

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS HAAZINU & SUCCOS/SIMCHAT TORAH 5786

Volume 17, Issue 4 5 Tishrei & 15-23 Tishrei 5786/Oct 4 & Oct 7-15, 2025

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

For a free subscription, please forward your request to keren18@juno.com

Past emails can be found on the website – ShabbosStories.com

The Special Esrog



Rav Avrohom Asher Makovsky related a great story.

The Tepliker Rav, zt"l, was one of the great Poskim of Yerushalayim. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, turned to him many times for clarification when Rav Shlomo Zalman was writing his Sefer, Meorei Eish, in which he discusses the subject of electricity, which at that time was a new and complex topic of Halachah.

With the Tepliker Rav's reputation for the highest levels of Torah knowledge, it was no surprise that from Yom Kippur to Erev Succos, long lines of people formed at his door wishing to show him their Esrogim. The Tepliker Rav not only knew

Esrogim, but he treasured the Mitzvah and always purchased for himself the most beautiful Arba Minim that were available.

Therefore, people were shocked when on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone, "Could you please give me your Esrog as a present?" He phrased his request this way, because Halachah states that on the first day of Yom Tov, a person may only fulfill the Mitzvah with Arba Minim that he owns. The man understood the request, but he was incredulous that the Tepliker Rav didn't have an Esrog. How could this be? He gladly gave the Rav his Arba Minim, and later set out to discover the story behind this strange request.

This is what he discovered: On Erev Succos, the Tepliker Rav's apartment had quieted down. The lines were gone and the Rav sat quietly learning. Suddenly, he heard shrieking coming from somewhere in the apartment building. It sounded like someone was in trouble! He leaped out of his seat and ran out the door into the hallway. There, he saw an open door and could perceive that the screaming was coming from within that apartment.

He knocked on the door and said, "Is everything okay? Is anyone hurt?"

The woman of the house was hysterical. She explained, "It's so important to my husband to get a good Esrog. He bought the most expensive one the dealer was selling, and he warned all the children to stay away from it. He just left the house to do a few last-minute Yom Tov errands, and my son took the Esrog and began to play with it and it fell. A piece broke off! The Esrog is ruined, and I can only imagine what my husband is going to do when he finds out!"

The Tepliker Rav calmly told the woman, "There is nothing to worry about. Wait right here." He ran to his apartment and came back with his own Esrog. He told her, "Listen to me carefully. Here is a beautiful Esrog, but your husband obviously is not going to be misled into thinking it's his. Give me the broken Esrog. I'll dispose of it. Take this new Esrog and tell your husband that I came to see his Esrog because I heard it was so beautiful. I looked at it carefully and I admired it, but I found a Shailah that might have made it invalid. So, I took an extra Esrog that someone gave me as a gift, a very special Esrog, and gave it to him as a gift instead."

That is how the Tepliker Rav found himself without an Esrog on Succos. Rav Makovsky writes that we learn from this what our priorities should be. Having a beautiful Esrog is a worthy goal, but it's not the only Mitzvah in the Torah. It doesn't supersede everything else. When faced with the choice between having a magnificent Esrog or doing an exquisite act of Chesed, the Tepliker Rav knew which to choose!

Reprinted from the Succos 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

More than You Can Ever Earn in 30 Years

By Rabbi David Ashear



Noam*, a young man living in Eretz Yisrael, worked in a large office building that housed many diamond dealers. His job was simple but steady—he was the errand boy. All day long he would run up and down the different floors, delivering small packages, picking up merchandise, and sometimes going out to buy lunch for the employees. Though it wasn't glamorous work, he was grateful for the opportunity and did it faithfully.

One ordinary afternoon, as he walked down the hallway, something on the floor caught his eye. He bent down and picked it up—his heart skipped a beat. In his hand was a small but dazzling diamond. He could tell immediately that this was not a trivial stone. Unsure of its exact value, he discreetly asked someone outside the building for an estimate. The reply stunned him:

“This gem is worth more than you would earn doing your job for thirty years!” The words rang in his ears. Thirty years! Noam suddenly found himself facing an enormous test. On the one hand, no one had seen him pick it up. He could easily pocket the stone and no one would ever know. On the other hand, diamonds have very clear identifying signs, and it would not be difficult to trace the rightful owner.

