**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayechi 5784**

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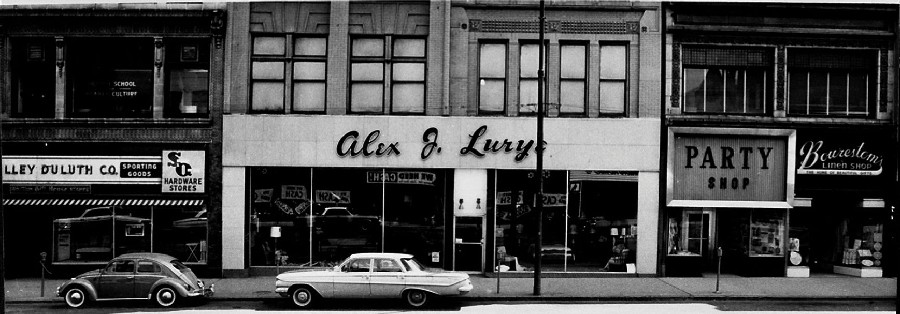
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**A Letter to Alex Lurye**

**in Duluth, Minnesota**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**



***Alex J. Lurye furniture store was located at 14 East Superior Street in downtown Duluth. It was started, owned and operated by***[***Alexander J. Lurye***](https://www.garon.us/asafe/Alex%20Lurye.html)***.***

America had finally entered World War I. Troops poured into Europe to put an end to the war. The war was in its final stages. American troops were dispatched throughout Germany. The year was 1917.

A lone Jewish soldier from Duluth, Minnesota, Alex Lurye, found himself in a small German town called Seldes. It was Friday night. Being far away from home was lonely. Having some time on his hands and feeling out of place, the young Jewish soldier decided to see what the local Jewish population was like.

His entering the local village synagogue must have created a stir. An American soldier in uniform! The Americans had fought the Germans in bitter combat. The lone soldier felt apprehensive. Almost immediately, however, he was greeted by a kind German Jew by the name of Herr Rosenau, who made him feel at home in the synagogue.

What’s more, after the services, Herr Rosenau invited the serviceman to his house for kiddush and the traditional Friday night meal.

Seeing the beauty of a traditional Shabbat together with the warmth and kindness of this German-Jewish family made a deep impression on this young soldier. He was a stranger, a foreigner, even an enemy; yet because he was Jewish he was invited to another Jew's home, given a delicious warm kosher home cooked meal, complete with wine and accompanied by the traditional Shabbat songs.

**Making the Soldier Feel that He was Not Alone**

Herr Rosenau's family, together with his teenage daughter, gave the soldier the feeling that he was not alone, certainly not an enemy, even in such a far and distant land.

The soldier was never able to come back to see this kind family again. However, the warm impression that he had received, the experience of the Shabbat in a warm and caring Jewish home did not leave him. It meant so much to this young soldier that when he finally returned to Duluth, Minnesota, his home town, he took time out to sit down and write a letter to the German Jew who had touched his life with such kindness.

This was in 1917. For some unknown reason, although Herr Rosenau received the letter it was never answered. It was placed in a desk drawer and there it rested for twenty-one years.

Time moves on. Ruth, the teenage daughter of the German Jew, had grown up and was married to a German Jew by the name of Eugene Wienberg. They had three small children.

In the year 1938 their oldest was a boy of eleven. It was a terrible difficult time for the German Jews. The dreaded Adolf Hitler had taken hold upon Germany and anti-Jewish proclamations were being contrived and enforced on a continually regular basis.

**The Grandson Discovers an**

**Envelope with a Foreign Postage Stamp**

One day, Herr Rosenau was hosting the family. While ruminating about the dark and dismal future for himself and his fellow Jews in Germany, he wasn't paying much attention to his eleven-year-old grandson, Sigbert, who was rummaging through his desk looking for something of interest. Suddenly a foreign postage stamp caught his eye. He pulled out the envelope with the stamp from America. "Grandfather, can I have this?"

Twenty-one years had passed since he received the letter. "Yes, take it," the grandfather replies. The old forgotten envelope makes his grandson happy. He takes it home to his mother. "Look, look what grandfather has given me!"

The mother and her husband, Herr Wienberg, eye the envelope with curiosity. They remove the letter inside and read it. It was the thankyou letter from the American service man, from twenty-one years ago.

