

Shabbos Stories For Parshas vayigash 5786

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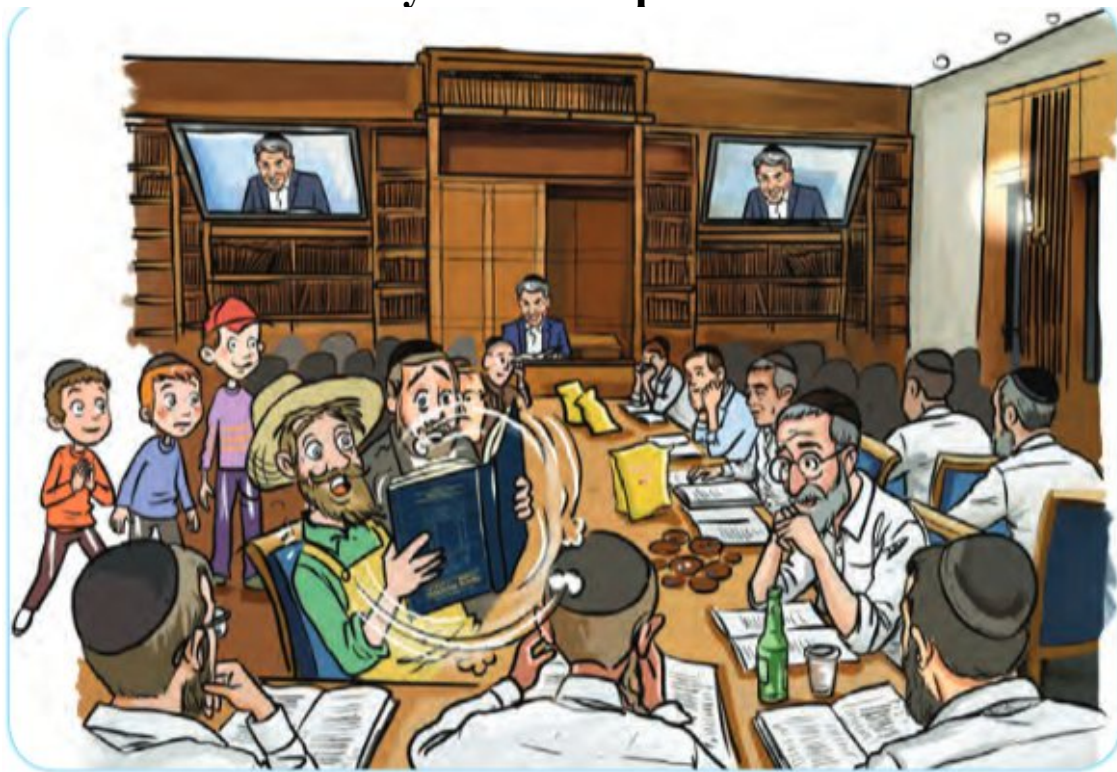
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Staying Close

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

“Hey Shimmy! Hey Yitzy!”

Shimmy and Yitzy looked up as they walked out of the house into the cool brisk night and saw their neighbor, Stevey Risnik, waving at them.

“Hi Stevey,” Shimmy and Yitzy both said politely.

“Look at this!” Stevey said, holding up a flyer.

“This is for a non-Jewish school,” said Yitzy, taking the flyer and reading it.

“Yeah!” said Stevey brightly. “Look! They have basketball classes taught by a professional basketball player - so instead of struggling to read the Mishnah, I can be learning how to bounce a ball better!”

“Why do you want to stop learning Torah to learn how to bounce a ball?” asked Shimmy.

“Because I’m not good at learning Torah,” Stevey said. “Whenever the rabbi in school talks about Torah, my brain thinks about basketball and rocketships and race cars. So, I’m going to ask my parents to send me to a school that is better for me.”

Shimmy and Yitzy looked at each other, horrified.

“Stevey, did you daven Maariv yet?” asked Yitzy, an idea forming in his head.

“Maariv? On a Sunday?” Stevey said, confused. “I only daven Maariv on Shabbat.”

“Come with us,” said Yitzy. “We don’t get to talk often. Let’s walk to shul together - it will be fun and Maariv only takes fifteen minutes.”

With nothing better to do, Stevey stuffed the flyer into his pocket and joined the Greenbaum boys on their walk to shul.

