

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS DEVORIM 5784

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The Boy Who Cried to Hashem for Mercy!



Once the students of Rabbi Binyamin Diskin (father of the famous Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin) came and told him that there is a student going through a very difficult time, so much so, they heard him crying in the Beis Hamedrash in the middle of the night.

The Rosh Hayeshiva hid in the Beis Hamedrash that night. A student entered, walked through the dark Beis Hamedrash and went up to the Aron Hakodesh. He opened the doors and burst into tears, “Hashem, please have mercy on me. When my friends are having discussions and arguments in their studies, I don’t dare mix in. But please Hashem have mercy that at least I should merit to understand what they are arguing about!”

Who was this poor boy crying so bitterly? The world famous and Prewar Rabbinical authority, Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor zt”l the Kovno Rav (1817-1896). The Rabbi who Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv looked up to as his role model!

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

The Penalty of Disrespecting the Community's Shul

A group of government officials once came to Rimanov to find a warehouse they could use for the army's food and supplies. After scouting the city, they decide that the best place to use was the local Shul. When the heads of the community heard this, they quickly ran to Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, zt”l, to ask him what they should do.

A Seemingly Good Plan of Action

One person stood up and pointed out that the roof of the Shul leaks. I'm sure that once we tell the officials about this, and that all of their supplies will be ruined, they will change their minds and not use the Shul as a storehouse. Everyone agreed that this seemed to be a good plan of action.

However, Rav Menachem Mendel said that they were making a mistake. In fact, he said, it was exactly because of the leaky roof that this decree had befallen them.

He said, “If we don't actively take care of our Shul, and we degrade its honor by allowing the roof to leak, what do you expect will happen? Go fix the roof right away, and everything will be alright.”

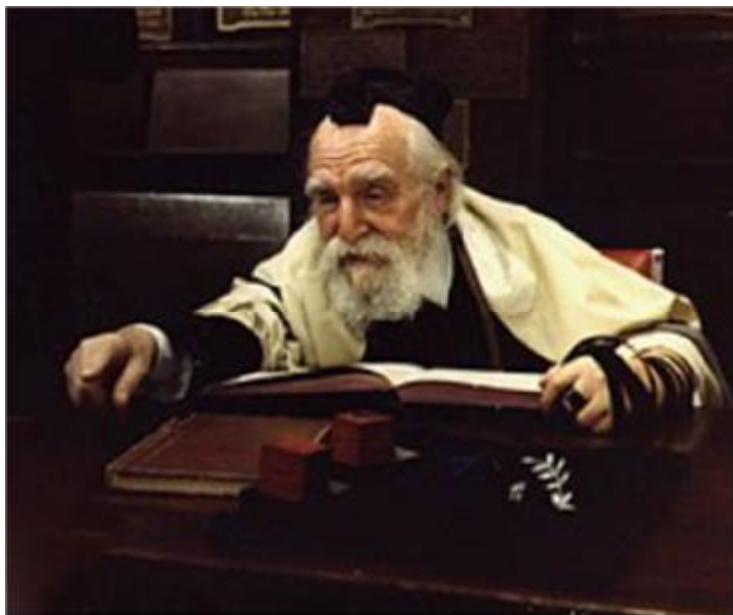
Fixing the Roof of the Shul

The leaders of the community listened Rav Menachem Mendel and got right to work on having the roof of the Shul fixed, and shortly after, for some reason, the government officials decided to use a different place for their storage!

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah & Tefillah.

Forgive Every Night

By Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum



Rav Chaim Greengrass z”l studied in the yeshiva *Tiferes Yerushalayim* for nearly forty years and enjoyed a personal chavrusa (study partnership) with the Mashgiach, Rav Michael Birnbaum zt”l. Of course, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, the Rosh Yeshiva, was around in those days. Rav Chaim personally attested to the following incident involving Rav Moshe.

A disagreement arose between two individuals, and it was decided to present the matter to Rav Moshe, who would give the final ruling. After doing so, Rav Moshe received a phone call. “I am Rav so-and-so,” said the man calling, “and I want to mention that with regard to the Din Torah which the Rosh Yeshiva ruled on, it’s contrary to an explicit Gemara!” Rav Moshe wanted to ask which Gemara he was referring to, but before he could, the phone went silent.

