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Stuck Overnight in Amsterdam

By Rabbi David Ashear



The Tombstone of Rav Hertzkele of Ratzfert

Gedalya* was 33 years old and not yet married. His friend told him about a segulah to go daven at the kever of Rav Hertzkele of Ratzfert on his yahrzeit, which was Erev Yom Kippur. “So many people have gone there and davened on his yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur, and have seen amazing yeshuos,” he said.

Gedalya took the advice and went there. That same friend saw Gedalya again a couple of days before Chanukah.

“Anything new?” he asked.

The Segulah Didn't Work

“No, the segulah didn't work,” Gedalya said disconsolately. “Things are worse than ever.”

“Go back to the kever and daven again,” his friend advised. “Speak out about what's bothering you.” Gedalya needed to travel to New York on the first day of Chanukah, so he decided to detour through Hungary and return to the kever to daven. He recited the entire Sefer Tehillim and, once again, begged Hashem to help him find his zivug. Then he went to the Budapest airport.

Arrived in Amsterdam

The next leg of his trip was to Amsterdam, where he was scheduled to catch a connecting flight to New York. When he arrived in Amsterdam, he learned that his connecting flight had been postponed until the next morning. He checked into a hotel, where he received permission from the manager to light his menorah in the lobby. Gedalya found a secluded corner, lit his menorah, and sang zemiros softly to himself.

Another Jew walked into the hotel, looking for overnight accommodations. He saw Gedalya standing by his menorah and asked the manager if he could light his menorah there, too. The manager graciously agreed. The two ended up speaking for a long time, and Gedalya made a very positive impression on the older man.

Offered Another Detour

After Gedalya explained that he had stopped off in Hungary primarily to daven for a shidduch and unexpectedly ended up spending the night in Amsterdam, the man mentioned that he had an outstanding daughter in her upper twenties, who just might be perfect for him. “Would you consider taking another detour, this time to Antwerp, where I live, to meet my daughter?”

Gedalya agreed, and not too long afterward they were engaged. (Excerpted from the ArtScroll book – “Living Emunah on Shidduchim”)

Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos Masei 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Bach's Chavruso

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The following story will demonstrate the importance of taking care of tzedakah and chessed matters right away; not pushing them off for later:

There was a G-d fearing baal tzedakah who was careful to give tzedakah according to halachah: to the right places, the right amount of money, and other halachic criteria. Therefore, he would learn hilchos tzedakah with the Bach, daily.

Once, someone came to the Ba'ch with a problem. He ran a tavern that he rented from a poritz, but someone convinced the poritz to rent the tavern to him instead, and he offered the poritz more money. It's forbidden to take away someone else's parnassah. But that person did that, and now the victim was asking the Ba'ch for assistance.

The Ba'ch summoned for the baal tzedakah, and requested that he go and speak with the poritz. The baal tzedakah knew the poritz from his dealings, and they were on good terms. He could influence the poritz to keep his previous tenant. The baal tzedakah promised to do all he can.



Tombstone of the Bach

But outside the Bach's home, when the baal tzedakah spoke with the tavern keeper, he said, "I will take care of it as soon as I return from the Leipzig Fair." The tavern keeper said, "But by that time, he may have already signed a contract with the competition. And even worse, the competition may already have moved

into the tavern, and then it will be harder to send him out. Please take care of it before you go to Leipzig."

The wealthy baal tzedakah replied, "I am liable to lose all my money if I don't go to this fair. I'm sorry, I have no choice; I must go. But don't worry. The fair is only for one week. As soon as I return, I will speak with the poritz. Even before I go home, I'll go straight to the poritz's home. Everything will be fine." To encourage the tavern manager some more, he reminded him: "Nothing happens if it isn't Hashem's decree. Your competitor can't take the tavern away from you, if it wasn't decreed on Rosh Hashanah..."

The Tavern Manager's Wife

The tavern manager was comforted, and went home to tell his wife the good news: "The baal tzedakah promised to speak with the poritz for me, and everything will be good, be'ezras Hashem. He said he will speak with the poritz as soon as he returns from Leipzig."

But his wife was very worried. The tavern manager repeated the ideas of emunah and bitachon he heard from the baal tzedakah, but those didn't calm her. She said, "If it was for anyone else, the baal tzedakah would have taken care of the matter immediately. But since it's for you, everyone knows that they can push you off. It's your fault! You let people take advantage of you!" She screamed and insulted her husband with her sharp words.

Now, in addition to their worries, their shalom bayis was affected too. A week later, the baal tzedakah returned, and even before going home, he spoke with the poritz as he said he would, and succeeded to convince the poritz to keep the old contract.

