

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS NOACH 5785

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**A Slice of Life – A Blast from the Past**  
(September 7, 2001)

## Every Action Counts

By Mordechai Kaler



I am a 16-year-old student at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington in Maryland. This past summer I decided to volunteer at the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Greater Washington. In the beginning I wasn't very comfortable about spending my days in a nursing home. But that would all soon change.

One job of the volunteers is to ask the residents if they would like to go to the daily services. Most residents are receptive; even those who choose not to attend are generally pleasant about it.

There was one man, however, who would get very angry when asked. One time he even cursed one of the volunteers. The volunteer was extremely upset so I decided to go to speak with the resident.

"The volunteers are only here to help and there is no reason to curse at them," I told the man firmly but respectfully. The resident asked me to wheel him to his room and when we arrived there he told me to sit down. "I want to tell you a story," he said.

He had grown up in a prominent religious family. Everyone had been murdered by the Nazis except for him and his father. In the concentration camp that they were in, someone had smuggled in tefilin shel rosh-tefilin worn on the head. Every morning the men would sneak a chance to put on the tefilin, even if for just a second.

"The day before my Bar Mitzva, my father had heard that a man had a whole pair of tefilin (the tefilin worn on the head and the tefilin worn on the arm). That evening, the man who had smuggled in the tefilin was killed by the Nazis. My father," the resident continued, "after hearing of the man's death, went to the man's bunk to get the tefilin so that I would be able to put on a complete pair of tefilin for my Bar Mitzva. On his way back to his bunk, my father was seen by a Nazi and shot, right in front of me. Somehow, I managed to take the tefilin and hide them."

The resident paused and then said to me, "How can you pray to this G-d, a G-d that would kill a boy's father right in front of him. The father who went to get tefilin so that I could pray to Him?" The man then turned to me and said "Go to my dresser and open the drawer." I did as I was told and I saw an old, worn black bag. The man told me to bring him the bag. I brought it to him and he opened it and showed me the contents. It was the pair of tefilin that his father had died for. "I keep these to show people that this is what my father died for, these dirty black boxes and straps. They were the last thing my father ever gave me," he said.

I left a few minutes later, totally speechless. I went home. I didn't eat supper and barely slept that night. But when I woke up the next morning I put on my tefilin I prayed and then went to the Hebrew Home.

When it was time to bring the residents to services I avoided that man's floor totally. Then I was notified that we were one short of a minyan and one of the residents needed to say "Kaddish." I went up to all the residents and none would attend. I had no other choice but to ask the man.

The man was in his room. I asked him if he would attend services as there was a man who needed to say Kaddish. I expected him to say "no," but instead he asked, "If I come will you leave me alone?" His reply took me by surprise. I said, "If you come I will leave you alone."

I don't know what made me ask him this question, but then I asked him if he would like to bring his tefilin. I was ready to apologize when he said, "If I bring them will you leave me alone?"

I told him, "yes." The man took his tefilin and I took him down to the synagogue. He asked me to wheel him to the back so that it would be easy for someone to wheel him out as soon as the services were over. I did as he requested and showed him how to put on his tefilin. Then I left to do some other work.

When services were over I returned to help bring residents back to their rooms. I walked into the synagogue. The only person left in the entire room was the resident I had brought in, still sitting in the back in his wheelchair with his tefilin on. Tears were pouring down his cheeks.

"Should I get a nurse or a doctor?" I asked him. He did not respond. Instead, he said over and over again, "Tatti (Father), Tatti, it feels so right." He was staring down at the tefilin on his arm.

After he calmed down I brought him back to his room. He told me that during that hour he felt as if his father was back with him.

Every morning after that, when I got off the elevator on his floor, he was waiting, holding his tefilin, ready to go down to services. One day I got off the elevator and he wasn't there. I asked one of the nurses where he was. She told me gently that he had been taken to the hospital and they had just received word that he had died. I was taken aback and asked her to repeat what she had just said.

Time passed and I was notified that I would be given an award by the Jewish Home for my work as a volunteer. After the ceremony a woman came up to me and said, "Thank you, you saved my father's life."

I had no idea who this woman was. "I'm sorry, but I must have forgotten who you are," I told her.

"We never met, but you knew my father," she said. She told me her father's name and I immediately recognized her as the resident's daughter. She told me that before her father passed away, he asked his daughter to bring him his tefilin. He said he knew he would soon be passing on and he wanted to put his tefilin on and pray one last time. Soon after that he went into a coma. His daughter told me, "You truly saved him and made his last moments comfortable." The man died with his tefilin on as he was reunited with his Tatti.

