

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TERUMAH 5783

Volume 14, Issue 24 – 4 Adar 5783/February 25, 2023

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

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It's a Test!

By Rabbi David Ashear



Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman

If we know that Hashem is behind everything, it is much easier to deal with challenges. Rav Ephraim Wachsman related that many years ago, an eighteen-year-old friend of his — we'll call him Eli — visited a museum in Eretz Yisrael.

When he went to purchase an entry ticket, the ticket seller told him, “You could pay half price; you're under eighteen.”

Eli replied, “No, I'm eighteen. I want to pay full price.”

The man said, “No, you look younger than eighteen. The guard at the door will never realize. Just pay half. It's okay.”

Eli repeated that he was eighteen and wanted to pay full price — and that is what he did. When he handed his ticket to the guard, the man said, “Thank you. I just won 100 shekels.”

The man explained: “When you were approaching the ticket agent, he said, ‘Look, a yeshivah boy is coming. He’ll probably try to lie about his age and pay less.’ I said, ‘No way. Yeshivah boys tell the truth.’ And you proved me right.”

That was a difficult test for Eli, but baruch Hashem, he passed. Rav Wachsman observed, “Imagine if Eli had been told beforehand, ‘There are people betting on you to see if yeshivah boys tell the truth.’ Would it even have been a question in his mind? He would have come confidently and stated with conviction, ‘I’m a yeshivah boy. I always tell the truth. I’m always honest.’”

In truth, this is how it always is. Hashem sends people to test our patience, to see how we respond. If each time we could remind ourselves, “It’s a test. Hashem sent him,” we would be able to pass it much easier.

Reprinted from the Parshas Terumah 5782 email of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the book – “Living Emunah 6.”



This Edition of Our Shabbos Email for
Parshas Terumah 5783 is sponsored by
Shua Fulda in memory of his grandfather –
REB BINYOMIN BEN YEHOShUA FROHWEIN, A”H
Who was nifter 9 Shevat 5783.
The nifter was an enthusiastic reader of our Shabbos
Stories email.
May his memory be for a blessing

The Power of the Children's Answering Amein

Rav Dovid Benarroch taught ninth grade at the Mesivta of North Jersey. One morning, as he walked into the Bais Medrash, he saw a tall stack of books next to the doorway. It was copies of the recently published Just One Word– Amein. A sign on top of the pile read, “Take one, free, on condition that you read it.”

Well, that wouldn't be a problem, he thought, as he loved to read. When he got home, he read the Sefer from cover to cover. It was an inspiring read, full of stories and Divrei Chizuk about the power of answering Amein to Brachos.

Advised to Give Out Candy to Young Children

One story stood out. It was about a woman who had been married for ten years and had not yet merited to have children. She was eventually advised to try giving out candy to young children, and encourage them to say Amein to each other's Brachos as a Segulah to have a baby. Since she and her husband had already pursued many options, both medical and Ruchniyus'dik, spiritual endeavors, she was reluctant to embark on yet another path that probably wouldn't lead anywhere, but she decided to try.

She and her husband devised a program for their Shul. At first there were some snide remarks, but the couple persisted, and within a year, their child was born.

“Wow,” Dovid thought. The story was particularly poignant because his good friend Yechiel Leifer had been married for about seven years and didn't have children yet. He reached for his phone.

Yechiel was Less than Enthusiastic

“Hi, Yechiel? I just read about this Segulah...” Even over the phone, he could sense that Yechiel was rolling his eyes, thinking, “Another one?” Though he sat patiently through the explanation, Dovid could tell Yechiel wasn't really listening. He heard well-meaning suggestions all the time, and he didn't seem to have much hope that another one would work.

After hanging up with Dovid, Yechiel went out to Maariv. He hadn't meant to be so cynical, but after seven years it seemed like everyone he knew was conspiring to barrage him with Segulos and suggestions. As he was driving to Shul for Maariv, he turned the radio on to Kol Beramah, Lakewood's station, and heard Rav Paysach Krohn speaking.

“It is an unbelievable Zechus to inspire Tinokos Shel Bais Rabban, little school children,” he was saying. “The Brachos of little children can even be a Segulah to be Bentched with children of your own.”

