**Shabbos Stories for**

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**Clarity in the Fog**

**By** [**Phyllis LaVietes**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/phyllis-lavietes/)



 My flight from Dallas to Newark, connecting with my flight to Israel, was due to take off at 6:30 a.m. So, in the middle of the night in the pitch dark, I put my suitcases in the car and prepared to drive the many miles to the airport.

 Not only was it pitch dark, but it was extremely foggy. The fog obscured traffic lights that were only a few feet in front of me. So, I drove very, very slowly and cautiously, even though there were very few other cars on the road at that hour.

 Thank G-d, I made it to the vicinity of the airport within a couple of hours, and parked at the lot where I was to take a shuttle bus to the airport itself. The bus arrived; the driver, a pleasant man, picked me up with my luggage. I checked in at the terminal with ease, and sat down to wait, saying *Tefillat* *HaDerech* in the meantime.

 At about the designated time, the plane took off. I was on my way to Israel again to see my children and grandchildren!

 The trip was doubly exciting because my husband and I were in the process of buying a house in the heart of the Jewish community in Dallas. We had been living on the outskirts of the city, 30 miles from anything Jewish, and finally my dream of living in the heart of the community was being realized.

**Husband Called to Confirm that the House was Purchased**

 While I was visiting one of my daughters, my husband called to say that the home purchase was finalized! At that exact moment my daughter was on the phone with her best friend in America, whose brother was a rabbi living in Dallas, and I told my daughter, “Quick, tell her to tell her brother that we’ve got the house!” I wanted everyone in the community to know that we were moving there at last.

 After a beautiful couple of weeks in Israel, it was time for me to go home and begin my share of the wonderful process of moving. I flew back to Dallas and got the shuttle bus to the parking lot. Interestingly, the bus driver turned out to be the same man who had taken me to the airport at the start of my trip. He had a good memory, for he recognized me and remembered when he had driven me before, and he mentioned that that had been one of the foggiest nights that had ever occurred in Dallas.

 “Did you know that the airport closed at 6:30 a.m. because of the fog, and didn’t reopen until about 3 hours later?” he asked me.

 “How could that be?” I replied in surprise. “My plane took off at 6:30 a.m.!”

 He answered, “Then it must have been just after your plane took off.”

**The Benefit of Not Having the Plane Flight Delayed**

 Without my even being aware of it, Hashem did a miracle for me by not closing the airport until I had taken off! Had the airport closed before that, I would have missed my connecting flight from Newark to Israel!

 When I had driven to the airport, I was so focused on just getting there safely, I hadn’t even considered the possibility that the plane wouldn’t be able to take off because of the fog. Now I saw clearly how Hashem had helped me! The weather might have been foggy that night, but the clarity of His Presence was unmistakable. Ever since then, many times when I read about the Clouds of Glory, I think about my own experience that foggy but miraculous night.

*Reprinted from the August 5, 2021 email of The Jewish Press.*

**Hiddurim in Kashrus**

**By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon**



 After my parents left Russia in 1947, under the guise that they were citizens of Poland and returning to their homeland, they had the status of refugees for six years, until they were allowed to come to America in the winter of 1953.

Initially, they were given a place to sleep in a refugee camp in Poland and then in Paris France. The following took place in Poland.

**Life was Not Particularly Easy for Religious Refugees**

 One understands that life was not easy for any refugee, especially a religious one. The various organizations that provided food for them were not Jewish and it took some explaining and time for them to understand the specific and unique needs of a religious Jew as it relates to what foods can be eaten as well as the separation between meat and dairy.

 But the officials were accommodating and they arranged for kosher meat to be shipped from other countries.

**A Letter from a Rabbinical Organization**

 One day a container arrived with a letter from a rabbinical organization attesting that the meat in the container is kosher it was slaughtered checked rinsed and salted under their supervision and even the most stringent person can enjoy it.

The manager of the camp was an upright person and he divided equally amongst all the refugees, each individual was given a drop over two kilograms of meat. He informed my father that he put aside for him around six and a half kilograms of meat, as there are three members to his family.

 My father thanked him for thinking about him, however, he informed him that he will not take any meat.

 Why he asked in astonishment here is a letter from leading rabbonim attesting that it kosher!!

 I only eat from a shochet that I know. Being that I don’t know who slaughtered the animal I won’t partake in it.

