**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas terumah 5781**

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**He Flew From London to**

**New York for Reasons**

**He’d Never Imagined**

**By**[**Batya Schochet Lisker**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/13542/jewish/Lisker-Batya-Schochet.htm)



 My cousin surprised me last week with a visit. The mood on the damp street outside was surly, and the people I observed from my office window were fighting the raw wind. It was noon on the foggy, drizzly gray day when a knock on my door startled me out of my reverie.

 I fixed my mask in place as I buzzed the door open. I was accustomed to my cousins visiting from near and far, stopping by for a chat whenever they were in town. Levi is a *shliach* in Edgware, England, and he was the last person I expected in the midst of a global pandemic, but I was happy to see him.

 “Welcome,” I called out. Refined and poised, he entered my office and shed his thick wet coat slowly.

 He settled himself in the battered leather chair across from my desk as I started questioning him. “What could have possibly brought you to New York during COVID-19?” He rested his arms on the sides of the chair as he leaned forward.

 “Actually, had you asked me that this morning I would have had a completely different response,” he responded, his British accent clipped and precise. “But over the last few hours, it became clear to me exactly why I had to travel to New York at this moment in time.”

 I studied his eyes, reservoirs of compassion and kindness, as he related to me that there were several legal documents relating to his wife’s immigration that required his attention. Even though they had retained an attorney, he had felt compelled to fly to New York to ensure that they were handled properly. Arriving at the lawyer’s offices in Manhattan this morning, he had started a casual conversation with a woman sitting in the waiting room because she, too, was British.

 Within a few minutes, she timidly said, “Obviously, there is no sign of recognition when you look at me, Rabbi Sudak, although you are acquainted with my family. I have changed so much in the two years I have been in New York.” She proceeded to tearfully confess that she was completely despondent and feeling absolutely alone. She was estranged from her family, her past way of life and even from G‑d, and it was causing deep sadness within her.

 Levi asked her why she did not reconnect with the things she clearly held dear. “What’s holding you back?” he inquired.

**“I Am Too Far Gone”**

 “I am too far gone. You can’t even imagine, rabbi. I am so far removed from G‑d and from Torah and mitzvot that there is no going back for me,” she cried.

 “Really?” continued Levi. “Connectedness is fundamental. It's the key to emotional and physical health." Reluctantly at first, she allowed Levi to make a few phone calls to shluchim and his own local family members. Something sparked within her as she learned that they were ready to immediately embrace her, be there for her and provide her with a warm, loving place to feel welcome and provide a sense of familiarity.

 “Now,” said Levi, “Please indulge me by taking a test to see if what you are saying about your alienation from G‑d is true or your own misconception. Let’s start with the Ten Commandments. We’ll leave the first five commandments, for now, and begin with the second five that focus on mitzvot between man and man. Commandment No. 6: Have you murdered anyone?”

 “No, of course not,” she responded.

 “Good,” Levi said. “Commandment No. 7: Have you committed adultery?”

 “What? No!” she exclaimed.

 “Great,” said Levi.

**How About Commandment No. 8**

 “Commandment No. 8: Do you steal?”

 “I would never,” she declared.

 “You are doing well,” said Levi. “Commandment No. 9: Have you been a false witness?”

 “No way,” she answered.

 “Amazing,” said Levi. “Commandment No. 10: Are you jealous of what others have?”

 “Never,” she countered.

 “Excellent. That’s five out of 10 already. Let’s go on. Commandment No. 1: Do you believe in G‑d’s existence?”

 “Of course!” she cried.

 “Awesome. You have already passed the test,” said Levi. “Commandment No. 2: Do you believe in or follow a different religion?”

 “Never,” she acknowledged.

 “Perfect,” said Levi. “Although you said you are completely alienated from mitzvot, you are acing the test with a score of seven out of 10, but let’s proceed. Commandment No. 3: Do you desecrate G‑d’s name?”

 “Not at all,” she answered.

 “Eight out of 10,” said Levi. “Let’s skip the Fourth Commandment and get back to it in a minute. Commandment No. 5: Do you respect your parents?”

“Always,” she retorted emotionally.

 “You have**“,”** scored 90 percent so far. Not bad for someone divorced from G‑d,” said Levi. “Now the Fourth Commandment is to sanctify Shabbat. There are actually 39 categories of work prohibited on Shabbat that correspond to the types of work used in the construction and maintenance of the holy Mishkan. So let’s divide up scoring for this commandment into 39 parts.”

