

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYEISHEV 5783

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The Brisker Rov's Memory



The Brisker Rov (Rabbi Yitchok Zev Soloveitchik, 1886-1959) once lent a man a not-inconsiderable amount of money. When the time for repayment arrived, the man did not have the money and was ashamed to come to the Rov for an extension. He avoided him for some time but since the Brisker Rov never mentioned it again, he assumed the Rov had forgotten.

He relaxed and waited until he was able to repay the loan. When that time came, he approached the Brisker Rov with a slightly sheepish smile on his face. "I'm sure the Rov doesn't remember," he began, "but some time ago you lent me money, and I am here to repay the loan."

"Not remember?!" exclaimed the sage. "Of course, I remembered! There are two ways to walk from my home to the Bais HaMidrash. The shorter way gets me

there faster but takes me past your house, while the longer way is quite circuitous but does not pass your home.

“Since the day I lent you the money, I have taken the longer way so as to avoid the issur of appearing demanding. I went out of my way to make you comfortable in borrowing the money and thus lend properly. I did not forget about the money, but neither did I forget about you.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5783 email of Rabbi J. Gerwitz's Migdal Ohr.

The Importance of Tefilla

It is related that the shamash of Rav Aharon of Chernobyl zy”a was very bothered by the fact that people disturbed him with matters related to his duties even during the time for tefillah (prayers). It got so bad that, one day, he wasn't able to daven at all. That day, when he entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe asked him, “Why didn't you daven today?”

He answered, “Because people were bothering me and I didn't have a moment to daven with a clear head and concentration. I didn't want to daven hurriedly and without concentration because what value could such a tefillah have?”

The Rebbe told him, “You can clearly see that a tefillah like that does have value from the fact that I could tell right away that you hadn't davened at all today.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 57823 edition of The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts on the Weekly Parshah from Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

The Baal Shem Tov and The Bar Mitzvah Boy

It was a chilly, windy day when the Baal Shem Tov stepped into his carriage, and as was his custom, allowed the horses to run as they would, invariably bringing their master to some small village or hamlet where the Tzadik would bring his fiery enthusiasm for G-d to his fellow Jews.

In what seemed like no time, the horses stopped in a tiny hamlet, buried in the midst of a dense forest and surrounded by tilled fields. The Jews of this place were a hard-

working lot, ignorant of Torah, able to steal just a few minutes a day to devote to their prayers, most of which they didn't understand. The Baal Shem Tov was filled with love and compassion for these Jews, and so he made these journeys to bring them a spiritual light to their eyes and turn their thoughts to G-d.

The Wealthy Landowner

There was only one villager who was a cut above, and he was a wealthy landowner, who, it turned out, was celebrating his son's Bar Mitzva just that very day. When the father of the boy heard that the famous Tzadik had arrived, he quickly harnessed his wagon and came to escort him to the grand celebration.

The Baal Shem Tov was seated at the head of the table and welcomed with great honor. But his attention riveted to the wrinkled faces and worn hands of the Jewish peasants who had also come to join the party. The Baal Shem Tov began to speak and the wondrous tales and parables of the Medrash he told held his audience spellbound.

Then he began singing in his melodious voice, the lovely Carpathian tunes sung by the local shepherd boys as they pastured their flocks on the mountainsides. The change which could be detected in the sad and exhausted faces of the laborers, the tears which trickled down their wrinkled cheeks, were touching to behold.

The wealthy landowner perceived the scene very differently. Why was the guest of honor devoting himself entirely to these unlettered peasants and paying no attention to me, he thought.

An Insult to the Baal Shem Tov

He decided he would avenge himself on the Baal Shem Tov, and with this in mind announced, "My dear friends, I want you to know that the highlight of this celebration will be a speech which my son, the Bar Mitzva boy, will deliver in the presence of our most esteemed guest, the rabbi of a nearby town, who will be here with his party. Only before such a prominent rav is it fitting to deliver his discourse."

The Baal Shem Tov was not oblivious to the insult, but he did not acknowledge it. Rather, he engaged the Bar Mitzva boy in conversation about various spiritual matters.

As he spoke, his spiritual gaze wandered afield to a faraway place beyond the green fields and forests of the village.