**Recognized as a Man of Principle, But…**

 The manager replied that is why I like you, you are a man of principle however your wife who isn’t the strongest, and your infant child have pity on them and let them enjoy it

 Seeing that he couldn’t persuade my father he went to my mother and offered it to her But she replied this is our way of life, we only eat from a shochet we know and if not no thank you

 That afternoon the smell of cooked and roasted meat was in the air it was a long time since  anyone had tasted it People were salivating at the thought that finally, they can enjoy some kosher meat

 That evening, every family had a fleishig dinner and my parents had a vegetable soup. However two kilograms of meat is more than four pounds, so people began salting it, to preserve it for another time.

**An Urgent Telegram Arrives**

 The next day an urgent telegram arrived and informed the manager that a mistake occurred and inadvertently two containers were switched. Their container went to another group, and the container they received was non-kosher.

 The people were devastated, they ate and enjoyed non-kosher meat. however, the manager of the camp came over to my father with a new derech eretz, no longer was he the stubborn person sticking to his chumros and hiddurim. He asked him, how did you know?

 He didn't believe my father when he said I didn't know anything, but this is how a chossid conducts himself, and the Aibishter helps one from mistakes.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Rabbi Avtzon’s Weekly Story. He is a veteran mechanech and the author of numerous books on the Chabad Rebbeim and their chassidim. He can be contacted at* *avtzonbooks@gmail.com*

**The Greatness of a Torah Scholar’s Loyalty to Hashem’s Torah**

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**The Rogatchover Gaon Rabbi Pinchos Teitz**

 The esteemed Rav of Elizabeth, N.J., and leader of the Tzafnas Paneach Committee, R’ Pinchos Teitz zt”l, who in his youth was a ben bayis by the Rogatchover Gaon, R’ Yosef Rosen zt”l, testified that he saw with his own eyes how within one hour and sixteen minutes, the Gaon managed to answer twenty-two teshuvos in sixteen letters.

 “His mouth literally did not stop speaking in learning,” writes another talmid R’ Shachne Zohn zt”l, “this is not an exaggeration.” In fact, it was said that the reason why the Rogatchover never cut his hair and it grew wild, was because he didn’t want to sit bareheaded while it was being cut and then he would have to stop learning.

 Once, when he was in Rogatchov, he himself told people that while sitting on a train traveling from Dvinsk, he recited half of Shas by heart and on his way back, he finished the other half ...

 The Rogatchover once gave a shiur to a group of talmidim in which he brought amazing proofs that chametz is permitted to be eaten on Pesach. He then asked his students, all brilliant minds themselves, to refute his proofs. They tried in vain to do so. The talmidim were truly astounded.



**Rabbi Shachne Zohn**

 Finally, when they gave up, the Rogatchover opened a Chumash and read the words, - “Do not eat chametz.” That, he said, is the only refutation necessary. All the intellectual gymnastics in the world cannot alter one sentence in the Torah.

 A Yiddishe kop is trained to think deeply and understand important aspects from different angles. This is why Bnei Yisroel are the “Am Hanivchar” chosen above all other nations for our faith, loyalty, and intellect. But, nothing can change a single word in the Torah. No amount of intellect can alter one single word of Hashem’s Torah.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**A Shemittah Story**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**

 For many years, an exceedingly poor man regularly begged for coins in the streets of the town. From time to time, he would supplement his earnings with a bundle of some small items which he attempted to sell.

 One evening during the month of Elul, the beggar Yossel was visited by his friend, Moshe, who traveled throughout Europe raising money for organizations and yeshivos in need.

 “Yossel,” exclaimed Moshe, “your salvation is near; your extreme poverty will be over.” With that he took out a bundle of money from the depths of his coat pocket and gave it to Yossel, who was understandably shocked.

 Moshe continued, “During my recent travels I encountered a very wealthy cousin of yours. When he heard of your dire straits, he gave me this money. I assure you that for him it wasn’t all that much, but for you it’s a lifesaver!” He then whispered to him quietly, “There is only one small problem. You will not be able to use this currency here. You will have to go somewhere else to exchange it.”

“What am I going to do?” cried Yossel. “Changing money is a problem of the wealthy!”

**Moshe Offers His Friend a Solution**

 Moshe rubbed his forehead in deep thought, and then told Yossel, “I have the perfect solution that will help both of us. Lend me the money for now because I am marrying off my daughter and I could use the cash. I’ll give you collateral and after the Yomim Tovim I will return the money to you. What do you think?”

 Yossel was very amenable to the suggestion, especially since his friend Moshe had facilitated this windfall in the first place.

