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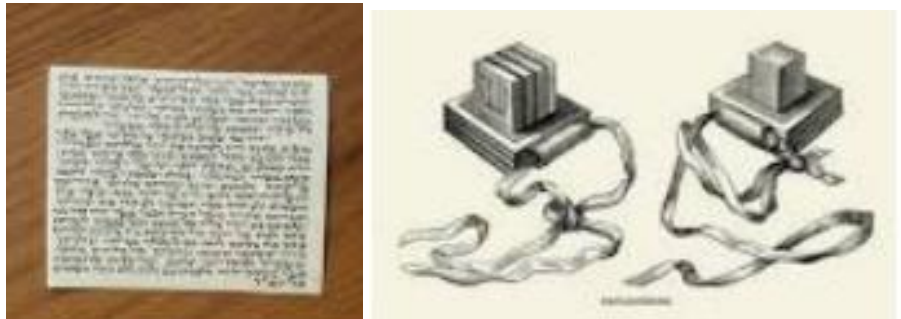
Story #1288

A Walking Miracle

By Arele Karnevsky

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

editor@ascentofsafed.com



When I was a baby, my family discovered that my legs were bow-legged (curved). My mother took me to a specialist. He said not to worry, for I would eventually grow out of it.

I didn't.

My mother was very concerned about my medical situation. She brought me to the Hospital for Joint Diseases to see what they could do for me. They told my mother that I would have to wear braces on my legs to straighten them. We kept visiting the hospital for regular check-ups.

Once, my mother asked the specialist how long he thought I would need to wear braces. The doctor estimated that I would need them for at least a year. He

suggested that I come back in three weeks, when X-rays would be taken of the leg to determine how much longer I would need the braces.

A Chance to Meet the Lubavitcher Rebbe

As it turned out, the day of my scheduled X-ray appointment was the day of my brother's birthday. It was customary that the Sunday before one's birthday, one would pass before the Lubavitcher Rebbe to receive a blessing and dollar from him. My mother, my older brother and I all went before the Rebbe for dollars the Sunday before my brother's birthday and my appointment.

My mother introduced the two of us to the Rebbe and told him in Yiddish that my brother's birthday was that Thursday. The Rebbe handed my older brother two dollars, instructing him to give it to charity on the day of his birthday.

Then it was my turn to pass before the Rebbe. After that it was my mother's turn. She thought about saying something to the Rebbe about the X-rays that were to be taken on Thursday, but was too overwhelmed in the presence of the Rebbe to say anything. She decided to say nothing, instead asking my father to write a letter to the Rebbe. When her turn came the Rebbe handed her a dollar and she started to leave. But then the Rebbe handed her another dollar saying, "This is for Thursday!" My father gave in a letter with a request for the Rebbe's blessing before the Thursday's appointment.

Later, my parents received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary. He told them that the Rebbe instructed them to check their tefilin and mezuzot and to report back to the Rebbe what the sofer (scribe) had found.

Used a Different Sofer to Inspect the Mezuzot and Tefilin

My father immediately removed all the mezuzot from the doorposts and took them and his tefilin to the sofer, this time a different sofer than the one he usually used.

The sofer checked both the tefilin and the mezuzot and found three mistakes: two mistakes in the mezuzot and one in the tefilin. All the mistakes were found in the legs of each of the problematic letters.

One had a hole in the foot of the letter and the ink was coming through the other side of the parchment. This indicated that the mezuzah was invalid from the moment it was originally written. It was now as obvious to us as a ringing bell that the Rebbe's advice to check tefilin and *mezuzot* was divinely inspired.

The other two letters were found to have cracks in them.

The invalid mezuzot were replaced, in fact, my grandmother went out and bought ten of the best-quality mezuzot from Israel as a gift for the family.

That Thursday I went to the hospital. My entire family was very excited about what might happen. Even my father, who was not always able to accompany me to my regular hospital check-ups, came along to see what miracles lay in store.

The doctors took me into the X-ray room and took the required X-rays of my legs. The doctor soon came out of the room completely shocked, his eyes wide in disbelief.

"How long has your son been wearing these leg-braces?" he asked.

"Oh, about a few months," my parents answered.

"I looked at your son's previous X-rays," the doctor continued. "They show your son's legs to be curved. For some inexplicable reason, the new X-rays show his legs to be totally straight, just perfect! Usually a case such as your son's would need surgery or possible years of wearing these leg-braces. Your son is completely healed."

