**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas pekudei 5782**

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**Honest Meir and**

**The Honey Comb**

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**Honey comb**

 In a small village in Poland there lived an unassuming and pious Jew named Meir. While he was by no means well-to-do, his family never wanted for their daily bread. Each day on his way home from the synagogue Meir passed through the farmers’ market, buying produce and poultry which his wife sold from a small store attached to their house. The prices were always fair, and they earned a reputation for honesty.

 Meir stood out from the other buyers at the market, for he would never haggle over prices. Meir had his one fair price, and that was that--he would never budge. Eventually the farmers came to respect him and would even seek him out when they had some special goods for sale, and he became known to everyone as “Honest Meir.”

 Meir had only one regret in life--his business took time away from his beloved Torah study. One day he decided that he would work only half as much, and spend the time saved learning Torah. His wife was worried by his decision, but he calmed her saying, “Don’t you think that G-d can send us enough in those three days?” She wanted to reply that of course He could, but would He? But she stopped herself and decided to wait and see what would happen.

**Their Income Did Not Decrease**

 As it turned out, their income was the same and her husband thrived on his Torah learning. One day his wife came to Meir to discuss the marriage of their daughter, Mirele. “G-d has been good to us, and we must certainly be grateful, but our daughter isn’t getting any younger, and the time has come for us to start saving for her dowry.”

 Meir looked at his wife and replied, “G-d has taken care of us so far. Trust in Him and stop worrying.” But his wife couldn’t rest. “Meir, we aren’t supposed to rely on miracles. Maybe you should go out and work like you used to.”

 Meir replied, “What you’re saying may seem true, but don’t forget my ‘silent partner’-- G-d. Haven’t you seen with your own eyes that since I’ve spent extra time with my ‘Partner’ we have lost nothing. I cannot stop my Torah studies, especially now when we need Him even more.”

 There was nothing more his wife could say except a heartfelt “Amen.” A short time later a peasant showed up at the marketplace with a large honeycomb encased in a block of wood. Several prospective buyers approached him, but he refused them, saying, “I will sell only to Honest Meir.”

**She Went to Fetch Her Husband**

 And there he sat and waited until finally, late in the afternoon someone told him that Meir wouldn’t be coming to market that day. The peasant made his way to Meir’s house where he was greeted by his wife. “My husband isn’t at home now,” she told him, but she asked him to wait while she ran to fetch her husband. Meir measured the honeycomb and lifted it; then he made his offer, “Judging by its size and weight, and even allowing for the wood, there should be a lot of honey in it.” The two men agreed on a figure which seemed fair to both. The only problem was that Meir didn’t have such a large sum. Meir’s wife interrupted, saying: “I will try to borrow the money from some of our neighbors.”

 Meir served the peasant a cup of tea, and then he questioned the man: “Tell me, how did you come to have such a strange honeycomb?”

 The peasant replied, “I was walking through the woods collecting fire-wood. When my cart was full, I got inside and fell asleep, but it seems that my mare wandered a bit, for when I awoke, I found myself in a different part of the woods, in front of a tree stump. Looking up, I noticed bees buzzing, and being something of a beekeeper myself, I hopped out of my cart and with a long thin twig I removed the queen bee from the hive. I tried to take out the honeycomb, but it was impossible to do so without breaking it. That’s when I got the idea of sawing off the stump.”

**Began to Extract the Honey**

 By the time the peasant had finished his tale, Meir’s wife had returned with the money. Meir gave it to the happy peasant who went off feeling very pleased. Meir’s wife began to extract the honey. She pulled out two and then three heavily laden honeycombs and reached in with a deep ladle for more, when she found there was nothing there but a deep, empty hole. The poor woman was horrified. They were now in debt, and for nothing but a bit of honey and a piece of wood! She screamed for her husband, who was equally shocked at the find.

 “What will we do now?” his wife wailed. Meir was also at a loss, but not willing to give up he said, “Go fetch your longest cooking spoon and maybe we can salvage something from the bottom.” Meir dipped the spoon into the wooden cavity, and lo and behold , the spoon was filled with golden coins and jewels!

