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A Story of Incredible Generosity and Ahavas Yisroel

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



Joe Teplow helping United Hatzalah after the October 7th Hamas attack

Joe Teplow is a volunteer EMT with the New York branch of Hatzalah. Joe had been visiting Israel for Succos, and as soon as he heard news of the massacre on October 7, he went to the United Hatzalah headquarters to help. Joe will never forget what he saw in the first few days of the war.

One of the things that made an impression on him was everyone's willingness to contribute to the war effort. As soon as they sent out a message saying that the

soldiers needed something — toothpaste, for example — a truck would pull up outside the United Hatzalah building, and a hundred boxes of toothpaste would be deposited on the pavement, there for United Hatzalah to transport to the soldiers in need. Two tons of water were delivered by water companies. It was the same with other goods and supplies.



Eli Beer

When Joe, who had been making himself indispensable, was ready to return home a few days after the war started, he went to say goodbye to United Hatzalah president Eli Beer. “Listen,” he said, “I wish I could stay here longer, but I need to get back to New York.”

“Okay, but I’m going to need you to continue helping me from there.”

“What do you need me to do?”

“I need you to be my man in America to ensure that we have access to supplies that we need. Although today things have changed and we can buy a lot of supplies and equipment in Israel, there is a shortage of certain supplies. I can’t get enough bandages here because they’ve all been sold to other countries like America and Ukraine. There’s also a shortage of tourniquets and special medical scissors.

“Of course, there are also plenty of things that Israel doesn’t manufacture. I need to know that I have someone like you in place to help us obtain those supplies. You will serve as our purchasing agent in the States. You’ll meet with the companies

and negotiate good terms and, most importantly, serve as the liaison with the New York branch of Hatzalah, which also purchases a lot of equipment and will be able to get us good deals. Can you do this for me and for United Hatzalah?”

To his credit, Joe agreed. Little did he know what the job entailed. Though it wouldn't have mattered. Once he agreed, he never wavered or backtracked. He was in — one hundred percent.

The Man to Speak to If You Wanted to Help Israel and United Hatzalah

Practically from the moment Joe landed in New York, people started calling him. The word was out: He was the man to speak to if you wanted to help Israel and United Hatzalah.

Caller: “How can I send diapers to Israel?”

Joe: “We don't need diapers.”

Another caller: “I want to send a batch of undershirts.”

Joe: “We don't need undershirts.”

Joe was on top of the situation, only accepting gear and equipment that was on the list and nothing else. Dovi Maisel, too, arranged to send more bulletproof vests and helmets — the kind of stuff they really needed. Over the next few weeks, Joe was responsible for sending three El Al cargo planes loaded with an immense supply of medical equipment and other vital things to Israel.

The first two planes were free of charge — courtesy of El Al. Upon landing at the airport, they were met by United Hatzalah staff who made sure that customs allowed everything through without taxation, in accordance with a special wartime amendment that was passed in the Knesset.

Also Reached Out for Donations

From there, the equipment was loaded onto United Hatzalah trucks and driven to the main warehouse on the outskirts of Beit Shemesh. Not only did Joe work nonstop as the liaison between United Hatzalah and what seemed at times to be a million people, he also arranged a really good deal for the organization, reaching out to businessman Josh Kushner and asking for his support.

Josh was familiar with United Hatzalah and wanted to help in a big way. “Joe,” Josh said, “I'll make you a deal. You work for one of the most successful Jews in the world, Marc Benioff. Tell Marc that if he donates a million dollars to United Hatzalah, I will match it.” Joe relayed the message, and Marc Benioff agreed without hesitation. Joe now had two million dollars to spend on purchasing equipment and was able to tell Eli and Michael Brown, the hardworking VP of United Hatzalah, to use the money they were raising for other things.

No matter how much money was coming in, endless amounts were flowing out to the extent that it was hard for Eli and his team to keep up with their very real needs. The cost of operating the ambulances on a daily basis was one hundred and fifteen thousand shekels. One hundred fifteen thousand shekels a day. That kind of money adds up very quickly. That is not to mention the cost of operating the command center at Sdei Yoav, the supplies and equipment, and the million other things involved in running an operation like United Hatzalah in wartime.

