

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5785

Volume 16, Issue 8 15 Cheshvon 5785/November 16, 2024

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

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Something Money Can't Buy



Kivi Bernhard and Bill Gates

Kivi Bernhard, a jeweler living in Atlanta, is an international motivational speaker. The author of the internationally acclaimed business book: *Leopardology: The Hunt for Profit in a Tough Global Economy*, is a frequent popular speaker for large corporate events. He is also an observant Jew.

Some time ago, Microsoft invited him through his agent to present a keynote address at their conference for senior executives from all over the world. Kivi looked at the date. The keynote address was scheduled for Shabbat, and the presentation

would require the use of electronic devices, power points, videos, mics, and recordings, so Kivi apologized to his agent and politely declined to attend.

A senior Microsoft executive decided to resolve the issue by offering Bernhard almost double his speaking fee. He explained that the meeting had been set a year and a half in advance and it could not be changed at this point. He also explained that the bulk of the event centered on Bernhard's theories presented in Leopardology.

Kivi once again apologized and remained adamant that he would not speak on Shabbat.

The Tempting Test

At some point, the executive at Microsoft was ready to pay him an astronomical fee of six figures. Tempting as it was, Kivi knew that was his test. He explained to Microsoft's Senior Global VP that he was not declining because he wanted more money, but that G-d told the Jewish people to observe Shabbat, and that his Jewish observance was his priority.

They deliberated and called him back to let him know they would reschedule the entire conference to Sunday. He said that would work and that the original price would work too. Indeed, the Microsoft conference opened with a keynote address by Kivi Bernhard.

Accommodating “a Jew’s Observance of the Sabbath”

A few weeks later, the Microsoft VP reached out once again to Kivi about an experience he had while on a private jet with Bill Gates. The executive related to Mr. Gates the unusual experience of having to reschedule an entire conference for Microsoft in order to accommodate “a Jew’s observance of the Sabbath.”

The VP told Kivi that the story made quite an impact on Mr. Gates, who remarked, “There are some things that just cannot be bought with money... I guess the Sabbath is one of them.”

Bill Gate’s Understanding Of What is True Wealth

Kivi shared the story and said that it was Bill Gates who allowed him to grasp the value and meaning of his sacrifice. Bill Gates gave him an understanding of wealth, and that having Shabbat is an example of true wealth, as it is priceless.

Reprinted from the Rosh Hashana 5785 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teaching of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

A Time to Marry and A Time to Forgive

By Rabbi David Ashear

Dovid was about to marry off his youngest daughter. Shortly before the wedding, his business collapsed. His oldest son, whom we'll call Binyamin, noticed his father's worried mien and asked him what was wrong. His father told him about the failure of his business.

"I honestly don't know how I'll be able to afford the wedding," he admitted.

"Don't worry," Binyomin told his father. "I will pay your share."

Then the father found out that the chosson's family could not afford their share, either, and his worries returned. Binyomin stepped up again and offered to pay for the entire wedding.

"Can you afford to do this?" asked his father, overwhelmed.

"I have some things I can sell," Binyomin assured him. "It would be my pleasure."

With no other options, Binyomin's father accepted his offer, even though it was very embarrassing for him to have his son pay for his own sister's wedding. Binyomin assured him he would not tell anyone about it. The only ones who would know were the chosson and his parents. Together, they decided they would use the chosson's and kallah's monetary gifts to help defray the wedding costs, and Binyomin would make up the difference.

On the night of the wedding, they gave Binyomin the code to the safe into which the gift envelopes were placed. As the wedding celebration drew to an end, he opened the safe, removed the envelopes, and began stuffing them into his pockets. Just then, a relative – we'll call him Shmuel – walked into the room and saw what was going on. "You thief!" he shouted. "You should be ashamed of yourself! I can't believe you're taking the wedding money!"

He strode over to Binyomin, wrested the envelopes out of his hands, and plucked the remaining ones from his pockets. Binyomin remained silent. He joined his wife and told her he was ready to leave. It was not until they were home that he told her what had happened.

"Why didn't you tell Shmuel that you were supposed to take those envelopes?" she asked incredulously.