**Did the Bees Cause this Treasure?**

 His wife almost fainted from the shock, but when she recovered, she asked her husband, “Do you think G-d had the bees produce this treasure for us?”

 Her husband turned to her, smiling, “Possibly, but I think there’s a simpler explanation. Probably someone hid this treasure years ago and had to abandon it for some reason. Then the bee colony settled in the trees stump and built their hive on top of the treasure. Now, it seems that G-d must have decided there was no longer any reason to leave it hidden since we need the money to marry off our children and do other good things. So, you see, the peasant was rewarded for his labor, and we were even more richly rewarded for our faith and trust in G-d.”

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Sisa 5782 edition of L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Segulah of Not**

**Uttering a Lie**

 Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlit”a, teaches in Orchos Yosher, that a person who speaks the truth will succeed in avoiding all aveiros, as we find in the Medrash (Mei HaShilo’ach, Otzar Midrashim, p. 296), which states that those who speak truth never stumble in sin.

 Many generations ago, there was a young man from a distinguished family, who, from his youth, followed the passions of his heart, and lived only to satisfy his desires. One day, the ‘spirit of Hashem’ began to overcome him, and he started to have feelings of Teshuvah.

 He went before Rav Shimon ben Shatach and cried, “My teacher, my teacher! The pain from my aveiros that surrounds and overwhelms me is devastating. I have resolved in my heart to do teshuvah!”

**Rav Shimon’s Solution to the Sinner**

 Rav Shimon responded and said, “My son, my son! Do not cry. I will find a cure for you. A remedy for you is with one simple thing, and that is, my son, to guard yourself from any falsehood and lying, in everything you do, and you will not stumble in aveirah, and this will save your neshamah (soul) from all hardship!”

 The young man replied, “This is an easy thing to do! I will fulfill it!” Rav Shimon ben Shatach said to him, “Swear to me that you will do this!” The young man took an oath and went home.

 One day, his neighbor went out, and left her home unguarded. Temptation overcame him, and he stole everything that she had in her house. He took all of her silver and gold utensils, and he did not leave behind even a small item.

 As he left, he thought to himself, “If my neighbor returns and cries out about her belongings, what will I say? If I say I am innocent, I will have lied and spoken falsehood. What will then become of my oath? I swore that I wouldn’t lie!” At that moment, he decided to put back all that he had taken, and he now understood the wisdom of Rav Shimon ben Shatach!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5776 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**Greater than the Righteousness**

**Of Yosef HaTzadik**

 In the Zohar (Parashas Mikeitz), there is a very interesting story. The Tanna, Rebbi Abba, would sit by the entrance to the city of Lod. One day, he saw a traveler approaching the city. The man seemed very tired from a long journey, and he stopped to rest on the mountainside, sitting down on a large stone that was part of a pile of boulders. The man rested his head on a rock and fell asleep.



 Rebbi Abba was watching the traveler from far away, when suddenly, he saw a poisonous snake approaching the man. He was too far away to kill the snake, or even to warn the man in time.

 However, a moment before the snake attacked the sleeping traveler, a heavy branch snapped sharply off a nearby tree. It landed directly on the snake and killed it instantly, just before it reached the sleeping man!

 At the loud crash of the branch, the traveler woke up. He saw the snake crushed on the ground right near him, and realized that he had just been saved. He gathered his belongings, and started on his way again. As he walked away, there was a low rumbling sound. The pile of boulders he had just been resting on collapsed! The rocks fell and tumbled down the mountain, destroying everything in their path. Rebbi Abba was amazed. Two open miracles had just happened to save this man’s life. He ran towards the traveler and spoke to him excitedly, “I just saw for myself how Hashem saved you twice! Please tell me what you did to deserve this, so that I can learn from your behavior.”

