

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS DEVORIM 5782

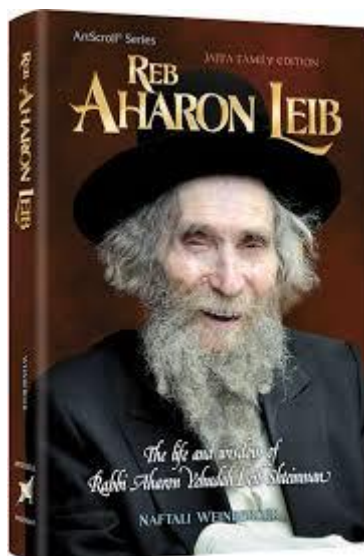
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The Irreligious Israeli Soldier's Desperate Prayers to Hashem



Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, as a preface to the following story, would say, “All you need to do is open your eyes, and you will see the miracles that roll up to your doorstep. We should also learn and internalize the great power of Tefilah, of every Jew that cries out from his heart to Hashem!”

Late at night at the Poleg interchange in Netanya, five Arabs angrily approached an Israeli soldier. They each had knives pointing at him. This soldier's name was Tzachi, and he was one of the worst shooters in the army.

In target practice, he would always miss the shaded areas on the target, but that night, miraculously, his shooting was perfect! He shot four of the terrorists that tried to kill him, with clean, direct shots. However, he then suffered a panic attack, ran out to the highway, and took the first ride he could to get away from there, and he didn't stay around to report the incident.

None of the Knives Were Found

The fifth Arab terrorist gathered all the knives from his friends, and disappeared from the scene and went back home. The police detectives that came to the intersection were shocked at what they had found, and from what they could tell, it looked like an unprovoked attack on the Arab men. None of the knives were found, and no one was around to report what had transpired.

It looked like a murderer came and shot them, and then ran away. They were soon able to track down and catch Tzachi, as that was his post. When he explained what had happened, all his claims of being attacked were ignored. They asked, "Where are the knives that you say they had?"

"How can someone being attacked like you are describing successfully take down four attackers so effectively? You are not the innocent person you say you are. You are really the attacker!"

Tzachi was judged in military court and sentenced to four life sentences for murder! In jail, Tzachi tried to improve his conditions, but he was repeatedly turned down. He was considered a dangerous murderer. It reached a point where Tzachi, who was irreligious, decided to speak with the prison Rabbi, and poured his heart out to him.

The Soldier's Questions on Emunah

He had questions of Emunah. He said, "Hashem saved me from certain death when those Arabs attacked me. Why did He throw me here into jail for the rest of my life?"

The Rabbi asked him, "How do you know Hashem saved you?"

Tzachi answered, "At the moment those ruthless murderers approached me, and I stood before death, I begged Hashem to save me!"

The Rabbi responded, "Where did you learn to cry out to Hashem, as you're not religious?"

Tzachi replied, "At that moment I remembered my righteous grandfather, and that he always used to tell me, 'Tzachi, Hashem helps even those who don't know and recognize Him, if that person truly cries out to Him, because it says in Tehilim that Hashem is close to ALL who call Him.'"

This was a surprising answer for the Rabbi to hear. He told Tzachi that he would get back to him soon with an answer. The Rabbi went to Rav Aharon Leib

Shteinman, zt”l, in Bnei Brak, and repeated what the soldier said in his complaint against Hashem.

Rav Shteinman replied, “Tzachi already knows firsthand that Hashem helps those who call out to Him, so why doesn’t he again ask Hashem for help with this too? He should simply just Daven to Hashem more!”

The Rabbi asked Rav Shteinman, “What can he Daven for? When he Davened to be saved, he had a gun in his hand. But now he already has four life sentences.”

Rav Shteinman began to laugh. He exclaimed, “Did Tzachi even know how to shoot his gun at all? No! But he Davened with all his heart and succeeded in killing his attackers. Let him cry out again, and once more ask Hashem to save him!”

