**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas lech lecha 5782**

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**“And Forgot G-d Who Brought You Forth”**

**By Ch. B**



 I arranged to fly to the United States with my wife and children to make them US citizens, but I did not even have one penny to go from my house to the airport, and we will not even talk about from the airport to where we were staying…

 Just then I met a friend who wanted to know how I was doing, and I shared with him a little of my situation. Without hesitation, he arranged a loan of 13,000 shekels without a pressured time to repay it. I was very pleased, and I arranged the trip.

 When we arrived in the United States, I used the time to sit and learn while waiting to arrange the passports. One night when the situation was dire and I could not even buy food for the children, and the borrowed money was spent on the trip, I decided to go around to the graves of Tzaddikim and ask for mercy.

**Cried Out My Soul and Pleaded with Hashem**

 Just then, I had a thought, “Why waste a day of learning for livelihood? I will daven here and tomorrow I will learn…” In my pajamas I went to the mezuzah, and I cried out my soul and I pleaded with Hashem to save me, easily and honorably.

 The next day after Shacharis, a man who knew me and my situation, approached and asked if I went to my older relative? When I said no, he said, “He is rich but stingy. Most people can’t get a dollar out of him, but you never know unless you try!!!”



 This man arranged a meeting for me in his office and the relative was interested in my situation and he gave me a small amount for each child. Then he gave me $1,000 and sent me on my way. In truth I did not expect a penny and so, I was shocked. I thanked him warmly and then he gave me another $1,000 after I thanked him, and he kept calling me back and giving me more.

**Was Chased Out of His Office in Shame**

 I saw that this was a good time, so I arranged a meeting for the next day in his office. Now I had a set agenda to ask for help, but when I got there, he chased me out of his office in shame and he would not even listen to a word.

 I left with great joy. Yesterday, he gave me after I cried to Hashem and I was warned that he won’t give me a penny, and yet, Hashem opened his heart, and he gave me generously. The next day I came on my own and I momentarily forgot that this is only from Hashem, and not from my doing, so I should remember that everything is from Hashem, and do not forget it even for a minute.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5781 email of Tiv Hakehila*

**The “Fake” Observant Jew**

 Flying to Israel one day, Ari noticed a fellow Jew on the flight who appeared to be observant. When Ari greeted him, he was ignored. Ari felt this was rude, but it got worse.

 The passenger didn’t even make a bracha as he ate and drank. When a minyan prayed, the guy took a nap. Ari was incensed. How could this person dress to appear to the world like a frum Jew when he didn’t daven or even make blessings on his food?! Ari tried to put it out of his mind for the rest of the flight but the hypocrisy of it infuriated him.

 When the plane landed, Ari saw the “faker” met by a group of people who had been waiting for him and the coffin of his mother, which he had been accompanying to burial in Israel.

 Only then did Ari realize that this man was an “onain,” who is prohibited from performing mitzvos or even making a bracha until after his relative is buried. It dawned on him that he did not judge the other man favorably. In truth, he realized, he was the one who was faking it; dressing like an observant Jew, but not acting like one at all.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5781 email of Jonathan Gewirtz’s Migdal Ohr.*

**Government Work…**

 Itzik Cohen stopped at his local Jerusalem gas station and after filling his tank, he paid the bill and bought a soft drink. He stood by his car to drink his cola and watched a couple of men working along the roadside. One man would dig a hole two or three feet deep and then move on. The other man came along behind him and filled in the hole. While one was digging a new hole, the other was 25 feet behind filling in the hole. The men worked right past the guy with the soft drink and went on down the road.

 "I can't stand this," said Itzik tossing the can into a trash container and heading down the road toward the men. "Hold it, hold it," he said to the men. "Can you tell me what's going on here with all this digging and refilling?"

 "We work for the Israeli government and we're just doing our job," one of the men said.

 "But one of you is digging a hole and the other fills it up. You're not accomplishing anything. Aren't you wasting the taxpayers' money?"