The mother remembered the young man. "Let's write to him! Maybe he will remember us and sponsor us, enabling us to immigrate to America." (In those years, the U.S.A. did not let refugees come to its shores freely. However, if an American resident citizen would sponsor you, there was a chance.) "We have no future in Germany, we must get out before this mad man, Hitler, begins to do worse things to the Jews.

Looking on the envelope, they saw that there was no return address--only the name, Alex Lurye, and the city and state, Duluth, Minnesota.  So, they wrote a letter addressed only as follows:

**ALEX LURYE**

**DULUTH, MINNESOTA**

Can you send a letter to a person in a large city without a street address and expect it to be delivered? Of course not. You would have to be foolish to think that it would get to its destination. But sometimes it works out. In this case, Alex Luyre had become a wealthy businessman who was well known in Duluth, even though it was a city of more than a hundred thousand people.

The post office delivered the letter.

When Alex received it, he quickly sent a return letter acknowledging his receipt of their letter and pledging to help bring the Wienberg family to Duluth.  Indeed, the entire Wienberg family arrived that same year, in May of 1938. Shortly thereafter, the Rosenau family were also able to reach America.

In Duluth, the Wienberg family began working hard to make life bearable through the depression era. Sometimes both the father and mother had to work two jobs in order to make it through the week. Yet in Duluth as in Seldes, Germany, the family made sure that the Shabbat would be joyously honored.

The rest of the family were fortunately brought over to the States before the horrors of World War II swiftly came. Most of German Jewry was destroyed.

The kindness that Herr Rosenau had given to a stranger twenty-one years earlier had come full circle. Because of their kindness, without any thought of personal gain, Herr Rosenau and his family were spared from the horrible fate of their fellow German Jews. The chessed that they had so warmly given to others without desiring a payment in return had come back to them with dividends. The entire clan was saved.

And they sprouted and grew--a family blessed with many children and grandchildren and great-grand-children ( as of the first writing of this report in 1997 ). All of whom took upon themselves always to honor the Shabbat.

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**Author’s conclusion** : Doing chessed (an act of loving kindness done without any expectation of remuneration) is the Jewish way. Helping another Jew, without trying to receive a thing in return. Pure and unadulterated kindness. It's for you and for me.

**Source :** Edited by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article [b*y Yisrael Nathan (as told to JewishMag.com staff and posted in Nov. 1997.)*](https://link.kabbalaonline.org/go.asp?li=16FE279A50D0C14E4EDF9A9E376AD4E6&ui=E439C22B2FA14D648D98C7BD5B92F85F) . Submitted by  Micha Roos of Tzefat, Israel.

**Connection:** Last Friday was the Fast of the Tenth of 10 Tevet. It commemorates the onset of the siege outside the walls of Jerusalem that led to the destruction of the Holy Temple on the Ninth of Av. In addition, in our times it has become the date to say Kaddish for those martyrs of the Holocaust (and all the others through the centuries) whose date of death is unknown.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayigash 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed in Israel.*

**Thanks to a Thousand**

**By Rabbi Daniel Staum**

Reb Yisroel Salanter zt”l once walked into a diner and asked for a cup of water. After drinking it, the concierge handed him the bill. To his surprise, it was an astronomical price. It made no sense, though. How could a simple cup of water cost so much?

“You’re not simply paying for the water,” replied the concierge. You are paying for the ambience, the service, use of the glass, and finally the water. Rav Yisroel, hearing this, took to heart more than the concierge was telling him.

“When we make the blessing, ‘*She’hakol nihiye bid’varo*—Everything is according to the word of Hashem,’ reflected Reb Yisroel, the blessing is intended to get us thinking along these lines. Nothing is plain and simple when it comes to the benefits and beneficence Hashem showers upon us in this world.

There are countless upon countless aspects that go into the actions and productions that we often take for granted. But when we consider that a glass of water is not just a glass of water, but encompasses much more, we can begin to appreciate how this too is true of all aspects of life. And then, with that new perspective, the gratitude and appreciation we feel to Hashem for all that He gives us—and even of those things which we don’t even know about—swells to unbounded proportions.”

