

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR ROSH HASHANA 5785

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*Past emails can be found on the website – [ShabbosStories.com](http://ShabbosStories.com)*

## Rav Levi Yitzchak's Belated Shanah Tovah Greetings



It was late at night one New Year's Eve, December 31st, and the Bais Medrash of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov, zt"l, was still filled with his Chasidim who were sitting and learning. Close to midnight, the door to the private office of the Rav, which was adjacent to the Bais Medrash, opened, and the Rav shouted out to his

Chasidim: “L’shana Tova Sichasivo v’chasimo”, - ‘May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year!’.

He then returned to his office and closed the door behind him. The Chasidim were mystified. Didn’t the Rav know that this was the secular New Year and not the Jewish New Year? A short time later the same thing happened and the Berditchover Rebbe came out to bentch (bless) them. And then this happened again for a third time.

The Chasidim were totally baffled! As not just anyone could approach the Rav, the men asked an elderly Chasid to approach him and ask for an explanation. The Rav told the elderly man the following: The previous Rosh Hashanah, the Tefilos and Shofar blowing of the city of Berditchov were especially beautiful and heartfelt and went directly to Heaven. Hashem was so taken by these Tefilos that He immediately inscribed the entire city in the Book of Life and bestowed on each and every one of them a year of health and wealth.



**The burial place of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov**

When Yom Kippur came, Hashem was so taken by their fasting and crying. The people poured out their hearts into their prayers. Hashem was about to seal the inscription that He had written on Rosh Hashanah, when suddenly the Satan spoke up. “True, the people have been praying fervently, however, this is only one day! How can You inscribe them favorably for an entire year based on their actions of only one day?”

Hashem therefore held back and the inscription was not sealed. Immediately after Yom Kippur, the people started to build their Succos in preparation of the upcoming Yom Tov. The defending angel spoke up, “Hashem, see how Your people are involved in doing the Mitzvah? Even the poor people are building their Succah to the best of their abilities!”

The Satan was not to be deterred. “Again, I object! True, they are building Succos for You. But, look at the houses they live in, permanent structures of brick, stone and glass. But for You, Hashem, they merely build temporary shacks that can barely last the week!” Again, Hashem held back from sealing the inscription.

Simchas Torah came and the Shuls were filled with dancing and joyful happiness. Again, the defending angel came to Hashem and spoke up. “Hashem, don’t You see how your children are rejoicing for Your Torah? Shouldn’t the inscription be sealed?” Hashem was about to seal the inscription when again the Satan spoke up. “I object yet again! True, they are rejoicing with the Torah tonight. But, how can You inscribe them favorably based on their actions of one night? When Yom Tov is over, they will go back to their old ways! They are undeserving!”

Hashem once again held back from sealing the inscription. So it was that the inscription that was written on Rosh Hashanah remained unsealed through Yom Kippur, Succos, Hoshanah Rabbah, Shmini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

Tonight, on New Year’s Eve, however, the defending angel spoke up. “Hashem, King of the Universe, do You see how non-Jews celebrate the New Year? Shouting and drinking in the streets, and all manner of carrying on! Do you remember how your children celebrated their New Year? They did it with prayer, atonement and holiness.” This time the Satan had no response.

Rav Levi Yitzchak concluded, “Therefore, after all this time the inscription was finally sealed! I felt it appropriate to bless everyone with “L’shana Tova Sichasivo v’chasimo!”

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

# Be Busy with What Counts.

**By Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky**

One Erev Rosh Hashanah, Rav Shlomo Heiman, the rosh yeshivah of Torah Vodaath, asked a few bachurim to please come to his house. The bachurim were in a state of high expectation. What mission, what words, would the rosh yeshivah have for them during this special moment right before the Yom HaDin? Much to their surprise, the mission could not have been more mundane.

“Could you please address these shanah tovah cards for me?” he requested. Immediately, Rav Shlomo noticed the disappointed looks on the boys’ faces. He realized that they expected to be asked to do something grander than addressing envelopes.

“Am I doing the right thing to be busy right now, Erev Rosh Hashanah, addressing envelopes for shanah tova cards?” he asked. “I don’t know. Maybe I’m not doing the right thing. But I want to tell you bachurim something important. For you, this is definitely the right thing, because you are doing the Torah mitzvah of gemillus chassadim. You are doing the greatest thing possible to earn a zechus before Rosh Hashanah.”



**Rav Shlomo Heiman**

This is a remarkable perspective. Regardless of whether Rav Shlomo was doing the optimal thing, the moment he asked the boys to help him do it, they had a full, beautiful mitzvah d'Oraisa — no less than hearing the blowing of the shofar or putting on tefillin — and all the merit it brings. Someone needed help and they

stepped up to provide that help. No other segulah they might have engaged in to bring them a favorable judgment on Rosh Hashanah could have been as powerful.

