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The Rosh Yeshivah's Interest in His Colleague's New Apartment



Rav Paysach Krohn shared a story. One afternoon, a Rebbi in Yeshivah Kol Torah in Yerushalayim informed the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l, that he needed to leave a bit early to look at an apartment his family was planning on moving into.

Rav Shlomo Zalman gave him a Brachah for Hatzlachah, and he also insisted on coming along to see the apartment. When they arrived, Rav Shlomo Zalman inquired about each room and what it would be used for. The Rebbi was astounded that the Rosh Yeshivah took so much of his time and was so concerned about the

apartment. Every moment was precious to Rav Shlomo Zalman, and here he was, asking about the details of an apartment!

The Rebbe finally asked Rav Shlomo Zalman, “Why did the Rosh Yeshivah insist on coming along with me?” Rav Shlomo Zalman answered with a smile and said, “I wanted to see where you will live so I can place an Ayin Tovah, a good eye, on your home!”

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

The Eavesdropper in the Rebbe's Room

From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky and Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin

These were the days of the Communist Revolution in Russia. After World War One, Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky was then a student in Chabad's Tomchei Temimim yeshiva, which itself had gone through difficult upheavals.

When Simcha became weak and fell seriously ill, the yeshiva's supervisor, Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin, took him to one of the most renowned doctors for an examination. The professor left the room after completing his examination of the yeshiva student. He turned to the rabbi who was waiting outside and quietly

remarked, “The young man is fading. His heart is weakening; his lungs are deteriorating. I don’t see any chance to save his life.”

“What did the doctor say?” Simcha asked Rabbi Feigin anxiously.

“You need to rest,” the supervisor replied curtly. “Go home until you recover.”

“Absolutely not,” Simcha responded firmly. “I will go to the Rebbe.”

When Rabbi Feigin saw he could not dissuade the young man, he accompanied him to see the Rebbe Rayatz (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe), who was then residing in Rostov.¹ The supervisor entered first to brief the Rebbe on the gravity of Simcha’s condition. Then Simcha was allowed in.



The Rebbe Rayat

“According to the supervisor,” the Rebbe told him, “you must not stay in yeshiva any longer.” Simcha stood breathless, unable to respond. “But I say,” the Rebbe continued, “that this is not so. You will continue to be a student in the yeshiva, and you will also serve as my emissary for various missions. I promise that you will be healthy and live a long life.”

The Rebbe tasked young Gorodetsky with traveling across Russian cities to gather information about Jewish life there. As Simcha embarked on his mission, the weakness that had overtaken him disappeared, and he grew stronger with each passing day. Periodically, he would set out on his travels and, upon his return, would personally deliver detailed reports to the Rebbe.

* * *

One day, Simcha was standing in the Rebbe Rayatz's office, not yet finished with his report to the Rebbe on his latest journey. The gabbai (attendant) knocked on the door, announcing that the time had come for yechidus (private audiences). Simcha started to leave the room, but the Rebbe surprised him by gesturing for him to stay. Simcha was astonished, but moved to the corner of the room, trying to be inconspicuous, standing there in awe so as not to disturb the proceedings.

The first person to enter was an elderly man with a beard. His meeting with the Rebbe was very brief. Upon entering, he asked, "Rebbe, did I understand the sign correctly?"

The Rebbe nodded affirmatively and said, "Yes, yes, yes!"

Next came a second individual, who burst into tears, crying, "Rebbe, it's me!" before fainting.

The gabbai quickly revived him, and the man left the room.

The third visitor was an older man who did not seem to be a Chassid. He handed the Rebbe a letter containing several questions, holding a copy of it himself. He went through the questions one by one with the Rebbe, receiving an answer for each.

However, to the last question, the Rebbe gave no response. The man pointed out that there was one more question in the letter. "I am not blind," the Rebbe replied. When the man tried again, the Rebbe said, "I am not deaf." When he persisted, the Rebbe signaled that the yechidus had ended.

* * *

Simcha left the Rebbe's office amazed. In the study hall, he saw the first man and asked, "Perhaps you could tell me what was behind your question?"

