

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS EIKEV 5783

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## The Kidnapped Orphan Boy



**Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein**

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein once said over a story. During the time of the Czars, the Russian army used to kidnap young Jewish boys and force them to become soldiers. In addition to gaining a soldier, there was also a profit motive. The kidnapping soldiers could be bribed with ransom to free the boys. After a community would redeem a child, they would be paupers, for the kidnappers knew they would get their price.

One day, another Jewish boy was kidnapped in the town of Leipzig. That was bad enough, but this boy was also an orphan, and he had no one who looked after him financially, and the community Tzedakah fund was empty.

The Rav of the community at the time was Rav Baruch Taam. He requested everyone to come to the main Shul, and he opened the Aron HaKodesh. He then took all the adornments off the Sifrei Torah, and the entire time he was crying, “Torah, Torah, you are so important and dear to us! But there is one thing the Creator of the world considers more important than you, and that is a Jewish child! We request that you, the Torah, Daven to Hashem for this Jewish boy, to save him from all misfortune!”

The cries from the Shul ripped open the Heavens, as the Rav begged forgiveness from the Torah scrolls for removing the ornaments, so that he could use them to redeem the captured boy.

### **Heavily Armed Kidnappers Were Waiting for Their Ransom**

The boy himself was present at this scene, surrounded by his heavily armed kidnappers who were waiting for their ransom. He saw the whole fuss and commotion to save him, and he cried out before the whole community, “I accept upon myself the Kingship of Hashem, and I promise to live in the halls of the Bais Medrash and learn Torah my entire life!”

The boy was then redeemed, and he went on to fulfill his promise. This orphan boy seemed like just an average child, and people didn’t expect to see greatness from him. But in fact, he grew up to become a Dayan in the Bais Din of Rav Taam, and became one of the Torah giants of that era.

Rav Zilberstein would tell this story to the children of Ramat Elchanan in Bnei Brak, and say to them with encouragement, “See the strength of a Jewish Child! See how high he can climb and grow in Torah greatness and Yiras Shamayim!”

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

## **When Not to Argue with Someone Who is Doing the Wrong Thing**

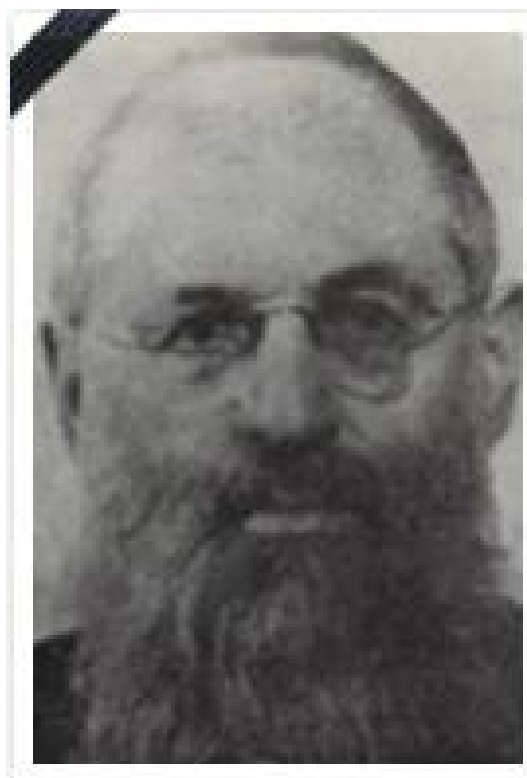
In recalling their request to send meraglim—spies to assess Eretz Yisrael beforehand, Moshe chastises B’nei Yisrael for making the request, but he conceded that “The idea was good in my eyes (1:23).” The Talmud deduces that Moshe felt it was a good idea to send meraglim, but Hashem did not. Hashem knew that sending spies would end in disaster, and He did not want them to go.

Rabbi Frand asks that if Hashem knew that the meraglim would end up poisoning the nation’s minds against Eretz Yisrael, why did He agree they could go?

Hashem could have told Moshe, “Tell them that I am G-d, I call the shots, and I said ‘NO!’”

Rabbi Chaim Mordechai “Mottel” Katz (1894-1964), the late Rosh Yeshivah of Telz in Cleveland, Ohio, takes an important lesson in chinuch from this incident. There are times that children want to do something that their parents deem inappropriate or incorrect. Our parental instincts tell us to lay down the law and prohibit them from doing what they want. We reason to ourselves that we are required to mechanech—educate our children, and sometimes this means that we have to say, “No.”