"I couldn't," Binyomin replied. "No one can find out that I'm helping to pay for this wedding."

The next day, Shmuel called Binyomin. Somehow, he had found out what Binyomin had been doing. Now he was terribly embarrassed about having accused him of stealing. “Please forgive me!” he entreated.

“Okay,” Binyomin said.

“I’m sure you don’t really mean it,” Shmuel retorted.

To which Binyomin replied, “You’re right, but I’m going to work on myself.” Shmuel decided to help Binyomin find a shidduch for one of his children who, due to various issues, seemed unlikely to get married. He spent all his free time calling shadchanim from around the world, trying to find a match. Finally, six months later, he facilitated a shidduch.

At the joyous engagement party, the two relatives hugged each other, crying emotionally. Binyomin told Shmuel, “The only way my child could ever have gotten married would have been if I hired someone to work on a shidduch for six months straight, leaving no stone unturned. And you did that for me! I don’t know what to say.”

“Please, just forgive me for what I did to you,” Shmuel begged.

“Of course,” Binyomin said, this time with his whole heart. (Living Emunah on Shidduchim)

Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Cohen Family and the Pecking Bird



There is a true story about the Cohen family who recently had a very strange problem. One day, out of nowhere, a bird began to peck continuously at his window. As days and weeks went on, the bird came every morning and relentlessly pecked at the window. The family tried many ways to drive it away, both physically and spiritually, and still, the bird returned every morning.

The father, Rabbi Aaron Cohen, understood that this was some sort of message from Hashem, but he couldn't figure out what it was. After weeks with no solution in sight, he went to the Kotel to pray and beg Hashem to show him what to do to solve the problem.

The Explanation of the Targum Yonatan

While he was praying and saying Tehillim, he suddenly remembered a Targum Yonatan from Parashat Metzora. The Torah describes the purification process of the metzora—a person afflicted with leprosy after speaking lashon hara. The metzora brings two birds to the Kohen. One is slaughtered, and the other is set free. On this passuk, the Targum Yonatan comments that if the metzora speaks lashon hara again, the bird that was set free will come to his house as a reminder to do teshuva.

Rabbi Cohen remembered something else. His family had a routine to learn two halachot of lashon hara every day, but that had gone to the wayside because one of the daughters had recently gotten married, and with all the preparations and commotion before the wedding, they had neglected to learn the daily halachot. The wedding had passed a month earlier, and they never restarted their nightly ritual.

The Family Resumes Learning Two Halachot of Lashon Hora Every Day

He rushed home, convinced this was the answer, and the family immediately resumed their previous custom to learn two halachot of lashon hara every day. The day they started again, the bird came to the window, but it just sat there and watched without pecking. After that, it left and never returned.

The laws of lashon hara are very intricate, but if we just start by reviewing the halachot, it can make a tremendous impact on our daily lives. Whether deciding to review the halachot of LH or to wear a kippah just at work as a start, small changes can be just as purifying as any big ones and likely even more successful. Rav Shach, a gadol hador, once publicly committed to saying birkat hamazon from a siddur instead of by heart. We all have ways to improve ourselves; we have to think, and we'll find them.

Reprinted from the Shabbat Yom Kippur 5785 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

Staying in Debt

By Rabbi Yisroel Besser



The Nesivos Shalom

A chassid once went to speak with the Slonimer Rebbe (Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky), the mechaber of the sefer Nesivos Shalom. The chassid had been involved in a serious vehicular accident, and he had miraculously emerged without injury.

He wanted to express his gratitude to the Ribbono shel Olam, and he asked the Rebbe to guide him as to how to properly repay the debt.

“If you are asking my advice,” the Nesivos Shalom said, “then I would suggest that you do not repay the debt!”

The Rebbe explained. “If you find some symbolic way of expressing hoda’ah, then you will have discharged this obligation, and then you will move on. Rather, instead of doing something, I think you should live your life like a baal chov, someone who is in debt, aware at every moment, with each decision and choice that you make, that He gave you your life as a gift.”

Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5785 edition of At the ArtScroll Yom Tov Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Aleinu – The Power and the Pride.”

Rav Yosef Chaim's Vision

By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman

For they are a generation of reversals, children whose upbringing is not in them
(Devarim 32:20).



Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld

The great Rav of Jerusalem, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, offered an original interpretation of our verse, which transforms it into a message of hope and rebirth.

In the year 5674 (1914), a distinguished group of rabbanim in Eretz Yisrael embarked on what came to be known as “The Teshuvah Campaign.” The rabbanim were led by “R’ Chaim,” as Rav Sonnenfeld was fondly known; Rabbi Ben Zion Yadler, the Maggid of Jerusalem; and Rabbi

Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who was then Rav of Jaffa.

This delegation traveled to settlements throughout Northern Israel, exhorting the settlers to embrace a life of Torah and observe the Land-related mitzvos. In one settlement, Rav Kook delivered an impassioned address, exhorting the people to go in the ways of their ancestors and observe the mitzvos, in particular the mitzvah of Shemittah which is a great declaration of the farmer’s faith in Hashem.

When Rav Kook stepped down from the podium, one of the settlement’s leaders arose and brazenly told the rabbanim that they were wasting their time. “Leave us alone!” he shouted. “Your old-fashioned ways do not interest us. We will build a modern land with modern ideas and your own descendants will follow our lead.”

Upon hearing such blasphemy, Rav Kook burst into tears. R’ Chaim then ascended the podium and in a loud, confident tone declared: Rav of Jaffa, and all those who are assembled here: It is true that at this point in time, matters do not look good for those like ourselves who strive to make this Land

what G-d intends it to be — a land of Torah, of mitzvos, of faith in Hashem. But I tell you with certainty: ki dor tahpuchos heimah, there will come a generation of reversals, banim lo aimun bam, children whose upbringing is not in them.

“Yes, the previous speaker and those like him are bent on raising a generation that will not know the Name of Hashem and the greatness of His Torah. But I assure you that a generation will come that will reject the empty, meaningless life of which you preach. That generation will reverse this terribly destructive approach. They will return to Hashem with all their hearts and will fill the Land with people who love the Torah and observe the mitzvos — including the precious mitzvah of Shemittah. U’dvar eilokeinu yakum l’olam, But the word of our G-d shall stand forever.

Before Shemittah 5754 (1993-1994), a gathering of farmers in Northern Israel was held in Chatzor. Hundreds of farmers came to hear a major address by Rabbi Yaakov Meir Sonnenfeld, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah in Kfar Chassidim and a great-grandson of R’ Chaim’s. In his address, Rav Sonnenfeld related the above story and concluded that the commitment of so many farmers to keep Shemittah 5754 was a fulfillment of his great-grandfather’s words.

No sooner had he uttered these words than a very old man sitting in the crowd waved his cane to catch Rav Sonnenfeld’s attention. He indicated that he wanted to ascend the stage and speak. Two men helped him up, and Rav Sonnenfeld gave him the podium. This is what he said:

“I was there 80 years ago, at that settlement when that gathering took place. I vividly recall the settlement leader’s harsh words, Rav Kook’s tears, and Rav Sonnenfeld’s fiery response. And I must confess: Neither I, nor any of the other settlers who were present, believed that Rav Sonnenfeld’s words would ever come true.

“This week, when I saw the posters announcing that there would be a major gathering for farmers who will be shomrei Shevi’is (observers of Shemittah), I felt that I simply had to come and tell everyone: Rav Sonnenfeld was right! The Land is becoming filled with those who are faithful to the word of Hashem. I never dreamed that I would hear Rav Sonnenfeld’s great-grandson tell the story that I was witness to ... U’dvar eilokeinu yakum l’olam, But the word of our G-d shall stand forever.”

Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5785 edition of At the ArtScroll Yom Tov Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - :Living the Parsha” by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman.

Ein Od Milvado



The Brisker Rav

In the early stages of World War Two, the Brisker Rav (Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Halevi Soloveitchik, 1886-1959) fled together with most of his family from Warsaw to Vilna. For three days, their traveling party was in great danger.