"Gladly," the man replied, and began his story:

"Many years ago, the Rebbe Rashab (Rabbi SholomBer Shneerson, father of the Rebbe Rayatz) sent me to Siberia to strengthen Jewish observance there. I asked when I would know that my mission was complete, and the Rebbe replied that when the time came, I would receive a sign.

"Years passed. I fulfilled the Rebbe's directive, opening a shul, establishing a school for children, building a mikveh and in general, strengthening the local Jewish community. My greatest success was with one Jew who had been distant from Torah and mitzvot but became a full-fledged baal teshuvah.

"In 1920, after the Rebbe Rashab passed away, I wondered if it was time for me to return. I wrote to his son, our Rebbe, and soon received a reply. To my amazement, the Rebbe wrote, 'It seems to me that my father said you would receive a sign when the time comes.'

"I was astonished—how did he know? I had never told him! "Not long ago, I received another letter from the Rebbe. I opened it with great excitement and began

reading aloud the Rebbe's words. At that moment, my baal teshuvah was in my room. In the letter, the Rebbe requested that I assist in locating a man who had abandoned his wife, leaving her an agunah. Suddenly, I noticed that my companion turned pale as a ghost. It dawned on me—he was the man!

“We decided to travel together to see the Rebbe. I asked him if this was the sign I had been waiting for. The Rebbe confirmed it. My companion then entered the room and confessed, ‘It’s me!’”

* * *

Years later, Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky encountered the third visitor. “Do you remember your meeting with the Rebbe?” Rabbi Gorodetsky asked.

The man's eyes lit up. “Of course!” he replied. “As you may recall, the Rebbe refused to answer my final question. At that time, I was considering a second marriage. That was my last question, and it was very important to me, but the Rebbe avoided answering it. I left confused.

“However, shortly thereafter, I learned that the woman in question had fallen ill and passed away. It was then that I understood the Rebbe's silence.”

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from Sichat HaShavua Rabbi Smincha Gorodetsky (#1570), based on a report to them from Rabbi Michil Vishetzky of Kfar Chabad, who heard it from Rabbi Gorodetsky of the story. Why this week? This Shabbat, the tenth day of the Jewish month of Sh'vat, is the 75th yahrzeit of the Rebbe Rayatz.

Biographic notes (in order of appearance): Rabbi Simcha Gorodetsky [27 Menachem-Av 5663 – 30 Tishrei 5744 (Aug. 1903 – Oct. 1983)] was an emissary of the Rebbe Rayatz to the city of Samarkan and the entire Central Asian region of the Soviet Union. He was arrested several times for his efforts to strengthen Judaism. In 1964, he emigrated to the Holy Land. Settling in Kfar Chabad, he served as a spiritual guide and mentor at an immigrant absorption center there, and in the 1970's he was among the founders of the Bukharian Yeshiva in Kfar Chabad. He passed away at the age of eighty, one day after returning from being with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn for the ‘Month of Holidays.’ [Excerpted and translated from <https://chabadpedia.co.il>]

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson [12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (June 1880-Jan. 1950)], known as the Rebbe Rayatz, was the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 1940 he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Rabbi Sholom-DovBer Shneersohn [20 Cheshvan 5621 – 2 Nissan 5680 (Oct. 1860 – April 1920)], known as the Rebbe Rashab, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought. In 1915, after 102 years of four Chabad rebbes living in Lubavitch, he transferred the center of the movement to Rostov-on-the-Don.

Reprinted from the Parshat Beshalach 5785 email of Kabbalahonline.org, a project of Ascent of Safat in Israel.

A Brocha with No Strings Attached

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



A young fellow appeared before R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, the gadol hador of his time, for a brocha that he not have to go to the Soviet Army. The hazards of war were frightening, and the term of service could be almost endless – usually 20-25 years – especially if the Soviet authorities knew that the inductee was Jewish.

In the course of his discussion with the young man, R' Chaim Ozer asked him, “Do you were tzitzis?” The boy was embarrassed to admit the truth but he would not lie to the man to whom he had come for a brocha, and so he looked down and said honestly, “No.”

The conversation continued and R' Chaim Ozer asked, "Do you at least put on tefillin every day?" The boy hesitated for a moment, and then said in a low voice, "Rebbe, I can't lie to you. I don't."