Let's imagine that someone asks his friend to be sandek at a bris on Erev Rosh Hashanah. The sandek is bound to feel that this is a wonderful zechus that Hashem has dropped into his hand. However, the Pele Yoetz says that this great merit of being a sandek pales in comparison to giving someone change for a dollar. This is because providing change fulfills the mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocha. If we needed change, we would want someone to give it to us. Therefore, when we give someone change, we are fulfilling the mitzvah of v'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocha.

Being a sandek, as important an honorific as that is, is not a mitzvas aseil d'Oraisa of gemillus chassadim. Therefore, Rav Shlomo taught his students this lesson: Nothing could be greater on Erev Rosh Hashanah than performing the mundane task of helping someone address shanah tova cards, because doing so changes that mundane task into the fulfillment of a Torah mitzvah. A segulah does not provide this merit.

### **Reading an Article About Segulos to Merit a Kesivah v'Chasima**

The challenge is to internalize this idea and keep it in mind when opportunities to do chessed arise. Imagine someone sitting on chair, reading an article about segulos a person can do for 40 days to merit a kesivah v'chasimah tova. Just then, a neighbor knocks on the door and asks to borrow a hammer. The person who was poring over the article is disturbed — he's busy thinking about which segulos to try and now this neighbor comes along and he is compelled to go into his garage and hunt down a hammer.

### **No Greater Segulah than the Mitzvah of Gemilus Chassadim**

If this person had internalized an understanding of what chessed is, he would excitedly drop the article and run to find the hammer. As the Chofetz Chaim explains in Ahavas Chessed, based on numerous sources, there is no greater segulah than the mitzvah of gemillus chassadim. We need to look for these opportunities, big and small — changing a dollar, giving a ride, helping someone fill out a form, loaning an item — and treasure each one as an easy, accessible opportunity to fulfill a Torah mitzvah.

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5784 edition of the At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - Living Chessed by Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky.*

# Getting Berachos, Giving Berachos

By Rabbi Naftali Weinberger



For many years, hundreds of men converged on the Lederman Shul in Bnei Brak on the first night of Rosh Hashanah to offer the customary greeting of shanah tovah to Rav Chaim Kanievsky. The line started before Maariv, as people tried to bypass the two-hour wait by approaching him before davening.

One year, the greetings took over four hours, as hundreds of people of all ages filed by Rav Chaim in the men's section of the shul. One year, after hundreds had passed by to wish him a good year, Rav Chaim told the rebbetzin, "With Hashem's help, we will have a very good year, since so many Yidden gave us a berachah for a shanah tovah!"

After giving berachos, Rav Chaim hurried to eat the Rosh Hashanah meal before midnight, as he was planning to wake up at his regular time to follow his chovos schedule of learning before sunrise. During the meal, one of the grandchildren asked him, "If you are going to get up so early tomorrow morning, how can you wish shanah tovah to so many people in one night?"

Rav Chaim quickly replied, "If so many Yidden come to wish us the berachah of a good year, how can we not stand there and get so many berachos?"

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5784 edition of the At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – Rav Chaim by Rabbi Naftali Weinberger.*



# The Awesome Power of the Day

By Rabbi David Ashear



**Rabbi Menachem Stein**

On Rosh Hashanah, we read the parashah relating to Sarah Imeinu having a child and the haftarah of Channah having a child. Chazal tell us (Yevamos 64b) that Sarah was an Ailonis, which means it was not physically possible for her to conceive. Chazal also tell us (ibid. 64a) that one of the reasons Hashem decreed that Sarah be barren was because He loves listening to the prayers of tzaddikim.

Rabbi Menachem Stein asked: It says elsewhere that we are not supposed to pray for Hashem to change nature and perform open miracles, so how could it be that Hashem wanted Sarah to pray for a child if it would have entailed an open miracle for her to conceive?

## **Physical Change Can Happen on Rosh Hashanah**

Rabbi Stein explained that on Rosh Hashanah, everything is created anew. For a physical change to happen on Rosh Hashanah, it is not a miracle. It is in the nature of the day. In fact, Sarah became capable of having children on the day of Rosh Hashanah. What was true last year does not have to be so this year. Everything is a new creation, and it gives us an opportunity to be zocheh to great blessings.

Rabbi Stein told of a girl—we'll call her Ilana—whom he and his wife occasionally hired as a babysitter. One day, Ilana told Mrs. Stein that she did not

want to go home after the job was finished. The Steins investigated and found out that she came from a broken home where conditions were not ideal.