Disconcerted, he switched it off. Even the radio was badgering him! He Davened in the neighborhood Shul, surrounded by neighbors, friends, and a few people who were visiting in town to collect Tzedakah. After Shemoneh Esrei, he noticed that one of the collectors was extremely enthusiastic. When the Chazan said the words of Kaddish, this man loudly called out, “Amein!”

“You Think I’m Crazy?”

Yecheil couldn’t help but stare. The collector turned his head, and their eyes met. After Davening he said to Yecheil, “You think I’m crazy? Amein is a very powerful Segulah. It can even be a Zechus to have children!”

Yecheil was surprised at his response and just looked at him, and said, “How did you know?”

The collector looked back at him in confusion and said, “How did I know what?”

Yecheil drove back home, unnerved. However, he just decided to attribute it all as a coincidence, when another friend called. “Hey, Yecheil, I was just thinking of you. I was learning a Sefer of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, and it said that if you get children to say Amein, it’s a Segulah—”

The Couple Agreed to Give it a Shot

Yecheil dropped the phone. After processing the Hashgachah that had clearly sent him the same idea from four different sources in one night, he discussed the idea with his wife, Chavi. The couple agreed to give it a shot. They recruited the neighbors’ kids and children from the local Shuls, and invited them over for Tehilim on Shabbos afternoon. Chavi distributed Pekelach, and one by one, each child made a Brachah and the others answered Amein.

Dovid Benarroch’s children did not participate in the program, which went on for a few weeks. He went about his business, unaware that Yecheil had taken his suggestion, and that he had delivered a critical message. Nine months later, Yecheil called to invite him to a Kiddush in honor of the birth of his new daughter!

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

The \$400 Loan by a Stranger

By C.B. Weinfeld

I never thought my son would marry a girl from London. He was learning in a yeshiva in England, and a shidduch was suggested that was too good to pass up. My husband had flown to England first, making a stop there after a business trip. He called and said it was important for me to fly to London right away to meet the girl and finalize the shidduch.

Quickly Booked a Ticket

Necessity fueled me into action and within the span of three hours, I booked a ticket through my travel agent, made arrangements for my children, and notified my boss of my departure. I am usually a very organized person, but the rush of things, the surge of emotions over the upcoming shidduch, and my innate fear of flying, caused the last-minute mistake.

When I was half way to the airport, I realized that I was missing my passport. I kid you not. I was grateful that the taxi driver, sensing my extreme distress and tension, came to the rescue, and asked his dispatcher to have another driver, who was taking a call to the airport, to stop by my house and get my passport. It was sitting right on the kitchen counter!

This entire scenario had taken valuable time, and when I finally received my passport, the British Airways agent checked my ticket and informed me that my flight was leaving at 11:30 the next morning, and not 11:30 that night. My head started to spin. I needed to be in England right away. This couldn't be happening. I tried unsuccessfully to reach my travel agent.

An 11:30 P.M. Flight was Available for an Additional \$405

The airline agents were very kind. I told them about the urgency of my arriving for my son's engagement, and they said that I could get on the 11:30 pm flight for an additional \$405. Problem was that I only had \$50 and my husband had our credit card as we were not frequent card users. He was sound asleep, as it was the middle of the night in England.

A small crowd had gathered to witness my drama. A young professional who overheard my problem piped up and said, "I'll lend you the money. No problem." He whipped out four \$100 bills and handed it to me. The ticket agents were speechless, and I was stunned. I thanked him profusely and promised to pay him back.

“Don’t worry about it, just hurry to your flight. It’s late,” said the pleasant young man. I quickly punched in his address and number so that I could reimburse him. He mentioned that he lived in Boston, where he was attending medical school, but his parents lived in upstate New York. I made the flight in the nick of time, and to make a long story short, the shidduch was finalized within the next few days.

Lost the Cellphone in the “Black Hole”

The flight back was much more bearable and calmer – I was flying with my husband and my son had a wonderful kallah. When I went to use the restroom midflight, somehow my cell phone ended up falling into the “black hole” that leads to nowhere. I was upset to have lost my contact list, and then it hit me – I had lost the information of the young man who lent me the money!