"What about Shabbos?" asked R' Chaim Ozer. "Do you observe Shabbos?" Once again, the boy couldn't look the Rav in the face, and staring at the ground he said, "Rebbe, I must tell you that I am not religious and I am not a Sabbath observer."

Silence permeated the room as the frightened boy waited for R' Chaim Ozer's next words. He was sure that he would be asked to leave immediately or be rebuked strongly. He braced himself for the harsh words that he knew must come.

But instead, R' Chaim Ozer said softly to him, "I give you a brocha that the Soviet authorities should be as disappointed in you as I am."

The boy thought his heart would melt as he understood at once both the rebuke and the blessing of R' Chaim Ozer. He nodded his thanks and left the room at once.

Two weeks later, he came back to R' Chaim Ozer and said, "Rebbe, I wanted to tell you that your brocha helped. I was rejected by the army."

Then he lifted up his shirt and showed R' Chaim Ozer the tzitzis that he was now wearing. The young man wore tzitzis and put on tefillin, and observed Shabbos for the rest of his life! (Excerpted from "Around the Maggid's Table")

Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5785 email of The Weekly Vort.

Saddened by the Illness of the Town Water Carrier

There was a gadol in Europe known by the name of his sefer, Baruch Taam (Rav Baruch Frankel-Te'omim (1760-1828)). Baruch Taam's son became engaged to a girl from a very wealthy and prominent family. At the tenaim, the mechutanim came over and they noticed that Baruch Taam was not really into it. He did not look happy. He looked preoccupied with other matters. The kallah's mother came over to him and asked why he did not look happy on this joyous occasion. "Are you not pleased with this shidduch?"

Baruch Taam responded that he had no problem with the shidduch. "But the water carrier of the town is very sick and I am worried about him." (In Europe, in the shtetl, before indoor plumbing and running water, there was someone whose job it was to be the water carrier. A water carrier would go down to the river and fill up buckets and then carry the buckets on his shoulders to deliver the water to the town's residences.) In European Jewish society, the water carrier was the low-man on the

totem pole. The only requirement for the job was a strong back. Brains were not needed.

The mother of the kallah was shocked: “Because the water carrier is sick, you allow that to dampen your simcha? You let the water carrier effect your mood? I can’t understand that!”

Baruch Taam stood up and announced “The shidduch is off! I will not let my son marry into a family that has such a cavalier attitude, which shows no empathy for the misfortune of another Jew.”

This was one of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach’s favorite stories because throughout his life, Rav Shlomo Zalman – among all of his other prodigious character attributes – exemplified the midah of feeling the pain of his fellow Jews.

Reprinted from the Parashat BeShalach 5785 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Old Man and the Horses

Many years ago, there was an old man that owned a horse. That horse was his only source of livelihood. One day that horse ran away, and the old man became poor. The people of his town came to comfort him, but the old man replied to them, “Who says this is bad? Perhaps it is for the good.”

The people of the town thought the man was in shock, because how could losing all your wealth be good? Meanwhile, the horse had ran away to the forest where it met other horses, when the old man’s horse became it hungry it returned to its barn with his four new friends. Now the old man became wealthy!

Indeed, something good had happened to the old man, so the village came to congratulate him. But, to their surprise the old man says, “Who says, who says this is for the good?”

Now, the town thought the old man had to be crazy. The man just became rich, why was he not celebrating?

Soon after, the man’s young son went for a ride on one of the horses. He fell off the horse and broke both of his legs. Again, the townsfolk visited the family and their poor son. “Who says? Who says this is for the bad? Perhaps this is for the good!”

Two weeks later the Russian Czar ordered all young boys to the army. When the soldiers came to get this man’s son they saw the boy laying in bed with many bandages. They decided the boy was unfit for the army, and they let him stay home!

