

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS CHUKAS 5782

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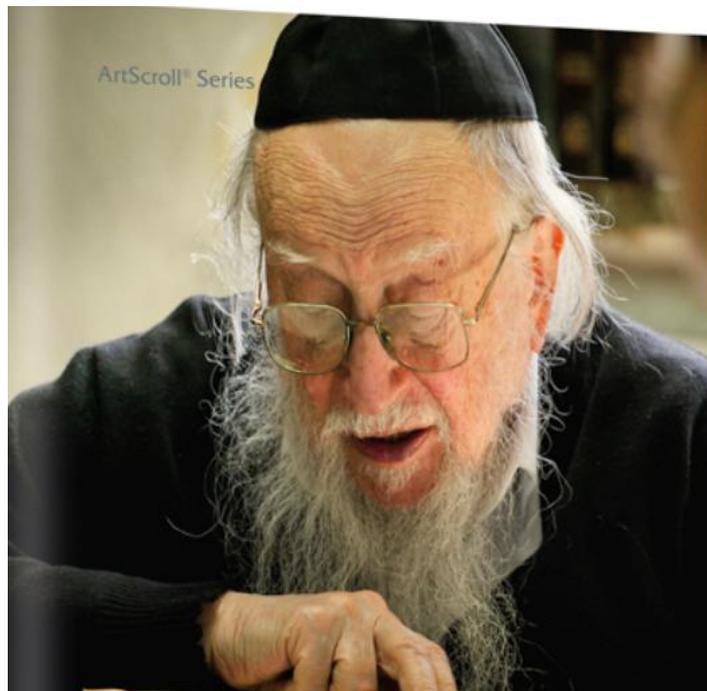
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Sage Advice

By Nachman Seltzer



On one occasion, one of Rav Yitzchok Scheiner's relatives came to him for advice. Two different shadchanim had reached out to her parents, and both suggestions were from families who were interested in having her meet their sons.

One of the bachurim was a "regular" guy who happened to be tops in learning, well-rounded, and charismatic, with a great sense of humor. The other bachur was also outstanding in learning, but was a "mevakeish," with outstanding middos, whose only interest in life was avodas Hashem.

When the relative came to the Rosh Yeshivah, she said, “When I think of Olam Hazeh, I’d like to go ahead with the first bachur. When I think of Olam Haba, I think I may be missing out, and perhaps I should go with the second bachur.”

In his warm, patient manner, Rav Yitzchok responded: “You’re making a big mistake. You don’t get married for Olam Haba. You have to make sure that you’re going to have the best Olam Hazeh. Let’s say you marry the first bachur. He’s fun and he has a sense of humor. In the beginning, you will be sitting together having a good time and might be cracking jokes at other people’s expense.

“But there’s a good chance that down the road, he may be cracking jokes at your expense. I know the second bachur very well. He may not be as entertaining or as much fun, but he will treat you like a queen. He will absolutely never hurt your feelings.

“Whatever you cook and however you decorate your home, he will think it’s terrific. I think you will actually end up with a much better Olam Hazeh with the second bachur.” The relative took his advice, which she has gratefully passed it on to others.

*Reprinted from the Parshav Tzav 5782 edition of “The ArtScroll Shabbos Table”
Excerpted from the ArtScroll/Mesorah sefer titled “Rav Yitzchok Scheiner – The life and leadership of the Kamenitzer Rosh Yeshivah” by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer.*

The Final Challenge

By Zelda Goldfield

Landing the first job in Tali’s profession was challenging.

Who wants to hire an architect with no experience in the field?

Especially when the young, petite *haredi* applicant looks no more than 18 years old, and the company never hired anyone from her type of background before. Why did they even grant her an interview, she wondered? She found out when the CEO, Ariel, and her boss-to-be, Amnon, plied her with questions about a seemingly unrelated item in her CV – her year of experience as a ballet teacher in a local *haredi* school of arts. She got the job. The company subsequently added other religious women to their workforce.

Making a Brocha Before Drinking Waterr

Tali’s next challenge appeared on the morning she began her job. Amnon’s department worked in a huge open space. Tali’s desk was situated in back of Amnon’s so that he could easily turn backwards to instruct her. He sipped his coffee

as he explained the new project she was hired for. She reached for her own water bottle, said the *brocha* aloud, and only then took a swig of water.

He gaped at her in amazement.

“What did you just say Tali? You weren’t talking to me, were you? Who in the world were you talking to?”

And so Tali explained to Amnon the lessons of thanking G-d for what he has given us, even for a drink of water.