Suddenly the Baal Shem Tov broke out into a burst of joyous laughter which seemed to engulf his entire being and spread to every man and woman in the room. Soon, not only the Baal Shem Tov was laughing, but the whole room was filled with joy and laughter – the people, the objects and even farm animals outside joined in his unbounded joy.

In the midst of all this laughter, the sound of carriage wheels grinding to a halt could be heard from the courtyard. It was the wealthy master of the feast who had just arrived with the rabbi of the nearby town, the much-awaited guest of honor.

As they approached, they were astonished to hear peals of laughter which emitted from the hall. “What has happened here?” the wealthy landowner asked.

The Baal Shem Tov’s Explanation

When silence was restored, the Baal Shem Tov began his explanation:

“Far away from here, in a lonely hamlet, there lives a widow and her only son. Today, he too is becoming a Bar Mitzva, and although he knows nothing about Torah and has never lived among Jews, he has a pair of tefilin left to him by his father.

“He put on the tefilin and his mother explained to him the tradition of going to the synagogue to be called up to the Torah. But, alas the poor lad had no way to fulfill this custom. He walked out to the barn and gathered all his beloved animals, which he cared for so devotedly and he formed them into a ‘minyan.’

Then he announced in a loud voice, ‘Today I am a Bar Mitzva!’ The animals responded to his words with a cacophony of ‘moos,’ ‘neighs,’ and ‘clucks.’ When the heavenly hosts beheld this strange but touching Bar Mitzva celebration, they laughed so happily that their laughter echoed through the universe until it reached G-d’s Holy Throne where it provoked great Divine Joy.

“And so, concluded the Baal Shem Tov, it is now a propitious time to hear the discourse of the Bar Mitzva boy, for now, the Gates of Heaven are open.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5783 edition of L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.

How to Give Charity

One who wishes to give charity intelligently will make sure the recipient will feel as though he is the giver. There is a story about a man who purchased stacks of wood and placed them on his porch in the front of his house. When he would meet a poor person, he would hire him to move the wood for him to the back of the house.

When he would then upon another person in need, he would hire him to move the stacks back to the porch.

In this way, he provided financial assistance to those who so desperately needed it, while preserving their dignity by having them feel that they earned the money, rather than receiving a handout.

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

Yossele the Miser



In 1550 in Krakow, during times of poverty, there was a rich Jew named Yossele who was known as The Miser of the community. He hoarded his wealth and never gave charity. He was an outcast. Children would walk by his house and throw stones; people would ignore him as he walked past them.

One day, he became ill and was on his deathbed, and the Chevra Kaddisha was notified to meet with him to discuss burial. They told him, “You’re dying, and you can’t take your money with you. Donate 1,000 rubles and we will bury you with honor and give the money to the poor, whom you’ve neglected your whole life.”

Yossele replied, “I could only give 50 rubles, not more.”

The people were disgusted with his behavior, telling him, “You can’t take it where you’re going. Once in your life give some money to the poor.”

Yossele Refuses to Give Extra Money to the Poor

But Yossele insisted he could only donate 50 rubles. The Chevra Kaddisha refused to bury him, and Yossele said he will bury himself. After they left, he uttered the words, “Hashem Elokenu Hashem echad—G-d is One,” and his soul left him.

Days passed, and his body was not buried. A neighbor felt very sorry for Yossele’s wife and children, and decided he would privately bury him himself. He hauled Yossele onto his wagon, dug a grave for him near a tree outside of the cemetery, threw him in, and put dirt on him, leaving The Miser to be forgotten.

The next night, on Thursday, the Chief Rabbi of the community, Reb Kalman, answered a knock on his door. It was a poor person, asking for some money for Shabbat. The rabbi said, “Sure, but I’ve never seen you before. How did you make last Shabbat?”

The Thursday Morning Envelope

The poor man said, “I have never been able to make a decent living, and for 20 years, every Thursday morning, there were five rubles in an envelope on my broken doorstep, but not this morning.”

Five minutes later, there was another knock at the door. Another pauper asked, “Reb Kalman, please help me, I need some money for Shabbat.” Reb Kalman replied, “I’d be glad to, but where were you last week?”

And the man said, “I’ve been living here ten years and unable to make enough money for Shabbat. Every Thursday morning, there was an envelope with 2 rubles underneath my broken door, but not this morning.”

Within hours, all the poor people in Krakow came to the rabbi and told the same story.