“So, are you guys going to be like big rabbis or something?” asked Stevey.

“I dunno,” said Shimmy. “We’re still kids.”

“Yeah, but in your school, you guys learn so much Torah - I mean what’s the point unless you’re going to be like rosh yashivas or something? Are you the best in your classes?”

Both boys shook their heads. “No, we’re not the best,” Yitzy said.

The boys arrived at shul and walked inside. Rabbi Stefnotsky was giving his world-famous Amud Yomi shiur. The boys listened while waiting for the shiur to end.

“Who’s that man over there holding his Gemara upside down?” whispered Stevey.

“Oh, that’s Farmer Bazoigenstein,” said Shimmy. “He always comes here.”

After davening, as everyone left, Farmer Richard Bazoigenstein stopped and wished the boys good night.

“I don’t believe I’ve had the pleasure of making your acquaintance,” Farmer Richard said, holding his hand out to Stevey. “I’m Farmer Richard. Are you new in town?”

“Uh, hi, I’m Stevey,” Stevey replied. “I uh no, I uh go to a different shul.”

“Well, it’s always great to meet a new Yehooder,” said Farmer Richard.

“Uh, Mr. Bazoigenstein,” said Stevey hesitantly. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure, fire away,” Farmer Richard smiled.

“Do you find Gemara interesting?”

“I’ll tell you a secret,” whispered Farmer Richard, adjusting his overalls and straw hat. “I don’t even know how to read Hebrew very well. I just come and hold this here Gemorrah so I don’t look different from everyone else.”

“But why come to the shiur at all?” asked Stevey.

“I’ll tell you why,” Farmer Richard replied. “Because I don’t want to be a rowshaw like Eisav. You see our great-great-great-granddaddy, Yakoff Oveenu was a big Tzadeek and his brother Eisav wasn’t as good at learning as him. So Eisav decided that he should move out of the country. But I read in Toras Avigdor that this was a huge mistake for Eisav. Because Eisav could have stayed in Eretz Israel and become one of the shayvets, just like Yakoff’s children. His children wouldn’t have been holy priests and singers in the Beis Hamikdosh like Levy’s children, but they could at least have been Yehodeem. But instead, he left and became a goy.

“Well, when I read that, I thought so what if I can’t be the rabbi of the shool? I can still be part of this holy congregation. So, I come here with my Gemmorah and sit next to all of the talmeed chachams - even if I can’t be the best like them, at least I’m part of them and not the goyim in the street. Like Rabbi Stefnotsky always says, ‘it’s not about the amood, it’s about the keyvoot – it’s about coming every day and being here’.”

Farmer Richard wished the boys good night and left Stevey standing there, stunned. He pulled the flyer out of his pocket and looked at it again before crumpling it up.

“Shimmy, Yitzy, you guys have the right idea. So maybe I won’t be the best at learning Torah. But by staying in a Jewish school and learning Torah studies, I’ll at least be part of the Jewish People and not Eisav’s people!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlach 5786 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

Mission Impossible in Manhattan's East Village

By Fay Kranz Greene
From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles
editor@ascentofsafed.com

The city was hot and sweltering on that summer eve in 1989. The Chabad rabbi looked incongruously out of place in Manhattan's East Village, with his long

beard and black coat. Nevertheless, the Chabad rabbi was determined. He had made a promise to a grieving father in Southern California, a man who was a leader in the Jewish community of his city, that he would find his runaway teenage daughter.

Sarah is in New York City, that's all we know. Can you find her for me? the man had begged the rabbi during a recent visit. Mission impossible? Not for the rabbi. With a lot of effort and a little bit of mazel (luck), he finally found someone who recognized Sarah's picture. After that he was able to track her to an urban commune.

He invited her to come to his home in Brooklyn for a Shabbat meal. She not only came but returned many times and began finding her way back to Judaism. After a while, she met a young man from Israel, who was also rediscovering Judaism. More time went by, and then "We want you to marry us," Sarah told the rabbi.

The father of the bride was delighted beyond belief, but the father of the groom less so. He was a holocaust survivor from a rabbinical family, but his experiences during the war had so alienated him from his faith that he had raised his children as a humanistic ethicist, completely devoid of spirituality or mention of G-d.

The father made his son promise that he would not be asked to recite any blessings or prayers either at the ceremony or during the reception. Only on this condition would he attend the wedding.