 The traveler responded, “For my entire life, I have been careful never to remain upset at another person. If someone did anything to hurt me, I tried to approach him and make peace. If I couldn’t speak to him, I would not go to sleep before fully forgiving him in my mind. I was careful to never again even feel upset about what happened between us. Additionally, I would always try to do favors for this person, so that he would realize that I am not at all upset at him, and there are no bad feelings.”

 Rebbi Abba cried out and proclaimed, “This man’s deeds are greater than those of Yosef HaTzadik! With Yosef, his brothers did not treat him right, but they were his brothers, and he still cared for them. It was natural for him to have pity on them. But this man followed the path of Yosef, even with those who were not his brothers.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5776 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**The Payback for the Mitzvah Of Hachnasis Kallah**

 When one is blessed by Hashem, he must realise that it is a gift for a purpose. Horav Yosef Shaul Nattenson, zl, author of the Shoeil U’Maieshiv, was Rav of Lvov. He once went with his brother-in-law, Horav Mordechai Zev, to solicit funds for pidyon shevuyim, to pay ransom, secure the release of a fellow Jew taken captive by slave traders or robbers or imprisoned unjustly.

 Sadly, this was not an uncommon occurrence. The wicked gentiles who preyed on Jews were acutely aware that Jews are benevolent and would pay for their brother’s release, and they took advantage of it. They stopped at the home of Rav

Hershel Bernstein, a prodigious philanthropist, who happily supported many causes.

**A Well-Known Benefactor**

 The well-known benefactor was ecstatic to see them, and he insisted that they have lunch with him. As a caveat, he would donate all of the necessary ransom. He loved guests, especially such distinguished personages, and he felt it was neither appropriate nor dignified that two such illustrious rabbanim spend their day knocking on doors seeking contributions.

 A meal with two such Torah giants revolves around Torah. In this case, they focused on the significance of the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim. When Rav Hershel heard the topic, he said, “I cannot add divrei Torah to such profound thoughts with which their honors are enhancing this meal, but I can share an exceptional, inspiring story – indeed the story which was the harbinger of my wealth.

 “When I was a young man, I studied Torah and was supported by my father-in-law. When the time came for me to go out on my own, I travelled to Leshkowitz, to the great market, to invest, buy and sell, in order to support my growing family. I had four hundred gold coins in my possession. My goal was to purchase precious stones and resell them at a profit.

 “I arrived at the market to see thousands of sellers, brokers and buyers, all engrossed in the business of making money. As I stood by the gateway to the market, I chanced upon a woman who was weeping bitterly.

**Offers to Help the Weeping Woman**

 “How can I help you?” I asked. “What is wrong?”

 She replied that her daughter had been promised in marriage to a young man. She had promised a dowry of four hundred gold coins which she did not have. She feared that the marriage would be called off, and her daughter would be shamed. She was a young widow with no visible means of support. My heart went out to her, so I gave her the money that I had brought along to invest. This was the sum total of my material assets.



 “For the sake of curiosity, I walked around the market. Who knows what I would venture to find? As I was walking, a man approached, and, in his hand, he had the most beautiful coral beads. I knew jewelry, and I was partial to precious stones, but I had never come across such beauty.

 ‘Would you like to purchase these beads?’ he asked.

 ‘I have no money to invest,’ I replied.

**Offers to Give the Valuable Beads on Credit**

 ‘You look like a trustworthy person. I will give it to you on credit. When you sell it, you will remember me.’ Interestingly, the price he asked was four hundred gold pieces. I sold it immediately at three times its price and made a handsome profit. I returned to the man and paid him off.

 He was so impressed that he showed me more jewelry which cost me one thousand gold pieces. What did I have to lose? I had the money. I bought and sold, making a large profit. The next day, when I paid him his thousand gold pieces, he sold me jewelry for six thousand gold pieces. Once again, I made an incredible profit. When I returned the next morning to reimburse the man for his jewelry, he was nowhere to be found. No one had any idea who he was or where he had gone. I have never been able to locate him. I am certain, however, that Hashem had rewarded me for the mitzvah of hachnasas kallah, helping a young bride to get married. I saved this girl the shame of a broken match. Hashem repaid me multiple times over.”