 That year on Shabbos Shuva, Yossel went to hear the drasha of the Rav Yossel found the presentation very interesting; it included points about the Shemittah year that was upon them. Yossel was especially intrigued by Rav’s mention that if one had not arranged a pruzbul for a loan that was made, then the debtor was exempt from paying back the loan.

 Yossel never had any need to know this halacha. He had never borrowed money, and he had certainly never lent anyone money. But this year he had in fact given his friend Moshe a very big loan which he would now not have to repay. Needless to say, Yossel returned home a sad and dejected man.

**The Wife Offers Encouragement to Her Shaken Husband**

 “What happened?” asked his wife anxiously.

 Yossel related to his wife what he had learned from the Rav. His wife, however, had an unshakable faith in Hashem, and she stated firmly, “Yossel, this is a nisayon, and you must remain strong. Hashem will send His salvation a different way.” She reminded him that he had been afforded the fortuitous opportunity to perform a mitzvah that he could otherwise never dream of fulfilling.

 After Sukkos, Moshe returned with the money that he owed Yossel, but Yossel told him delightedly that the loan had been cancelled and explained what he had learned. Initially Moshe could not understand why Yossel was refusing the money, but he could not deny the joy that Yossel was deriving from the fulfillment of this mitzvah. He set out for home, contemplating how Yossel could recover his money.

 It was only a short while later, when two officers from the government knocked on Yossel’s door. “We have heard that you have illegal money on your premises, which is cause for severe punishment.”

 Yossel stated unequivocally, “That is a complete lie. You can search the entire house, but you will not find even one coin.” Although the officers searched tirelessly, in every possible hiding place, they could not find anything, and they finally left.

 Yossel raised his hands to Heaven and said, “I give thanks to You, Master of the world, that I was privileged to fulfill the mitzvah of shemittah, and in that merit I was saved from severe punishment.”

*Reprinted from the August 5, 2021 email of The Jewish Press.*

**The Challenge and**

**Power of Forgiveness**

 Rabbi Yoel Gold told a story about a couple that was getting married in Israel right at the start of the pandemic. They decided to make the wedding quickly with just immediate family before Israel went on lockdown. Only 20 people came to attend. Right after the kedushin, the mishtarah—police showed up, saying they received an anonymous tip, and demanded that everyone evacuate the venue. They were afraid coronavirus would be transmitted so the police slapped everyone with a 5,000-shekel fine and sent everyone home, except the bride and groom, who were required to wait outside against the building in the cold.

 Picture it: Tamar—the bride—in her wedding dress, David—the groom—in his tuxedo, were surrounded by police and soldiers with guns, shivering from cold. By the time the police let them go, the wedding was ruined, and the couple was in debt on their very first day as husband and wife.

**The Couple Tried to Understand**

**That it was for Their Best**

 The couple tried their hardest to stay happy, to dance, to cheer each other up, to not cry. As much as they knew it was for the best, they were so disappointed and heartbroken with how the night turned out.

 Seven months later, David got a phone call, and he was visibly upset after hanging up. His wife asked him, “What’s wrong?” He said, “That was my father. A young man in kollel contacted him to say that he was the person who gave the police the tip at the wedding, and he’d like to speak to us.” “Should we go?” Tamar asked. “I guess so… maybe it will help us come to terms with how our wedding turned out.”

 They went to meet the boy. He explained to them that COVID-19 had just emerged in Israel, and he was extremely afraid of the new virus. He heard the music and assumed it was a big wedding, so he called to tell the police there was a party going on next door at the hall.

**The Informer Begged for Forgiveness**

 Since that night, he felt a tremendous guilt. He was also in shidduchim and usually got calls with matches. Since the wedding, not one shadchan had called with a date, and when he reached out to matchmakers, he could not get set up with anyone. He knew he had to apologize to this couple. He tracked them down and was begging for their forgiveness.

 The newlyweds, so traumatized from the event, told him they needed some time. After a few days, on Erev Yom Kippur, they decided that even though it was so hard, they would put it all behind them. They would forgive him. They called him, and the bochur broke into tears, crying, “I’m so sorry for what I did. Please forgive me.” The couple was emotional and accepted his sincere apology.

 They went into Yom Kippur feeling so at peace, knowing that they overcame a huge challenge, and they felt comfortable asking Hashem for forgiveness when they did the same a few hours earlier.

**A Bad Car Accident**

 The next day, while David was building the Sukkah, Tamar was driving to work, and she was in a bad car accident. Three cars plowed into hers. When David got to the hospital, the doctor walked into Tamar’s room and said, “Your wife must have G-d watching over her.” The whole car was completely totaled, except for the driver’s side! Not only that, but the airbag should have deployed on impact, and for some reason it didn’t. Tamar was newly pregnant and would have lost her child.