On the morning of the wedding, the rabbi wrote a note to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, to inform him about the marriage and to ask for a blessing for the bride and groom. The Rebbe, upon receiving the note, put it together with hundreds of others that he would read aloud that day at the Ohel, the resting place of [his father-in-law] the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe.

On this day, upon reading the note from the rabbi, the Rebbe wrote a few words on a paper and directed that it be given immediately to the rabbi. The Rebbe had written that today's date, the date that the young couple chose for their wedding, was the 14th of Kislev, the same day on which the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were married decades earlier, in 1928. The note explained that the groom's grandfather was a Rabbi in Warsaw then and had attended the Rebbe's wedding. As a wedding present the rabbi had given them a book that he had written. The Rebbe directed the Chabad rabbi to go to the Rebbe's office, find the book, and take it to the chupa (wedding ceremony canopy) that evening.

Of course, the rabbi did exactly as the Rebbe had instructed. Just before the ceremony, the bride asked the rabbi to say a few words. The rabbi decided to tell the story about the book he was carrying. He related how the Rebbe had asked that the book be at the chupa and explained that through the presence of the book the groom's grandfather, the former rabbi from Warsaw, would be spiritually represented at the

wedding of his grandson, a grandson from whom he now has so much nachas (pleasure).

Upon hearing these words, the father of the groom abruptly stood up and quickly left the room. The rabbi found him, a few minutes later, weeping quietly in a phone booth in the lobby of the hotel.

“Rabbi,” he sobbed “when I was a child, my father took me to Cheder (Torah elementary school for boys) where I loved studying, but I forgot everything. I wanted to forget. I made myself forget. Now I see that my father never gave up on me, even from Heaven. Won't you take me in hand and teach me again?”

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Source: Excerpted and edited by Yerachmiel Tilles from the full version that first appeared in InsideOut Magazine, and was subsequently posted on L'ChaimWeekly.org

*Reprinted from the November 21, 2010 email of Yerachmiel Tilles, a project of Ascent of Safat.*

# Reb Leib Sarah's and the Future Blood Libel

By Yehuda Z Klitnick

Reb Leib Sarah's was orphaned from his father at a young age, and was known as Reb Leib Sarah's, after his mother, who was named Sarah. When Leib Sarah's was almost 13 years old, before his Bar Mitzvah, his mother brought him to the Maggid of Mezritch, on Sunday the 17th of Tammuz for a Bracha.

The Maggid told him that he would give him a Bar Mitzvah present, but no one knew what that meant, and no one saw him give the boy a gift. However, the heilige Baal Shem Tov revealed that Leib Sarah's received an additional soul, that of Rabbi Chaim Ben Atar - the "Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh" who passed away just two days ago, Erev Shabbos, the 15th of Tammuz, as a Bar Mitzvah gift.

After the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Leib Sarah's became close to the Baal Shem Tov's disciple and successor, Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch. Much of his life Reb Leib Sarah's spent wandering through Poland, Galicia and neighboring districts, wherever Jews happened to be in trouble. As he grew older, he worked diligently to support the Lamed Vav tzadikim. He constantly saw with Ruach Hakodesh many decrees and evil plans devised against Yidden, and when he

wanted to cancel such a decree or evil plan, he would travel far, with kefitzas (a miraculous shortening of the trip).

He would travel from his home in Russia to anywhere in the world in order to accomplish what he needed. He would do all of this on Erev Shabbos, and come home before Shabbos, that very same day!

Once, R' Yaakov Fish of Kalev related how Reb Leib Sarah's saved him from danger: R' Yaakov's hostel was always open to guests. All the Tzaddikim who came to Kalev stayed there. R' Yaakov had a very close relationship with the hidden Tzaddikim, and supported them too.

Once, Reb Leib Sarah's was a guest in Rav Yaakov's home and he was well-received and greatly honored. During that stay, Reb Leib Sarah's asked Rav Yaakov to prepare for him a private room with two fancy chairs and a nice candelabra to be placed on the tablecloth table.

R' Yaakov did as ordered. He had no idea why Reb Leib wanted this setup! However, he soon found out the reason. Reb Leib asked R' Yaakov to go to the home of the minister named Kalo and tell him that Leib was calling for him.