 "You don't understand," one of the men said, leaning on his shovel and wiping his brow. "Normally there are three of us: me, Shmuel and Chaim. I dig the hole, Shmuel sticks in the tree and Chaim, here, puts the dirt back. Now just because Shmuel’s sick, that doesn't mean that me and Chaim can't work."

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5781 email of Lekavod Shabbos Magazine.*

**The Chortkov Rebbe and His Chasid Reb Meir Shapiro**



**The Chortkover Rebbe and Rabbi Meir Shapiro**

 The job of a Tzaddik is to elevate the neshamos of Yidden and bring them ever closer to their Father in Heaven. This role is well illustrated by the following story which was recorded by R’ Tzvi Hirshorn zt”l Hy”d (Rav of Yebrozna in Galicia).

 It was Shabbos Mevorchim in the vast shul of the holy Rebbe, R’ Yisroel Friedman zt”l of Chortkov. R’ Meir Shapiro zt”l, who was then a young man and Rav in the town of Sonik, had come to spend Shabbos in the company of his Rebbe.

 After krias haTorah had ended, the door of the Chortkover Rebbe’s private room suddenly opened and there on the threshold stood his radiant form. “I honor R’ Meir Shapiro with Rosh Chodesh bentching and Mussaf,” the Rebbe declared.

**A Very Rare Event**

 In Chortkov it was a very rare event for the Rebbe himself to honor anyone with davening before the congregation. Normally this was left totally to the gabbai’s discretion. R’ Meir, however, was known not only to be a brilliant talmid chacham, but also a genius of the emotion and the heart. His fiery tefillos captivated the hearts of all who heard them and his davening softened even someone who had a heart of stone.

 And so with his beautiful and melodious voice R’ Meir walked up to the amud. He davened Mussaf with such emotion that the thousands of listeners were completely caught up with his devotion. After davening the Rebbe invited R’ Meir into his room, where he remained for some time. When he emerged, R’ Meir's face was radiant with joy.

 Later on, while eating the Shabbos meal together with the other chassidim, R’ Meir related a small snippet from his conversation with the Rebbe. The Rebbe had revealed to him what his mission in this world was to be. Since the Rebbe had mentioned R’ Meir’s gift for davening, and his ability to inspire others, R’ Meir had asked him, “If my power of tefillah is so great, perhaps I should become a regular chazzan?”

**Tells a Story about Rebbe, R’ Zishe of Anipoli**

 The Rebbe pondered his chassid’s question and after a few moments of silence, he answered. “I would like to tell you a story about the Rebbe, R’ Zishe of Annipoli zt”l. R’ Zishe was once on his travels, going from town to town. Eventually he reached the town of Zalkova where he made his way to the local shul.

 The Rav of the town, who was known as R’ Yuzpah, was delivering a complicated shiur at the time, and thus no one took any notice of R’ Zishe as he took a place at the back of the shul. Although R’ Zishe was dressed in worn-out clothes and had the appearance of a beggar, R’ Yuzpah sensed that there was more to him than met the eye.

 ‘What is it about you that so special?’ R’ Yuzpah asked him after the shiur concluded.

 “‘I have no special traits,’ R’ Zishe answered. ‘I hardly know how to learn. The only thing I know is to daven a little bit.’

 “R’ Yuzpah wasn’t satisfied with the answer. Which Yid does not know how to daven? Perhaps R’ Zishe could show him what he meant that he knows how to daven a little bit. The two of them entered a side room and R’ Zishe started to instruct his host in the secrets of tefillah and the Kabbalistic ideas contained in every word, until R’ Yuzpah could not contain his amazement. ‘You are indeed, a very special person. I can see that I do not yet know how to daven properly,’ R’ Yuzpah exclaimed. ‘Perhaps I should leave my post and follow you, so that I should at least learn how to daven properly?’

