

SHABBOS STORIES

FOR PARSHAS METZORA 5784

Volume 15, Issue 34 12 Nisan 5784/April 20, 2024

Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

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“All the Other Kids On My Street”



Several bar-mitzvah age boys had stopped attending their local Hebrew school. Their parents, who were concerned, took the teenagers to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe, hoping he would convince them to continue seeking a Jewish education.

“Tell me,” the Rebbe asked the first boy, “why have you decided to stop attending Hebrew school?”

“All the other boys on my street have stopped going to Hebrew school, so I want to stop as well,” he answered.

“And what about you?” the Rebbe asked the second boy.

“Same reason,” the boy explained. “The kids on my street don’t go, so why should I?”

“Tell me,” the Rebbe asked the boys, “who were your favorite Jewish heroes that you learned about?”

One boy responded that he deeply admired Noah, and the other, Abraham.

“Do you know,” the Rebbe told the first boy, “that if Noah would have followed all the other kids on his street, we would have no world? And if Abraham would have followed all the kids on his street,” the Rebbe told the second boy, “we would have no Jewish people!”

Reprinted from an email sent by a devoted subscriber of the Shabbos Stories email.

A Chassidic Rebbe's Search for Chametz



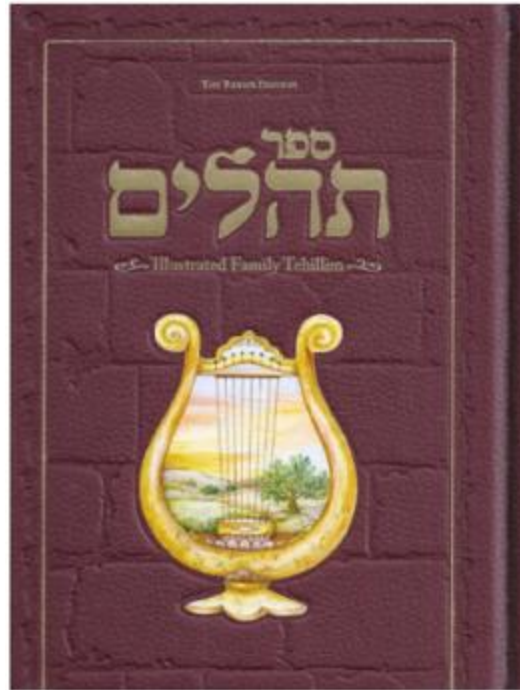
The preparations of the Ahavas Yisroel of Vizhnitz (Rabbi Yisrael Hager, 1860-1936) for the search for chametz were lengthy and he approached the act with great feeling. The Rebbe made the brachos on the removal of chametz with great fervor while his spodek crowned his head.

He would search the cracks and crannies by candlelight, constantly beating his chest and calling out, “Oy, oy, oy!” All who heard him trembled, and their hearts broke to the sound of his groans. When he had completed the search, he turned to his faithful chassid, R’ Mordechai Chaneh, and standing before him, he tore open his heart, baring his chest and said, “Now, search out the chametz in my heart.” (Chametz is symbolic of the yetzer hara, evil inclination.)

R’ Mordechai did not lose his presence of mind and replied, “Rebbe, the halachah instructs us that we need not search a place where chametz has not entered.” (Haggadah of the Chassidic Masters)

Reprinted from the Parshas Shemini 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Power of a Simple Yid's Recital of Tehillim



Years ago, when Rav Mordechai Friedman, the Rosh Kollel of the Tehilim Kollel, was just a young boy, he was learning the Sefer of the Sh”lah Ha’kadosh, and he saw a story that changed his life.

The Sh”lah tells of a town where a very simple man recited Tehilim every day. The people didn’t recognize this as greatness, and they didn’t think that saying Tehilim was any type of remarkable endeavor. When this simple man passed away, he came to the Rav of the town in a dream, and he had a very urgent warning.

He said, “Rebbi, you must evacuate the town! Tomorrow night, there will be a massacre here. Robbers will come and burglarize all the homes and kill everyone they find. Since I have been saying Tehilim every day, I have provided the town with protection, but now that I am gone, the townspeople are in great danger!”

The Rav took this dream very seriously. He gathered his community the next morning, and told them to pack up their belongings and run to a safe place. Many people listened, but there were some who didn’t, and they thought that such a simple man couldn’t have possibly protected their town like that, and that the message couldn’t be true.

