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The Greatest Gift

By Rabbi Boruch Brull



Rabbi Raphael Mendlowitz was shopping for Hanukah presents for his children at a large toy store in Maryland. He noticed a father and daughter also buying toys for Hanukah. They had already filled their cart with some toys, and the young girl was busy looking for a few more. The girl picked up a doll and asked her father, “Does this cost too much?”

Her father replied, “No, it’s fine. You may have it.” The girl put it into their cart and then picked up a second doll. She asked her father if she could buy that doll too. “Sure,” said her father, and the girl dropped the doll into their cart.

R’ Mendlowitz’s attention was drawn to a father and son who were also shopping for Hanukah presents. The young girl with the dolls was also listening to their conversation. They overheard the boy begging his father to buy him a remote-control car. The father told his son it was too expensive, but the boy persisted. ‘Please, Tatty,’ he pleaded, “this would be the best Hanukah present I ever got! Please buy it for me!”

“You know we can’t afford it,” his father said. “Let’s go over to the last aisle and you can pick out some nice stickers.”

The boy sadly walked away. The young girl turned to her father and said, “I’ve decided I don’t want the second doll.” She put it back on the shelf and walked over to the next aisle, where she picked up the remote-control car that the young boy had been eyeing and put it in her cart.

Whispering Something Into the Cashier’s Ear

A few minutes later, Rabbi Mendlowitz was waiting in line to pay for his purchases. In front of him were the girl and her father. He watched as the girl handed over the remote-control car to the cashier after her father paid for it, whispering something into his ear. The cashier put the car under his counter. Rabbi Mendlowitz paid for his toys and watched as the man and his son, who were standing behind him, prepared to pay for their stickers.

Suddenly, the cashier began shouting, “Congratulations! Congratulations! You are our one-thousandth customer this week! You have won a brand-new remote-control car! He reached under the counter, took out the car, and handed it to the boy.

“My Best Hanukah Present Ever!”

The boy looked startled, and then his face broke out in a huge smile. He jumped up and down and shouted, “This is my best Hanukah present ever!”

Rabbi Mendlowitz noticed the girl and her father smiling at each other as they left the store. He was very moved by the beautiful act of kindness that he had just witnessed. Coincidentally, Rabbi Mendlowitz’s car was parked right next to the car that belonged to the father and daughter. As he walked to his car, he overheard the father say to her, “That was a very nice thing you just did. You know, though, that Grandma and Grandpa really sent you money for Hanukah to buy toys for yourself.”

“Giving that Car to that Boy Made Me Happy!”

The young girl turned to her father and answered, “Grandma and Grandpa said that I should buy whatever would make me happy, and giving the car to that boy made me happy!”

What a wonderful lesson we can all learn from this young girl. Sometimes you can enjoy a gift more by giving it away to someone else than by having it yourself. (Excerpted from the book – “For Goodness’ Sake”)

Reprinted from the Parashat Shelah 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Surprising Beracha (Blessing)



Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, zt'l

Klal Yisroel recently lost a great holy leader recently, Rav Moshe Wolfson A'h. Rabbi Yitzchok Gottdiener relates over a story of Rav Wolfson who by a friend's wedding gave a beracha to a young man that he should be blessed with many generations of strong children. Later by the wedding the young man mentioned to Rav Wolfson's grandson that it was a shame the Rabbi wasted a beracha on him and his wife as he had a genetic disease, and she was biologically infertile.

His Wife was Very Worried that the Baby Would Have a Genetic Disease

Two months later, this young man bumps into the gabbai—shul coordinator, and the young man tells him that against all odds his wife was expecting! He explained that his wife is very worried that her child will be born with the genetic disease and wants to have her blood tested.

The gabbai told this over to Rav Wolfson who exclaimed that she should not get a blood test. This baby is a miracle, and everything will be okay. The woman still concerned proceeded to test her blood and the embryo for diseases, yet the tests showed everything was okay. Everyone held their breath at the birth, and miraculously the baby was born healthy!

Everyone attributed the baby's health to the Rabbi, however the Rabbi disagreed. He said that during the wedding he was so overwhelmed with love and

joy for his friend that his beracha was infused with that same power. The Rabbi said he was not surprised that the baby was strong and healthy. When a Jew gives another Jew a blessing with his full heart it transcends the laws of nature. Let us be like Aharon HaCohen and Rav Wolfson A'h and use our love to support our fellow Jews. Tefillah for our fellow Jews can change Hashem's decrees instantly.