Amnon lived in a kibbutz located halfway between Jerusalem and Bet Shemesh. Yet he knew nothing about Judaism and had never spoken to a *haredi* Jew. Tali found herself not only in a new job, but in the position of Defender of Her Faith. Whenever he offered to give her a lift to the main road, she braced herself for a barrage of questions. Her boss was not interested in becoming a *ba'al teshuva*. He was an intelligent and curious person. Skeptical but not antagonistic.

Checking the Rice in the Company Kitchen

During coffee break one morning in the company kitchen, he “caught” her checking the rice. The company prides itself on being equal-opportunity and democratic where employees and bosses mingle freely in the dining hall where all are welcome to partake of a hot lunch. The kitchen is strictly vegetarian, uses no disposables, recycles water and boast a huge compost heap in the garden. Totally ecological. And totally kosher, according to the elderly and nearsighted Moroccan cook. So Tali “helps” her check the rice.

When Amnon saw Tali bent over a large tray, fingers nimbly moving over the little white grains on the large plate, he burst into laughter. He sensed that it had something to do her halachic stringencies.

“What exactly are you searching for in that rice? Think you’ll find a little pussycat?”

Showing Off the Dead Spider

Hashem came to Tali’s rescue. She looked up from the rice, and grasped between her fingers a dead, crunched up spider. She shoved the spider in front of Amnon’s eyes so he could view the corpse himself. He gallantly conceded.

“Vegetarians, right?” she coyly teased.

Despite his skepticism about religion, he had many fine qualities. Amnon was an excellent teacher and expended much effort in explaining and helping the people who worked under him. He generously offered professional advice to whoever approached him on matters unrelated to work. Amnon never raised his voice, did not get angry, and did not use offensive language.

Tali remained with the company for five years and grew immensely in her field, largely due to Amnon's tutelage. When she left to open her own office she had been well-prepared.

But she was not prepared for the WhatsApp she received recently from Ariel, the CEO. *I've been away from the company for over four years now. Why would Ariel be writing to me?*

"Amnon died. Funeral today at 3 in his kibbutz."

Tali immediately phoned a religious friend who still worked there. She told her that Amnon had been ill for the last few months with cancer. Together, they attended the funeral, which was unlike any funeral they had ever seen.

The Forgotten Kaddish

Tali stood frozen in disbelief. She looked at Ariel, who was getting ready to leave, and implored: *Kaddish!* They didn't even say *Kaddish!*

Everyone in Israel, even secular Jews, are familiar with *Kaddish* because whenever a soldier is buried, the Army Rabbinate perform a religious burial. Ariel squirmed under Tali's demanding gaze.

"You don't have enough people left here to say *Kaddish*. The sun is setting in half an hour Tali, just go home and leave it. OK? Amnon wouldn't care."

But Tali and her friend did care and rose to the challenge. They insisted that Ariel remain and they would organize a *minyán*. Tali phoned her husband who was picking up some of his fellow *cheder Rebbe's* for a staff meeting. Instead of taking them to the meeting, he diverted them to the cemetery. Her friend's husband was home sick, but jumped out of bed when he heard that he was desperately needed, and enlisted a few boys from the local yeshiva.

Nine men raced into the kibbutz cemetery where Ariel, Tali, and her friend were anxiously waiting, watching as the coral sun descended lower and lower. The breathless young men looked at each other and asked who could say *Kaddish*? Because their parents were alive, they could only answer, but not lead the prayer – unless their parents gave permission. It was one of the enlisted yeshiva boys who came to the rescue.

"No problem guys. I'm an orphan. I'll say the *Kaddish*."

As the fiery winter sun sank down into the Judean Hills, men who had never met Amnon said *Kaddish* for his soul.

Reprinted from the June 19, 2022 website of The Jewish Press.

The Benefit of the Doubt



The following story exemplifies how we should never judge others. An older woman boarded a crowded bus in Israel. There weren't any available seats, so she was forced to stand. Next to her sat a young girl. The girl looked out the window pensively and ignored the woman beside her. The elderly woman expected the young girl to offer her seat, but the girl — though aware of the situation — did not look up.

The woman said, "She's not even looking at me; it's mindboggling. Today's teens are so self-involved, so entitled!"

The other standing passengers nodded their heads sympathetically.

"I'm so confused," the older woman said, unable to understand why the young girl still refused to get up and offer her seat even after the rudeness was pointed out to her.

Instead, the girl stared out the window, totally oblivious to the conversation around her.

A man standing next to the woman said, "Frankly, it's scandalous." "It's not even crossing her mind that maybe I need the seat more than she does?" the critical woman continued.

