**Shabbos Stories for**

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**Understanding**

**Hashem’s Ways**

**By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon**

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**Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein**

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein related that he had a close friend who had one the biggest money exchanges in the world. When one entered his business on Wall Street, he would notice close to a hundred employees looking at the numerous screens hanging on the wall flashing the latest value of every currency in the world.

There were four partners, and his friend was one of them. He gave tzedoka with an open and generous hand to every tzedokah organization. He was riding high, until a day in 2020 when Great Britain voted to leave the European Union.

At that time, there was so much uncertainty in the financial world that there was a mad run on the money. Almost all of their clients were fearful that all currencies were about to nosedive, and they wanted their investment back in cold cash. If ten, twenty, or even thirty percent of their clients pull out simultaneously, they had enough capital to cover it. However, when over 80% pulled out on the same day, there was no way to come up with the money.

Although they followed the standard guidelines, they were prosecuted and charged with defrauding their investors. After the trial they were found guilty and one of the punishments was that they were forbidden to involve themselves in any sort of financial trading.

Since I was close to him, I visited and asked him how he was managing. He replied in the typical Sephardic tradition, “Hashem gave, Hashem took, may Hashem be blessed.”

**“But How Are You Dealing Emotionally?”**

I asked him, “I know the Mishna in Berochos says, one has to bless Hashem for the bad as for the good. But how are you dealing emotionally?”

He replied “In 2001 I became a baal teshuva. I just enrolled my children in a yeshiva and although I was working on Wall Street, I was struggling. One day, the man sitting next to me to my right in the office announced that a big financial firm hired him to open their new division of money exchange. They are going to pay triple of what we were receiving from this firm.”

Looking at the thirty of us, he continued, “My entire team will be from those I know at this table.”

“Now I and him were the closest of friends. We went to lunch together and on Sundays our families played together. I was positive that I would be his right-hand assistant and the income would cover the tuition and other bills. Hashem would [reward me](http://reward.me/) for my sacrifice of leaving behind my non-religious lifestyle and embracing a life of Torah and mitzvos.

**Shocked by His Best Friend’s Betrayal**

The first one he picked was a lady sitting directly across from him, then he chose the man sitting on my left and so it went. At that time, I was positive that he was keeping the best as his last pick and that would be me.  But then he stopped without selecting me, and I was shocked and hurt, Hashem why did you make it that my best friend didn't choose me?

Six months later was 9/11 and everyone knows what happened then.

The firm that hired them was Cantor Fitzgerald whose headquarters were located between the 101st and 105th floors of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, the plane struck the 93rd floor. Not one of my former colleagues had a chance. They all died on that tragic day.

At that point, I saw that Hashem indeed chose me. He chose me to live!

So now that I lost everything, am I upset at Hashem? Not at all! I am confident that whatever He does to me, is for my own good.”

*Reprinted from the Rosh Hashanah 5784 Weekly Story of Rabbi DovBer Avtzon, 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 Contractor’s Wife**

**By Yehudis Samet**

For those people who have complaints about contractors, I can offer plenty of excuses. This is not to say they are always in the right, but there are reasons why they might “never call back,” or promise to come and then don’t show up, or don’t have the work finished when promised.

As the wife of a former general contractor, let me tell you his side of the story. People would call all day. When my husband would get home he’d have to be in touch with his suppliers and contractors, the architect, hired help, etc.

By the time he got off the phone, the hour was too late to call people back. Or he was too exhausted (and that was when he’d finally sit down to eat his cold supper). I haven’t even mentioned spending a few moments with the children or helping his wife.

**If His Workers Don’t Show Up, He’s the One Who Looks Bad**

Why hasn’t he come to fix the thing he promised to fix ages ago? He’s a contractor, which means his hired help does the work – whether it’s the painting, plumbing, carpentry or electrical work. If they don’t show up when they promise, then he’s the one who looks bad.

He’s only as dependable as his sub-contracted laborers, and unfortunately, responsible and dependable workers are hard to come by (they can offer their own excuses).

Many times, a job isn’t finished on time as promised because the homeowner changed his mind several times in the middle of the job, or added extra items to what was originally agreed upon. I’d also like to point out that people shouldn’t leave complaints with the wife.