Understanding the Connection of Yossele

After Reb Kalman caught on that it was Yossele supporting the entire community, he asked, “How come one gets five rubles, one gets two, one gets 10? How did he know their addresses?”

So, he asked the paupers at his door, and one by one they told similar stories. “I knocked on his door, and he answered warmly. Yossele asked me where I’m from, how many children I had, and what I did for a living. He was attentive and kind when he asked me what I would need to tide me over for the week. He wrote everything down and thanked me for visiting.

“Then out of nowhere, he screamed and threw me out of his house! He told me he would never give up his precious money! I went home to my wife to tell her Yossele was a crazy and selfish miser. And that Thursday, I received five rubles on my doorstep. I had forgotten all about him.”

Giving Like Hashem Gives

Reb Kalman was heartbroken. Not only did Yossele give, but he also gave like Hashem gives, without credit, in the holiest way. And they didn’t even bury him. The rabbi called for a fast day for all of Krakow. The people of the community cried and begged Yossele for forgiveness.

When Reb Kalman was crying and inconsolable at the ark, he fainted, and Yossele came to him in a dream. “Reb Kalman, please tell all my brothers and sisters there is no reason to fast. This is the way I wanted it. I wanted to have the privilege to give like G-d gives—without anyone knowing. Please tell them I am in Gan Eden in the highest place.

“I have everything I need, but there is one thing I miss so much. I would give up Heaven for one Thursday morning, one broken door, one envelope with five rubles in honor of Shabbat.”

Reb Kalman said to him, “But, tell me, Yossele, aren't you lonely being buried there all alone?”

Yossele smiled and said, “But I was not alone. Our Avot Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were there. Our Imahot were there too. Moshe Rabbenu, Aharon Hakohen, Yosef Hatzaddik, and David Hamelech walked with me, and Eliyahu Hanavi led the way with a candle to show me to my place in Gan Eden.”

This is true giving. Yossele did the ultimate chessed like Rachel Imenu, sacrificing without anyone having any idea. On his elaborate tombstone in Krakow, Reb Kalman had it engraved, saying: Here lies Yossele Hatzaddik, the Holy Miser.

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

What's in the Name – “Zelig”?

R' Elimelech Biderman shlit'a recounts the following amazing story. A family living in Jerusalem had a son by the name of Zelig, who was getting on in years, and couldn't seem to find his soulmate. The family did its utmost but things were not turning out the way they had hoped for their son.

The boy's mother decided that she would travel to Meron and daven at the kever of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, in the hopes of finding a shidduch for her son. She took the bus from Jerusalem and while she was sitting on the bus, she called her husband on her cell phone.

“Do you remember,” she asked him, “that when we were first married, we didn't have a child right away and we went to Meron to daven? At that time, we made a promise that if we were to have a son, we would name him Shimon, after the great Tanna.

“Boruch Hashem, we had a son but for some odd reason, we seemed to have forgotten our promise and in the end, we named him Zelig. I was thinking, maybe this is what's holding back his shidduch?”

Her husband agreed with her premise but felt that he must discuss the matter with his Rov before taking any measures. Immediately, he called his rabbi and explained the whole situation. The Rov also agreed and told him to add a name to their son, and from then on he should be called Shimon Zelig.

He called back his wife and told her to daven at the kever of Rashbi for their son “Shimon Zelig” that he should finally find his soulmate and become engaged. She arrived in Meron and davened with heartfelt tears for a very long time. When

she returned back home, she felt as if a stone had been lifted off her family's collective chest and they were excited about the future prospects.

In order to make it official, the following Shabbos during Krias HaTorah, the gabbai called up "Habachur Shimon Zelig ben Reb" for an aliyah, and afterwards he made a Mi Shebeirach using the same name.

A few eyebrows were raised but no one seemed to have an issue. Except for one man who also davened in the same Beis Medrash, and his name was also Zelig. As soon as davening was over, he walked over to the gabbai and asked him, "Why did you call this bachur Shimon Zelig? His name is Zelig. When did he suddenly get a new name?"

The gabbai shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Don't look at me. This is what his father asked me to do. I don't know why. I didn't ask questions."