Rav Moshe Gave a Glowing Haskama

A few months later, the same Rav who had called approached Rav Moshe seeking a *haskama* (approbation) for a *sefer* he had just written. Rav Moshe went on to give the Rav a glowing *haskama*, well beyond the expectations of someone who had just recently disrespectfully phoned him.

Eventually, it was time for the Rav to go, and Rav Moshe seized the opportunity. “Please tell me,” asked Rav Moshe, “what is the explicit Gemara you were referring to?” The Rav looked at Rav Moshe confused. “I have no idea what

the Rosh Yeshiva is talking about. I never made such a phone call to the Rosh Yeshiva.”

As it soon became clear, an imposter had called Rav Moshe, using the name of this Rav.

But one question still lingered for Rav Moshe. “Being that all along you thought this was the Rav who made that phone call, how did you go on to give him a *haskama*, let alone such a warm and praiseworthy *haskama*?”

Rav Moshe responded rather simply. “It didn’t make a difference. That night, before I said Krias Shema Al Ha’Mitah (the Shema before retiring to sleep), I forgave him. And therefore, I had no ill feelings against him anyway, so even if it was him, I let it go and I gave him the *haskama*.”

Every night, before we nod off to sleep, we have the opportunity to remove from our heart any ill feelings that might remain entrenched in our heart. Sometimes it might be easy, sometimes it might be hard. But it’s always worth it.

Reprinted from the Parshat Shelach 5784 email of the Torahanytimes.com Newsletter.

Joy Amongst the Pain

By Paysach J. Krohn



Rabbi Zamir Cohen

The following remarkable story was told to me by Rabbi Zamir Cohen, a prolific author, renowned lecturer, and chairman and founder of the Hidabroot kiruv organization in Petach

Tikvah, Israel. In the Friday night tefillah of Lecha Dodi, we say that Shabbos is the Mekor Haberacha, the source of blessing.

In this case, was it ever! Nati and Rona Halabi* lived with their three children in the secular Nir Oz kibbutz, which lies within view of southern Gaza.

Several years ago, Rona became a baalas teshuvah, observing Shabbos, davening every day, and eating only kosher. Noam reluctantly went along with Rona; their children followed their mother’s lead.

Every Shabbos they left Nir Oz and stayed with observant friends. One Shabbos they would be in

Yerushalayim, another in Ashdod, and a third in Ashkelon, but always staying with a Torah-observant family.

Why The Halabis Chose That Simchas Torah to Stay in the Kibbutz

Rona was expecting her fourth child, and the baby was due around Simchas Torah. The Halabis decided that it was probably best to stay in their kibbutz home for Yom Tov, for if Rona went into labor, she would be close to her doctor and hospital. Reluctantly, therefore, they stayed in Nir Oz and felt they would make do with the holiday spirit that they could muster.

At least there would be flags, candy apples, and some dancing with a Sefer Torah. On Simchas Torah, October 7, 2023, their community was among the hardest hit by Hamas terrorists, who savagely murdered, maimed, and kidnapped people, leaving the community scorched and shattered.

Incredibly Their Home was Bypassed by the Hamas Savages

Incredibly, none of the Hamas savages even entered the Halabi home. People in neighboring homes were killed or maimed and worse, but the Halabis, though terrified by what they heard and saw through the slits of their window shades, were spared and untouched. No one could figure out why their home was bypassed.

Two days later, when the clothing of dead Hamas terrorists was searched and captured terrorists were interrogated, the reason for the Halabis survival became known. Many of the terrorists had maps indicating which kibbutzim to enter, which homes had dogs that could attack them, where the parents' bedrooms were, and where the children's rooms were. These maps had been drawn by the Palestinians who for years came in from Gaza to work in these homes. They had betrayed their employers, those who provided their livelihood, by giving Hamas exact details as to where they could do the most damage.