Phase 3 – Assessing Needs for the Long Haul

If phase 1 was making sure that everyone had what they needed in the first few days of the war and phase 2 was replenishing the warehouses after all the equipment and supplies had been exhausted, now they were at phase 3 — which meant doing their best to assess their needs for the long haul, or, at least, however long the war would last.

There was another factor that Eli and his team had to take into consideration: training all the new volunteers who wanted to join the organization. When 90 Seconds: The Epic Story of Eli Beer and United Hatzalah was published in the beginning of 2023, there were about 6,300 volunteers in United Hatzalah. The goal was to reach 12,000, which would allow them to respond to every emergency in the country in less than ninety seconds. Since that time, the organization has grown. There are now more than 7,000 volunteers — with another 2,500 waiting to join.

The Plan to Train Another 2,100 Volunteers

People around the country have been lining up to join the organization, especially after seeing the volunteers' heroic behavior on Simchas Torah and the number of lives they had saved. They, too, want to join in the effort and do their part. Though United Hatzalah normally trains 700 volunteers a year, the plan right now was to train another 2,100 volunteers in the coming year. But for that to happen, United Hatzalah needed to be able to pay for it: the cost of training one volunteer is ten thousand dollars.

This means that the budget just for training volunteers was projected to reach twenty-one million dollars in 2024. Aside from all this, United Hatzalah is constructing a new three-story building in Sderot. And then there are all the new vehicles that need to be purchased for the coming year and the upkeep, as well as the new medical machines, the epipens, and the defibrillators. The expenses never stop.

But unlike in the past when this would have made Eli extremely nervous, now he is confident that the money will arrive — because, as he says, “our people know what’s going on, and I know that they’re going to be there for us.”

Sometimes Eli will look at a group of donors meeting with him and say, “Right now we need to raise money for more bulletproof vests. I know that you are people who care about Israel and want United Hatzalah to be able to deal with emergencies under fire. But for that to happen, we need more vests. This is the situation. Are you in?” And time after time they are. Because they really care.

Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Angels in Orange – Uplifting Stories of Courage, Faith and Miracles from the United Hatzalah Heroes of October 7th” by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer.

The Dry Pair of Socks

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



Portrait by Herman Strouk (1876-1944)

Rabbi Akiva Eiger was traveling on a wagon to a certain town. Suddenly, it began to rain. The rain kept on getting heavier and heavier. The water was filling the ditches on the roads and turning the hard earth into soft mud. Soon, not only was the entire wagon filled with water but also one of the wagon’s wheels got jammed in the mud. When the wagon driver hopped off to take it out, the water came up to his knees. Once the wheel was finally out of the mud and the driver got back onto the wagon, he had to take his shoes off to let them dry.

Rabbi Eiger saw the discomfort the driver felt from having soaking wet and cold socks and felt his pain. He then handed him a pair of dry socks which the wagon driver greatly appreciated.

When they reached their destination, the wagon driver saw Rav Eiger with shoes but no socks and immediately felt very guilty for having used the socks of the great Rav. Rav Eiger, seeing his guilt, felt the need to comfort him. He said, “When I saw you in wet socks, I felt that it’s not fair for me to sit here in dry shoes and socks.”

Reprinted from Parshas Mishpatim 5784 email of Torah Sweets edited by Mendel Berlin.

Rav Kalman’s Secret



Rav Kalman Krohn, zt”l

Rav Chayim Tzvi Blau writes a story about Shlomo (name is changed), a young man who was struggling with his Yiddishkeit. One Shavuot, he was staying by his brother’s house in Lakewood, and he wandered into the great Bais Medrash of Bais Medrash Gavoha. He walked into a room and listened in as Rav Kalman Krohn, zt”l, was telling stories to some younger children.

Rav Kalman told them that when he was finished with the stories, he would reveal to them a great secret. This really caught Shlomo’s interest, and he decided to stay until the stories were over. When the stories had ended, Rav Kalman said over his secret to the children. “If a person goes to the Mikvah on Shavuot morning before daybreak, and then he cries himself out during Shacharis by the Brachah of Ahavah Rabbah, he will have unbelievable Hatzlachah that year!”

