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The Best Grandchildren

By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg



Ariel Sharon

Several months after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had suffered a stroke, his son went to the leading doctor in Israel and asked if anyone had ever had such a condition and walked out on his two feet.

After rummaging through many profiles, the doctor recalled only one such episode. “There was only one such patient who completely recovered from such a stroke, but no one else. Don’t waste your time looking for solutions. It doesn’t pay.”

But the Prime Minister’s son was determined. He had to find out how that one person recovered and try that one last avenue. He went down to the street, called for

a taxi, and headed to the neighborhood of Geula in Yerushalayim enroute to the man's house. He wasn't going to leave any stone unturned.

When the man opened the door, the Prime Minister's son saw that he was a saintly tzaddik in his mid-70s. He asked the prestigious looking fellow if he could come in and have a talk, and the tzaddik welcomed him in and offered him a refreshing glass of water.

The Prime Minister's son then relayed his father's situation and the numerous attempts that were made to send his father back into office that all fell flat. All the strategies made no improvement in the Prime Minister's situation whatsoever. The host nodded his head; he understood all about the prognosis and the many attempts that were made. The Prime Minister's son finished the story in a nutshell and then asked the \$1,000,000 question:

"So how did you get out of it yourself? Which medication did you take? It must've been something better than what the hospital is offering my father. Please enlighten me."

The small apartment in Geula filled with pin-drop silence. Not a sound erupted from either of their mouths. Then the man said, "Truth be told, and even with all that we did, it's a neis. No one can explain it. It was a miracle."

"But at least tell me the thing you did," demanded the visitor. "Teach me what you have different than the hospital."

"It's something that you cannot do."

"I can't do?!" questioned the Prime Minister's son, a grin across his face. "Whatever you did I will do for my father."

"The idea is irrelevant for your father — I can't assist you any further."

"Don't you understand with whom you are dealing with? The Prime Minister of the nation. We would do anything, and everything. We will fly him to any state-of-the-art facility, pay out-of-pocket for the best doctors. Don't underestimate our determination and ability. Nothing is beyond our grasp."

With the pressure in the room mounting, the man decided to unveil his secret. With two hot tears trickling out of his eyes, he asked the Prime Minister's son, "Tell me, does your father have 60 grandchildren who can plead to Hashem to spare him? I do. I have 60 grandchildren who, from the day I fell ill, did not stop davening on my behalf. That propelled such an open neis. That is the only solution. If you have that, then you might be able to pull off the very same recovery that I experienced."

The Prime Minister's son now understood what the man was conveying. He had something over the Prime Minister of Israel. The Prime Minister's son thought he had everything, but indeed he didn't. The Prime Minister's son was glad to learn something new. He thanked his host, wished him well, and left. So ends the story.

Back in the doctor's office, Reb Yisrael Dovid then said to the doctor, "Now let me tell you my father's story. My father has 130 grandchildren and great-grandchildren who have done the very same. They didn't let go of davening ever since we learned of his condition. Time and again, they besieged Hashem that my father would return to his full health — and speedily.



"Why are you then declaring 'Nitzachnu'? This is not your victory; it's a miracle straight from Above. Credit should be given to the Almighty. He is the victorious One."

The doctor stood up on his feet and declared: "Nitzachta! — This is your victory. It was your strategy — tefillah, Torah, and mitzvos — that brought your father back to good health."

The doctor humbly shook his "mentor's" hand, and they departed while wishing each other well. Reb Yisrael Dovid lived another nine years, outdoing any predictions the doctors laid out for him. He left this world with many more grandchildren and great-grandchildren who all follow in his legendary mehalech ha'chaim.

Reb Yisrael Dovid's son left the doctor was the most valuable piece of information he had ever learned, something that had been omitted from his medical books. He taught him about a Power greater than all medicine, something that each of us can access. We have the ability, at any time of day, to consult Hashem for any need. Whether you're big or small, or the request is big or small, you can ask it of Him. Everyone can ask for anything, anywhere.

Take advantage. It's free!

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.

