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From Decades Before

By Rabbi David Ashear



Rabbi Yitzchak Scheiner

The Midrash tells us (Bereishis Rabbah 28:10) that since the creation of the world, Hashem has been involved with making shidduchim. This does not merely mean that when it is time for a couple to marry, Hashem brings them together. Rather, beginning decades earlier, Hashem leads each person to the circumstances they need to be in to eventually find and marry their zivug.

Rav Yitzchak Scheiner, the late rosh yeshivah of the Kaminetz Yeshivah in Yerushalayim, grew up in Pittsburgh at a time when there were no yeshivos or talmud Torahs in the vicinity. His parents were religious, but having no other choice they sent him to public school. After eight years of elementary school, he went on

to a public high school called Peabody High. After graduating from there, he was accepted to the University of Pittsburgh, where he planned to major in mathematics. He was very good at math and Latin and his teachers told him he would become a scholar in those subjects.

As can be seen in hindsight, one potential hindrance to this plan was that forty days before his future wife was born, a Heavenly voice rang out, saying: “Esther Leah bas Rav Moshe (the granddaughter of the famed rosh yeshivah Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz), is going to marry Yitzchak Aryeh ben Reb Dov.”

Growing Up in Pittsburgh – a Torah Learning Wilderness

At that time, Rav Scheiner was a three-year-old boy growing up in Pittsburgh with no Torah learning available, while his wife was born in the great Torah center of Vilna. Yitzchak Aryeh would not know much about Gemara for the first sixteen years of his life, but he was destined to marry a girl from the family of the gadol hador, the author of the Bircas Shmuel, a sefer used in every yeshivah in the world. Not to mention that they lived almost 6,000 miles from each other.

How did Hashem arrange such a marriage? The summer after Rav Scheiner graduated from high school, Rav Avraham Bender went to Pittsburgh to solicit funds for a yeshivah. He had never visited the East End neighborhood where the Scheiners lived, but on this occasion, Hashem sent him there. Since the Scheiner family was one of the few that kept kosher, Rav Bender stayed at their house.

While making small talk one day, he discovered that young Yitzchak was planning to attend the University of Pittsburgh. “Why aren’t you sending your son to New York to learn in yeshivah?” he asked the boy’s parents, who did not know that there were yeshivos at that time in New York. They agreed to send him there, and he went.

Meeting New People who Encouraged Him to Attend Torah Vodaas

The following summer, Yitzchak learned in a camp in the Catskill mountains called Camp Mesivta, the only Orthodox Jewish learning camp that existed at the time. (He had developed a bad cough and it was recommended that he go there to breathe the fresh mountain air.) It was there that he met new people who ended up bringing him to Yeshiva Torah Vodaas, where he studied for years under the great rosh yeshivah Rav Shlomo Heiman, and then under Rav Reuven Grozovsky.

Rav Grozovsky had married the daughter of Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz and lived in Vilna. Later, he moved with his father-in-law to Kaminetz and learned in the yeshivah there called Knesses Beis Yitzchak. During World War II, Rav Grozovsky escaped Europe and eventually found his way to New York and Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. There, he suggested his niece, a granddaughter of Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, as a shidduch for his student, Rav Yitzchak Scheiner.

That is the amazing story of how Rav Yitzchak Scheiner and his rebbetzin came together! These are merely some details of how Hashem made one shidduch. The same is true in millions of other people's lives. Hashem is the mezaveig zivugim. He matches up people from different backgrounds, from different parts of the world, after years and years of advance planning.

Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5782 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book "Living Emunah on Shidduchim" by Rabbi David Ashear.

The Baal Tefillah with The "Grating" Voice

A great Jewish chazzan once visited Amsterdam and davened in a certain shul on Shabbos morning. He heard the baal tefillah davening very loud, skipping words, and singing in a grating voice that was completely off tune.

The Chazan was Terribly Upset

The chazzan was upset, as he assumed that this baal tefillah probably paid his way to receiving the honor of serving as baal tefillah. Maybe the shul let him have his way and serve as baal tefillah, only because he gave a few dollars to the shul's coffers.

The chazzan was so infuriated that the davening was sold to the highest bidder, that he went into a side room and preferred to daven alone. However, he returned to hear kri'as haTorah. As the chazzan went over to kiss the Torah, he saw that the baal tefillah was walking, holding the Torah, and two people were supporting his arms.