It causes her a tremendous amount of stress to receive phone calls such as, “Tell your husband I’m annoyed…” or, “Just let your husband know how angry I am that…”

The wife didn’t do it, she can’t fix it, and she can’t defend her husband because she doesn’t know the details of this particular situation. When my husband first went into this business, I would get very upset when these gripes were unloaded on me. From the way people presented their complaints, it sounded like my husband hadn’t acted responsibly. As time went on, I learned more about how this business works. It certainly sounded different when he’d tell me his side of the story. (The Other Side of the Story)

*Reprinted from the Succos 2020 email of The Weekly Vort.*

**The Rebbe Maharash**

**And the Lost Soul**

**By**[**Menachem Posner**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Posner-Menachem.htm)



***Art by***[***Sefira Lightstone***](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

Night was approaching as the carriage pulled up in front of the Alexander Hotel, one of Paris’s most luxurious establishments. Out of the carriage stepped the Rebbe Maharash, the fourth Chabad rebbe, followed by two attendants and two companions.

Walking into the hotel lobby with an air of confidence, he approached the reception desk and, in fluent French, asked for the best suite available on the casino floor. The clerk was taken aback; the suite was very expensive and usually reserved for nobility. But the [Rebbe Maharash](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/626953/jewish/Rabbi-Shmuel-of-Lubavitch.htm) did not flinch at the exorbitant price, and was soon escorted to his rooms by a bellboy. He instructed his attendants, R. Leivik and R. Pinchas Leib, to stay with him in the hotel, while his two companions, R. Monye Monensohn and R. Yeshaya Berlin, both men of means, went to a cheaper hotel nearby.

The Rebbe Maharash settled in. The suite was spacious and elegantly outfitted, with fine furniture and valuable paintings. But the Rebbe was not there for the luxurious decor. He had come to Paris to find and save a lost soul, a young Jewish man who had fallen so far into the clutches of gambling and drinking that he had long forgotten his heritage.

**The Rebbe Walks into the Casino**

After several hours, the Rebbe got up and left his room. He walked along the corridor until he reached the casino.

He scanned the room with his piercing eyes, until he spotted the young man at a table, where he was playing dice. He had a glass of wine in front of him, which he sipped from time to time.

The Rebbe [Maharash](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/626953/jewish/Rabbi-Shmuel-of-Lubavitch.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Rabbi%20Shmuel%20of%20Lubavitch) walked towards him, ignoring the curious glances of the other gamblers. He reached his table, and placed his hand gently on his shoulder. The young man looked up at him with surprise and annoyance.

“Who are you?” he asked.

The Rebbe Maharash smiled warmly at him, and said: “Young man! One is not allowed to drink non-kosher wine!”

The young man blinked in confusion. He did not understand what the Rebbe Maharash meant.

“What are you talking about?” he asked.

“Such wine dulls the sensitivity of the mind and the heart. Be a Jew!” the Rebbe Maharash continued.

**A Tradition He Had Abandoned Long Ago**

The young man felt a strange sensation in his chest, as if something was stirring inside him. He recognized the Rebbe’s words as coming from his own tradition, which he had abandoned long ago.

The Rebbe Maharash then bade the man good night and left the casino, his eyes blazing with passion and excitement.

Exhausted and exhilarated, the Rebbe sat down on a chair in the corridor, not realizing that it was a chair on which one would be carried from one floor to the next (there were no elevators in those days). Only after he was already being carried up to the next floor, did the Rebbe realize and inform the porters that his room was on the same floor as the casino and that he could be brought back down.

Sometime later, the young man came looking for the Rebbe. The two remained closeted for many hours together.

What words they exchanged are not known, but the young man emerged from that meeting a new man.

The very next morning, the Rebbe left Paris. His mission had been accomplished.

And the young man? He embraced his Jewish identity, began living as a Jew, and became the father of the well-regarded Klein family of France, known for their Orthodoxy and piety.1

*When re-telling this story, the Seventh Rebbe would point out that time was very precious to the Rebbe Maharash, to the point that even his Chassidic teachings are brief. Nevertheless, he freely spent lavish sums of money and traveled for days, all for the sake of a single lost soul.*2

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6092640/jewish/The-Rebbe-Maharash-and-the-Lost-Soul.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a6092640) This story was [told](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3153050/jewish/Shabbos-Haazinu-13-Tishrei-At-the-Daytime-Seudah.htm) by the Sixth Rebbe on Shabbat, 13 Tishrei, 5705.