Sadly, those who stayed behind were killed that night. Rav Mordechai was astounded by this story and the clear power of Tehilim that it represented. He immediately took it upon himself to say Tehilim every single day, and he continued for over 25 years without missing!

Reprinted from the Parshas Tzav 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Challenge of the \$5,000 Kiddush Hashem

Rav Shraga Freedman relates a story that was told to him by the Rav of a Shul. “One of my Mispalelim once found a purse in the street. It contained \$5,000 in cash, along with some documents indicating that it belonged to a non-Jewish woman who lived nearby. The man called a Rav to ask what to do, and the Rav told him that it would be a tremendous Kiddush Hashem if he returned it to the woman.

The Rav reminded him, ‘Keep in mind that your Parnasah is decreed on Rosh Hashanah, and no matter what you do, your bank account balance will be the same.’ After a difficult internal struggle, the man decided to return the money, and he contacted the stranger. The woman was moved when she heard that she would be getting her purse back, and soon after, she was even more impressed when she saw there wasn’t even a single dollar missing from her purse.

The Woman Showered the Finder with Blessings

She told this man that her father had just passed away, and the cash was for his burial expenses. She offered the finder \$1,000 as a reward, and she showered him with blessings.

The next week, the man received a phone call from his health insurance company, and they informed him that the company had decided to pay a \$4,000 bill that they had previously been refusing to cover! The man recognized that the Hashgachah Pratis, the Divine Providence, was unmistakable. He had received exactly the amount of money that he had chosen to return, and he had gained the merit of a great Kiddush Hashem as well.”

The Rav said, “I shared this story with my Shul, and I made it clear that this Kiddush Hashem was a reason for celebration, and it was an example that everyone can emulate!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Tzav 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Humble Talmid Chacham (Torah Scholar)

Rav Meir Ma'arim of Kobrin, zt"l, was someone who always acted in a pleasant way to everyone, no matter how he himself was treated. He never took revenge against anyone, he was always kind to others, and he tried to make peace whenever he could.

Always Acting a Soft and Gentle Way

Someone once approached him about this and asked how he could always act in such a soft and gentle way, when the Gemara in Yoma (23a) says that a Talmid Chacham who does not take revenge and bear a grudge like a snake, is not a true Talmid Chacham?

Rav Meir explained, "Just imagine what would happen if I didn't act in my normal manner, and instead, I tried to take revenge from those who bother me. After I leave this world, the Bais Din in Shamayim will surely ask why I behaved with such terrible Middos and did so many Aveiros with these actions.

"If I quote this Gemara to justify what I did, everyone assembled there will all get a good laugh at my expense. They will say, 'Look who thinks he's a Talmid Chacham!'"

"At Least I Won't be a Laughing Stock"

Rav Meir concluded, "While it's true that I may have some explaining to do after my time is up about why I didn't react more strongly in some situations, at least I won't be a laughingstock for having made a mistake and think myself to be a Talmid Chacham!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Tzav 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

Rav Pam's Rebuke



Rav Avraham Pam related a humorous story about his father, Rav Meir Pam, who served as a Rabbi in Brownsville. Once, Rav Meir found it necessary to harshly rebuke the congregation, and delivered a speech critical of their conduct. Afterward, one of the members approached him and said, “Wow, Rabbi, you really gave it to them!”

“I had to bite my lip not to laugh or say anything,” Rav Meir later told his son. “He was exactly the person I was talking about!”

Reprinted from the Parashat Tzav 5784 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

Rav Chaim's Humble Answer



An elderly man, leaning on his cane, comes to Rav Chaim's house. His back is bent, and every step is hard. He has a question, and he has come to ask it davka because he walks so slowly. He sits down in Rav Chaim's room and tries to catch his breath.

“I was a child, and now I’m old,” he says. “Oy, how old I am! I don’t have the strength to come and go as I used to. It’s hard for me to leave my house. I can’t go to daven in shul three times a day because it’s too hard for me to get to the shul and home again. I can do it only once a day. Which tefillah should I go to? Should I daven Shacharis in shul, or Minchah and Maariv?”

“Why don’t you make a minyan in your house? If you ask people, they’ll come to your house to daven. I also asked for a minyan in my house, and we daven here every day, Shabbos and weekday.”

The elderly man is surprised at Rav Chaim’s anavah (humility). It is as if Rav Chaim sees no difference between himself and others. It is as if the minyan in Rav Chaim’s house is just a minyan for an old man, nothing more!