How would I pay him back? I tried, but could not even remember his name. A few weeks passed. I wondered what that young man was thinking. What would I think if it had been me on the other end of the story? One day, I was in line in a store, and I heard them call a customer by name – Aryeh Mallek. That’s it! The man’s name was Maury Mallek! I was so grateful to Hashem for this obvious hint!

I looked up the number in Boston and upstate NY. I called the Boston number. No one answered. I dialed the NY number, and after 15 rings, a young man picked up. I asked for Maury Mallek.

“This is Maury.”

I was never so happy to hear someone’s voice on the other end! I explained who I was. He remembered me and the \$400. “You’re probably wondering why it took me so long to find you. You see, it’s a long story...” and I launched into the tale.

It All Worked Out in the End

Maury laughed. “You know, it’s unusual that you reached me here. I happen to be visiting my parents, but I don’t live at this address. My father rarely picks up the landline. You could have called and called, and no one would’ve answered. Luckily, it all worked out in the end.”

I was so relieved to send Maury a \$400 check, and to be given the opportunity to pay him back. The hashgacha pratis couldn’t have been more obvious. But it got me thinking – what did Maury think when I did not pay him back right away, and what would I have thought if the situation was reversed! (Another Handful of Stars, ArtScroll)

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

The Unwilling Cantor

By Aharon Loschak



Art by Sefira Lightstone

Many long months had passed since the last rain had fallen over the parched gardens and orchards of Jerusalem. Rabbi Shalom, the city's respected leader, announced that a communal prayer would be held in the central synagogue the next day, where they would beseech G-d to bring them rain. Rabbi Shalom sent a special messenger to one of the city's most esteemed residents, Rabbi Gershon Kitover, brother-in-law of the Baal Shem Tov, and asked him to lead the prayers.

The custom in Jerusalem of old was for the *chazzan* to prepare words of inspiration and deliver them to the congregation before leading the service. As was typical for those times, public words of inspiration were always peppered with direct quotes from Scripture and Talmud. If the speaker misquoted even one passage, shame was heaped upon his head by the exacting and erudite Jerusalemites.

Unable to Lead the Prayers

Rabbi Gershon took to his task in earnest, spending the entire night preparing his remarks and ensuring he was fluent in all the passages he planned to cite. Unfortunately, the next morning he awoke with a sore throat and was barely able to

talk. He summoned his son, Reb Leib, and told him, “Please go to Rabbi Shalom and tell him that I will not be able to lead the prayers.”

As a result, the whole program fell apart, the communal prayer was canceled, and everyone ended up praying as usual in their respective synagogues.

Rabbi Shalom was praying in his own synagogue, when suddenly, the unmistakable voice of Rabbi Gershon, one of his regular congregants, could be heard loudly and clearly from behind him. Apparently, his sore throat had healed and he was well enough to pray aloud.

Rabbi Gershon Took Over

When the substitute *chazzan* finished the silent *Amidah*, Rabbi Shalom asked if he would step down and allow Rabbi Gershon to take over, which he did.

Rabbi Gershon energetically led the congregation in repeating the *Amidah* and the subsequent *Selichot* prayers reserved for times of dire need. Curiously, as soon as he had started reciting the *Selichot* prayers, Rabbi Gershon stepped down and didn't want to carry on.

When the prayers concluded, Reb Leib turned to his father and asked, “Why did you step down? What happened?”

Afraid of What Others Would Think of Him

“When I started chanting the *Selichot* prayers,” replied Rabbi Gershon, “I realized that the prayer was rolling off my tongue and I felt that if I continued, it would immediately begin raining. But then I realized that if that happened, it would surely inflate my ego, ‘Look how pious Rabbi Gershon is,’ people would say, ‘his prayers are answered immediately!’

“I would have none of that, so I stepped down right away.

“But don't worry,” Rabbi Gershon confided in his son, “I was able to discern from on High that it is anyway destined to rain soon for two or three days straight, so everyone will be none the wiser.”