The Rabbi went back to the prison and told Tzachi what Rav Shteinman said. He gave Tzachi encouragement and told him, “Daven to Hashem with all your heart.”

A few weeks later the Rabbi saw Tzachi walking out in the street and saw that he was out free. The Rabbi said to him, “What are you doing here? You had four life sentences! Did you run away from the prison?”

Tzachi responded, “Hashem heard my Tefilos and I am out free! The general security service caught the fifth Arab, and after a long interrogation, he told them what happened that night. He admitted that they attempted to murder me and that he escaped, and that he took the knives with him back to the village. The detectives investigated and found the knives, and they then set me free!”

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

Story #1284

The Master and the Lad

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

editor@ascentofsafed.com

After the passing of the Maggid of Mezritch in 1772, when the spheres of influence in spreading the teachings of Chasidism were divided up among the inner circle of the Maggid’s disciples, **Rabbi Shneur Zalman**, the "**Alter Rebbe**" of Chabad Chasidism, was allotted Lithuania and White Russia. However, being as **Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin** had followers in the towns of Beshenkovitz, Tzeshnik and Liepli, he was allowed to continue visiting there.

When Rabbi Shlomo decided that he wanted to permanently move to Beshenkovitz, he first asked permission of Rabbi Shneur Zalman. The Alter Rebbe agreed with the following conditions:



The Alter Rebbe

The Three Conditions

- 1) Reb Shlomo would not demean those who devoted themselves seriously to the study of the revealed parts of the Torah;
- 2) Reb Shlomo would not disparage those who had an innate fear of Heaven;
- 3) Reb Shlomo would teach his own chasidim that faith alone in the *tzadik* (pure, righteous leader) is not sufficient to enable one to ascend to higher spiritual levels, but that one must personally toil in one's G-dly service.

Reb Shlomo was willing to agree to the first two conditions but could not come to terms with the third, for he taught his chasidim that those who are bound to the *tzadik* are elevated by his service; the mission of their Divine service is simply to be enthusiastic about the study of Torah and the observance of its commandments. But his teachings conflicted with the school of thought known as Chabad Chasidism established by the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe taught that each individual must personally exert effort in understanding G-d and His world, and in one's Divine service. Therefore, Reb Shlomo did not move to Beshenkovitz, though he continued to visit there periodically.

Treated with the Utmost Respect and Deference

Despite their disagreements and differences, a number of years later when Reb Shlomo visited the Alter Rebbe on a communal matter, the Alter Rebbe treated him with utmost respect and deference. When Reb Shlomo left to travel to Beshenkovitz for one of his visits, the Alter Rebbe sent a number of young scholarly chasidim to accompany him, among them Binyamin of Kotsk.

Along the way, Reb Shlomo and the Alter Rebbe's chasidim engaged in deep discussions of all areas of Torah. Reb Shlomo was very impressed with the depth of knowledge of his escorts. Upon their arrival in Vitebsk, the Alter Rebbe's Chasidim got ready to return to Liozna, but Reb Shlomo asked R. Binyamin to travel with him to Beshenkovitz. Reb Binyamin agreed.

When it was time for the afternoon prayer, Reb Shlomo instructed his wagon driver to stop the coach so that he could pray. Reb Shlomo climbed down and looked for a stream to wash his hands but there was none nearby. He climbed back up into the coach and sat there for many moments in meditation.

Suddenly the horses started to gallop undirected. Before long they stopped near a stream, whereupon Reb Shlomo descended and washed his hands. He prayed the afternoon service with his usual fiery devotion, and then alighted upon the wagon.

When the wagon driver informed Reb Shlomo that he had no idea where they were, Reb Shlomo told him to allow the horses to proceed on their own. The horses galloped along until they came to a highway. From there they traveled until they arrived at an inn.

Arriving in Beshenkovitz on Thursday Afternoon

Reb Shlomo told the wagon driver to stop at the inn. He and R. Binyamin prayed the evening service followed by *Tikun Chatzot* [the after-midnight set of prayers in remembrance of the destruction of the Holy Temple]. At dawn they prayed the morning service and then continued on their way. They arrived in Beshenkovitz on Thursday afternoon, in time for the afternoon prayer.