**No Two People Look the Same**

 “R’ Zishe, however, refused to allow R’ Yuzpah to leave his post. He told him, ‘Chazal have told us that just like no two people look the same, similarly no two people have the same inner mind and attitude. Accordingly, every person has been given a different task to perform in this world, one to which only he is suited according to the way he has been created. Your job is to sit and learn and give shiurim and my job is to daven.’ The Zalkova Rov accepted this decision.”

 The Chortkover Rebbe finished his story and, turning to R’ Meir Shapiro, he said, “You have the gifts and potential to become a great Torah disseminator in the world. You have the ability to establish yeshivos and produce fine talmidim. This must be your goal! As for davening and inspiring Yidden to greater kavanos, that you can leave to me, that is my job.”

 “With these words,” R’ Meir concluded, “the Rebbe directed me on my life’s mission. He showed me that I had been appointed to educate the younger generation and to spread the Torah far and wide.” (Rebbes of Chortkov, by R’ Y. Friedman, Artscroll publications)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**Lost and Found**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**



 Once, two people appeared before the *beis din*of R’ Yaakov of Lissa, the *Baal HaNesivos.*The defendant claimed he had found a golden *dinar* lying in the street and had picked it up. The plaintiff insisted that the *dinar* had fallen out of his pocket a minute earlier and that the coin was his because he had not despaired of finding the coin.

 R’ Yaakov intuited that the plaintiff was a swindler. In order to establish the truth, R’ Yaakov instructed the plaintiff to leave the room for a few minutes. He then asked the defendant to show him the coin.

 Aware that the plaintiff had his ear against the door to hear the proceedings, R’ Yaakov loudly proclaimed, “I see that the coin has the unique distinguishing mark of a small hole above the first letter. If the plaintiff will be able to identify the coin, then the *dinar* belongs to him.”

 R’ Yaakov then told his *gabbai*to call the plaintiff back into the room. R’ Yaakov then asked the man, “Can you identify the coin with any special characteristic?”

 “Definitely,” the plaintiff responded. “If you look at the coin, Rabbi, you will coin, find a small hole by the first letter.”

 R’ Yaakov opened his hand and showed the plaintiff the coin, noting with a smile, “You will see that the coin doesn’t have any hole at all. You had better search for your coin that you probably lost somewhere else.”

*Reprinted from the Austust 11, 2021 email of The Jewish Press.*

**The Rosh Yeshiva and**

**The College Professor**



 When he needed to recite Kaddish, a Jewish college professor would daven at the Los Angeles yeshivah headed by R’ Simcha Wasserman zt”l. Once, this academic asked the Rosh Yeshivah a question.

 “We are both teachers,” he said. “You impart knowledge and I impart knowledge. What is the essential difference between us? The Torah you teach is a stream of wisdom and I teach advanced math, also a stream of wisdom. Why do you consider yourself more fortunate?”

**How Many Students Do You Have?**

 Gently, R’ Simcha asked the man how many students he had. He said that he had taught hundreds of students over the years, perhaps thousands.

 “How many of them have invited you to their wedding?” R’ Simcha asked. The professor looked at him in surprise. “To their weddings? Why would they invite me to their weddings? I am their teacher, not their friend.”

 R’Simcha smiled. “In our yeshivah, a student would never consider getting married without the teacher. We do not give them information, we give them life.” A Rebbi and a Talmid are connected not by wisdom alone, but by their shared bond, a vibrant, real cord of love and devotion, because Torah, and daas Torah, is Divine.