With her parents' permission, she began to spend her days with the Steins, just going home to sleep. Ilana eventually married an outstanding Torah student and moved to another city. Eight years passed, but she did not have children. She consulted with top specialists in America, who told her that her chances of having a baby were very slim. Toward the end of Elul one year, she contacted the Stein family, asking if she and her husband could come to them for Rosh Hashanah. She remembered praying at Yeshivat Ohr Yisrael in Petach Tikvah in her youth and said that she never found another minyan since for the Yamim Nora'im that was as spiritually elevating as that one.

### **Remained Focuses Throughout the Entire Tefillah**

The Steins happily welcomed the couple. For the entire two-day Yom Tov, Ilana did not engage in mundane talk, only in Tehillim, Torah, or tefillah. She had heard an inspiring speech about how Rosh Hashanah can change anything and was determined to do whatever she could to merit having a baby. She went to shul early in the morning on Rosh Hashanah and remained focused throughout the entire tefillah.

When the baal korei read from the haftarah about Elkanah asking Channah why she was crying—wasn't he better to her than ten sons?—Ilana burst into loud and piercing sobs. The baal korei could not continue reading. Ilana's cries kept getting stronger and she could not hold them back.

The congregants stood there in trepidation, somberly contemplating what the day of Rosh Hashanah truly meant. After a pause of over five minutes, the haftarah reading resumed and the prayers continued. The rest of the tefillah that day was the best it ever was in that yeshivah. Everyone was inspired by Ilana's tears.

### **Tears on Rosh Hashanah that Seemed to Have Pierced the Heavens**

The students asked the rabbi afterward about that episode. Who had been crying in such a heart-rending manner? He explained that it was a woman who wanted a child, just like Channah. Nine months later, Rabbi Stein received a phone call from Ilana, informing him of the upcoming bris milah for her baby. Today, baruch Hashem, she has eight children. Her emotion and tears on Rosh Hashanah seemed to have pierced the Heavens and recreated her into a woman who can have children.

Rabbi Stein concluded by saying that another woman, who heard him recounting this story on Kol Halashon, was so inspired by it that she told her niece to listen. That same year, she invited her niece to come pray with her on Rosh



Hashanah in Yeshivat Kol Torah in Bayit Vegan. Her niece had been married for thirteen years without having children.

When the baal korei reached the part of Elkanah asking Channah why she was crying, she motioned to her niece: This is the time you should pour out your heart to Hashem! And, indeed, that year she was blessed with a baby of her own.

Rosh Hashanah contains tremendous power. We should use the day properly in all aspects, especially in tefillah. We should accept Hashem's sovereignty as we are supposed to, we should accept upon ourselves to improve our ways, and, be'ezras Hashem, we should all be inscribed in the Sefer HaChaim.

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5784 edition of the At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – Living Emunah on Shidduchim by Rabbi David Ashear.*

# An “Unusual” Rosh Hashanah Concert in Spain

In Spain of August 1492, all Jews were ordered to leave the Spanish kingdom. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had recently conquered all of Spain and sought to make their new kingdom an entirely Christian nation. No Jews could remain. Thousands of Jews fled, and within days, the Jewish community of Spain, which had flourished for hundreds of years, had ended.

However, not all of Spain's Jews had fled. It was possible to remain in Spain, but every Jew had to publicly convert to Christianity and renounce all Jewish observance. Many Jews lived outwardly as goyim in public, but held on to their Jewish observance in secret.

## Whispering the Words of the Kiddush

On Friday nights, these secret Jews would shutter their windows so neighbors wouldn't see them light Shabbos candles. They would bake their challah in hiding, and would whisper the words of the Kiddush. They knew their lives were at stake if they were ever discovered. The Spanish Inquisition had begun years before, and Jews were frequently killed when their secret Jewish lifestyles became known.

Even though these Jews had apparently embraced Christianity, the secret Jews of Spain were never trusted by the Spaniards. They called these Jews “Marranos”, a disparaging term that means “pigs”, and many looked for any sign of Jewish practice in order to turn them over to the Inquisition.

There was a large group of these secret Jews in the city of Barcelona who clung to their ancient traditions. One person, a prominent Jew named Don Fernando Aguilar, was the conductor of the Royal Orchestra in that city, and he enjoyed great wealth and prestige. He privately kept all the mitzvos he could. When he would come home each night, he kissed a Mezuzah that he kept hidden in his floorboards. He was careful to eat only Kosher food and observe the Jewish holidays.

### **A Nearly Impossible Mitzvah to Observe**

Some Mitzvos, however, were nearly impossible to observe, like hearing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. Blowing a Shofar out loud would lead to an immediate arrest, and death. After five long years of living this secret life, Don Aguilar saw an opportunity. In 1497, he made a public announcement, that on Sunday, the 5th of September, he would personally lead the Royal Orchestra of Barcelona in a brand-new concert of his own composition, and the piece he had written was unlike anything ever heard in Spain before.