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

Should the Boy Reveal His Medical Problems?

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman



Rav Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss, Rav Eliyahu Dessler and the Chazon Ish

The Gava'd of Yerushalayim, Reb Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss, zt"l, told me that when he was learning in Kollel after his chasunah, he thought of a shidduch for an orphan bachur, who also learned in the yeshiva. To protect the yasom from possible disappointment, he spoke with the girl's family first, to see whether they were interested in the shidduch. They were.

Reb Tuvyah then spoke with the bachur. The bachur revealed that he has some medical problem, and he couldn't go on with the shidduch without first letting the other side know about it.

Reb Tuvyah listened as the bachur described his medical issue, but Reb Tuvyah wasn't certain that the issue was so crucial that it had to be told before continuing with the shidduch. He spoke with the boy's doctor to get more details, but after that conversation he still didn't have clarity. Reb Tuvya then spoke with the

Rav of the community, but even after that conversation the issue remained unresolved.

Reb Tuvyah sent a letter to his rebbe, Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l (who was living in Eretz Yisrael). Reb Eliyahu Dessler didn't give a direct answer either. Reb Tuvyah sent another letter to Reb Eliyahu Dessler with a request that he present the question to the Chazon Ish.

The Telegram's Message

He received a telegram from Reb Eliyahu Dessler, which stated, "Better not to say anything. Letter is on the way." (The telegram was written briefly, since each word cost money.)

When the letter arrived it read, "I went to the Chazon Ish, and asked him your question. He said that it's better not to tell the girl's family anything. But don't apply this to other situations..."

Reb Eliyahu Dessler explained in the letter that every situation is different. For this particular bachur, the Chazon Ish ruled that he shouldn't tell his medical history, but there are situations when people should tell. Reb Eliyahu Dessler concluded the letter, "I can't explain to you in writing the details of when one should mention one's medical issues and when one shouldn't, and why this case is different than others. When I come to your city, I will explain the matter face to face."

Never Heard the Reason why That Case was an Exception

Reb Tuvyah recalls that it never transpired, since the Chazon Ish was niftar that year (on the 15th of Cheshvan 5714) and Reb Dessler was niftar shortly after (24th Teves 5714). Unfortunately, he never heard the reason why this case was an exception.

Reb Tuvyah went to the bachur and told him that the Chazon Ish said not to tell about his illness. The bachur replied, "Baruch Hashem, I have become totally cured. The illness I told you about has been healed entirely..."

The Power of the Chazon Ish's Prayer

Perhaps this is the reason the Chazon Ish said that he shouldn't say anything about his medical issues. The Chazon Ish davened for that bachur, and trusted that his tefillos will be accepted and the bachur would be well. This story is a reminder of the power of tefillah. When we discuss the pursuit of a shidduch, we must remember that tefillah is an integral part of the process.

Reprinted from the June 17, 2024 email of Torah Times Media.

How to Make Your Son Want to Learn Torah with Zest!



Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein told over a remarkable story. One night, the phone rang in his home. One of biggest supporters of Torah in the generation was on the line. It was a man who donates vast sums of money to Mosdos HaTorah. He said that he urgently needed to speak with the Rav. Although he wasn't feeling well at the time, Rav Zilberstein agreed.

The man said that the night before, he had been to Rav Zilberstein's father-in-law, Rav Shalom Yosef Elyashiv, zt"l, and he introduced himself as one who donates generously to Yeshivos. Then he asked for a Brachah that his descendants should all become Bnei Torah. He said, "Rav Elyashiv gave me this Brachah with great joy, but then I asked that he add a Brachah for them to have a strong desire to learn Torah.

He shook his finger and indicated that he was not going to give that Brachah." Rav Elyashiv said, "That is not up to me. If you want children who have a strong desire to learn Torah, then it is clearly up to you, not me."

The man was deeply disappointed and upset with this remark, and he wanted Rav Zilberstein to explain what it meant. “Why did Rav Elyashiv refuse to give me this Brachah?”



Rav Shalom Yosef Eliyashiv

Rav Zilberstein tried to comfort him. He told him that it was clear that Rav Elyashiv had nothing against him, he was just expressing the Torah’s view that only a father can instill a love of learning Torah into his children. He further told him that if his children saw him use every possible moment for learning Torah, and he did it with a desire, and not like one who was being forced to do it, they will learn that Torah is the most important thing.