 Explains R’ Yaakov Bender shlit’a, much like when a parent says something whose reasoning you do not completely understand, but you accept that it comes from a place beyond your comprehension and every word is meant for your gain, so too a Talmid Chacham. When a Gadol Hador speaks, even “even if he tells you about right that it is left and about left that it is right,” you must follow him. Because one who gives over the Torah is connected to the power and might of Sinai, the truth of the Divine word we heard there; when a Gadol Hador speaks, his word is reality.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5781 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**Who Knows?**

**By** [**Rosally Saltsman**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/rosallysaltman/)

 In my freshman year, I attended Brandeis University, which I really enjoyed. There was a lot of musical activity on campus. They had a regular choir, a black Gospel choir – but there wasn’t a Jewish choir. Seeing as at the time Brandeis was about 70 percent Jewish, I thought this was an oversight that needed rectifying. So I went to the Hillel Student Society and asked if I could form a Jewish choir for the next year and if they would take care of the logistics and finances. They agreed.

 My next step was to contact the music department on campus and see if anyone would be interested in conducting it. I found a graduate student who seemed eager to do so. Everything was in place for the inauguration of the first Brandeis Jewish Choir the following year. Except for me. Due to financial considerations, I transferred to McGill University in Montreal where I completed my degree.

**Found Out by Chance of the Performance**

 In May of the following year, I went to visit my friends at Brandeis and noticed a poster advertising a performance (that had already taken place) by The Brandeis Jewish Choir. I did a double take, then contacted the conductor I had found and learned that he and Hillel had gone ahead with the choir in my absence. While I was thrilled about this development, I was a bit disappointed that no one had bothered to tell me about it and I had found out “by chance.”

 I don’t know the fate of the choir in subsequent years but an Internet search told me there were now several Jewish choirs and music groups on campus. Did I set a precedent? Who knows?

**The Book They Chose was Written by Me**

 A few years ago, I spoke to a woman who told me that she and a group of women had undertaken to learn a book on shmirat halashon in the merit of a friend of theirs who was undergoing treatments for cancer. The book they had chosen was Finding the Right Words written by me. Each lady had procured a copy of the book and when they made a siyum, they also had a seudat hodayah to celebrate the woman being, Baruch Hashem, cancer free. I was honored and humbled by the fact that they had chosen my book for this mitzvah. Again, I found out about this after the fact.

 A couple of years ago, on my last visit to Toronto, I was staying with a close friend. She had been my roommate in an apartment in the student ghetto near McGill. Another friend came to visit us and we reminisced.

 While we were tripping down memory lane, he mentioned an episode where I had apparently given someone mussar on the street (I did this even before I was religious). I had absolutely no recollection of the incident (although it sounded like something I would do) and even now, I can’t recall what he had told me about it. Generally speaking, I have a very good memory but for the life of me, I couldn’t remember it although it had obviously made an impression on him.

**True for Good and Bad**

 When we recall our deeds each year, there are many that we don’t remember, most whose ramifications we don’t know about and others that take on a life of their own after we have brought them into the world. This is true for good and for bad. We tend to minimize our influence because there’s no way we can possibly imagine how far it extends. Like an iceberg, we only see about ten percent of how our lives play out. And we will be truly (and hopefully pleasantly) surprised when at our Day of Judgment we see our impact on the world and go, “Wow! Did I really do all that?!

 Our actions, our words, even our thoughts resound through eternity, touching the lives of so many countless others. Our potential is infinite and the knowledge of our impact is to a large extent hidden from us. We can leave, in the rather limited time we are here, a completely limitless impression on the world, influencing it indefinitely, infinitely, and for all eternity, with every action at any given moment.

 That’s both a great achievement and a heavy responsibility. Let us understand this, embrace it and continue to shine our light that travels great distances to destinations unforeseen.

*Reprinted from the August 8, 2021 website of The Jewish Press. The article was published in the newspaper’s Lessons in Emunah: True Stories with an Emphasis on Faith edited by Naomi Mauer.*

**Reb Levi Yitzhok and**

**The Handy Man**

**By Sholom DovBer Avtzon**

 It was the beginning of Elul and Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov was learning in his house next to an open window. A handy man was driving his wagon with all of his tools and noticed him, so he took out his horn and blew it to get his attention.

 When he saw the master of the house looking at him he asked, “Do you need anything fixed or repaired?”