A second man concurred. "Zero respect."

The woman said, "It's a lack of manners. What a generation." she sighed, expanding her criticism from the girl to all her imagined peers.

Just then, a woman across the aisle wrapped up a call on her cell phone. "I have to go," she said, shutting her phone and rising. She opened a folded wheelchair and proceeded to help the young girl, apparently her daughter, out of her seat.

The passengers — who had been so free with their loud and vocal criticism — were silenced, and it was evident from their faces that they were deeply ashamed of themselves and regretted every word they'd uttered.

We learn from this story that we must be aware of our tendency to judge others and the consequences of this tendency. First, we judge, and soon enough, we feel the need to relay it to others. It is then an easy next step to humiliating the object of criticism in public. The woman did not hesitate to complain about the girl in front of a crowded bus. She was so sure of her judgment, so confident that she was right. Because of her, the others joined in on the harsh criticism.

Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

The Sun and the Wind



The Sun and the Wind made a wager. They were trying to see which one of them could make a fellow walking down the street take off his coat. The wind went first, and blew until he was blue in the face, (or blew in the face, or whatever,) but the harder the wind assailed him, the tighter the man drew his jacket around him.

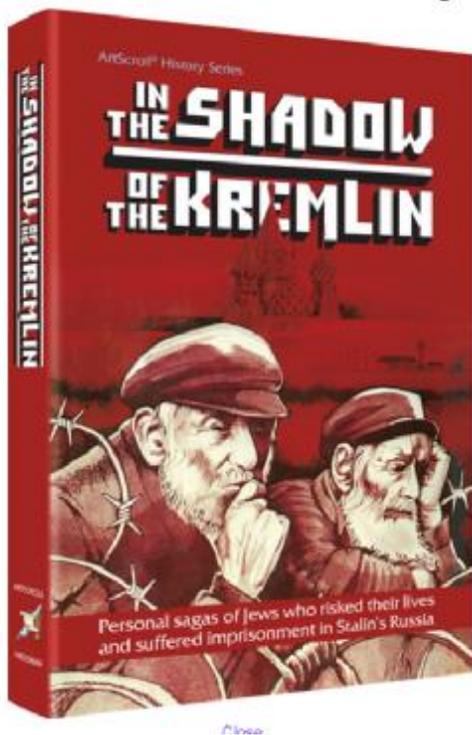
Then it was the sun's turn. He just beamed at the man and the continued warmth of the sun's smile made the fellow peel the jacket right off. When you want to help someone come closer to Hashem, don't be cold to him, or blow lots of air in his face. It will make him turn his back and cling more tightly to his beliefs. Instead, just love him, be kind, and when he's ready, he'll ask for help in taking off the jacket.

Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5782 email of Midgal Ohr.

Reb Baruch's Heroism

Living under Soviet oppression was hard enough; living in Leningrad in 1943, during the Nazi onslaught was horrific. A desperate mass flight from Leningrad was gathering momentum: anything, anywhere, was better than the horrors of a fate such as this. Anyone who was able to do so fled, men, women and children, young and old, the healthy and the ailing, shrunken civilians and soldiers in uniform.

Reb Baruch Shifrin z"l and his family left Leningrad, in a train of seventy carriages that were packed cruelly beyond capacity. The stench was such that it was almost impossible to utter a word of Torah or of prayer, and every day he would try to clamber towards a corner so that he could put on tefillin and whisper shachris.



While he was thus standing one day in his talis and tefillin, he noticed a young stranger making his way towards him. He sat down nearby, and from that moment scrutinized him constantly. He completed his morning prayers as the train slowed down at some station, and took off his tefillin.

It was time for his meager breakfast. Suddenly, three burly officers of the NKVD burst into the carriage. Pointing at him triumphantly they screamed, "That's him." It transpired that the young naive informer who had observed him so carefully had run out when they arrived at the station to report to the Secret Police what he had seen with his own eyes: a bearded Jew with clandestine transmission apparatus mounted on his head and under his left sleeve, into which he was muttering coded communications to the German enemy.

Branded a Real-Life Spy

At last: a real-life spy, caught redhanded! Pushing their way through the bewildered crowd towards him, they seized Baruch as if he were Russia's most dangerous criminal, and wanted to know, "Where's that thing you've hidden away?"

His children could not understand why their father was being manhandled in such a manner, and asked what had happened. “Your daddy’s a German spy!” they were answered. They hustled him off the train, and began at once to cross-examine him as to the nature of his unconventional wireless equipment.

