

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYISHLACH 5784

Volume 15, Issue 12 19 Kislev 5784/December 2, 2023

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

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A Miracle to “Tank” Hashem for

By Rabbi David Bibi



Israeli Namer tank

I heard a story told by Rabbi Baruch Rosenblum who heard it from a commander within Gaza. (Chantelle told me last night that the story is all over Instagram, but for those like me without Instagram, let me share it).

The commander called the Rabbi and said, “I must share a miracle with you. I walked into our situation room in the morning where the strategy for the day is planned and an entire group of officers was seated at the table with ashen faces. They had just seen a video taken by a drone which showed three Namer troop transport tanks hit and destroyed by RPGs.”

This Meant that 36 Israeli Soldiers Had Just Perished

Each Namer tank holds 12 soldiers so to the group sitting there it meant that 36 Israeli soldiers had just perished, Lo Aleynu! How could this have happened? How could three tanks be hit and destroyed at the same time? How do they share this information with the families? How do they share the information with Jerusalem?

And as they are sitting there, one of the officers gets a call and it is from one of the Namer commanders. He asks the caller how is it possible? How are you calling me? We just saw the tanks hit and blown up.

So, the commander explains. The tanks rotator belt detached and we realized that we were sitting ducks so we quickly abandoned the tank. Without us noticing, those in the tank behind us saw us abandon the tank and assuming there was something wrong did the same. Seeing both tanks empty, those in the third tank reached the same conclusion and quickly ran for cover. As soon as they made it to safety, all three tanks were hit.

The Soldiers Saw This as an Open Miracle

The officer went on to explain to that Rabbi, “This is the impact of the prayers, the acts of kindness, the commitment to do misvot from everyone around us. The soldiers realized that their lives were saved in what they saw as an open miracle and they realized that the miracles are on account of everything that everyone is doing with them in mind.

B’H, we should continue in our jobs to back up each soldier with whatever they need to be successful and with the angels we create through the misvot we do.

Reprinted from the Parshat Toledot 5784 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.



**This Issue of the Shabbos Stories
Email for Parshas Vayishlach 5784 has
been sponsored in memory of
Faiga Rivka bas
Betzalel Eliezer, a”h
Whose Yahrtzeit is Yud Daled Kislev**

Go Back

By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



The Ribnitzer Rebbe

Rabbi Yaakov Zaks had an esrog business for many years. At one point, his business suffered a major setback — a setback that led to his having a heart attack. Hatzolah arrived and got to work, but nothing helped. Meanwhile, his wife called everyone she knew begging them to daven for him.

One friend went to daven at the kever of the Ribnitzer Rebbe. And then his neshamah simply drifted out of his body. “I left this world,” Reb Yaakov later told Shlomo Thaler, who had been close to the Ribnitzer, “and as I was rising up to Heaven I saw that my great-great-grandfather, Rav Mendele Strikover — the first admor of the Strikover dynasty — was at my side, escorting me to the next world.”

“How did you know that you were seeing Rav Mendele Strikover?” Reb Shlomo asked him. “Did you ever see a picture of him? Are there even any pictures of Rav Mendele?”

“You should know one thing,” Reb Yaakov rejoined. “In Heaven you don’t need to ask any questions. In Heaven, you just know. That’s the way it is.”

“Okay, so what happened next?”

“Rav Mendele brought me to a certain place next to a certain Yid — I didn’t know who he was, though I had an idea — and told me to wait there for the Yid to deal with me.

“I waited for what seemed like half an hour, and for some reason, I had a feeling that the Yid he had told me to wait for was the Ribnitzer Rebbe. After half an hour, the Rebbe came and asked me, ‘Yankel, what are you doing here? You’re supposed to be down on earth!’

“I remember answering him, ‘I don’t want to be down on earth. It’s not good for me there. I don’t want to return there.’

“‘I promise you,’ the Ribnitzer replied, ‘that it will be good. Go back.’

“After that, Rav Mendele took me by the hand and brought me back down, where I woke up just as the Hatzolah guys began shocking my heart back to life with the defibrillator.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “The Ribnitzer.”

Story #1353

The Helpful Hitchhiker

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

“*The Toldos*” Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye [1] by nature had a quick temper. He sought counsel from Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Mendel of Vitebsk-Horodok (even though the latter was younger than he by 20 years, he admired his humility --YT). He asked him what he could do to overcome his anger.

Rebbe Mendel didn’t respond. It didn’t take long, though, before the Toldos learned the answer.

The Toldos, together with a group of chasidim, was traveling on a wagon. A poor person stood by the road, and asked for a lift. The Toldos helped him aboard, but he explained to him that there wasn’t much room. “If you want to ride with us, you will need to sit among the packages.”