The Brisker Rav took upon himself to follow the advice of his ancestor Rav Chaim of Volozhin in *Nefesh HaChaim* (3:12). Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes that one should reflect constantly on the phrase, “Ein od milevado,” in times of danger. No matter what was going on around them, the Brisker Rav thought only about this verse and its implications.

When it came time for Minchah, the Brisker Rav asked that the wagons stop so that he could daven properly, as it was difficult for him to concentrate in a moving wagon. His fellow passengers, however, were up-in-arms over the idea of delaying their journey in light of the danger in which they found themselves.

The Rav announced that he had no objections if they continued, but for his part, he would daven where he was, and follow after the party later. Out of respect for him, his fellow passengers agreed to wait. When they reached the next city on their journey, they found the streets empty of Jews. The streets were swarming with German soldiers, and it was only through a *nes* (miracle) that they didn't notice the Brisker Rav's wagons.

A gentile woman called out to the Brisker Rav's party to flee the city immediately because the Germans had already gathered the city's Jews and taken them away. The Brisker Rav's fellow passengers all expressed their amazement at the Rav's ruach hakodesh which had delayed them long enough to avoid the Germans.

But the Rav dismissed the suggestion that anything extraordinary had taken place. "What I did was perfectly logical," he said. "I asked myself what reason is there to hurry. There we will be in danger, and here we are in danger; if so, there is no reason not to daven properly. Anyone who acts according to the halachah is zoche to the fulfillment of the words of the Medrash (Devarim Rabbah 4:5), 'No man who listens to Me will lose because of it.'"

Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5785 email of Chayeinu Weekly. Compiled by Tzvi Schultz.

A Different Type of Teshubah (Repentance)

By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka



Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

When we think of teshubah (repentance), we usually recall the sins that we've committed or the misvot that we've neglected to perform. Indeed, that is the basic level of repentance, to wipe out the sins from our records. However, there is another concept that we should also focus on, especially during these days of teshubah.

There was a great Rabbi, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the Netziv, who once invited his family and friends to a festive meal. He explained that he had just finished composing a very complex sefer, and wanted to celebrate. At the meal, he told his guests that when he was a young boy, he was a playful child, not interested in studying.

One day, he heard his father tell his mother, "It looks like our son is not cut out to be a Torah scholar. Maybe we should teach him a profession so that he could hopefully be successful in his trade." The young boy burst into his parents' room and cried out, "Please give me one more chance and I'll apply myself to my studies!" His parents gave him another chance to prove himself, and the rest was history.



The Netziv, zt"l

The Rabbi then concluded his speech by saying, "Imagine if I had become a tailor, a pious Jew who learns every day for a while, and after 120 years went to the Heavenly court. I would think that my judgment would be based on my life as a tailor, but the Heavenly court would show me this book that I have just completed, and would ask me, 'Where is this work that you could have written?'"

Of course, I would be shocked and speechless because I would never have dreamed that I was capable of

writing such a sefer. But we see now that I was given the ability to write such a book. That is why I am celebrating today - because I will be able to say that, at least in this matter, I did what I was capable of doing and fulfilled my potential."

We see from here that when we do teshubah, it's not enough to just consider our transgressions. We should also ask ourselves, "Are we living up to our potential?" Hashem has given us so much talent and capability, but we sometimes neglect to utilize it and maximize it. We need to recognize our skills and exert ourselves a little more in the service of Hashem. In these days of teshubah, let us re-examine our lives, our gifts and our proficiencies, our accomplishments and our goals, and let us see where we can make a difference.

*Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5785
email of the Jersey Shore Torah
Bulletin*

The Real War!

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

Shimmy and Yitzy huffed and puffed as they shlepped the grocery bags up the steps to the house next-door. Their neighbor, Irving Blumenbaum, had just undergone surgery and the Greenbaums had offered to do his shopping for him until he recovered.

Shimmy rang the doorbell.

“Come in!” came a voice and they pushed the door open to see their neighbor coming towards them in his wheelchair.

“Hi boys!” said the always-cheerful Mr. Blumenbaum. “Thank you so much for helping me.”

