**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Noach 5775**

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**The Power of a Great Doctor**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

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|  The following story occurred some 300 years ago in the Ukraine.It seemed like Mr. Groisboich's (pseudo name) millions weren't going to help him now. He was on his deathbed gasping for breath, surrounded by family and friends. The best doctors and professors in Europe and Russia had unsuccessfully treated him, and now it was only a matter of minutes.Suddenly the door burst open and his son-in-law entered the room leading a very distinguished-looking man. "This is the King's personal doctor, Professor Zaritzki," he announced anxiously. It was a miracle that I found him….." The Doctor approached the sick man and motioned for quiet, so he moved the family to a side of the room and continued in a whisper. "The Doctor was passing through our town. I was really lucky to get in to see him. At first he refused. I really had to talk fast, but finally he agreed to take on the case as a challenge." "It is very serious," Said the professor worriedly, bending over his patient. "Maybe a day ago I could have done something, but now, I think it's too late." He thought for another second and continued. "I'm taking a big chance but...." He took out a pad of paper from his coat scribbled something on it, gave it to one of the boys standing in the room and said, "Here! Take this and run to the apothecary as fast as you can, every second counts. Run!" The boy dashed out the door and down the stairs, while the Doctor returned to the dying man to check his pulse. But as soon as he did, a look of surprise came over his face. He ran to the window and called to the boy and motioned to him. "Young man!! Come back up. Yes. Come back immediately!" All eyes were on the professor as he wrote a new prescription, took the previous one from the boy, and threw it away and told him to run as fast as possible. "Strange" he mumbled to himself as the boy dashed out the door. "Very unusual." He returned to the patient once again, lifted one of his eyelids, suddenly gave another startled look, ran to the window and recalled the boy again. "Quite remarkable! He seems to be improving," he said aloud. In fact it did seem that Groisboich was breathing a bit easier. The same scenario repeated itself five times. Each time a different prescription was written, and each time the condition of the patient improved before the boy reached the street. After a half hour Mr. Groisboich actually asked for water, and in less than an hour he was sitting up in bed and drinking soup. "I don’t believe my eyes" Said the doctor wiping his brow, obviously shaken to the essence of his being. "I've never seen the likes of it in my life! Why, the man was as good as dead less than an hour ago." "Thank you doctor. You saved my life," whispered Mr. Groisboich to the professor, "Thank you." "I? I saved your life? My friend, I did nothing! I don’t even understand what happened here. It's most incredible! I just stood here and watched a miracle. I can’t explain it." "I can!" Said Mr. Groisboich weakly, "There is only one explanation. It a holy Jew called the Baal Shem Tov." No one in the room had the faintest idea what he was talking about. He sat up even straighter and continued. "It was over ten years ago. I decided to visit a Jew called the Baal Shem Tov. Probably you never heard of him, but there was a lot of talk. Some said he was a miracle worker and a holy prophet, but others said that the whole thing was a bluff. So I was curious. "I traveled to the city of Mezibuz where he lived, and the next day I was standing before him in his study. I tried to see something unusual, but I have to admit that I wasn't very impressed. True there was something about his eyes, but nothing worth getting so excited about. "What brings you here?" Asked the Besh't (initials of Baal Shem Tov). "I just came to hear a word of wisdom." I replied in a friendly tone. "So he looked at me and said:"Just remember that G-d gives every doctor an angel. A small doctor has a small angel and a big doctor has a more powerful angel. And that angel is the one that does the healing." "I waited a few seconds for him to continue, and when he didn't, I got a bit angry; "Excuse me!" I said, "Doctors? Angels? What is it supposed to mean to me? I'm no doctor. And I'm not sick either. What type of wisdom is that? It took me several days to travel here…… and now I have to return with this?! " "But the Baal Shem just looked down, implying that the meeting was over. "Thoroughly disappointed, I left the room, traveled home, and didn't even tell anyone about it for fear of saying Loshon HaRa (Slander). But it was pretty clear that this man was nothing to get excited about. Years passed, ten years. I succeeded in life, became wealthy and famous, married off all my children, and totally forgot that meeting. Then, a few months ago I became ill. At first the doctors thought it was nothing, but it got worse. I went to bigger and bigger experts but nothing helped until, well you saw my condition when you entered....I was dying. But now, the whole thing came back to me; the Besh't must have been referring back then to what just happened now. He foresaw it all.  