Came to the Bach in a Dream

Years passed. The night after the baal tzedakah was niftar, he came to the Bach in his dream and told him the following:

"I was greeted in heaven with honor and joy, and the court said that I can go to a high place in Gan Eden, where there are many great tzaddikim. I headed towards the gate that leads to Gan Eden, but a large, beautiful malach stood at the gate and didn't let me pass. I told the malach that the court told me I may go to a high place in Gan Eden, and I pleaded with him to let me pass, but he refused to let me get to the entranceway.

He said, 'I was created by your good deed, when you spoke to the poritz on this man's behalf. It was a very special deed, which created a beautiful malach. But you also did something wrong. You went to Leipzig first. That put stress on the shalom bayis of this couple, not to mention that they were agonized with worry.

Therefore, I request that the celestial court judge you once again.'

Each Hour Felt Like Many Years

I was brought before the heavenly court a second time. The court ruled that for the amount of days the couple suffered, I would need to stand outside Gan Eden. I am now standing in the corridor outside of Gan Eden, and watching the tzaddikim inside. It's extremely painful for me to be here, and not be permitted to enter. Each hour, feels like many years.

In the morning, the Ba'ch gathered the community, and told them his dream. He said that we learn from this the importance of doing chessed without delay. When someone needs help, lend your help immediately, because pushing it off for later is prolonging their sorrow.

Reprinted from the August 1, 2024 email of the Torah Times Media – Treasures of Emunah – Stories of Faith by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman. Copied with permission from Be'er Emunah.

What was, was. Now Begin from the Beginning

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

With no worries, goals, or time limits, **Ido** was hitchhiking across China. Every morning, he awoke in a different hostel and decided where he was going next. "It was my type of fun," he recalled.

One day, he decided to travel to a city some 120 miles away on his own. Much of the route lay on dirt roads and through dangerous terrain, but Ido was up for a challenge. After walking for a while, he hitched a ride on a truck that was going that way.

No Idea of How to Retrace His Steps

The trip proved too difficult even for the truck, however, and the driver told Ido he would have to turn back. Undaunted, 22-year-old Ido continued on foot. Some 20 minutes later, he found himself alone in a large field. He must have taken a wrong turn, but he had no idea where, or even if he could retrace his steps.

He put down his backpack and took out some water. At that moment, he recalled how, when he was a young boy in Jerusalem, a rabbi from the north of Israel

had visited his class and taught the children a song, which translated roughly as, "What was, was. The objective now is to begin from the beginning."

The long-forgotten song seemed to encapsulate his current situation, and alone in the field, Ido began to sing and dance. "Mah shehaya, hayah."

Just then a pickup truck rolled into the field. The driver, a little shocked at the strange apparition of a white man dancing in the middle of a Chinese nowhere, asked him what he was doing. Ido explained that he was making his way to Chengdu on foot and had lost his way.

"Why are you dancing?"

"This is a Jew's way of asking G-d for help," the Israeli explained.

Bemused, the driver offered to take him the rest of the way.

The man, a Chengdu resident, dropped Ido at the only Jewish building he knew of in the city, the Chengdu Chabad House. "Just go in", he told the backpacker, "They will help you."

The Chabad Rabbi's Grandfather

Ido, who had no idea what day it was, walked in and found himself in the middle of a Shabbat meal. Standing at the head of the table and addressing the crowd was the rabbi's grandfather, Rabbi Yitzchak Grossman, chief rabbi of the northern Israeli city of Migdal HaEmek.



Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman

Ido was shocked to see the same rabbi who had visited his classroom so many years before and taught him the song he had been singing in the field. "I saw G-d's hand at work in China," he exclaimed later.

A few weeks afterward, Rabbi Dovi Henig, the Chabad representative in Chengdu, received a text message from Ido, "Can you please tell me what time Shabbat begins this week?"

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Source: Expanded and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from // *collive.com* (search on "Chengdu"). The photo is reprinted from *collive.com* . )

Why this week? The second half of the doubled Weekly Torah Reading is all about journeys and stopping places.

Biographical note: **Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman**, chief rabbi of Migdal Ha'Emek since 1969 at age 23, is a sixth generation Jerusalemite. He is a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council and a recipient of the Israel Prize and many other prestigious government awards for his successful efforts to bridge the gap between the religious and secular populations in Israel (thus his nickname from 50 years ago, the Disco Rabbi). His Migdal Ohr educational institutions and charitable organizations in Migdal Emek service thousands of underprivileged and at-risk children and teenagers.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Mattot-Masei email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

# The Popcorn in the Movie Theater

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz

Rebellious and twitching to escape Yeshiva, one Friday night, a young man broke into the office of his high school Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Dovid Trenk, ZT"l, stole his car keys, and was about to head to the movies when a friend caught him. He said he wanted to come along and threatened to snitch on him if he refused, which he did.