Shlomo was very inspired by this idea, and he did exactly what Rav Kalman had said to do, and that year, he had a complete turnaround in his life for the better. As the year played out and he got involved in Shidduchim, he met someone who was really wonderful, and he got engaged around Purim time, and his Chasunah was the day after the next Shavuot!

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

The Best Field Trip Ever

By Aharon Spetner

“Hi, Yitzy!” Pinny greeted his friend with a huge smile, as the two boys met at the bus stop.

“Hi Pinny!” Yitzy responded excitedly. “I’m so excited for the trip!”

“Me too!” said Binyomin, joining his friends. “This is going to be the best school trip ever!”

The three friends talked animatedly about all of the fun things they were looking forward to on their class’s annual trip. This year they were going to Super Geshmak Fantastic Land - the best kosher theme park in the world!

“Look, a painted bunting!” Yitzy suddenly exclaimed.

“A painted what?” asked Pinny.

“See that colorful bird over there?” Yitzy said, pointing at a tree down the street. “That’s called a painted bunting. It’s really rare to see them in New York. I’m going to get a closer look.”

“But Yitzy,” said Binyomin. “Rebbe Caplan said that everyone needs to be at the bus stop in time and they aren’t going to wait for anyone who is late.”

“It’s fine, I’ll be right back!” Yitzy said, running off to see the bird.

Noticing that His Friends Were No Longer There

Yitzy approached the tree where the colorful bird was sitting on a branch. True to its name, the bird looked like someone had painted it in brilliant shades of red, blue, and green. Yitzy stood there for a few minutes, mesmerized, before suddenly looking back and noticing that his friends were no longer there.

Yitzy rushed back to the bus stop, tears welling up in his eyes. He looked down at his watch - it was 8:35! The bus to Super Geshmak Fantastic Land had left without him.

“Is everything okay?” came a kind voice, as tears streamed down Yitzy’s cheeks.



Illustrated by Miriam Weinreb

Yitzy turned to see an old man approaching him in a wheelchair.

“No,” Yitzy sobbed. “The bus to Super Geshmak Fantastic Land left without me. I walked away to look at a bird and now I’m going to miss the class trip.” Yitzy covered his face with his hands and continued to cry.

“Look at me for a second,” said the man.

Yitzy removed his hands from his face and was shocked to see that the man was missing one of his legs.

The man smiled. “You’re probably wondering what happened to my leg,” he said.

Yitzy didn’t know how to respond.

“Doctors Told Me They Would Have to Amputate My Leg”

“Years ago, I got into a terrible car accident. Boruch Hashem I was alive, but the doctors told me that they would have to amputate my leg.”

“That must have been terrible,” Yitzy said compassionately.

“That’s what most people think, but my father always taught us that everything Hashem does to us is for the best. If Hashem does it, no matter how bad it seems, then it is actually good for us, and if we understood why, we would actually thank him for it!”

“Really?” asked Yitzy in wonder. “Even something as bad as losing a leg?”
Beep beep!

The Ice Cream was Driven by None Other than His Rebbe

Yitzy looked up to see an ice cream truck pull up, driven by none other than his rebbe, Rabbi Caplan!

“Hi Yitzy!” Rabbi Caplan called. “It looks like you missed the bus! I rented this ice cream truck so the boys can all enjoy delicious ice cream on our trip today. How would you like to ride with me to Super Geshmak Fantastic Land? I’ll need someone to taste all of the flavors so we can know which ones everyone will like best!”

Yitzy couldn’t believe his ears! Not only would he get to go on the trip after all, but to ride in an ice cream truck? And to spend the ride sampling all of the ice cream flavors??? This was turning out to be the best day ever!

“Thank you so much, Rebbe!” Yitzy gushed climbing into the front of the truck.

Yitzy paused before closing the door and turned to the old man in the wheelchair. “Wait,” he said. “You didn’t tell me what happened after you lost your leg. How did that turn out for the best?”