As the battle raged within him, his emunah began to speak louder than his temptation. If Hashem wants to give me this kind of wealth, Noam thought, He can do it in an honest way, without my having to do something wrong. With that clarity, Noam printed and posted notices all over the building, announcing that a diamond

had been found, inviting the owner to come forward with identifying signs. Before long, a dealer approached him and described the stone in precise detail. It was clear he was the true owner.

When Noam handed it back, the man stared at him in amazement. “I have to be honest with you,” the dealer said. “I don’t think I would have returned such a diamond if I had found it. And yet you did it— quietly, without fanfare, with complete integrity. That tells me a lot about who you are. You know, I’ve been searching for an honest and trustworthy personal assistant for quite some time. I think you’re exactly the person I’ve been looking for.”

Right there on the spot, he offered Noam the position—with a salary far beyond what Noam had been earning running errands. But the greatest reward came later. After seeing firsthand Noam’s loyalty, humility, and honesty, the wealthy diamond dealer approached him with another life-changing offer.

“Noam,” he said warmly, “I would like you to meet my daughter.” One meeting led to another, and in time Noam married her. What had begun as a moment of temptation in a hallway had turned into the very path through which Hashem sent him his bashert. Noam not only gained parnassah and honor from his integrity—he gained his shidduch. The diamond that he returned was worth more than thirty years of salary, but through his emunah and honesty, Hashem gave him a far greater diamond: his wife, his home, and his future. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living Emunah on Parnassah”)

Reprinted from the Ki Savo 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

The “Cheerful” Mashgiach

Rav A. L. Scheinbaum wrote a story. Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zt”l, was a revered Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ponovezh. Rav Yechezkel served Hashem with great awe throughout his life. In fact, his Yiras Shamayim was so great that he was rarely seen smiling.

One day, a Talmid noticed that Rav Yechezkel was in a cheerful mood. Surprised, he asked his Rebbe why he was in such good spirits. Rav Yechezkel explained, “Before the Second World War, I served as Mashgiach in the Mirrer Yeshivah. I received a very small salary that was nowhere near enough to feed my family. Every day, I pleaded with Hashem to spare my family from hunger. Baruch Hashem, my prayers were always answered. I felt like the Yidden in the Midbar who had no choice but to place their faith completely in Hashem to send them Mann from Shamayim every day.

“When the war broke out, I escaped to Shanghai along with the entire Yeshivah. Money was tight there as well, but I managed the same way I had in Lithuania. I trusted in Hashem and He supported me. After the war, I began serving as the Mashgiach of the Ponovezher Yeshivah.



“For the first time in my life, I was paid a comfortable salary. Without realizing it, my feeling of dependence on Hashem diminished. Suddenly, I had money in my pocket. I no longer felt quite so keenly that I could not possibly survive a single day without Hashem’s Chesed in seeing to my needs and those of my family. Now the Yeshivah is experiencing financial difficulties,” Rav Yechezkel concluded. “I haven’t been paid in months. I suddenly find myself pleading with Hashem to sustain my family with the same fervor I used to Daven with every day. The realization that I had regained a precious treasure fills me with joy!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.

The Desire for “One” More Mitzvah

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt”l, would share this story:

The Yismach Moshe had a son that was very sick, R”L, and he sent a Shliach to the Kever of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk, zt”l, to Daven for his son. The Yismach Moshe told the Shliach, “When you get there, I’m not sure that at that specific time Rav Elimelech will be at the Kever, so I want you to do the following when you get there. Take out a Prutah, a penny, from your pocket, and say, ‘I am giving this Prutah L’Iluy Nishmas, for the sake of the Neshamah that will be the first one to rush to

Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk, wherever he is, and tell him that there is a Shliach from the Yismach Moshe at his Kever.””



The burial place of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk

The Yismach Moshe said that when you will do that, thousands, and tens of thousands of Neshamos that passed away hundreds and hundreds of years ago will start racing to see who will be the first one to find and tell Rav Elimelech that the Yismach Moshe's Shliach is there, because they are desperate for another Mitzvah, they are desperate for another Zechus, and that will bring Rav Elimelech to the Kever. Rav

Aharon Leib Shteinman said, “We don't value what it means to give a penny to Tzedakah, or what so-called simple Mitzvos really mean. But those Neshamos that are in the Olam HaEmes appreciate what giving one penny to Tzedakah really means. They'll do anything to get the Zechus of one more Mitzvah.”