A Letter to Hashem

A young woman in her early thirties had been waiting many painful years for her zivug. Her parents had passed away when she was young, and she was raised by an older aunt and uncle. Her circle was small, and suggestions were few.

On her birthday, she sat alone and wrote a raw letter to Hashem. “Hashem, I have no one to turn to but You. I know You haven’t forgotten me. I’m writing this not to complain — but to say that even if I’m still waiting, I trust You. I just want to be ready when the right one comes.”

She placed the letter in her siddur. A few days later, she received a call from someone she hadn’t spoken to in five years. An old friend from seminary. “I don’t know why, but your name came into my head suddenly during davening. I realized it might be a good idea for you to meet my cousin. Would you be open?”

The boy seemed to have all the qualities she was looking for. She agreed. They got engaged within the month. When she told her kallah teacher the story, the teacher asked to see the letter she had written. It was still in her siddur.

The teacher gasped: “Look at the date. You got engaged exactly 40 days after you wrote this.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Lottery Test

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Yeshaya Asher-Zelig Margulies, one of the main 20th century Kabbalists of Jerusalem, once shared a story¹ about a Jew who came to Rebbe Shaya’leh of Kerestir to complain about his difficult financial situation. Reb Shaya’leh listened to the litany of problems and suggested a particular business in which the fellow might engage. Along with advice, Reb Shaya’leh dispensed warm blessings for success.

A year later, the same Jew returned to inform the Rebbe that he had succeeded. He thanked Reb Shaya’leh for the guidance and encouragement. “However,” he announced, “I now have a new problem.”

It turned out that along with success had come a steady stream of requests for help. Suddenly, distant relatives and old friends were appearing on his doorstep, eager to reignite their friendship. He felt beholden to all of them, yet the expense of satisfying their expectations was mounting.



Rebbe Shaya'leh of Kerestir

Reb Shaya'leh was deeply pained that a Jew who had faced poverty such a short time earlier could have forgotten its taste so quickly. He requested a pen and piece of paper from his gabbai [attendant] and turned back to the visitor. "Who are the distinguished Jews in your hometown?" the Rebbe asked. The petitioner relayed some of the prominent personalities, and Reb Shaya'leh wrote the name of each one.

"Now," the Rebbe reflected, "since you don't want to share your wealth, we will find another person who is more willing!"

The visitor gasped, realizing the import of the Rebbe's words. He immediately protested, insisting that he regretted his words and that he would be generous with anyone who asked for help.

"Why does one seek plentiful parnasah [income] if not to assist other Jews?" the Rebbe wondered. As the Jew continued to plead for a second chance, Reb Shaya'leh prepared slips of paper, each with a name from the list that he had recorded.

"Alright," the Rebbe stated, "this is what I shall do. I'll prepare a paper with your name too so that you can be included in the lottery. If your regret is genuine, then your name will be selected and your wealth will be preserved. If not, someone else will be given the opportunity."

Reb Shaya'leh withdrew a slip of paper as the Jew stood there and wept; the name on it was that of the visitor. He had been granted a reprieve. "You've learned your lesson," the Rebbe told him. "Be kind and generous in the future. That's the purpose of your wealth."

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from baltimorejewishlife.com, based on the book, "Reb Shaya'leh," by Rabbi Yisrael Besser. Why This Week? In this week's Torah reading, Pinchas, a major lottery is employed to determine the division of the Holy Land among the Twelve Tribes.

Biographic Note: Rabbi Yeshaya "Shaya'leh" Steiner of Kerestir (1851- 3 Iyar 1925) was the founder of the Kerestirer dynasty. He was a disciple of Rabbi Chaim