**A Mission to Thank Those**

**Who Make Our Morning Coffee**

A.J. Jacobs, a professed atheist, commented that it is a well-circulated notion in today’s world that by focusing on the gratitude one feels for what they have in life, it will increase their happiness. Jacobs assumed this commonly held position, as did many others, to the point that when his family would sit down for a meal, they would thank everyone who was involved in preparing the food. Until one time when Jacobs’ son noted that despite all these thankful statements being shared, none of the benefactors could actually hear it. This got Jacobs’ on a mission to begin thanking everyone who was involved in the making of his morning coffee.

Jacobs spent the next several months traveling around the world, thanking all those involved. He included the trucker who transported the coffee, the workers who laid down the asphalt for the road, architects, biologists, designers, miners, and on and on. His project was called, “Thank 1,000.” Jacobs admitted that he in fact could have gone on more than a thousand.

**How to Keep the Spark Going?**

On the last day of my first year of marriage, I went to my Rebbe, Rabbi Leibel Resnick, and said, “The day I got engaged, I was elated. Throughout the engagement, wedding, and first year of marriage too, I felt a special spark, a special exhilaration. But now, my first year of marriage is coming to a close. Now what? How do I keep the spark going, how do I keep the momentum going, instead of growing stagnant and complacent?”

He replied very beautifully and simply. “As long as you always remember that everything is a *chesed* (kindness), that spark will never fade.” With this attitude, when you or your spouse does the laundry, makes dinner, puts the kids to sleep or bathes them, it is all a *chesed,*and there are always ample opportunities to seize and give and receive appreciation in the marriage.

Our challenge is to see the opportunities before us, along with the moments that are latent for growth, and utilize them for the good, appreciate them, and thank our family, friends, and ultimately Hashem for every minute and thing we have in our life.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayeshev edition of The “TorahAnyTimes” Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.*

**A Contemporary Korban**

Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum relates an amazing story. A few years ago, a terrorist packed his car with 100 kilos of explosives, and parked it near a supporting pillar at the Cinemall in Haifa. However, it did not explode. Had his intentions to bring destruction actually came through, the tragedy would have been enormous and devastating.



**Interior view of the Haifa Cinemall.**

The explosion would have destroyed the support pillar of the mall, and it would have ignited countless fires in the other cars in the parking lot. This is one of the most popular malls in the area, and it was full at the time. We cannot even begin to contemplate the extent of the tragedy if that bomb had gone off.

An alert pedestrian had walked past this car and noticed smoke coming from it. He quickly notified the police, who brought in the bomb squad, and they diffused the bomb. Everyone, even Ehud Olmert, then the Prime Minister, recognized that they were spared by Hashem. This was clearly a miracle.

Rav Scheinbaum writes, “Now, for the rest of the story.” Several weeks prior to this occurrence, a teenage girl in Haifa had been suffering with stomach pains that would not go away. She went to the doctor, and after a battery of tests, she was diagnosed with a malignant tumor that had started to spread, R”L. The doctors gave their sad verdict, that they could not do anything at this point, other than give her pain medication to make her comfortable. They informed her that she had only a few weeks left to live.

However, the girl did not give up, and her parents did not give up. They might not have been observant Jews, but hope is an inherently Jewish value. They pleaded with the doctors to try something, anything, at least to make an effort to save their daughter’s life. They finally agreed, and surgery was scheduled for the next day. Feeling that their chances for success were very low, they assigned a young, inexperienced surgeon to the case, with the feeling that it would be good practice for him. Since he had nothing to lose, the surgeon really could not go wrong.

**The Non-Observant Girls Pleads for Mercy**

The night before the surgery, this non-observant girl began to plead with Hashem. She said, “HaKadosh Baruch Hu, I am not perfect, and I probably do not deserve any favors from You. In ancient times, when we had a Bais HaMikdash, a person who sinned would confess his Aveirah and offer a Korban, and he would achieve atonement. Today, we have no Bais HaMikdash, no Korbanos, and no Kohanim, but I still want to bring a Korban.”

At that moment, she walked into her closet, removed all of her immodest clothing, and carried it out to her yard. She made a pile and lit it all on fire. She cried out, “Hashem, this is my Korban!”