Reprinted from the Tzav 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book “Precious Moments with Rav Chaim.”

Bad News is Good News

By Rabbi Yitzchok Aryeh Epstein

David, a computer scientist living in Petach Tikvah, received a call one day from his boss, who asked that he come into the office on a particular day and time. An informal hearing would be held, he explained. This wasn’t good news, David knew as much. Most likely, they would ask him some questions, deliberate together, and then fire him. The most that he’d get would be severance pay.

Although David was naturally anxious about life, when he heard this, he knew that it was the beginning of the end. He was sixty years old at the time, and he wouldn’t be able to land another job if he’d be let go. Feeling sick to his stomach with nerves, he decided to call it a day and head home early. He couldn’t handle it. Once he arrived home, he went to sleep.

A Threatening Message from His Company

The next day, he didn’t even go to work. But that’s when things compounded. He received a message from the company noting that if he chose to not attend the hearing, they would proceed without him and make the decision as to his position without him. If David was out of sorts before, this tripled it. His heart raced with palpitations and he felt physically sick. Worried for his health, he decided to head to his doctor to make sure the news he had received was not endangering his well-being.

“You need to go to a cardiologist,” David’s general practitioner said. Making the referral, the next day David was having his heart monitored. “We can administer

a stress test,” explained the doctor, “but if you’d like, we can do an angiogram, and that will give us a better indication of what’s going on with your heart.” David had been leaning toward a stress test, and informed the doctor that he’d think about it for a few minutes. In the meantime, he’d call his wife and see her thoughts.

Agrees to Go with the Doctor’s Recommendation for an Angiogram

But she didn’t pick up. Left to his own thoughts and decision, he finally decided that he’d go along with the doctor’s suggestion. An angiogram it would be. Soon enough, the results came in: one artery was totally gone, and the other artery was almost entirely blocked. When the doctor saw this, he looked at David as if he was a walking dead man. “I have no idea how you’re alive. You need emergency open heart surgery.” David agreed, but added that he wanted to first consult with Rabbi Elimelech Firer, the medical expert in Israel.

After giving the name of a certain specialist, a phone call was put in to see when the surgery could be scheduled. “Three months” was the reply. But that was not possible. “Well, if you come into the hospital tomorrow, the doctor has a few surgeries lined up. I can put you on schedule for surgery after those are completed, and you should be able to be seen. Come today and take care of the pre-ops.” David did just that.

David would have died within days if he hadn’t undergone that open heart surgery as soon as he did.

How was David’s Life Saved

How did this all come about? We need to look back to the beginning. Hashem orchestrated that a difficult situation would come about—David would be called to a hearing. But David couldn’t deal with the hearing, so he experienced heart pain. From there, he went to his doctor who recommended an angiogram, despite David being inclined to take a stress test.

Thankfully, his wife didn’t pick up the phone, for she might have led him to decline the angiogram in deference to the stress test. Thankfully there also, he didn’t take the stress test, because that would have caused too much trauma to the heart and might have killed him. And then, based upon the guidance of Rabbi Firer, the surgery was scheduled for the very next day at the hospital.

Hashem wanted to give David life. He was a good man and had his heart in the right place, and Hashem wanted to save his heart.

There is always a plan in life. Hashem sees it. Just sometimes it takes time until we see it.

Reprinted from the Parshat Pekudei 5784 email of the Torahanytime Newsletter as edited and compiled by Elan Perchik.

A Classic Levi Yitzhak Story



Cattle Market in Europe

A number of chasidim were gathered with Rabbi Yitzhak Meir of Ger, partaking of the festive meal after a brit mila, when the rebbe asked a certain chasid to relate a story about Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev.

The chasid began: “One of the followers of the Berdichever Rebbe was a cattle dealer. And it happened that once when he had many heads of cattle to sell the market price dropped drastically. The chasid was worried about the heavy loss he would have to sustain, so he travelled to Berdichev to consult his Rebbe for advice in the matter and a blessing.

“When he arrived in the rebbe’s presence, Levi Yitzhak asked him, ‘Is there any particular mitzva with which you occupy yourself?’

The Cattle Merchant Explains that He is a Mohel

“Yes, replied the man, ‘I am a mohel.’ [one who performs ritual circumcisions].

“And what do you do in the case that an infant bleeds heavily after the circumcision?’ asked the Rebbe.

