**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayelech 5783**

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**Elevated Concepts of Honesty**

Our gedolei Yisrael, Torah giants, personified the Torah’s view of mishpat. To take something from another person, regardless of the circumstance, even with the knowledge that the owner would be honored to give permission for its use, is considered tantamount to theft. It is not absolute truth.

If the individual were to be asked, “Do you have express permission to use it?” and the answer would be, “No,” even though the person would certainly have given permission, the act constitutes theft.



**Horav Moshe Chevroni**

Horav Moshe Chevroni (Rosh Yeshivah, Chevron) once sat in his seat on the Mizrach vont, eastern wall (the prestigious place reserved for the Roshei Yeshivah and distinguished guests), during Mussaf on Shabbos without a tallis. He davened Mussaf not wearing a tallis.

Apparently, he had to leave davening for a few moments and had removed his tallis. When he returned, he discovered someone had taken his tallis by mistake. Halachically, he was permitted to use the other man’s tallis. A dispensation allows one to use another fellow’s tallis for a short while.

The Rosh Yeshivah refused to rely on the dispensation. If it was not his tallis, he would not use it. Instead, he would sit in front of the entire yeshivah and daven without a tallis.



**From left to right: Rabbi Dessler, Rabbi Levenstein and the Ponovezher Rav of blessed memories**

When Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, arrived in Eretz Yisrael to serve as Mashgiach in Ponovezh, a group of students from Gateshead, England (where he had founded and built the yeshivah), joined him. When they wanted to speak with their Rebbe in learning, he demurred.

He said, “I have been hired to serve as Mashgiach, to be the ethical supervisor of the student body. As such, I am supposed to devote all of my thoughts and abilities to this task. To take time off to speak in learning on another subject is akin to stealing.”

Last, when Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl, the Mashgiach in Ponovezh, reached the age of seventy-five, he asked the Ponovezher Rav, zl, to relieve him of his duties. He felt that, due to his age, he was unable to devote enough of himself physically to the students. The Rosh Yeshivah replied, “Rav Chatzkel, I am prepared to pay your salary just to have you daven and learn in the bais hamedrash. The bachurim, students, benefit just from looking at you!”

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

**Non-Monetary Bribes**



**Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch of blessed memory**

For the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise and make just words crooked. (16:19)

We think that shochad, bribery, is about taking money to sway judgment. As Horav Shlomo Levenstein, Shlita, points out, it is not always about accepting money. Any favour that, when granted, makes the beneficiary/judge feel indebted is considered a bribe.

Indeed, as we see from the following story (“In the Footsteps of the Maggid,” by Rabbi Paysach Krohn), one can never be too careful with regard to the far-reaching effects of taking a bribe/accepting a favor.

Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, together with his brother-in-law, Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl, founded Telshe Yeshiva in America. The Rosh Yeshivah had lost his wife and four of his children to the Nazi murderers, when they decimated the city of Telshe, Lithuania.

He remarried, and he and his wife were blessed with a son and a daughter. Understandably, he doted on these two children who served in some small manner as comfort and solace after the tragedy that he had sustained.

Unfortunately, as much as they wanted to, they were unable, due to their material insufficiency, to provide the two children with even the basic, simple toys with which all children grow up.

When their son’s third birthday arrived, two of the yeshivah’s bachurim, students, each one hailing from a well-to-do family, purchased a small tricycle as a birthday gift. We can only begin to imagine the joy that permeated within their home.

A short while later, the Rosh Yeshivah was set to give the Yoreh Deah bechinah, to test the oldest students and grant them semichah, ordination. When they walked into the bechinah the Rosh Yeshivah smiled, “Just the other day, I penned a thank you note to you for the gift you gave our son. It was greatly appreciated. However, due to the feelings of gratitude that I have for you, I do not think that I can be objective in testing you for semichah. Therefore, I must recuse myself and ask you to take a bechinah elsewhere.”