 Tamar said, “Hashem must have had a sentence on me. And in His kindness, He orchestrated this whole situation with the wedding and having to forgive this yeshivah boy, for us to have the zechut, for me and my son to be saved. When we forgive Hashem’s children, Hashem forgives us. When we hold grudges, they weigh us down and they’re very hard for us. And when we forgive, we become lighter and happier, and we become better people for it.”

 May we always follow in Hashem’s ways and His commandments which are only good for us in this world and will benefit us in the world to come. As we read in the story above, know that all the obstacles and challenges that Hashem sends our way are for us to grow in order to earn our place with the Shechina in Olam Habah!

*Reprinted from the Parashat Re’eh 5781 email of Jack E Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes*

**A Masmid’s Unique**

**Prescription for a Refuah**



 Rav Yisrael Gustman, zt”l, was the youngest Dayan to sit on the Vilna Beis Din at the age of 21, and was the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Netzach Yisroel. He once said about himself, “The only thing I ever wanted to be was a Gadol Ba’Torah, great in Torah,” and nothing deterred him from achieving his goal, not even the brutal Nazis or the cruel Russians.

 He was a tremendous Masmid, as his diligence in learning Torah was legendary. He never missed a Shiur given by his Rebbe, the Rosh Yeshivah of Grodno, Rav Shimon Shkop, zt”l. Regardless of his state of health, the Shiur always took precedence.

 Once, as a student in Grodno, he became ill and was burning up with a fever of over 104 degrees, so he hired a driver to take him to Shiur. As soon as Rav Shimon began to speak, Rav Yisroel felt his fever break, and by the time the Rosh Yeshivah had concluded the Shiur, Rav Yisroel’s fever was completely gone. He had received the therapy that was necessary for him to get better!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Poor Chasidim**

 Nearly all the Chasidim of Rav Uri, zt”l, of Strelis were very poor. Once, Rav Uri’s Rebbetzin asked her husband why he didn’t daven (pray) that his Chasidim be blessed with abundant Parnasah (livelihood).

 Rav Uri answered her, “Tomorrow I will prove to you that my Chasidim have no interest in wealth.”

 The next morning, before Davening, the Rebbe announced that whoever wanted to amass riches was welcome to come to him for a Brachah (blessing). Not a single Chasid took him up on his offer.

 When Rav Uri got home, he told this to his wife and said to her, “This is why I don’t Daven for them to become wealthy. Why should I Daven for something my Chasidim don’t need?”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Rebbe’s Games of**

**Chess in the Vatican**



 Rav Meilich Biderman once said over a story. After years of research, the Rebbe of Radzamin, zt”l, believed he found the blue Techeiles dye, which could be used for Tzitzis. To verify his claim, the Rebbe traveled to Rome. He wanted to see the color of Techeiles in the Kohein Gadol’s clothing, which is stored in the Vatican. Getting into the Vatican was not a simple matter.

 After much effort, the Vatican finally allowed him to visit the Vatican’s basement, to be able to glimpse at the Kohein Gadol’s clothing. However, they set a condition, that the Rebbe must first play and win two chess games against two professional chess champions.

 The Rebbe agreed and tried to come up with a plan which would help him win, and he said that he had his own conditions that he would like to set as well. He said that he would like to play both games simultaneously, in two adjacent rooms.

**The Rebbe Chose in the First**

**Game to Play the Black Pieces**

 The Vatican was impressed by this, and they agreed. When they began the games, the Rebbe told the first opponent that he wanted to play the black pieces. Traditionally, since the one who plays the white pieces goes first, the Rebbe’s opponent took a white pawn and made the first move.

 The Rebbe didn’t respond to this move. Instead, he went into the next room, to start the second game, and stated that he would be playing the white pieces, and he took the first turn and copied the move of his first opponent. He watched to see how this second opponent responded to this move, and he then returned to the first room, to copy that move.

 Now he watched to see how the first opponent reacted, and he repeated what he saw in the next room. He continued both games in this manner, and by adding his own insights towards the end, he managed to win both chess games!

**A Lesson to Be Learned from this Story**

 Rav Meilich says that one lesson we learn from this story is to have determination. He taught, “The Rebbe traveled all the way to Rome to verify his Techeiles, and he wasn’t daunted by the obstacles that were put in his way. We can apply this lesson in our own lives, to draw an analogy on how to battle the Yetzer Hara. When one fights with the Yetzer Hara, he needs wisdom, and he must develop wise strategies to overcome him and win the battle.