## Informed of the Theft of His Car

His friend warned that if he gets caught, he will be kicked out of Yeshiva. The boy said, "Good, that is exactly what I want. I am only here because my parents are forcing me. I do not want to be in Yeshiva." The boy drove off and that Friday night his so-called "friend" went out of his way to tell Rav Dovid Trenk that this boy stole his car keys and drove to the movies.

When Rav Trenk heard this, he asked how to get to the theater and despite the theater being an incredibly long distance from the Yeshiva, the Rav walked there. Once he arrived, he had to go seat by seat in each of the dark theaters to find him. Finally, the Rav found him and quietly sat down next to him.



**Rabbi Dovid Trenk, zt"l**

Sensing a strange presence by his side, the boy turned his head. His face almost turned white. “Rebbe! What are you doing here!” he exclaimed. “Shhh!” said Rav Trenk, “People are trying to watch the movie.”

“What! Rebbe, it’s Shabbos! Why are you here?!” Rav Trenk responded, “I am assuming that as you are enjoying the movie, you will want to buy refreshments and snacks. I came to tell you that the popcorn here is not kosher. Please do not buy it.”

Rav Trenk then arose and began the long journey back home. A few minutes later it was Rav Trenk, this time, who felt a strange presence by his side. He turned his head and it was the boy. Together, they had a beautiful walk back during which this boy vowed to never violate Shabbos again and stay in Yeshiva.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5784 email of Torah Sweets.*



# Challos for Shabbos



Rav Gamliel Rabbinowitz shared a story on Tiv HaHashgacha: For the honor of Shabbos, I bought delicious Challos from an excellent bakery in the north of Eretz Yisroel. I had to take a bus, and according to the schedule, there was a twenty-minute wait at the bus stop.

Instead of wasting precious time at the bus stop, I went into the Bais Medrash which was diagonally across from the bus stop, and I learned calmly. After twenty minutes, I left the Bais Medrash and got right on the bus, happy and pleased that I had not wasted time.

## **Left the Challos on the Bench in the Bais Medrash**

During the trip, however, I realized that I had left the Challos on the bench in the Bais Medrash. I thought about what a waste it would be if they weren't used, and that someone else should somehow benefit from them. Just then, I received a call from a friend who I usually help, and I realized that he lives in the area I was just in.

I asked him if he knew that Bais Medrash, and he replied that it was right near his house. I told him about the Challos I forgot there, and he got very happy. With great joy he said, "This is unbelievable Hashgacha Pratis, and it can only come from Shamayim. You know that I do not have any money, and my daughter has just given birth. She is staying in our house, and my wife has asked me to lighten the load for her this week, and that I should buy Challos for Shabbos so that she wouldn't have to bake Challah.

I didn't know where I would get the money for this, and now you are telling me about delicious Challos that are waiting for me! It could only be from Hashem!" He sent his son-in-law to the Bais Medrash and then called to tell me that the aroma of these Challos has filled his entire house! I thought I had forgotten the Challos, but Hashem had planned beforehand that I should leave them there for their real purpose!

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

# Miracles at Rosh Hanikra

By Barukh Ben David Lev



Shaul was a new driver when he took his family on a trip to the north of Eretz Yisrael. He was so inexperienced that he did not even have a map in the glove compartment (pre-GPS days), since he naively assumed that road signs along the highway would be enough to guide him. When he reached a junction at the foot of Rosh Hanikra and turned left onto a quiet side street, the large, bold signs that read "Stop, border ahead!" did not faze him. He drove on.

When Shaul reached the end of the road, he felt the car slowing down on its own until it stopped. Oh no! The gas tank was empty! The needle in the gas gauge had been stuck on full, giving him a false reading. He chided himself for not noticing that the level had not changed for hours. So Shaul was stuck with his wife and

children on a remote road near the Lebanese border, with not a soul in sight. He was more than a bit nervous.

Soon the silence was broken by the sound of an engine. Shaul was relieved to see an army patrol jeep, which stopped right next to his car. A few soldiers jumped out and started to berate him, "What do you think you're doing stopping here? Can't you see you're at the border? Right over there are Lebanese snipers who are liable to fire at you at any moment."

### **Shaul Didn't Want to Abandon His Brand-New Car**

Shaul shamefacedly explained what had happened. They told him to take his family and get into the jeep so they could drive them to a nearby army base, as it was dangerous there. But Shaul did not want to abandon his brand-new car where it would likely be stolen. Shaul proposed that perhaps he could find some gas, but his car was a Ford, and the army jeep ran on diesel fuel.