Such was the greatness of the Rosh Yeshivah. He sensed that his overwhelming love for his son and his appreciation to the students who had brought a little extra joy to his son’s life, would impair his objectivity. This is the extent to which the prohibition against taking a bribe can go.

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

**Torah Insights Regarding a Famous 1970 Hijacking**

A famous hijacking that targeted Jews took place in 1970. On September 6, 1970, the Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivta Chaim Berlin, R’ Yitzchok Hutner zt”l, his daughter, and son-in-law R’ Yonasan David shlita, were on a flight from Eretz Yisroel to New York that was hijacked by Palestinian terrorists.

The terrorists freed the non-Jewish passengers and held the Jewish passengers hostage. R’ Hutner was held alone in an isolated location while Jews around the world prayed for his safe release. While the remaining passengers were being held, the hijackers realized that R’ Hutner was a prominent leader in the Jewish world.

Although they generally treated him with respect, they did confiscate a bag in which he kept his precious writings of chiddushei Torah that he had accumulated over his lifetime, and they did not return it upon his release. His close followers went to great lengths to retrieve the chiddushim, offering financial rewards for their return. Even though there were several instances when the intermediaries thought they might be successful, nothing materialized and the writings remain lost to this day.



**Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (right), zt”l and Rabbi Meir Fund**

In the United States, there was talk about raising money to ransom R’ Hutner, but R’ Yaakov Kamenetzky zt”l ruled against the move. Although there is a halachic basis for paying an exorbitant sum to save a great Torah leader, R’ Yaakov ruled that this applies only during peacetime, and Israel’s ongoing struggle with terrorism constitutes war.

There were young children traveling alone on this flight. Ten-year-old Yosef Trachtman and eight-year-old Tziporah Moran. As soon as passengers realized the plane was being hijacked, R’ Hutner’s two students on the flight, R’ Yaakov Drillman and R’ Meir Fund, moved from their own seats to sit next to the two unaccompanied children.

Eight-year-old Tziporah was carrying documents from both the United States and Israel. R’ Drillman knew that signs of Israeli citizenship would put the girl in danger. He therefore ripped her Israeli documents into tiny shreds and swallowed them. When Chacham Yosef Harari-Raful shlita, Rosh Yeshivah of Ateret Torah, was given a cup of water on Erev Shabbos, on this hijacked flight, he dipped his shirt into it to cleanse his clothing, in order to do something l’kavod Shabbos! (Rabbi Yehoshua Alt)

*Reprinted from he Parshas Shoftim 5782 edition of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Torah Tavlin.*

**A Commitment to Wash Hands Before Praying**



Now that Elul is here, and Rosh Hashanah is rapidly approaching, it is time to reevaluate our current routines and take mitzvot upon ourselves. Rabbi Baruch Rosenblum told a beautiful story about a man who took a kabala—commitment upon himself one Rosh Hashanah to wash his hands before prayers from then on. Though it was a small commitment, he chose this one carefully. Throughout the year, he stuck to his word. Whether it was mincha, birkat hamazon, or Tehillim, he did netilah just before he prayed.

**Jogging Along a Tel Aviv River Path**

He went on a little vacation with his wife later that year, and as he was jogging on a path along a river in Tel Aviv, he heard a group of men, heartily calling, “Mincha! Mincha! We need a tenth!” He went to join them when he remembered his commitment to wash his hands before prayers. At first, he thought to himself, “It’s no big deal. I’m not praying in a shul or anything; they caught me on a jogging path. There are no sinks around here anyway.” But then, he recalled, he took a kabala, and so he was obligated to look for water. He asked the men to wait while he took a cup to the Yarkon River to make netilah.

**Saw a Little Hand Break through the Surface**

He went down the stairs to dip his cup into the water, and suddenly, he saw a little hand break through the surface. He looked a little closer and saw a toddler’s head bobbing under the water. He quickly sprang into action and jumped into the river and lifted a little girl out of the Yarkon. He knew exactly what to do, performing CPR until the girl coughed and vomited all the water out of her tiny body. And that’s when he heard, “Sharon!! Sharon, where are you??” Her family had been looking for her. If they had found her then, five minutes from the time the man found her, she would never have survived.