Rav Aharon Leib used this story to inspire people to do Mitzvos, because if doing an easy Mitzvah like giving a penny to Tzedakah, which thousands of Neshamos are desperate for, how much more so is it true when it comes to a Mitzvah that is challenging to do, and how much more it is worth. It says in Avos D'Rebbi Nosson (3:6) that it is so much greater to do a Mitzvah with Tza'ar and difficulty, than doing a Mitzvah a hundred times without difficulty. The same is true about doing something as a Zechus for someone who passed away. Even the smallest Mitzvah is a tremendous Zechus, and we can only imagine how great the Zechus is when the Mitzvah we do comes with a great challenge!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Lechovitch Rebbe, the Limping Pauper and the Mitzvah of Living in a Sukkah

Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, zt"l, related a story. If one was poor, finding boards to build the walls of a Succah was always a problem. Therefore, year after year, Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch, zt"l, used to prepare a stock of them, and lend them out to the poor people of the town during the few days between Yom Kippur and Succos.

One year, Erev Succos was on a Friday, and a threadbare pauper who was lame in one leg, made his way up to the door of the Tzadik Rav Mordechai, and asked him if he could borrow a few planks for his Succah. Rav Mordechai felt bad, but he told him that there were none left. He had given them all out already, and the man left.

Rav Mordechai then looked out his window, and he saw this ragged fellow limping from house to house, searching for a few boards of wood. He felt so sorry for him that he burst into tears. He cried, "Ribono Shel Olam! Just look how Your children cherish the Mitzvah of living in a Succah! See the self-sacrifice they have and how determined they are to fulfill it! It's raining outside. The alleys are full of mud, and yet, this poor man, whose clothes are ragged, he is lame in one leg, and he is wearing torn shoes, is hobbling around looking for boards for a Succah!

A Special Plea to the Ribono Shel Olam

"Look down, Ribono Shel Olam, from Your holy Place in Shamayim! Bentch Your people, Klal Yisroel, and spread Your Succah over them, Your Succah of Shalom, peace!"

Rav Mordechai then took a ladder and climbed up to the roof of his house and searched around until he found a few boards that he could probably do without for a few days. He handed them to his attendant and instructed him that he should find the poor man, and he should help him build his Succah, as he could likely use the help, and time was short because it was Erev Shabbos as well!

Reprinted from the Succos 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

Rav Chaim's Request and Promise

By Rabbi David Ashear

Jeffrey's* father ingrained in him from a young age to have emunas chachomim. In 2010, Jeffrey was 37 years old and still unmarried. His Rav told him, "You need to learn Torah every day."

"I have a difficult schedule," he replied, "and I must rush to work. I don't have time."

The Rav then said, "If you commit to learning Torah every day from 6:15 am sharp until 7:00, I guarantee you will be engaged by Tu BiShevat."

This conversation took place at the start of November with Tu BiShevat just a few months away. Jeffrey believed the words of his Rav. The next morning, he came at 6:10 to learn. For the next few months, he always arrived early to fulfill his part of the deal. The week of Tu BiShevat, he got engaged. And he has been learning ever since.



Rav Chaim Kanievsky

The story did not end there. A year later, he and his wife were blessed with a beautiful baby girl. Three years went by without another child. They went to Eretz Yisrael on vacation. Jeffrey went to R' Chaim Kanievsky for a bracha.

"We've been waiting for another child for three years," he said, adding, "and I really want a baby boy!"

At the time, Jeffrey was wearing a bracelet and a ring, both of which had sentimental value. R' Chaim told him to remove his jewelry, because it was forbidden for a man to wear items befitting a woman.

"I will listen to anything the Rav tells me to do, but can the Rav please give me a bracha that I will have a baby boy?"

R' Chaim said yes. Exactly nine months later, his wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy. He believed in the words of the Gadol, and Hashem rewarded his belief. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living Emunah on Shidduchim”)

Reprinted from the Succos 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Rebbe's Mesiras Nefesh

The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation shared a story.

Rav Yankele of Pshevorsk went to visit an elderly Chasid during Chol HaMo'eid Succos. The man lived with his wife on a high floor of an assisted living facility, and his declining health made it difficult for him to leave the apartment. When the Rebbe arrived at the door, the Chasid's wife greeted him.

She urged, “Please, Rebbe, don't tell him it's Succos. If he knows, he'll insist on going downstairs to the Succah, and it's simply too much for him.”