**Going Through Each of the 39 Works of Shabbat**

 Calmly and deliberately, Levi went through the 39 works of Shabbat one by one with her. And one by one, she said she did not sow, plow, harvest, thresh, winnow, build, weave, sew, hunt, slaughter, etc. When they were done, Levi said, “OK, so we caught you on a few out of the 39, like shopping, carrying and fire. You still passed this commandment with a 97 percent score. And the others with a perfect score. Not bad at all for someone who claimed that she was estranged from G‑d. As the Talmud states, all Jews are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate is filled with seeds.”1

 “I didn’t think of it that way,” she said as tears of relief streamed down her cheeks.

 “It’s all a matter of perspective,” responded Levi. “When you reconsider, you realize that you’re actually living a different story than the one you told yourself. Moreover, there’s nothing more empowering and important than knowing that no matter what, in essence, you are pure. Your soul is untainted by anything the world has thrown at you. Being aware of your character strengths enables you to actualize your potential and find your true happiness.

**The Importance is not in Perfection, But in the Trying**

 “Now it is true that we have been given 613 mitzvot, and all are of equal importance simply because they are Divinely ordained. But the point is not in perfection; it’s in the trying, in the journey, in the discoveries, in the process and in the continuous *becoming*. Every person is unique, and every situation is unique. Focusing on our personal weaknesses just leaves us with a faulty sense of who we are and who we can become. By realizing our innate connection with G‑d, on the other hand, we gain the ability to embrace our identity.”

 The Baal Shem Tov taught that every single Jew is compared to a “desired land” because inside lies precious stones and diamonds, wellsprings and treasure. One need only dig a little, and he or she will immediately find these precious stones, these wellsprings.

 Levi turned to me before leaving. “We exchanged contact information and resolved to keep in touch,” he concluded. “Man’s steps are established by G‑d.2 Divine Providence led me to travel to exactly the place where I needed to be today to perform my mission ... wherever our feet tread, we are emissaries of G‑d, each one of us.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’eira 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Getting to the Root**

**Of the Problem**

**By L.Y.**

 My oldest son is enclosed in a bubble in a large yeshiva far from home and he is dedicated to his learning. One day he called me complaining of a painful toothache, and because of his suffering he did not know what to do or where to go. Since they are not allowed to go home from the bubble, one of the administrators directed him to Kupat Cholim for treatment by a good, reliable dentist.

**Told He Needs a Root Canal Now!!!**

 After the treatment, my son called me to tell me this hashgacha: “When I sat in the dentist chair, they took an x-ray of my mouth. The dentist saw the results of the x-ray and concerned, told me, “You need to have a root canal, now!!!”

 “I looked up to Heaven and said to myself, ‘Ribono shel olam, I know that everything is for the best, and everything in this world is measure for measure and if the dentist says I need root canal it is because I did something wrong with my mouth, either lashan hara or gossip. I accept upon myself from now on to be strong to guard my mouth from speaking lashan hara or gossip.’

 I had just finished speaking when the dental assistant came in, looked at the x-ray and she told the dentist, “Why root canal?! There is still enough enamel to just fill the cavity, why make him suffer!!!”

 The dentist looked at the x-ray again and admitted he did not look so carefully. The dentist did his job, and I thanked Hashem as I alone knew the true reason for the change in treatment. This was not the negligence of the dentist, but rather, the correction of the root of the issue.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Tiv Hakehila.*

**The Secret of Reb Amram Blau’s Miraculous Recovery**

**By Dovid Hoffman**

 R’ Gamliel Rabinowitz shlit’a recounts an amazing story that occurred during the time that Arik Sharon was in a coma. He relates that his own mechutan, Reb Amram Blau shlit’a, an active member of one of the premium Vaad Hakashrus agencies in Jerusalem, fell ill and he too, suffered a brain hemorrhage which put him into a vegetative coma. Doctors used life-saving measures to stabilize him but he hovered between life and death for many months. His family was constantly at his bedside, saying Tehillim and learning as a zechus for hum, but doctors were not optimistic and had no idea if he would ever regain consciousness, or brain function.

**Reb Amram Suddenly Opened His Eyes**

 But the A-mighty tends to His righteous adherents and one fine day, Reb Amram suddenly opened his eyes and woke from his vegetative stupor. His family laughed and cried and doctors came running to witness the miracle patient who suddenly woke from a coma, seemingly without rhyme or reason. Extensive tests were performed on the patient and after a few short weeks, Reb Amram was released from the hospital with a clean bill of health. He had sufferend no long term effects and his cognitive skills were as sharp as before he took ill. It truly was a miracle.