*Reprinted from Parshas Ki Sisa 5782 email of Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum’s Peninim on the Torah.*

**The Defense of the Accused Teacher of Children**

**By Rabbi Dovid Caro**

 The city was full of forged notes. The Police made investigations and together with private detectives they discovered that the notes were being printed in a basement somewhere in the city. A large group of officers circled the basement and broke inside. In the basement they found a printing machine and the metal plates for printing the counterfeit money.

 All the household members from the apartment above were arrested. The house owner a poor teacher was taken into custody for questioning. He claimed that he had rented out his basement to earn some extra money to try and make ends meet. He claimed he knew nothing about the forgery.

 Obviously, the story wasn’t believed and the case was taken to court. In the court the prosecutor claimed that he was the owner of the building that had set up a printing press of counterfeit money. They asked for capital punishment for such a serious crime.

**The Defendant’s Lawyer Questions His Client**

 The defendant’s lawyer stood up and turned to his client and asked him to stand in the witnessing platform. The lawyer asked the defendant, “please can you tell the Judge what you do for a living.”

 “I am a teacher,” he replied.

 “Please can you explain more about your job,” said the lawyer.

 “I go around the city and look for students until I have got together seven or eight children. I teach them from eight in the morning till late afternoon, besides a short lunch break.”

 “And how much do you earn from a full day teaching?”

 “How much can I expect from poor parents? Half a Dinar per week?!”

 “And from that you live? That’s not even a minimum salary,” exclaimed the lawyer.

 “You wish,” replied the teacher. “Not all the parents pay and some have a large debt, just a few pay on time.”

 “Do you enjoy your job?”

 “Enjoy? Babysitting eight to ten hours a day, young mischievous kids? Having to make sure they study and know their stuff, otherwise I have the parents coming to complain and threaten to take their kids elsewhere, not to mention that then I won’t get any new students”

 The lawyer turned to the judges and said, “if the printing press was his or even if he had any share in the profits would he be working as a teacher for such a meager few pennies?”

 And the judges accepted the claim, the man was found innocent and allowed home. Now if we had a basement that cut diamonds without breaking the law, would we be working for a meager salary? Surely not. Now let us stop for a moment and make a calculation.

**The True Great Value of**

**Our Torah Study and Prayers**

 We all know that our Torah study and our prayers are eternal diamonds. Our business it depends. What we use to do Mitzvos, to give charity and support Torah study is also diamonds. What we need to live is basic needs, that’s our teaching job with a meager salary.

 The question is where do we put in more hours? Where is our emphasis? On our own Torah study, prayers on our Chessed and Tzeddaka or on our day-to-day pleasures? The Kesav Sofer explains that this is what his father the Chasam Sofer explained in Parsha Tezave. The Passuk starts that Moshe was told to command Klal Yisrael to bring pure olive oil for the Menorah.

 Our Rabbis tell us that it was a very special and unique job preparing the oil for the Menorah. Only the first drop of oil that naturally came out of the olives could be used for the Menorah. The rest of the oil could be used for certain sacrifices (Menachos – flour offerings) but not for the Menorah.

**The Uniqueness of the Menorah’s Oil**

 The Passuk uses an interesting expression – ‘Kasis” beaten out. Rashi brings from the Gemara that this oil that was beaten out was only for the lights of the Menorah, the other sacrifices didn’t need such unique oil.

 The Chasam Sofer explains that our Rabbis tell us that the Menorah resembles Torah study and the Shulchan (the table that stood in the Beis Hamikdash with the lechem hapanim – the twelve loaves of bread) resembles Parnassa. Kasis lamaor, a person should stretch himself for Torah study, supporting Torah study, prayers and Chessed, and not kasis le’menachos not to overdo for one’s own day to day pleasures.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tezave 5782 edition of Inspired by a Story.*

**The Young Man with**

**Peyot and a Ponytail**

 Rabbi YY Jacobson told a story about a man who went to “great lengths” to care for his fellow Jew. A rabbi was in Uman visiting a grave when he saw a young man praying. The rabbi immediately noticed how strange the young man looked, with long *peot*—*sideburns* and an extra-long reddish-blondish ponytail. The rabbi thought, “What kind of silly things are trending now? Who does this boy think he is with ridiculous *peot* and a pony? He went up to him and said, “What’s with the ponytail?”