The chazzan asked someone why he needed help. The person told the chazzan that this baal tefillah used to be the one who led the davening in the great shul in Lodz, Poland, prior to WWII. This man used to lead a choir of 40 children in Lodz. When the war broke out, this baal tefillah and the 40 children in his choir were taken together to Auschwitz, where he remained with them until the children were murdered in the gas chambers.

Forced to Entertain the Cursed Nazis

This baal tefillah of Lodz was kept alive, and was forced to entertain the Nazis y"ts with his powerful and melodious voice. He was tortured, blinded and his vocal

chords suffered damage. After the war, he settled in Amsterdam. When the people in the shul realized who he was, they begged him to serve as baal tefillah.

He kept refusing, saying that his vocal chords were damaged, and besides, he was too broken and dispirited to lead the davening. He finally acquiesced, and this Shabbos – when the chazzan was visiting the shul – was the first time the baal tefillah agreed to lead the tefillos.

The visiting chazzan felt deeply ashamed. His entire perspective took a paradigm shift. The chazzan went over to kiss the Torah, and to kiss the chazzan as well.

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

Toras Avigdor

The Mayor's Shabbos Speech

By Aharon Spetner

The Sefer Torah was put away, the curtain of the Aron Kodesh was pulled closed, and Rabbi Greenblatt stepped to the amud to give his weekly Shabbos morning droshah at the Agudas Yisroel of St. Louis shul. But before he could begin, two policemen walked into the shul.

“Is everything okay, officers?” the Rov asked, concerned.

“Everything is just fine, Rabbi!” rang out a familiar voice, as Mayor McGillicuddy squeezed between the two policemen and made his way to the front of the shul. “It’s me, your beloved mayor!”

Everyone, including the Rov, appeared to be frozen in shock. What on earth was the mayor doing, bursting into shul in the middle of Shabbos davening?

“Thank you, thank you, you don’t have to clap,” the mayor said, even though nobody had clapped. “I know this is your Sabbath and that it’s an important day for all of you people, but I came to speak to you about something that’s even more important.”

A few gasps filled the shul. Something more important than Shabbos?

Everyone Just Stared in Shock at the Mayor

“Did you know that we live on a planet?” Mayor McGillicuddy paused, as if waiting for an answer, but everyone just stared at him.

“And did you know that the sun is actually a star? And there are more than billions and trillions of stars with planets in our universe. We are just a tiny insignificant speck.”

Everyone looked around uncomfortably. Did the mayor interrupt davening to give an apikorsus science lesson?

“Every second, 173 trillion kilowatts of energy from the sun hit the earth. That is seven times more energy than the entire planet uses every day! Don’t you see the waste of energy?”



Illustration by Miri Weinreb

Rabbi Greenblatt cleared his throat. He didn’t want to be rude to the mayor, but he had a droshah to give and people had hot cholents waiting for them at home. “Anyway,” Mayor McGillicuddy continued. “I recently became concerned about all of the energy we are receiving from the sun that is just going to waste. I mean, how much energy does the sun have already? We keep taking from it and we’re going to use it up and then we won’t have a sun to melt the snow or to keep the beaches warm.

And this is not to mention all of the light coming from other stars in our galaxy. If we don't act now, we will lose them too!"

The mayor held up a large poster he was holding.

The Mayor's Special "Space Mirror" Project

"This is why I am announcing my 'space mirror' project. I intend to launch giant mirrors into space to reflect sunlight back into the sun and to the other stars which shine light towards the earth. This is much more important than anything else. There is a giant universe out there, and I need your help to save it!"

The Rov finally spoke up.

"Mr. Mayor, "I'm not sure how we can help you in the middle of our Sabbath prayers."

"Oh, I'm about to leave. I just want everyone to take down the phone number to my space mirror hotline so everyone can donate generously after you finish praying."

"Mr. Mayor, we don't write on our Sabbath, nor do we use phones. Maybe you should have come on a different day", Rabbi Greenblatt said, walking back to the amud.

A Stunned Mayor McGillicuddy

Mayor McGillicuddy looked stunned. "What? No phones? Why didn't anyone tell me? I gotta run. Have a happy Sabbath, everyone!" And with that, he rushed out the door, followed by the policemen.

As the door closed behind them, the Rov turned to the kehillah.