One day, Reb Amram received a phone call from Omri and Gilad Sharon, the two sons of Ariel Sharon. A Sharon family member got on the phone and explained that their father, the Prime Minister, is lying in a coma in Sheba Medical Center in Tel HaShomer, for quite a few years already, and the doctors have tried just about every medical procedure to save him. Nothing has worked. The family hired some of the best doctors in the world to see if there’s anything to do - no matter how impossible the odds or how far-fetched the remedy. As of now, there’s no cure in sight.

**Asked if Blau’s Family Would Teach Them the Secret**

 The family member finally got to the point. Someone had told them about Rabbi Blau and how he was in a vegetative coma for months, with the same diagnosis as their father. And suddenly, he woke up from the coma and his health has been totally restored. They were requesting a meeting to possibly learn what forms of treatment were done to bring him back from the dead; would he teach them the “secret” formula that had allowed him to beat the odds and regain his health? They were prepared to pay whatever he asks to help them in their quest for the cure. Name your price, they said, we beg you to help us.

 Reb Amram smiled inwardly and replied, “I am sorry to hear about your father and the suffering your family is going through. From a medical standpoint, I cannot imagine that more was done for me than for your father. In fact, no doubt, you have done much more to cure your father than was done for me.”

 There was a pause at the other end. “So you’re saying you don’t know? It was a miracle?”

 Reb Amram replied, “It was better than a miracle. Bezras Hashem Yisborach, I have been blessed with many children and over one hundred grand and great-grandchildren. All of them are shomer Torah and mitzvos. Each and every one of them spent every day of my illness davening to Hashem and performing acts of goodness as a zechus for my recovery. Their actions and their prayers not only stormed the heavens, but it broke through the heavenly gates! That’s the whole ‘secret’ - that’s the ‘miracle.’ If you can somehow do that, maybe you can invoke Divine mercy and merit a miracle too!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Torah Tavlin.*

**An Important Lesson**

**About Chinuch**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 Rav Zev Eidelman related: “I merited to meet the Steipler Gaon in Vilna, before World War II, when he came to attend the wedding of his brother. He brought along his only son, Chaim (today Rav Chaim Kanievsky) who was then about two years old. At that time I learned an important lesson about chinuch (education)!

           “The Steipler Gaon told his son, ‘Chaim, recite the names of the masechtot!’ The small child jumped up onto the bench, with all the exuberance of youth, and began loudly chanting the names of the 63 tractates in order! His father, the Steipler Gaon, had composed a special tune to which he set these words and he sang it to young Chaim every night as a lullaby.

           “The child reached the end of his song and concluded, ‘…Tvul yom, yadayim, uktzin, now give me the candy!’ His father, smiling proudly, handed him a small treat.

           “This taught me how one must educate his children, helping them internalize what will truly bring joy to their parents and preparing them for a life filled with love of Torah. That is how one raises a child who will become Rav Chaim Kanievsky.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace. Originally printed in the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**The Greatness of Tzedakah**

 The Gemara teaches us (Avodah Zarah 18a) that Rebbi Yosi ben Kisma taught Torah in public, despite a Roman decree forbidding anyone to do so, under penalty of death.

 One day, Rebbi Chanina ben Teradion visited him, and asked, “Don't you know that the Romans were granted their power from Shamayim? How can you flaunt their decrees?”

 Rebbi Yosi ben Kisma replied, “I rely on the mercy of Heaven. Please tell me, will I have a share in Olam Haba?”

 Rebbi Chanina asked him, “Have you ever done anything outstanding?” Rebbi Yosi responded, “Yes, I have. I once had Tzedakah money, as well as my own money, together in the same pocket. They got mixed up and I didn’t know which was which, so I gave everything to Tzedakah.”

 Rebbi Chanina said, “If that is so, may my own portion be as great as your portion, and may my destiny be as great as yours!”

 Rav Yissochar Frand commented about this, “What can we make of this conversation? Rebbi Yosi ben Kisma is risking his life to teach Torah in public. He will probably die a horrible death at the hands of the Romans if he is apprehended. Yet, this great act of heroism doesn’t seem to guarantee him a share in Olam Haba. What worthy act convinces Rebbi Chanina ben Teradion that Rebbi Yosi ben Kisma has earned a share in Olam Haba? That he gave his own money to Tzedakah when it got mixed up with Tzedakah money! Amazing!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehdua Winzelberg.*

**The Life Threatening Danger To the Kallah and Her Mother**

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**Rav Shalom Schwadron**

 Rav Shalom Mordechai HaKohein Schwadron, zt”l, the Maggid of Yerushalayim, recounted a true story regarding this topic. The Rav of the city of Lissa was the leader of the generation, the great Gaon, Rav Yaakov Loberbaum, zt”l, who authored great works such as the Nesivos HaMishpat and Chavos Da’as, among others.