But is it always right to say no?



**Rabbi Mottel Katz, zt”l**

### **Hashem Knew the People Were Not Ready to Accept His Refusal**

We learn from the spies that there are times that we have to grant requests, even if we know that what our children want is wrong. Hashem knew that the people were not ready to accept His refusal. Had Moshe returned from Hashem with a negative response, they would have thought, “How are we supposed to go and fight against a country without sending spies? Everyone knows that you don’t fight without intelligence,” and they may have sent spies anyway.

Sometimes, notes Rabbi Katz, chinuch is all about conceding. We have to distinguish between when our children can accept the denial and when they are just too, set on doing what they intend to do to receive our “no.”

Rabbi Katz added a personal anecdote on this lesson that must have occurred in the 1940s or early ‘50s.

### **A Desire to Pray Earlier in Order to Not Miss Listening the Championship Fight on the Radio**

“One day, the boys came over to me in yeshivah and asked me to change the schedule for one night,” wrote Rabbi Katz. “They wanted to pray Arvit earlier than we regularly did. When I asked them why they wanted to daven early, they explained that a heavyweight championship bout was being fought in New York that night, and they wanted to listen to the match on the radio. If we prayed at the regular time, they would miss the fight.”

“Of course,” writes the Rabbi, “the very request was inappropriate, not to mention the questionable propriety of yeshivah students listening to a fight between two humans trained to beat each other until one of them could no longer stand up. I realized that if I refused, the boys would not understand why I did and possibly skip Arvit.

Growing up in America, they were accustomed to the finest, most respectable citizens flying in from all over the country to view these matches. They considered watching or listening to the radio broadcast of two adults pummeling each other, a perfectly normal means of recreation.”

“I decided,” concludes Rabbi Katz, “that since these boys would not begin to understand why I was refusing their request and would challenge my rejection, it would be better to allow them to pray early and listen to the match.”

Of course, there are many cases in which parents and mechanchim have to say no. But in this case, Rav Mottel learned from the best Teacher. If Hashem permitted Klal Yisrael to do something that He knew was wrong when He realized they could not accept His refusal, then the Rosh Yeshivah of Telz had to find it in himself to do the same.

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The following is a true story about Rav Shlomo Wolbe, ZT’L, a veteran expert in proper chinuch. Rav Wolbe wrote extensively about raising children and the psychology of moral education. He had a gentle and practical approach, and this story exemplifies many aspects of his parenting method.

One of his daughters had just gotten engaged, and the future in-laws were invited for a Shabbat dinner at the Wolbe home. In an atmosphere of great

purity, Rav Wolbe welcomed the new in-laws warmly, and everyone wished each other Shabbat shalom.

When his daughter's future chatan arrived, he warmly exclaimed, "Welcome to our future son-in-law!" The atmosphere could not have been more joyous and pleasant throughout the Shabbat meal. Suddenly the doorbell rang repeatedly. Everyone was astounded, and there was tension in the room. Who could be ringing the doorbell?

Rav Wolbe opened the door, and in walked his rebellious son, who had left the community and was no longer religious. He wore a t-shirt with slang, jeans, and sneakers. He wasn't wearing a kippah, and as he walked in, he threw his cell phone and car keys on the hall table.



**Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, zt"l**

### **Warmly Welcomes His Rebellious Son to the Shabbat Meal**

Rav Wolbe's response filled everyone with surprise. His voice was filled with love and happiness at seeing his son, and he greeted him like he would have the most outstanding yeshivah scholar. He said warmly, "Oh, welcome, my son. Really, what an honor that you came to join us for dinner tonight. How could we have had this very special Shabbat without you? Come, please come in; you must be hungry."

The son sat at the table next to his father, who did not express any disapproval. His voice was full of acceptance, and his message was one of unconditional love.

He was not embarrassed or ashamed of his son in any way in front of his future son-in-law and his family. He made his son feel that his father was so very proud of him.

“I see you’re looking well,” Rav Wolbe said. His son shrugged. “Yeah, I’m fine,” he said flippantly. Rav Wolbe turned to his daughter’s fiancé and said, “You should know that you have an extraordinary brother-in-law, really extraordinary. His intelligence has amazed us since he was a child. I’m certain that you’ll get along well together.” He continued praising his son in front of the others to raise his self-esteem and show his unbending love and respect. He could see right into his son’s heart that he was good and capable of great things, which is what he chose to focus on.