The Secret of the Note

On the map of Nir Oz, there was a note not to bother going into the home where the Halabis lived. The note simply said, "They are never there on their Sabbath." The Shabbos had saved them, and on the next Shabbos their child was born. Rabbi Zamir Cohen

*names have been changed

*Reprinted from the Parshat Pinchas 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.
(Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – "From Sorrow to Celebration.")*

The Injured Finger



The Bobover Rebbe, *zt”l*, Rav Shlomo Halberstam, was once leading a Tana'im event, an engagement, on a Motza'ei Shabbos. After he read the Sh'tar, he broke the plate as is customary. Somehow, he cut his finger while he broke the plate.

However, he did not lose his calm even for a moment, and he even looked extremely joyful that this happened. Someone asked why he was happy about it, and he shared the following idea.

The Bas Kol (Heavenly Voice)

“We find in the Gemara (Sotah 7a) that forty days before a baby is formed, a Bas Kol, a Heavenly Voice declares, ‘The daughter of so-and-so is destined to marry so-and-so.’ Similarly, the Gemara in Chulin (7a) tells us that one does not cut his finger unless a heavenly voice announced this from above. Both this Shidduch that we are celebrating now and my cut finger were the subject of a Bas Kol, a Heavenly Voice!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah & Tefillah.

The Old Man's Story

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn

Rabbi Moshe Raitport related the following:

Some years ago, on Simchas Torah, he was in a shul in Boro Park and an elderly respected individual noticed him and seeing that he is a Lubavitcher chossid, came over to him.

He said, “I am going to relate to you a story, however, you are not to ask me questions about it.”

The Man Became Extremely Emotional

Moshe said, “I don't know if I can agree to that condition”; however, that person started to speak with tears flowing down his beard. It was evident that he was becoming extremely emotional, as if he was reliving an experience.

Once in the 1920's the Friediker Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, 1880-1950) was sitting on a train. Opposite him said an agent of the notorious NKVD. He began berating and belittling the Rebbe and all observant Jews, in a very vulgar way.

During his entire tirade, the Rebbe sat in his seat and did not give any response. When the train arrived at the station that he planned to get off at, the Rebbe stood up to disembark and that person did so as well.

Recognized that His Antagonist Was From a Chassidishe Family

At that point, the Rebbe faced the man and said, "Hayitochen (how is it so), that you spoke such vile language, especially as you were raised in a chassidishe family [it is unbecoming of you]?"

Full of indignation the officer angrily retorted, "How do you know that I come from chassidim?"

The Rebbe responded, "I observed you while you were eating, and I noticed that you had crackers in your hand. However, instead of biting a piece off of it, you first broke a piece off and then ate it, and that is how you continued eating them. That comes from a chassidishe upbringing." Saying that, the Rebbe left, and the man was utterly stunned.

Extremely Reflective and Thoughtful

The man came home that evening and was extremely reflective and thoughtful. In a short time, he made a drastic change in his life and returned to his roots.

The man continued his narrative and said, I know this story because that officer was my father. Not only did he become religious, but he merited to see that all of his children and grandchildren are Shomrei Torah and mitzvos.

More than Just the Tremendous Power of a Tzaddik

When I related this story, someone mentioned to me, without a question, the words of a tzaddik have tremendous power and can change even an avowed atheist. However, often as in this story, the person has to be ready to listen to and internalize the tzaddik's words, and then it will accomplish its objective.

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5780 email of The Weekly Story by Rabbi Avtzon.

Treasures of Emunah

The Six-Year-Old Thief

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

A first grade rebbe realized that he had a problem when many children of his class were complaining that someone was stealing the snacks they brought from home. The rebbe also noticed that several items in his classroom, such as books, pens and toys, were missing. To figure out which child was stealing, he began coming to the classroom when the children were out for recess. He discovered that the thief was none other than one of the sweetest boys in the class, Yochanan.

The Young Thief Had Exceptional Middos

From all children, the rebbe would never suspect Yochanan. This six-year-old boy had exceptional middos, behaved well in class, and was brought up in a warm, loving, and G-d fearing home.

The teacher called Yochanan's parents and told them what he discovered. "We can't just let this pass," he emphasized to the parents. "We must not let it become a habit."