“You’re welcome, Mr. Blumenbaum,” said Shimmy. “Would you like us to help you put the groceries away?”

“Oh wow!” said Mr. Blumenbaum. “You boys really do have unbelievable middos. Why yes, that would be a great help.”

So the two boys quickly unloaded the groceries and put everything away.

“Boys,” said Mr. Blumenbaum as they were finishing. “Would you mind putting one of those tissue boxes in the back room?”

The Room was Filled with Army and War-Related Things

“Sure!” they exclaimed and ran down the hall. When they got to the back room, however, they stopped. There on the wall, was a picture of a bunch of soldiers jumping out of a helicopter in a field! And on the table next to the window was an old US Army uniform with the name “I. Blumenbaum”. They looked around and saw that the entire room was filled with army and war-related things. There was even what looked like a real grenade on the shelf!

A voice made them jump. “Do you boys find my military keepsakes interesting?” Mr. Blumenbaum was sitting his wheelchair in the doorway, still smiling.

“Oh, we’re so sorry!” Yitzy said and he quickly put the box of tissues on the table next to the army uniform. “But this room looks so interesting! Were you in the army?”

“I was,” Mr. Blumenbaum answered. “I actually fought in Vietnam.” He pointed at the picture on the wall. “That’s me right there, jumping out of the helicopter.”

“Wow,” breathed Shimmy. “But why did you jump out of the helicopter instead of waiting for it to finish landing? It seems so dangerous!”

Under Constant Attack by Enemy Gunfire and Rockets

“It definitely is dangerous to jump out of a helicopter while it is still in the air,” agreed Mr. Blumenbaum. “But waiting until it landed in this case would have been even more dangerous! You see, this was right in the middle of North Vietnam during a time of intense fighting. We were constantly under attack from gunfire and rockets. Why, just a few minutes after this picture was taken, another helicopter full of soldiers was actually hit by a rocket!”

The boys listened in awe as Mr. Blumenbaum went on to tell them harrowing stories of the war, how he used to wade out into the middle of a big river in order to see whether there were enemy soldiers downstream, and how he was even hit in the left arm with shrapnel from an exploding bomb!

“That’s incredible, Mr. Blumenbaum,” said Shimmy. “Being at war in Vietnam must have been the most intense period of your entire life!”

In Tougher Battles than in Vietnam

Mr. Blumenbaum's smile faded slightly. "Oh no, Shimmy," he said seriously. "Not at all. I have been in battles that were much tougher than in Vietnam."

"You fought in Iraq?" Shimmy asked.

"Nah, not Iraq," Mr. Blumenbaum said. "This is a war that I'm still fighting in right now."

"Oh, was that why you just had surgery?" asked Shimmy. "Were you hit by another rocket?"

"No, no, no," said Mr. Blumenbaum. "This isn't a war with rockets. It's much more dangerous and intense than that."

"Like what?" asked Shimmy again. "Nuclear bombs???"

Even Worse than Nuclear Bombs!

"Even worse than nuclear bombs!" exclaimed Mr. Blumenbaum as the boys got fearful looks on their faces. "I'm talking about the war against the Yetzer Hora! — the war that lasts our entire life! And while rockets and bombs are scary and dangerous, they still can only hurt us in Olam Hazei. But the Yetzer Hora? He tries to destroy our Olam Habah as well!

"You know, when I was out in the bush in Vietnam, we had to constantly be careful. Every noise, every movement we made, we never knew where the Viet Cong might be hiding, waiting to attack us. Even going out to go to the bathroom was risky! But with the Yetzer Hora it's a million times more dangerous! In the milchemes hayetzer, we have to be careful not only about how we talk and act, but even how we think!"

The Real Fight is With the Yetzer Hora

"Boys," finished Mr. Blumenbaum. "It's late and you should be getting home before your mother worries. But take one more good look around at the army paraphernalia, the pictures of guns, bombs and helicopters, and this old deactivated grenade. And remember, the fight against the Yetzer Hora is the real fight. Every second, the enemy is waiting to jump and you must be ready for him so you can win the war!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Teitzei 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l.