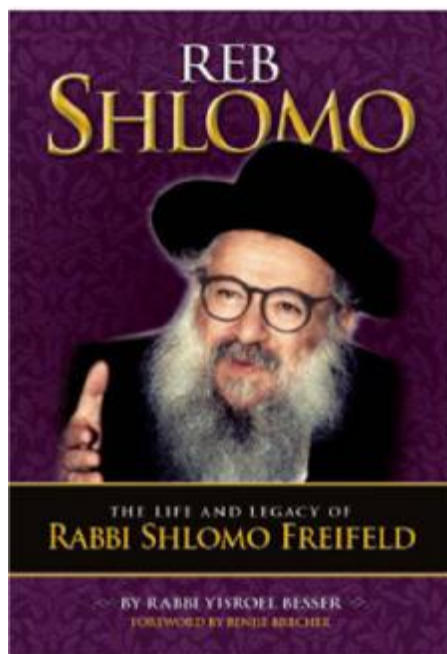
As the weeks past, the townspeople received word that many of their children had been killed in war, and they saw that old man was correct in his saying, “Perhaps this is for the good.”

In this world we cannot see everything. We do not know what is ultimately good for us. As it says in Tehillim, “Cast your burden on to Hashem, and He will sustain you (55:23).” With this attitude of humility and total faith we should all merit to see the arrival Mashiach!

Reprinted from the Parashat Beshalach 5785 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

One at a Time

By Rabbi Shlomo Farhi



I became a posthumous student of Rav Shlomo Freifeld, *zt'l*, making him my rabbi 18 years after his passing. A great rabbi once gifted me a book titled *Reb Shlomo*, and when I asked why he chose that particular book, he said, “Every time you look at your bookshelf and see the name ‘Reb Shlomo,’ you’ll remember that one day, someone may write a book about you. Perhaps that thought will inspire you to act with greater wisdom.”

All Our Deeds Are Recorded in a Book in Heaven

His words resonated. *Kol ma’asecha b’seder nichtavim*—All our deeds are recorded in a book in Heaven (*Avos* 2:1).

Rav Shlomo Freifeld was a towering figure, not just in his physical presence but in his achievements. He founded a yeshiva, a summer camp, a synagogue, and an entire community—each reflecting his boundless love for every Jew, regardless of their background or level of knowledge. He embraced those whom others overlooked, offering them a place of belonging.

His legacy shines through every story in that book, many of which I've marked with folded corners to preserve their lessons. Nearly every page is creased, a testament to the wisdom contained within.

A Hot Day in the Summer

One story in particular stands out. Rav Shlomo was in his summer camp, teaching two boys who didn't fit in elsewhere. They were boys who had been expelled from other yeshivot and had come to him as a last resort. On a hot summer afternoon, he sat outside learning with them.

As they studied, a distinguished rabbi approached, possessing a long beard and a commanding presence. The boys, impressed, invited him to sit and speak with Rav Shlomo. This rabbi had studied alongside Rav Shlomo in their youth, and after catching up, he asked Rav Shlomo the following:

"Rabbi, I don't understand. We learned in the same yeshiva, had the same teachers, and came from similar backgrounds. But look at you—you've built a yeshiva, a community, a camp. You're known throughout the Jewish world. Meanwhile, I'm a simple teacher in a small school. How did this happen?"

The Pain Behind that Question

There was pain behind that question, and Rav Shlomo, in his humility, deflected. "Hashem decides," he said simply, not attributing his success to himself. After the rabbi left, Rav Shlomo sat quietly, shaking his head. His students, sensing something was amiss, asked, "Rebbe, is everything okay?"

He replied, almost to himself: "Everyone wants a yeshiva. Everyone wants a synagogue. Everyone wants a community. But who wants to sit in the heat of the day and learn with two boys? What is a yeshiva if not for two boys? What is a synagogue if not for one family, one individual?"

Leadership is not about the grandeur of institutions, but about the care and attention given to each individual. The many are nothing more than a collection of individuals, and if we fail to tend to the one, we fail the whole. Yes, it's challenging, and at times it feels like an impossible task. But true greatness lies in the willingness to embrace that challenge—one person at a time.

Reprinted from the Parashat Shemot 5785 email of the Torah Anytimes Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.

Doing it with Love!

By Aharon Spetner



Illustrated by Miri Weinreb

As sunlight streamed through the bedroom window, Yitzy stretched his arms out from under the blankets. He smiled at the familiar sound of Totty learning shnayim mikra in the other room and slowly opened his eyes. Sitting up, he said modeh ani and washed negel vaser from the washing cup next to his bed.