"I'm sorry about that interruption," he began. "This is definitely not the way I intended for our davening to proceed today. And, believe it or not, I had an actual droshah prepared, not some nonsense about space mirrors."

Everyone in the shul laughed.

"But I want to point out one important thing. The mayor said that the sun and the stars of the universe are more important than anything else here on earth, and that we are insignificant in comparison.

"Now I can't speak for silly politicians, but as Yidden we have to know that we are more important than anything else that Hashem created! More than the sun, the moon, and all of the gazillions of stars! Moshe Rabbeinu says Parshah Eikev, that Hashem only loved the Avos out of everyone and everything else in the world, and he chose us, their children, over all of the other nations."

Every Yid is of the Utmost Importance in this World

"That means you, Rabbi Bromberg, and you, Mr. Klein, and everyone else in this shul, and all of the Yidden around the world. We are what is important, and

everything else in the universe combined doesn't even come close to the value of a single Yid!"

And with that, the Rov returned to his seat and everyone stood up for Mussaf.
Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

"Behold to Hashem belong the heavens and all the galaxies, the earth and ALL that is in it, but only in your Avos did Hashem delight and He chose their children after them; YOU today."

Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5783 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l.

The Value of Just Reciting One Amein or Beracha

By Rabbi Dov Keilson

A person related that at the age of eighty-six, his mother's health began to decline; her sight and hearing diminished greatly, and she suffered many yissurim. She fell into a depression and lost the will to live.

This person went to his rebbi, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, and asked him what to say to try to strengthen his mother. Rav Yaakov replied that when Yaakov Avinu was fighting the malach, the malach told Yaakov to release him, for it was his time to sing to Hashem (Bereishis 32:25- 27).

Rav Yaakov explained that we do not know exactly what is needed to sustain a malach, yet we know that the angels were formed during the six days of creation. And thus, for this one day that the malach would sing to Hashem, it was worthwhile for Hashem to sustain him for 2,000 years!

Said Rav Yaakov, "You must therefore share with your mother that when she says one Amein, or one kappitel of Tehillim, or one berachah, it is worthwhile for Hashem to sustain her for 2,000 years!" We have no idea of the indescribable value that one moment of tefillah has to Hashem, and even one single Amein!

The talmid relates that his mother thought about these words repeatedly until she truly absorbed them; and the chizuk from Rav Yaakov sustained her for another ten years!

*Reprinted from the At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table for Parshas Eikev 5783.
Excerpted from the ArtScroll book "25th Hour" by Rabbi Dov Keilson.*

The Legendary Jewish Woman - Glueckel



A fancy portrait of Bertha Pappenheim wearing 17th-century costume in the persona of Glückel, painted by Leopold Pilichowski.

History books are replete with accounts, real or imaginary, of famous kings, politicians and soldiers, but it is rare that we are afforded a glimpse into the life of ordinary people who lived long ago. The journal of a Jewish woman named Glueckel who lived in 17th century Hamburg is a rare and wonderful treasure, from which we can gain insight into what life was really like in the distant past for a Jewish wife and mother.

The years directly preceding her birth and her early childhood were marked by chaos. The Thirty Years' War continued on, decimated Europe and created colossal upheaval throughout society. When Glueckel was only three years old, the Jews were expelled from Hamburg. They fled, and relocated to the nearby city of Altona. No sooner had they mended their torn lives, when, only seven years later, they were driven back to Hamburg by the army of Sweden.

Jewish life, however, continued in its time-honored traditions. Young Glueckel was enrolled in a cheder (Jewish school) and there she enjoyed studying

the Bible and many other parts of Torah. What emerges from her later diaries is the picture of a bright, educated woman, conversant with the topics of her day and knowledgeable of that literature written in the German dialect which would later emerge as Yiddish that she could have encountered.

Married at the Age of 14

As was the custom then, Glueckel was married at the age of 14 to Chaim, a young scholar and businessman from the small town of Hamelm. The couple spent the first year of marriage there, and Glueckel was already active, teaching the local women what she had learned in her studies.

The following year, Glueckel and Chaim moved to the port city of Hamburg, which was then one of the great centers of world trade. The young couple had a rocky start, filled with difficulties, but within several years, their business became very successful. The energetic and enterprising young couple became quite well-to-do, and they lived a satisfied, comfortable life.