He declared that it was going to be a musical celebration of different people and cultures from around the world, featuring every instrument ever invented from across the globe, no matter how far away. The only thing he didn't announce was that it was also the first day of Rosh Hashanah. He generated much excitement for his concert, and on the day of the performance, the orchestra hall was filled with an over-flow crowd.

### **An Array of Interesting Music from a Wide Range of Instruments**

Also, in attendance were those "Marranos", but nobody seemed suspicious of them. As the concert began, Don Fernando Aguilar was true to his word, the audience heard interesting music from a wide range of instruments. There were bells and horns, stringed instruments and an array of different drums.

Then, in the middle of the concert, a musician with the orchestra who was rumored by many to be a secret Jew took the stage. He was holding an unusual instrument: a ram's horn. The musician put it to his lips, and began to blow. He blew a Tekiah, a Shevarim, and a Teruah. Each note of the Rosh Hashanah Shofar service rang out throughout the hall, one hundred notes in all.

Most of the audience appreciated it as a skillful performance of an unfamiliar instrument, but to the secret Jews in the audience, Don Aguilar's "music" gave them their first chance in years to fulfill the mitzvah of hearing the Shofar! (The Book of Our Heritage, Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Nisabim-Vayelech 5783 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

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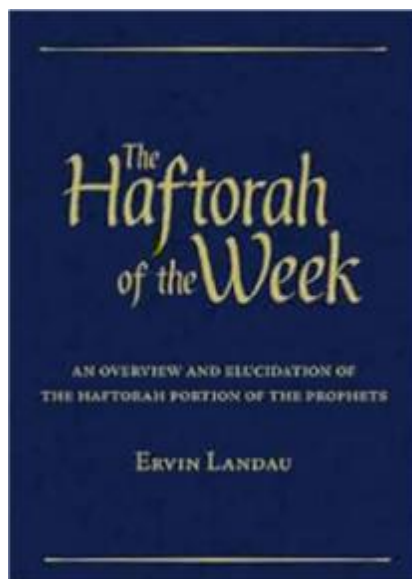
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**A Blast from the Past (Published August 31, 2001)**

## A Plane, a Boat and a Haftorah

By Steve Hyatt



The flight to Philadelphia had barely cleared the runway in Portland when I took out my book, put on my headphones and played the tape Rabbi Choni Vogel had sent me to help me study for my haftorah. I couldn't help but smile as I heard his first few words, "Okay Shloma Yakov, here is the tape, I am sure you are going to be FANTASTIC!"

Fantastic indeed. I had been studying for six months and no matter how much I tried, I simply could not retain the melodies. Six months before, I had made a

mitzva pledge to chant the haftora that I should have presented at my bar mitzva 33 years earlier. Back then, I was such a poor Hebrew school student that my teacher Rabbi Lapidus had wisely limited my role to a morning aliya and leading the afternoon service later that day. And even that had been an enormous challenge.

### **Trying to Find an Excuse to Get Me Off the Hook**

Of course, life had changed since I discovered Chabad, and reciting the haftorah of my youth had seemed like a great idea. But now it was almost "game time" and I simply was not ready. Even as I was practicing on the plane, I was trying to find an excuse to get me off the hook. I was desperate to avoid looking foolish in front of friends and family.

As I sat in my seat wallowing in self-doubt an elderly woman strolled past, looked at my open book with the Hebrew writing, looked at me and then kept walking. Repeating this procedure for the better part of a half hour, she finally stopped in front of me. She said, "It isn't often you see someone reading from a Hebrew book on an airplane. What are you reading?" I explained that I was practicing for my haftorah.

She smiled and sat down in the seat next to mine and proceeded to tell me her life story. She was a retired Jewish doctor living in Los Angeles and she and her husband were on their way to Philadelphia to see their son. After a little while she walked back to her seat.

### **Her Husband Gave Me an Old Newspaper Article to Read**

Several minutes later her husband sat down next to me. He pulled an old newspaper article from his jacket pocket and gave it to me to read. He explained that the photo in the article was of his cousin's school class back in Hungary during World War II. He pointed to his cousin and said he was the only member of the class that had escaped when the Nazis invaded his village. He thought since I was studying for my haftorah I would appreciate reading the article.

The story moved me but I was mystified why he thought it had a connection to my haftorah. When the plane landed, the doctor and her husband said goodbye.

After picking up my luggage, I started driving toward Chabad of Delaware, where Rabbi Vogel's second son Areleh was soon to celebrate his Bar Mitzva. As I crossed the state line into Delaware I could almost smell the aroma of the Rebbetzin's mouth-watering kugel cooking in the oven!

The next evening was Shabbat and it got off to a joyous start as friends and family from around the world prayed, ate, laughed and sang together. On Shabbat morning, Areleh made us all proud leading the services, reading from the Torah and chanting a magnificent haftorah.