We never know what kind of an effect we will have on another person. But we do know that every little thing we do counts.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Ki Tavo 5761/2001 edition of L'Chaim.*

# The Unasked Question



It happened before the First Knessiah Gedola in Vienna, where many leaders of Klal Yisroel, Admorim, Rabbonim, Roshei Yeshivas, and Marbitzei Torah got together, including the Chofetz Chaim.

The Chofetz Chaim was hosted by a wealthy person by the name of R' Akiva Schreiber. He was very excited about the opportunity to have such a gadol ha'dor, and he worked hard to let the Chofetz Chaim learn in peace and quiet without being troubled by all the many people who wanted to see him.

There was one askan from England who wanted to go in and see the Chofetz Chaim very badly and asked the host if he could allow him in to discuss an important matter with the Chofetz Chaim for a short time.

R' Akiva thought to himself, "who would be more worthy than such an askan to go in and have a private audience with the Chofetz Chaim?" And so, he told the askan that at One O'clock, when the Chofetz Chaim eats lunch, the askan can come in and catch the Chofetz Chaim for a few minutes.

The askan was very excited and entered the house from a side entrance, anticipating his chance to audience with the Chofetz Chaim. He watched as the Chofetz Chaim finished eating and said the perek of Tehillim 23 like he said at every meal. He said it slowly and emphasized specifically the words of the last pasuk (verse) "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days."

He then turned to the people sitting at the table and looked at the askan from England. "Why did Dovid Hamelech connect *tov* and *chessed* to *redifah*? They sound like opposites." The askan didn't know why the Chofetz Chaim picked him

to ask this question, but he understood why once the Chofetz Chaim answered the question:

“Every person has rodfim, people who run after him during his life. Some people have their enemies running after them, some people have their neighbors, and others have other random people running after them. Then there are select people who are invested in helping the klal, and they have many people running after them, coming for money, advice, etc. They are literally being run after, but they are being run after for their good work in tov and chessed.

“That is what Dovid Hamelech is asking for: Let them run after me while I’m busy with askanus type of work, and there will be no need for other rodfim to come after me.”

After the Chofetz Chaim finished, the askan got up to leave. R’ Akiva stopped him and asked, “Didn’t you say that wanted to discuss something of great importance with the Chofetz Chaim? Why are you leaving without asking anything?”

The askan answered him that his work as an askan does not afford him any time or peace of mind. He is busy all day and night. People are coming for money, for loans, getting kids into school, changing things in shul, etc. He doesn’t have a life! He thus came to ask the Chofetz Chaim if he should continue this work or whether he could stop. But before he could ask, the Chofetz Chaim answered his question. He gave him a clear answer, and he had no more qualms.

“It’s up to me to decide if I’d rather be chased down by people for my work in askanus or for other reasons. I choose like Dovid Hamelech — to be sought after in chessed work.”

R’ Yerucham Levovitz says that the best thing a person can do for himself is to be an Ish Klal, someone who busies himself with others. It’s a great investment and will help with judgement for the coming year. We all look for zechusim to add to our account; the best zechus is to help others. When we help others, we are viewed as someone Klal Yisroel depends on thereby making the zechus ha’rabim a real zechus for us to have a good year and more ability to continue helping.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5784 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.*

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**“If you don’t like starting again,  
stop quitting in the middle.”**

*Reprinted from the archives of the Torah Sweets Weekly email.*

# The Power of Being Mevater

By Rabbi David Ashear



**Rabbi David Ashear**

By the time Avrohom\* turned twenty-five, he had already watched every one of his friends and former classmates marry. He was learning in yeshivah, but felt terribly uncomfortable being the oldest bachur there. Meanwhile, his younger sister Shaindel\* reached marriageable age and a promising shidduch was suggested. Their parents did not want to allow her to start shidduchim without Avraham's consent, but he was reluctant to give it. His family understood how he felt and declined the shidduch offer.

Six months later, the same promising shidduch was suggested again. This time, a rabbi who was close to their family called Avraham, explaining that the shidduch being suggested for Shaindel seemed very appropriate. "You will not lose out if your sister gets engaged before you!" the rabbi assured him. "Whoever is mevater (gives in or forgives) never loses out! On the contrary, perhaps this is Hashem's way of sending you an opportunity to do a great deed, which will pave the way for your own shidduch. Hashem runs the world, and if your sister is meant to get engaged before you, it's going to happen one way or another, whether you like it or not. But now, you have an opportunity to be mevater. Don't let it pass."