At this point it was impossible for Reb Binyamin to return to Liozna in time for the Sabbath and so, he decided to stay in Beshenkovitz for Shabbat. Throughout Shabbat, R. Binyamin met many of his fellow Chabad chasidim. They were amazed that the Alter Rebbe had accorded Reb Shlomo so much honor as to send such a scholar as R. Binyamin to accompany him. Thereafter, they accorded Reb Shlomo much more honor than they had previously.

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A Fleeting Thought to Remain with Reb Shlomo

Reb Binyamin remained in Beshenkovitz for another two days, walking around as if in a daze from all that he had learned from Reb Shlomo and from

everything he had seen in Reb Shlomo's prayers and Divine service. He had even had a fleeting thought to stay on in Beshenkovitz to spend more time in Reb Shlomo's company. In the end, R. Binyamin decided against staying and called on Reb Shlomo to take his leave.

Reb Shlomo spoke passionately to R. Binyamin for many hours, entreating him to stay and become one of his chasidim. He promised that he would share with him wondrous secrets of the Torah and he would hand pick a group of students for him to teach who would be worthy of his keen intellect.

Reb Binyamin listened and responded by quoting a Ukrainian rhyme (just as Reb Shlomo would often spice his conversation with Ukrainian sayings):

The master's a master...but he's not mine; The lad's a lad...but he's not thine."
And he returned to the Alter Rebbe in Liozna.

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*Source:* Edited and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the excellent translation by Basha Majerczyk in lchaimweekly.org (#750). lchaimweekly.org/lchaim/ 5763/750.htm

*Biographical notes* (in alphabetical order): **Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin** [1738 - **22 Tammuz 1792**], was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch and Reb Aharon the Great of Karlin, whom he succeeded in 1772. Most of the Chassidic leaders of the next generation in the Lithuanian region were his disciples. He died *Al Kiddush HaShem*, stabbed by a Cossack while in the midst of the *Amida* prayer.

**Rabbi Shneur Zalman** [18 Elul 5505 - 24 Tevet 5573 (1745 - Dec. 1812 C.E.)], was one of the main disciples of the *Maggid of Mezritch*, successor to the Baal Shem Tov. He is the founder of the Chabad-Chassidic movement and the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

*Connection:* This Thursday, *Tammuz* 22 (July 21), is the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin.

***Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5782 email of KabbalahOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.***

## Judging Favorably #193

# The Missing Cell Phone

By Yehudis Samet



Zvi Goldman checked his coat in the coat room of the convention hall, inadvertently leaving his cellular phone in the pocket. At the end of the evening, he went to get his coat and the phone was missing. He was very upset, and blamed the hall for being negligent and hiring dishonest people.

The management said that the hall had an impeccable record. Nothing had ever been stolen, and their employees were all honest. They suggested that Zvi might have left the phone in his car or at home. He checked both but to no avail.

As the week went by, he became more upset, and threatened to report the incident to the proper authorities. I heard the whole story from Zvi the following week as we were riding home from work together.

“You certainly seem pretty calm about the whole thing now,” I commented to Zvi. “I guess time cures most everything. And I see you replaced your phone,” I said, noticing his phone.

Zvi looked at me and smiled. “There’s more to the story.”

“Okay, I’m listening.”

“I hadn’t worn my coat since the night of the convention,” Zvi continued. “Yesterday it started to drizzle, so I took my coat to work. As I walked towards my office, I felt something banging against my knee. It started raining harder. I put my hand in my pocket, where I found a hole, and walked faster. The flash of lightning in the sky must have lit up something in my brain, and all of a sudden, I realized that the knocking at my knee was the phone. It must have slipped through the hole in my pocket into the lining of my coat,” Zvi finished sheepishly. (The Other Side of the Story, ArtScroll)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Piinchas 5782 email of The Weekly Vort*

# A Time to Ask For Forgiveness

Rav Yaakov Yisrael Lugasi related a story told to him by a woman named Rachel. In high school, she had a classmate from a wealthy family, but she came from a poor background. The rich friend's attitude toward her made her feel worthless. Her *gaavah*—*arrogance* and condescending remarks were like arrows shooting into Rachel's heart. The girl might not have realized the damage she was causing, but Rachel said she lost her self-esteem and felt broken.

