

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS BAMIDBAR 5783

Volume 14, Issue 36 – 29 Iyar 5783/May 20, 2023

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

For a free subscription, please forward your request to [keren18@juno.com](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

*Past emails can be found on the website – [ShabbosStories.com](http://ShabbosStories.com)*

## The Thief and the Deadbeat

By Aharon Loschak



*Art by Sefira Lightstone*

Part of the unwritten “job description” of a Chassidic rebbe is accepting everyone and moving heaven and earth to help them in any which way.

Such was the modus operandi of Rabbi Yisroel Dov of Vilednik, known far and wide as a wondrous miracle worker.

People flocked to his small Chassidic court in northern Ukraine to receive blessings and guidance. His fame spread so far that even non- Jews — peasants and aristocrats alike—revered him and traveled to seek his wise counsel.

One matter for which Rabbi Yisroel Dov was especially known was helping *agunot*, women whose husbands had left without divorcing them. Technically still married, they had neither the benefit of a husband at their side nor the ability to remarry.

But what was he to do if the person seeking his help was particularly unsavory and perhaps not even deserving of his aid? This was the case one day when Rabbi Yisroel Dov told his trusted *shamesh*, “Today, you must lock my door and not let anyone in.”

### **Forces Herself into the Rebbe’s Study**

Sure enough, it wasn’t long before a distraught and disheveled woman came running into the Rebbe’s court. She rushed to the Rebbe’s study and before anyone could interject, she pried the door open and threw herself before the saintly Rebbe. “Rebbe, help me! I have collected money and traveled for the better part of two years just to get here. I desperately need your help!”

“What is it?” asked the rabbi, whose soft heart compelled him to help even those he knew did not deserve it.

“Nineteen years ago, my husband walked out on me and our four children without a trace,” she began. “I raised the children alone, in poverty. Now my girls are of marriageable age, and I have nothing to help them with. My body is sapped of all strength; I simply cannot go on like this.

“Rebbe, help me find my husband and get his help in marrying off our daughters!”

Apparently, the Rebbe recognized that she was not an entirely honest person and turned to his *shamesh* and said: “I told you not to let anyone in today! Why did you neglect to lock my door?! Please, take this woman out of the room!”

### **The Woman Cried Out in Frustration**

Pushed beyond her limits, the woman cried out, “Rebbe, it took me two years to make arrangements to receive your blessing and guidance, and this is how you respond?! Is it money you seek? Here, take these five rubles!”

“Is that really all you have? I believe you have six rubles, not five,” the Rebbe replied with a sad and gentle smile.

“Yes, Rebbe, I do have six rubles—but that’s it! Take it all!”

“Really? Are there not another 25 kopeks in your purse?” the Rebbe pressed.

“Indeed, there are, but I must keep those few kopeks to pay for my trip back.”

“The truth is I don’t want your money,” the Rebbe replied. “In fact, I will give you some more money. But please, learn to always tell the truth.” With that, Rabbi Yisroel Dov took out some coins from his desk drawer and handed it to the woman, and instructed her further.

“Here’s what you should do: With this money, go to the market and buy a large amount of bread and pastries. You should then sell them individually in the market at a markup. With the profits from the sales, G-d will help and provide for all your needs, including respectably marrying off your children.”

### **G-d Smiled on Her New Enterprise**

The woman woke up early the next morning and followed the Rebbe’s instructions. With the handsome sum of money that he had given her, she was able to buy a large amount of baked goods, and she set up shop in the local market. G-d smiled upon her little booth, and by midday she had sold the entire stock at a fine profit. She repeated the process the following day, buying an even larger amount of baked goods and setting up shop once again in the local market.

Business was booming, with bread, pastries, and cookies flying off the table. In the middle of it all, a well-dressed Russian gentleman approached the table. “I heard you sell delicious baked goods. Please, sell me three large pastries.”

“Of course,” she replied, scooping up three treats and handing them to the wealthy-looking patron. He pulled out an overstuffed wallet, took out one ruble, and requested his change. She handed back the coins, which the man deposited in his coin pouch.

