day, while R' Uri was davening with his usual fervor, the governor of the city happened to visit the shul. He was struck by the sight of the Rabbi's passionate prayers and the intensity with which he prayed. After observing for a while, the

governor turned to those around him and remarked, "If after such a prayer your Messiah has not come, he is never going to come."

Later, when the prayers were finished, one of the Chassidim approached R' Uri and informed him of the governor's comment. Rabbi Uri responded with a smile and shared the following parable:

### **The King Walking in the Forest**

Once, there was a king who went for a walk in the forest. During his stroll, he came across an enormous tree, the thickest he had ever seen. The king commanded his servants to cut it down, but in those days, without modern machinery, removing such a tree was no easy task. The method involved tying the tree with thick ropes, attaching the other ends to sturdy poles, and then shaking the tree repeatedly. Over time, this would weaken the tree until it eventually fell.

However, this particular tree was so immense that no amount of shaking seemed to work. For generations, people tried to bring the tree down, but despite their best efforts, it remained standing.

Years later, a group of teenagers came across the tree during a walk in the forest. They saw the ropes still tied to it and decided to give it a try. To everyone's amazement, after just a few shakes, the mighty tree finally toppled. The entire city was astounded that two young boys had succeeded where so many before them had failed.

### **An Accumulation of Many Generations' Efforts**

An elderly man, witnessing the event, remarked, "When I was a young boy, my father told me that his father had tried to take down this tree and that people had been working on it for generations. But it wasn't these boys who brought it down—it was the accumulation of all the efforts over the years. All it took in the end was one final shake."

R' Uri concluded, "So too with the coming of Moshiach. So many Jews throughout the generations— Tanaim, Amoraim, Rishonim, Acharonim—have all been shaking the tree, so to speak, with their prayers and good deeds. In the end, when Moshiach finally comes, it won't be because of one grand act, but because of all the small, persistent efforts that have built up over time. We are now in the days after Tisha B'av, in the month of comfort. We must remember that even the smallest good deed, every small act of restraint or kindness, brings Moshiach closer. The final redemption is almost here. We just need a few more small efforts, and with Hashem's help, we will see the complete redemption soon.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Re'eh 5784 edition of the Torahanytimes Newsletter.*

# Chabad on the Front Lines

As told by Rabbi Zev Siroti



I was raised in a Torah-observant family in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, where I attended religious schools through junior high school. But when I expressed the desire to continue my studies in a yeshivah, my parents objected. My father, an immigrant from Russia, wanted me to have a proper college education that would lead to a proper career so, as a compromise, I enrolled in Yeshiva University, which offered both secular and religious studies and which had a campus near our home in Washington Heights.

## **Invited to Join a Weekly Group to Study Tanya**

While at Yeshiva University, I first encountered Chabad. This was in 1954, when a bearded young man approached me and explained that he was from Lubavitch. Berel Shemtov was his name, and he had a few books with him — they were copies of the *Tanya*, the seminal work of Chabad philosophy authored by the Alter Rebbe in the 18th century — and he invited me and several of my colleagues to join a weekly group to study it. He only spoke Yiddish, so we had a hard time communicating with him, but we joined the class, and for a few weeks we studied in the evenings in one of the empty classrooms.

But when the university administration found out, they objected and the class was stopped. Berel reported this to the Lubavitcher Rebbe who advised him to speak directly to the YU dean, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. Berel did just that; Rabbi Soloveitchik gave us his total approval and the class resumed.

### **Felt as Though He Had Acquired a New Soul**

After two years of Tanya studies, I was on fire spiritually — I felt as if I had acquired a new soul — and I wanted to quit YU in order to enroll in a Chabad yeshivah. Of course, my parents were not happy about this, and my father wrote to the Rebbe complaining: “My son wants to stop his secular learning. What is going to become of him?”

The Rebbe responded, “B’shum panim v’ofen nit — Under no circumstances” should I quit college. His opinion was that I should complete my studies, earn my diploma and use that diploma to spread Torah. So, I stayed at YU, and only after my graduation in 1958 did the Rebbe agree for me to enroll in the Chabad yeshivah. I studied there until I got married in 1961, when I became one of the founding members of the Chabad kolel in Crown Heights, where married men study Torah full time.

### **Only Possible Because I Had Followed the Rebbe’s Advice**

Fast forward to 1970, when Russian Jews began coming out of the Soviet Union and immigrating to Israel. By then I had my rabbinic ordination, and I was among the emissaries whom the Rebbe sent to Nachlat Har Chabad — the Chabad enclave in Kiryat Malachi — to do outreach work with the new arrivals. I was appointed principal of the school in the village —which included a kindergarten, a boys’ and a girls’ school — and, in that role, I was able to impact many young lives. This was only possible because I had followed the Rebbe’s advice and received a college degree. The school was a government school – known as mamlachti dati – and I could never have qualified for this position without advanced credentials.

### **Selected for an Officer’s Course in the IDF**

After two years as an educator, I realized that to be a full-fledged member of Israeli society, I had to serve at least a minimal amount of time in the IDF. I completed basic training, and although at my age I was required to do only six months of duty, I was selected for an officers’ course, which meant I had the option of staying in longer. Of course, I asked the Rebbe’s advice, and he said to go for it. When he said that, I was reminded of his earlier advice — to complete my diploma and use it to spread Torah.

Now I would do so with my promotion to officer. Because I was a rabbi, I was appointed to be the chaplain of a very large unit based on the front lines in the Sinai Desert (as this was in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War). In this role, I was able to spread Torah to thousands, just as the Rebbe had envisioned.

### **Published a Popular Weekly Flyer Explaining the Torah Reading**

Among my many activities as chaplain, I conducted prayer services, I led kiddush on Shabbat and holidays, and I both gave a class on the Torah reading of the week and published a flyer explaining the Torah reading and its present-day implications for an IDF soldier defending the Land of Israel.

This flyer was very popular and was printed in the thousands. Not only did the soldiers study it, but some even used it to teach others. It was spiritual advice that they all clearly needed. When I finished my tour of duty, I had to make the decision whether to stay on or return to teaching, but the Rebbe advised, “Where you are successful, that’s where you should stay.” So I stayed in the army for fourteen years total.

### **In Charge of Identifying the Remains of Soldiers Killed in Battle**

During that time, I also served in Lebanon, after Israel gave back the Sinai to Egypt and war broke out in the north. While in Lebanon — this was between 1982 and 1985 — I was put in charge of identifying the remains of soldiers who were killed in battle — and many died in that war; more than 650. It was also my task to give spiritual support to the soldiers, and because of this, I was constantly in correspondence with the Rebbe.

I also received many blessings from him to be safe from danger. I felt that the Rebbe was guiding my every step throughout my time in the army, as he had done from the time in my youth when he first advised me to stay in college and use my education to spread Torah, which I have done to the best of my ability ever since then.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Re’eh 5784 email of Here’s My Story [with the Lubavitcher Rebbe], a project of JEM (Jewish Educational Media.) Rabbi Zev Sirota is retired from active service in the IDF and living in Brooklyn, where he continues to spread Torah. He was interviewed in April 2024.*