*Reprinted from the Sukkot 5784 website of Chabad.Org*

**Too Young For Yizkor**

**By** [**Betty Weingarten Goldberg**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/betty-weingarten-goldberg/)

My father-in-law passed away a few months after we married. My husband was all of 22 years old and suddenly thrust into a lifetime of saying Kaddish. It especially struck me that he could not join me outside of shul at Yizkor, during each of the Yamim Tovim where Yizkor is said communally. It was sad… Yizkor should be for “old people” to say for ancestors in remembrance of their holy neshamos.

**Fortunate to Have My Parents**

I felt so fortunate to have my parents and even when they were both in their 80s and I had a number of children, I would be so grateful to leave shul with my children. There is no turning back from Yizkor – it is a permanent reminder that our close loved one is gone and our supplication for their neshama is all we can offer.

It is also a stark reminder of who is an orphan. Joining in Yizkor is a public notice that one has lost their parent and that their life is always with a void.

Life does not slow down and at the age of 84 my father unexpectedly passed away. I only have sisters, so how Kaddish would be said for him was a distressing thought. Except there was my husband. He took it as an honorable obligation to say Kaddish all year and at each yahrzeit for my father. I was extremely comforted in that.

Now it was my turn at Yizkor. I watched my children exit the shul and I concentrated on the sad reminder of my loss, and of my powerful ability to create zechus for my father’s neshama. There was an understanding I now had, of my husband’s humble participation in Yizkor services for the 25 years of our marriage.

**As My Children Left the Shul**

Six years later, my mother passes away. Again, my husband took the roll of Kaddish-reciter for the full year and every yahrzeit. As my children left the shul, my time in the Yizkor services became more meaningful, more focused and with a host of prayers on my lips for a lifestyle that would bring merit to our dear departed parents.

Our children proudly learned Torah, and did acts of mitzvos in the merit of their grandparents’ neshamos.

Then tragedy struck our family. It was the morning after Simchas Torah. A joy filled chag together with most of our children. At 56 years old, my husband was suddenly gone.

How quickly our children’s lives can change from the bliss of youth to the weight of awesome responsibility. Now my sons were saying Kaddish. Three times a day, every day their voices were heard, the words memorized… my heart would cry… my heart was pained… to hear these young voices emotionally pray the words of Kaddish for their father.

**Helping Their Father’s Neshama**

Every action, every hour of learning, chesed, brachos, tefillos were done for their father’s neshama to merit a closeness to the Kisei HaKavod. That was all that was left for them to do for him.

Pesach was approaching with sad anticipation. It was a comfort to be all together. On Acharon shel Pesach I prepare to go to shul for Yizkor but this time I have all my sons and daughters accompanying me. I do not watch them innocently exit the shul, but my daughters are standing next to me. They should not need to be here I cry silently. I lift my head and look around. I am struck by how many young people I see standing for Yizkor. My tears flow freely – they are all too young to be saying Yizkor.

*Reprinted from the September 22, 2023 website of The Jewish Press.*

**The Israeli who Saved a**

**Life on Mount Everest**

**By**[**Dr. Yvette Alt Miller**](https://aish.com/authors/84110707)



***The climber was 300 meters from the summit when he risked everything to save a fellow mountaineer.***

May 20, 2012 was a stormy Spring day near the summit of Mount Everest. Approximately 200 climbers were on the slopes, each racing to reach the mountain’s peak, then make their descents as quickly as possible before a threatening storm moved in. The temperature was a shocking -55 Celsius (-67 Fahrenheit). Anyone who fell or passed out on the treacherous mountain paths faced near-certain death.

Two climbers had already died on the mountain in recent hours, and another two would soon perish in the following days.

One of the intrepid climbers on Everest was Nadav Ben Yehuda, a 24-year-old law student from the Israeli town of Rehovot. Nadav was only 300 meters away from the summit, carrying his 50 lb. backpack of equipment, and was about to become the youngest Israeli ever to reach the top of Everest, and only the fifth Israeli ever to scale the world’s highest peak. He’d been dreaming of this moment and training hard for it for years.