“They will see that you learn Torah with more drive than you do anything else, and they will want to do as you do.”

Just so that he could understand what it means to have a strong desire to learn Torah, Rav Zilberstein told him about something that had happened years before, just before an important, official state event, an event that everyone went to see, and even many Yeshivah Bachurim couldn’t resist.

Rav Zilberstein said: One of the best Bachurim in the Slabodka Yeshivah said to me, “This is a great opportunity. Precisely now, when so many people are not in the Bais Medrash learning, let’s go and get a taste of true Torah. Let’s go to the Ponevezh Yeshivah and listen to a Shiur given by Rav Shmuel Rozovsky, zt”l.”

Rav Shmuel Rozovsky was someone who personified a real drive for learning Torah. Where did Rav Shmuel get that incredible drive and love of Torah? Rav Shmuel’s father, Rav Michel Dovid Rozovsky, zt”l, did everything possible so that his son would become a Talmid Chacham. He paid one of the best Bachurim in the

Yeshivah to learn with his son. This bachur was brilliant. When he was eighteen years old, he served on Rav Chaim Ozer's Bais Din in Vilna.



Rav Yisroel Gustman and Rav Shmuel Rozovsky

The Bachur's name was Rav Yisroel Gustman, zt"l, who went on to become one of the greatest educators and Roshei Yeshivah of the previous generation. One could see on his face just how much he enjoyed learning Torah. After a few days of learning with the young Rav Shmuel Rozovsky, Rav Yisroel Gustman told his father that he did not wish to accept money for learning with his son anymore.

Rav Michel Dovid implored him, but it did not help. Rav Gustman said, "I did not say that I wasn't going to continue learning with him, it's just that I was taking money on a false understanding. When I accepted the money, it was because I thought it was going to be an effort, a real job for me to learn with a young boy. But this is no job! I could never take money for learning with such a delightful Chavrusah!"

One evening, Rav Michel Dovid saw them learning together with such pleasure, that he decided to join them. He didn't hold himself to be too high for this. He sat down to learn with his son and the Yeshivah Bachur. What did Rav Shmuel learn from that? That an intense desire to learn Torah removes all thoughts about oneself, so that his father could sit down to learn with his child and a young man.

Rav Zilberstein explained, "That is what Rav Elyashiv was telling you. If you show your children that you have an intense desire to learn Torah, and you set a personal example of doing so, believe me, they will imitate you. They will also have a strong desire to learn Torah, and a Brachah is not what is needed for this!"

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

To Feel Their Pain

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

A dear friend of mine, Akiva Becker,* owns and runs a very popular summer camp for boys, in Monticello, New York. For many years, Camp Gadlus* has been filled to capacity. In the winter of 2022, Akiva sent an email to parents who had previously sent their children to Camp Gadlus, giving them the opportunity to register their sons before he advertised in Anglo-Jewish newspapers offering registration to the general public. After he tallied the responses received, he found that there was room for only fifty new campers. Akiva advertised and within only two weeks all openings had been filled.

Weeks later, Mrs. Nina Gertner,* a very wealthy woman who had sent her son, Avner,* to Camp Gadlus for the last three years, called Akiva to register him. Akiva was flustered. He felt an obligation to the loyal Mrs. Gertner, but all the slots were taken.

“I feel terrible,” said Akiva. “I did send an email a while ago to all parents. Didn’t you get that email?”

“Yes, I did,” replied Mrs. Gertner, apologetically. “But at the time my husband and I thought we would be taking our children to Israel this summer, so I didn’t respond. But now our plans have changed and there is no camp like Camp Gadlus, so we’d like Avner to be with you.”

Akiva told Mrs. Gertner that he could not renege on any of the commitments he made. “However,” he said, “I have a waiting list. You’ll be at the top of the list, and if anyone cancels — and somebody usually does — I’ll call you immediately.”

“That’s fair enough,” responded Mrs. Gertner gratefully. “I hope to hear from you soon.”

A Phone Call with the Good News

Sure enough, three weeks later, R’ Shmuel Handelsman* phoned Akiva and explained that his family plans had changed and regretfully he had to cancel the registration for his son Moishy.* As soon as he hung up, Akiva called Mrs. Gertner with the good news. “You can register Avner right now.”

Mrs. Gertner told Akiva she would send in her deposit that day. Then she added something that Akiva told me he will never forget. “Rabbi Becker,” she began, “I want you to know that I have been wealthy all my life. My family and I never had to wait for anything. We could afford anything we wanted, no questions asked. During the last three weeks, I have experienced feelings of worry and concern that I never had before.