### **A Gesture Full of Love and Acceptance**

As they were singing Shabbat songs, Rav Wolbe reached out and laid his hand on his son’s. The gesture was full of love and acceptance and said, “No matter what, you are my son. I am very proud of you. I miss you and will always love you.” At the end of the meal, Rav Wolbe said, “Thank you for coming. Our family would never have been complete without you, and we love it so much when you join us.”

The son said, “Thank you, Dad,” took his car keys and cell phone, and left. As he reached his car, just as he was about to start the engine, he hesitated, thought about the evening, and decided to return to his father. As he entered the house, he immediately went over to his father, and they hugged each other. He told him, “Thank you for being there for me. I’ll be walking tonight, not driving.”

### **Surrounded with Much Love and Acceptance**

Ever since that evening, this “rebellious” son changed his ways to become a true man of Torah. He explained it a few years later: “Even with my profanities and provocations — he didn’t get upset, didn’t criticize me, nor did he force me to do anything I wasn’t comfortable with, like saying berachot or wearing a kippah. He surrounded me with much love and acceptance, the only thing that ultimately connected me back to Torah.” As this chinuch expert has taught us, love, rather than rebuke, pays off immensely!

May we all hesitate before rebuking another person. If we must, may we only do so after first giving positive thoughts and compliments. May we also learn to accept rebuke from others who genuinely want to help us grow. May we learn from Hashem when not to say “no,” and always accept our children with love.

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

# Who Gave the Slap?



The Sefer Nachlas Tzvi cites a story involving the Divrei Chaim, Rav Chaim Halberstam of Tzanz, zt”l, whose son, Rav Meir Nosson, zt”l, passed away at a young age. The Levayah took place on an Erev Shabbos.

That night, the Divrei Chaim came to Shul and Davened with the same warmth and enthusiasm that he had always been known for. The Chasidim could not understand how just a few hours earlier, he was crying at his son’s Levayah.

During the Rav’s Tish, when the Chasidim gathered together with the Rav to hear Divrei Torah and sing Zemiros, the Divrei Chaim explained his behavior:

“When a person walks along the street, and someone gives him a strong slap on the back, his first reaction is to turn around and see if the slap is from a friend or an enemy.

## **Enemy or Friend**

“If it is from an enemy, his reaction will be anger, and perhaps he will even retaliate in response. However, if he sees that it was his good friend that slapped him, he realizes that it is not an angry blow.”

The Divrei Chaim said, “I received a slap from Hashem. It is a difficult and painful slap, but I know that it came from Hashem, and a slap from Hashem is like getting a slap from my friend, and there can be no anger!”

This response to his tragic loss reflected a sense of Emunah that is beyond the average person. The Divrei Chaim, however, was no ordinary human being. His wife could not overcome the tragedy as easily, and she was having a difficult time.

The Divrei Chaim came over to her and said, “If you would have any idea of the spiritual satisfaction and ecstasy that takes place in Shamayim when our grandson recites Kaddish for his father, you would not be so distraught.”

These powerful words consoled the Rebbetzin, and this boy went on to become the father of the first Bobover Rebbe!

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

# Not Yet!

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



The young man appointed to walk Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, the Rav of Yerushalayim, to shul waited patiently outside the Rav's home. After a few moments, the door opened and the Rav emerged, carrying his talet and tefillin. But instead of heading down the street toward the shul, he began to climb the stairs outside his home, one step at a time until he reached the top. The Rav was already an elderly man; it would take much effort for him just to walk to shul. Why, then, was he climbing the stairs outside his home?

The scenario grew even stranger, for when Rav Yehoshua Leib reached the top of the steps, he seemed to be looking for something. No longer able to control his curiosity, the young man waited for the venerated sage to come back down and then asked him what he was looking for.

## Looking for the Third Beit Mikdash

Rav Yehoshua Leib looked directly into the young man's impressionable eyes. "You know, the first two Batei Mikdash (Temples), which were man made, had to be built during the day. But the third one will descend in a heavenly blaze - and that can happen even at night. I was just looking to see if it came down last night." And then the Rav added plaintively, "It didn't."

The stunned talmid did not move. He just stared in disbelief at his disappointed Rebbe who was already on his way to shul. He still had much for which to pray.