“The man described at length the medications and salves he applied, and then the Rebbe responded: ‘I will give you a certain medicinal herb to use if you are ever,

G-d forbid, in such a situation. If you apply this to the wound, it will stop bleeding immediately.’ And the Rebbe handed him some herbs.

“‘But Rebbe,’ beseeched the chasid, ‘what shall I do about the cattle?’

“‘But the Rebbe only replied, ‘I have already explained that if you encounter an infant who bleeds excessively, just apply the herbs and the bleeding will stop immediately.’

“‘The chasid didn’t repeat his question. He took his belongings and returned to his home.’”

“We Can Tell That He Was A True Chasid”

At this juncture in the story Rabbi Yitzhak Meir interrupted the story with a comment: “From the behavior of this man we can tell that he was a true chasid, since he didn’t persist in his questioning of the Rebbe, but simply assumed that the Rebbe’s words contained the advice he sought, although he didn’t as yet perceive the meaning in them.”

The storyteller continued: “The chasid stopped at an inn on his way home, and in casual conversation found out that the innkeeper’s infant son had not been circumcised. He was surprised and asked the reason for this. The innkeeper told him that his two previous sons had died because of excessive bleeding after circumcision. The chasid, remembering his Rebbe’s words, asked the innkeeper, ‘If I were to tell you that there existed a cure for this problem of bleeding, would you allow a brit to be performed on your son?’

“‘If my son could be circumcised without the possibility of danger, I would be prepared to pay the mohel a sum of four hundred silver rubles.’

Offers to Assume All Responsibility for Performing the Mitzvah of Bris Milah

“‘I have a very potent medication which will stop any bleeding. Allow me to perform the brit, and I will assume all responsibility. I will even give you four hundred silver rubles of my own, forfeit in the case of any problem, G-d forbid.’

“‘The innkeeper agreed on the stipulation that the mohel remain with them for a full month to watch the child, should any complications develop. The circumcision was performed, and in fact the child did bleed a great deal. But the mohel applied the herbs he had received, and all went well; the bleeding stopped at once. A few days after the brit, news reached the inn that the price of cattle had risen considerably.

The chasid-merchant was anxious to return home and sell his livestock, but the innkeeper was adamant about their agreement, and refused to allow him to leave. Several more days passed, and word arrived that the price of cattle had gone even higher, and the chasid pleaded with his host to allow him to leave, as the baby was

doing quite well. But the innkeeper was unmoved by his argument, and answered that a deal was a deal, and he must remain the full four weeks.

“After the entire month had passed the chasid left the inn. The grateful innkeeper paid him the four hundred silver rubles he had promised and also returned the other four hundred he had held on bond. The cattle dealer was able to sell his cattle for a price far greater than he had ever imagined, making an enormous profit. “When the time came for his customary visit to Berdichev he happily presented his Rebbe with four hundred silver rubles to be used charity, saying: ‘Rebbe, this money rightfully belongs to you!’”

Reprinted from the Parshat Shemini 5784 edition of L’Chaim.

Dayeinu

By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Once there was a king who lost his ring. The king said he would give all those who would search for his ring a substantial sum of money that would allow them to search worry-free. There was a poor Jew there who did not have money to buy what he needed for Passover.

"The king is giving money to all those who are willing to search for his ring," his wife said. "Go and tell the king that you will also search for his ring and the king will give you money, which we will use to buy our Pesach supplies."

The man took his wife's advice, went to the king, and offered to help search for his ring. The king gave him money and he bought an abundance of supplies for Pesach. When the Seder night arrived, the Jew brought many guests to his home and fed them royally.

The King’s Advisor Hated Jews

One of the king's advisors was a priest who hated Jews. He could not tolerate the fact that this Jew had bought his Pesach supplies with the money given to him by the king. On the Seder night, the priest hid under the Jew's window and saw how he, his family and all his guests were eating and drinking in abundance and were not searching for the king's ring at all.

"I am going to show the king what this Jew did with his money," said the priest and he promptly returned with the king. They stood under the window and

saw how the Jew was sitting like a king at the head of his table. But the king had his doubts and tried to make out what was being said around the festive table.

Just as this was happening, the house's inhabitants reached the Dayeinu [portion of the Seder]. This Jew's custom was that when they sang the Dayeinu at the Seder, he would stand up and recite one verse at a time, and all present would repeat the chorus: "Dayeinu, dayeinu" After each verse.