This man Zelig had a daughter who was in shidduchim for a while as well. Long ago, he had his eye on the bachur Zelig as a chosson for his daughter, but since both of their names were Zelig, he couldn't do such a shidduch. After all, it is famously quoted from Rav Yehuda HaChasid that the names of a father-in-law and son-in-law mustn't be the same.

He had never pursued the shidduch - until now. Now that he realized that their names weren't exactly the same, he was willing to go forward with the shidduch. He involved a local shadchan who put forth the idea. It didn't take long, and with amazing siyata dishmaya, Shimon Zelig became engaged to Zelig's daughter.

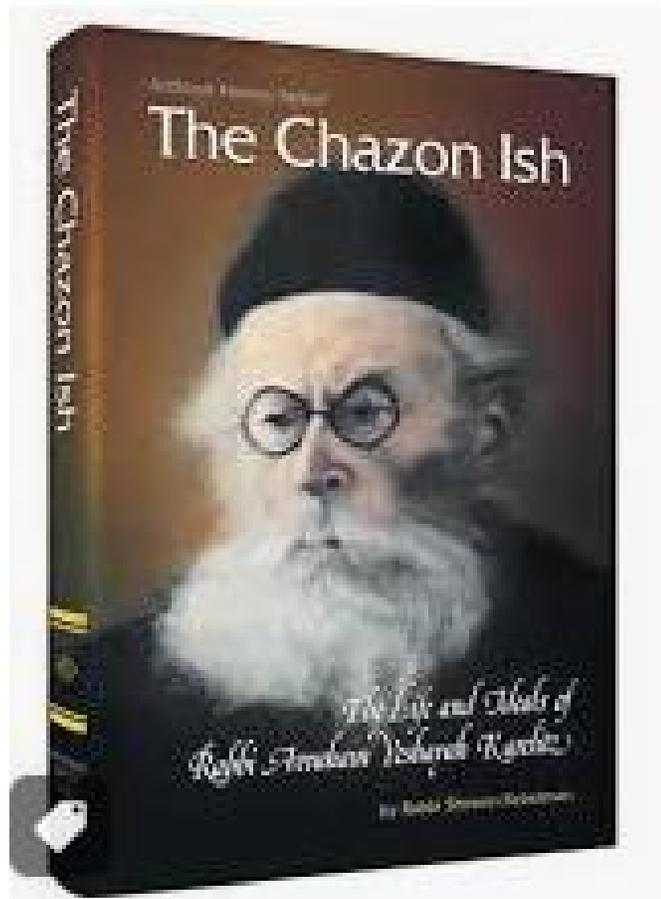
Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzie 5783 edition of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

The Chazon Ish and the Devastated Holocaust Survivor

The Maggid, Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, related a story. When he arrived in Eretz Yisroel after the destruction of European Jewry in World War II, he met a man who was completely broken and shattered, as he had lost his entire family in the war, and he himself had endured much suffering. Several times he had been on the verge of death, R"L.

One day, Rav Galinsky took this man to the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953), zt"l, and he unburdened himself of everything that had happened to him. He said, "I no longer want to live!"

The Chazon Ish shared the pain of the young man, and then he said, “Listen to a Din Torah that just came to me this morning. I am sure that this was worked out by Shamayim, that this Din Torah should specifically come my way today, and this is what happened.



A merchant's wife came to Yerushalayim with a large sum of money, in order to close the deal on a major business opportunity. However, before she came to the place where they agreed to meet and sign off on the deal, she fell and the purse with all the money in it got lost.

The woman searched and searched, but eventually, she gave up hope of ever finding it. Her husband, however, who was overseas, asked her to keep looking for it.

A short while later, a man came forward and announced that he had found the purse with the money in it, and he claimed that because the owner had given up on ever finding it, the Halachah was it was now his, and he could keep it.”

The case came to the Chazon Ish, and the Chazon Ish ruled that the woman was not the owner of the money. And since the husband expressly stated that he did not give up hope of recovering the money, and he even encouraged her to keep

looking for it, therefore, the man who found it was required to return the money to her.

The Chazon Ish then said to this man, “Did you hear what happened? The same thing applies to you. You are not the owner here. Hashem is the Owner, and He decided to not give up hope on you, and He let you live. If Hashem didn’t give up hope on you, how could you give up hope?”

The man tearfully thanked the Chazon Ish, as his words had made a powerful impact on him, and he was able to go on and live a productive life serving Hashem!

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

Don’t Just Sigh!