The leg-braces are still in my house. They are there to remind my family and me of the great miracle. I am forever grateful to the Rebbe for his blessing.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Geulah (#67)

Connection: The mitzvahs of tefilin and mezuzah are mentioned both in last week's and this week's Torah reading. These four verses are incorporated into the Shma Yisrael prayer.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Eikev 5782 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*

# The Tempting Offer

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

The *Sefer Taryag* – *Toras Chaim* recounts the following:

The family of R' Shimon, a survivor of the Holocaust, had been wealthy artisans working with gold and silver. After the war, R' Shimon came to Eretz Yisrael, and, with no other means of support, became a shoemaker. However, his income was meager and he had difficulty supporting his growing family. If circumstances did not improve, he would be forced to leave Eretz Yisrael to find another means of earning a livelihood.

One day a cleric entered the shop to offer R' Shimon a lucrative commission crafting various religious objects and sacred vessels for his institution. R' Shimon knew that he could not consider such a request and wanted to refuse instantly. However, he found it difficult to do so and asked the cleric to return the next day.

After all, a generous source of income had finally come his way and he had many people to sustain. He prayed that he would be able to do the right thing.

A few minutes later, R' Shimon went to the back of the shop, where his father-in-law was sitting and learning the Torah portion of the week. R' Shimon related the entire conversation and the dilemma he faced. "I know it is something I should never do," he said, "but how can I turn down this financial boon for our family?"

His father-in-law pointed to the page he was studying from the weekly Torah portion (*Shemos* 20:20), "... gods of silver and gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves ..." and commented, "You know we are forbidden to even derive any benefit whatsoever from them."

### **The Divine Providence Guidance**

R' Shimon's face instantly broke out in a great smile. He had, of course, instinctively known what was the right thing to do, but he was heartened by the Divine Providence that had guided his father-in-law to be learning those exact words.

When the cleric returned to R' Shimon the next day, he was regretfully informed by R' Shimon that he would be unable to fulfill his order. The cleric was disappointed, but R' Shimon remained steadfast in his refusal.

Late that afternoon, a well-to-do American entered R' Shimon's shoe repair shop. He explained that he was seeking an expert silversmith to craft *tashmishei kedusha*, such as menorahs, candelabras, *atzei chaim* (Torah rollers), and the like, and R' Shimon had been highly recommended.

R' Shimon simply could not believe the turn of events he had merited. Hashem had obviously generously rewarded him for withstanding the test, and he now had an opportunity to earn a livelihood in a legitimate way. "It would be a great honor for me to accept the assignment," exclaimed R' Shimon.

*Reprinted from the August 11, 2022 website of The Jewish Press.*

# **And You Shall Teach Your Child**

A chasid once came to Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Belz, with the complaint that his sons have no cheishek, desire, to learn, even though he hired a melamed, special teacher/tutor, to learn with them. The Rebbe replied that if the Torah exhorted a father to learn with his sons, using the pasuk, V'sheenantam l'vanecha, it is an

indication that it is within a father's ability to teach his sons (or see to it that his sons learn). Hashem does not expect us to do what is beyond our ability.

"Let me ask you," the Rebbe countered. "Do you learn? Do you set aside time every day for Torah study?"

The man began to hem and haw, offering any of a number of excuses for not learning. The Rebbe responded emphatically, "If your sons would see you learning every day, if they would see that you value Torah study, they, too, would learn. Since you do not learn, however, how can you expect them to have a desire to learn Torah?"

The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, was asked by a chasid whose son had just been bar mitzvah, what he should do to educate his son in the derech haTorah, in the Torah way, to grow up ethically, morally and spiritually correct. He responded "If you will act appropriately and follow in the ways of the tzadikim, righteous, your son will emulate you and grow up to be a source of nachas."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5782 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum's Peninim on the Torah.*

## Worshipping the Dust of One's Feet



R' Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam zt'l, known to his followers as R' Chatzkele Shinever, asked his students: "When Avraham Avinu saw the three angels coming to his tent, he thought they were Arab merchants who worshiped the dust on their feet, so he offered them water to wash off this dust outside. What sort of unusual "god" was this, to worship the dust on their feet?"