The rabbi concluded his story by blessing the little girl to have a long, happy life, where she marries and has plenty of children who are tzaddikim and gedolei Torah, and that all of her and her descendants’ merits should be credited to this man’s commitment to making netilah. One mitzvah. Just one small commitment in honor of Rosh Hashanah. We never know how it can affect our soul or any other neshamot. After all, it could literally be lifesaving.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5782 email of Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of his mentor Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

**Not a Time to Calmly Recite Tehillim!**



**From left to right: The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky and Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, of blessed memories.**

When the communists came to power, the Chofetz Chaim felt the pain of every one of the three million Jews who found themselves trapped in the evil empire that forbade any form of Torah or Tefilah. When the Rav of Slutsk, Rav Yechezkel Abramsky, zt”l, was arrested and exiled to Siberia, the Chofetz Chaim stood up in his Yeshivah in Radin, crying and bewailing the fate of this great Gaon.

One of the other Roshei HaYeshivah followed up on the moving Drashah by announcing that the Yeshivah should now “say Tehilim.” However, the Chofetz Chaim uncharacteristically interrupted him, and demanded, “What are we, a Chevrah Tehilim? This is not the time to say Tehilim. This is the time to scream out Tehilim! In Mitzrayim, they screamed out, and in that merit they were saved!”

The entire Yeshivah did indeed cry out, and their cries pierced the heavens. A short while later, Rav Elchonon Wasserman, zt”l, was visiting the Chofetz Chaim, and they were learning together.

Suddenly, the Chofetz Chaim raised his head with great Simchah and declared, “The Bolsheviks have not succeeded!” Three times he proclaimed, “Against their will, they had to free the Rav of Slutzk!” Rav Elchonon made careful note of the exact time, and later, he determined that indeed, at that precise moment, Rav Yechezkel Abramsky was freed!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.*

**The Baba Meir’s Advice**

**To an Illiterate Job Seeker**



**The Baba Meir**

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein related a story. Many years ago, Levi decided to move from Morocco to Eretz Yisroel. The problem was that Levi did not know how to read or write, and he did not even know the letters. His friends discouraged him from moving to Eretz Yisroel. They told him, “People are more educated there, and you won’t be able to get a job if you can’t read or write.”

He decided to ask Rav Meir Abuchatzeira (the Baba Meir) and do whatever the Rav suggested. Rav Meir said, “Go to Eretz Yisroel and have no worries. HaKadosh Baruch Hu feeds every living thing. He feeds all the animals, even though they can’t read or write. Why should He not feed you too?”

When Rav Meir saw that Levi was still nervous, he added, “If Hashem wants, He can send you your Parnasah, not just despite the fact that you can’t read, but specifically because you can’t read!”

**Saw Many Younter and Better Educated**

**People in the Employment Office**

Levi took Rav Meir’s advice and moved to Eretz Yisroel. After he found a place to settle in, he went to the employment office to look for a job. During the long wait for his turn, he saw many people who were younger and better educated than he was, and his doubts returned.

“What kind of employer would want to hire me over these people?” he asked himself. When his turn finally he arrived, he introduced himself to the clerk on staff. “I just came from Morocco, and I am looking for work.” Then, almost as an afterthought, he confessed, “But I can’t read or write.”

The clerk wrote down everything he said, and Levi was immediately consumed with regret. “Why did I have to tell him that?” Then he regained his composure and put his trust in Hashem and in the advice of Rav Meir, who had advised him to move to Eretz Yisroel. Hashem would provide his Parnasah no matter what.

Early the next morning, the phone rang in Levi’s house. “We are calling from the Defense Ministry. Please come as a soon as possible for a work interview.” Levi arrived and was told to sit in the waiting room until it was his turn. Levi sat there and waited for a very long time, watching the people who were entering and leaving the room. He could not understand why, after such a long wait, no one called him in for his interview. After three hours of waiting, he was almost ready to get up and go home. Then, someone finally approached him and asked him to come into a different room.

