

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA 5783

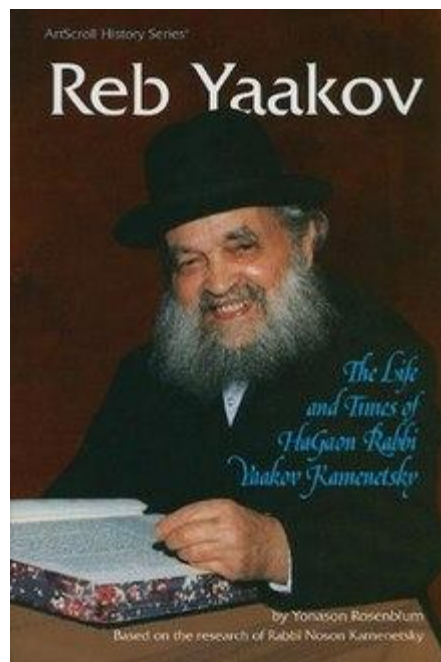
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“This is My Baby, Avraham...”



Over the final decades of his life, the home of the great Tzaddik and Rosh Yeshivah, R' Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l, on Saddle River Road in Monsey, NY, was the address for thousands of people seeking guidance. They ranged from the leading figures of the Torah world to simple Jews, and their concerns covered the gamut from the most pressing issues confronting Klal Yisrael to the choice of an appropriate cheder for one's child.

People who would have normally have been too intimidated to bring their problems to someone of his stature did not hesitate to speak to R' Yaakov. His

humor, simplicity, and practical, down-to-earth manner put people immediately at ease.

Despite his advanced age and the multiple demands on his time, R' Yaakov was remarkably accessible to the public. He never had a gabbai or shammas of any kind controlling access to him.

Even Advanced Age Didn't Isolate the Rosh Hayeshiva

"I don't want to become a prisoner in my own house," he would say. He or the Rebbetzin usually answered the phone themselves, and when he wanted to speak to someone, he called him himself. Even when advanced age forced him and his Rebbetzin to have a young man in the house to answer the phone or door, it was never his function to prevent people from speaking to the Rosh Yeshiva.

He was acutely aware of the heightened sensitivities of teenagers. Upon seeing a young teenager who had grown rapidly since he had last seen him, R' Yaakov quoted the description of Shaul as "a head taller than anyone else in the nation" (Shmuel I 9:2) and mentioned that height is a sign of malchus (kingship). He knew just the right thing to say.

Even the feelings of a toddler were not beyond his purview. Once he was watching the young toddler of a close talmid walking towards her father, who was holding out a candy for her. When the father drew his hand further back to encourage the child to take a few more steps, R' Yaakov reprimanded him sharply.

"How can you fool the child like that and make her feel bad? Give her the candy at once."

Realizing the Importance of a Good Impression

Had R' Yaakov's love of children not been genuine, they would never have responded to him as they did. Children have a sixth sense for artifice. But another calculation also lay behind his every action with children. He never lost sight of the fact that the impression he made on people - and youngsters, in particular - could be the means of sparking in them a desire to become just like him.

Once he happened to find himself in a doctor's office with a non-religious boy. Realizing that he would not be able to speak to the boy, but very much wanting to create a connection to this Yiddish neshama, R' Yaakov played catch with him instead. "It was the only way I could leave him with a pleasant memory of what a frum Jew is," he explained.

During one of their regular Wednesday learning sessions, R' Yaakov mentioned to his son R' Avraham, that a father and daughter would be coming for a brief visit and he wanted R' Avraham to remain in the room. That request was quite out of the ordinary, as R' Avraham usually stepped out of the room when visitors came in order to allow them to talk in private.

When the visitors arrived, the first few minutes of the conversation were taken up with small talk about the father's business and the daughter's schoolwork. In the course of the conversation, R' Yaakov suddenly clapped his son affectionately on the back and said, "This is my baby, Avraham." A short time later, the father and daughter departed.

Since R' Avraham was then a man in his late forties, he was eager for some explanation of his father's unexpected reference to him as a "my baby." At their next Wednesday learning session, R' Yaakov explained what had taken place. The father had always had a warm relationship with his daughter, his youngest child, until he made the mistake of introducing her once as his "baby."

The daughter felt humiliated and had virtually stopped speaking to her father. Distraught, the father had consulted with R' Yaakov, who told him to bring his daughter on Wednesday when R' Avraham would be in Monsey. Shortly after the meeting with R' Yaakov, the greatly relieved father called to say that as a result of the visit his relationship with his daughter had never been better.