### **Knocked the Wallet off the Table**

Between his wallet and his coin pouch and the three pastries, the man apparently got mixed up and left his overstuffed wallet full of bills on the table. By the time the woman noticed it, he was long gone. Thinking quickly, she knocked the wallet off the table and hid it in the snow underneath, hoping he wouldn’t return and she could take it home at the end of the day and end her misery.

To her disappointment, the man returned demanding his wallet.

“Sir, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” responded the woman who had apparently not learned her lesson.

“You’re a liar and a thief! I know I left my wallet here, and you must have stolen it! You’ll see, I’ll find it yet and expose you!”

But try as he might, the gentleman could not locate the wallet on her person or in her bags. As the man shuffled around, the woman nervously pressed the wallet deeper into the snow, hoping he wouldn’t notice.

Frustrated, the man called for the police and made his claims.

“Well, we cannot find the wallet, and we don’t know who to believe,” the police officer said. “Thankfully, this isn’t Moscow or St. Petersburg. This is Vilednik, and in Vilednik lives a saintly rabbi with miraculous vision. Let’s go to him and he will settle the matter. Though this woman is one of his, the Rabbi is a holy and honest man and he will tell us the truth.”

And with that, they were off to see the Rebbe. When no one was looking, the woman quickly grabbed the wallet from under the snow and snuck it under her coat. After hearing both sides, the Rebbe said, “This is a complex matter. Please return tomorrow afternoon and we will determine the matter then.”

### **The Rebbe Started Interrogating the Owner of the Wallet**

They appeared before the Rebbe the next day, and he immediately started interrogating the gentleman about the exact nature of the wallet. The man started answering in Russian, but the Rebbe cut him off. “Why are you talking Russian to me?!” he demanded, “Can you not speak Yiddish?!”

The man continued in Russian.

The Rebbe turned to his *shamesh*, “Please, go get the stick and give this man a few beatings. We’ll see what language he really speaks.”

Seeing that the rabbi had called his bluff, the man broke down and started speaking a fluent Yiddish.

“You wicked man!” shouted the Rebbe, “For nineteen years you tortured this poor woman—your own wife! How cruel could you be? Why did you abandon your children? Do you not know that you must provide for them! How could you expect your poor wife to bear that burden alone for so long?!”

That week, the Rebbe and his court finally arranged for the divorce proceedings which went without a hitch. The Rebbe compelled the man to hand over his fortune to his wife, and they both went their ways—hopefully having learned the importance of being honest and truthful. (Adapted from *Sippur Leshabbat* (Weinstock, Yair), vol. 4, p. 11-21)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Behar-Bechukosai 5783 website of Chabad.Org*

# **Defining an Appreciation of Living in a Difficult Place**

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, relates a story which, on one hand, demonstrates the overwhelming sense of chesed, kindness, manifest by a yeshivahman who eventually became a distinguished Rosh Yeshivah, but leaves us wondering how he had ignored the pasuk’s directive to save his life first.

It was post-liberation; World War II was over, but the Jewish suffering had not ended. Huddled together in a DP (Displaced Person’s) camp, the survivors were

more concerned about where they would get their next rations than setting up schools for the young children who had somehow survived the war.

They were not many, but pockets of children existed, and, if they did not receive a Jewish education, their religious conviction and observance would be inadequate. Certainly, they had not been spared in order to turn their backs on Hashem. Rav Galinsky worked together with Horav Gershon Liebman, zl, who later became Rosh Yeshivah of Novoradok in France, where he ultimately established forty Torah institutions.

Together, these two intrepid Rabbanim went through the DP camp offering and begging parents to enroll their children. It was not easy, and they expected to receive backlash from the secularists, but, when they encountered open hostility from an observant Jew, they were thrown for a curve. Indeed, it was the representative of the religious community who viewed Rav Galinsky with suspicion.