Explaining the Concept of Tefilin

He explained that this was a pair of tefillin, that the little black boxes housed tiny parchment scrolls which bore quotations from the Bible, and that Jews wore them every morning when at prayer.

They remained unconvinced, insisting firmly that he open up the tefillin boxes so that they could confirm his story. He, of course, refused. In the course of his bargaining, he recalled that he did have one official-looking piece of paper in his pocket - a note certifying that he had worked in Leningrad for eight years without any objections from officialdom. Why then should he now be suspected of being a spy for the Germans?

Threatened to Never See His Family Again

Finally, one officer said to his friends, “Only five kilometers from here lives a Jew who’ll be able to clear up this whole thing for us. In the meantime, we’ll let the train go on its way, and our obstinate friend here will never see his wife and children again.”

Again, they began their interrogation about the contents of his tefillin. Desperate, Baruch shouted from the bottom of his heart, and at the top of his voice: Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad! The officers gaped at him as if he was out of his mind. “What does that mean?” they demanded.

Translated into Russian the Words of Shema Yisroel

So, he repeated the sentence in Russian - but again at the top of his voice, so that the message should not be lost on them. Seeing that he was not budging from his stance, they gave him up as a lost cause and let him climb back up to the train just in the nick of time.

His sole regret was that the only piece of paper that attested to his identity was no longer in his hands and he had to remain fixed to his exact place in the train, because without papers of any kind, he would be hounded at every step by uniformed criminals: “Who are you? What’s your name?”

Arriving in Khazakstan

After twenty days and nights without the most minimal human living conditions, without even clean air to breathe, locked in a carriage stoked with the anguish and stench of the ailing and starved, tossed about like a splintered ship on a turbulent ocean, the train finally arrived at Khazakstan in Asia Minor.

When they alighted at the last station, they were asked what their destination was. They simply did not know what to answer. The same prospect seemed to await them wherever they would choose to turn - famine, disease, unrest. For four years, they lived in a town called Alma-Ata, before finally escaping the Russian bear in 1946 and ascending to Zion, to the holy city of Jerusalem. (Adapted from: "In the Shadow of the Kremlin" - Artscroll History)

Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5782 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin.

Remembering Who We Are



DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR the Russians sent many prisoners to the deathly cold Siberia and forced them to do back-breaking labor. Rav Yankel Galinsky זצ"ל was one of those prisoners taken to Siberia.

While he was there, a non-Jewish, a broad seven-foot-tall man, joined the prisoners. This particular man was put to work doing the hardest labors possible from morning until night. It was horrendous. They also brutally beat him. At the end of the day this man collapsed from exhaustion, completely wiped from the day's work.

But there was one thing that got Rav Yankel Galinsky very curious. There was a sack that he had hidden that he guarded and protected very well. One day Rav Yankel didn't fall asleep, and at midnight he saw this tall strong individual pull out his sack and look around to make sure that no one was awake.

Then he pulled out a neatly pressed and polish uniform, and donned it over his prisoner's garb. Rav Yankel then saw him make a few motions, a forward march,

and then the inmate quickly removed the uniform folded it and placed it back into his sack.

The following day, Rav Yankel could not resist, and he asked the man the reason for his strange behavior the night before. The man quickly looked around to make sure that no one was listening, and Rav Yankel promised that no one would find out, he would keep it a secret. The man looked around again to make sure all was clear and he said as follows:

“I was the highest general in the Polish army. As you see, I was captured by the enemy, the Russians. These terrible people want to break my spirit in every way. They are working me to my last strengths, and giving me degrading positions and jobs. Why? They want to break me! However, friend, I am not budging, I will stay fierce like a lion and by no means will I let them break my spirit **NO MATTER WHAT THE CASE MAY BE!** That is why every night I don my general’s uniform and I remind myself of where I came from and who I really am. I don’t want to ever forget my roots. Rav Yankel concluded the story, “We can learn from this Polish general, that every Yid has to remember who he is and where he came from.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5782 email of Eitz HaChayim.

Well Worth the Wait

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



During his tenure as one of the premier leaders of Russian Jewry, R' Yitzchak Zilber taught countless Jews who otherwise would have been completely ignorant of all Torah. Even after he made his way to Eress Yisrael, he would still make it his business to sneak back into his native country to inspire and instruct. During those

trips, he had to make sure to keep a low profile because if his true identity were revealed he risked being sent to the Russian gulag, a prison from which few return.

Once, as he was on one of his trips, a man called out to him, “Reb Yitzchak! Reb Yitzchak!” Shocked that someone would call his name publicly, he turned around and recognized a man whom he had taught many years before, obviously in dire straits, dressed in rags. Poor and hungry and cold as he was, the man could not control his excitement upon seeing R’ Yitzchak for the first time in many years.

