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A Heter for Shalom Bayis?



Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein

There was once a man who called Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein with a question. He explained that his wife tends to do things with care, though very slowly, and when he returns from *kollel*, he has to wait a long time for lunch. At times, the hunger is quite intense, and on this particular day, he was so hungry that he went to a meat restaurant, simply unable to wait to eat.

“Today, of all days, when I got home, my wife said to me, ‘Dear husband, I made a surprise for you,’ and on the table was a plate of cheese blintzes, which I love.” The man added he was not supposed to eat in a restaurant, knowing his wife was preparing him lunch, and on top of that, not eating the blintzes would lead to his wife being even more upset. He called Rav Zilberstein asking for a *heter*—*halachic allowance* to eat the dairy blintzes citing *shalom bayit*.

The *Rav* responded, “For *shalom bayit* you could tell her that you ate meat at a *Pidyon Haben*, even though there was no *Pidyon*. However, permitting dairy after meat is out of the question. A small white lie for *shalom bayit* is okay, but transgressing other prohibitions is unacceptable.”

Hashem may be willing to erase His name on behalf of *shalom bayit*, but we must be cautious not to take advantage and use “keeping the peace” as an excuse for serious transgressions.

Reprinted from the Parashat Nasso 5783 email of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

A Doctor's Story

R' Yisroel Besser writes a great story. A contemporary doctor related a story about a woman who moved into a Williamsburg apartment building. Having recently become religious, she didn't have any close family or friends in the neighborhood. Along with being alone, and somewhat shy, she suffered from a severe disfigurement in her face, which made it difficult to look at her.

Some families stayed away from her, but one family, residents of the same building, drew her close. They invited her for a Shabbos meal, and before she came, the mother cautioned her children not to react to the guest's unusual appearance. The children agreed, and one of them, 10-year-old Chani, seemed to really connect with the guest, and chatted with her like she was with an old friend.

A Childlike Question to Her Neighbor

Over the next few weeks, Chani would often visit this neighbor in her apartment, and once, with childlike simplicity, she asked why the woman wouldn't have the deformity repaired.

The woman sighed and admitted that there was a plastic surgeon who could help her, but the procedure wasn't covered by insurance, and she was slowly saving up money to pay for the surgery.

The next day, Chani circled the halls of her school, knocked on each door, and asked for permission to address the other students. Speaking with confidence and clarity, she told the girls about her neighbor who wanted so badly to look normal, and she asked for money to help this woman. That night, she ran home from school and told her new friend that she had raised the money to help her. “Take me to your doctor,” she said. “I am off from school on Friday, let's go together.”

Bewildered, the woman allowed Chani to join her, and they took the subway to the doctor's office. Chani saw the doctor in the waiting room and approached him. In a matter-of-fact manner, she explained that she was there to take care of the surgery for her friend, and she was ready to pay for it.

Busy as he was, the doctor was intrigued, and he fit in a quick consultation for this woman in between his patients. He was convinced that he could help her, and he escorted Chani to the financial office. After Chani gave him the money she had collected, the woman was scheduled for surgery at the hospital where he was employed.

A Successful Operation

Within a few months, the procedure was done, and Baruch Hashem, the disfigurement was corrected, with the patient looking and feeling like a new person. Chani had never mentioned a word about this campaign to her parents, and only once it became obvious that the neighbor had undergone surgery did Chani share the story at home.

Her mother couldn't understand how she had raised sufficient funds to pay for this type of surgery. "How much money did you have?" she asked her daughter. Chani proudly replied, "Fifty-three dollars!" Chani's mother said to her that they had to go speak with the doctor about this.

She took Chani by the hand and led her back to the surgeon, where they sat in the waiting room, once again without an appointment. Eventually, they were admitted in to see the doctor, and Chani's mother began to speak. "My daughter told me the whole story. I know that there's no way that you perform that type of surgery for \$53. I would like to pay you what it costs, although I don't have all of it now. Please put me on a payment plan, and I will raise the money we owe you."

An Unusual Humanitarian Opportunity

The doctor laughed. He said, "How often does a person have a chance to actually give another human being a gift like this? I'll take care of the hospital fees, and my own fee is waived, but I do have one condition."

The mother held her breath waiting to hear what he would ask. The doctor reached into his pocket and pulled out a tattered envelope. He shook out a pile of crumpled and folded bills, some ones and fives, and a few tens, which added up to \$53 in all. He said, "I keep this with me wherever I am, and whenever I'm having a rough day, I take it out. It reminds me that there are some good people out there. I want to keep this!"