The man agreed. It was still better than walking.

The Toldos was concerned that the guest wasn’t comfortable. As they were traveling, the Toldos turned to him and asked, “Are you alright? Are you comfortable?”

“Everything is fine,” the man assured.

The Toldos was still concerned about the guest, so soon afterwards, he turned to the guest and asked, “Are you sure that you are comfortable?”

Once again, the guest told him that he felt fine.

Repeats His Question of Concern

When the Toldos inquired about his welfare a third time, the man replied, “We say, “*Ashrei ha’am shekachah loâ*” [2]. This can be translated, “Fortunate is the

nation that whatever happens to it”, they say, ‘Let it be that way.’ No matter what happens, they say, ‘let it be so. It is good the way it is.’”

The chassidim on board laughed when they heard the pauper's witty response, but the Toldos turned white. He realized that he had just received the answer to his dilemma. How can one overcome anger? By saying that the way things are, it is good that way. Perhaps someone said something that insults you, perhaps someone did something that upsets you, but you accept life as it comes. Fortunate is the nation that can do so.

The Answer to Overcoming His Trait of Anger

With this perspective, the Toldos realized that he could overcome his negative trait of anger.

When the Toldos came to the Vitebsker another time, Rebbe Mendel remarked, "I sent you *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the Prophet) to answer your question." *Biographical notes: Rabbi Yaakov-Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye* [5470 - 24 Tishrei 5542 * (1710 - Oct. 1781)] was one of the earliest and closest rabbinical disciples of the **Baal Shem Tov**. He was the first to author a book of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, titled *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, which had a revolutionary effect upon publication. Subsequently, he published two other chasidic classics, *Ben Porat Yosef* and *Ketonet Passim*.

* Not certain--some say 5544 (1783) and some say 5551 (1790).

Rabbi Menachem-Mendel of Vitebsk/Horodok [5490 - 1 Iyar 5548 (1730 - May 1788)] was an elder disciple of the *Maggid of Mizritch* and one of the earliest chasidic rebbes. He led the first modern aliyah to Israel, in 5537 (1777), where he and three hundred chasidim and others settled in *Tsfat* (Safed). After a few years most of the group moved to Tiberias, where he is buried in the “Students of the Baal Shem Tov” section of the Old Cemetery. His works include *Pri HaAretz* and *Likutei Amarim*.

1] Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohain of Polnoye was one of the closest disciples of the **Baal Shem Tov**. He was the first person to author a book of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, titled *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, which, besides having a revolutionary effect upon publication, led to his popularly becoming known as “*Ba'al HaToldot*” or “the Toldos”, as above.

2] “*Ashrei ha'am shekachah lo [ashrei ha'am sh'Hashem Elokav]* - (Psalms 144:15) is the second verse of the famous “*Ashrei*” prayer, recited 3 times a day.

Reprinted from the Parshat Toldot 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.

The Chicken Lady



Mrs. Hammer was waiting in line at her local butcher shop in Yerushalayim, waiting to pay. Two young children walked in just then and went right up to the register. The store's owner, Mr. Epstein, asked Mrs. Hammer, "Would you mind if I just took care of these children as it will take only a few moments?"

Mrs. Hammer was in a hurry, but she nodded with a smile that it would be okay. She observed Mr. Epstein handing the children a large bag of chicken fat and bones, and writing an amount in his ledger book, as the children thanked him and left.

Mrs. Hammer was appalled! How could Mr. Epstein sell them only fat and bones? Most likely there were many mouths at home to feed in their family, and fat and bones... that wouldn't sustain them. It might even be unhealthy! But Mrs. Hammer was too tired, and in a big rush, to express her thoughts.

Until the same scene repeated itself the next week. Now she spoke up. "Mr. Epstein," she exclaimed, "Why are you giving only remnants to this family?"

Mr. Epstein explained: "About three years ago, the father of these young children fell ill. They had a hard time paying their bills, including mine. I carried them for years, as I couldn't let a family of 9 children starve, could I? But then their account stretched beyond my limits.

"So, I started saving all the trimmings that would ordinarily be discarded, and giving it to them every week. Occasionally there is a good piece of meat in the bag, something that was inadvertently cut off during the trimming process. Each week, the children tell me to put it on their account, and each week I pretend to do so, but

I don't. What's the point of putting it on their account when I know they cannot pay me? But I do it to preserve their dignity.”