**Shared Her Miracle Story with Her Friends**

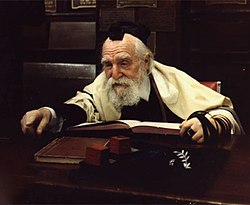
The next day, the girl went to the hospital in her nightgown and robe. She had no other clothing to wear. Her entire wardrobe had been burned as a Korban. She had the surgery, and, to the doctor’s astonishment, the tumor had not metastasized. It was totally contained, and additionally, it was totally benign! It was a miracle! When she shared the story with her friends, they also wanted to tap into this Brachah of dressing modestly.

The next day, they all came together, brought out all their immodest clothing, and made a bonfire. They offered their clothing as a Korban to Hashem. The girls were now left without anything presentable to wear. However, that is what malls are for. They all went together to celebrate their newly-accepted standards of Tzniyus and modesty, by shopping for new clothes. When that terrorist’s bomb was set to go off, it was precisely then that those girls were at the mall, shopping for new, modest clothing!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayigash 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**Rav Moshe’s Concept**

**of True Tzadakah**



Rav Avrohom Chaim relates a story about Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, who was especially attuned to the effects his actions would have when he was dealing with poor people. One day, a car pulled up in front of the Yeshivah to take Rav Moshe to an important meeting. There was no time for delay. As Rav Moshe was about to get into the car, a poor man asked him for some Tzedakah.

Rav Moshe gave him some money, but the man wished to speak with Rav Moshe as well. The man drew out the conversation, and the driver who was waiting started to become impatient. A few students attempted to tell the man that Rav Moshe was in a great hurry, but Rav Moshe motioned for them to wait.

After ten minutes, Rav Moshe excused himself, shook hands with the poor man, and finally got into the car. Rav Moshe explained to the driver and to his students, “You must understand that to this man, the conversation meant more to him than the money. My Mitzvah of Tzedakah included showing him that I care about what he has to say, and that I am not too busy to speak with him!”

Rav Chaim Brim, zt”l, was once learning with the Chazon Ish, zt”l, late at night in Bnei Brak. When they had finished their session, there weren’t any more busses at that hour to bring Rav Chaim back to Yerushalayim, where he lived, so the the Chazon Ish invited him to stay the night by him.

The Chazon Ish’s brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon, zt”l, also lived in that house. Rav Chaim Brim said that that night, three great people were serving him: the Chazon Ish, the Steipler, and the Steipler’s Rebbetzin. The Chazon Ish was giving the directions, and one person brought the Negel Vasser, one brought him some food, and so on.

Rav Chaim was very uncomfortable that they were all serving him, and he said to the Chazon Ish, “Please, this isn’t necessary. There is no need to do all of this for me!”

The Chazon Ish replied, “Since when does an Esrog tell the person who holds him how he should be handled? Right now, you are a Mitzvah, and you shouldn’t be telling the people who are obligated from Har Sinai to do this Mitzvah, how they should perform the Mitzvah!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayigash 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah.*

**Arguing with the**

**Chofetz Chaim**



Once the Chofetz Chaim, ZT”L, was visiting a certain town for Shabbos. He carried with him a very large sum of money. As time for Shabbos was getting closer, he realized that he had nowhere to keep it so he entrusted the money into the hands of the local town Rav.

After Shabbos was over, the town Rav noticed something very strange. He saw the Chofetz Chaim boarding the carriage with all his personal belongings (about to depart) without collecting the money he entrusted him with.

The Rav ran towards the wagon to tell the Chofetz Chaim that he forgot to pick up the money he left with him. The Chofetz Chaim responded by explaining that he was well aware of that. The Rav asked him why he didn’t pick it up. He explained that his reason for doing so was that there is a halacha which states one is not allowed to entrust money to another person without witnesses. He added that since he didn’t have time to get witnesses, as soon as he handed over the money he declared it ownerless. He then told the town Rav, “It’s not mine, you can keep it.”

           The Rav tried to convince the Chofetz Chaim to take it back but he wouldn’t budge until finally, once the carriage started moving the town Rav threw the money into the carriage and declared, “I declare it ownerless in return!” What an outstanding example of honesty!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mikeitz 5784 email of Torah Sweets.*

**Look and See**

**By Aharon Spetner**

“Hi Shimmy!” Yitzy greeted his older brother as everyone walked out of cheider at the end of the day. “Do you want to come with me to Moishy Raskner’s house after supper? His grandparents bought him a telescope - we’re going to look at stars and planets.”