Reprinted from the Parshat Yitro 5783 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

The “Wisdom” of the Fox



Rabbi Twerski writes in his book *Twerski on Chumash* about how a great rabbi was once challenged by a government official. “Why do your rabbinic courts dispose of a case so quickly? We have lawyers that study both sides of the case and gather evidence. After the court rules, there may be several appeals. That way we know justice is carried out.” The rabbi responded with a mashal—parable.

A wolf once made off with a lamb from a flock, but he was accosted by a lion who took the lamb from him. The wolf protested, but the lion insisted that as the king of all animals, he has the right to all prey. The wolf and lion decided to take their dispute to the fox, the wisest of all the animals. The fox ruled that both the wolf and lion had rights to the animal, so he determined they should share the lamb equally, so he proceeded to divide it. He saw one piece was larger than the other, so he ate from it to make the pieces equal. He nibbled a bit too much, so he ate from the other to make the pieces equal. By the time they were equal to each other, almost nothing was left.

The rabbi said, “That’s your judicial system. With endless litigation, the lawyers end up receiving most of the money. In a Bet Din, both sides have their say, and the ruling is swift.” This gives us insight into the Torah’s legal philosophy.

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

The Kindness of Stranger

Charlie Harary told a story about a friend of his who was in a supermarket an hour before Shabbat. There was a woman who was ready to check out, and she had a full shopping cart. She handed the cashier her credit card, and the cashier said, "I'm sorry, your card is declined." The woman looked around, embarrassed, and said, "Okay, just put it on my account, please." The cashier pulled it up on the computer and said, "I can't put it on the account, it's maxed out at \$4,000." The woman was so ashamed, she looked like she wanted to crawl into a hole. "Okay... I'm going to go put the stuff back."

Immediately, and very nonchalantly, Charlie Harary's friend handed his credit card to the cashier and said, "No problem, please put it on my card." This man quickly responded to a need, and without causing a scene or any further embarrassment, he took care of his fellow Jew, no questions asked! The woman looked at him with tears in her eyes and a heart full of appreciation. And she wheeled her full cart out of the store.

But the story doesn't end there.

When the man standing behind the person who paid for the groceries witnessed that quick interaction, he was so inspired himself. As Charlie Harary's friend was walking out, he overheard the gentleman that was behind him in line say, "How much was on that woman's account?" When the cashier said, "\$4,000," this man answered, "Do me a favor, add up my groceries and just put her account on there and wipe it clean." And when he was done, he just pushed his cart out of the store. No fanfare, no smiling, no patting on the back, he just quietly performed this act of kindness and generosity for a complete stranger totally anonymously.

Mishpatim teaches us the importance of being kind, of interacting properly with our fellow man. When we follow the mitzvot between man and man and treat each other with empathy and respect, we can truly excel at the mitzvot between man and G-d.

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

A Moment of Contact

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair



When I was at Bristol University as a student in England, I had a friend whose father worked for the British Petroleum company in Iran. One year, he invited me to spend the summer vacation in Tehran. And one day we went for a stroll around the market. It was about as far from Bristol as you could get.

As we moved from one small shop to another, the scent of spices wafting through the air, my eye was drawn to a beautiful banjo-like instrument called the tar. The tar is a traditional Persian instrument, and the back of the body of this tar was covered with the most beautiful Persian miniatures of hunting scenes. The owner saw my interest and he took down the tar from the shelf and put it in my hands. Close up, it was even more beautiful. I asked my friend to ask him in Farsi how much it was. He wanted a king's ransom.

No Such Thing as a Price Tag in the Middle East

Now, in the Middle East, there's no such thing as a price tag. So, I countered with the closest thing to a reasonable offer that my American Express travel checks would allow. He looked at me as though the carriage just brought me in, took the tar from my hands and put it back on the shelf. I shrugged my shoulders and carried on browsing around the shop.

And then I saw it – a small ceramic plate with a Hebrew inscription on it. “Hey,” I said to my friend, “I can read this.” It says “Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad.” Before I finished the sentence, the owner of the shop spun round and said to my friend in Farsi, “Are you Jewish?” “No,” he said. “But he is,” pointing to me.