“Urg,” Shimmy mumbled from the other bed, as Yitzy began getting dressed.

“Good Shabbos to you too,” said Yitzy, laughing.

After getting dressed, Yitzy headed to the kitchen and opened the pantry.

“What cereal should we have today?” asked Shimmy groggily, tucking in his shirt as he shuffled into the kitchen.

“Look Mommy bought Sugarinies™!” exclaimed Yitzy, pulling out a brightly colored box.

“Ooh Yum!” said Shimmy suddenly wide awake, and both boys poured themselves a heaping bowl of cereal.

“Lekovod Shabbos Kodesh,” said Yitzy, holding up a spoonful before making a brocha and taking a bite.

“Lekovod Shabbos Kodesh,” repeated Shimmy, doing the same.

After making a brochah acharonah and cleaning up, the boys headed to shul with Totty.

“Ah, what beautiful weather!” exclaimed Totty. “Thank you Hashem for the fresh air!”

As they walked down the block, a city bus drove by and stopped at the bus stop ahead of them.

“Huh?” said Shimmy, bewildered. “That looks like our neighbor Stevey Risnik and his father getting on that bus!”

“That can’t be right,” said Totty, also confused.

“Maybe it’s pikuach nefesh,” suggested Yitzzy as they got closer and saw that indeed Stevey and his father, both wearing baseball caps, were among the people lined up to board the bus.

“Good Shabbos, Harvey,” Totty said to Mr. Risnik. “Is everything okay?”

“Shabbat Shalom to you too!” answered Mr. Risnik jovially. “The buses are free today in honor of Pigeon Appreciation Day, so since we don’t have to pay we can ride the bus on Shabbat!”

“Wait, money isn’t the only problem with riding a bus on Shabbos...” Totty began.

“I looked it up in Shulchan Aruch,” Mr. Riskin said, stepping into the bus with Stevey. “Nowhere does it say that you can’t ride a bus on Shabbat. Shabbat Shalom!”

The Greenbaums stood stunned for a moment as the bus drove off into the distance.

“Wait, is that true?” asked Shimmy in astonishment. “Is it mutar for them to ride the bus on Shabbos?”

“No,” said Totty firmly. “There are several halachic problems with riding a bus on Shabbos. But even if someone had managed to find a heter, I want you to think about kabolas hatorah.”

“Klal Yisroel definitely didn’t take buses to Har Sinai,” joked Yitzzy.

“Haha,” laughed Totty. “But think about when we said naaseh venishma. We didn’t have to say that. We could have just accepted the Torah. But no, we shouted ‘WE WILL DO IT AND WE WILL LISTEN!’ And you know why? Because as Yidden we don’t just do what we have to do. There are all sorts of things that are technically permitted, that we don’t do.

“Some people only eat the very best hechsherim even though there are others that are perfectly kosher. You’ll find all sorts of Jews who keep all sorts of chumros that are not mandated by halacha. And do you know why that is? Because we are a people who love Hashem so much that we WANT to serve Him in the best way possible, beyond what He requires of us.”

“So why doesn’t it say those things in halacha?” asked Shimmy. “If it doesn’t say it, so why do we do it?”

“Good question,” Totty said. “Let’s say I ask you for a drink and you bring me a cup of water from the sink. Does that show your love for me?”

“Not necessarily,” said Yitzy. “A waiter in a restaurant would do the same and he probably doesn’t love you.”

“Correct. But now, let’s say when I ask you for the water, you jump up, run to the kitchen, look for my favorite glass, add ice cubes, fill it to the top with my favorite chocolate-flavored seltzer - and also bring me one of Bubby’s delicious cookies on a plate. What about that?”

“I did that for you yesterday!” said Shimmy. “And I did it because I love you!”

“Exactly! And because we love Hashem we are always looking to see how we can serve Him in the best way possible. We don’t look for the easiest way to do what He asks. We want to go as far as we can to show our love for him, and not look for shortcuts around his mitzvos, like chas veshalom trying to figure out how you can ride a bus on Shabbos.”