"How can I go there? The place is heavily guarded, and there are dangerous dogs!"

"Nonetheless, you must go," said Reb Leib. Reb Leib sent him together with one of his aides. In a miraculous manner, they soon found themselves in front of the minister who, once he heard Reb Leib's message, replied, "I am coming at once!" The minister came to Reb Leib and they closeted themselves in that private room that R' Yaakov arranged and the two held a long, private discussion. When they came out, Reb Leib pointed to R' Yaakov and declared, "This is the R' Yaakov whom I told you about, that he is an expert in oxen. If you ever wish to buy oxen, take him with you to the fair. Please look at him and remember his face!"

The entire episode was a wonder!

Thirty years have passed since this story, R' Yaakov Fish had long forgotten what transpired with him and Reb Leib. When suddenly a young Gentile worker who worked for him in the hostel disappeared. A libel was hatched by R' Yaakov's gentile enemies and the local priest accusing him of murdering a Gentile boy who had been his servant and using his blood for matzohs! The priest paid the young lad to run away and produced false witnesses to testify in court. R' Yaakov was arrested, and put in prison among the criminals until the judgment.

When one day, the prison door opened and R' Yaakov was led away by an officer who said that the minister Kalo has summoned him. R' Yaakov was in a state of fear, and R' Yaakov promptly arrived at the minister's headquarters. When the minister greeted Rav Yaakov, he saw that his oxen expert was down and in low spirits.

"Why do you look so downcast?" he asked the expert.

Rav Yaakov described the false accusations and the libel against him. “Don’t worry,” the minister attempted to calm him, “I will do my best to vindicate you from such ridiculous charges!”

I heard that you are an expert on oxen and there is a oxen fair in Leipzig, and I need you to come along with me to be my expert. R' Yaakov was perplexed as he wasn't an expert on oxen at all, and thought there was a mistake of identification.

However, inertly he felt that Hashem was on his side to be saved from the libel. R' Yaakov traveled with the minister to Leipzig, there was no oxen fair. When suddenly the minister revealed to R' Yaakov his conversation with Reb Leib thirty years ago. He foretold that there would be a libel against you and the Rebbe commanded me to save you, and to remember your face.

He stated that I should take you to Leipzig, and there we would locate the missing boy. It didn't take long and the missing Gentile servant boy, come forth and was crying that he wanted to go home, and that the priest had sent him away from his family against his will.

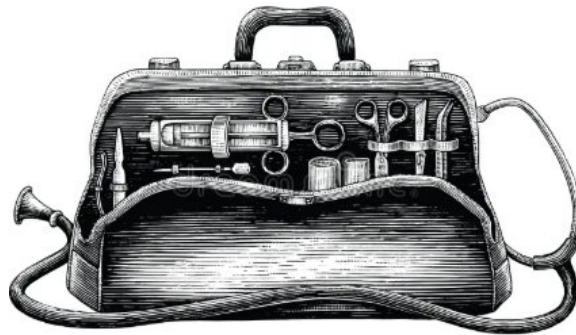
The minister was shocked at the vision of the Rebbe, and they took the boy back with them to Kalev. Once they were back in Kalev, they hid the boy in R' Yaakov's house until the day of the trial. The trial began in court, and the prosecution witnesses were called to testify, and they attested that R' Yaakov murdered the boy who had been his servant to use his blood for matzohs.

However, the defense presented their arguments. The judges who didn't exactly have a liking for Jews, deliberated for a while, and were about to convict R' Yaakov, and hand down a harsh sentence. Suddenly the door of the court opened and Minister Kalo walked in with the apparently “dead” boy in front of the entire assembly! The truth had prevailed, and the judges saw that the libel was false! The priest was punished for his crimes.

Reb Leib Sarah's saved the life of R' Yaakov. The minister told over the story and it was a Kiddush Hashem. R' Yaakov lived until the age of 115. Reb Leib Sarah's ben Rav Yosef was niftar the 4th of Adar 1791, ''

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlach 5786 email of Pardes Yehuda.*

# The Medical Advice of the Mezritcher Maggid



A prominent Jewish merchant, Reb Yaakov from Vilna, known to be an accomplished Torah scholar, once passed through Mezritch. Having heard of the greatness of the Mezritcher Maggid, Reb Yaakov decided to visit him, even though he was not an adherent of the Chasidic movement. Reb Yaakov was eager to engage the Maggid in a learned discussion, and he was not disappointed. But, as Reb Yaakov had no interest in Chasidic philosophy, the subject was not broached.