As he climbed in the frigid, threatening weather, Nadav knew the risks he faced. He’d passed the bodies of two climbers who’d died on the mountain. Suddenly he saw another mountaineer ahead of him who was alive, but in distress. It was Aydin Irmak, a 46-year-old Turkish man Nadav had become friendly with back in Kathmandu, as they prepared to scale Everest’s peak.

**“He Was Waiting for the End”**

Aydin was terribly ill. He’d passed out as he made his way down the mountain and was now lying on the mountain pass unconscious, without a harness, oxygen mask, nor appropriate equipment for the coming storm. “He had no gloves. No oxygen. No crampons. No cover…” Nadav later described. “He was waiting for the end.”

[Nadav yelled](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/25/climber-rescue-summit-everest) at his friend, “Aydin, wake up! Wake up!” but to no avail. It was obvious that Aydin was dying.

Nadav couldn’t believe his eyes. Instead of stopping to help, climbers ignored Aydin and hurried past on their way to the top then down again. “If I had continued climbing, he would have died for certain,” Nadav explained. “Other climbers just passed him by and didn’t lift a finger, but I had no second thoughts. I knew that I had to save him.”

In a moment, Nadav’s dreams for scaling Everest evaporated. All that mattered was saving the life of a fellow human being.

**Began the Slow Journey Down**

No one offered to help. Alone, Nadav attached Aydin to his harness and began the slow journey down. It was an eight-hour trek down to a lower-elevation base, and Nadav was doing it in extreme weather conditions, lugging the inert, 190 lb. climber. “It was very hard to carry him because he was heavy,” Nadav recalled. “At times he would gain consciousness, but then faint again. When he woke up he would scream in pain, which made it even more difficult.”

For some of the descent, Nadav carried Aydin on his shoulders. At times, he shuffled down the mountain’s paths with Aydin between his legs. More than once, the two men fell down the mountain together as much as 50 feet at a time.

Climbing up, Nadav wore three gloves on each hand. In order to better maneuver his equipment as he carried Aydin down, Nadav removed two of the gloves on his right hand; nearly immediately, he felt frostbite setting in. Half an hour after he began carrying Aydin, Nadav’s oxygen mask broke and two of his oxygen cylinders stopped working in the freezing air. “That was the one moment of true panic,” he described.

By the time they reached the camp, both Nadav and Aydin were extremely ill. Nadav collapsed a hundred yards from camp, with frostbite on his right hand, his cheeks, and his feet. He had to receive emergency medical treatment and was [soon evacuated to Assaf Harofe Hospital in Tel Aviv](https://www.israel21c.org/giving-up-everest-to-save-a-life/). He’d lost 20 kg. during his time on the mountain.



**Nadav Ben Yehuda (left) with the man he saved Aydin Irmak.**

Doctors warned Nadav that he might lose his fingers, though miraculously, doctors in Israel managed to save them. Despite his pain, and not reaching the summit, Nadav had no regrets. “A person’s life, any person’s life, is more valuable than anything,” Nadav said once he was back home. “I knew that I might lose my fingers, but that wasn’t something I could worry about because that would be immoral.”

“I am not a hero but I am completely Israeli,” he told reporters, explaining that in his time in Israel’s army he absorbed the maxim that Israelis never ever leave a fellow soldier behind. “I didn’t get to the summit, but I saved someone’s life.”

In the decade since he saved Aydin Irmak, Nadav Ben Yehuda has gone on to climb other peaks and pursue a career in mountain rescue. His actions on the slopes of Mount Everest are a testament to the timeless Jewish value that human life, so fragile and irreplaceable, is more important than anything else, always.

The Torah commands: “You shall not stand aside while your fellow’s blood is shed” ([Leviticus 19:16](https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.19.16?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)). It’s difficult to imagine how we might respond in a dangerous situation when our actions could save another person’s life. Nadav’s heroism on Mount Everest inspires us all.

*Reprinted from the September 27, 2023 posting on aish.com website.*

**Mr. Weiss’s Special**

**Question to G-d**

**By Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky**

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**Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein**

The Chovos HaLevavos teaches that a person should think about all of the good that Hashem has done for him, from the time he was born until today. This should fill him with a deep sense of hakaras hatov, enough to inspire him to serve Hashem with all his heart.