 Reb Levi Yitzchok replied, “*Boruch Hashem*, all is good, thank you.”

 “If you would take a good look,” the handyman replied, “You will see that there is much to repair!”

 Hearing these words Reb Levi Yitzchok exclaimed, My Rebbe taught me that everything that happens is *hashgacho protis*. These words are directed at me for this time of the year.

 It is the month of Elul and I am going around as if everything is ok, I am davening and learning properly, I am conducting myself with others properly, and so on, all is good. However, if I will take a careful and honest look at what I am doing, I will see that everything is not so good and that there is plenty I can improve on and fix.

Reprinted from the Parshat Shoftim 5781 Weekly Story email of Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon. Rabbi Avtzon is a veteran mechanech and the author of numerous books on the Chabd Rebbeim and their chassidim. He can be contacted at avtzonbooks@gmail.com

**You Can Be Your Boss**

 A story: A Chassid once came to Rabbi DovBer, the "Maggid" of Mezeritch. "Rebbe," he said, "there is something I do not comprehend. When the Almighty commands us to do something or forbids a certain act, I understand. No matter how difficult it may be, no matter how strongly my heart craves the forbidden course, I can do what G-d desires or refrain from doing what is against His will.

**Man Has Free Choice**

 After all, man has free choice and by force of will, he can decide on a course of action and stick to it, no matter what. The same is true with speech. Though somewhat more difficult to control, I accept that it is within my power to decide which words will leave my mouth and which will not.

 "But what I fail to understand are those precepts which govern matters of the heart; for example, when the Torah forbids us to even entertain a thought that is destructive and wrong. What is one to do when such thoughts enter his mind of their own accord? Can a person control his thoughts?"

 Instead of answering the chasid's question, Rabbi DovBer dispatched him to the town of Zhitomir. "Go visit my disciple, Rabbi Zev" he said. "Only he can answer your question."

 The trip was made in the dead of winter. For weeks the chasid made his way along the roads which wound their way through the snow-covered forests of White Russia.

**The Weary Traveler Arrived at Rabbi Zev’s Doorstep**

 Midnight had long come and gone when the weary traveler arrived at Rabbi Zev's doorstep. To his happy surprise, the windows of the scholar's study were alight. Indeed, Rabbi Zev's was the only lighted window in the village. Through a chink in the shutters the visitor could see Rabbi Zev bent over his books.
 But his knock brought no response. He waited a while, then tried once more, harder. Still, he was completely ignored. The cold was beginning to infiltrate his bones. As the night wore on, the visitor, with nowhere else to turn, kept pounding upon the frozen planks of Rabbi Zev's door, while the rabbi, a scant few steps away, continued to study by his fireside, seemingly oblivious to the pleas which echoed through the sub-zero night.

 Finally, Rabbi Zev rose from his seat, opened the door, and warmly greeted his visitor. He sat him by the fire, prepared him a hot glass of tea, and inquired after the health of their Rebbe. He then led his guest -- still speechless with cold and incredulity -- to the best room in the house to rest his weary bones.

 The warm welcome did not abate the next morning, nor the one after. Rabbi Zev was the most solicitous of hosts, attending to the needs of his guest in a most exemplary manner. The visitor, too, was a model guest, considerate and respectful of the elder scholar. If any misgivings about the midnight "welcome" accorded him still lingered in his heart, he kept them to himself.

 After enjoying the superb hospitality of Rabbi Zev for several days, the visitor had sufficiently recovered from his journey and apprehension to put forth his query. "The purpose of my visit," he said to his host one evening, "is to ask you a question. Actually, our Rebbe sent me to you, saying that only you could answer me to my satisfaction."

 The visitor proceeded to outline his problem as he had expressed it earlier to the Maggid. When he had finished, Reb Zev said: "Tell me, my friend, is a man any less a master of his own self than he is of his home?