R' Besser derives a lesson from this story. There are times in our life, and in many places in Davening, where we would like to thank and praise Hashem. However, we are very inadequate in this task. We cannot "pay" the full price of what

we owe in thanks and praise to Hashem. It's immeasurable! But perhaps, that is exactly why Hashem finds our efforts so meaningful, because they are genuine and pure, and it is the best that we can do. And that makes them especially precious!

Reprinted from the Parshas Naso 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

It Once Happened

Reb Yosef's Upset Business Partner

There was once a Torah scholar named Reb Yosef who lived in the city of Nikopol, in northern Bulgaria. Although Reb Yosef's main interest and joy in life was the study of Torah, he insisted on supporting his family through the sweat of his own labor. To that end, he entered into a business partnership with an acquaintance and opened a store. But the division of labor would prove to be problematic.

Reb Yosef's daily schedule was as follows: After waking up early in the morning to pray, Reb Yosef would go to the study hall for several hours, and did not arrive in his store until noon. His partner, who had already been dealing with customers for several hours, eventually began to resent this arrangement. He respected his partner's diligence in Torah study, but at the same time needed help with the practical aspect of running a business.

His Love for Torah was So Strong

Reb Yosef realized that his partner was right and remained silent. "But what can I do," he thought to himself, "if my love of Torah is so strong?"

One morning Reb Yosef was studying when someone raised a particularly complex question in Torah law. The heated discussion that ensued lasted for hours as all the scholars in the study hall attempted to answer it. By the time Reb Yosef looked up from his volume of Talmud it was already late in the afternoon.

When Reb Yosef finally arrived at the store his partner was furious. "That's it!" he fumed. "I've had enough of this joint venture!"

Reb Yosef asked his partner to wait one more day before dissolving the partnership, as he wished to consult with his wife. That evening he went home and asked her opinion. His wife, a righteous woman, advised him to continue learning, and not reduce the number of hours devoted to Torah study. "If your partner wishes

to close one door to you, I have full faith that G-d, Who opens the gates of salvation, will surely unlock other channels through which to send His blessing."

Encouraged by his wife's words, the next day Reb Yosef returned to the store and announced that he was willing to end the partnership amicably. Reb Yosef was given half the value of the store's holdings and suddenly found himself unemployed. "There's no point in letting the money just sit at home," his wife advised him the following morning. "Why don't you go to the marketplace and look for another business venture?"

Reb Yosef agreed it was a good idea and set out at once. But he was so involved in his Torah thoughts that by force of habit his feet led him in the direction of the study hall, where he remained until evening. Only when his wife questioned him that night did he remember what he had set out to do. "Don't worry," he told her, "G-d will surely send something my way tomorrow."



The next day Reb Yosef had barely entered the marketplace when an unusually tall man approached him with a huge mortar and pestle for sale. Reb Yosef handed over all his money and bought the mortar and pestle with his last cent.

"What will we do with this old mortar and pestle?" his wife wondered when he returned home. But Reb Yosef wasn't worried and went off to the study hall.

Two days later Reb Yosef had a curious dream in which the tall man who had sold him the mortar and pestle told him a secret. "You should know," he revealed, "that good fortune has long been awaiting you, which was not meant to be shared by your former partner. That is why it was necessary that you part ways. But now that you're on your own, your hour has come.

"The mortar and pestle I sold you," he continued, "is made out of pure gold. You must learn its true worth before you can receive fair compensation. Then you

must leave this place, as it is not where you belong. Go to the Land of Israel, and live in the city of Tzefat."

The next morning Reb Yosef recounted his dream to his wife, who immediately summoned a goldsmith for an appraisal. The goldsmith rubbed off the accumulated dust and dirt and was astonished by what he saw. "This mortar and pestle is made out of pure gold!" he told them, and determined that it was worth a fortune.

The mortar and pestle were quickly sold, and Reb Yosef and his wife moved to the Land of Israel and settled in Tzefat. In fact, the money they received from the sale was enough to support them for the rest of their lives.

But the thing that pleased Reb Yosef most was that it finally enabled him to publish his two greatest works, the Beit Yosef and Shulchan Aruch. For Reb Yosef was none other than Rabbi Yosef Karo, the famous medieval codifier of Rabbinic law.

Reprinted from the Parshat Beha'alotcha 5760/2000 edition of L'Chaim.