Glueckel was not only a very competent household manager, but with her keen mind, she took an active interest in her husband's business. As they became more and more successful, Glueckel and Chaim rose in social status; they even developed close contacts with the various German aristocratic courts, which existed in the centuries when there was no unified central government in the region. In those unstable days, it was vitally important to sustain good relations with the rulers, for danger always threatened from the dark halls of power. Jews under attack looked to their co-religionists for helpful intercession in those perilous situations.

Married Six of Their Children with Illustrious German Jewish Families

Because of their wealth and social status, Glueckel and her husband were able to make successful matches for six of their children with the most illustrious families in German Jewish society. At the wedding of their eldest daughter, a number of members of the aristocratic Court of Brandenburg (from which later descended the German Imperial family) were in attendance.

Glueckel's account of her marriage and child-rearing days is full of adventure and describes the enormous challenges which faced Jews in those dangerous times, when exile and persecution could overtake them at a moment's notice. In 1689, when Glueckel and Chaim had been happily married for 29 years, Chaim died, leaving his wife with twelve children, eight of them unmarried.

Glueckel responded with the faith and courage that characterized her life. She assumed management of her husband's business, with all the perils that entailed, and set about raising her children alone. In her diary, she records her plans, writing that after the marriage of her last child, it was her desire to sell her business and move to

the Holy Land. There, she envisioned spending the remainder of her life helping the less fortunate.

Unfortunately, her desires were not realized. Her business suffered a decline, and she was forced to reconsider her projected plans. Glueckel married a second time. Her new husband was a wealthy businessman from Metz, a well-established Jewish community, where she set about starting a new life. Sadly, just when life might have become easier for her, her new husband's business failed. Just two years after their marriage, he lost everything, including whatever Glueckel had brought with her.

Wrote Her Famous Memoirs

Glueckel was suddenly thrust into a life totally bereft of the comforts she had always known. In the face of such obstacles, her innate buoyancy and optimism surfaced, and Glueckel remained the same faithful Jewish woman she had always been.

Her last years were devoted to recording her memoirs, which she left to us as an enduring and fascinating record of life in 17th century Germany, as well as snatches of Torah wisdom and teachings she left to her children. The diary was discovered by one of her sons, Moshe, who was a rabbi. He copied his mother's records onto parchment, thus providing us with a priceless record through which we meet a remarkable woman whose wisdom and courage enabled her to survive the calamities of life and emerge spiritually and emotionally unscathed, to serve as an inspiration to future generations.

Reprinted from the Parshat Eikev 5782 edition of L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.

The Shomer Shabbos Amusement Park Owner

A man told Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT" L: "I own a large amusement-style park in Northern Israel that is very popular with tourists, families, and school groups. Recently, I became more religious, and decided to close the park on Shabbos. I feared that losing the income from the busiest day of the week, Saturday, would hurt the business terribly. Unfortunately, my fears were realized and I am now suffering tremendous losses. Rabbi, he concluded, I do not regret accepting to keep Shabbos, but I am asking for a bracha (blessing) that I should be able to save my business."



Reb Chaim looked at him lovingly and answered with a smile on his holy face: “So it is when one does a good deed. Initially, the Yeitzer Hara fights us and tries to break our resolve. However, if you hold strong and continue keeping Shabbos, you will see that you will have tremendous bracha with your business.”

Months later, a relative of Reb Chaim visited the park with his family. The owner greeted them warmly and updated them: “When I came to the Rav, I was absorbing tremendous losses to the tune of hundreds of thousands shekalim. The temptation to reopen on Shabbos was immense, so I went to Reb Chaim for a bracha. His response pushed me to continue keeping Shabbos.

Today, my business is flourishing, with over 10,000 customers in the past few months. In fact, have jumped from 50th place to 3rd place on the list of amusement parks! I have no doubt that the credit goes to my keeping Shabbos, and to the bracha from Reb Chaim! I have also already convinced some friends to close their businesses on Shabbos!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5783 email of Torah Sweets.

The Two Wills

By Rabbi Avi Slansky



Before Mr. Reichman, known for his successful businesses and philanthropy, passed away, he drafted two wills. One will was intended, as he noted, to be read upon his passing, and the second will was to be read seven days later, at the conclusion of *shiva*.