The Rebbe readily agreed to keep the secret. As he entered the apartment, the Chasid's face lit up with pleasure. “Shalom Aleichem!” he said, and then, turning to his wife with the alacrity of Avraham Avinu serving the Malachim, he said, “Please bring the Rebbe some fruit!” His wife had expected this request. Soon the Rebbe's attendant was entering the room with a grand platter filled with beautiful fruit.

The Chasid asked the Rebbe, “Please make a Brachah on a fruit as a Zechus for me.” Now the Rebbe found himself in a dilemma. He had never taken a bite of food or a sip of a drink outside the Succah on Succos. Even when he was imprisoned in a Siberian labor camp, he had fasted most of the day and saved his rations for the few moments he was able to sneak into a tiny Succah that he had constructed out of a pit in the frozen earth and covered it with some twigs.

The Rebbe peeled the apple and shifted it from hand to hand, trying to stall and distract the Chasid with conversation. However, the Chasid held onto his hope to hear the Rebbe's Brachah. “Please, Rebbe, I need the Zechus of your Brachah!”

At last, the Rebbe cut off a tiny piece of apple (Halachically permissible) and recited a loud Brachah on it, to which the man answered with a resounding “Amein!” Later, the Rebbe's attendant asked why, if Siberia hadn't broken his determination to eat only in the Succah, this elderly Chasid's pleading was able to do so.

The Rebbe answered, “In Siberia, I was willing to sacrifice myself for the Mitzvah of Succah. But to sacrifice another Yid? This I simply cannot do!” In the Rebbe's eyes, he had not abandoned a stringency. Instead, he had chosen to sacrifice one stringency in order to perform another. It was Ahavas Yisroel, his love for a fellow Yid at the highest level!

Reprinted from the Succos 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Power of Simcha

A Chasid once traveled to Lublin to spend the Yamim Nora'im with the Chozeh of Lublin, zt"l. When it was his turn to introduce himself, he was shocked when the Chozeh told him to go home right away. Thinking that he misunderstood, the Chasid came the next day to see the Chozeh. The Chozeh was surprised to see him and exclaimed, "What are you still doing here? I told you to go home!"

A Deeply Dejected Chasid

Deeply dejected, the Chasid set out on his journey home. On the way, he stopped at an inn to spend the night, and he met a group of Chasidim that were traveling to visit the Chozeh. After a few rounds of L'Chaim, the Chasidim started to dance, and they drew this Chasid into their circle. Round and round they danced, joyfully singing Hashem's praises. Gradually, the Chasid's sadness turned into Simchah.

As they danced, the Chasidim said to him, "Come on back with us to the Rebbe." The Chasid decided to give it another try. Perhaps the Chozeh would welcome him this time. When he again arrived at the Chozeh, to his great surprise, the Chozeh was delighted to see him and embraced him warmly.

Achieving What Even a Rebbe Can't Do

The Chozeh declared, "A Rebbe cannot accomplish the miracles that Chasidim can achieve through Simchah!" He explained, "When you came to me the first time, I saw that Heaven had decreed that you will die shortly. I sent you home because I did not want you to pass away here on Yom Tov, I wanted you to be with your family. But because of your Simchah, you caused the Heavenly decree to be annulled!"

Indeed, this Chasid lived to a ripe, old age. The Skulener Rebbe said about this, "This story represents the underlying meaning of Simchas Torah. After our intense Tefilos of the Yamim Nora'im and after the decree was sealed, we dance on Simchas Torah, and even if the decree was not favorable, it is possible to reverse it and change it into goodness and Brachah through the power of Simchah!"

Reprinted from the Simchas Torah 5785 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

A Father and Son Combination

By Rabbi David Bibi

About a year ago, a young man from the community came to me. He and his wife were struggling to conceive. He listens to my shiurim, he davens with me, and one day, he asked me for a blessing.

Now, everyone here knows me. I'm not a mekubal. I'm not known for segulot. My first instinct was: Who am I to give a brachah?

But then I remembered what Rabbi Abittan Z'SL, always taught us — even the blessing of a hedyot, of a simple person, has weight. So, I told him: I'll have you in mind. I'll add you to my tefillot. May Hashem bless you and your wife with children.

And then I moved on. I didn't think much about it.