The old man smiled. “Well, Yitzy, honestly I don’t know for sure. Hashem doesn’t always show us how things are better. But in Parshas Mishpatim we learn about how if an eved gets hit by his master and loses his tooth, the slave then goes free as a result. Rav Avigdor Miller says that often when something seemingly bad happens to us, it is to ‘free us’ from our aveiros, to give us a kapparah. I can’t know for sure until after 120, but I am 100% confident that if Hashem took my leg, then it is the best possible thing that could happen to me. Have fun on your trip!”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

Hashem is always doing things for our benefit.
Even when it seems bad, it is always for our ultimate good.

Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, a publication based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

Fans and Players

By Dovid Zaklikowski



The last trolley of the evening rolled by as a jolly young Shimshon Stock ushered a close acquaintance and his soon-to-be-Bar-Mitzvahed son into the synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway.

Inside “770,” as Lubavitch headquarters is known, was the study and office of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who a few years earlier had accepted the leadership of this small Chassidic community.

At the time, the Rebbe had only a handful of representatives scattered across Israel, America, Europe and North Africa; but he was already relentlessly and tirelessly building a global network of communities.

Shimshon introduced his friend and his friend’s son to the Rebbe, who greeted them with his comforting and warm handshake, requesting them to please take a seat.

The Rebbe briefly blessed the boy that he should grow to become a source of pride to the Jewish people and to his family. As they turned to leave, Rebbe surprised the three Americans with the question he addressed to the youngster: “Are you a baseball fan?”

The Bar-Mitzvah boy replied that he was.

“Which team are you a fan of — the Yankees or the Dodgers?”

“The Dodgers”, replied the boy.

“Does your father have the same feeling for the Dodgers as you have?”

“No.”

“Does he take you out to games?”

"Well, every once in a while my father takes me to a game. We were at a game a month ago."

“How was the game?”

"It was disappointing, the 13-year-old confessed. By the sixth inning, the Dodgers were losing nine-to-two, so we decided to leave."

“Did the players also leave the game when you left?”

"Rabbi, the players can't leave in the middle of the game!"



Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l, circa early 1950s

“Why not?” asked the Rebbe. “Explain to me how this works.”

"There are players and fans", the baseball fan explained. "The fans can leave when they like — they're not part of the game and the game could, and does, continue after they leave. But the players need to stay and try to win until the game is over."

“That is the lesson I want to teach you in Judaism,” said the Rebbe with a smile. “You can be either a fan or a player. Be a player.”

Outside 770 father and son said goodbye to Shimshon, the three now sharing a new admiration of a pioneer in Jewish education.

Reprinted from the Parashat Mishpatim 5784 edition of L’Chaim, a weekly publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.

One Action Multiplies Manyfold

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

I heard the following story from a friend [Yaakov].

Yaakov told me that around 1980, he was working in a bank by Kings Highway and Coney Island. When he applied for the job, he informed them that he is Shabbos observant and they replied, we have other workers that will cover your responsibility on Shabbos.

This went on for a few years. One day Mr. Herman came over to Yaakov and said, “In a few weeks on Shabbos is my fortieth anniversary. Do you think I should ask to be excused from work that day. I want to get an Aliyah by the Torah on this special day.

Yankel responded, Yes, and I don’t think the manager will give you a hard time, especially as you are giving him two-week’s notice. Mr. Herman then went to the manager and said, “In two weeks on Saturday is my fortieth anniversary, and I would like to spend the entire day with my wonderful wife. May I have the day off?

The Manager Graciously Agrees to Give Mr. Herman the Day Off

Of course, such an occasion doesn’t happen every day or to everyone. I will find a replacement and enjoy the day. Congratulations!

Mr. Herman then went to the shul he goes to a few times a year and asked them if he can have an Aliyah on that Shabbos. The gabbai replied, With pleasure, it would be our honor.

He came home and when he informed his wife of his decision, she was overjoyed. “I will put on a beautiful dress in honor of this occasion, and I too will attend the services in the synagogue.”

The Shabbos came and they walked together to shul. She stood next to the balcony, so she can see her husband being called up to the Torah, and clearly hearing him make the blessing.

He didn’t disappoint her. He remembered not only the brocha and said it fluently, but he also said it with the proper tune. She was overjoyed, or as we say in Yiddish, she kvelled with nachas.