“The feeling of being rejected, the fear that I wouldn’t get what I really wanted, were all new to me. Then it occurred to me that there are so many people out there today that have those feelings all the time and dread potential rejection. There may even be some parents who have registered their sons in your camp who feel this way. So please, if there is any parent who can’t pay the full camp fee, please let me know and I will pay it for them.”

Rabbi Becker is in awe every time he tells the story.

A Woman Worthy of Emulation

The sensitivity of this amazing woman is worthy of emulation. It is relevant in so many aspects of life, and it is especially so with shidduchim. Those who are, baruch Hashem, happily married and those whose search for shidduchim was relatively easy — those who get calls and resumes without significant effort — should feel obligated to share the pain of those who have not yet been blessed with a spouse.

Perhaps each of us should keep a list of all the singles we know, both men and women. Perhaps keep an index card for each individual, noting the relevant information. Once a week, look over the cards and think of a possibility. of these cards with you and at a family simchah bring up some of the names. If you have these names in front of you, there is a better chance you will feel their pain. And if you do something about it, you will know what to answer the Heavenly Tribunal.

Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “From Sorrow to Celebration.”

A Gift for the King of Morocco

By Rabbi Ephraim Epstein



Moshe (Paul) Reichman

You might be familiar with the Reichman family from Canada. The Reichmans, a very well-to-do, are great benefactors and philanthropists. And although they come from Hungary, before that, they had a personal history in Morocco.

It therefore didn't come as too big a surprise when the King of Morocco held an extravagant birthday party and invited people from all over the world to attend the party, the Reichman's included.

But this didn't make it any less uneasy. Many households struggle with that to get family members for their birthday. And if you can imagine that being a question when thinking about a family member, it's certainly a question when you're thinking about the King of Morocco.

Uncertain what to get, the Reichman brothers convened with the intent on reaching a consensus. In tossing around multiple ideas, they knew they wanted to create a Kiddush Hashem through their actions and likewise gift the King with something that would honor him. After many days of discussing it and mulling it over, they decided on an appropriate gift.

The heralded day arrived and the Reichmans flew to Morocco and attended the birthday. There, individuals began getting up one by one and stating what they had chosen as the gift to honor the King.

One announced, “We, the Country of Africa, pledge to his Majesty an Ireland off the coast of Africa for his birthday.” Another got up and declared, “We, the family from Britain, are giving a fleet of racehorses to his King, his Majesty, for his birthday.”

And then Mr. Moshe Reichman got up, sweating. With a sense of reverence and humility, he said, “We, the Reichman family from Toronto, Canada, humbly pledge to the King, his Majesty, that we will build a beautiful Jewish school—a yeshiva—in the city of Fez, the largest Jewish community in Morocco, with his name on the school.”

There was dead silence in the entire room. Mr. Reichman began sweating even more profusely, as the King began getting a little red. Grabbing the microphone, he screamed, “What are you crazy? You’re going to build a Jewish school in Morocco? You think the future of the Jewish people is in Morocco? Build it in Israel! The future of the Jewish people is only in Israel!”

If you visit the neighborhood of Talpiyot in Jerusalem today, you will see a Moroccan Jewish school built in honor of the King of Morocco.

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The Power of a Simple Prayer or Mitzvah

There was a Bachur who traveled from the Mir to Radin to ask advice from the Chafetz Chaim. The train arrived at the station near Radin very late at night and a few passengers disembarked. They sat down and waited for a wagon to drive them to Radin. On the wagon the boy sat next to an elderly respectable Yid who asked him why he came to Radin.

The boy answered that he came to speak to the Chafetz Chaim. The man explained that it was too late to go now to the Chafetz Chaim and he kindly invited him to come and sleep over in his house. The boy accepted the invitation, happily followed the man home, knowing that he would have a bed to sleep on that night.

The man offered the boy to join him for dinner. At first, the boy refused, as he hadn’t davened Maariv. But his host offered to be his Shomer (to remind him), like this the boy could wash and eat a proper meal. The boy ate some bread, butter, cheese and finished off with a hot drink. After he finished Bircas Hamazon, his host showed him his bedroom and reminded him to daven Maariv.