Halberstam of Sanz after whose passing he became a disciple of Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvorna. The latter suggested that he move to the small town of Kerestir, Hungary. He complied, and there he became a famous Rebbe with the reputation of a miracle worker. (based on Wiki) Until today, Kerestir is the focal point of an annual pilgrimage of thousands of followers and descendants of the town's most famous resident, He was especially known for his dedication to feeding the poor and hungry under any circumstances, often performing miraculous feats to provide sustenance for those in need. (One example: his own Rebbe commented, "Look at my Shaya'leh distributing the bread. The sack is empty, yet he continues to give...." Long after the supply ran out, Reb Shaya'leh mysteriously continued handing out fresh rolls! (ravlehoishia.org) Appendix: Rabbi Yeshaya Steiner, the Kerestirer Rebbe, was a very pious man and extremely humble, always referring to himself with the diminutive of his name, Shaya'leh. He was known as a "miraculous" person. His greatest pleasure was to host a very elaborate Melaveh Malka, the meal that follows Shabbat, on Saturday night. Often he would have his chasidim slaughter fresh chickens for his meal. One Saturday night, while Reb Shaya'le was eating this special Melaveh Malka meal, a chasid came to him with an urgent request. He was a man who had a warehouse full of foodstuffs and he made his living by buying and selling food. For the past number of months, his warehouse had been taken over by mice who were eating his grain and other commodities and his entire livelihood was threatened. He asked Reb Shaya'le for a blessing that the mice should leave his warehouse. At that time, each small town in Europe was ruled by the local church pastor. Some of the pastors were kind towards the Jews and others were harsh. Reb Shaya'le asked the chosid if the pastor of the town he lived in was kind or harsh. The chasid replied that he was very harsh toward the Jews. Reb Shaya'le then instructed the chasid to go to his warehouse, stand in the center, and announce: "Reb Shaya'le says all the mice here must go to the estate of the pastor." The chasid followed the Rebbe's advice and instantly hundreds of mice raced out of the warehouse, all heading in the direction of the pastor's estate. The chasid's business was saved. Ever since, Jews who have been plagued with this problem have used Reb Shaya'le's picture to accomplish the ridding of mice from their homes. (jewishgen.org [including the photo]—as posted on sefaria.org.il)

1 His eyewitness written report of the techiyas hameisim -- "restoration to Life" -- miracle in 1923 at Meron is undeniable as a verified and verifiable source of the episode.

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.

It is All From Hashem



The following story is from the Torah Wellsprings, and it happened with the rebbetzin of Reb Chaim Sarna zt'l at the beginning of the Holocaust, when she was still a young girl. When the Holocaust began, whoever could escape did so, and this young girl tried to save her life by running into the forest. She came to a large field, and from the distance, she saw a large, beautiful house. She was very happy. The house was far from the city, and it might be safe for her to hide there. She hoped that the people in this home would take pity on her and save her. With her final strength, she rushed through the courtyard, arrived at the house, and knocked at the door, shouting, "Good people, save me! Save me!"

The appearance of the man who opened the door frightened her. The man wasn't wearing an army uniform, but his mustache was styled like those of the Nazis. This man was the Nazi commander in that area, and the girl immediately realized the trouble she had fallen into. The man laughed a rolling laugh as he shouted, "A Jew!"

She almost fainted and had to hold onto the doorpost for support. He said to her, "Foolish Jew. You ran all this way to fall in my hands... I can kill you in a moment." But suddenly, he became serious and said, "Tell me, young girl, how did you get to my door?"

She showed him the path she took to reach his home. It was through the field, at the edge of the forest, and then through the courtyard. The man said, bewildered,

"I have many dogs guarding my home. Why didn't they attack you? How did you pass them and remain alive?"

The girl looked back and saw tens of dogs. All of them had murderous teeth. She hadn't noticed them earlier. She wouldn't have risked passing through the courtyard if she had seen them earlier. But the fact is that she did pass this courtyard, and she was alive and well!

The man thought that perhaps she had mystical strengths, maybe witchcraft. He told her, "Look, today you can sleep here. But tomorrow morning, I will send you out of here, and obviously, you will need to pass through the courtyard where I keep my dogs. And then I will see. If the dogs do their job... nothing will remain of you. But if you survive, I will know that you are protected from above, and then I give you my word that I will take care of you until the end of the war."