 The young man started to tell his story. When he was a little boy in Monsey, he couldn’t sit still in school. All he wanted was to be outside riding a scooter. His parents had very high expectations, and they couldn’t handle his personality. His grandparents took him in. The boy would ride his scooter all around town, and when the electric scooters came out, he begged his grandma for one and she quickly agreed.

**Realized that Something was Missing from His Life**

 He spent his days scooting around. He didn’t attend *yeshivah*, and though his grandparents were religious, they accepted his eccentric personality and showed him they loved him no matter what, raising him as their own. Years passed, and the boy grew up and decided to create a business. When he succeeded financially and his business started to manage itself, he realized something was missing in his life. And so, with the confidence instilled in him from his caring grandparents, he set out to find what it was.

 The rabbi interrupted the story, saying, “But what does that have to do with the pony?” The man answered, “I started to volunteer with Mekimi, an organization that helps children during their hospital stays. I had visited this young girl who was in the hospital for her cancer treatments, and she was in the early stages of losing her hair. The wig places couldn’t match her unique hair color, and she was devastated and embarrassed.

 “Her hair is a reddish blond, just like mine. It’s been almost six months, and I have two weeks left, when I’ll finally have enough to cut for a wig for her. I didn’t want my parents to be ashamed that their eccentric son was walking around with a ponytail, so I decided to travel for six months while I grew it out.”

 While he traveled, he became more and more religious; he prayed, he learned, he got closer to Hashem. He found fulfillment in helping this young girl save her dignity and self-esteem.

 It’s so easy to judge a book by its cover—to judge our children for not meeting our expectations or strangers for their odd appearances. But if we really learn to accept and be kind to our fellow Jews, becoming two halved pieces of a *shekel*,they may go above and beyond in paying it forward and caring for others.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5782 email of Jack E, Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

**Please Accept This Gift**

**By Rabbi Yehuda Azoulay**

           A wealthy Bucharian Jew came to Rav Haim Hizkiah Medini and begged him to accept a purse filled with gold coins. The Hacham refused, but the rich man persisted, firmly believing that giving money to the Torah scholar would bring him success and blessing in his quest. Sensing the man’s anguish, the Hacham said to him, “It is written that only one who hates gifts will live. Don’t you want me to merit a long life?”

**Confused by the Unexpected Rejection**

           The wealthy man stood silent and confused at the unexpected rejection of his offer. He was accustomed to receiving praise and honor for such acts. “Hacham,” the man said, “I am an old man and Hashem has not granted me any children. We have tried many amulets, prayed many prayers, and given much charity, yet G-d has still not answered us. One night, I dreamed that Eliyahu the Prophet appeared to me and said, ‘Go to Hebron because there G-d has commanded the blessing of eternal haim (life).’

           “I was astounded at the vision,” the man continued, “and when I awoke, I went to a Rav to have my dream interpreted. I was told, ‘Go to Hebron, for Rav Haim is there, and he will give you a blessing.’ At that moment, I vowed that if G-d would grant me the privilege of seeing the hacham’s holy countenance, I would donate this purse full of coins for misvah purposes.



 **Rav Haim Hizkiah Medini**

           “And now,” the man concluded, “here I am. My vow is in my hand, and I am placing it in your hands to do with as you please.”

           “I see that your motives are proper,” Rav Haim answered him, “but please fulfill the misvah with your own hand. There, in front of you, is the Yeshivah’s treasury, the free loan fund, and the secret charity fund. Give to each one as you wish, and may Hashem grant your heart’s desires with favor.”