The parents admitted there was a problem, since at home too, items (and also money) were disappearing. They promised to speak with their son about it. After speaking with Yochanan, the parents discovered the root of the problem.

The Grandmother and the Mother "Stealing" Sweets

The family lived with their grandmother, and she slept in Yochanan's room. She was diabetic, and wasn't allowed to eat sugar, but because of her old-age and failing mind, she didn't totally grasp her situation. At nighttime, when no one was around, she would sneak into the kitchen, "steal" some sweets, and conceal them in her drawer. In the morning, when the elderly grandmother wasn't watching, the mother would secretly open up her drawers, and "steal" the snacks back.

Yochanan watched this day after day. He saw his grandmother stealing, and he saw his mother stealing, and that is how he acquired this bad habit of stealing. Children learn from what they see. Parents should therefore show their love for the mitzvos to their children, so the children will love the mitzvos and perform them with fervor too.

Reprinted from the July 25, 2024 email of the Torah Times Media.

I Don't Know His First Name

“Shimon*, please don't forget to think of an idea for a shidduch for Surie*,” his mother reminded him, perhaps for the umpteenth time. “There must be somebody in your chaburah suitable for Surie.”

Shimon knew that his first cousin, Surie, needed a shidduch, and he took his mother's reminders to heart. The next day, Shimon finally came home with a good suggestion.

His Name is Bergman*

“Mommy, I thought of someone for Surie. His name is Bergman*. I believe he's a nephew of your good friend Leah Kushner*. Perhaps you can get her to redt the shidduch.”

“What's his first name?” “I don't know, he's just Bergman. That's how we call each other in the chaburah. I'm sure your friend Mrs. Kushner will know.”

Shimon's mother wasted no time, and phoned Leah, who was more than happy to redt the shidduch. Leah called her sister-in-law, and explained that her good friend's son recommended Surie, his cousin, as a good shidduch suggestion for her son, Dovid*.

Leah emailed Surie's resume to her sister-in-law. Within a day or two, Leah received a call from her sister-in-law with a “yes” for Surie. It seemed they were able to swiftly and smoothly obtain all the pertinent information about Surie, and she seemed perfect for Dovid.

The Shidduch Proceeded Smoothly

Surie's parents also were able to obtain their information quickly, and before anyone could blink, Leah was arranging the first date for Dovid and Surie. The shidduch proceeded smoothly, and soon – “Mazel Tov!” – a l'chaim was celebrated.

When Shimon heard about the mazel tov, he was so happy to have had a part in it. He was completely shocked when he arrived, seeing that Dovid Bergman was the chosson. That was not the Bergman boy in his chaburah! Soon matters were clarified, which left everyone astounded at the marvels of Hashem's orchestration of shidduchim.

The Bergman boy in Shimon's chaburah was Dovid's younger brother, Pinny. Since no name had been specified, Leah Kushner assumed that Shimon was referring to the older brother, Dovid. Leah's sister-in-law later confirmed that had Surie been redt for Pinny, she would have never considered the shidduch, because she was not a match for Pinny.

Shimon not knowing the Bergman boy's first name, and Leah assuming it was Dovid, was another manifestation of the open miracles of Hashem's direct involvement in arranging shidduchim.

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchos 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

Siberian Squabble

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

One winter, a father and son living in the frozen tundras of Siberia got into an argument. There was only one warm coat available in their home, and the father felt that he was entitled to wear it. “I am an old man,” he complained. “I am frail and freezing in this house. If I don’t wear the coat I will die.”

The son countered, “I am out working in the field where the wind is howling and I must be protected. I am the one supporting the family. It is only proper that I should have the coat to wear.”

Let Their Rabbi Decide Who Gets the Only Coat

The father and son could not come to an amicable solution so they decided to let their Rabbi rule on the situation. The Rabbi listened with astonishment to their selfish arguments and said, “I have never seen or heard of such a quarrel about a coat between a father and son. I need two days to think about it. Please come back then.”

On the way home the father began thinking, “My son is right. He is out in the cold where the winds are terrible. He is more susceptible to getting sick. I am living off the money he earns. He should have the coat.”