**Rabbi Gershon Liebman and Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky of blessed memories**

“Who sent you?” (He was concerned about who was behind the schools. He was aware of varied approaches to education, based upon the student’s background and affiliation. Was it chassidish, litvish, modern, heimish? Until he knew what would be the derech halimud and under whose aegis the school would be, he was not prepared to support it.)

Rav Galinsky replied, “It is under the aegis of Hashem Yisborach!” The man countered, “If that is the case, I do not need you. I have a direct line to the Almighty.”

“If that is true, then you must have done something to address the religious needs of the children” was Rav Galinsky’s rebuttal. The man said that he had not done anything for them. “How can you say that you are the religious representative if you have done nothing to save the children from heresy?”

The man saw that he was bested, yet he persisted. “Who is supporting your endeavor?” he asked. “It is a private initiative under the direction of someone whom you probably never heard of; Rav Gershon Liebman.”

### **The Man’s Surprising About Face**

As soon as he heard the name, the man’s entire tone took an about face, “If Rav Liebman is behind you, I will support anything you want. I am yours. You see, I know Rav Gershon from the camps.”

The man then related an incredible, moving story. “In the concentration camp, we had two constants: hunger and forced labor. If one survived these two, he had a chance to deal with the multiple challenges to his physical and emotional health. These, however, were the immediate concerns to which the Jewish inmates by the droves were succumbing.

“They went out every day to participate in hours of brutal forced labor in the bitter cold or in the scorching heat, to return at the end of the day for their meagre rations, consisting of a small slice of stale bread and a cup of watery soup. This is all we had for the entire twenty-four period – day in and day out. Many died from the hunger. Others succumbed to the brutal labor.

“Every morning, some did not wake up, their hearts giving out. Sadly, these conditions caused others to lose their minds and fight for that slice of bread –even if it meant taking it from another wretched prisoner. [Obviously, we may not judge, because we have no idea the extent of their suffering.] Indeed, I looked contemptuously at someone who stole his fellow’s bread, but Rav Gershon would admonish me, saying, ‘Do not judge another person until you are in his place.’

### **A Block Mate in Danger of Dying**

“One morning, we woke up to see that another one of our block friends could not arise from his bed. This was a sign that his end was near. The man murmured something, but we were unable to make out his words. He was a talmid of Yeshivas Pinsk, but here he was a prisoner like us all. We rushed to the food line because we knew that, if he did not eat soon, he would no longer have to eat.

“I looked back and saw Rav Gershon standing over the man and patiently giving him sips of soup drop by drop. The man was able to swallow some of the soup, but the rest dribbled down the side of his mouth. He opened his eyes and showed signs of life. We just stood there watching Rav Gershon feeding the man. What else could we do?

“When the soup was finished, Rav Gershon tore the slice of bread into tiny pieces and fed them to the man one-by-one. He held his hand over the man’s mouth, so that he was compelled to swallow. Finally, by the time Rav Gershon had finished, the man was revived and sitting up. “Rav Gershon did not eat that day. He needed that slice of bread and water for himself, but he was not going to let someone die if he could prevent it. For a person like that, I will do anything.”

Inspiring story. We are left with a question: Was Rav Gershon acting appropriately by endangering his life, so that the other Jew could live? What about V’chai achicha imach? Your life comes first. I think the answer lies in the understanding of v’chai—you should live. Rav Gershon felt that to watch another Jew die, for him to live when he might save another Jew, is simply not living! Rav Gershon did put his life first, but he could only live if his friend lived. This was the way in which he understood the pasuk.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5783 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum’ Peninim on the Torah.*

# A Good, Clean Lesson

By Mordy S

Rabbi Epstein received a call from a wealthy businessman who was interested in exploring Judaism, but had many questions. He asked if Rabbi Epstein could pay him a visit at the office, which he obliged.

The next day, Rabbi Epstein pulled up to an enormous manufacturing facility that produced soaps and other household cleaners. The company president, Aaron Miller, was there to greet him.

“Thank you for coming, Rabbi,” Mr. Miller said, “Le’s go for a walk, shall we?”