“I don’t think so,” replied Shimmy. “The latest issue of The Adventures of Yaari and Divshi is out and I want to read it.”

“You don’t want to see the rings of Saturn?” asked Yitzy, surprised.

“Not really. That type of stuff doesn’t really interest me. But thanks for offering.”

**A Confusing Brocha**

Shimmy pulled a shiny red apple out of his bag. “Bachatanolemelecholam borei pri ha’eitz,” he mumbled and took a big bite out of the juicy fruit.

“Amein?” Yitzy said hesitantly.

“Why did you say ‘amein’ like you’re asking a question?” asked Shimmy.

“Because I wasn’t sure if you actually said the brocha, you mumbled it so quickly.”

“I said the brocha,” Shimmy insisted. “I just said it quickly because I’m so hungry.”

“Yitzy, what are you doing?” asked Shimmy a few minutes later. “Why are you stopping?”

“Look, there’s an amazing anthill over here!” exclaimed Yitzy, who was bent over, looking at the ground. “Someone dropped a cracker next to it and you can see hundreds of ants taking crumbs and bringing them into the hole. Why, I bet a few of those crumbs could feed a tiny ant for a lifetime! But they keep coming back and bringing more. I bet by tomorrow the entire cracker will be gone.”

“Okay, but can we keep walking? I want to get home already.”

“Sure,” said Yitzy with a smile as he stood up and continued walking. “Do you want to hear a question Rebbi Caplan asked today?”

“Okay,” agreed Shimmy.

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**Illustrated by Miri Weinreb**

“After Yaakov Avinu hears that Yosef Hatzadik is still alive, he says - “I will go and see him before I will die’. Why was it so important for Yaakov Avinu to go see Yosef?”

“Um... because Yosef was his son and he loved him,” Shimmy said.

“I know, right? That’s what everyone in the class said too. But Rebbi Caplan said that tzadikim on the level of Yaakov Avinu don’t just drop all of their Avodas Hashem just because they want to visit their son. It’s not like Yosef was a little boy who needed his Totty - he was a big tzadik who was in charge of all of Mitzrayim.”

“Okay, so why did he want to go?” asked Shimmy, taking another bite from his apple.

“So Rebbi Caplan explained that going to see Yosef was part of Yaakov’s Avodas Hashem. Because Hashem gave us a power of sight to be used to be more aware of him. For example, did you look at the peel of your apple before eating it?”

“I saw that it was red, if that’s what you’re asking,” Shimmy said.

**Appreciating Hashem’s Beautiful Colored Gift**

“Okay, and isn’t that amazing? Isn’t it incredible to look at the beautiful color Hashem gave it, which makes it more enjoyable to eat? And what about the fact that the peel serves as a perfect wrapper that keeps the fruit fresh?”

“I told you, I was hungry,” Shimmy said defensively.

“Okay, but what about the anthill? Do you know how much niflaos haborei you can witness by just watching ants work for a few minutes?”

“Yeah, but I wanted to go home and relax,” Shimmy protested.

“Or even the opportunity to look through a telescope and see the stars and planets - it’s an incredible chance to see the wonders of Hashem’s creation.”

Shimmy was quiet.

“Now of course, if you are learning Torah, we probably shouldn’t interrupt that to go look through a telescope. And you don’t have to necessarily stop and look at every anthill if you are in a hurry. But Hashem wants us to use our eyes to pay attention to all of the amazing things that he put in the world for us.”

“I hear,” said Shimmy. “But what does that have to do with Yaakov and Yosef?”

“Because as much hakoras hatov as Yaakov had to Hashem for Yosef still being alive, he knew that he could gain an even greater level of connection to Hashem if he would see it with his own eyes. Because it’s important to use our eyes to look at things that make us more aware of Hashem.”

Shimmy looked at the half-eaten apple in his hand as he thought about this. “Yitzy!” he exclaimed. “I just realized that the outside of the apple peel is like plastic - it’s mamesh waterproof like a high-quality food wrapper, like you said! And look! These little seeds in here - if you think about it, they’re like tiny little apple factories - just add water and you get a new tree full of apples! It’s amazing how much chochma Hashem put into a little apple!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

**Takeaway:**

Hashem gave us the power of sight to be used to be more aware of him. When we see His greatness and goodness, we can grow a lot.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayigash 5784 email of Toras Avigdor Junior, adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*