 "You see, I gave you my answer on the very night you arrived. In my home, I am the boss. Whomever I wish to admit -- I allow in; whomever I do not wish to admit -- I do not."

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shoftim 5781 email of the Chabad of Great Neck, New York.*

**You Go**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

 A man told me that he had a great idea that could potentially inspire hundreds of people to get closer to Hashem, but then he said, “Who am I to implement it? I don’t have the manpower or the resources necessary to put it into action, and who says it will be good anyway?”

 I told this man, we are not the ones who accomplish or produce results – that is Hashem’s job, but we have to do. We have to try and if it is a good idea and Hashem wants *Klal Yisrael* to benefit from it, He will ensure that it happens. We should never become discouraged by how unlikely it seems that we will accomplish a goal that we have. As far as we are concerned, our success depends on our efforts – those are what make us great people.

 A few weeks ago, a seven year old boy named Yosef Shapiro went missing in Brooklyn. His camp was on a trip at Canarsie Park, and somehow when they loaded the buses at 3:00 PM to go back, he wasn’t there and no one knew where he was. A massive search began, with hundreds of volunteers coming out to find this boy.

 Baruch Hashem, shortly before 9:00 PM, the boy was found on the beach by the edge of the park. The man who was instrumental in finding this boy, whose name is Victor Shine, related the following message.



**Yosef Shapiro being carried to safety and his family by a volunteer searcher**

 He heard of the request for more volunteers at 6:30 pm, and he was debating whether or not he should go. At first, he said to himself, *it looks like it is going to rain, and I'm an older guy, what difference would I make anyway*, and he was about to go do something else.

**He Thought of His Own Six-Year-Old Grandson**

 But then he thought about his own six-year-old grandson and said, if it was him, he would want as many people out there as possible until he was found. And so with that thought, he put on the proper attire and set out for the location of the search.

 When he arrived at the command center, he saw hundreds of people waiting for instructions on what to do. He didn’t want to wait, so he just began searching by himself. By this time, people had already been searching for hours to no avail, so he began looking further away. He went under a bridge by the Belt Parkway and went up and down the beach, calling the boy’s name. After about an hour and a half, he was drenched with sweat, he was very tired, darkness had already set in and it was starting to rain.

 He was ready to give up and go back to his car, but then he saw a dirt path and he turned on it and he called out the boy’s name once again. This time, he heard a faint voice of a child saying, “Ta.” He yelled, “Is that you Yosef?” but he didn’t hear any reply.

 In front of him was a marsh so he called for help. He happened to have the number of the man [NYPD Deputy Inspector Richie Taylor] who was heading this entire search. He called him again and again until he finally picked up and told him what he heard. About 15 minutes later, some ATVs showed up and a truck with a massive search light. He told the people what he heard and where the voice was coming from and then he went back.

**It Was Because of You that the Boy was Found**

 Minutes later, everyone was rejoicing, the boy was found. Victor then received a phone call from the person leading the search [Deputy Inspector Taylor] who said to him, “I want you to know, you were the major breakthrough in this case. It was because of your tip that this boy was found.”

 Victor then began to cry. The search had become so desperate, it was nighttime, the rain was coming down very hard and it seemed highly unlikely that this boy was going to be found, butHashem’s kindness is unending and He brought about a *yeshua*, which caused everybody to break out into singing and dancing in the pouring rain.

 Victor concluded his message by teaching us a lesson. He said, “It just goes to show that one person can make a difference. No one should ever say, *there are hundreds of other people anyway. What good am I?* No. You go, because you can make a difference.” Our job is to try and Hashem brings results through whom He sees fit.

 As a side note, the amount of people who volunteered for this search made such a *kiddush* Hashem. The police force and all the other government workers were in awe at what our People were willing to do to help one person in need. B’ezrat Hashem, it should be a *zechut* on behalf of the entire *Klal Yisrael* and we should only hear good news always.

*Reprinted from the August 16, 2021 email of Living Emunah.*