Mrs. Hammer was incredibly impressed, and sorry for having misjudged Mr. Epstein. Being a woman of action, she started sponsoring chicken for that family every week, anonymously. This one encounter at the register, grew to a large chessed operation of providing poor families with chicken for Shabbos. Mrs. Hammer later became known as the “chicken lady.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Toldos 5784 email of The Weekly Vort

A Segulah at the End of Praying the Shemonah Esrei

Rav Shai Graucher related a story. When Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky, z”l, was about 14 years old, she noticed that her father, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt”l, would continue Davening (praying) for an exceedingly long time after taking three steps back at the end of his Shemoneh Esrei.

She asked him for an explanation to this, and he told her that before saying the standard ‘Yehi Ratzon’ at the end of Shemoneh Esrei, he said Perek 121 from Tehilim, “Shir LaMa’alos Esa Einai el He’harim. He explained that this was a Segulah from his grandfather, the Leshem, a noted Mekubal.

The Rebbetzin began to follow this practice as well, although she did not know what exactly it was a Segulah for. “Many years passed,” she said, “and my son-in-law told me an interesting story.

In Yeshivas Chevron, there was a group of 20 Bachurim who had not yet been successful in Shidduchim for a number of years. One day, it was brought to their attention that there is a little-known Sefer called Asarah Ma’amaros from the Rama MiFano (Ma’amar Chikur Din, Part IV, Ch. 17) that says that reciting this Perek of Tehilim at the conclusion of Shemoneh Esrei is a Segulah for finding one’s Shidduch.

They started doing this practice, and incredibly, within two months, each of them was engaged!” The Rebbetzin concluded, “When I heard this story, I realized that this Segulah that I had also adopted, was likely a reason in the Brachos we enjoyed in being able to marry off each off our children at a young age!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Toldos 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

Making Lemonade from the Bitter Insults

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, ZT”L, would tell over the story of a couple, (let’s call them) Chavi and Shimon, who had been barren for ten years and once came to him for a blessing to have a baby. He responded that he was sadly unable to bless them for a child because the gates of heaven are closed. He continued, however, that if they find somebody who was embarrassed in public but did not respond, they should ask this person for a blessing, as it would be effective.

After some time, they walked into a wedding and Chavi sat down in the women’s section next to another lady who had recently moved into the neighborhood, (let’s call her) Miriam. There was another woman who walked in shortly after who was known locally to be “not all there” (mentally). When she entered, she began screaming at Miriam for no reason. She was shouting in front of everybody that Miriam stole her house and now her and her kids are homeless.

Miriam was shocked to her very core; she felt so embarrassed. Every word that was coming out of that woman’s mouth felt like emotional murder for Miriam. Nevertheless, she restrained herself and did not say a word in response. Realizing what had just happened, Chavi quickly asked her for a bracha for children. Nine

months later was the bris, to which she invited Rav Kanievsky and Miriam, and celebrated the new life Hashem brought into the world.

Comment: The Gemara (Baba Metzia 58a) teaches that embarrassing someone in public is akin to murdering them. Although Miriam may have felt like somebody was emotionally killing her word by word, it was those very words that allowed her to bestow life on a barren couple.

Reprinted from the Parshas Toldos 5783 email of Torah Sweets.

The Undersized Measuring Weight

Once a month, on the eve of Rosh Chodesh, it was the custom of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Riminov to send out two supervisors to all the shops in town to see whether the weights and measures being used were correct. One of those sent on a certain occasion was Reb Zvi Hirsch, his faithful attendant and disciple, who was later to succeed his Rebbe.

Checked the Store of a Wealthy Businessman

Arriving with his partner at the store of a certain wealthy businessman, he found an undersized liquid measure. When Reb Zvi Hirsch rebuked him for his carelessness, the shopkeeper answered that it was not used for measuring.

"But there is an explicit law on the subject," said Reb Zvi Hirsch. "Our Sages teach us that a man is forbidden to have an oversized or undersized measure in his house, even if it is used as a pail for garbage."

The storekeeper's retort was brazen! Borrowing a phrase remembered from Nach, from the Book of Shmuel, he asked: "Is Shaul also one of the prophets?! Does our Reb Zvi Hirsch too go about laying down the Law?"

In reaction to this, Reb Zvi Hirsch took the measure in hand and trampled on it. When he returned from his day's rounds and was asked by the Rebbe if everything was in order, Reb Zvi Hirsch concealed that incident, being afraid that the wrath of the Rebbe would be kindled against the arrogant offender.

The Gabbi was to Skip the House of the Offender

But Reb Menachem Mendel got to hear of the story from the man who accompanied him. He immediately instructed his Gabbai to announce that the townsmen should all assemble in the Synagogue to hear a sermon, but though he was to knock with his cane on all the shutters according to custom, he was to ignore the house of that offender.