When the family read through the contents of the first will, there were two important requests. The first asked that his children bury him in Jerusalem. The second request was that he be buried with his socks. In discovering this request and knowing that someone who passed away could not be buried with his socks, the family along with the *Chevra Kadisha* who oversaw the burial process discussed their next steps.

After a lengthy back-and-forth, it was concluded, as had been originally assumed, that Mr. Reichman would be buried without his socks. Despite his request, it did not align with Jewish law and tradition, and despite the import of carrying out the wishes of the one who passed, this request could not be due to its *halachic* implications.

Throughout the period of *shiva*, this matter became a source of quiet concern. Why, in fact, had Mr. Reichman made this request? He was certainly aware that it could not be carried out. Until the *shiva* had concluded and the family opened the second will.

The second will outlined how the various funds should be allocated amongst the family members. In addition, it noted that despite the confusing request asked of the family in the previous will, Mr. Reichman was certain that he would not be buried with socks, as per Jewish law. The reason he had requested, though, to be buried with his socks was in order to impress upon his children that even though they will be blessed with fabulous inherited wealth, there was a far more important lesson he

wanted to convey: even our socks we cannot take to the grave. The money we are blessed with is a means to help and support others. It is not intended to stir us toward jealousy or live a lavish lifestyle. Increased kindness and support and learning of Torah are the goals.

It's a lesson for life. Even our socks don't live on forever. We can't take them with us. All that does remain is the goodness and kindness we accomplish in our lifetime.

Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5783 edition of the Torahanytime.com Newsletter.

Losing a Fortune in Just “One Moment”

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l explained the pasuk (Shmuel 1, 2:7) ומעשיר מוריש ה', "Hashem impoverishes, and makes wealthy," that it can happen in a moment. In one moment, one can become wealthy, and in one moment, one can lose all his money. A

wealthy chasid heard this vort from the Chozeh but didn't believe that one could become poor or rich so quickly. On his way home, this chasid passed the home of a priest he knew, and a kelipah (impure spirit) took hold of him, and he went inside and told the priest that he wanted to convert, r'l.

The priest knew this Yid for a long time as a G-d fearing person and didn't believe that the chasid was sincerely interested in converting. "You are playing a prank on me. You will turn me into a fool. I refuse to convert you."

Insisted that He Genuinely Wanted to Convert

But the Yid insisted that he genuinely wanted to convert. The priest told him, "I will agree to your request only if you sign a document that says that if you back out of the conversion, you will give me all of your possessions as a gift."

The Yid signed the document and handed it to the priest. Immediately afterward, he regretted what he did. He couldn't understand how he had done something so foolish. He believed in Hashem and the Torah. Of course, he didn't want to convert!

He quickly left the priest's home, although he knew he would forfeit his wealth. He ran to the Chozeh and told him what occurred. He added, "It happened to me because I didn't believe the rebbe when you said that one can become poor in a moment."

The Chozeh replied, "Now go home, and you will discover that one can become wealthy in a moment, too." When he got home, the chasid heard that a fire had broken out in the priest's home, and the document he wrote was consumed in flames. He had become wealthy in a moment! Birchas HaTorah

Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5783 email of Torah Wellsprings: The Collected Torah Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

The Father's Letter



The Steipler Gaon

As a bachur, the Steipler Gaon zt'l learned in the Novardok yeshiva. Once, when he was home, a neighbor asked him, "When are you returning to the Novardok yeshiva?"

The Steipler replied that he planned to return the following day. The neighbor said, "I want to send a letter to my son (who also learned in Novardok). Can you take it to him?"

The First World War Broke Out

The Steipler took the sealed letter, but the First World War broke out, traveling was impossible, and he never returned to the yeshiva.

Eight years later, the Steipler met with the person to whom the letter was written. "Your father sent this to you eight years ago, but due to the war, I couldn't deliver it until now."

The man took the letter with awe. It was after his father's death, and now he would receive a message from his father! He felt like he was receiving a hidden צוואה, an ethical will, written by his father for him.

"Buy Me the Delicious Herring"

The letter said, "When you come home from yeshiva, remember, and don't forget to buy me the delicious herring that's available in Novardok." That was all the letter said.

The lesson: Never waste an opportunity. Had the father written a thought of Torah or yiras Shamayim, the message would have remained with his son forever. Every moment is an opportunity and a shame to waste.

Reprinted from the Parshas Nasso 5783 email of Torah Wellsprings: The Collected Torah Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.