The rebbetzin said, "Don't ask how I passed that night because the night didn't pass! I cried and prayed the entire night, knowing what awaited me in the morning. I saw in my imagination hungry dogs eating me alive, ripping me to pieces. When it was daybreak, I prayed to Hashem, "Save me, Hashem. Please, Hashem, I am a young girl. I place my life in Your hands; please save me."

The wicked person sent her out into the courtyard. She walked calmly; she didn't rush. She wasn't afraid. She focused on reminding herself that there is no one in the world other than Hashem. Hashem was with her, and the dogs didn't touch her. They didn't even bark. The man, who was a high-ranking Nazi officer, witnessed the miracle and had no choice but to keep his promise. He protected her until the end of the war.

This story teaches us that even wild animals can't cause harm, if Hashem didn't decree it. This isn't solely with regards to dogs. It also applies to dogs who appear like humans. No one can harm you unless Hashem commands so. "When Hashem accepts a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him." As in this story, the cruel Nazi saved this girl and protected her throughout the war. She was saved because of her emunah and because of her tefillot.

Tefillah can turn everything around and save a person's life. We are always at war with the yetzer hara—evil inclination who wants to tear us apart. But just as this young girl was saved from wild dogs with her emunah and tefillot, certainly whoever davens will be saved from the hands of the yetzer hara – including the snare of technology which rips and tears the neshamah of a Jew. Hashem will hear his tefillot and save him from the yetzer hara, and he will be saved and live well.

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Wedding Crisis

Rav Yisroel Majeski shared a story that he was involved with, the names have been changed. He was in the middle of teaching Dovid Levine, a Choson who was getting married that Sunday, and he couldn't be interrupted. But why did the phone keep ringing? Rabbi Majeski glanced at the caller ID, and he saw that it was Mrs. Werner who was calling, the Choson's future mother-in-law. She was the one trying so hard to get through to Rabbi Majeski.

The Chason's Father Says He Won't Come to the Wedding

After several repeated calls, Rabbi Majeski excused himself and went out of the room to take the call. Mrs. Werner told him, "Rabbi Majeski, the wedding is off. Mr. Levine, Dovid's father, saw a name on our guest list, and he said that if this person was coming to the wedding, then he wasn't coming, and neither was Dovid. I begged him to be reasonable, but he wouldn't budge!"

Rabbi Majeski asked who this guest was, and he learned that it was Zev Stein, a person he knew. Rabbi Majeski told Mrs. Werner he would call her back. Rabbi Majeski called Zev and explained the situation.

Without hesitating, Zev said, "Never mind. It's fine. We won't come to the wedding. Please tell the Werners we're not insulted."

Rabbi Majeski then attempted to call Mrs. Werner, but before he could deliver the message, Zev called him back and said, "We are coming to the wedding, but we won't go in. We'll dress up, drive over, call the parents out to our car, and I'll play some music. I'll dance with my friend, and my wife will take some pictures with her friend. And then we'll go home. And please wish the Levines a Mazel Tov, and tell them I hope we can iron things out some day."

The Outcome of the Gesture

Rabbi Majeski gave over the message. The Steins drove for an hour to share in the Simchah, just as Zev had said they would. Rabbi Majeski witnessed the outcome of this gesture.

That year, the Steins married off two of their children and had their first grandchild. Also, a lot of difficult business issues they were facing were resolved. Rabbi Majeski said from this, "And once again, Chazal's words are proven to be true, that Hashem said, there is nothing that holds Brachah, other than Shalom!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Reward for Sticking to One's Learning Seder



Horav Yechiel Tzucker, Shlita, relates the story of a popular maggid shiur, who under no circumstances permitted his students to leave in middle of seder. As far as he was concerned, everything could wait – post office, dentist/doctor's appointments, parents – everyone could wait until after seder, and they had better return on time. This was an affable Rebbe who was easy to get along with, highly respected and admired – but, with regard to Torah study, he accepted no compromise, offered no flexibility whatsoever.

At the end of the yeshivah year, the bochurim all came to say good-bye and receive the Rebbe's warm blessing for a restful, productive summer bein ha'zmanim. One thing gnawed at them: their Rebbe was a very easy person who had many friends and was loved by his students. Why was he so impossibly inflexible with regard to seder?