Fast forward. I'm driving my son Moses — an OB-GYN — into the city. He was quiet, thoughtful. Then he said he had a surgery scheduled the next morning: a high-risk pre-term C-section.

I had rarely heard concern in his voice. And instinctively, I said: Vihi no'am Adonai Eloheinu aleinu, u-ma'aseh yadeinu konenah aleinu — “May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us, and may the work of our hands be established”.

I blessed him that everything he did with his hands should be blessed. A father's blessing to his son. And life moved on.

A week later, my son Jonah gets a call from his friend Steven: “You won't believe this. My cousin's wife went in for a dangerous, early C-section. The father walked into the hospital nervous... until he saw the doctor's name: Dr. Moses Bibi. He asked, ‘Are you the son of Rabbi Bibi?’ Moses said yes.



Dr. Moses Bibi and Rabbi David Bibi

And in that moment, all the father's fear disappeared. Because a year earlier, he had asked me for a blessing to conceive and have a healthy child. And here was my son, delivering that child."

And had he only known... just the night before, I had given my son a blessing with those very words.

What are the odds? Or maybe the better question is: how does Hashem weave blessing into the world?

This is exactly what Chazal meant. Blessings don't vanish into thin air — they enter the fabric of creation.

Special Story sent to the ShabbosStories.com by Rabbi David Bibi.

Two Amazing Shidduchim Stories

Cancel a Shidduch Rather Than Embarrass a Jew:

This pasuk is teaching us that when a man embarks on starting a marriage and building a home, his house must be "naki", clean of all stumbling blocks. He must ensure that his house is a place of purity, where no innocent soul will be harmed.



Rav Akiva Eiger zy" a (whose Yahrzeit is on the 15th of Elul) was known as a diligent masmid from a young age. By the age of 15, he was renowned as a brilliant scholar who already was fluent in Shas and Poskim. A wealthy man heard about the young ilui and wanted him as a son-in-law.

Accompanied by two talmidei chochomim, he traveled to Breslau, the city where Rav Akiva lived, in order to meet him. When the three men met Rav Akiva, they began to discuss a sugyah in Gemara with him. They asked sharp questions but the boy remained silent. It seemed like he didn't understand what they were saying. Of course, this disappointed them greatly.

After they left, his father asked him, "What happened to you?! Why didn't you say anything? Did you really not understand their words?"

The young man replied, "I realized that they were puzzled by my behavior, but there was nothing I could do. I recognized that their questions came from a lack of knowledge. One of them forgot an explicit Gemara, and the other made a mistake in interpreting the sugyah. Since they are older than me, I didn't want to embarrass them for their mistakes, so I said nothing."

His father said, "But now the rich man won't want you to marry his daughter?"

Rav Akiva responded, "I prefer for the shidduch to be cancelled, rather than to embarrass someone."

A Shidduch from Shomayim



The Kesav Sofer, zy" a

Sefer Rishum B'Shmecha (page 101) relates the following story in the name of Rav Shlomo Unger zt"l, Rov of Chug Chasam Sofer in Bnei Brak. Rav Unger said that he heard the story from Rav Moshe Avraham Sofer zt"l of Tcharna, the son of Rav Eliezer Zusman Sofer zt"l, Rov of Paks. The story is about how Rav Eliezer Zusman's shidduch came about:

In his younger years, Rav Eliezer Zusman learned in the yeshiva of the Chasam Sofer zy" a. He subsequently learned under the Kesav Sofer zy" a, who was his primary Rebbe. When the time came for him to find shidduch, The Kesav Sofer

called him over and asked: “You are old enough to get married. Why aren’t you looking for a shidduch?”

Rav Zusman replied: “Rebbi, I am a poor orphan. How can I find a shidduch when I don’t have a penny to my name?”

The Kesav Sofer asked, “Do you think that a shidduch can only be found in Pressburg?”

Rav Zusman said, “Rebbi, I don’t have any money to travel anywhere.”

The Kesav Sofer said, “I also have no money.” He began rummaging through his pockets and showed Rav Zusman that all he found was 97 groschen, which was a miniscule amount. He gave it to Rav Zusman and told him, “Here is so money for your trip.” Rabbi Zusman had full faith in his Rebbi, so he set out for the train station and wondered where he could go with such a sum of money. So deeply was emunas chochomim ingrained in Rabbi Zusman’s heart that he did not even worry about saving some money for the return trip. He trusted in Hashem that he would undoubtedly find a match there, and he would have money to return. He was told that he would not get far with such a small sum of money. He could only travel to certain towns near Pressburg.