The shopkeeper heard that the Rebbe was speaking on the subject of weights and measures, and realized that this whole tempest was brought about on his account. He went to the Synagogue of his own accord, and as a sign of contriteness removed his shoes in preparation for begging forgiveness of the Tzaddik. Reb Menachem Mendel promised to forgive him on condition that by way of a fine he undertakes to donate fifty gold coins to charity.

The Rebbe's Rebuke to the Storekeeper

He also said to the storekeeper, "you say that my Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch doesn't know to study? Who could say whether the Rosh Yeshivah of your heavenly academy would know to study as well as him?"

But why, then, had the man gotten off with such a light fine? Before the storekeeper had yet come in for his punishment, the people in the synagogue noticed the lips of Rav Tzvi Hirsh whispering. So, they asked him, "What are you saying?" He said that he was praying for the storekeeper, that he should not be punished on his account, and so, already, before the man arrived, the story of the prayers of Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch had reached Reb Menachem Mendel, and so he was appeased.

Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5784 email of Inspired by a Story from Rabbi Dovid Caro.

To Go or Not to Go?

Reb Mordechai HaTzaddik, a talmid of the Baal Shem Tov, had two close friends from his yeshivah days, and he very much wanted to share with them his new path in serving HaShem. However, he was hesitant to leave his Rebbe. Besides, who knew if he would be able to find them. And even if he did find them, would they listen to him?

True, the Baal Shem Tov had once taught that "one must have mesirus nefesh to do a favor begashmius, and even more beruchnius, for even a single Yid. A neshama can descend to this world and live for seventy or eighty years or more, just to do a favor for even a single Yid."

Accordingly, Reb Mordechai nearly resolved to begin the journey and seek his friends, but somehow he could not bring himself to actually leave. He decided to remain with the Rebbe for just a few more days, and then he would go.

After a few days, he considered approaching the Rebbe, telling him the whole story, and asking his advice. Then, by means of his ruach hakodesh, the Rebbe could tell him where his friends were now. That would certainly save him time. But a

moment later, Reb Mordechai rejected the idea. Hadn't the Rebbe clearly said that "one must have mesirus nefesh to do a favor for even a single Yid?" So why ask if he should go?

And as to asking the Rebbe to use his ruach hakodesh to save him some time – what a chutzpa! Furthermore, if Reb Mordechai did know where they were, he would have less mesirus nefesh. No - he would not ask! He decided to take to the road and search for his friends.

On the day of his departure, he rose very early and prepared himself for Shacharis. After davening he packed a little bag with his tallis and tefillin and his belongings, and began the journey. He had already passed the city limits when the Rebbe's shammes ran after him with a message:

The Rebbe wished to speak with him! When he entered the Rebbe's room, the Baal Shem Tov said to him: "Boruch HaShem, you won your battle with yourself!" The Baal Shem Tov gave him instructions and a bracha for success, and Reb Mordechai was indeed successful in his mission. After a long journey he located his friends and brought them to the path of the Baal Shem Tov.

Reprinted from the Parshat Chayei Sarah 5784 edition of The Weekly Farbrengen.

His Daily Bread

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

Reb Reuven, the brother of the legendary R' Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz (1886-1948), was a grocer in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. On the day of the funeral of R' Shraga Feivel, thousands of people gathered at Mesivta Torah Vodaath on South Third Street to pay their final respects to the man who was an architect of Torah in America. (The funeral procession had made its way from Monsey, where it had begun in Bet Midrash Elyon.) On the way to his brother's funeral, Reb Reuven was walking to the Mesivta when he suddenly went into a grocery along the way.

The people who were walking alongside Reb Reuven were taken aback. What could be so important to divert his attention from the matter at hand? In respect of Reb Reuven's piety, no one said anything. When he was asked about it during the shivah, the answer he gave symbolized the special nature of the Mendelowitz family.

There was a poverty-stricken man who came to Reb Reuven's grocery every morning for bread and milk for his family. Reb Reuven never charged him but to preserve the man's dignity he wrote the amount due on a balance sheet that he knew

– and the poor man knew – would never be claimed. It was an unspoken pact between them.

“During the shivah my store will be closed,” explained Reb Reuven, “and this man will have to go to the other grocer for his family’s bread and milk. I wanted to be sure that the grocer wouldn’t charge him so I went in to assure him that I would cover the cost!”

If that’s what the grocers of that generation were, one can only imagine how extraordinary the Torah leaders were. (Reflections of the Maggid)

Reprinted from the Parshat Toledot 5784 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.