The relationship had such an adverse effect on her life that it was hard for her to date, and she found herself alone, with no direction, at the age of 28.

One day, Rachel spotted an old friend, Leba, on the street.

*"How are you doing?"* asked Leba.

*"Not so great,"* Rachel replied, and she told her about all the negative feelings she had carried around since high school toward their old classmate. She just could not let them go.

Leba decided to look up the young woman and try to bring peace. She found out that the woman now lived in the United States. She gave her a call and asked how things were. The woman replied, *"Baruch Hashem, fine, except I have been married for several years without having children. It's so hard. We've been seeing doctors and rabbis, but nothing is working."*

Leba told her about the heartache she had caused her former classmate and said that the best *segulah* would be to appease Rachel. The woman was shocked to learn that her comments had done so much damage. Nevertheless, she did not hesitate to admit guilt. She didn't make excuses for her youthful callous behavior; instead, she immediately decided to fly to *Eretz Yisrael* to beg forgiveness in person.

Rachel later described how difficult it was for her to forgive her former classmate. They actually had to meet several times until Rachel could let go of all her negative feelings. Finally, the two young women hugged and kissed each other. Before they parted, the friend said to Rachel, *"I am anticipating that you get married this year. Please send me an invitation. I am going to come back and dance with you at your wedding."*

Later that year, *baruch Hashem*, Rachel did get married. However, her friend could not attend the wedding – for an excellent reason because she was in labor with her first baby!

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



# My Mother

**By Rabbi Sholom BerDov Avtzon**

This Sunday is the 36<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit of my mother Mrs. Cheyena Avtzon. I am sharing a letter one of her friends sent us shortly after her petira.

Cheyena Karasik and I were born in the city of Nevel. We were friends from an early age. At school, Cheyena was always at the top of the class. When I was ten I moved from Nevel to Moscow.

Years later, in 1948, Cheyena and I were reunited at a Chabad community hotel in Paris. I will never forget the warmth and compassion she greeted me with when we met. I had arrived at the hotel late at night with my husband and two infant children. We were without a penny and nothing to eat. My babies were crying.

Imagine my feelings when I heard a knock on the door of the tiny storage room we were in and in walked my childhood friend Cheyena with a steaming pot of rice soup with meat. As long as I live, I will not forget the look of compassion and understanding on Cheyena's face that night.

## **A Renewed Friendship**

Our renewed friendship was based on our love for each other's families, companionship, and on understanding and sharing. The summer of 1949 in Paris was impossibly hot. Our families were crammed together in tiny rooms and we were afraid for the health of our children. For the summer, Cheyena and I decided to move with our families to the suburbs of Paris where dozens of Chabad families lived in what was once a Summer Estate.

We found a small storage room on the roof of the building and we all moved in. We cooked our suppers together and even fed our children from one plate. Cheyena and I had many intimate conversations together. She told me about the passing of her mother and her brother and about how she made sure that they were given a Jewish burial.

My English vocabulary is too poor to mention all the details. One thing that I must mention is how she slept in the cemetery on the burial plots that had been allotted to her mother and sister so that they would not be stolen by others who were also in desperate need of a plot for their loved ones. Exposed for so long in the bitter cold in the cemetery, Cheyena lost some of her teeth.

## **Overcoming Many Tragic Events**

In our discussions, we shared with each other the many tragic events that we had both gone through since the time when we had been friends as children in Nevel.

After the Leningrad Blockade was over, her father, Reb Leibel Karasik and his remaining family moved to Central Asia. But tragedy followed them still. Cheyena lost her father and buried him.

Only a person who had such a strong emunah as Cheyena could survive the tragedy of Leningrad and the hardships she experienced in Central Asia.