The rabbi's sincere words entered Avraham's heart, and he gave Shaindel his blessing. As expected, within a short time she was engaged. When his sister introduced her chosson to her brother, the chosson took one look at Avraham and had a great idea for a shidduch— his first cousin! She turned out to be a perfect match, and they announced their engagement, even before Shaindel's engagement party! In this case, the chessed Hashem did for him was a direct result of the chessed he did for his sister. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "Living Emunah on Shidduchim")

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*

# How Can One with Problems be Happy?



A man once spoke of his troubles with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, and Rav Shlomo Zalman assured him that despite his problems, happiness was still within his reach.

The man disagreed and said that it was impossible for someone who was enduring suffering like he was to be happy. It was simply too difficult for him to see any good in his situation.

Rav Shlomo Zalman responded to him, "I know someone who had an operation, and because of this procedure, he is deaf in one ear. He is also a widower, R"L, and three of his children are childless. But despite his tribulations, he is always cheerful and smiling."

The man couldn't believe the story and said, "How can he be happy after suffering so much?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman said that he was referring to himself. He has been enduring this situation, and nevertheless, he was always happy. He told the man, "If I could be happy despite all of my hardships, then other people can be happy as well, despite what they are currently going through."

The man received a lot of Chizuk from this conversation, and he was able to move forward and work on his Simchah!

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



# The Wealthy Shoemaker



R' Yitzchok Rosenthal was the Rosh Kollel of Medrash Bnei Tzion. One day, he came to R' Isser Zalman Meltzer and asked him if he can retire his responsibilities of financing his Kollel so that he can dedicate his life to learning Torah. R' Isser Zalman told him to do as his heart desires, but he should first listen to the following tale:

There was a talmid chacham who worked as a fundraiser for Yeshivas Slutsk. He spent his days going from door to door gathering the much-needed funds for the yeshiva and didn't have much time to learn Torah. He went to the Chofetz Chaim and told him that he wants to stop fundraising, as it's taking up too much time and space in his head. He can't daven a single tefillah where he doesn't think about this donor or that donation, and he can't learn properly, etc. He wanted to return to his old days of pure learning and davening before he took on the tiring and hard work.

The Chofetz Chaim wished him hatzlachah and they parted. As the fundraiser started to head to the door, the Chofetz Chaim called after him and asked, "What's the cost of a pair of shoes?"



The fundraiser didn't know, as it had been a while since he'd bought a new pair, but he said that he thought the price was such-and-such amount. He gestured to the Chofetz Chaim, and then parted. He turned to glance back at the door when he was outside, and the Chofetz Chaim called to him again.

"At what expense does a shoemaker make shoes, and what profit does he make on each shoe he fashions?"

The man called back, "I don't know. I never served as a shoemaker."

The Chofetz Chaim called him back, and together they went through the approximate price of materials, and what profit a shoemaker makes with every shoe he produces. After this, the fundraiser then turned to leave, and again the Chofetz Chaim called after him and asked if shoes were made only by shoemakers or whether a factory could also make shoes.

The man assured him that a factory could do it as well. The Chofetz Chaim asked him, "Do people prefer to buy shoes from a shoemaker, or do they rather buy factory-made shoes? Whose shoes are better quality?"

The man responded that the ones made by a shoemaker are more valuable and better eminence.

"If so," continued the Chofetz Chaim, "then shoemakers should be very rich, as people prefer buying from them for their good work, while manufactures should poor. But is that the case? Are shoemakers rich?!"

"No," the man responded, "the factory owners have more money than the standard shoemaker, as they can produce more quantity. In the end, the profit of a shoemaker is much less."

"If that is the case," said the Chofetz Chaim, "then listen. If you want to stop your work as a fundraiser and live a life of peace so you can learn and not have distracting thoughts when you are trying to concentrate on tefillah, then it would make sense for you to stop.

"But if you realize that you are working for a yeshiva and are enabling countless people to learn because you collect and bring in money for the yeshiva, then this is preferable. You are doing much more by collecting for the yeshiva than you would if you'd be sitting and learning yourself. When you work for a yeshiva, the quantity is great, and you have the zechus of the rabim. Your reward is very great."