When services were over the celebration began in earnest. After more food, and of course more kugel than I could eat, a full-fledged "farbrengen" began. Each participant shared insights and wisdom about the Torah portion, the responsibilities a

boy assumes upon becoming Bar Mitzva and discussions of spirituality and commitment.

### **Recalling a Miraculous Escape from the Nazis on the Last Boat Out of Calais**

Midway through the festivities Rabbi Vogel cajoled his father, Reb Noson Vogel, to recount his miraculous escape from the Nazis, on the last boat out of Calais, France. Rabbi Vogel described how, on that fateful day, which "coincidentally" was exactly 61 years to the day of Areleh's Bar Mitzva, his sister had convinced a guard to let the family secretly scale the wall of the ship and board before it sailed out of port. In the end they were four of the less than seven hundred souls who finally escaped from the clutches of Hitler's henchmen that day.

He explained that only through G-d's blessing did he and his family escape the hands of the Nazis and how he had dedicated his life to foiling Hitler's ultimate plan by promoting and supporting Jewish education throughout the world. Rabbi Vogel established the Lubavitch Boys High School and eventually the Lubavitch Yeshiva in London, which sends to communities around the world hundreds of boys who are involved in Jewish outreach. He said that with every mitzva performed, and with every Jewish boy or girl educated, we ensure that the Jewish people survive and thrive in the post Hitler world.

### **Realized that Learning the Haftorah was More Important than I Had Imagined**

When Shabbat was over and it was time to return to Oregon, I returned with a passion burning in my heart. When I first started this journey I was fearful of "looking foolish" in front of my friends. After meeting the couple on the plane and then listening to Reb Vogel's words of inspiration, I realized that learning and chanting the haftorah was more important than I had ever imagined.

I realized that no matter the final melodic quality of my haftorah, it was imperative to complete it. For every note of my haftorah and the millions that others have and will chant, serve to remind us that despite the evil intent of the Hamens and the Hitlers of history, the spirit of the Jewish people still burns brightly throughout the world.

As I sat back in my seat I couldn't help but marvel at hearing two such painful, yet inspiring stories over the course of a few days.

I thanked G-d for these wondrous blessings, smiled, picked up my book, slapped on my headphones and went back to work.

*Reprinted from the August 31, 2001 edition of L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

# Hashem Can Overcome a Seemingly Impossible Impasse

By Rabbi David Ashear

Rabbi Green\* is a public speaker who is noted for giving chizuk to large crowds. He had an eligible daughter for whom he was seeking a shidduch. After doing much research, he zeroed in on Sruly,\* a top boy in a top yeshivah, and inquired if he would be interested in meeting his daughter. Although Sruly and his parents found out wonderful information about the young lady, he declined to meet her.

“What’s the problem?” his parents asked.

## **Wants More from a Father-in-Law than Some Who Gives Nice Chizak Speeches**

“I heard that her father gives nice chizuk speeches, but I want a father-in-law to whom I can speak in learning, someone who is intimately familiar with the deep sugyos of Shas.”

Since Sruly had only recently begun dating, his parents did not pressure him to go out with this girl. A few months later, the same shidduch was suggested and again he turned it down.

Rabbi Green was invited to speak to the congregants of Mishkenos Yaakov on a Friday night after Kabbalas Shabbos. He replied that he lived far from the shul and it would be too difficult to walk home afterward. Hours later, having reconsidered, he called back. “Hashem has been so kind to me,” he said. “Now I have a chance to inspire His children to get closer to Him. How could I give up that chance because of a long walk?”

They arranged a date one month away. The Sunday before Rabbi Green’s speaking engagement was the day his daughter was suggested to Sruly for the second time. The next night, Sruly met his uncle at a wedding.

“What are your Shabbos plans?” his uncle asked. Sruly replied, “In yeshivah, as always.”

## **An Invitation to Come for a Shabbos Meal**

“Why don’t you come to us for the Leil Shabbos seudah?” Sruly gladly accepted. The Mishkenos Yaakov shul is where the uncle davens, and Sruly went to shul with him that night. After Kabbalas Shabbos, the guest speaker, Rabbi Green, gave a speech that blew the crowd away.



“Who was that speaker?” Sruly asked his uncle as they walked home together after Maariv. “He was incredible!” When he heard the name, he was stunned. It was the father of the girl who had already been suggested to him twice! He realized he would be privileged to have a father-in-law like that.