 Two conditions are essential for winning a war. Firstly, you must know who your enemy is. If the enemy is camouflaged, you won’t know to be wary, and you cannot defend yourself. Secondly, you must develop strategies. The Rebbe of Radzamin thought of a wise plan to win the chess games. Similarly, our battle against the Yetzer Hara should include wisdom, strategies, schemes and tactics. Because without them, people will fail and lose the battle!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Unexpected**

**Spark of Judaism**

**By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn**

      In Russia in 1919, the followers of the Bolshevik Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin, may Hashem erase his name and memory, struggled against the group known as the Petlyureftzas, led by the vicious anti-Semite Simon Petlyura, may Hashem erase his name and memory also. Each group struggled to establish its sole ruler-ship, particularly in the Ukraine. First the Bolsheviks would storm into a town, killing and injuring people with abandon as they sought to take over the local government.

**The Jews Were Always Blamed**

      Then the Petlyureftzas would battle with the Bolsheviks and try to oust them from power. If they were successful, they, in turn, made sure to execute all those who had resisted them. This vicious cycle of fighting and killing continued, and the Jews were always caught in the middle. If the Bolsheviks were the ones in control, they would seek out some Jews of the town, blame them for the existing problems in the city, and put them to death.

 Then, when the Petlyureftzas overpowered the Bolsheviks, they too made the Jews the culprits, claiming that they had sided with the opposition. So regardless of which faction ruled, the Jews stood to lose as they were tortured and killed by whoever was in power. It happened one time that the Petlyureftzas stormed a particular city and took control. They laid waste to building after building, after which they rounded up the people in the city to announce new ordinances and decrees.

**The Jews Order to Center of Town in Order to Shot**

 Among their decrees was one ordering that the Jews of the area were to be brought at once to the center of the town - where they would be shot in full view of the townsfolk. Protest as they did, the Jews were helpless, for the rest of the townsfolk knew that if they didn't bring the Jews to be killed, they themselves would be shot instead. As quickly as they could be found, the Jews were dragged to an open square outside a courthouse, where a Petlyureftza revolutionary leader was shouting about the importance of being loyal to the incoming government.
      The local Russian peasants and townspeople gathered in the square to watch the public execution. As he continued to rant and rave, the police tined up the Jews who had been forcefully brought there. Soldiers with rifles took their positions opposite them. The crowd of locals grew larger as the revolutionary leader announced that the Jews were about to be killed for treason. "We are making an example of these people for all of you to see, so that you will not follow in their ways," the leader said.

 The crowd grew nervously silent as the Chief of Police barked at the soldiers to ready their rifles. He instructed them to fire at the count of three. "One!" he yelled. "Two!"

**A Man Jumped from the Crowd**

 Just as he was about to yell "Three!" a man jumped from the crowd of onlookers and pierced the silence as he screamed out, "Wait! I too am a Jew! If you kill them, you have to kill me as well!" The crowd was shocked, for the man who had run out in front of the rifles was none other than the town pharmacist. He was loved and admired by all, and until then everyone had taken him to be a gentile. He had never given anyone even the slightest hint that he might be Jewish.

 People knew that he never distinguished at all between kosher and non-kosher food; his drug store was always open, even on Yom Kippur; and not once was he ever seen in a shul. He was considered to be among the most prominent people of the community, a man whom almost everyone had depended on at one time or another for medical advice and reliable medications.

**A Tremendous Argument Broke Out**

 Quickly a tremendous argument broke out among the townspeople. Many argued that the pharmacist was too valuable a person to the community to be killed, while just as many turned on him and argued that if indeed he was a Jew, then he deserved to be put to death just like the rest of them. Pandemonium erupted as people screamed and shoved each other.

 Within moments the arguments had turned into fisticuffs, and the Petlyureftzas saw that unless they risked their own lives there was no way they would be able to restore order that day. The soldiers and their leader, badly outnumbered, had no choice but to leave the courthouse area, vowing they would be back another day.

  A few days later, however, the Bolsheviks took over and the Petlyureftzas themselves ran for their lives. But those Jews, so perilously close to death just a few days before, were spared. And only because the tiny spark of Yiddishkeit - der pintele Yid - suddenly erupted in a man who, at the risk of losing his life, wanted more than anything else to be counted with his brothers. (Around the Maggid's Table Rav Paysach Krohn, p.112)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781 email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*