The students had no answer, so R' Chatzkele explained: "It was not typical idolatry, praying to an inanimate object. Rather, these men believed in themselves. They were convinced that one's success is determined by how hard he workshow many miles he walks - hence the "dust on their feet." Such a belief is heresy!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5782 email of Rabbi Jonathan Gewirtz's Migdal Ohr.*

# Why Young Rav Akiva Eiger Couldn't Answer the Questions on the Gemara



Rav Akiva Eiger, zt"l, became known as a great genius at a very young age. By the time he was fifteen years old, he was said to have an extraordinary command of Shas and Poskim.

A wealthy man, who was also a Talmid Chacham, heard about this young genius, and he thought Rav Akiva would make a good husband for his daughter.

Accompanied by two other Talmidei Chachamim, he set off to meet the young Rav Akiva, and see if the reports about his genius were true. When they met with him, the wealthy man and his companions began discussing a complicated Sugya in Shas.

Young Rav Akiva Eiger listened carefully, but added nothing to the conversation. He sat in complete silence, as if he were having trouble following what the men were discussing.

Baffled, the men left and set off for home. They wondered, "Is this what people call a genius? How come we didn't see any signs of even ordinary intelligence?" they asked each other.

After their guests had left, Rav Akiva's father turned to him and asked, "What happened? Why didn't

you participate in the conversation? Didn't you understand what they were talking about?"

Rav Akiva replied, "I knew you must be wondering about my behavior. I couldn't offer any answers to their didn't want to point out their mistakes and embarrass them.

"I couldn't answer their questions, because they weren't really questions at all, so I chose to remain silent."

Rav Akiva's father then said, "But now the father of the girl will no longer want to take you as a Chasan for his daughter."

Rav Akiva responded, "It is better that the Shidduch come to nothing, than to be guilty of embarrassing another person!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vaeschanan 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'tefilah.*

## The Story of Rebbe Elazar ben Dordava

The Gemara in Avodah Zara (17a) relates an amazing story about an individual named Rebbe Elazar ben Dordaya, who was involved with terrible Aveiros his entire life.

One time someone said to him as she breathed out a breath of air, "Just as this breath will not return to its place, so will Elazar ben Dordaya never be received in Teshuvah."

This statement deeply shocked Elazar ben Dordaya, and he went and sat between two hills and mountains and exclaimed, "Hills and mountains! Will you Daven and plead for mercy on my behalf, so that my Teshuvah will be accepted?"

The hills and mountains replied, "Before we Daven for mercy for you, we must Daven for mercy on our own behalf, as the Pasuk says (Yeshayahu 54:10), 'The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed.'"

He then said, "Heaven and earth! Daven for mercy for me!" But they too replied, "Before we Daven for you, we must Daven for ourselves, because the Pasuk says (Yeshayahu 51:6), 'If the heavens would melt away like smoke, and the earth should wear out like a garment.'"

Elazar then cried out, “Sun and moon! Will you Daven and plead for mercy on my behalf?” But the sun and moon answered, “We must Daven for ourselves, for the Pasuk says (Yeshayahu 24:23), ‘The moon will be ashamed, and the sun will be embarrassed.’”

He exclaimed, “Stars and constellations! Daven for mercy for me!” But they said, “We must Daven for ourselves, because the Pasuk says (Yeshayahu 34:4), ‘All the hosts of heaven will fade away.’”

Elazar ben Dordaya then said, “Clearly, the matter depends only on me! He placed his head between his knees, he cried loudly until his soul left his body. A Bas Kol emerged and was heard proclaiming, “Rebbi Elazar ben Dordaya is destined for life in Olam Haba!”

When Rebbi Yehuda HaNasi heard this story of Elazar ben Dordaya, he wept and said, “Some people acquire their share in Olam Haba only after many years of hard work, and some people can acquire their share in just one moment!”

Rebbi Yehuda HaNasi further said, “Not only are Baalei Teshuvah accepted in Shamayim, but they are even called ‘Rebbi!’” Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, comments (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah I, 135) that the title of “Rebbi”, given here, was given after Elazar ben Dordaya passed away, and it was never enjoyed during his life.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vaeschanan 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’tefilah.*

## Getting Back Those “Shemittah” Apples

The following story was told [by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman] in Torah Wellsprings. During the last *shemittah* year, an Israeli family’s non-Jewish housekeeper one day told them that she was going back to her home in Romania.