One day during the Yom Kippur War, Mrs. Hammer was sitting on a bench enjoying the fresh air in her neighborhood in Yerushalayim, when she overheard a conversation between two women. They were commiserating over their neighbor, a young woman named Shula, who had just come home from the hospital with new triplets. She had two other young children at home, her husband had been called up to army duty, and her mother – who planned on coming to help – came down with pneumonia and was hospitalized. They didn’t know how Shula would manage.

Mrs. Hammer, who was renowned for her chessed in providing free chicken for poor families, was up in a flash. “Excuse me, I could not help but overhear your conversation. Where does this Shula live?”

The women gave her a peculiar look, but Mrs. Hammer was undaunted, “Well, I would be glad to help her. Where does she live?”

They figured, why not – and gave her the address. Mrs. Hammer went right over and found a very tired looking young woman.

“Mazel Tov Shula!” said Mrs. Hammer with genuine joy. “My name is Mrs. Hammer. I live a few blocks away and I can come any time to help with the children.”

Shula stood there speechless. Shula needed the most help with keeping her toddlers occupied while feeding the babies. She gave Mrs. Hammer a schedule of the triplets’ feeding times, and from that moment on, every day at meal time “Savta Hammer” was there to lend a hand.

When the war was over and Shula’s husband returned from the front, the grateful couple presented Mrs. Hammer with a beautiful siddur. Over the years, the

two families kept in touch. Mrs. Hammer had the joy of participating in their triple bar mitzvah celebration.

As Mrs. Hammer so matter-if-factly put it, “Some people listen and say, ‘Oh, poor Shula.’ What do you mean ‘poor Shula’?! I was willing and able, so why shouldn’t I help someone instead of just sitting on a bench and sighing?” (A Mother’s Favorite Stories)

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

Highlights in the Life of Rabbi Dov Ber Weidenfeld, zt”l



R’ Dov Ber Weidenfeld (1881-1965) was [during the Second World War] sent to a labor camp situated in a huge forest in Siberia. Due to his advanced age, the Russians did not require the Rav to engage in hard labor. Identified merely as a simple school teacher, he sat alone in a freezing basement, warmed only by the fire of his Torah study.

Not having a single sefer in his possession did not keep him from learning. He would record his chiddushei Torah on small scraps of wrapping paper and slivers of wood; these chiddushim were preserved and published after the war.

It was in Siberia that his true Torah genius shone even more brightly. The Rav quoted whole sections from the commentaries of the Rishonim and Acharonim, word for word. He dictated verbatim to others the better part of several mesechtos of the Gemara so that they would have texts from which to learn.

He also dealt with many of the halachic questions germane to the harsh conditions in Siberia. A typical she'eilah was: If someone managed to obtain one kezayis of matzah for the first night of Pesach, should he eat it all himself or give half of it away to someone else, thus enabling both people to eat some matzah?

Reviewing His Torah Knowledge In the Freezing Wasteland

There, in the wasteland of Siberia, where the temperatures plummeted to 40 below zero, the Rav would sit and review by heart all the pertinent halachos to issue his psak. He would do so without any sefarim to refer to, gleaning his answers from the most obscure sources, all properly annotated and quoted word for word.

Incredibly, even entire selections from Acharonim such as the Nodah BiYehudah and Minchas Chinuch, were rendered so flawlessly that recipients hardly suspected that this wealth of information was stored in the Rav's mind. These particular halachic responses meant a great deal to the Rav. Upon reprinting the Doveiv Meisharim in Yerushalayim, he devoted a special section to these unique halachic responses.

The Rav's noted son-in-law, his successor as Rosh Yeshivah of Kochav MiYakov, the Gaon R' Boruch Shimon Schneersohn, relates that upon republishing these halachic responses some 26 years after they were written, he included the Rav's subsequent handwritten glosses to the first edition. He found not one correction, only additional proofs to those very answers originally written without as much as a Gemara.

Escaping to Buchara

With the dissolution of the labor camp, the Rav escaped to Buchara, where he was warmly received by the local Jewish population. He was regarded as a saint in their midst. The Rav accepted his providential calling; overnight his bare house once again became a Torah center, as all who could, flocked to his side to hear his shiurim. However, the authorities maintained his house under constant NKVD (KGB) surveillance, until eventually he was forced to cease his activities.