After some small talk Mr. Miller said, “Rabbi, please help me answer this question that I’ve been thinking about: what good is religion, really? Look at all the trouble and misery in the world! Even after thousands of years of religions teaching about goodness and truth and love and peace, there’s still war and deceit and so many terrible things. If Judaism is true, why should this be?”

Rabbi Epstein just stroked his beard in thought.

They continued walking until the Rabbi noticed a child playing in the gutter. Rabbi Epstein said, ‘Look at that child. You say that soap makes people clean, but see the dirt on that youngster. Of what good is soap/ With all the soap in the world, over all these years, this child is still filthy. I wonder how effective soap is, after all.’”

Mr. Miller, president of the soap company protested, “But Rabbi, soap can’t do abt good unless it is used!”

“Exactly,” replied the rabbi. “Exactly.”

*Reprinted from Iyar-Sivan 5783/May 2023 issue of Community Magazine.*

# To Rejoice in Meron

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



This past Tuesday was Lag Baomer, the day we celebrate this life of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I would like to share an amazing story that Rabbi Tzvi Greenwald related that he himself witnessed in Meron.

I grew up in Yerushalayim in an observant home. When I was around twenty, the atmosphere in Eretz Yisroel was very tense. No longer did we feel comfortable and safe to walk the streets as our Arab neighbors were agitated. They were unhappy with the influx of the Jewish refugees from war torn Europe and were seething with anger about the Balfour Declaration, where England committed itself to establish a Jewish homeland in Eretz Yisroel.



To try to pacify them, the British who were then governing Eretz Yisroel started refusing Jewish refugees from entering. They placed a blockade and forced the ships to return or to go to him Cyprus.

Knowing that our brothers and sisters were being sent back, aroused a tremendous feeling of indignation and resentment against the British. So, Jews from all backgrounds united as one to fight this injustice.

### **Joined a Para-Military Group**

Some groups focused on ways to evade the blockade, while others mainly concentrated on fighting the British. When the Arab neighbors began attacking us, I joined one of these Para-military groups to protect the communities and we often had small skirmishes.

As more Jews settled in Eretz Yisroel, many of them who escaped the horrendous brutalities of the war, were determined not to allow it to happen again and joined our division. One such person whom we will call Avrohom, was the only survivor from his entire extended family, joined us immediately after being smuggled past the blockade. He learned quickly how to use a rifle and was fearless in combat. But, in one fierce battle, a bullet hit him by the spinal cord, and he was paralyzed. Since he was our comrade, and especially as he didn't have anyone else, we would visit him quite often.

One day, around six months later when we came to the hospital, we noticed that he wasn't his normal self and was subdued or depressed. We asked him what was bothering him and he replied that tonight is Lag Baomer and he wishes he can be in Meron, so he can watch the singing and dancing.

### **Got the Nurse to Let u Take Avrohom out of the Hospital Room**

We were going to an operation around there and decided to fulfill this request. We turned to the attending nurse and said that our friend asked us if we could take him outside to get some fresh air on this beautiful day. With your permission, we will stay with him for an hour or two and then bring him back. The nurse was overworked and was happy to have a break, as well as to help the patient enjoy some company, so permission was readily given.

We picked up his bed, carried it down the stairs, and put it down for a few minutes while one of us brought the jeep over. When we noticed that no one was watching, we swiftly placed him with the bed in the back and began the few hours long drive to Meron.

He thanked us profusely. When we arrived in Meron we placed him and the bed where no one would be dancing, but close enough that he could watch it. After helping him eat and leaving some food and drink close to the bed, we informed him

that we must arrive at our destination and will G-d-willing pick him up in the morning.

We took care of what had to be done and returned early before sunrise. When we arrived, we saw the bed but not him. For a moment we panicked, understanding the severity of the situation, and then quickly decided to ask others if they noticed what happened to him.