With this R' Isser Zalman concluded. "It's your decision whether to continue, but before you resolve it be sure to weigh each side properly.

R' Yitzchok took to the advice of R' Isser Zalman and continued his M'leches hakodesh, cashing in on the most zechusim.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5784 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.*

# The Cosmic Twin of the Baal Shem Tov

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



It is a tradition that in every generation there are Hidden Tzadikim (“righteous ones”) who conceal their greatness from the eyes of men and live amongst us disguised as simple, ignorant folk. Rabbi Gershon Kitover once asked his famous brother-in-law, the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement, to reveal to him one of the hidden righteous.

At first, the Baal Shem Tov refused. But Rabbi Gershon persisted in his request until the Besht finally relented.

“This Friday night in shul, look among the crowd of beggars waiting near the door to be invited for the Shabbat meal. One of them will be a hidden tzadik,” the Baal Shem Tov told Rabbi Gershon, and described the righteous pauper. “But you must promise not to let on in any way that you are aware of his true identity.”

Rabbi Gershon readily identified the tzadik-in-disguise and invited him to share his Shabbat meals. However, that evening, though he carefully scrutinized his guest’s every word and deed at the table, he was unable to discern anything beyond the ordinary behavior of a wandering pauper. Finally, he could not resist the temptation to ask his guest to grace the table with some words of Torah.

“Me?! Speak words of Torah? A beggar the child of beggars, who has scarcely seen the inside of a cheder? Whatever gave you such an idea, anyway?” asked the guest, a note of suspicion in his voice.

Rabbi Gershon quickly let the matter drop.

On Shabbat day though, at the noontime meal, Rabbi Gershon could not resist another attempt. Finally, he thought, I have one of the greatest people of the generation at my table, should I indeed learn nothing from him? Again, he pressed his guest to speak words of Torah, hoping that would reveal something of his well-concealed greatness.

This time, the hidden tsaddik seemed to hesitate somewhat, as if tempted to accede to his host’s request, but only for a fleeting moment. He immediately resumed his ignorant- beggar pose of the night before, protesting that the very request was ridiculous.

But at the third Shabbat meal in the late afternoon, Rabbi Gershon seemed to have finally made some headway. When he again asked his guest to enlighten him with words of Torah, the holy beggar’s face was transformed. His eyes began to glow with a Divine light, and his coarse features assumed a sublime grace.

Then he opened his mouth to speak; but before a single word emerged from his lips, he suddenly closed them, and with obvious effort, wrenched himself from his seat and bolted from the room. By the time Rabbi Gershon had collected his wits and run after him out to the street, he was gone.

The next day, when Rabbi Gershon came to see the Baal Shem Tov, he was shocked to learn that his brother-in-law had been ill all Shabbat. At the Friday night meal, the Baal Shem Tov’s disciples had noticed that something was amiss; the next day the situation had worsened, and at one point, toward the close of Shabbat, it had seemed that his very life was in jeopardy. But the crisis had passed, thank G-d, and he was steadily regaining his strength.

When Rabbi Gershon entered his brother-in-law’s room, the Besht said to him: “What have you done? Because of you, I almost departed from this world.

“You see, every righteous soul has two faces--one hidden and the other revealed. The tzadik who ate at your table this Shabbat is my cosmic ‘twin’, whose greatness must remain hidden for as long as I openly serve as a teacher and guide in the service of the Almighty.

“But the temptation for a hidden tsaddik to reveal himself is very great, since every person desires to manifestly influence his surroundings. Had he done so, my soul would have had to be concealed from the world, and since I am already widely known, this meant that I would have had to pass on from my present life.

“Luckily, he stopped himself just in time.”

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**Source:** Modified and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article by Rabbi A. H. Glitzenstein of blessed memory on Chabad.Org

**Biographic notes:** Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov [18 Elul 5458- 6 Sivan/Shavuot 5520 (Sept. 1698 - June 1760)], the Baal Shem Tov ["Master of the Good Name"-often referred to as "the Besht" for short], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed his identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 5494 (1734 C.E.), and made the until-then underground Chasidic movement public. He wrote no books, although many works claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of Tzava'at Harivash, published by Kehot.