 When he passed away, he was survived by a widowed daughter and a granddaughter (the daughter of the widow) who lived together in the city of Lissa.

**The Granddaughter Became a Kallah**

 Some years later, the granddaughter grew up and became a Kallah. One day, the widow and her daughter wanted to travel to the nearby city to purchase things for the wedding, and they hired a local gentile wagon driver to take them. Early the next morning, he arrived at their home to pick them up. The wagon driver knew that the young woman was engaged to be married and he assumed that they were traveling to the city to make some of their wedding purchases, which meant that they were probably carrying a nice sum of money with them.

**The Driver Veered Off Course**

 Instead of taking them to the city, he veered off course and traveled to the outskirts of Lissa, where he lived. When they were near his house, he signaled to his friends who he had notified in advance and were hiding nearby, and they immediately jumped on the women, tied them up, and took all their money.

 The wagon driver and his friends were concerned that the women would go and inform the police about what had occurred, so they decided to burn them alive in the large furnace in the driver’s house, so that there would be no trace of them.

**The Furnace was Fired Up**

 The wicked gang began firing up the furnace, and they started to discuss how they would divide the money. The wagon driver claimed that he deserved the largest portion of the money since he initiated the idea to begin with, and without him, there would be no money to divide at all. Also, he claimed to have done the most work from all of the others. However, his friends disagreed with him, and they soon began yelling at each other. Just at that moment, a police officer was passing by and heard the shouts, and he entered the house to see what was going on there.

**The Bandits Immediately** **Fled**

 When the wagon driver and his friends saw him, they immediately fled. The officer who saw them run away understood that there was a reason for this, and he started searching the house.

 In one of the rooms, he found the two women lying on the floor, tied up. He released them and then inquired about what had happened. He then found their money and returned it to them, and helped them get back home.

 That night, the Gaon of Lissa appeared to his daughter, the widow, in a dream. He told her, “You should know that when I found out that you were in distress, I ascended to a very high place in Shamayim, and I began begging Hashem to save you.

**The Tzadik’s Father**

**Was not Answered**

 However, my Tefilah was not answered since you and your daughter had transgressed the prohibition of Yichud, by secluding yourselves with the wagon driver, since the road through the forest was completely deserted.

 I then ascended to an even higher place in Shamayim, and pleaded with Hashem that He save

you in the merit of the Torah that I taught throughout the Jewish nation in my Sefer Nesivos HaMishpat. My Tefilah was then answered, and you were allowed to be saved.”

 The widow related her dream to the community leaders in Lissa, and they decided to record this story in the community’s log, so that it would be told over in future generations, and that many people can learn the lessons from it!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehdua Winzelberg.*

**The Rabbi and Napoleon**



 The Brisker Rav, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, zt”l, related a story that goes back to the time of Napoleon. Napoleon had won a major battle and made a big party, where he invited everybody to speak in honor of the great victory.

 Speaker after speaker got up, and no one said anything worthwhile. Napoleon then inquired if there was a Rabbi in the town who could give a speech in honor of the occasion. Napoleon’s lieutenants went out and found some Rabbi from a small nearby village and brought him to the banquet, and they ordered him to say something in front of Napoleon, the most powerful person in the world.

 It happened to be Parashas Vayeishev that week, so the Rav related the story of Yosef in prison with the two royal ministers. They each had a terrible nightmare and were unable to come up with a satisfactory interpretation. When the Sar HaMashkim, the chief cupbearer, recited his strange dream to Yosef, Yosef gave him an interpretation (Bereishis 40:9-15).

 “The chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He said to him, ‘In my dream, there was a vine in front of me, which had three branches. It had barely budded, when out came its blossoms and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.’

 Yosef told him, ‘The three vines are a three-day period. In another three days Pharaoh will restore you to your post, and you will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand as you had done previously when you were his cupbearer. At this time, if you would think of me and please do a kindness for me and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building. For indeed I was taken from my land and I have not done anything for them to have put me in this pit.’”