At the same time the son was thinking, “My father is the one who deserves the coat. He raised me all these years. I owe him so much. I am younger and stronger. I’ll figure out a way to stay warm. Maybe I can build a fire at the worksite.”

Coming to the Rabbi with a Different Dispute

Two days later when they returned to the Rabbi, the father and son explained that they were now having a different argument, as each one was insisting that the other have the benefit of the coat.

When the Rabbi heard their new dispute, he told them to wait a moment because he had to go into a back room. He returned with a heavy fur coat. “Here,” he said. “One of you can use this coat; the other will have the coat you have at home. Now both of you will be warm.”

The father and son thanked the Rabbi profusely for his generosity. After a few minutes though, the son said to the rabbi, “I hope you don’t mind my asking, but if you had this coat, why didn’t you give it to us two days ago, when we first came to you?”

The Rabbi smiled and said, “When you came here two days ago and each of you was claiming, ‘I need the coat, I can’t manage without it,’ I thought about my own coat and said to myself, ‘I too need my coat. I can’t manage without it.’

“But now that you each say, ‘I can do without the coat. Let the other person have it,’ I, too, say to myself, ‘I can manage without the coat. Let another person have it.’”

King David teaches, “Hashem is your shadow (Tehillim 121:15), meaning that Hashem acts toward people the way they act to others. Hashem uses a man’s own behavior as a guideline for His actions toward that person.

Thus, if one is tightfisted and refrains from giving charity or sharing his bounty with others, Hashem, in turn, will eventually withhold His generosity from him. However, if one is caring and good and shares his bounty with others, Hashem will bestow prosperity and good fortune upon him and his family. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Echoes of the Maggid”)

Reprinted from the Parshat Balak 5784 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

“Why is G-d Doing This to Me?”

By R’ Yoni Schwartz

I will share a personal story. In my late teens, something strange began happening to my body. My knees were burning, my lower back was inflamed, and each joint in my body felt hotter than a car dashboard on a summer day. The joint pain progressed to the point where I couldn’t walk, lie down or sit in chairs without pain.

I tried therapy but my body was strangely unresponsive. I visited some of the best doctors in the New York area and when asked why this is happening, to no success. As somebody who loves exercising and sports, not being able to walk - let alone run - took a major toll on my mental health.

Mad at G-d

Have you ever felt so mad that you felt like punching a hole through the wall? For a while, that’s how I felt towards Hashem. What bothered me wasn’t the physical pain but the question, “Why is G-d doing this to me?”

When I met Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz in Yerushalyim, my perspective began to change. Rabbi Breitowitz is an internationally sought halachic authority with hundreds of thousands of listeners on his famous Q & A’s shiurim. I have heard all

of Judaism's textbook answers on why people experience hardships. While they are easy for us to tell others, it's much harder to accept when we're the ones in pain.

Years of Frustration and Anger Flowed Through My Tears

I walked through the old wooden door of his blandly colored office and poured my heart out. Years of frustration and anger flowed through my tears as they dripped down my red cheeks. He did something almost unheard of today: actually listen. His eyes gently contacted mine, his eyebrows scrunched up in empathy and his ears honed in on my words.



Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz

For the first time I felt somebody understood my plight. Others I have spoken with were eager to state the textbook answers of why people suffer, so quick to show that they barely listened. Some even interrupted, but not Rabbi Breitowitz. As he listened, I felt some of the weight get lifted from my chest as he bore my burden with me.

When he spoke, the first thing he did was express empathy, and respond to my emotions, not my rational mind. He did not jump to find logical reasons for the occurrences, nor did he try to problem- solve or rationalize the situation right off the bat. Instead, he sat there, felt my pain with me, gave me courage and hope. That was the most comforting response I had ever received. Thankfully, since then my situation has greatly improved!

Reprinted from the Parshas Pinchas 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

What is the Secret of the Jews?

By Mark Twain



“If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was. All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

There’s only one answer to that question. The secret of our immortality that Mark Twain speaks about is all the blessings that we receive from Hashem!

Reprinted from the Parashat Balak 5784 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes. The Mark Twain essay was originally published under the title “Concerning the Jews” in the September 1899 edition of Harper’s New Monthly Magazine.