Cheyena arrived in the United States with her husband, Reb Meir Avtzon, and a large family. Despite her extreme state of tiredness and later on, her physically weak state, she always had an open home filled with guests.

The last time I met Cheyena was in New York. Our friendship never wavered. Her untimely passing deeply wounded my heart. Cheyena and her husband left behind a treasure house of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren that brighten up the world around them in gashmius and ruchnius. She left generations that go in the way that she and her husband wanted. Generations who bring much nachas and pride.

For me, Cheyena will forever be the highest example of a compassionate, loving and understanding woman, who shared her companionship with all. Although Cheyena may not be with us physically, in spirit and in good deeds she is with us forever.

R. G.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5782 email of Rabbi Avtzon's Weekly Story.*  
The Irreligious Israeli Soldier's Desperate Prayers to Hashem

## The Maharal's Shidduch

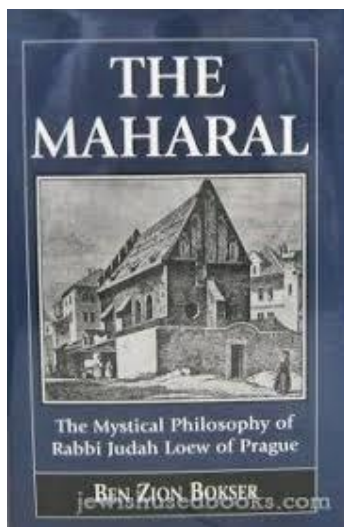
To those who express concern that they will not have the funds for their children's weddings, Rav Chaim Kanievsky often related the following story that contains a number of valuable lessons.

The Maharal of Prague, Rav Yehuda Loewy (1526-1609), became engaged at age 15 to Perel, the daughter of Rav Shmuel Reich from the city of Worms. Following the engagement, the Maharal went to learn in the Maharshal's yeshivah in Premislau with the intention of returning for his wedding when he would turn 18.

During that period, his future father-in-law lost his fortune and could no longer provide the support that he had promised the couple. In fact, he became completely indigent and they could barely obtain their most basic necessities.

Thus, it was impossible for them to marry unless the chassan, Rav Yehudah, would leave learning and go out to work. Rav Shmuel and his daughter knew that

Rav Yehudah was destined to become a great gaon and marbitz Torah, but to achieve that, he would need to dedicate himself to limud haTorah without financial worries. Father and daughter wrote Rav Yehudah a letter explaining the situation and stating that in light of the turn of events, they would fully understand if he broke the shidduch.



The Maharal did not break the shidduch and the engagement continued for more than ten years. However, throughout that period, there was no change in the financial status of the kallah's father. During that time, the kallah opened a small bakery from which she hoped to at least support her aging parents.

One day, a soldier on horseback arrived at her store and, without a word, began stacking loaves of bread onto his horse. The soldier was about to leave without paying when Perel started to cry, saying that she very badly needed the income from the store.

The soldier replied that he was starving and had not eaten properly for several days. He handed Perel a garment and said, "I am giving this to you as security. If I do not return within twenty-four hours to pay for the bread, the garment is yours to keep."

The soldier did not return. Perel began to examine the garment and saw that there were items sewn into the fabric. She opened the seams and was astounded to see many coins whose total value was a small fortune. A message was sent to the Maharal and the wedding soon took place. The Maharal was 32 and Perel was 28 at the time of the wedding.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5782 email of At The ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from "Rav Chaim Kanievsky on Shidduchim" by Rabbi Naftali Weinberger.*

# The Apter Rov and the Horse

The Apter Rov, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel zt"l, used to make the rounds to various cities. He would travel to visit his Chassidim, as well as to inspire so many other yidden who adhered to his loving words of wisdom.

Once, while on one of his usual travels to visit his Chassidim, it happened that he encountered a steep hill. The Rov quickly descended from the wagon drawn by the rather bony horse and ascended the hill afoot.