On Motzei Shabbos, he told his parents he wanted to meet Rabbi Green’s daughter. A few weeks later, they were engaged. Sruly’s preference had been blocking him from meeting his destined wife. Hashem brought him and Rabbi Green to the same shul at the same time – a shul neither of them ever davened in – to remove that obstacle and bring the shidduch to fruition.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5784 email of The Weekly Vort. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living Emunah on Shidduchim” by Rabbi David Ashear.*

# The Great Escape

**By Rabbi Avrohom Barash**

R’ David Halevi, known as the Taz, was the Rabbi of the city of Ostroh in about 1643. His peaceful existence was shattered by the Cossack uprising of 1648, when a band of Polish peasants led by the infamous Bogdan Chmeilnicki rampaged through the Ukraine. These bandits killed and tortured anyone in their path, mostly the Jews.

Somehow the Taz heard that the Cossacks were headed for Ostroh, and he immediately told his followers to prepare for flight to the nearby town. There they would barricade themselves in an abandoned castle and hope to be spared.

The townspeople fled with their leader to the next town, and when the Cossacks arrived in Ostroh they were furious to find their quarry had escaped. They soon discovered where the Jews had gone, and followed them to the neighboring town, blocking the entrance to the town so that no one could enter or leave.

## **None of the Jews Had So Much as a Sword or Even a Knife**

When the Jews peered out the windows of the castle, they were terrified to behold the Cossacks readying ammunition, obviously preparing to storm the castle walls. The hapless victims had fled empty-handed; no one had so much as a sword or even a knife.

The Taz gathered all the people and led them in heartfelt prayers for salvation. At the end of his entreaties, he fell asleep, exhausted, and dreamed that a hand was writing a pasuk on the wall: “And I shall protect this city, to save it, for

My sake and for the sake of My servant, David” (Melachim II 19:34; the Taz’s name was David).

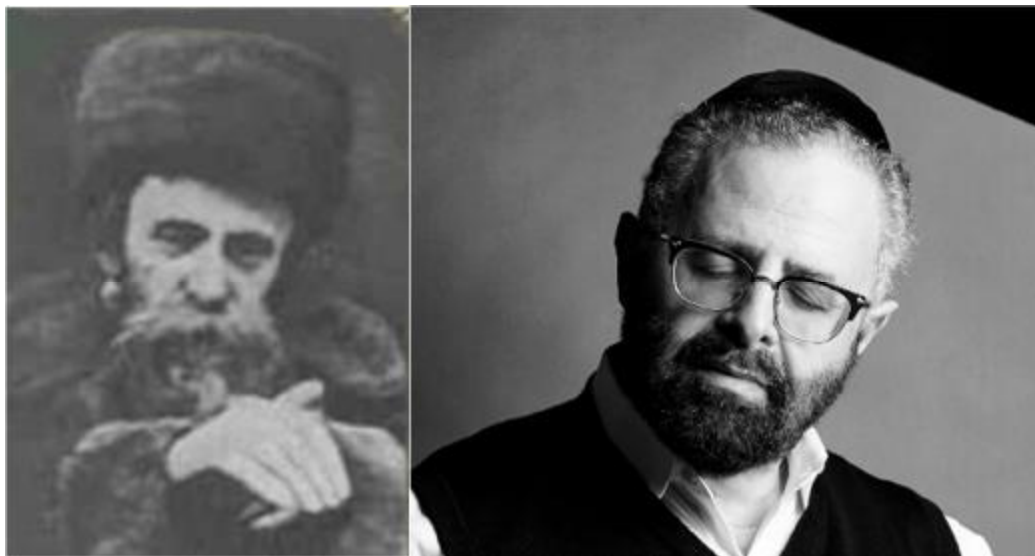
He awoke and, with great joy, told the people of his dream and instructed them to thoroughly search their innermost hearts to do teshubah, as they would soon be saved. Suddenly, one of the men in the group began fiddling with an old rusty cannon which was perched at a notch in the window, and to everyone’s amazement, it began shooting - straight at the Cossack encampment! As one, the men in the room rushed to the other cannons, and found that they all shot at the Cossack positions outside. The Cossacks panicked and retreated immediately, leaving the Jews to rejoice at their miraculous delivery. They could now safely return to their homes without fear of attack.

Every year on that day, 26 Sivan, the Taz would fast and say extra prayers to commemorate the townspeople’s miraculous escape. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book - A Mazeldig Voch)

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

# A Special Brocha from the Belzer Rebbe

By Sholom DovBer Avtzon



**Rav Aharon of Belz and the composer Yossi Green**

One summer a Chassidishe Yid from Eretz Yisroel came to America and was hosted by a family in Seagate. The following day after Shacharis he noticed one person was still in the shul. [I was told that it was the composer Reb Yossi Green.]

He went over to him and said, I am here for a few months in order to visit some doctors and then I am to have a procedure. I would greatly appreciate if you would be willing to be my chavrusa every day during these few months, for whatever amount of time that you can.