May it be rebuilt speedily in our days, Amen. (Touched by a Story 3)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Debarim 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*



# “Until a Hundred and Twenty”

By Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



On 27 March 2012, to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Queen, an ancient ceremony took place at Buckingham Palace. A number of institutions presented Loyal Addresses to the Queen, thanking her for her service to the nation. Among them was the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Its then President, Vivian Wineman, included in his speech the traditional Jewish blessing on such occasions. He wished her well “until a hundred and twenty.”

The Queen was amused and looked quizzically at Prince Philip. Neither of them had heard the expression before. Later the Prince asked what it meant, and we explained. A hundred and twenty is stated as the outer limit of a normal human lifetime in Genesis 6:3. The number is especially associated with Moses, about whom the Torah says:

“Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his strength undiminished.” Deut. 34:7

*Reprinted from the Parashat Debarim 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

# The Sleeping Lion

By Rabbi Elimelech Biderman



**Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**

Allow me to share with you what took place in Yerushalayim with the Pearl family on Rechov Rappaport.

Rebbetzin Pearl came home after a tiring day out of town, and she wanted to go to sleep. She waited for her children to come home from *yeshiva* at 9:30, and she went to go to sleep. Suddenly and unexpectedly, though, a woman who frequently came to their house to eat knocked on the door.

This woman was very downtrodden, and it was also difficult for the family when she came. She had many demands. “This is good, this is not good. Open the door, close it...” The family had to spend time with her, and it wasn’t easy.

This woman was now knocking on the door, and through the peephole the children saw her. Between themselves, the children decided not to open the door. The mother heard this, and got out of bed and said, “What’s the matter? We must know that whatever we do for another is really helping ourselves!”

“Aren’t you tired?” replied the children. “Don’t you want to sleep?”

The mother remained undeterred. “This woman came a long way to eat, and now she’ll return without food. We can’t let that happen. You want to help up? Come, let’s prepare some food!”

The woman ate there to her heart’s content, and spent quite a while of time with the family. As she was leaving, she wished them well and blessed them that the house should be safe, and then she went on her way.

As the mother was escorting the woman out, a young daughter came running and said, “There’s a snake in the bedroom!” The mother laughed, and tried calming her down.



“There’s no snake, it’s nothing,” replied the mother.

But the girl insisted that it’s a snake.

“How do you know what a snake looks like?”

“I saw a picture,” the daughter explained.

But the mother couldn’t understand. “How could a snake get in there! It must be a mouse!”

She sent one of the older children to go check what was going on. The child came running back, confirming, “It’s a snake!” They quickly went and shut the door tightly, and ordered an exterminator. By the time the exterminator arrived, they all saw through the window that it was indeed a long snake. And the snake was spread out across the mother’s whole bed. The exterminator entered and saw that it was a poisonous snake.

Had the mother been in bed, Hashem should have mercy what could have happened.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Matot-Masei 5783 Newsletter of TorahAnytime.com*  
Compiled and Edited by Elan Perchik.

# Friends To The End

By Shayna Gutke Poupko

I entered the hall and spotted the mother of the *kallah*, my neighbor. Zeroing in to her corner, I wished her *mazal tov* and much *nachas*. In a moment she was busy greeting new guests and accepting their *brachos*. At the table nearby was an older woman.

She was no more than four feet ten, outfitted in sensible shoes, a knitted black and white top over a black straight skirt and a light blond *sheitel* which ended in a gentle flip. Her eyes glistened as she leaned over to tell me in her soft melodic voice, “I have already passed 90. I came to Israel when I was five years old and I have lived here for eighty-five years now.”

## My Neighbor’s Mother Fascinated Me

I’m no youngster anymore, but 90 is a number to treat with respect. Especially when this woman was actively participating in the simcha of her granddaughter’s engagement. This was my neighbor’s mother, Bubby Yaffe, and she fascinated me. Different married grandchildren approached to greet the matriarch of the family. They would stand close and say, “Bubby, *mazal tov*! This is Dini (or Tova or Bracha, or Chava).” Then Bubby would proceed to ask about each of the children in their family by name and delve into particulars that were occurring in the person’s life.

I eventually surmised that Bubby’s sight was compromised but not her memory.

During a lull in the festivities, Bubby turned to me once again radiating delight. “So much *bracha*. Hashem is so good. The couple should have a wonderful life together. You know, that Hashem surrounds us with good.”

## “It is Our Choice”

Nodding in agreement I offered, “It is so true that we are showered with good. But it is our choice whether to see it or not.”