Rav Zusman thought to himself: The people who live in the vicinity of Pressburg also know that I am a poor orphan and they will not want to do a shidduch with me. So, I will use the money I have to go and set sail on a cargo ship and get to somewhere further away. With that thought, he went to the Danube River and asked, “How far can I sail with the money I have?”

They told him that he could get to such-and-such village, but he also learned that not a single Jew lived there. Still and all, Rav Zusman strengthened his bitachon that Hashem would guide him and he sailed to that village. When the ship reached that village, he disembarked and walked slowly along the banks of the river, trusting Hashem to guide his way. Suddenly, he saw an old Jew standing before him. The Jew turned to him in surprise and asked, “What are you doing here?” Rav Zusman was excited to see another Jew and he answered with the same question, “And what are you doing here?” The old man said to him: “It is not polite for you to answer me with a question, when I asked you first. Moreover, I am older than you, so you should answer me first.”

Rav Zusman told him everything that had recently occurred to him and explained that he had come to see what Hashem had in store for him. The old man then smacked him on the back and said, “You are mine!” This old man was Rav Yoel Unger zt”l, author of Shu”t Riva. He told Rav Zusman, “Last night, the Chasam Sofer appeared to me in a dream. He told me that it was time to find a shidduch for my daughter and that I would find her groom in this village. I immediately traveled here and found you!”

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5785 email of The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts on the Weekly Parshah from Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.

The Red Cell Phone

By Rabbi Eliezer Abish



Malka Roth, hy'd

Rashi explains that this posuk is referring to the prohibition against talking Lashon Hara: "If you wish to take precautions against being stricken with tzara'as, then do not speak Lashon Hara (derogatory remarks). Remember what was done to Miriam, who spoke against her brother (Moshe) and was stricken with plagues (of tzara'as)."

One day, while discussing with a friend the precarious situation in Eretz Yisroel, I mentioned how interesting it is that the stories we hear about the victims of the Arab terrorist murderers have a similar thread running through them: The victims all appear to be very righteous and special, either great in learning or giants in chessed. It sends shivers up and down my spine whenever I think about it.

Motioned Me to Follow Him

My friend, usually very outgoing and gregarious, did not say anything in response. He got up from the couch and motioned for me to follow him. I was a bit taken aback at the solemn expression on my friend's face and his unusual behavior. He led me into his study and pointed to a picture hanging on the wall above his desk, "Look at that."

I looked, and could not understand what he was trying to tell me. I tried to figure out what could be so special about an old red cell phone. After all, it's one thing to want to own a nice red cell phone, but to hang a picture of one in your study above your desk?

Who is Malka Roth?

"This is a picture of Malka Roth's cell phone," he explained. "Huh? Who is Malka Roth," I asked, "and why would you have a framed picture of her cell phone hanging in your study? I don't get it."

My friend pulled out his large leather chair, sat down and explained. “Malka was a sweet and good-natured, popular fifteen-year-old girl. She was so full of life and zest. She was especially devoted to her younger sister, Chaya Elisheva, who is blind and has other serious disabilities. She was also a very popular youth leader for nine-year-old girls. Her magnetic personality and propensity to always see the good in people made everyone want to spend time in her company.”

Still Completely Baffled

“That’s beautiful, but I still don’t get it. What does that have to do with having a picture of her red cell phone hanging in your study?” I asked him, still completely baffled as to what my friend was leading towards.

“On the twentieth day of Av 5761 [August 9, 2001], she was in Yerushalayim with some friends, enjoying a slice of pizza in the Sbarro restaurant, when an Arab terrorist murderer entered with a guitar case full of explosives and nails - to ensure maximum damage. Hundreds of innocent people were seriously injured, many of them for their whole lives. Malka was one of the sixteen innocent people brutally murdered in that senseless terrorist attack.

“She was less than four months shy of her sixteenth birthday. The red cell phone in the picture is Malka’s cell phone. The police found it among the destruction and carnage and gave it to the family after they got up from shivah.”

What Was the Significance of the Picture?

I had tears in my eyes. It broke my heart to visualize parents sitting shivah for a murdered fifteen-year-old daughter. But I still did not understand the significance or purpose of the picture of Malka’s red cell phone occupying a prominent place on the wall of my friend’s study.