The Baal Shem Tov's Frustration Over the Kiddush Levanah

One year, after Davening on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, the Baal Shem Tov went outside to see if it was possible to say Kiddush Levanah, the Brachah on the new moon. However, the sky was overcast, and thick clouds blocked the view of the moon.

The Baal Shem Tov returned to his study and began to become very agitated. He saw, with his Heavenly vision, that if they were unable to say Kiddush Levanah on that night specifically, it was going to be an extremely difficult year for the Jewish people. The Baal Shem Tov sat at his table, and with deep Kavanah, tried to impact the situation.

He Davened, imploring the heavens to open, to move the clouds, and let the moon become visible. However, his efforts were not successful, and the clouds remained where they were. The Baal Shem Tov became even more troubled. Meanwhile, his Chasidim, who were unaware of any of this, began to sing and celebrate the conclusion of the holy day of Yom Kippur.

Their singing began to become even more enthusiastic, and they danced with even more energy. The entire room vibrated with their Simchah. The door of the

Baal Shem Tov's study became slightly opened, and the Chasidim went in and tried to convince their Rebbe to join them in the singing and dancing.

The Baal Shem Tov was reluctant, but he agreed, and while they were dancing, someone came in and said that the skies had cleared, and the moon could be seen! Everyone went outside and said Kiddush Levanah.

Later, the Baal Shem Tov commented that the simple and pure Simchah of his Chasidim had a greater impact in Shamayim than all his deep concentrations and spiritual efforts!

Reprinted from the Parshas Naso 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Rabbi and the Jewish Prison Inmate



Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Grossman

The Torah teaches us that no challenge is too great that it cannot be successfully overcome as long as one feels chizuk and is energized to do it. The Yetzer Hara is smart and knows just how to pull us down, how to create hardship in our lives that seem insurmountable. It makes us depressed; it tells us we have nothing to live for; it tells us we are not capable of accomplishing great things in the world.

This is one of the satan's greatest tactics. It is called "auth" - Discouragement. If he makes us believe that we can't, then we believe that we don't need to try! This is why we need achdus. On Har Sinai, the Jewish people were united like "One man with one heart" at Har Sinai. That is how much they cared about each other.

They shared each other's joy and felt each other's pain, as if it were their own. They were like one single individual person, and that is why they were able to be united with one heart, one deep and passionate desire to receive the Torah and live by it! In this way we can grasp the words "lift up those people who feel that they are divorced (arudn) from Hashem".

By encouraging others, we can fulfill "ezj rnth uhjtku" - to his brother he will say, "Be Strong."

A Special Request from the Lubavitcher Rebbe's Secretary

On one of his trips to the United States many years ago, R' Yitzchok Dovid Grossman shlita, Chief Rabbi of Migdal HaEmek, received a call from Rabbi Binyamin Klein, a secretary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Scheerson zt"l. He told him that the Rebbe had a special request to ask of Rabbi Grossman; to travel to the Sing Sing Correctional Facility, where there was an irreligious Jewish inmate who needed chizuk (encouragement).

This maximum-security facility located in Ossining, NY, is notorious as one of the most rough-and-tumble prisons in the country and anyone incarcerated there was usually someone who had committed felonious crimes with long sentences.

R' Grossman acceded to the Rebbe's request and made a special trip to Ossining. He arranged to meet the inmate, telling him that the Lubavitcher Rebbe had sent him specifically to talk to him. When the prisoner heard this, he suddenly began to cry and needed some time to come to himself.

Formerly a Prominent Physician

"How did the Rebbe know?" he kept saying over and over. Finally, he was able to talk and he told R' Grossman that the last few weeks, he had been extremely depressed as he was formerly a prominent physician (prior to his prison sentence) and was accustomed to a certain level of respectful treatment.

Now, though, he was a prisoner in this heartless facility with nothing to anticipate, nothing to live for. His depression grew worse day by day, until after a brutal incident, he decided to end his life. It wasn't easy in lockup but he carefully planned his suicidal act. But his plans were suddenly altered when R' Grossman showed up with uplifting words from the Lubavitcher Rebbe and of his own, which lifted him out of despair.

The man now realized that he did have what to live for and he was going to make the best of it. After that visit, R' Grossman remained in contact with this man.

They exchanged letters, and their friendship gave him the will to carry on. They stayed in touch until the prisoner's passing years later.

There is a story about a rabbi who would visit prisons and provide warmth and chizuk to the Jewish inmates in order to cheer them up and encourage them. The inmates looked forward to his visits because the rabbi's love spilled over to the point that he would even inspire the non-Jewish prisoners, giving them hugs just as he did to the Jewish inmates.