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

Lessons in Emunah

Dreams Fulfilled

By Penina Metal

I attended a *chasuna* recently returning to my former neighborhood, in Crown Heights where I had lived for several decades and yet, as I stood in front of 770 Eastern Parkway, for the *chupa*, I was transported back in time to the early 1960s when I, a little 10-year-old girl joined my friend Leah, who was hosting me for the last days of Pesach, when we were fortunate to find a seat on a bench on Eastern Parkway.

Back then, you see, in the early 1960s, the *schechuna* (neighborhood) overflowed with all manner of *Yidden*, as the flight from the neighborhood had not yet materialized. One was therefore fortunate if one could find a seat on one of the benches which dotted the parkway's island.

It was about *mincha* time when a chant began: "*Rebbe! Rebbe!*" It didn't stop. There was much excitement. Leah, told me to stand up, because the *Rebbe* is coming!

I had no idea what a *Rebbe* was, being accustomed to the term, "Rabbi," but I did as I was told and came face-to-face with the *Lubavitcher Rebbe, zy"a*, who was

cheering on his *chasidim* who would be visiting other neighborhoods in their customary *minhag*, I would learn later, which is referred to as a “*The Tahalucha*.”

I was entranced with everything that I experienced on that *yom tov* and told my mother, upon my return home, that when I grew up, I wanted to live “in a place like Crown Heights,” as well as to adopt many of the customs that I had experienced.

Mommie assumed that within three days’ time, I would forget what I had experienced, but through a series of different occurrences, I did, in fact move to Crown Heights, as a young married woman, with my dear husband, as well as my long-awaited *kinderlach* who are indeed *brachas* from the *Rebbe!*

And so, during the *chupa*, my eyes searched and found the bench that I had occupied all of those years ago, situated directly in front of 770, and my eyes teared with overwhelming gratitude to *Hashem Yisborach*, for ensuring that the hopes and dreams of a little 10-year-old did indeed, come to fruition.

Reprinted from the March 26, 2023 website of The Jewish Press

Every Jew’s “Military Commands”

Even as a young child, the famed Sanzer Rebbe, R’ Chaim Halberstam zt”l, was renowned for his love of Torah and mitzvos. Once, an adult spotted little Chaim’ke murmuring to himself with great seriousness.

“Why are you talking to yourself, Chaim’ke?” he asked.

The young boy answered. “I’m reviewing the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. I want to know them all by heart.”

“Wouldn’t your time be better spent studying Chumash or Mishnayos?” asked the man.

Young Chaim’ke answered. “One day, I happened to overhear a conversation between two of the Czar’s soldiers.

‘Do you remember what our commander instructed us to do during the military mission we’ll be carrying out tomorrow?’ the first soldier asked his comrade.

“Of course,” replied the second soldier. “Every evening, I review all of the commander’s orders. A good soldier must know all the military commands by heart. If even one soldier doesn’t bother reviewing the military orders and makes a mistake on the battlefield, this can cause all the soldiers to lose the battle!”

“When I heard that conversation,” concluded young Chaim’ke, as he spoke to the questioner, “I thought to myself that we Yidden are soldiers in the army of Hashem! Our ‘military commands’ are the mitzvos that Hashem has given us and commanded us to obey. Since I want to be considered a good soldier in Hashem’s army, for that reason, I constantly review all the mitzvos until I know them by heart!”

The Sefer of Vayikrah is all about avodah, doing the service of Hashem through offering sacrifices. In today’s day and age, many of us don’t fully comprehend or even appreciate this service. However, we still have our own ways to serve Hashem which take the place of our korbanos!

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.

Sing it for Me

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Yair Yisraeli did not have an easy childhood. When he was just a little baby, his father passed away and a few years later, his mother also died. Raised through the kindness of others, he never forgot the importance of being sensitive to those in need.

Rav Yair grew into an exceptional person, a rosh yeshivah of Tiferes Yisrael Yeshivah in Rishon LeZion and a baal chesed extraordinaire. Rav Yair was beloved by one and all. For many years, he influenced thousands of talmidim, who cherished their rebbi and kept a connection with him long after they left his tutelage.

Additionally, many sought out Rav Yair when checking into medical references. He was well connected and informed. Just to give you an inkling into what type of person Rav Yair was...