 The Rav commented as follows, “Under normal circumstances, when someone in a high position of government is accused of a terrible crime, the most that he can expect to accomplish is to receive an acquittal and then go off to be forgotten. In the natural course of events, it is never expected that such a disgraced official will get his old job back.

 The Sar HaMashkim, who had one of the most prestigious posts in ancient times, was rotting away in jail for a crime that he committed. All of a sudden, he had a strange dream and Yosef told him, ‘Not only will you be freed, but you will get your old prestigious job back, as if nothing happened.’ This is very strange. It just does not make any sense.

 Why should the Sar HaMashkim have believed Yosef? Yosef told the Sar HaMashkim, ‘Do you know why you and I are in this jail cell together? Do you know why you were stuck in this pit in the first place and why you will be restored to your old position of glory? It is all in order that you remember me and mention me to Pharaoh and help me get out of here.

 The only reason it will happen is because it is part of Hashem’s master plan, so that I should be able to get into the good graces of the King of Egypt. Therefore, it is important that you listen to me and play your destined role, to mention me to Pharaoh.”

 The Rav then told Napoleon, “How is it that you are so successful in conquering the world? It is because you have been good to the Jews. You liberated the Jews and brought them freedom. This is the reason you have gotten as far as you have. Your key to success, Napoleon, is to continue to be the friend of the Jews and continue with your noble work!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Bo 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehdua Winzelberg.*

**Compromising on Kapporas For Yom Kippur**

**By Daniel Keren**

  

**Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser and Rav Elazar Shach, zt”l**

 Rabbi Goldwasser noted that one of the major areas that he frequently get calls from people is regarding the subject of shalom bayis (harmony in the home). There is no greater zechus (merit) than to help restore harmony between a husband and wife.

 Oftentimes, the quality of being a mevater (giving in to satisfy another person) is essential towards promoting shalom bayis. A newly married wife grew up in a home when before Yom Kippur, the family would go together to perform the ritual of kapporas by shlugging (waving) a chicken over their heads while reciting verses from the Yom Kippur machzor.

**The Wife Asked Her Husband to Do**

**The Kapporas Ceremony with Her**

 In the week before Yom Kippur she asked her husband to do the kapporas ceremony with her. He was a Litvak (a Jew whose family came from Lithuania) and he happily went to get the machzor from the bookcase and some money. His wife was shocked and said that this was not the way she wanted to perform the ceremony, but with real chickens.

 Not knowing how to handle the crisis he went to Rav Elazar Shach, 1899-2001, the Rosh Hayeshiva of Ponevezh in Bnei Brak and was told to do kapporas as his wife desired. The husband complained that this would take up extra valuable time from his learning Torah. He also asked Rav Shach how he performed kapporas. The Rosh Hayeshiva admitted that he also performed the ceremony with money but that for the sake of shalom bayis, the new husband should be mevater to the wishes of his wife. Rabbi Goldwasser explained that in order to ensure shalom bayis, a person may sometimes have to take a few steps back and swallow his pride.

**The Secular Israeli Soldier Who Wanted to Do Teshuvah**

 Rabbi Goldwasser also told a story about a chiloni (secular) Israeli reserve soldier who was sent into battle. He was confronted by an Arab enemy who had a deadly hand grenade and was preparing to throw it at the helpless soldier. At that moment, this Jew who had no previous thoughts of becoming a baal teshuvah (a repentant Jew devoted to fulfilling religious mtizvahs) declared out loud in a vow to Hashem that if He would save his life, he would do teshuvah and become a Gerrer chassid. At that very moment the grenade blew up in the hand of the Arab before he could throw it at the Jew and the soldier’s life was saved while his enemy died a very painful and deserved death.

**Discovered Being a Gerrer Chassid**

**Was Not Such a Simple thing**

 Afterwards, this Jew when returning to civilian life discovered that being a Gerrer Chasid was maybe after all not such a simple thing. He still wanted to do teshuvah and become Torah observant. But did he have to go the whole route of wearing white socks and black clothes? Someone told him that if he would daven in the Gerrer shteibel once a week or once a month, that might qualify as his fulfilling his vow to Hashem to become a Gerrer chassid, while he could still dress in a more moderate but non-Chassidic manner without the white socks.

 However, when Rav Moshe Sternbuch, the Av Beis Din of the Eidah Chareidis in Yerushalayim heard of that solution, he disagreed. He said something more substantial was required. Before Jewish holidays this baal teshuvah must like other Gerrer chassidim come before the Gerrer rebbe and request a brocha and give tzedakah money. That would qualify as fulfilling his vow to become a Gerrer chassid.

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