He explained with the following story: "I was once a single bachur in yeshivah. I was considered a top student and was blessed to find my bashert, Heavenly-designated match, in no time. My father and future father-in-law took it upon themselves to purchase an apartment for us at a reasonable price – one to which they were both in agreement. As the date of our wedding approached and still no apartment, I decided to take things into my own hands.

"I decided to close my Gemorah, take off time from yeshivah, and go apartment hunting. "I met a real estate broker who showed me an apartment that fit our criteria exactly. I said I would speak with my future father-in-law. When I described the apartment to him, my father-in-law said that he had seen a "for sale"

sign for this apartment on the shul's bulletin board. We proceeded to the seller and made the deal.

"It was then that the agent became livid, claiming that he had shown me the apartment first, and, as such, deserved his customary fee as a broker. I replied that I had taken the apartment because my father-in-law had seen the sign in shul. It made no difference. This man was bent on extracting his fee from me. He took me to court where I was obligated to pay him 25,000 shekel, which was a considerable amount of money. As a result, we were compelled to cut back on the furniture and appliances that were important to us. We had just lost a considerable amount of money – because had I closed my Gemorah one day to go apartment hunting.

"The story is not yet over. There is more. After this fiasco, I made a firm decision to prioritize my Torah learning, and that, under no circumstances, would I take a break/close my Gemorah to pursue a mundane objective that was not life-threatening. Torah was paramount.

"Ten years passed, and I was approached by a friend whom I knew from my early days at the yeshivah. He had an investment for me to consider. I was interested; after all, before I would realize, my children would grow up and weddings, apartments and kollel support would become a way of life. A maggid shiur's salary could not compensate for such expenses.

"Apparently, the city of Ashkelon was selling parcels of land. His goal was to put together a Torah-oriented shechunah, neighborhood. His strategy was to purchase the land at bargain- basement prices, and, within a year, the price of the real estate would double. This was one of those "you have nothing to lose and all to gain – too good to be true" ventures. He needed 25,000 dollars (four times the amount of shekalim which he had lost ten years earlier).

"I explained that I did not carry that sum in my pocket. I would have to make a loan from the bank, where my credit was good. I added that now is the time for second seder in the kollel where I learn. I could go to the bank only during bein hasedarim. The bank's hours did not coincide with my schedule. They were open bein ha'sedarim: once a week on Wednesday. Today is Sunday; I will go on Wednesday.

"That Wednesday, as I prepared to go to the bank, my young son fell, requiring a trip to the doctor and stitches. By the time I returned, I barely made it to seder on time. I had missed the bank. Needless to say, my friend was beside himself. We had no alternative but to wait until the following week. The following week, I went to the bank, took out a loan and immediately went to my friend's home to share the good news.

"By now, you can imagine what happened. The entire deal from beginning to end was a sham, the workings of a disreputable real estate broker, who made away with the life's savings of many an unsuspecting investor – of which my friend was

one. Apparently, he was so taken in by the broker that he had convinced his parents, many family members and friends – who all lost every penny they had invested. His friend was afraid to leave his apartment for fear of what the investors he had convinced would do to him.”

The maggid shiur looked at his talmidim for a few moments, allowing the story to sink in. He then said, “When I closed my Gemorah the first time, I lost 25,000 shekalim. When I refused to close it and refrained from taking time off from seder – I saved 25,000 dollars. Now you know why I will not compromise on Torah study – mine, or yours.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5758 email of Peninim on the Torah, compiled by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum at the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.

The Mezritcher Magid and the Gutsy Winds

By Yehuda Z Klitnick



The Baal HaTanya

The Baal HaTanya the first Rebbe of Lubavitch, Harav Shneur Zalman, was from the youngest students of the Mezritcher Magid. In Mezritsch he stayed in the home of a widow who had many children. One day, the Baal HaTanya saw the

widow crying heavily. He asked her why she was crying. The widow told him that she had only son among many daughters, and he has cast away from Yiddishkeit. He is considering converting to Christianity. He was now in the hands of the priests, locked away in private chambers. No one could reach the boy now.