Attended a Cello Recital

On one occasion, he attended a cello recital for a little boy. It seemed strange that a rosh yeshivah would show up to a musical performance. When someone asked him why he had come, he admitted that he didn't know the family, but he knew the boy was a yasom and the mother an almanah. "Since there was no father to attend, I thought it would be nice if I would go and then compliment the boy on his talent. The mother was so happy I came."

At the end of his life, Rav Yair was very sick, confined to a bed in Maayani Hayeshua Medical Center. During those days, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, who felt extremely close to Rav Yair and valued his relationship, visited him. Yet, though his family knew how special Rav Yair was, nothing could prepare them for the greatness they were to witness in the final few days of his life.

The doctors informed the family that the situation was dire, and they themselves could see that Rav Yair was slowly leaving them. During that time, his family and close talmidim stood around his bed. He didn't ask for much; there wasn't much they could do for him.

The Illness Had Taken its Toll

Although he had been a luminous figure, with an unbridled joy, the illness had taken its toll. Rav Yair had little strength or energy left. When a group of singers made their rounds in the hospital to cheer up the patients, they stopped in Rav Yair's room and asked if he had any requests.

At first, he graciously declined. Then, out of the blue, he seemed to change his mind. He cleared his throat and motioned that he had a request — but it was an unusual one. Rav Yair wanted the choir members to sing a song: a Russian song.

Now this was very strange. Either there was something about Rav Yair's childhood his family and talmidim were unaware of, or his mind was slipping. However, when he repeated his request, the singers did their best to accommodate him. A few of them knew a Russian folk song and they began singing it to the best of their ability.

Rav Yair smiled; he appeared so happy that they were fulfilling his request. When they finished, he asked for another one and they duly cooperated. When they finished that song, he requested one more. With each song the singers sang, the situation seemed more and more bizarre. But soon everyone would understand.

As soon as they finished the third and final song, Rav Yair leaned over. Next to his bed was a curtain. He pulled it away slightly and began conversing with the

The Sergeant's Uniform

The Dubno Magid would often relate the following parable: After receiving his promotion to captain, a young sergeant was given his new uniform. He was strictly warned by his appointing general. "Officer, this uniform is your badge of honor. Wear it with pride, and never remove it in public! Remember, you represent the king's elite forces, and your life is now devoted to enhance the honor of his kingdom."

Not long after his commission some seamen in a public park chided the young officer. "We hear you have a large tattoo across your chest reading "I miss my Mom." The young officer was enraged at this humiliating claim, and disputed it vehemently. He was tempted to strip to the waist, but remembered the stern warning not to remove his coat. Suddenly one of the sailors declared, "we will contribute 500 golden pieces to the King's treasury if you don't have the tattoo — but only if you prove it now!"

In a patriotic move that the sergeant felt would surely bring pleasure to the commander-in-chief, he bared his chest, proved his point and collected the 500 gold coins. He ran to the general with the money and expected a commendation. Unfortunately, a shower of abuse greeted the neophyte officer. "You fool! I just lost a fortune because of your stupidity. I bet the Navy admiral 2,500 gold pieces that not one of my soldiers would ever remove their uniforms publicly! "

Reprinted from the Parshat Shemini 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Tempting Non-Kosher Dish in the Tel Aviv Restaurant

There is a story in Rabbi Nachman's book Incredible! about a man named Joe Wallis. Joe was on his way home from work when he stopped by The Elephant Steakhouse, an unkosher restaurant in Tel Aviv, to get take-out for his wife and children. He could hear the sizzle of grilling meat and frying onions. He looked up at the pictures of food displayed above the counter, "Pork in a pita," he thought. "The kids are going to love it."

He waited in line to place his order, and as he stood surrounded by laughing people, he began daydreaming. The steakhouse slowly faded while a story he heard

when he was a young child popped into Joe's head. It was a story about his mother's father, Rav Winkler.

When the Nazis came to Hungary and took the family away, his grandfather was sent to a labor camp instead of Auschwitz. The Rav was condemned to backbreaking work, terrible abuse, and starvation. Although almost everyone around him ate whatever they could lay their malnourished hands on, Joe's grandfather never defiled his mouth with non-kosher food.

Forced Rav Winkler into the Circle's Center

Time passed, and the inmates were gathered in a circle when the SS officer in charge began to speak. "Germany has lost the war," he said. "The Russians will be here momentarily. You are about to become free men again. You will be reunited with your wives and children if they're still alive. But before you leave, we have one final test before we unlock the gates. We've heard your Rabbiner Winkler is a man of principle. We need to find out just how strong-willed he is." The Nazi grabbed Rav Winkler and forcibly maneuvered him to the circle's center.