**Unable to Grasp the Shape of the Letters**

The officer who sat there questioned Levi about his background, focusing mostly on his inability to read. Levi explained, “I never went to school when I was a child, and when I grew up, I didn’t manage to grasp the shapes of the letters.” At that point, the officer stood up and extended his hand. “You’re hired to work here in the department for weapons development. Your job will be to shred piles of documents, to make sure they do not get into the wrong hands.”

Levi was amazed. How could it be? Why would such an advanced department want to hire him? Only after he started working there did he come to understand. The department produced very large amounts of secret documents, and they were stuck with the problem of what to do with it all. The staff consisted mostly of highly trained engineers, whose time was very valuable and could not be wasted on shredding paper.

**Asked to be Alerted if an Illiterate Job Seeker Came**

On the other hand, they could not hire someone from the outside to do it, since he would see all their military secrets. Then someone suggested that they hire someone who couldn’t read to do the paper shredding for them. At first it sounded crazy. Where would they find someone illiterate in today’s times? Nonetheless, they told the employment agency that they were looking for someone who was illiterate, and asked to be alerted if such a person came looking for a job.



**Shredded Paper**

Hashem had orchestrated such an amazing turn of events, that after the Defense Ministry came with such an odd request, Levi came looking for a job, and accidentally let it slip that he was illiterate. It was precisely for that reason that he got the job!

Later, he discovered that his three-hour wait was just a test. They could not believe that he was entirely illiterate, so they left him in the waiting room with a bunch of newspapers and books, and a hidden camera to watch what he did with them. Over the course of three hours, they waited to see if he would start to read them.

At one point, Levi was so bored that he opened the newspaper, but he opened it sideways, proving that he couldn’t read! He found his job simple and steady, and it paid a salary that his educated friends could only dream of. After many years of working at the same job, with a comfortable salary, he decided to retire and live off his pension.

However, his retirement did not last long. He soon received another call from the Defense Ministry asking him to come back to work for them. They had not been able to find anyone to replace him, and they desperately needed his services. They promised, “We’ll pay your pension and your salary too,” and Levi agreed. Levi merited to see the fulfillment of Rav Meir’s Brachah. It was precisely because he was illiterate that he found such a good job. Who knows if he would have found such a good job had he been able to read and write! בס"ד בזכות לרפואה שלמה לכל חולי ישראל

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**Defining Your Life’s**

**True Lamborghini**

**By Rabbi Yosef Farhi**

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**2022 Lamborghini**

The other day, I asked my Rabbi if I should get a new car. My car is a Toyota Prius, the first, awesome hybrid, and it works fine and is extremely inexpensive. B”H, I have more money than I need, and I can buy any car I want. For me, the truth is, I don’t even need a car. I work from home, and my apartment in Jerusalem is less than 5 minutes’ walk to all my kids’ schools, and endless minyanim. One of my life’s blessings is that I don’t need, ever, to be stuck in traffic.

But when I was seeing how everyone got new cars, I wondered if I am doing something wrong. I asked my Rabbi, “So many friends have gotten themselves nice cars, like Volvos, Teslas, Audis, etc. Should I upgrade to a brand-name car, or just stay the way things are?”

My Rabbi answered me, “The reason why they got the Volvos, Teslas and Audis is because, they are seeing others getting Porsches and Lamborghinis, and they feel that they need to upgrade, so they got the cars they got. You have to ask yourself what serves your needs, and not look around at what other people are choosing.”

So, instead of my putting money into the most expensive, fancy black Audi, I will put my money into the most expensive pair of black Tefillin for my son’s upcoming Bar Mitzvah. That is my Lamborghini.

Instead of investing time in the stock market, to gain from a bear market, something I have no control over, I am investing in my health and running in the forest, every day, in the backyard of my neighborhood Bayit Vegan (there are no bears there).