### **Shocked by the Sight of One of the Dancers**

As we came to a small group of dancers, we were shocked. There was Avrohom in the middle of the circle, dancing with tremendous fervor. While we were relieved and overjoyed, we wanted to know how this miracle happened, so we asked him.

“Yesterday you guys did me the greatest favor. You put yourselves in danger with the law to fulfill my desire. When we arrived in Meron I was full of joy that I can experience the joy of Rabban Shimon bar Yochai. But after you left and I was watching others dancing, depression slowly encompassed me. I cried out, "Holy tzaddik, the great sage, our master and teacher Rabban Shimon bar Yochai, while I was growing up Lag Baomer was the happiest day in my life. I always was hoping to one day dance by your holy eternal resting place.

“Then when the war broke out and I witnessed the atrocities that were happening to my family and our people, I made a vow. If I survive, I will move to Eretz Yisroel and will dance in Meron on Lag Baomer. I arrived in Eretz Yisroel and was counting to when I can fulfill my vow and then I was injured. You kindly brought me here and initially I was thrilled, but then remembering the vow I began to cry. I am in Meron but I can't dance. I don't know how long I was crying for but suddenly I began feeling sensation in my feet.

### **Was it Just Wishful Thinking**

“Originally, I thought it was my wishful thinking and I am hallucinating. But after a few moments, I realized it just may be real, so I decided to try and move my feet. Boruch Hashem I was able to, and then when I stood up I was surprised that I wasn't shaky, so I walked around a little bit and then I began to dance.”

May all of our Tefillos be accepted in every aspect.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5783 email of Rabbi Avtzon's Weekly Stories. Rabbi Avtzon is a veteran mechanech and the author of numerous books on the Chabad Rebbeim and their Chassidim. He can be contacted at [avtzonbooks@gmail.com](mailto:avtzonbooks@gmail.com)*

## Judging Favorably #233

# The Phone Call and The Ice Cream Shop

Moving to a big city was a big adjustment for Leah Stein\*. Her outgoing nature enabled her to adjust quickly and make several friends in her new school. She was particularly friendly with Dina. Leah was looking forward to Sunday when Dina would come to her house to do homework together.

Sunday arrived and Leah was excitedly preparing for her friend's visit when the phone rang. "Hi ... sniff ... Leah?" said a hoarse voice. "This is Dina... cough, cough ... I'm really sorry but I caught this terrible cold... don't think I can make it today."

Leah was quick to assure Dina that she understood and wished her a speedy recovery. Disappointed, Leah sat down to do her homework. An hour later Leah was done. "Whew," she said to herself. "That wasn't easy, but I'm finished."

She decided to treat herself at the popular ice cream shop. Though she had never been there, all her friends were talking about how great it was, and Leah figured this was a good time to try it out. As she stood in line at the shop, she was shocked to see Dina sitting at one of the tables with a group of girls from her school! Although she was wearing her hair in a ponytail instead of the usual way, there was no mistaking that it was Dina, who was supposed to be sick at home.

Not only didn't she look sick, but she looked like she was having a great time, laughing and eating ice cream. Leah quickly sped out of the ice cream shop before Dina noticed her.

"Some cold! She's just not interested in being my friend," muttered Leah angrily to herself. By the time she arrived home, her eyes were red and teary. Leah's father noticed her distress.

"Leah, what's wrong?" he asked with concern.

"I thought Dina was my friend and she made a fool out of me!" Leah blurted out and proceeded to tell him the whole story. "And tomorrow as soon as I see her I'm going to tell her what I think of what she did!" concluded Leah, bitterly.

"I understand how you feel," said her father. "But maybe you should give Dina a chance to explain herself first. From everything you've told us about her, Dina doesn't seem like the kind of girl who would hurt somebody like that. Perhaps there's a good reason for what happened and a way to judge her favorably."

Leah thought about her father's words, but she just couldn't stop feeling angry with her friend. The next day at school as Leah was walking down the hall she heard a familiar voice. "Hi Leah!"