It was your angel that healed me, doctor. In fact it is your angel that has been healing ALL your patients." The professor was dumbfounded. He felt like a little child. He didn't want to believe it but he couldn’t deny the facts. In fact he had done nothing. His very presence had succeeded where all the other doctors had failed. He stood for a moment in deep thought and then asked. "Tell me, where can I see this holy man?" He went to the Baal Shem and activated his Jewish soul. It seems that this professor was a Jew, who had left Judaism in order to succeed in life. But now that he had clear evidence that all along he had only been a vehicle for a power greater than himself he started rethinking his life.Reprinted from the Parshas Bereishis email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.**It Once Happened****Honest Shmuel**There was once a Jew named Shmuel who lived in a small European town. A scholar of Torah and upright of character, he was also clever and competent. When the governor of the district heard about his abilities he appointed him his business manager, and grew to trust him implicitly. Along with his other responsibilities Shmuel was entrusted with the keys to the treasury. The governor had no compunctions about this, as he knew he could rely on the honest Jew. Shmuel, for his part, proved to be more than worthy of the governor's trust. He exercised his duties faithfully. The governor's assistant business manager, however, was a vicious anti-Semite. Shmuel's success, and the esteem in which he was held, were almost too much for him to bear. His greatest desire was for the governor to get rid of the Jew and appoint him in his stead. Then one day, it seemed as if his fantasy was about to be fulfilled... The governor had just returned from an extended trip, and was throwing a party for his friends to celebrate his return. Before leaving, the governor had appointed Shmuel in charge of his household. In the middle of the festivities, during which the wine flowed like water, the governor decided to impress his guests by showing off his wealth. One his most priceless possessions was an extremely large and rare diamond, whose value was beyond estimation. The governor had never displayed it in public, but the party seemed like the perfect opportunity to do so. Shmuel, as manager of the estate, was asked to retrieve the jewel from the treasury. A few minutes later he returned holding a tiny golden box, encrusted with precious gems and diamonds. Everyone gathered around the governor to see this special sight. With an extravagant gesture the governor opened the box, but was stunned to find it was empty! The diamond had evidently been stolen. After the initial shock had worn off, all of the guests began to look at Shmuel with suspicion. Everyone knew him as an honest fellow, but what other explanation could there be? Who else had access to the treasury? The governor turned to Shmuel and said delicately, "For many years you have worked for me faithfully. But sometimes, a person may give in to temptation. If you return the diamond, I give you my word that nothing bad will happen to you." "G-d forbid!" Shmuel cried as his face paled. Pain and disgrace were visible in his eyes. "In my whole life I've never touched anything that didn't belong to me, and I certainly didn't take your diamond." The crowd was silent. The Jewish manager's words sounded sincere, but unfortunately, all the evidence pointed to his guilt. Then Shmuel had an idea. "If you give me a chance to prove myself," he said, "I will show you who the real thief is." After asking the assembled guests to remain in the hall, Shmuel rushed off to his house. He returned, clutching a black rooster under his arm. Everyone's curiosity was aroused by the odd spectacle. "Esteemed guests," Shmuel announced in a loud voice, "this rooster is not your ordinary, run of the mill bird. In fact, it has a special ability to detect thieves! When an honest man touches this rooster, it does not react. But if a thief dares to pet it, it immediately ruffles its feathers and crows at the top of its lungs. Pay attention - it will now reveal the person who stole the governor's diamond." Shmuel chose five guests at random and asked them to pet the wonderful bird. The guests did as they were asked, but the rooster remained silent. A wave of laughter rippled through the hall. What an impudent Jew! It wasn't bad enough that he had stolen the diamond; now he was making fun of them as well! Shmuel, however, appeared unconcerned. "Wait! The test is not yet over," he called out. The five men who had petted the bird were then asked to raise the hand that had touched it. Five hands shot up in the air. Four palms were as black as coal, but the fifth - the one that belonged to the assistant manager - was white. "Here's your thief!" Shmuel announced, pointing to the assistant manager. "He is responsible for the robbery." Everyone