After the kiddush in shul, they walked home together, and as he said, he spent the entire day talking and taking a walk with his wife.

The Wife’s Great Desire to Spend Every Shabbos With Her Husband

Towards evening she said to him, My dear, thank you for such a wonderful present. I enjoyed this day tremendously. I have one request, why can’t we spend every Sabbath like this? Why do you have to work on the Sabbath, can’t they get someone else?

Mr. Herman replied, If that is your desire, I will request it from the manager. On Monday when he entered, the manager came over to him and asked, Your wife enjoyed the anniversary present?

Mr. Herman was thrilled that he brought it up, and replied; she loved it so much that she told me to request that I no longer have to work on Saturday, as this way we can spend the weekend together.

The manager replied, I will work on it, but for a permanent change, you have to submit a request four weeks in advance.

Mr. Herman replied, "I understand. So, if you can find someone in a week or two, I will really appreciate it. If not, I will come in for the next four Saturdays.

He then went over to his co-worker Yankel and said to him, "Your few words of encouragement gave me the strength to ask for this past Shabbos, as well as for the future.

The power of a few words and doing one mitzvah. Look what it leads to.

Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5784 email of Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber Avtzon's Weekly Story.

Rav Ya'akov Kamentetzky's Mother's Name

By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman



Rav Ya'akov Kamenetsky and Rav Menachem Shach

In the early 1980's, the venerable Rosh Yeshivah of Torah Vodaas, R' Ya'akov Kamenetzky zt"l, suffered an angina attack, and his doctor strongly recommended that he undergo an angiogram, a difficult and sometimes dangerous procedure for a man of that age. The Kamenetzky family was understandable concerned about the procedure and took extra measures to ensure the Rosh Yeshivah's safety.

Among other things, family members went around asking and receiving berachot from various gedolim on behalf of R' Ya'akov. A grandson of R' Ya'akov was learning in Bnei Brak in the Ponevezher Yeshivah at the time and decided to

approach the venerable Rosh Yeshivah, R' Eliezer Menachem Mann Shach zt"l, with a request to pray for R' Ya'akov's welfare.

The Grandson Tries to Find Out His Grandfather's Mother's Name

When one prays for a sick person, he mentions the person's name and his or her mother's name in the blessing. The grandson did not know R' Ya'akov's mother's name, since he could not recall a single time when there had been a need to mention his grandfather's name in the blessing for the sick. As he was unable to call his family back in America to get the necessary information, the young man embarked on a search expedition throughout the city of Bnei Brak, to get the name. After much time and effort, he finally located a relative who thought he knew the name. Relieved that he had obtained this hard-to-find information, he prepared himself to go to R' Shach.

Armed with the names and the most recent update on his grandfather's condition, he approached the home of R' Shach with trepidation. R' Shach warmly welcomed him in and set his mind at ease. The elderly Sage knew the bachur and his lineage, and after inviting him into the sparsely furnished dining room and offering him a seat, he asked how his grandfather, R' Ya'akov, was feeling.

The bachur turned white. "That is exactly why I came," he stammered. "My grandfather is not feeling well and must undergo a procedure. I came to inform the Rosh Yeshivah..."

A Special Prayer for Reb Ya'akov ben Etki

Immediately, R' Shach jumped up from his chair and exclaimed, "Quick, we must say a special prayer for Reb Ya'akov ben Etki!"

The grandson stood open-mouthed and in shock. R' Shach knew the name of his great-grandmother! The very information which he had labored to uncover – and the Rosh Yeshivah already knew it! He was unable to contain himself.

"Rebbe," he began meekly, "for the last twelve hours I have been trying to find out my great-grandmother's name in order to present it to the Rosh Yeshivah. Now I see that the Rosh Yeshivah already knows the name. How is this possible?"

R' Shach explained. "Years ago, your grandfather visited Eress Yisrael. I was privileged to get to know him then, and he left such an incredible impression on me. Right then and there, I asked him for his mother's name. I could not imagine a Jewish world without a healthy R' Ya'akov, and there is not a single day that goes by that I do not say a special prayer for his welfare!" (Torah Tavlin)

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