Aghast, his Chassidim cried out, "Rebbe, why come down from the wagon and climb this steep hill afoot, when the horse is pulling the wagon up the treacherous road?!"

"Because," replied the Rebbe, "I am afraid the horse will call me to a din Torah, a heavenly court case. It will claim that I had no pity on it, making it shlep me up the hill."

"And if so," said the Chassidim, "would the Rebbe not win the case on the ground that the horse was meant for man's service? Surely, the Rebbe has nothing to worry about."

"Yes," said the Rebbe, "there is no doubt that I would win the case, but I would rather walk up the hill a dozen times, then find myself in litigation with a horse!"

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

# The Toronto Fire Extinguisher

This story happened two years ago during the height of Covid. We live in Toronto where the government is very slow with their work. The fire hydrant by my neighbor's yard was leaking for weeks and finally the city workers came on the Monday before Shavous with their tractors to start digging around the hydrant.

Another worker went around to all the houses telling everyone on the block that the water would be turned off on Thursday as they had to replace the hydrant.

I thought, "Thursday?! Oh no that is Erev Shavous and we need to have water! We can't even go to other people's houses to prepare for Yom Tov because of Covid!"

So I asked the worker why can't they do everything today on Monday? He shrugged his shoulders, saying that's the way things are and there is nothing to do about it.



What this worker didn't know is that Hashem is in charge. A couple of hours later, I saw many workers by the hydrant removing the old hydrant and replacing it with a new one. I went over and asked them what happened and why they were doing it today.

The worker replied that when they were digging to prepare the ground for Thursday's work they 'accidentally' broke a water pipe which turned the project into an emergency that had to be taken care of immediately! I came inside my house and turned towards Hashem thanking Him for this nes that we would be able to prepare for Yom tov.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5782 email of The Spring Hill Times.*

## **The Left-Over Food from a Bris**

Sruli,\* a yungerman from Lakewood, New Jersey, went to a bris. When he came to the hall, he saw that the ba'al simcha had already left. There was leftover delicious food that was going to go into the garbage.

So Sruli decided to take the food to a Yeshiva so that the bochurim could enjoy it. He went to one Yeshiva but because it was an off Shabbos, nobody was there. So, he went to another Yeshiva and gave them: bagels, lox, cream cheese, egg salad, tuna fish etc.

Later in the day, he got a call from the Yeshiva and they told him, "Thank you for saving the day! For the first time ever, there was a misunderstanding and the caterers who were supposed to bring lunch to the yeshiva didn't bring it! They thought the yeshiva had an off Shabbos! The bochurim ate the food you brought!"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5782 email of The Spring Hill Times.*

# Reasons for Sponsoring A Tikun in Shul

By Daniel Keren



Dayan Aharon Dovid Dunner, senior dayan (judge) of the London Kesassia Beth Din (religious court) and rov of Bais Medrash, Tottenham Adass in London was the Guest Speaker at a Flatbush parlor meaning last month on behalf of Shuvu, a chain of religious schools in Eretz Yisroel designed to serve the educational needs of boys and girls from the former Soviet Union and families long cut off from any ties from any connection with a Torah lifestyle.

Dayan Dunner told those who came to the parlor meeting that in his hometown of London there is a particular shul that caters to a Chassidic clientele. What was interesting was that almost every day after davening (prayer services in the morning) someone would place on a table a delicious array of pastries, herring, and shnaps for all of the mispallilim (Minyan participants) to make brochas (blessings) over and to offer l'chaims.

One day, the sponsor was asked what the reason for tikkun was and his answer was that he had a yahrtzeit (memorial anniversary) for a parent. The next day another sponsor was asked the reason for the tikkun and his explanation was that his daughter just had given birth to another grandchild. And on the next day, a beautiful tikkun was again offered. The explanation was that the day before the sponsor had been involved in a horrific car crash and came out with no scratches. The next day, again there was a gorgeous tikkun. And the explanation? The sponsor said that unlike the host of the day before, he was giving a tikkun because he too had drove his car and thank G-d was not at all involved in any mishap. And that was his justification for offering his tikkun.