stared at the man, who was trembling with the fright of discovery. Without a word in self-defense, the assistant manager then admitted to stealing the diamond. When the governor asked Shmuel to reveal the rooster's secret, he burst out laughing. "There really isn't anything special about this rooster," the Jew explained. "The only thing I did was to rub soot into its feathers before I brought it here. I figured that an innocent person wouldn't hesitate to pet it, whereas the guilty party would only make believe he was touching it. And indeed, my assumption was correct..." After apologizing profusely the governor gave Shmuel a warm hug, and announced that he was giving him a promotion. And the assistant manager was thrown into jail, where he remained for the rest of his life.Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization of Brooklyn, NY.**What is the Secret** **Of Happiness?**A young man, fresh out of business school, answered a want-ad for an accountant. He was interviewed by a very nervous man who ran a three-man business."I need someone with an accounting degree," the man said. "But mainly, I'm looking for someone to do my worrying for me.""Excuse me?" the young accountant said."I worry about a lot of things," the man said. "But I don't want to have to worry about money. Your job will be to take all the money worries off my back.""I see," the young accountant said. "And how much does the job pay?""I will start you at eighty-five thousand dollars a year. We will give you a 50,000 raise each year.""Eighty-five thousand dollars!" the young accountant exclaimed. "How can such a small business afford to pay me a sum like that?""That," the owner said, "is your first worry.Once upon a time, a king had a great highway built for the people who lived in his kingdom. After it was completed, but before it was opened to the public, the king decided to have a contest. He invited as many of his subjects as desired to participate. The challenge was to see who could travel the highway the best, and the winner was to receive a box of gold.On the day of the contest, all the people came. Some of them had fine chariots, some had fine clothing and fancy food to make the trip a luxurious journey. Some wore their sturdiest shoes and ran along the highway on their feet to show their skill. All day they traveled the highway, and each one, when he arrived at the end, complained to the king about a large pile of rocks and debris that had been left almost blocking the road at one point, and that got in their way and hindered their travel.At the end of the day, a lone traveler crossed the finish line warily and walked over to the king. He was tired and dirty, but he addressed the king with great respect and handed him a small chest of gold. He said, "I stopped along the way to clear a pile of rocks and debris that was blocking the road. This chest of gold was under it all. Please have it returned to its rightful owner."The king replied, "You are the rightful owner.""Oh no," said the traveler, "This is not mine. I've never known such money.""Oh yes," said the king, "you've earned this gold, for you won my contest... He who travels the road best is he who makes the road better for those who will follow."These words of wisdom guide our voyage through the road of life. By following this advice, by making the road better for those who follow us, by helping others, we can achieve true happiness.You can’t own your happiness; happiness must own you. You can’t define your happiness, it must define you. This is the great paradox: As long as you are pursuing happiness as an end unto itself, happiness is unattainable. But if you are doing things for others, happiness is achieved.*Reprinted from the October 8, 2014 Sukkot email of Chabad of Great Neck, NY***Extra Room in the Taxi**It once happened that HaRav Aharon Kotler zt”l, the Rosh Yeshiva from Lakewood, was visiting Israel, hired a taxi to transport him from Tel Aviv to Yerushalayim, and since there was extra room in the vehicle, he stipulated with the driver that when he would notice a Jew standing on the side of the road, intending to travel to Yerushalayim as well, he should stop and pick him up. Rav Shimon Zalaznik was accompanying the Rosh Yeshiva on his journey, and he was troubled by this arrangement. He asked the Reb Aharon, “Is the Rosh Yeshiva not aware that there has been several incidents where Arabs have been disguising themselves as Jewish hitchhikers, and they have been murdering Jews; perhaps one of them will enter the taxi and we will be endangered!?”The Rosh Yeshiva responded, “I am far more afraid of the Gemora in Yevamos, which states: A man shall not pour the water out of his pit, so long as others may require it. There is plenty of room in the taxi and I am anyway paying the fare; this is the condition that I made up with the driver.”Reb Aharon continued, “And regarding the danger, what is there to be concerned about? If a terrorist would Heaven-forbid enter the vehicle, he is only one person, and I, you and the driver are three! We can surely overpower him!”The Rosh Yeshiva at the time was in the latter stages of his life.