The Baal HaTanya felt a great deal of pity, and reassured her saying that her son would definitely return to be a Yid. He told her, "Friday, when the Magid's Gabbay goes to the mikvah, and the Rebbe will be alone, come with me to see the Rebbe. When we will go in, tell the Rebbe what you told me."

Friday, the widow was already standing near the door of the Maggid, and when the Baal HaTanya arrived they went in to see the Maggid. The widow was so emotional that she couldn't speak a word, and was unable to describe her problem. She stood there and just cried. The Magid was quiet for a few minutes and thought a while and then told her to go home.

She was shattered from the fact that she hadn't found the ability to describe her problem to the Magid. She thought that it was hopeless! The Baal HaTanya soothed her and told her, "I noticed that the Magid understood what your problem was. He was working on a solution, and certainly will do something for you."

When the Gabbay returned from the mikvah, the Magid ordered him to call together all his close students, and told them that they must begin to observe Shabbos right then and there, even though it was still daytime.

They were all surprised, but the Baal HaTanya understood that this was associated with the widow's coming to see the Magid. Immediately after Maariv, the Magid hurried to begin the Tish. The Magid bentcht out loud, with unusual fervor which was not his style. The Baal HaTanya, understood that the Magid was working to save the son of the widow.

After bentching, the Magid began to say Torah. In the middle of saying Torah, a very strong gusty wind began to blow outside, and it knocked down a few trees. The talmidim became frightened when they heard a bang on the outside wall of the yard. Then the Magid yelled at the Gabbay to go to the edge of town. and see what was there. At that point, the Magid's face began to shine with Simchah, and he got up and went into his private room. The Baal HaTanya followed the Gabbay, and they found a bochur lying on the ground crying.

They took him into a nearby house, and they give him food and drink. When he had calmed down, he told them the following:

"I was lying in bed a few hours ago, and my intention was to convert. "About two hours before nightfall, my heart suddenly began to pound, and all of a sudden I felt a strong craving for the people I was raised with, and return to my upbringing. I ran to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked. I tried to break it down, but I couldn't. So, I went back to my bed.

“My burning desire to return to Yiddishkeit grew stronger every minute. I felt my strength grow more and more, until finally I ran back to the door and tried to tear it from its hinges so I could get free. But everything was locked.

“A thought came suddenly to me: If Hashem gave me the feeling that I return to Yiddishkeit, He will certainly help me leave this place.

“I went to the window, and I found it open. I looked through the window, and saw that I was very high up off the ground. I concluded that if I jumped out of the window I would not live through it, so I returned back to my bed.

“But in a few minutes, when night began to fall, and the sun began to set, I looked out the window again and decided to jump out the window. I prayed to Hashem to have mercy on me, and I fell in such a fashion that received only a few minor bruises. My body was not injured in any way.

“But I quickly realized that the danger was not over. I saw that I was standing in an area that was beset by wild dogs. They would find me and rip me apart. But I was very surprised and uplifted when the dogs came to me, and instead of attacking me licked my hand, as if I was their owner and controlled them somehow.

“But I was still not free yet. There was a very high stone wall that surrounded the church,. I managed to scale the wall, but when I reached the top, I saw that on top of the wall were sharp spikes sticking up out of the wall. It was impossible for any human to scale those.

“I gave out a yell, ‘My father in Heaven! Please have pity on me and help me! I have done everything a person can do! I jumped out of a high window. Please don’t abandon me at the last moment! I see my rescue clearly; it’s just over this fence. But I can’t jump this last obstacle!

“As I was yelling, a sudden strong wind began to blow, and it lifted me up off the top of the stone wall. It blew me and carried me till here. “Now I am saved, and I will remain a Yid.”

And with that, the bochur finished his story. The Baal HaTanya said, “Now I understand it all: Making Shabbos early, and even the strong, blowing wind makes sense to me now. And now I understand, the Maggid, did all this to help save this bochur.”

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