As Reb Yaakov was about to leave, the Maggid suddenly said: "Remember, Yaakov, what our Sages of blessed memory said, that Hashem sends His cure to a patient through a particular doctor and a particular medicine. Sometimes Hashem sends His cure not through the medication which the doctor prescribes, but through the doctor himself. As you know, a doctor receives his healing powers by authority of the Divine Torah, as it is written, 'And he shall surely cure him.' Therefore, the doctor has a healing Malaach at his side, and a very great doctor is accompanied by the chief healing Malaach, Rafael, himself."

As he traveled back to Vilna, Reb Yaakov thought about this strange parting remark, which seemed to come out of the blue. Reb Yaakov was, Baruch Hashem in very good health. He had never needed a doctor before, and he hoped he would not have to consult one in the future. He hadn't asked the Maggid for medical advice, so why had the Maggid mentioned doctors? Unable to solve this puzzle, he soon dismissed the entire episode from his mind.

Reb Yaakov returned home and soon fell into his normal routine. Several weeks later, he awoke feeling quite ill. His condition worsened rapidly and although all the best doctors were called in, each offering a different medication, nothing



helped. Word of his condition spread quickly. His friends and acquaintances were devastated, for Reb Yaakov was a kind and charitable man.

Then, a ray of hope appeared. The Jews of Vilna heard that the king would be arriving in town, and his personal physician, who was a wayward Jew, would be accompanying him. If only they could persuade the king's doctor to pay a call on their beloved friend, maybe this great doctor could save his life.

The community leaders dispatched a delegation to the king and petitioned him to allow his royal physician to visit Reb Yaakov. The king received them graciously and agreed to their request. The hopes of his family and friends soared when the famous doctor entered the sickroom, but were soon dashed. When the doctor looked at Reb Yaakov he said, "Am I G-d that you have brought me here to revive a dead man?" To everyone's horror, the doctor turned to leave.

The distraught family begged him to prescribe some medication. "Nothing can help this man," he replied, casting a parting glance at the dying patient. But at that moment something caught his eye and he turned to look again. A slight bit of color could be seen on the patient's pale face. The doctor quickly took his notepad and scribbled a prescription. "Run to the pharmacy and bring this medication at once!"

Hope sprang again into the hearts of the man's family and friends. The royal physician remained at the man's bedside his eyes fixed on the sick man. He was amazed to see further signs of improvement. He pulled out his pad and prescribed another medication. But no sooner had he written it out than the patient's eyes began to flicker. The doctor had never seen such a thing in all his experience. Suddenly, the dying man sat up in bed and addressed the physician, "I beg you, dear doctor, don't go yet. Stay a while longer, and I'll feel much better. The Angel Rafael must be at your side."

The physician was completely overwhelmed. He stared at the patient in utter disbelief, and although he didn't believe in Angels, he could almost believe the patient's words. As if reading the doctor's thoughts, Reb Yaakov began to relate his visit to the Maggid of Mezritch and especially the Maggid's puzzling remark at the end of the visit.

"I can see now, that his remark was completely prophetic and true," Reb Yaakov remarked. The king's doctor, who had listened intently to the whole episode, sat engrossed in thought. It occurred to him that, great healer though he was, he needed a lot of healing himself, healing of a spiritual nature. "I would like to meet this saintly man," he finally said. "When you are fully recovered, please take me to meet him." Not very long after, the two of them, Reb Yaakov and the king's physician, traveled to Mezritch - Reb Yaakov to become a Chassid and the physician to return to his faith.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlach 5786 email of Rabbi Dovid Caro's Inspired by a Story.*

## A Shidduch Story

# Sorry, Wrong Number



Shira was 18 when she started searching for the meaning of life. She read a lot and was always trying to find her way, when she finally came to Judaism. After a long period of personal empowerment, she decided to become observant. At first, she did everything quietly; this did not bother her parents – what's wrong with a little tradition, anyway, or for your child to respect you a little more? But then, later, when the family began to realize that Shira was serious about her religious observance, they began making things extremely difficult for her.