Right after Austria was annexed by Hitler yemach shemo, the Rav's greatnephew, Shimon Geldwerth, escaped to America. There he embarked on a one-

man relief effort to save his family. Having secured the freedom of his parents, brother and sister-in-law, he focused on saving his great-uncle. Shimon's first step was to locate the Rav, who had disappeared into the Siberian tundra. He finally located the Rav, maintaining constant telegram contact with him.

Shimon's mechutan, R' Yitzchak Isaac Herzog, Chief Rav of Palestine, brought the matter of the Rav's situation before Lord Halifax in London. Agudath Israel and Vaad Hatzalah leaders in America brought pressures to bear on the U.S. State Department. With super-human perseverance, the Rav's young great-nephew arranged for American visas to be awaiting the wandering Rav in all major cities along his route. Finally, with the direct aid of the Soviet Ambassador to the United States (they were "allies" during the war), the Rav was informed that he could cross into Iran, from where he would proceed to Eretz Yisrael.

A Pain He Never Overcame

The Rav traveled through Iran, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon, arriving in Eretz Yisrael just before Pesach (1946). His heart was shattered by the devastation which had befallen his immediate family – and all of Klal Yisrael – a pain he never overcame. The Rav had no home of his own and had to stay in a hotel.

The then newlywed R' Betzalel Zolty (later Chief Rav of Yerushalayim), was also a guest in the same hotel for Pesach, as he was staying there during the entire week of his Sheva Brachos. The Rav, who was still dressed in layman's clothing, was sitting next to R' Zolty one day in the hotel lobby when he asked him to relay some of his chiddushei Torah.

R' Zolty thought chiddushim in Gemara would be way beyond the layman's grasp, so he began to relate an insight on a midrash. This "layman" quickly picked up his trend of thought and cited numerous proofs from Talmud Bavli, Yerushalmi and other sources.

The Unusual "Layman" is Exposed

When the stunned R' Zolty later stepped outside the hotel, he happened to see the Lev Simcha (who later became the Gerrer Rebbe) walking by. R' Zolty told him of this unusual "layman" who seemed to be proficient in the entire Torah. With a gleam of comprehension in his eyes, the Lev Simcha exclaimed, "So this is where the Tchebiner Rav is hiding!" Soon thereafter, a delegation of Gerrer chassidim arrived at the hotel with clothing befitting the Rav.

His first steps in the Holy Land were directed towards his aged Rebbe, the Husyatiner Rebbe, who lived in Tel Aviv. The Husyatiner Rebbe assured the Rav that he need not worry; the Rebbe would arrange a house for him. The Rebbe himself gave 600 lira – an enormous sum – to help pay for the cost of an apartment for the Rav. But even this sum was not sufficient; the Husyatiner Rebbe summoned six

wealthy chassidim and commanded each of them to give 100 lira to make up the missing amount.

One of the chassidim refused the Rebbe's request and did not give. A few weeks later, on the first night of Pesach, this man's wife came to the Rebbe crying that her husband had gone mad. When her husband had come home from shul, he suffered a sudden fit of insanity and threw all the expensive china from the beautifully set table onto the floor, all the while screaming and shouting.

The Husyatiner Rebbe replied, "What did he think? The Tchebiner Rav will not have his own home in which to lead his Pesach seder, and your husband will lead his own seder?" The woman promised to bring in the missing money the night after Yom Tov. The Rebbe then told her to go home; she would find her husband fully recovered.

A Connection with the Belzer Rebbe

Following the passing of the Husyatiner Rebbe in 1949, the Rav became close to the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach. The Belzer Rebbe had great respect for the Rav, stating that the Rav was "the da'as Torah of our generation." Whenever a difficult halachic question came up, the Belzer Rebbe would command that the Rav be consulted, particularly if the question involved the field of medicine. People would come to receive the Belzer Rebbe's blessing for a complicated surgery, and the Rebbe would first send them to the Rav to find out if such a risky surgery was permissible according to the halachah.

During his first Shavuos in Eretz Yisrael, the Rav davened in the Gerrer Beis Medrash. The Imrei Emes instructed his gabbai to call the Tchebiner Rav to the Torah for the aliyah in which the Aseres Hadibros are read, saying, "Today, the Aseres Hadibros will be honored by the Torah itself."

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