           Immediately, the rich man divided the money among the three funds and took his leave of the Hacham to await Divine mercy. A year later, a son was born to him. He named him Haim Hizkiah after the great Hacham Rav Haim. (A Legacy of Leaders: Inspiring Stories and Biographies of Sephardi Hachamim by Rabbi Y. Azoulay – Israel Bookshop Publications

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tisa 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi’ Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace as reprinted from the Jersey Shore Rabbis.)*

**The One Thing that Bill**

**Gates Can’t Even Buy**

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**Kivi Berhnard and Bill Gates**

 A native of South Africa and the son of a well-respected rabbi, Mr. Kivi Bernhard is an orator who built a successful diamond business from scratch in the United States. Kivi devised a fascinating original business philosophy called “Leopardology,” which derives lessons from the African leopard, a legendarily successful predator he observed in South Africa, to the competitive business world of today.

 Kivi’s book, “Leopardology: The Hunt for Profit in a Tough Global Economy” is an international bestseller. Kivi and his philosophy have been profiled by a slew of major media outlets, and he has become a mainstay attraction at elite corporate events hosted by some of the world’s most successful corporations.

**Most Passionate about Shabbos**

 Kivi spoke about his experiences as an Orthodox Jew who travels as a keynote speaker working with meeting planners and speaker bureaus across the world. Kivi has spoken for many Fortune 500 corporations, among them AMEX, Bank of America, Coke and ING Insurance. But he is most passionate about Shabbos. “Nothing we do for Shabbos is a sacrifice, rather everything that we do is for Shabbos,” he says. “The whole world compromises so that we can keep Shabbos.” And he is talking from personal experience.

 Kivi was once invited to deliver the opening address at an important Microsoft business conference. Hundreds of international figures key to Microsoft’s business were slated to be there. Immediately realizing that the conference was scheduled to be on Shabbos, Kivi told the speaker bureau, “You know I don’t work on Saturday.” A senior VP of Microsoft called him up and offered him double, even triple the rate to appear at the conference. He said to Kivi, “What do you need? We’ll send you a blank check, you write it.” At some point they were ready to pay him an astronomical fee, half a year’s salary for some people.

**Knew it was a Nisayon**

**from Hashem**

 Tempting though it was, Kivi knew it was a nisayon from Hashem. This is where his commitment to Judaism was being tested. This is where his integrity as a G-d-fearing Jew was being challenged. This is where he stood at the end of a chain of 4000 years of ancestors who celebrated Shabbos, and he would have to make his own decision now. And he did. He explained to Microsoft, that his decison did not have to do with money. He was not declining the offer because he wanted more money; he was declining because G-d told the Jewish people to observe the seventh day of the week, Shabbos, as the one day which is beyond money, beyond career, beyond finances, beyond promotions.

 It was a day of rest and closeness with G-d, a day to pray in the synagogue - a day to spend with your loved ones The very next day they got back to him. They said that due to his strict Shabbos policy, they would reschedule the entire conference to Sunday. They asked if that was okay, and he said that would work and the original price would work too.

 Indeed, the Sunday conference opened with a keynote address by Mr. Kivi Bernard. A few weeks later, Kivi got a call. It was the same senior Microsoft executive who tried to negotiate with him. He told Kivi that subsequent to the conference, he had an occasion to join Bill Gates on his private jet where this particular event came up for discussion. The name Bill Gates is well-known and as the one-time richest man in the world, his wealth and charitable donations are famous world-wide.

 The Microsoft executive mentioned the unusual experience of having to reschedule the entire conference for Microsoft in order to accommodate “a Jew’s observance of the Sabbath.” Bill Gates was quiet for a moment. Then he said, “I am a person who can buy anything I want. From any skyscraper, yacht, jet, to any company under the sun. There is nothing I can’t purchase for money. I can buy people. I can buy patents. I can buy talent. I can buy genius.

 “But there is one thing that money cannot buy,” Gates intoned as his executives listened intently. “One of them is the Sabbath! For a Jew, it is not up for sale.”

 Kivi shared the story and said that it was Bill Gates who made him understand just how meaningful his sacrifice really was. Bill Gates made him realize how rich he really was, when he owned something that money could not buy.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisi 5782 email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*