“But Totty,” said Yitzy. “It does say this in the Torah. There is a mitzvah of ‘V’ahavta es Hashem Elokecha - to love Hashem.”

“Ah, very good,” said Totty. “So, you see we are actually required to serve Hashem in this way. Because if we actually love him, then we will do everything possible to serve him on the highest of levels.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5785 email of Toras Avigdor Junior based on the Torah teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.

The Jewish “Fortune Teller”

There once was a Jewish man who lacked a good source of livelihood. He decided to advertise himself as a fortune teller who could see into the future and to charge for his services. When people came to him, he would assure them that their future looked bright, that they would be successful, etc., so that they would like what he said and would continue to come back.

One day, thieves broke into the king’s palace and stole some precious treasures. No matter how hard the police investigated, they could not locate the thieves. They had heard about the Jewish fortune teller and informed the king about his supposed abilities.

The king summoned him and ordered him to reveal the identities of the thieves. The Jew began to panic, unsure of what to say, as he knew he would be severely punished if he couldn’t come up with an answer. He told the king, “I can’t answer you right now. I need 30 days to look into it before I can have an answer. I also need 30 apples...”

In those days, apples were a rare and expensive treat. The man thought that if he was going to be killed anyway, he might as well enjoy himself a little first.

He came home and gave his mother the apples, and told her what had happened. That night, he ate the first apple and, as he finished it, he said out loud, “I finished one.”

Meanwhile, the thieves had heard that the king had hired a fortune teller to find them. One of them was sent to stand outside the door and spy on him, to determine if he really had the ability to identify them. When he heard him call out that he had finished one, he thought he meant that he had figured out the identity of one of the thieves, assuming it was himself.

He ran back to his friends and reported to their leader what he had heard. The next day, another thief was sent to spy on the Jew. That evening, he ate a second apple and said, “I finished two!” This thief also got scared that his intent was that he had discovered his identity.

On the third day, the leader of the thieves went himself to spy. When he heard the Jew say, “I finished the third one!”, he thought that he himself had been identified. In a panic, he ran into the Jew’s house and confessed that he and his friends had stolen the king’s treasures. He promised to return everything and begged him not to turn them in.

Thus, on the designated day, the Jew returned all the stolen treasures to the king, and earned the king’s admiration for doing so. The king was tremendously impressed by the man and, at a gathering of his friends, he greatly praised him and his abilities. The king’s friends were skeptical and said that they wanted to test him out themselves. They asked to meet him, and messengers were sent to bring him to the palace. Right before he came, the king’s friends attempted to trap some birds. The first two birds escaped, but they managed to catch the third one. When the man was brought before them, they asked him, “What were we doing right before you got here?”

He thought and thought but he could not come up with a good response. Finally, he blurted out, “The bird got away twice, but it was caught on the third time!”

He actually was referring to himself. He meant to say that he managed to save himself once or twice, but he was now caught, with no way out. However, everyone else thought he had successfully deduced what they had done. They were amazed by him and gave him many gifts.

A short while later, the man hurried to the palace and asked to speak with the king. The guards refused to let him in and said that the king was taking a bath at that time. He ignored them and ran through the door. He found the king preparing to take a bath, ran over to him and slapped him. He then fled. The king was shocked and he

ran after him. As soon as he exited the room he was in, the roof caved in. The Jew had saved him from being crushed to death!

The king asked him, “How did you know this was about to happen?” The man replied, “I can’t reveal that secret to you.”

“But why did you slap me?” the king asked.

The Jew answered, “If I had told you that you needed to run outside, you would have asked me what was going on and by the time I answered you, the roof would have fallen already.”



**The Ben Ish Chai (Chacham
Yosef Chaim of Baghdad)**

The Ben Ish Chai concluded by saying, “When Hashem wants to help a person, the person doesn’t need to possess much talent, wisdom or intellect. Hashem just takes care of him in ways that could never be foreseen. This is as is stated (Devarim 25:2): ‘All the blessings will come to you and reach you.’ Even if a person runs away from the brachos of Hashem, if He wants to give them to him, they will reach him.”

Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5785 email of The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts of Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.