But these Jews were from an area of Europe where "Dayeinu" was pronounced "Dayayni." Incredibly, the priest's name sounded just like "Dayayni." What the king heard was some unintelligible sentence and then the priest's name - again and again.

What the king imagined was happening was that the Jew was investigating who stole the ring. He addressed all his merry helpers and asked them questions about what they had found. Each question was answered with Dayayni's name.

Listening to this "investigation," the king understood that they had found proof that it was the priest who had stolen the ring. He had the priest arrested and beaten until he admitted that he had stolen the ring and returned it. And the Jew had all his needs for Pesach met with great abundance. (inner.org)

Reprinted from the Parshat Shemini 5784 email of The Jewish Weekly.

Remembering Olam Haba

By Aharon Spetner

Shimmy and Yitzy Greenbaum excitedly got on the brand-new hoverboards that Zaidy and Bubby had just bought for them and glided down the street, carrying bags of Toras Avigdor booklets. Riding hoverboards was so much more geshmak than riding their old bikes.

The boys approached Congregation Anshei Maaseh and brought one of the bags inside. After neatly placing the booklets on the bimah, they headed back outside, excited to get back on their boards. But when they got outside, they were dismayed to see that their hoverboards were no longer there!

"Our hoverboards were stolen!" Shimmy said, about to cry. "We were just inside for less than a minute! How could this happen?"

"This is the worst day ever!" Yitzy said, a tear trickling down his cheek. "How could this happen? How could Hashem do this to us?"

* * *

Later that day, Totty and the boys headed to visit their great-uncle Velvel. Uncle Velvel had recently suffered a stroke and had to be moved to a nursing home.

As the boys walked into the nursing home, they looked around at all of the old people. Many were just sitting there, staring into space. A few were playing checkers, and others were just sitting around with grouchy faces.

“What a boring place to be,” Yitzy said. “Uncle Velvel must be miserable here.”

“I don’t think he’s miserable,” Totty said with a smile, pointing down the hallway.

The boys looked, and to their surprise they saw Uncle Velvel sitting at a table learning from a Gemara, a huge smile on his face.

“Hi Uncle Velvel,” Totty said.



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

“Hello!” Uncle Velvel replied joyfully. “It was so nice of all of you to come visit me. And perfect timing too - I just figured out the answer to a kashe I had on this Tosfos for over forty years!”

Uncle Velvel paused, seeing Shimmy and Yitzy’s sad faces. “Is everything okay?” he asked.

Shimmy and Yitzy explained how their brand-new hoverboards had been stolen. “It’s the worst day of our lives,” Yitzy lamented.

Uncle Velvel reached over awkwardly with his left hand to take the glass of water a passing nurse had offered him.

“Since my stroke I can’t use my right hand,” Uncle Velvel explained.

The boys looked at each other uncomfortably, realizing that they must sound like babies complaining to Uncle Velvel about their hoverboards when he could no longer use his right hand.

The Question About the Sudden Deaths of Nadav and Avihu

“Listen boys,” Uncle Velvel said, opening the Chumash that was next to his Gemara. “Boys, look here at Parshas Shmini. The Mishkan had been erected. Klal Yisroel were celebrating. And then, all of a sudden, Aharon’s sons Nadav and Avihu were killed by Hashem. How could Hashem have done something like that on such a happy day?

“And the answer is, because sometimes Hashem needs to remind us that there is more than just this world. We can get so caught up with enjoying ourselves that we can forget that there is a much bigger world waiting for us in Olam Haba.

“Look at me, for example. I was going along with my routine, enjoying life, trying to be a good Jew. But Hashem sent me a message with this stroke, telling me ‘Velvel! You’re not in this world forever! Remember what you’re working towards!’ “Well I didn’t need to be told twice. I immediately realized that I need to start getting more serious about Olam Haba.” Uncle Velvel tapped his Gemara. “I don’t know when, but a day is approaching when I will be given a farher on everything I learned - I need to prepare myself for that day!”

Not Having Their Hoverboards Still Hurt Them

Shimmy and Yitzzy listened to this and thought about it. It made sense, but it still hurt to not have their hoverboards.

Uncle Velvel sensed what the boys were thinking. “I have an eitzah for you,” he said. “Try to think about this lesson. Make a real effort to understand and feel that Olam Haba is more important than anything else. I can’t make any promises, but perhaps you might get your hoverboards back. After all, if you learned the lesson already, there might not be a need for you to no longer have your hoverboards!”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Reprinted from the Parshas Shemini 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.