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein was real and down-to-earth, which made him so effective as a speaker and an educator. He related the stories and ideas that inspired him, believing that if these stories and ideas inspired him, they could inspire others, as well. More often than not, he was right on the mark.

As someone involved with people enduring trauma and challenges, Rabbi Wallerstein used to approach Holocaust survivors and ask them how they managed to survive and then build their lives anew. If these people, who went through such hardship yet kept going, could disclose their secret to Rabbi Wallerstein, he could transmit that information to others, to teach them how to overcome the challenges in their own lives.

**A Very Special Man Named Mr. Weiss**

One such Holocaust survivor, a very special man named Mr. Weiss, was still serving as baal tefillah for the Yamim Noraim at the age of ninety-seven. Moreover, this was in a tent, during Covid-19, when the world at large was dealing with unprecedented challenges.

Rabbi Wallerstein asked him, “After the war, when you found out that everything was lost, that six million Jews had been slaughtered, among them your family members, did you have any questions? Did you wonder why Hashem had done this? Please tell me the truth. If you did question Hashem’s ways, I understand. You were a young man who lost everything: your family, your friends, your yeshivah, your town.”

Mr. Weiss looked at him, eyes piercing, and asked, “You want to know the truth, Rabbi Wallerstein?”

“Yes, I do!”

“I had one question. When I realized what had happened, I looked up to Shamayim and asked, ‘Six million Jews died — and You let me live? Why me? What did I do to deserve life?’”

“You mean, you didn’t ask Hashem why everyone had to die?”

**I Had My Emunah Intact**

Mr. Weiss was surprised. “No, of course not. I had my emunah intact. All I asked Hashem was why I merited to live. What did I do to deserve this kindness? At that moment, I realized that I would be forever indebted to Hashem. And I made up my mind to make Hashem proud of me. When I go up to Shamayim after 120 years, I want Him to be pleased that He gave me life.”

Then he went on to list all of the bnei Torah among his descendants and how he merited raising a beautiful family of shomrei Torah u’mitzvos. “I will come up to Hashem after 120 and tell Him, ‘You made a good decision.’”

Said Rabbi Wallerstein: “We all need to do this. Before we go to sleep at night, we need to feel grateful to Hashem for all the kindness that He bestows upon us every day. And since Hashem decided to give us life today, that means He wants us in This World. How lucky we are…” At the end of every day, and at the end of our lives, we want to be able to tell Hashem, “You made a great decision.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ha’azinu 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. (Excerpted from “Living Higher” by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky.)*

**Tatte, Can I Come**

**Back Home?**

**Rav Elimelech Biderman as**

**Written by Yisroel Besser**

A chaburah of respected Boyaner chassidim were once sitting together in Yerushalayim, and they were discussing the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 7:6): “Teshuvah brings near those who were far removed. Previously, this person was hated by G-d, disgusting, far removed, and detestable. Now, he is beloved and desirable, close, and dear.”

**Just a Single Thought of Repentance**

How, they wondered, could it be? How is it possible that a person whom the Ribbono Shel Olam found repulsive has a single thought of repentance and he is suddenly considered desirable?

One of the respected members of the chaburah was Reb Nuchem Yasser, a man who spoke little. He had come from Russia, where his only son had chosen a different path, leaving his home and family and turning his back on Yiddishkeit.

Reb Nuchem never mentioned this son, but now, as he heard the question, he exclaimed, “Der zuhn, the son!” He explained what he meant, and thus, he answered the question.

“I know that if tonight, my son would suddenly appear at my door and cry out, “Tatte…” Here, Reb Meilech shouts the word, investing it with such passion and warmth.

**I Would Immediately Open the Door**

“If he would say, ‘Tatte, I just want to come home to you, I want to come back,’ my heart would be flooded with joy. I would not think about what he has done or where he has been, only what will be… I would open the door and welcome him with love…”

In one instant, we can achieve that, with one sincere cry of Tatte… Now is the time.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ha’azinu 5784 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. (Excerpted from “Around the Year with Reb Meilech from Rav Elimelech Biderman as written by Yisroel Besser.)*