*Reprinted from the October 15, 2014 email of Daf Notes.***A Son’s Song For****His Mother****A Moving Tribute During Breast****Cancer Awareness Month**By [**Stephanie Butnick**](http://tabletmag.com/author/sbutnick/)schlusselberg620(Photo courtesy David Schlusselberg) October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, a time of year when Americans are even more attuned to the impact of breast cancer within their communities. Given the high rates at which breast cancer affects Jews, and the [predisposition](http://tabletmag.com/scroll/183981/study-yields-sobering-results-for-jewish-women) among Ashkenazi women for BRCA1 and BRCA2 genetic mutations linked to breast and ovarian cancer, the October surge of education and awareness efforts is acutely felt by the Jewish community.  One particularly moving October tribute comes from David Schlusselberg, a 27-year-old rabbi and teacher at Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School in Livingston who’s also an aspiring songwriter and musician.  Schlusselberg was nine when his mother Marion died of breast cancer in 1996, and last week he released a song in her honor, “[I Miss Her](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uektSrPfK4k).”  “I was nine years old when my mother passed away, and I don’t have too many memories of her,” Schlusselberg wrote in an email. “Of course, I vividly remember the day she passed away, being taken out of school in the middle of the day, and my father’s face as he told me my mother had passed away.”  Schlusselberg began playing guitar when he was 12, and he started writing songs as a teenager. He wrote “I Miss Her” while working as a camp counselor in the summer of 2004, eight years after his mother’s death. “I remember being on my hour-long daily break, sitting on my porch with my guitar in my hand and a piece of paper on my lap, writing the words to this song,” he said.  It wasn’t another 10 years until Schlusselberg’s vision for the song would be realized.  After setting aside his musical ambitions for rabbinical school and professional pursuits, last year he recorded [*Mizmor L’Dovid*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQ5siXzzLc0), an album of Hebrew prayer verses set to original tunes, on which he sang and provided guitar, piano, violin, and cello accompaniment. “After releasing the album last March, I knew I wanted to do something more,” he explained, and a roommate suggested he revisit “I Miss Her” in the recording studio. “I wanted people to connect to it, and for the lyrics to express what someone feels when they go through a challenge like this.” Schlusselberg is donating 75 percent of the proceeds from digital sales of the song to two breast cancer organizations, [Sharsheret](http://www.sharsheret.org/) and the [National Breast Cancer Foundation](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/). *Reprinted from the October 8, 2014 email of Tablet Magazine. You can google his song by clicking youtube – I Miss Her by David Schlusselberg.***Torah Scroll for the U.S. Military Rewrites a Legacy****By Jacob Kamaras/JNS.org**Click photo to download. Caption: The color guard marches during an Oct. 12 dedication of a Torah scroll for the U.S. military at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan. At the podium is Jacob Kamaras, and at left giving a salute is his father, Philip Kamaras. Credit: Alexa Drew Photography.Click photo to download. Caption: The color guard marches during an Oct. 12 dedication of a Torah scroll for the U.S. military at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan. At the podium is Jacob Kamaras, and at left giving a salute is his father, Philip Kamaras. Credit: Alexa Drew Photography.Have you ever seen your name engraved on a tombstone? It’s almost an out-of-body experience. Death stares you in the face. Of course, the grave belongs to one of your family members, but the fact that your name is etched in stone is inescapably personal. You ask: When will it be my time? What happens between now and my end? Who am I? Why am I here? Who will I become?I’ve had that experience multiple times at the grave of my grandfather and namesake, Sgt. Jacob Kamaras (U.S. Army Air Corps, 7/8/1942-11/30/1945). I stood and cried alongside my father, Philip, who lost Jacob on Oct. 6, 1964. Jacob died at the age of 56; Philip was 8, and his sister Deborah was 12.Fifty years have passed. I’ve been alive for 28 of those years. During that time, my grandfather has remained mostly a mystery to me. He has been defined by his absence—primarily, the fatherlessness experienced by his children from a young age. But on Oct. 12, 2014, a different narrative on Jacob came to the fore.It had been my father’s desire to mark Jacob’s 50th *yahrzeit* by commissioning the writing of a Torah scroll in his memory. A Torah leaves a tremendous physical and spiritual legacy. Our 613 commandments—the complete guide (supplemented and elucidated by oral law) to the Jewish way of life—are all there to be seen written in ink on parchment. Each Monday, Thursday, and Saturday, and on Jewish holidays, we bear witness to those commandments by reading portions