The mother of the Israeli family gave her some apples to take with her on her trip. When her husband came home and heard that his wife gave the goya some apples, he said, “But those were *shemittah* apples, and it is forbidden to give fruits of *shemittah* to non-Jews. Furthermore, it is forbidden to take fruits of *shemittah* out of *Eretz Yisrael*!”

He thought about whether it would make sense to chase the housekeeper to retrieve the apples, and he decided to take extra care with this *mitzvah*, so he got into the car and drove to the airport to get the fruit back.



The housekeeper saw her employer approaching her at the airport, and she quickly raised her hands. With fear in her eyes, she said, “Fine!! You caught me! I will give everything back. But please, I beg you, don't report me to the police!” As she handed him a velvet bag, the man realized she was not talking about apples. Before leaving her employer's home, the housekeeper had emptied out his wife's jewelry cabinet to bring back with her to Romania. [He made a point of also demanding the return of those “shemittah” apples.]

We learn from this story that one earns a lot when he is cautious with *mitzvot*. The man was careful with the laws of *shemittah*, and due to his caution, he got the stolen jewelry back. We only gain from keeping the Torah. Sometimes we think abiding by Torah and *mitzvot* is bad for us because it prevents us from enjoying life to its fullest extent, but in so many ways, life is better and full of *berachot* and *mazal* when we keep the Torah.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Ekev 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

## Judging Favorably #197

# The Careless Caterer

By Yehudis Samet

I was on my way to shul Erev Shabbos, just before sunset. As I turned the corner, I saw a car pull into a driveway. A man jumped out and dashed for the door. It was Leib Siegel, the shul's caterer.

It's not that I don't understand. I do understand. Don't you think it's hard for me too? The scene is only too familiar. Friday afternoon. Just one more call – one more client – one more sale. Then you miss the train, or the traffic is so heavy that you slide into home base moments before Shabbos, jump into the shower, throw on your clothes and race to shul.

That's what business can do to a person, unless you care enough about Shabbos to set limits. I'm not saying he was desecrating Shabbos. But is that the way to bring in Shabbos? If he's willing to take the chance and cut it so close for an extra buck, wouldn't he be as likely to compromise on kashrus if it were a matter of losing money?

I started to think of all the simchos I ate at that he had catered. I felt this was information that the shul board of directors should have. Let them decide what to do. It was with these thoughts that I walked into shul.

After Maariv, a crowd started gathering around Tuvia Leifer, who was talking a mile a minute. I walked over, and from the bits of information I picked up, I understood that right before Shabbos there had been an emergency in the house next to the Leifers.

A child was choking. They called Hatzoloh and in minutes help arrived. Tuvia had been there, and now, to the approval of his audience (me included) he was describing how our own Leib Siegel had performed so heroically. As the rest of us prepare leisurely for Shabbos, Leib Siegel and others like him are called upon to leave their families and their preparations in order to save a life.

They are part of that dedicated team of Hatzoloh workers who are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, some in ambulances, some in private cars, all without fanfare and without signs. (The Other Side of the Story)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5782 email of The Weekly Vort.*

# I Want to Cry

**By Fradl Adams**

Mrs. Rivkie Pickholtz dropped off her daughter at Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov one morning, grief-stricken at the petirah of her husband's grandmother. The news was still raw and fresh; it had happened earlier that same morning. She kept her emotions in check as Morah Murik approached her, knowing that she was a good friend of this grandmother, and Rivkie certainly didn't want to be the bearer of bad news.

Morah Murik didn't give her much choice, though. "How is your grandmother?" she asked immediately, knowing that her friend had been hospitalized and was very frail and sickly.

Rivkie stammered, unable to get the words out, delaying the inevitable for just a few more seconds. Finally, she managed to convey the news. "Unfortunately, my grandmother passed away this morning."

Morah Murik blanched. She leaned heavily against the wall and closed her eyes, silent for a moment. She then opened them, and with a steely strength reflected in them looked directly at her former talmidah, now a parent, and said, "Rivkala, really I want to cry right now, but I have a lot of talmidos who are waiting for me and I can't indulge in my own feelings right now, but as soon as I'm able to be alone, then I can. That is what we need to learn how to do. Put others before ourselves." With a heartfelt hug, she squared her shoulders and strode off to greet her waiting students.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "One Morah in Uniform: Rebbetzin Sara Murik" by Fradl Adams.*