The room didn't have any heating so it was very cold. The boy was shivering from the cold so he slipped under the blanket to warm himself up. He decided to start davening Maariv under covers until Shemone Esrei. But the boy was so tired that he fell asleep instantly. He woke up in the morning, got ready and went to daven Shachris in the Yeshiva.

He was surprised to see his host sitting in the front, only to find out that his host was Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Levinson, son in law of the Chafetz Chaim and the Rosh Yeshiva. After Shachris the Rosh Yeshiva invited him for breakfast and then showed him the way to the home of the Chafetz Chaim. The boy went over to the Chafetz Chaim's house, entered his study and sat down next to the Chafetz Chaim.



The Chofetz Chaim

Before the boy even had a chance to say anything, the Chafetz Chaim started talking quietly, as if he was talking to himself. The boy listened carefully. "I remember," said the Chafetz Chaim, "before the war, there was an abundance, the economy was successful and people had plenty money. If a person would walk on the street and see a copper kopeck on the floor, they wouldn't bother to pick it up. It was a waste of time and effort.

"But since the war, times have changed, there is a lot of poverty. If a person were to see a copper kopeck now on the street, even in the mud, they will stop, pick it up wash it and clean it. After all, one can buy a small roll with a kopeck."

"Why am I saying this," continued the Chafetz Chaim? "Because once upon a time most Jews were Shomer Torah Umitzvos – kept the Torah and Mitzvos. So, if it happened, that someone fell asleep before they davened Maariv and they missed Krias Shema in Maariv and Krias Shema before going to sleep, in Heaven they didn't miss it, after all there were so many other Mitzvos and prayers from so many Jews. But nowadays, that there are so few Jews who are Shomer Torah Umitzvos, if a Yeshiva boy falls asleep before Maariv, in Heaven they miss his prayers."

The boy jumped in shock remembering he had forgotten to daven Maariv the night before and had to go and daven another Shemone Esrei. He was shaking as he

quickly asked the Chafetz Chaim for a Beracha and ran out to go and daven, completely forgetting what he needed to ask the Chafetz Chaim.

The truth is, that our Torah, our prayers and our Mitzvos doesn't compare to those of the Jews that lived generations before us. So naturally, we look at our Mitzvos and our Tefilos and think, what are they worth? If the prayers of all the great Tzaddikim from so many generations weren't answered, if there Mitzvos that were done with such perfection didn't bring the redemption and Mashiach never came until now, why should our prayers and Mitzvos accomplish anything?

It Will be Our Torah, Prayers and Mitzvos that will Bring Mashiach

But the answer is that we are wrong. Every generation is going downhill but Mashiach is still going to come and hopefully in our times. Furthermore, it will be our Torah, our prayers, our Mitzvos which will ultimately bring Mashiach. The obvious question is, how is this possible? The answer is very simple. Hashem doesn't judge a Mitzva just by the way it looks to us. Hashem sees the circumstances in which the Mitzva was done and accordingly judges a Mitzva.

In the previous generations, Klal Yisrael had much less Nisyonos and much less challenges than we have. So, although our Mitzvos don't look anything like their Mitzvos do, but in Hashem's eyes our Mitzvos have a completely different appearance. Hashem knows the challenges we face in our times. He knows how hard it is for us and how hard it is to concentrate and focus when we are doing our Avodas Hashem. So, Hashem judges our Mitzvos so differently than we look at them ourselves.

Build Yerushalayim the Holy City in Our Days

This is Hashem's comfort to us Klal Yisrael so many years after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash that we, with our Avodas Hashem can be the ones to bring Mashiach. With this explanation we have a new understanding in the words we say in Shemone Esrei and Bircas Hamazon. We ask Hashem, 'Uvnei osah bekarov beyameinu' – and build it (the Beis Hamikdash) in the near future in our days (in our times). Uvnei Yerushalaim ir hakodesh bimhera beyameinu' – and build Yerushalaim the holy city very soon in our days.

But there is another translation to those words. We ask Hashem to build Yerushalaim quickly 'with our days'. Beyameinu can mean 'in our days' and it can mean 'with our days'. How are we building Yerushalaim with our days? With our Torah, with our Tefilos and with our Mitzvos! Our Torah, our Tefilos and our Mitzvos will ultimately bring Mashiach. And if we know this, understand it and really believe in it, we will have a new respect and appreciation to our own Torah study, our prayers and our Mitzvos, and surely we will speed up Mashiach's arrival. *Reprinted from the Parshat Va'eschanan 5784 email of Rabbi Dovid Caro's Inspired by a Story.*