Asked His Former Student How Things Were Going

R’ Yitzchak tried to temper his own excitement in seeing the man, and after quickly looking around to make sure no one was watching, he asked many questions about how his former student was doing. Nothing, though, could have prepared him for the question this poor, hungry man asked him. “Rebbi, seven years ago I bought a new coat to wear during the winter months. I have not worn it yet. I was wondering if you would be able to check it for sha’atnez.”

R’ Yitzchak could hardly believe his ears...or his eyes. He looked at the coat the man was wearing. It was literally falling off his shoulders, it was so worn down. The man had purchased a coat seven years ago. Despite the brutal Russian winters, he was worried about the possibility that the new coat might contain sha’atnez and therefore had not worn it.

An Obvious Question of Pikuach Nefesh

Any Rabbi would have given him a heter (allowance) to wear the coat, regardless of whether or not it had sha’atnez; it was pikuach nefesh (saving a life), without the coat the man could have frozen to death. But to this unbelievably sincere Jew, sha’atnez was poison! He had probably been hoping, for the past seven years as his old coat became more and more tattered, that he would find someone able to check the coat for sha’atnez. It boggles the mind!

And now we can ask ourselves, and dig deep to find the answer:

What would we have done? (Touched by a Story 2)

Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Please Do Me a Chesed...



Once, on the Tunisian island of Djerba, a terrible plague descended upon the community. One of the effects of this plague, aside from the suffering, was that food prices sharply increased.

One of the most respected members of the community was Rav Yehudani Kohein, zt”l, who was both a distinguished Talmid Chacham and a man of great wealth. Although Rav Yehudani had more than enough means for his family and many others to get through this trying period, he wanted to give money to those who needed it in a way that would not embarrass the ones receiving it.

He especially wanted to help the Talmidei Chachamim, as they had no savings to rely on. After a great deal of thought, Rav Yehudani finally came up with a plan. He went to visit Rav Mautak Chadad, zt”l, and he presented him with a sack of gold coins.

He said, “The plague is among us, and can anyone say who will live until tomorrow? Whose finances will remain intact? What will be if bandits show up? People in such a situation are essentially helpless. Therefore, I have decided to deposit small amounts of money with various trustworthy friends, so that I am ensured that at least some of my resources will be safe from robbers.

Please do me a Chesed and guard some of my fortune, but on one condition. I wouldn’t feel comfortable asking you to protect my money if you yourself needed money. Take whatever you need. You can return it at your leisure, or not at all. Perhaps your use of our money will be the act of Chesed that will save my family’s life! In any event, I appreciate the feeling of security very much, and I would be very grateful to you for your help.”

Once the plague was over, Rav Chadad met a number of Djerba's other Talmidei Chachamim and asked them how they had survived the calamity. To everyone's surprise, they all told the same story. Rav Yehudani's "deposits" literally saved these Rabbanim and their large families from certain tragedy!

Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah

Why the Need for Different Types of Jews?



A man once asked the Chofetz Chaim, "Why are there so many different groups of Jews? There are Chasidim and Misnagdim. And even among the Chasidim, there are so many factions. Some emphasize learning over Davening, while others Daven at length but learn only a little. Some focus on music and songs, and others prefer dancing. Why can't we have just one group of Jews that all Davened the same way and had the same customs?"

The Chofetz Chaim responded, "Before you ask me about the different groups within our nation, go and ask the Czar of Russia why he has so many different types of soldiers and fighters. He has soldiers that fight on the ground, and those that go by horse. He has some that go by air, and others that are navy sailors.

Ask him, 'What would be so bad if you had only one type of soldier to fight for you? It's all under one commander that would lead them anyway.' He would answer that since he has to go out to war and defeat the enemy, he must use a mixture

of strategy to do this. Some soldiers use swords to fight, but others cannot. Those on a horse fight differently than those who go by air or sea.

“It is the same thing when it comes to the war against the Yetzer Hara. All of the different groups in Judaism are soldiers fighting for the same cause of Hashem. They each have their own way of contributing to help defeat the enemy. One’s strength is in learning Torah, another’s is in Davening, and yet another’s is with song. All that is important is that their hearts are loyal to their Father, Hashem, in Shamayim!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Korach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah

17th Century German Hanukah Lamp



This silver-gilt Menorah was offered in the 2012 Sotheby’s Judaica Auction. It was designed by the Frankfurt artisan Johann Valentin Schuler.