When Shaul decided to wait for another car to drive by, the soldiers lost their patience. "Listen," one soldier said curtly, "you need three miracles. One, that a car will pass by; two, that he'll have extra gas with him; and three, that the gas will be the same type your car uses. If all three miracles happen, then you're all right. But I wouldn't count on it if I were you. Days can pass without a single car driving along this dangerous road. The chance that one will come right now is almost nil."

### **The Three Miracles that Stunned the Soldiers**

Just then, a white car suddenly appeared on the horizon. Shaul's car and the jeep were blocking the road, so the white car was forced to stop. That was the first miracle. The driver got out, and after hearing about Shaul's problem, he pulled out a jerry can of gas from his trunk, which he kept in reserve. Miracle number two. Shaul thought he was dreaming, and the soldiers' jaws dropped. But was it the right kind of gas? That was no problem, because the driver of the white car said he carried all kinds of gas.

Soon Shaul's gas tank was filled and he was able to start the engine. Before he drove off, he asked the other driver why he carried so many different kinds of gas. The man explained, "I work for Mekorot, the water company. I spend a lot of time on the road, and the company requires me to carry an assortment of gas types, so that if I come across a car that needs gas, I can help him out."

Shaul was simply astonished. The soldiers were fairly amazed themselves. The driver further explained: "I came this way because a water pipe burst in one of the nearby settlements. It's urgent, and I thought I'd save time on the side road where there is no traffic. I better be on my way."

As the man drove off, the soldiers suddenly remembered they had all been standing around in a dangerous spot far too long, and left. Shaul headed toward

Teveryah, to pray at the holy sites and thank Hashem for bursting a pipe in a certain settlement, in order to help him and his family.

As he drove, he thought about the sequence of events. The people with the burst pipe were probably annoyed and frustrated. They had no idea that at that moment, a certain Jew named Shaul was thanking Hashem for the burst pipe. Shaul did not know what other parts there were to the puzzle. He had only seen the parts that involved him. He wondered if he would be able to use the lesson when he was on the other side, when he was the one feeling annoyed and frustrated. Would he then remember that Hashem alone can see the whole puzzle? (There is No Such Thing as Coincidence, Vol. 1)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*

## The Grandfather's Birthday Presents



**Charlie Harari**

Charlie Harari said over a story. The grandchildren of a Holocaust survivor once made a grand party for their grandfathers' ninetieth birthday. At the birthday party, each of the grandchildren brought a present to their grandfather. The grandfather was enjoying the gifts of each of his grandchildren and gave each one personal affection.

The grandchildren lined up in age order to give their presents. At the end of the line was a young child who took the present he had been holding in front of him and put it behind his back. When it was his turn, he hesitated to give it to the grandfather.

The grandfather asked him, "Why are you hesitating?"

The child responded, "I just saw how my cousin made the exact same box that I made, and I thought that you really don't need another one, so I'm not sure if I should give it to you."

The grandfather said, "It's true that I just got a box, but I don't have a box from you yet. The box that your cousin gave me is not a box from you, and therefore I'm happily waiting to get this box that you are holding for me."

Charlie Harari said that this applies to serving Hashem. Hashem has many Yidden doing Mitzvos, yet, he wants our Mitzvos. Hashem desires, as it were, that we should do the Mitzvos. This is the connection that Hashem wants, and that He can't get from anyone else.

It may seem at times that there are so many more people that are serving Hashem. It may even seem that they are serving Hashem better than we are. If so, then why should I bother doing Mitzvos? But this story brings us to a new understanding. We know that Hashem wants our Mitzvos, and the fact that others also do Mitzvos doesn't undermine the value of ours.

It will allow us to properly cherish our Mitzvos. If Hashem is looking for the Mitzvah itself, then the most special one is valued and the rest is not. But since Hashem seeks to have a connection with each of us, the fact that He has a connection with one person doesn't take away from the other. Each of us is greatly admired and appreciated!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mattos-Masei 5784 email of The Weekly Vort.*

## **The White Eagle Symbol of Poland**

Towards the end of 1930s, Poland was under "Government of Colonels." During this period the Jewish community, which constituted approximately ten percent of Poland's total population, was in an extremely difficult position. New laws were being issued daily, laws which were strangling the economic and cultural life of the Jewish minority.

After Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, the Poles were only too happy to step up their acts of anti-Semitism. One very popular ploy was to accuse a Jew of insulting the Polish people or the Polish government. The accused would be brought before a judge, usually an anti-Semite himself, who would almost always sentence the Jew to a lengthy prison term.