In response to the quizzical look on my face, he instructed, “Go and take a closer look at the phone and you’ll understand.” I walked over to the picture and took a close look at it. My eyes welled up with tears that I could not contain. Malka had written on the phone in black marker "asur lidaber lashon horah" - It is forbidden to speak lashon hara.

How Great Every Day Common People Can Become

“That picture,” explained my friend, “does more than anything else could, to help me realize and internalize how much more there is for me to accomplish in life. It helps inspire me to see how great every day common people - even young fifteen-year-old girls - can become. I hung up that picture to inspire me to grow and constantly strive for greatness.” (Excerpted from the Israel Bookshop Publications – “Portraits of Prayer”, Rabbi Eliezer Abish)

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Seitzei 5785 edition of Torah Tavlin.

A Generous and Priceless Gift



I heard the following amazing story which happened a few weeks ago from a kollel member in Chicago and I verified the details with Shmuel Mashiach.

Shmuel Mashiach, a Chicago businessman, was waiting in line at Ben Gurion Airport together with hundreds of teens returning from NCSY's Anne Samson Jerusalem Journey (TJJ). Behind him, a boy named Eyal was telling his counselor that although he had kept his first Shabbos in Eretz Yisrael, he had no idea how to continue once back home, since his parents didn't keep Shabbos or kosher.

On the spot, Shmuel raised his voice so the group could hear: "Anyone who keeps four Shabbosos in a row starting this week will get one thousand dollars from me."

A commotion broke out as the teens turned toward him. He explained the conditions: they had to begin right away, spend Shabbos with a shomer Shabbos family, and go to shul at least once. Shabbos is a gift, he told them. Unwrap it, and it will change your life.

The counselors took his number, and the line moved on. A few minutes later, Mrs. Mashiach placed her carry-on bag onto the conveyor belt. The alarm sounded. Security began searching the bag and pulled out a beautiful silver challah knife from Hazorfim a gift they had purchased for their son. Because they weren't checking luggage, the guard explained firmly that it had to be confiscated. this is Ben Gurion policy, nothing can be done.

Shmuel tried to protest. "This isn't a weapon, it's for Shabbos. It cost hundreds of dollars. Can't I just bring it back to check-in?" But the answer was final: it was going into the trash, along with all the other confiscated items [compiler's note: where it would be retrieved later and taken to the home of an airport employee to enjoy].

Just then, a voice rang out from the back: "Rega, rega, rega!" A supervisor approached and motioned to them quietly, "Bo iti" follow me."

Expecting trouble, they braced themselves. Instead, he lowered his voice and said, "I saw what you did with those kids. You touched my heart. I used to keep Shabbos faithfully, for many years, until life and old wounds pulled me away. But what I heard from you awakened something in me".

Then, breaking protocol, he told them, "I'm going to do something that's never done. I'll have your wife escorted back to the United desk, check this bag as luggage,

and then bring her back through security.” And true to his word, he arranged everything until the knife was safely stowed under the plane.

Before parting, he turned to Shmuel with emotion in his voice. “I want you to give me the same challenge but without the money. I want to try keeping four Shabbosos in a row.” It was clear that he carried a deep, heartfelt longing to return to Yiddishkeit. They exchanged numbers, and soon afterward he began sending updates: “First Shabbos kept.” “Second week and still going strong.”

And it didn’t stop there. Since that airport encounter, many of the teens from the group have been calling as well, saying they’re taking him up on the challenge and some have gone beyond the four weeks, continuing to keep Shabbos on their own.

Who knows how far the impact of this Kiddush Hashem will spread as the story continues to unfold.

Reprinted from the August 28, 2025 email of Rabbi Shraga Freedman.

Three Doctors; Three Mezuzot

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Dr. Yaakov Orlean directs the blood bank in the Ma'ayanei HaYeshua Hospital in Bnei Brak. He is originally from the United States, where he used to live and work in California.

One day he went to a well-known *sofer* (scribe)[1] in Bnei Brak and ordered three exquisite *mezuzot of the highest quality*. Dr. Orlean mentioned to the *sofer* that he would be going to the United States for business reasons, and that he would be giving the mezuzot as gifts to three former doctor colleagues of his from California.