Like a bird’s wings, her hand fluttered over my arm eventually landing near my elbow. “Yes, it is up to us if we see it or not. Whether we’re happy or miserable is in how we see our lives. What do we notice? The things that surround us or the things we think we need. Our happiness or misery is up to us to choose.”

A caretaker appeared and asked if there was anything she could bring Bubby to eat or drink.

“Just my walker, please.”

As the three-wheeled apparatus was delivered Bubby positioned her hands, firmly grasping the handles and rose with dignity and determination. Maneuvering the walker toward the buffet table, she leaned over close to the food, examining the display of fruit and cakes. Purposefully she lifted a strawberry toward her and said a *bracha*, then shut her eyes as her mouth closed around the berry. My own mouth salivated as I watched Bubby enjoy the fruit. No mindless chewing on Hashem's bounty while reaching for the next piece for this woman of distinction.

As Bubby glided her three-wheeler back to her seat more of her offspring drew near to wish *mazal tov*. Once seated Bubby continued our previous conversation.

### **Lifelong Friends with Ruti Pisga**

“When I arrived in Israel, I lived in Geula. From when I can remember myself I was best friends with Ruti Pisga. Hashem sent her to make me feel welcome and part of this new country. We remained friends all through our growing up, getting married and marrying off children. She was a true friend.”

“Are you still friends?”

“She passed away a number of years ago. But I think of her a lot. The memories keep me company.

“Geula was not the same as it is now. There were so many shopkeepers that lived there. Some were religious, some not. But it was a community. We all were one. And Ruti and I would go everywhere together.”

I returned home from the engagement as the phone rang. It was my son, Yehuda.

### **“Such a Special Woman!”**

My recounting of the evening centered largely on the bubby. When I told my son who it was his response was, “Such a special woman. Such a special lady.”

“You know her?”

“I don't know her personally, but her husband was a famous *mashgiach*. She was born in Europe and was orphaned at the age of five. She was sent to live with her uncle and aunt here in Israel. They raised her as their own.

She married Rabbi Y. and they lived in Rechasim for over fifty years. He passed away about five years ago. The same week she was sitting *shiva*, a young *avreich* in another city was *niftar* at the age of 43. This elderly woman got up from her *shiva* and traveled over an hour to try and console the young widow. She wasn't thinking of her own loss but how she could help someone else. She is a very special woman.”

I had been right. She was an unusual person. I continued to recount the details of my conversation with Bubby. When I got to the point of her friend Ruti Pisga, Yehuda laughed out loud.

“What’s so funny?”

“Do you know who the other side of the *shidduch* is? It’s Ruti Pisga’s grandson! They were friends for more than eight decades and now two generations later, the two families are *mechutanim*! True friends to the end.”

*Reprinted from the Parshat Devorim website of The Jewish Press.*

# The Poor Man’s Dybbuk

By Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The Chofetz Chaim told the following amazing story. In Vilna, there lived a wealthy man, who suddenly began to be hounded by a local poor person. It got so bad that the rich individual dragged his antagonist to a *Din Torah* by Reb Chaim Volozhin.

Reb Chaim immediately realized that a Dybbuk (a malicious possessing spirit) had entered the body of the poor person, and his intent was to bother the rich man. Reb Chaim asked the Dybbuk who he was, what sin had he done to cause his soul to wander, and why was he out to get the rich man.

## The Private Teacher for the Rich Man’s Father

The Dybbuk answered, “I was a private teacher for this rich man’s father, tutoring him and his brother. One day, his father did a deal with a non-Jew and swindled 20,000 rubles from him. I signed on the deal and got a cut. Since I died, I have no peace because of this. Therefore, I decided to enter this man’s body, and pester the son of my former boss, until he will pay back the stolen money.”

Upon hearing this, the rich man jumped up and angrily cried out, “You scoundrel! As if your only sin was that you partnered with my father to rob a non-Jew?! I remember that you were barely religious and that you sinned constantly with impudence.”

The Dybbuk answered, “True. When you knew me, I was a real *rasha* (wicked person), but at the end of my life, I became a *ba’al teshuva*, repented for all my sins, and learned Torah every day for four hours...never missing a day. When I went up to Heaven, my teshuva was accepted and the Torah that I had learned saved me. All was forgiven, except for the money that I had stolen. That will not be wiped clean until the money is returned!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Devorim 5783 email of Torah Sweets.*