The store owner walked over to me, looked at me, put out his hand and said with a big smile, “Shalom aleichem.” “Aleichem shalom,” I replied. And then we stood, our hands locked in an ancient kindred spirit, not being able to speak one single word of the language of the other. I just looked at him and he looked at me. Then he went up to the tar, took it down, put it in my hands and said to my friend, “Tell him, you can have it for the price he offered.”

Two Jews from the ends of the Earth. I’m not sure other people from similar religious backgrounds would have had that moment of contact that I said in Tehran with that storekeeper.

Reprinted from the Parshat Terumah 5782 edition of the Torahanytime.com Newsletter.

Making a Visit to the Sick Miser



Rav Meir Shapiro, zt”l, was once on a fundraising trip on behalf of his Yeshivah, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. He visited a wealthy businessman who was known for his miserly attitude towards anything that did not help him gain a financial profit.

Rav Shapiro knocked on his door and the businessman greeted him. He said, “Dear Rabbi, you must have the wrong address. I do not believe in giving to Tzedakah.”

Rav Meir Shapiro replied, “You are mistaken. I did not come to collect Tzedakah. I came to visit the sick person that is here.”

Confused, the miser said, “Rebbe, who is this sick person? I don’t know of anyone in my home that is ill.”

Rav Shapiro responded, “You are wrong. Someone in this house is quite ill. You are the one that is not well.”

The man said, “I think you have gotten the wrong information about me. I am feeling fine, and I am not ill.”

Rav Meir Shapiro got stern and said, “Shlomo Ha’melech says in Koheles (5:12), ‘There is a terrible illness that I have seen, and that is riches hoarded by their owner, to his detriment.’ Yet, you claim not to be ill!”

“Rebbe,” the miser replied, “that’s a nice P’shat, but if the Rav wants to visit sick people, there is a hospital down the block which is filled with sick people. There, the Rav can visit to his heart’s content. Why are you bothering coming to me?”

“It is very simple,” explained Rav Meir Shapiro. “Chazal teach us that one who visits the sick takes away a sixtieth of his illness. Therefore, if I visit someone who suffers from typhus, I will leave and take one sixtieth of his typhus with me. Your illness is the incorrect management of the wealth Hashem gave you. If I visit you, I will leave with at least one-sixtieth of your wealth. Is that so bad? The Yeshivah can really use that kind of help!”

Rav Shapiro’s words made an impression on the miser, and the seriousness of his condition.

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

Accelerated Learning

By Avrohom Barash

R’ Chaim of Volozhin, founder and Rosh Yeshivah of the famous Yeshivah of Volozhin, also bore the burden of ensuring the institution’s financial stability. During one difficult period, R’ Chaim heard of a wealthy man who was offering to support the Yeshivah on a steady basis, pledging a considerable sum.

R’ Chaim traveled to the man’s town to thank him personally, and the man told him that he had no family. All he asked in return was that when his time would come to leave this world, R’ Chaim would undertake to say Kadish and to study Mishnayot in his memory. The bargain was struck and the money was sent regularly every month. The man was one of the main supporters of the Volozhiner Yehsivah.

After several years, the man passed away on a hot summer’s day. Remembering his promise, R’ Chaim traveled to the city where the funeral was

taking place, and recited kadish there. Following the funeral he returned home, went to the Bet Midrash and sat down to study Mishnayot. He encountered a very complicated passage which he could not understand. Due to his fatigue from the journey, coupled with the strain of struggling to fathom the Mishnah and the extreme heat of the day, R' Chaim fell asleep.

The man who had just recently been buried appeared to him in a dream and said, “Rebbi, I must thank you heartily for saying kadish for me; it was a great source of merit for my neshamah – as is your learning Mishnayot for me. Regarding this Mishnah which you find difficult: I will explain it to you...”

When R' Chaim awoke, he was astounded. He remarked, “I know that if a person provides support for Torah, then in the Next World he will acquire knowledge of Torah. I understand that in Heaven he deserves to be granted Torah knowledge, which he enabled others to achieve during his lifetime on this earth. What I did not realize is that it happens so quickly! It is only shortly after his funeral and already he can explain a complicated Mishnah in Seder Taharot that I do not understand!” (Gut Voch)

Reprinted from the Parshat Yitro email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book “Gut Voch”.

Historic Purim Card



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