A few days later Dr. Orlean came to pick up the three mezuzot. He carefully inserted each one into a nice *mezuzah* case and packed them in his suitcase. The first thing he did when he arrived in California, was to drive over to his former colleagues' homes to catch up on old times. They all lived on the same street, so it was very convenient to visit each of them. All three were very happy to see him again, but their reactions when they received his gift were wildly different.

The first doctor, Jack, was disturbed when he finished unwrapping the gift paper and realized what it was he was holding in his hands. He plainly said, "Thank you very much for the mezuzah. How unique! I will keep it right here in my desk drawer and it may come in handy as a paperweight."

Dr. Orlean was not pleased. He said in astonishment, "A paperweight? This is a mezuzah! You're supposed to attach it to the doorpost of your front door!"

Jack, with equal astonishment, responded, "On my front door? You have got to be kidding. Everyone will know I'm Jewish! No. I'm sorry, but that's out of the question. Thank you so much anyway, it's a really nice gift."

Dr. Orlean said goodbye and then walked down the block to the second colleague's house, Steven. His reaction to the special gift from Israel was less severe. He said, "How nice! A mezuzah! Just what I always wanted!" And he proceeded to put it into his desk drawer.

Tactfully, Dr. Orlean said, "You know, the purpose of a mezuzah is to hang it on a doorframe. And now that I think about it, the casing goes very well with the color scheme of your front entrance."

Steven didn't look thrilled. He agreed to hang the mezuzah on a room in his house, but he said he couldn't imagine posting it on the front door.

Dr. Orlean, after failing twice, made a third attempt and visited his friend a few houses down the street. The third doctor, Michael, unwrapped his gift and was very excited to find the mezuzah and its beautiful case. He kissed the mezuzah, caressed the case and delighted in the fact that his gift came from the Holy Land.

Then, without being told what to do, Michael stood up, asked for the correct blessing to say, and affixed the mezuzah onto his front doorpost. Dr. Orlean was very proud and happy.

When he returned home to Israel, Dr. Orlean heard about a terrible earthquake that had struck California just days after he left. Numerous homes had sustained considerable damage, and some had been demolished.

Dr. Orlean was concerned about what had happened to his three friends. When he found out about them, he was amazed by the news.

Jack's house had been completely destroyed. Nothing remained standing except the foundation

Steven's house suffered tremendous damage, except for one room - the one where the mezuzah had been hung!

And Michael's house, which was on the same street as the other two, was completely intact without any trace of damage!

~~~~~

*Source:* Modified and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles the email of *Torah U'Tefilah* compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg, who received the story in the name of Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, who heard it directly from the sofer.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Eikev 5785 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# Overcoming Natural Humility

By Yoni Schwartz

Rabbi David Ozeri once visited Israel and came across a bochur he knew who was struggling to get married. Rabbi Ozeri was going to visit Rav Shach and took the bochur along to get a bracha. When they arrived, Rav Shach asked who the young man was, and R'Ozeri explained he had come for a bracha to get married. Rav Shach asked, "How old is he?"

"Twenty-four," responded Rabbi Ozeri. Rav Shach asked, "Why is he not married?" "Well," replied Rabbi Ozeri, "he's very shy and hasn't mustered the strength to go on a date yet."

Rav Shach said, "Humility is a great thing, but you have to get married." The boy responded, "I want to get married but..." "Promise me you'll get married this year," said Rav Shach. The boy was flabbergasted at his request and was afraid to make a promise to the Gadol Hador, which he might not be able to uphold. Nevertheless, Rav Shach didn't let him leave until he promised. Eventually, the boy gave in with tears in his eyes, afraid to break his word, so Rav Shach gave him a bracha that he should be zocheh (merit) to uphold his promise.

Afterward, Rabbi Ozeri had to stop by a certain hotel and brought the bochur in, too. While there, he bumped into an old friend who mentioned that he had a daughter in seminary. Six months later, the two got married. At the vort, Rabbi Ozeri got up and mentioned this story. The father of the kallah responded, "That's not the end of it. We were also by Rav Shach that week because my daughter was also too afraid to go out, and Rav Shach made her take the same promise."

**Comment:** In Parshas Ki Savo, we learn about all the tragedies that were predicted to befall us. Why? Because we didn't do the Mitzvos with joy. Humility is a great thing, but there is a time and place for everything. When in a world that shames Jews for being Jewish, we must stand tall and say, "I am proud to be an ambassador of pride in serving G-d."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5785 email of Torah Sweets.*