Rabbi Gershon of Kitov [? - ca.1760] was the brother-in-law of the Baal Shem Tov and subsequently an important disciple. He was the recipient of the famous letter from the Besht about his visit to the heavenly abode of Moshiach, as well as other important correspondence. In 1747 he moved to the Land of Israel, living first in Hebron and then in Jerusalem.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Ki Tavo 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# Last Men Standing

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair



**The Brisker Rav**

In the 1930s, the Yiddish theater was thriving in Europe, though it wasn't exactly known for promoting Torah values. One day, a yeshiva student rushed to the Brisker Rav, (Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, 1886-1959) the Rabbi of Brisk, to report a new play that the Yiddish theater had put on. He was outraged and said, "Does the Rav know about the new play? It's a disgrace! They've taken a scene from the Torah portion of Shoftim, where the Jewish army is about to go to war, and turned it into a mockery."

The student described the scene. An actor stands up and quotes the Torah, saying, 'Who is the man who has built a new house and not inaugurated it? Let him go home and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man inaugurate it.' At this, ten people get up and walk off the stage. Then the actor says, 'And who is the man who has betrothed a woman and not yet married her? Let him go home, lest he die in the war and another man marry her.' Another twenty people get up and leave. Finally, the actor says, 'Whoever is afraid, let him go home so he won't scare everyone else.'

Now, everyone except two actors leave the stage. These two are playing the Vilna Gaon and the Shaagas Aryeh. They start arguing about who should take the first shot in the battle, each insisting that the other go first. They go back and forth, and the audience collapses in laughter. The curtain falls and that's it.

"It's a terrible, shameful disgrace!" said the student, appalled. "Rav, you have to put a stop to this."

The Brisker Rav listened and then calmly asked, "Well, what's wrong with that?"

The student was shocked, unable to understand the Rav's reaction. The Brisker Rav explained. "There's nothing wrong with what they did. They just forgot the last scene."

Confused, the student asked, "What last scene?"

The Brisker Rav replied, "The last scene is where the Vilna Gaon and the Shaagas Aryeh win the war."

Fast forward to June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967, when the Israel Defense Forces initiated Operation Focus, a coordinated air attack on Egypt. That morning, around 200 aircraft took off from Israel, flew west over the Mediterranean, and attacked Egypt from the north. They caught the Egyptian forces by surprise, bombing 18 different airfields and eliminating approximately 90% of the Egyptian Air Force while it was still on the ground.

There's a story about a general at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point who was asked why their curriculum included studies of many wars but not the Six-Day War. The general explained, "At West Point, we're concerned with studying military strategy and tactics, not miracles."

Major General Ezer Weizman, the IDF's director of operations during the Six-Day War and later the president of Israel, was once asked how it was that after the first and second waves of Israeli bombings, the Egyptians didn't radio ahead to warn other air bases. Weizman paused, lifted his hand to the heavens, and quoted from the Torah, "It was the finger of G-d."

The strength of the Jewish people doesn't lie in our numbers or military might. The Torah calls us, "The smallest of the nations." Our protection comes from G-d, the Master of Wars.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5784 edition of the Torahanytimes Newsletter.*

# It Must Have Been a Mistake

By Rabbi Reuven Semah



One great educator in Jerusalem said something very powerful. “You know with children it’s important to bear in mind the power of parental judgment and the narrative they carry about their children. Never say, ‘We knew all along he was going to turn out bad.’ That’s called a self-fulfilling prophecy.” There are so many ways to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy. Our words can be so powerful in helping to form a different perception.

Rav Aharon of Belz zt”l once hired a local handyman to do some minor repairs in his home. While the man was busy taking care of the work, the Rebbe overheard others in the room whisper in an undertone, “I can’t believe that the Rebbe hired him. It’s well-known that this Jew works on Shabbat!”

The Belzer Rebbe immediately spoke up and said loudly, “That’s impossible! And if he did work on Shabbat, it must have been a

mistake. He must have confused the days and thought it was Friday!”

The Rebbe then turned to the workman who had clearly heard the whole exchange and had remained silent. The Rebbe said gently, “Isn’t that right? You got confused and thought it was Friday and not Shabbat?”

The worker looked abashed and didn’t say a word. The Rebbe again said softly, “You must have mixed up the days and thought it was Friday, correct?”

But the worker stood stock still and wouldn’t open his mouth. For the third time, the Rebbe pleaded with great feeling, “Didn’t you really believe it was Friday and not the holy Shabbat?”

At the Rebbe’s final, exquisitely gentle insistence, the Jewish laborer mouthed, “Yes,” and then burst into tears! The entire room was astounded at the depth of his emotion. And from that moment the handyman became a Shomer Shabbat.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Ki Tesse 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. Originally published in the South Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*