However, in one of the prisons he visited, there was a certain inmate that was exceptionally tough and scary looking - muscular, very tall, covered in tattoos - whom he avoided due to fear. The man never showed any emotion and the rabbi did not know what to expect.

After one of his visits, as he was leaving the prison, he heard someone call out from behind him, "Hey, rabbi, no hug for me?"

It was this scary looking inmate. The rabbi stopped and slowly approached the mountainous hunk of a man. Then, he held out his arms and gave him a bear hug, barely getting his arms around the man's chest. They stood that way for a few extra seconds until the inmate stopped and told the rabbi that he needs another hug, to which the rabbi conceded. The massive inmate then began to cry saying those were the first hugs he had ever received in his life.

Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5783 edition of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

The Mystery Detour

By Hillel Baron

R' Alexander, a righteous and ardent *chassid* of the Alter Rebbe, was preparing for a business trip when the Rebbe made an unusual request: "When you are finished with your business, please stop at this nearby town."

He had no idea why or what he was supposed to do there, but R' Alexander trusted the Rebbe and agreed to the task.

As soon as he arrived in the town, he noticed that something was different. The Jews there were dressed in the modern style of clothing, influenced by the winds of enlightenment blowing from the West.

He felt uneasy about spending Shabbat with them, but found lodging at the only kosher establishment, owned by a woman named Hindel. She promised to take care of his needs for Shabbat.

During Shabbat prayers and meals, R' Alexander shared words of Torah and chassidic melodies that deeply touched those in attendance. He still didn't understand why the Rebbe had sent him there until he saw a young boy at the end of the table, his eyes wide open, taking it all in. Then he heard Hindel sobbing in the corner.



Art by Sefira Lightstone

He approached her and asked why she was crying. She explained that when her father, who had been the town rabbi, was alive, they used to have a beautiful Shabbat experience just like this every week. After his passing, the town had lost its Jewish heart. Now, her husband was often away for Shabbat. Her son rarely experienced such beauty and meaning and she was worried about his Jewish education. She started to cry again.

R' Alexander had an idea. He offered to take her son back with him to the Alter Rebbe in Liozno to be educated in the inspiring ways of Chassidism. After hearing his descriptions of the warm Jewish life of the Chassidic community and the greatness of the Alter Rebbe, she agreed to send him.

Now R' Alexander understood his mission. The Rebbe had sent him to this town because there was a special soul there that was thirsting for Yiddishkeit.

The young boy grew up to be one of the Alter Rebbe's most illustrious students, Reb Peretz Chein, the progenitor of a large family of rabbis and communal

leaders, many of whom continue to bear his name. (*Sippurei Mofet: Baal Hatanya, page 225*)

Sometimes we may not understand why we are sent on a particular mission, but we must find the hidden purpose. Who knows, maybe a small act of kindness can lead to something great...

Reprinted from the Parshat Nasso 5783 website of Chabad.Org

Famous Last Words

By Esther Stern



An important Rabbi of Tunis was once on a journey accompanied by two of his students. On the way, an Arab accosted them and threatened to kill the Rabbi.

Although there were three of them, they were no match for the Arab, who was tall and muscular, and well-armed.

The students started to plead for the life of their sage and leader, explaining that he was a holy soul. Anyone who sought to harm him, they warned, would bring untold suffering upon himself and his family.

But their words fell on deaf ears. “Your threats mean nothing to me,” the Arab cackled. “He is my enemy!”

The Rabbi realized that there was nothing he or his students could say that would deter the Arab. “My sons,” he said to his faithful students, “do not put yourselves in danger on my account. Please, I beg of you, save yourselves, for you

see that it is against me alone that Heaven has sent this evil hand, and I accept Hashem's decree."

At first the two hesitated, but when the Rabbi insisted, they tearfully took their final leave of their saintly mentor. They retreated into the distance, out of harm's way, but still able to see what would befall their beloved teacher.

The Arab was delighted! "Have you a final request before I slay you?" he barked.

The Jew Requests "a Drink of Water"

"Yes," answered the Jew. "I would like a drink of water."

The Arab was willing to grant his victim this modest request. The Rabbi took the water from him and prepared to thank his Creator one last time from the depths of his heart. Slowly he uttered each word, with heartrending devotion: "Baruch...shehakol niheyah bidbaro!" he declared emphatically, and then he raised the jug to his lips.