### **The Chavrusa Learning Went Smoothly**

Reb Yossi himself was thinking about learning extra in the summer as his family was upstate, so he replied yes. The guest wasn't particular on what to learn, and whatever Reb Yossi wanted to learn was good for him and it went smoothly.

On the afternoon of chof Av or perhaps later on, in the evening, his chavrusa said, tomorrow is the yahrzeit of my Rebbe the heilike tzaddik, Reb Aharon of Belz, and I had the tremendous zechus (merit) to be one of his attendants for a period of time. My custom is that I prepare a small seudah on the day of his yahrzeit and learn some mishnayous in the Rebbe's memory, but I need a minyan.

Yossi, I don't know the people here, can you please arrange that a minyan remains after shacharis. I see that almost everyone leaves immediately after davenning. Of course, I will pay for the seudah and he gave him money to purchase the necessary items.

Reb Yossi had to call much more than ten people, until he received assurances from another eight that they will attend.

However, after davening only seven of them were present, while Yossi and the guest made it nine, and they were missing one for the minyan.

The man pleaded. can one more Yid be found that we would have a minyan, and while they called many numbers, no one was locally around to attend.

### **Yossi's Father Agrees to Drive Over to Make the Tenth Man**

Suddenly, Yossi said I will call my father, maybe he can come. His father heard the situation and said although I am almost an hour away from Seagate, if the people would remain, I will drive over.

When he arrived, they began the seuda and then the Yid said, I will relate a story that I personally witnessed in the period of time that I was zoche (merited) to be an attendant by the Rebbe.

He then related; there was a man who was married for many years and was not blessed with a child. Each year when he had come to the Rebbe, [author's note: I believe the person speaking noted that it was motzei Yom Kippur] the Rebbe blessed him that Hashem will definitely help, however, the brocha had not yet come to fruition.

One year he decided that he would not move from the Rebbe's presence until the Rebbe guarantees him that he will be blessed with a child. When he came to the Rebbe and the Rebbe said, Hashem will help, he poured out his heart and then said, Rebbe, I am remaining here until the Rebbe guarantees that we will be blessed with a child.

### **The Rebbe Says “You Will Merit to Have a Son This Year”**

The Rebbe heard his pain and anguish and concentrated deeply for a few moments. He then said You will merit to have a son this year.

Hearing these words from the Rebbe, the Yid answered Amen and began walking joyfully home. But before he was able to take a few steps, a chashuvah Yid said to him, I want to be the sandek at the bris.

The Yid was in seventh heaven and he happily replied, Yes.

As the Rebbe promised that Yid had a son and the Yid also kept his word.

### **Yossi Became Concerned About His Father's Pale Face**

Throughout the story everyone present was enraptured by the way this Yid became so alive when he was saying the story, they felt they were witnessing the person reliving it, that they weren't paying attention to anything else. When the story ended, Yossi looked at his father and became startled.

His father was no longer wearing his hat, his face was pale and he was sweating profusely, while he was dabbing it with napkins to remove the sweat.

Tatte, are you OK. Should we call the Hatzalah, he cried out nervously?

Yossi, Boruch Hashem I am OK. Please give me some water, everything is good.

### **A Most Shocking Revelation**

After drinking more than one cup water and wiping the sweat of his brow, Mr. Green began speaking in a choked voice. And what he said shocked everyone.

Yossi, my son, the story this man said is true in every detail. The man in the story was me and you my dear son is the son that the Heilike Rebbe, Reb Aharon may his merit protect us, blessed us with.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5784 email of Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon's Weekly Story.*

# The Measly Penny



**The Ba'al HaTanya and Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz**

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz related a story. One time, HaRav Ba'al HaTanya, zt"l, went to raise funds to redeem a captive, as the students of the Ba'al Shem Tov would do. In those days, many people in need of a livelihood would rent a tavern from the village owners who were very brutal, and if the tavern owner did not have enough money to pay the rent, the wicked landlord would throw him into a narrow pit. It would become a matter of Pikuach Nefesh, as the landlord would not release the prisoner until the debt was paid.

The Ba'al HaTanya came to a certain town and wanted to see the wealthiest people, and he received a list of the honorable people which Hashem had bentched with wealth. Amongst those on the list was a very wealthy man, but as great as his wealth was, his stinginess was equally as great. It did not matter the cause, he would never give more than a measly penny to anyone who asked him for money.

The Ba'al HaTanya was told not to even bother to knock on his door, because aside from the embarrassment, nothing would come of it. However, the Ba'al HaTanya specifically chose to go to this Jewish man anyway, and explained the situation to him, that presently there was a Jew in a pit whose life was hanging in the balance, and it was up to them to save him.