"Rabbiner," the Nazi addressed his prisoner, "You want to go home like everybody else, don't you?" The Nazi motioned to one of the officers, who walked over carrying a plate with a solitary piece of pork. "Rabbiner, you'll be freed when you take a bite of this pork. You'll walk through the gates and go home. Otherwise, you will be killed in this camp. The choice is yours. One bite is all it takes." No one breathed as they waited. One bite of pork suddenly equaled life. What would the Rav do? "I will not eat this pork," he said. The German shot Joe's grandfather, and he crumpled to the ground, the final Jew to perish at that camp.

Something Changed in His Heart

Joe came back to himself. "What on earth am I doing here, waiting to purchase meat my grandfather would rather die than eat? And I'm feeding my wife and children this food when I have the means to buy any food?" Joe stood in the middle of that busy, cheerful, unkosher restaurant, unaware of anything but the incredible argument within him. On that humid summer evening, something changed in his heart, and Joe Wallis walked out of The Elephant Steakhouse with empty hands.

Joe, now Rabbi Yossi Wallis, became CEO of Arachim, the ultra-successful global kiruv organization. Rabbi Wallis has touched and transformed the lives of tens of thousands of Jews and has developed personal, warm relationships with many of our most outstanding Torah leaders, all because of the unexpected reminder of his Torah heritage while waiting in a restaurant for his unkosher sandwich.

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

The Horse Thief

By Hillel Baron



Art by Rivka Korf Studio

*A thief, at the mouth of the tunnel, calls to G-d in prayer.
Variant text of Talmud Berachot 63a.*

It was already late at night and most people in the town of Mezerich were fast asleep when the famed Maggid of Mezerich, the town’s spiritual leader, strode into the study hall and gathered his students.

“Come, let us say Psalms,” he told them. “There is a Jew in grave danger now who needs our prayers.”

After some time, he said, “This Jew has resolved to mend his ways and return to G-d. Let us help him fulfill his resolution by praying for him.”

In time, the Maggid returned to his chambers and the matter was soon forgotten.

A while later, one of the students who had been present that night ended up in a distant town and recognized one of the poor wayfarers in the synagogue as someone who once lived in his Mezerich.

“What are you doing here and why did you leave our village?” he asked him.

“I’ll tell you my story,” answered the vagrant. “As you know, from a young age I rebelled against the moral and religious teachings I had been brought up with.

“One thing led to another and I was soon stealing horses for a living. I would steal the best horses at night and hustle them over to nearby towns where I would quickly sell them at bargain prices

“Before long, I became the best of all the horse thieves. Once I set my eyes on a horse it was only a matter of time until it was in my hands.

A Magnificent Pair of Horses

“When I came to a certain village, I saw a magnificent pair of horses pulling a farmer’s cart. ‘Say goodbye to your horses!’ I said in my mind to the farmer. ‘Tomorrow they will be mine.’

“That night, I made my way into the farmer’s barn and started to take the horses. Suddenly the unexpected happened: One of the farm hands sleeping above the barn woke up from the noise and called for help.

“I started praying like I never prayed before. I thought to myself: ‘Here I am, acting in such a terrible way and asking G-d to help me? Why should He want to help a thief like me?’ Then and there I resolved to turn over a new leaf and change my life for the better if only I would be saved from this predicament. Suddenly, I noticed some clothes scrunched up in the barn and I had an idea. I quickly stuffed the clothing with straw until it looked like a person, put it on the back of one of the horses and sent it running out of the barn. Everyone gave chase and I was able to escape.

Hoping that G-d will Forgive Him

“So now you see that I am fulfilling my promise to return to G-d. I can never repay all that I have taken, for the victims of my crimes are many and I do not know who they are. So, I live the life of a poor wayfarer, going from one synagogue to the next and living off the kindness of strangers, hoping that G-d will forgive me.”

With a little thought, the student realized that the dramatic events in the barn had taken place the very night he and his fellow students had been reciting Psalms in the study hall with the Maggid of Mezerich.

Do we truly realize the power of saying Tehillim (Psalms)? We may not always realize who is being helped, but it surely has an effect.

Translated and adapted from Sipurei Mofet Hamaggid Mimezerich, pg. 53.

Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org magazine.