It was Dina. Leah was about to explode. But she remembered her father's words and thought, "there must be a good reason..." as she turned around to face Dina. Leah couldn't believe it! She thought she was seeing double. There were two Dinas standing next to each other! One, holding a Kleenex, and another "Dina" with a ponytail.

The first "Dina" spoke up. "Hi, sorry I couldn't make it yesterday. But the day in bed did me good. By the way, this is my twin sister Chavie. I don't think you've met."

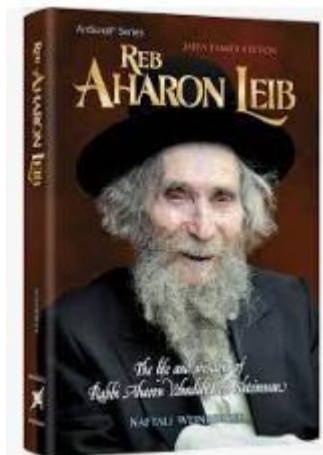
Leah swallowed. "Hi ... Chavie," she stuttered. "Nice to meet you ... I think I've ... um ... seen you around."

Leah was very grateful she had followed her father's advice!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.*

# How to Make Torah Learning Add Up

By Rabbi Mordechai Levin



One time, a concerned father came to Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, ZT”L, seeking advice regarding his teenage son. The young man was a genius, and had been showing a bright future as an Talmid Chacham. However, he loved

mathematics, so much so that he had begun spending his entire day engrossed in complex mathematical concepts, and had completely stopped learning Gemara, etc. The father was now seriously considering enrolling his son in a college yeshiva. This would allow him to pursue an advanced degree in mathematics while also hopefully learning Torah at least part of the day.

Rav Shteinman replied that he would like to study bichavrusa (together) with the young man, the Sefer Sha'agas Aryeh. Rav Aharon Leib explained that this Sefer utilized calculated thoughts and reckoning in order to prove Torah ideas, and the young man would renew his love for Torah via learning in this manner. Rav Shteinman learned the Sefer Sha'agas Aryeh with the teenager, and successfully brought him back to learning Torah. (Sefer Kiayal Ta'aarog, 2018)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5783 email of Torah Sweets.*

## **The New Man in Town's Dilemma**

Rav Avraham Pam, zt"l, related a story which showed how not only are the rewards great in Olam Haba for one who lends money, but there are even rewards in this world as well.

He told about Reb Zalman, one of Vilna's great Talmidei Chachamim, who was also Bentched with enormous wealth, and he used it to be a Ba'al Chesed, always looking to do kindness and help others with his money.

A stranger once approached, and asked him for a loan of three hundred rubles, an enormous amount of money. When Reb Zalman asked him for references, the man sadly replied that he was new to town and didn't know anyone yet.

Reb Zalman asked him, "How can I lend you such a large sum of money if you have no one who can assure me that you are a trustworthy person to lend money to?"

The man said, "Since nobody in town knows me, I only have Hashem to serve as my Guarantor!"

Reb Zalman replied, "If that is the case, I will surely give you the loan. Who can be trusted more than Hashem?"

The loan was granted for three months, and when the date for payment arrived, the man returned with the entire sum of money. Reb Zalman was a little surprised to see him, and said, "What are you doing here? Your loan has already been paid up by your Guarantor, and I never take payment for a loan twice!"

The man insisted that he wanted to pay back the money he borrowed, and they began to argue, with Reb Zalman claiming that Hashem had already paid the loan

through many, unusually large and unexpected profits, that could only be the workings of Hashem. The borrower claimed that he owed the money, and he very much wanted to pay it back.

They ended up settling on a compromise, that Reb Zalman would accept the money to be used exclusively for his free-loan fund Gemach, with the rewards from the Mitzvah of lending money to be divided equally between them. Reb Zalman understood that Hashem rewards one who lends money in many ways, one of which is an increase in his own wealth. Rav Pam explained that there is a dual reward for lending money to others!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefillah.*



**Rome's Great Synagogue decorated with flowers ahead of the festival of Shavuos last year.**