The wealthy man listened, and took out a small coin and gave it to Rav. The Ba'al HaTanya did not flinch, and he took the coin from him with great pleasure and

bentched him for the donation, and turned to leave. As he was going down the stairs from the house, he heard the wealthy man call him back. The Ba'al HaTanya returned, and the wealthy man took out another small coin, worth a little more than the first coin, and gave it to the Rav, and again the Ba'al HaTanya bentched him profusely, and started to leave.

The man once again asked the Rav to return and gave him slightly more than previously. This went on over and over until the wealthy man was giving sizable amounts. Finally, the man opened his drawer that was full of money and said, "Rebbe, please take whatever you need."

### **The Closed Heart of the Wealthy Man was Opened**

The Rav took the amount he required, and warmly bentched him for the Mitzvah that he merited to perform, and from then on, the closed heart of the wealthy man was opened, and he began to give much tzedakah.

The Ba'al HaTanya later explained, "The wealthy man was so stingy because when a poor man once came for a donation, the man gave a small amount, and the poor man became angry and rebuked him and did not want to take the donation. This caused his heart to close to the mitzvah of tzedakah. When I thanked him for whatever he gave me, no matter how small, it caused his heart to be moved until it opened completely as is befitting a Jewish heart."

Rav Gamliel teaches from this that soft words will appeal to a person, while harsh words will force a person to become closed up, and when dealing with others, the correct and proper approach that one should take is to use soft words and always have a nice demeanor!

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

## **The Chofetz Chaim and the Pharmacist**

The Chofetz Chaim, Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, once stopped by a pharmacy and told the pharmacist how much he envied him. The man was taken aback, and asked what there was to envy?

The Chofetz Chaim explained he envied the pharmacist because of his many opportunities in the course of each day to sell medicines and save lives.



The pharmacist responded that he merely did it to make a living, not out of any other motives.

Hearing that, the Chofetz Chaim said to him, “When you come to work, you must have the intention that ‘I am coming to fulfill a Mitzvah of Chesed to others and saving lives.’ The profit-making side of it does not devalue the Mitzvah, as long as you have the proper intention!”

The pharmacist followed the Chofetz Chaim's advice, and over time, the pharmacist, who until then had been somewhat distant from his faith, became fully observant, and eventually, he rose to become the head of the Chesed organizations in his city! (Kuntres Chaim V'Chesed)

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## Just Be YOU!

Rav Naftali Amsterdam was a Talmid of Rav Yisroel Salanter. He once came to his Rebbe and said, “Rebbi, if I had the head of the Shaagas Aryeh, and if I had the Neshamah of the author of the Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah and if I had your good Middos, then I could truly be a Servant of Hashem.”

Rav Yisroel Salanter responded to him, “Naftali, with your head, and with your heart, and with your good personality traits, you can be Naftali Amsterdam! That is all you have to be. You do not need to be the Shaagas Aryeh, or Rav Yisroel Salanter, or anybody else. Just be YOU, and that is how you will serve Hashem!”

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## Honoring the Torah Itself!

Rav Aharon Kotler, zt”l, the Rosh Yeshivah of Lakewood, was preparing to travel to Eretz Yisroel for a visit. His Talmidim made preparations to accompany him and escort him to the airport, but when Rav Aharon found out about their plans, he told them that he preferred they remain in the Yeshivah and continue their learning.

The Talmidim were in a quandary about what to do because they loved their Rebbe and wished to see him off, but they did not want to upset him by not following his wishes. They decided to ask Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, for advice. Rav Moshe considered the question and answered, “Accompany the Rosh Yeshivah to the airport. Honoring Rav Aharon is like honoring the Torah itself!”

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

# The Two Kopecks

By R' Yoni Schwartz



**The Chofetz Chaim and the Rebbe Rashab of blessed memories**

Decades ago, in the times of the Chofetz Chaim, ZT”L, there was a terrible decree against the Jews in Russia. As a result, the gedolei hador decided to hold a large convention in St. Petersburg to discuss the pressing issue. At some point during the convention, a very interesting dialogue took place between the Lubavitcher Rebbe at that time, the Rebbe Rashab, and the Chofetz Chaim. The Chofetz Chaim had to write a certain letter. However, there was just one issue: he didn’t have any paper.

He saw that the Rebbe Rashab had some extra paper and decided to ask him for a sheet. The Rebbe happily gave him one. Afterwards, the Chofetz Chaim handed the Rebbe Rashab two *kopecks*, which are coins of very small value, but enough to cover the cost of that one piece of paper. A bewildered bystander approached the Chofetz Chaim and said, “You know the Rebbe has plenty of paper and plenty of wealthy people providing his stationery needs. Those two coins don’t mean anything to him. Why are you giving them?”

The Chofetz Chaim’s response was legendary. He said, “To me the two kopecks also aren’t worth anything but two kopecks of *geneiva* (stealing), that’s worth billions. That can create one *malach* (angel) that can turn over all of St. Petersburg with one blow!”

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