Instead of my trying to figure out a way to beat inflation, I am investing in relationships, by giving free services to as many people now who are in need and can’t afford the new life expenses. I try to beat the herd mentality, instead of falling for it. I try to stop seeing the world from the point of view of the news media.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**All for Your Honor**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Rav Yosef Poesner was the son-in-law of the Noda B’Yehudah, the esteemed Rav of Prague. He was a brilliant scholar and an amazingly righteous individual. During his entire life, he seemed to be plagued by a nagging wife who would belittle him at every opportunity.

After a brilliant lecture, she would come into the room, and belittle him. During meetings at which his opinion was prominently sought, she would serve the company food, but at the same time she made sure to deride him. During all these outbursts, he never said a word. He never defended himself. In fact, he hung his head low, as if to agree with her words of derision.

Then, suddenly, he passed away. Hundreds came to the funeral. All of the gathered contrasted his greatness to the difficult life he had led, by being married to a shrew of a wife who was about to bury him.

After the eulogies, his wife suddenly appeared before the coffin, crying uncontrollably. She begged his permission to speak and then burst into tears.

“All these years,” she cried, “I fulfilled the adage that a loyal wife fulfills the wishes of her husband. And due to my loyalty and respect to you and your greatness, I did whatever you had asked me to. But now that you are in the world of the truth, I can finally say the truth.” She began to declare her respect for his greatness and humility, his piety and patience, his kindness and compassion.

The people near the coffin were shocked to see this woman transformed into a loving, grieving widow. And then the true shock came. She continued her soliloquy.

“Despite, how difficult it was for me, I kept the promise and commitment you had asked me to make. Any time you were treated honorably, or were asked to fulfill a prestigious role, you told me to come in and belittle you as strongly as possible. You were afraid that the honor they afforded you would make you haughty. I only complied because that was your will!”

“But now I can finally say the truth! But that was only in front of people!

“You know how much I appreciated and cherished you!” She continued to cry over the great saddik and lifelong companion she lost. The stunned grievers were shocked at the tremendous devotion of the Rebbitzin, who portrayed herself as a harrying nag all for the sake of her husband’s wishes.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shoftim 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**HEARTWARMING: Yeshiva Boys at YULA Buy Their Teacher a Car**

Julio Castro, 31, who teaches at YULA (Yeshiva University of Los Angeles) Boys High School in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood of the city, was gifted a 2019 Mazda CX-3 by his students at the Jewish private school on Thursday, [*Kiro7.com*](https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/high-school-students-private-la-school-surprise-math-teacher-with-car/C7VO7UL66NA6ZBYVRPHWPNYLVU/) reports. The car means that Castro no longer has to commute more than two hours one way to teach.

Castro lives in the Santa Clarita Valley and used a scooter and bus to get to the school, the LA Times reported. He typically wakes up at 4:30 a.m. PDT and returns home sometimes as late as 9:30 p.m. – long after his three young children have gone to sleep.

“He made sure I understood all of the material by sitting down with me during his lunch breaks and sacrificing his time after school where he could be getting to the bus stop going back home,” said Joshua Gerendash, a senior at the school, told KABC.



“It is roughly two hours. It depends, if I miss my bus, I wait another half hour or an hour,” Castro told the television station, according to [*Kiro7.com*](https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/high-school-students-private-la-school-surprise-math-teacher-with-car/C7VO7UL66NA6ZBYVRPHWPNYLVU/).

Castro’s commute was a 7-mile trip on his scooter to a bus stop. From there, the bus took 90 minutes to reach Century City. After exiting the bus, Castro used the scooter to reach the school.

Castro’s students, aware of his transportation difficulties, raised more than $30,000 over the summer to buy the vehicle. They also bought the teacher a year’s worth of gasoline and car insurance, KABC reported.

“I feel surprised. I feel special. So, thank you to my students. They are like my kids as well,” Castro told KABC.

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