The Polish Treasury Department also had a hand in reducing the Jews to financial ruin. Its officers routinely interpreted the laws in a manner which served to economically break Jewish merchants. When a Jew was unable to meet the excessive taxes, a tax collector would come to his home or place of business and confiscate his merchandise and household furnishings.

### **A Jew by the Name of Yisrael Weiner**

In 1935, in the tiny village of Kreszowice, near Krakow, there lived a Jew by the name of Yisrael Weiner. It happened that he fell behind with his tax payments, and his home was visited by the tax collector, accompanied by a policeman. They had come to confiscate his belongings in lieu of the unpaid taxes.

Among Yisrael's possessions was a greatly valued sewing machine. When not in use, it was draped with a linen cover adorned by an embroidered white eagle, the Polish national emblem. The tax collector ordered Yisrael to lift this cover so that he and his companion could inspect what was beneath it. When they were through, he lowered the cover back onto the smooth surface but, in his nervousness, did not take care to center it properly and one side hung down lower than the other.

### **Accidentally Stepped on the Cloth**

Within a few moments the cover began to slip and soon, unnoticed by Yisrael, it was on the floor. The tax collector ordered Yisrael to show him another piece of furniture. As he began to cross the room, followed by the two men, his foot caught hold of the crumpled cover on the floor, and he stepped on the cloth.

"Aha!" cried the policeman gleefully. "See how this Jew treats they symbol of his country!" Despite his pleas and explanations, despite his pointing out that he used the cloth decorated with the Polish national symbol to cover his most prized possession, charges were drawn up and he was summoned to court.

A day was set for the trial, and a magistrate appointed. To Weiner's dismay, the judge was a notorious anti-Semite, and he knew that the probability of a severe sentence was high.

### **Asked the Bobover Rebbe for a Blessing**

On the eve of the trial, the nervous and depressed defendant went to the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Bentzion Halberstam, for a blessing. Weeping profusely, he told the Rebbe his woeful story.

The Rebbe gave his blessing, expressing his hope and belief that Hashem would help the desperate man, and then added some very strange instructions.

"Tomorrow, when you go to court," the Rebbe said, "take with you a matchbox containing only one match. Then, when you notice a member of the court

taking out a cigar or a cigarette during the proceedings, as someone inevitable will, you step forward and offer him your matchbox."

Weiner was puzzled until the Rebbe explained the rest of the plan, and advised him to inform his lawyer about it. "You have nothing to lose, and much to gain," said the Rebbe.

The next day at court, as expected, the public prosecutor released his venom on the trembling Jew. "Would you dare tread upon your Holy Scroll?" he challenged, his voice full of thunder. "For such a disrespectful act against his country, this man deserves the maximum sentence under the law!"

### **The Jew Offers the Judge His Matchbox**

As the prosecutor continue to rant, the judge becoming excited at the prospect of giving out a harsh punishment to this helpless Jew, began to fumble in his pocket for a cigarette. Yisrael, alert to such a move as he had been instructed, quickly stepped forward and offered his matchbox, containing only one match, to the judge. Absent-mindedly, the judge accepted the matchbox, lit his cigarette and tossed the empty matchbox into the waste basket.

However, in those days all matches were distributed solely by the Polish government, so every matchbox bore the emblem of the Polish national eagle. The defense lawyer, who had been waiting for this moment, jumped out of his seat. "Your honor," he cried, "I must bring a very urgent matter to your attention!"

All eyes were on him. How dare he interrupt the proceeding with such an outburst? In a ringing voice, the lawyer for the defense continued his bid for attention. "The honor of our national symbol, the Polish white eagle, has been insulted in this very room, only a moment ago!" he boomed.

### **"Look Into the Waste Basket!"**

As everyone stared at him in astonishment, he continued. "Look into the waste basket! You will see the image of the Polish white eagle imprinted on a matchbox, amidst the refuse. The honor of our beloved country is at stake! And it is His Honor, the magistrate himself, who is guilty of this violation!"

Stifled laughter was heard from the back of the courtroom, and then the laughter became louder and the audience began to applaud. The defendant then sprang up, wringing his hands, and cried out, "Your Honor, I am the father of small children! Please have mercy on me! I am a devout patriot; I cover my most cherished possession with our beloved national symbol. My stepping on the while eagle emblem that was on my sewing machine cover was no more an act of disrespect than was your casting an empty matchbox into the garbage!"

The room was silent for a moment, the judge shifted in his seat. "Case dismissed!" he said.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Matos-Masei 5784 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.*