This was a great challenge for her that she tried very hard to overcome. For example, the hot plate that she prepared for Shabbat, was mysteriously unplugged, and she was forced to eat cold food throughout the entire Shabbat. Even the humiliation that she endured was sometimes too hard for her to withstand. But she remained determined in her ways, and decided not to give up.

She sometimes even had tears in her eyes because of the difficulties that she had to go through, but Shira kept strengthening herself by reminding herself that she used to be like them too, and she hoped in her heart that one day, they too will see the light and truth.

At a certain point she starting hoping for the day in which she will leave her current home and build a home of her own with her husband in which they will observe Torah and Mitzvot with joy.

As soon as she felt ready, and started dating, an additional difficulty began to develop: Shira's father, who knew that his daughter wants to marry a guy who learns

Torah, became enraged and told her officially that a guy like that will not step foot into his house – no matter what!

One day, Shira's father decided to call his wife, but by mistake, dialed the wrong number. Without realizing, he automatically began speaking in Bucharian, the native language spoken at Shira's house. The lady on the other end of the line surprisingly responded to him in the same language!

The father quickly apologized, and a split second before the conversation ended, the father asked the woman out of curiosity what her last name was – as Bucharians all know each other. From that point, they started conversing and the father began telling the woman that he's having a very difficult time with his daughter who is becoming religious. To his amazement, the woman began telling him that she too has a son who's driving her crazy with his religious observance and how he studies in Yeshiva all day!

To Shira's astonishment, she immediately received a phone call from her father who informed her that she would be having a date the next day with this guy. Shira, who expected to encounter a guy who meets her father's expectations, was shocked to see a Yeshiva boy like she wanted all along! And after several dates, the couple announced their engagement.

For the first time in his life, a real Yeshiva boy stepped foot in her father's house, dressed in a black suit, a white shirt and a hat. At that moment, countless memories crossed Shira's mind of the times her father warned her not to ever bring home a Yeshiva boy. But the truth is, that she never did, it was her father who brought him home. Today, they are happily married years, live in Holon and have four children.

*Reprinted from the website of Hidabroot.*

## The Pack of Playing Cards

Rav Meilich Biderman shared a story. Rav Mendel Futerfass, zt"l, spoke about a time when he was imprisoned in Siberia. The warden had a rule where he forbade the prisoners to play cards. There was no reason for this, other than to break the spirit of the prisoners.

Nevertheless, some prisoners managed to smuggle in a deck of cards, and they played in their barracks. Once, the guards heard that there were cards in the prison, so they came to the barracks and searched all over for the cards, but they couldn't find anything. Eventually, they gave up and left.

This is what really happened: One of the prisoners was an expert at pickpocketing. This may be the reason he was imprisoned in the first place. He knew how to take a wallet out of another person's pocket without the person feeling anything. This time, however, instead of picking a pocket, he used his skill to place the deck of cards into the pocket of one of the guards who was searching the barracks.

The guard looked for the deck of cards under the beds, inside the drawers, and in everyone's pockets, and he didn't realize that it was in his own pocket! On his way out, the pick pocketeer slid the cards back out of the guard's pocket, and slipped them into his own pocket.

Rav Meilich says that we can learn from this that people think that treasure is elsewhere. They want to copy others because they think that others know how to serve Hashem better than they do. But this isn't necessarily true.

Each person has his own treasure in his pocket. All he has to do is discover it and master it!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

## The Hefker Money



Once, the Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, was visiting a certain town for Shabbos, and he had with him a very large amount of money. As the time for Shabbos was getting closer, he realized that he had nowhere to keep it, so he entrusted the money into the hands of the local town Rav.

After Shabbos was over, the town Rav noticed something very strange. He saw the Chofetz Chaim boarding his wagon with all of his personal belongings, and he was about to leave without collecting the money he entrusted him with.

The Rav ran towards the wagon to tell the Chofetz Chaim that he forgot to pick up the money he left with him. The Chofetz Chaim responded by explaining that he was very aware of that. The Rav asked him why he didn't pick it up. The Chofetz Chaim explained that his reason for doing this was that there is a Halachah which states that one is not allowed to entrust money to another person without witnesses. He added that since he didn't have time to get witnesses, as soon as he handed over the money, he declared it ownerless. He then told the town Rav, "It's not my money, you can keep it."