As he was drinking, another Arab appeared, a sheik mounted on horseback. The second Arab understood at once what his countryman intended to do. He, too, was far from being a friend of the Jews, but for some inexplicable reason, he took exception to his friend's evil plan.

"Slay any Jew you like!" he roared. "You have my permission to slay them all, but I forbid you to touch a single hair on the head of their hacham!"

The would-be assassin had no choice but to obey. He freed the Rabbi who set out to look for his followers, who by now were a safe distance away.

Why Did Your Ask for a Drink of Water?

When the students met their teacher again, they rejoiced over the Rabbi's sudden rescue. They asked the Rabbi why he had asked for a drink of water at such a fateful moment. Surely it was not just to quench an ordinary thirst!

"No, it certainly wasn't," agreed the Rabbi. "I didn't need water just then; what I needed was to recite the blessing of shehakol. For thus I was taught by my teachers: The blessing of shehakol can annul the worst of evil decrees - if it is recited with perfect faith that there is, indeed, no other force in all of creation but Hashem alone.

"R. Chaim Volozhin, in the Nefesh HaChayim, has taught us that saying the words 'ein od milbado - There is none other beside Him,' with immense concentration, is a wonderful segulah to overcome the evil desires of others wishing to cause harm.

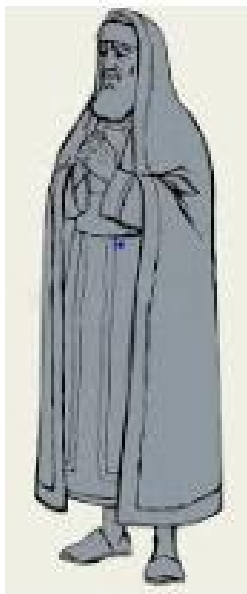
"When a Jew firmly establishes this principle in his heart, and believes it with complete faith, his enemies have no power over him, no matter how malicious their intents. Indeed, there is no force in the world but the will of Hashem!

“The words of this berachah imply the same meaning as ein od milbado. Shehakol niheyah bidbaro - everything in creation depends on His word. I was saved when I concentrated on this berachah.” (Just One Word published by ArtScroll)

Reprinted from the Parshas Naso 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Spiritual Greatness of Yochanon Ben Narbai

Based on the Torah Lectures of
Rabbi Avigdor Miller



I'll tell you a story from the Gemara to explain a little more. In Mesichta Pesachim (57a) it says that a bas kol, a prophetic voice, rang out in the courtyard of the Beis Hamikdash to make an announcement.

The people who were assembled in the Beis Hamikdash and they heard a voice above their heads ringing out, a mysterious voice from above that proclaimed as follows: – Lift up your heads, oh you gates – and welcome in this great man, Yochanon Ben Narbai. It means that Hashem was honoring him.

Now, what was the greatness of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Narbai? That's all the Voice said – “The gates should open wide for him.” But what was it that made him deserving of such honor? Listen to this. – he used to fill his stomach eating the kodshei shomayim. You hear the greatness of a man? He used to fill his belly with the sacred foods of heaven. He ate korbanos (the sacrificial meats). How much did he eat? He ate a fabulous amount. He was a very fat man, very big, heavy man.

Now you don't get fat from fasting. He was eating! What was he eating though? He wasn't eating cake. He wasn't eating candy. He ate korbanos. In his day, there was never any nosar in the Beis Hamikdash. There was never anything left over.

Recognized by Bas Kol

Now you might think this man was a glutton. Chas veshalom. The bas kol came and let us know that because he was a man who lived for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, a man of idealism and avodas Hashem, his body was a mizbeiach. He was kadosh, a holy man, but he ate because he loved to serve Hashem and therefore he consumed the korbanos like a fire on the mizbeiach.

And it was so appreciated the greatness of his character, his intentions, that this is one of the rare occasions where a bas kol was heard in the azarah: “Lift up, o' gates, your heads – you have to become higher to let this high man come in, it is too small a gate for such a great man – and welcome in this big heavy man whose eating is kulo kadosh.

Now of course it doesn't mean you should imitate him and get busy getting overweight. We're not going to deceive ourselves. We won't fool ourselves and think that we are Yochanan ben Narboi and you're going to sit down and eat like you're burning an offering on the mizbeach.

No, it's very difficult. He did it leshem shomayim and that takes a lot of practice. It is necessary to be very prepared for kedushah – otherwise you get lost in the eating and it's nothing; it's just eating and gluttony.

Reprinted from the Parshas Naso 5783 email of Toras Avigdor, based on the classic Thursday night lectures of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.