from the Torah at prayer services. Both the physical scroll and its message are passed down from generation to generation, and over time, the Jewish people are inextricably linked by tradition.Who should receive a Torah written in Jacob’s memory? That was no easy question for my family, but after giving the matter serious thought, it was clear to me that because Jacob was a U.S. Army veteran, Jews serving in the military should benefit from a Torah whose creation he inspired. My father agreed. And in fact, I was already aware of a program established for this purpose. When they visit Jewish troops, U.S. military chaplains often find themselves without Judaism’s most essential ritual object—a Torah. The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) Jewish Chaplains Council, a program of the Jewish Community Centers Association of North America, has 60 Torahs at major military installations around the world. But since these full-size Torahs are too large to transport with ease, the JWB in 2009 established the “Torahs for Our Troops” program to address chaplains’ needs in the field and aboard ships to have small scrolls that accompany them from site to site. Four of the lightweight Torahs commissioned by the JWB have been used in Iraq, Qatar, Afghanistan, and on ships. The fifth such scroll, which my family donated, is slated to ride aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) aircraft carrier. (More specifically, my family subsidized a mid-size Torah scroll, a size that works well for ships. Due to the changing needs of the military, the writing of smaller scrolls such as the first four commissioned by the Torahs for Our Troops program is no longer a priority.)On Oct. 12, my family hosted a dedication for our Torah at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan. It was an unforgettable day. Members of all branches of the military—Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard—were on hand for the color guard. “Taps,” the unmistakable musical piece known for being played at military funerals, rang through the air. Rear Admiral Rabbi Harold Robinson, director of the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, recounted inspiring stories of Jews who served in the military. The sofer (scribe) completed the Torah’s final letters, and we sang and danced with the scroll to celebrate. My sister presented a moving [video](http://vimeo.com/108078628) she produced about Jacob’s life and legacy, featuring interviews with my father and aunt. A series of speakers—some who had firsthand knowledge of the aftermath of Jacob’s death, and others who got to know my family later in life—reflected on the significance of the occasion. In my own speech, I addressed a question that consumed my thoughts leading up to the event: What’s in a name? Like my grandfather, I have no English middle name, but I do have two Hebrew names: Chaim Yaakov. My lack of a middle name isn’t lost me. There’s always a blank space where the middle name should go. For me, that represents Jacob’s absence and my duty to fill that void. Then the fact that Chaim, meaning “life,” is part of my Hebrew name can be taken literally—I am Chaim Yaakov, or as I’d like to think of it, “Life of Jacob.” My name is my life. It’s who I am. It represents my family’s past, my own present and future, and my family’s future.A name can derive from a variety of inspirations—a deceased family member, a life experience, or simply an appealing entry in a book of names. Regardless of the scenario, every name has a story, and I believe it’s one of our jobs in this world to craft that story as our lives progress. For me, the story of my name is fairly obvious from the outset, but the story continues to evolve.My family’s newly dedicated Torah scroll is undoubtedly an important chapter in that story. The new Torah is not only a fitting tribute to my grandfather the veteran, but it also represents the re-writing of his legacy—which was previously defined by his absence. This Torah exists because Jacob served our country in the military. This Torah exists because Jacob and his wife Sylvia started a family that was able to support its creation. Now, this Torah will allow Jews to exercise the privilege of religious freedom at the most crucial time, while they defend America. Although tradition looks forward to a time when all Jews settle in the land of Israel, the Jewish people survive and thrive because of their current devotion and endurance in the Diaspora. As it travels on the Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, my family’s Torah will be no small part of that journey.My grandfather’s story is no longer about the tombstone bearing my name. Quite the opposite, Jacob’s legacy is about *life*—the English translation of Chaim, the first part of his Hebrew name. In the face of war and adversity, Jacob’s Torah will give our soldiers new life, new meaning, and new inspiration. It’s a legacy defined not by absence, but by enormous presence.*Reprinted from the October 15, 2014 edition of JNS.org Jacob Kamaras is the editor in chief of JNS.org.* |
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