The Rav tried to convince the Chofetz Chaim to take it back, but he wouldn't budge. Finally, once the wagon started moving, the town Rav threw the money into the window and declared, "I declare the money ownerless in return!"

As the wagon left town, the Rav marveled at the outstanding honesty of the Chofetz Chaim!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayishlah 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.*

# The Manmade Sefer Torah

By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg



Growing up, Ariel was no different from his siblings. But as he grew older, the challenges began to grow with him. Before he realized what was happening, not only was he not achieving what others seemed to achieve with ease, but even his

closest friends slowly began drifting away from him. Outwardly, he performed just like everyone else. Inwardly, though, he carried a heavy sense of inadequacy and rejection.

His siblings all followed the same path, entering prestigious yeshivos with confidence and success. While Ariel tried the same route, the results never mirrored theirs. That contrast shattered him. When the Corona pandemic hit, Ariel felt tempted to step out of the yeshivah world altogether.

While most bochurim worldwide tried to make the best of the lockdown, Ariel found himself searching for something — anything — that would validate his worth. He eventually found a job that required dedicated, reliable workers, and that was exactly what he was. He threw himself into the work, followed every guideline scrupulously, and quickly became their most outstanding employee.

For a while, it felt like this was where he belonged...until one ordinary afternoon changed everything.

Standing in line at the register, Ariel hardly noticed the store owner approaching. With just a few simple words, the man changed his entire trajectory: “Your face is shining. It’s your Torah that’s holding up the world — and I want a part in that. Take three items free of charge, and on whatever else you’d like, I’ll give you ten percent off.”

Ariel was stunned. He was holding up the world? He wasn’t even learning during that tekufah. Yet, the owner’s sincerity struck a deep place inside him. Those words ignited something. A spark. A memory of who he was, and who he still could be.

He made a quiet promise: When the yeshivah reopened, he would not remain in the workforce. He would return.

And he did.

But this time, something had shifted. For the first time, Ariel didn’t sit down with the usual cloud of negativity. Instead, he had an awareness — however small — that he had worth. That he mattered.

And those around him noticed.

Friends who had previously overlooked him now approached him warmly. His learning improved. His confidence grew. Within weeks, he found himself with a circle of chavrusos, learning all sedarim — something he hadn’t experienced in over two years.

All because of a few words from a store owner who saw the neshamah beneath the surface.

Two months later, Ariel felt compelled to share with the store owner just how deeply those words had affected him — how they hadn’t merely encouraged him but had changed his life.

Before returning to yeshivah, he set out early, determined to hand-deliver a heartfelt letter of gratitude.

But when he arrived, his heart sank.

A sign hung on the storefront window announcing that the store would be closed for the week. At first, Ariel assumed it must be for a family shivah — perhaps a relative of the owner had passed away. But as he leaned closer and read the notice more carefully, his breath froze.

It wasn't a relative who had passed away.

It was the store owner himself.

Ariel was crushed. He had wanted so desperately to express appreciation — to let the owner know the lasting impact of his kindness.

With the new z'man starting that day, and strict rules that no latecomers would be admitted, Ariel had no choice but to return with the letter still in his pocket, his mission painfully unfinished.

When the Mashgiach welcomed him back, Ariel gathered the courage to share what had happened. Moved by the story, the Mashgiach took the letter and promised to personally deliver it to the owner's family.

When he did, the reaction was overwhelming.

The family knew nothing of the encounter. Nothing of the owner's act of kindness. Nothing of the ripple effect his words had created.

With tears streaming down her cheeks, the store owner's wife revealed something astonishing. Over the past few days, she had been contemplating commissioning a Sefer Torah as an illuy neshamah for her late husband. But now, holding Ariel's letter, she said:

"Now I see that during his lifetime, he already wrote one for me. This is our only nechamah, knowing this boy was uplifted, how his life was touched — all because of my dear husband."

A single moment.

A single compliment.

A single spark of recognition.

Sometimes, that is all it takes to rewrite another person's destiny.

The store owner thought he was giving Ariel a small gift. In truth, he wrote an entire Sefer Torah — not with ink, but with the indelible strokes of kindness, dignity, and the ability to see the hidden brilliance in another neshamah.

Because Torah isn't only written on parchment. Sometimes, it is engraved in a heart.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5786 email of Zichru Toras Moshe – Shabbos Table Stories #234.*