**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Vayishlach 5773**

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**As Long as the**

**Candle is Burning**

**By Rabbi Label Lam**

 It's told that Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt"l once noticed an elderly shoe-maker working late into the night by the light of a small flickering flame. Reb Yisrael approached him and after engaging in conversation eventually registered his criticism. The old Jew understood that it looked as if work had overtaken his life but he answered back and said, "As long as the candle is burning there's still time to work and repair!"

 When Reb Yisrael heard these words they went into his heart like an arrow. Here he came to offer a rebuke and he was struck with such a powerful aphorism in disguise. He was heard for weeks afterwards pacing in his room crying and repeating the words, "As long as the candle is burning there is still time to work and repair."

 When the Dubner Maggid was asked why he answered every question with a parable he is reported to have said, "I'll tell you a parable!"- In a certain town there was a person named Emes-Truth that always created a stir wherever he went because he was naked. There was always some sort of strong reaction to his presence and by most he was deemed a nuisance.

 He had an old friend named Moshol-Parable who approached him one day and explained, "So many people are disturbed by your appearance. I have a helpful suggestion. If you were to wear one my suits then I think people will tolerate you, understand you, and even accept you." So it was that Emes- Truth put on one of Moshol-Parable's fine suits and he was able to be found mingling comfortably amongst the citizenry of the town, and his message could be heard.

 It seems to be a part of human psychology that when faced with raw truth we all tend to shrink and hide. However, when we see it dressed up in a story or a metaphor we can afford to agree to the lesson before deciding first if it makes us uncomfortable. Reading about somebody else's foibles educates without tripping alarms, by artfully bypassing the defense mechanisms.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting.*

**It Once Happened**

**Rabbi Moshe Yehuda**

**Leib Sassov**

 At his grandson's circumcision celebration, the great Chasidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1810), recounted the following episode:

 "This morning I arose very early to prepare myself to perform the brit mila (circumcision) of my dear grandchild. At daybreak I opened the window and saw a penetrating darkness in the heavens. As I wondered about the blackness before my eyes, it was made known to me that this very day a prince of Israel, the holy Tzadik (righteous person), Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib Sassov, had passed away.

 "As I mourned for that master of Israel, I heard a voice cry out: 'Make way for Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib!'

 "When Rabbi Moshe entered the celestial realms, the Tzadikim and Chasidim formed a joyous circle around him. Suddenly, he heard a voice reaching from one end of the world to the other. Intrigued, he began following it until he found himself at the gates of Gehinnom (Purgatory).

 "Without waiting for permission, Rabbi Moshe entered Gehinnom. The guards saw him walking back and forth as if looking for somebody. They were certain that he had come there by mistake and they politely asked him to ascend to his proper place in Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden).

 "Rabbi Moshe said nothing. The guards repeated their request, but he remained silent and did not move. They didn't know whether to drive him out or permit him to remain. They decided to confer with the Heavenly Court, but even it was puzzled. Never had a Tzadik descended into Gehinnom of his own desire. Rabbi Moshe was summoned before the Throne of Glory where he made his request known.

 "Rabbi Moshe began, 'Master of the World, You know how great is the mitzva (commandment) of redeeming captives. I have occupied myself with this mitzva my entire life, and I have never differentiated between wicked captives and righteous captives. All were equally beloved by me, and I had no peace until I had succeeded in freeing them. Now that I have entered the World of Truth, I find that there are many captives here, too. I wish to fulfill this mitzva here, as well.

 "'I will not leave Gehinnom until I have fulfilled this mitzva. So dear are Your commandments to me that I have observed them no matter what the place or time or penalty might be. If I cannot bring these wretched souls to freedom, I would rather remain with them in the fires of Gehinnom than to sit with the righteous and bask in the light of the Divine Presence!'

 "Rabbi Moshe's words flew before the Throne of Glory, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, uttered the decision: 'Great are the Tzadikim who are ready to relinquish their share in the Gan Eden for the sake of others. Because this mitzva is so noble, let it be calculated how many people Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib redeemed during his lifetime, both they and their children, and their children's children until the end of time. That number he may redeem here, also.'

 "The Book of Records was immediately brought, opened and read. The names of all those who had been redeemed by Rabbi Moshe were counted and their children and their children's children. The final figure arrived at was 60,000 souls from Gehinnom to Gan Eden.

 "Rabbi Moshe began to walk through Gehinnom, looking into countless pits and caves where he found souls who had suffered for a long time. One by one he gathered them and when he was finished, he found their number to be exactly 60,000. Column after column emerged from Gehinnom, marching with them at their head, until they arrived at Gan Eden.

"When all 60,000 souls had entered, the gates were closed."

 After recounting this story, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak named his little grandson Moshe Yehuda Leib and blessed him to grow up to emulate the holy Tzadik, Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Leib of Sassov.

*Reprinted from the recent Parshat Toldot issue of “L’Chaim,”a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Which reprinted it From The Crown of Creation, by Chana Weisberg, published by Mosaic Press*

**Love of the Land**

**A Heavenly Sign**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 The German forces under General Rommel were advancing towards Eretz Yisrael and Jews there feared that they might face the same fate as their brothers in Europe. In the summer of 1941 many of them gathered at the grave of the Ohr Hachayim on the Mount of Olives. They chose to do so on the day of his Yahrzeit in order to give greater power to their prayers for Heavenly deliverance from the threatening Nazis.

 Among the worshippers was the Chassidic leader Rabbi Yisrael of Hasaytin who had set up his court in Tel Aviv a few years earlier. The crowd was stunned as he suddenly cried out, “The wicked will not come. They will not enter Eretz Yisrael!”

 “I have just seen the Divine Name of G-d shining brightly,” he explained. “This is a Heavenly sign that the enemy will never enter the land.”

 Within a year Rommel was stopped at El Alamein only 60 miles west of Alexandria on the Israel-Egypt border, and by the beginning of 1943 the German forces were driven so far back that the threat to Eretz Yisrael was gone.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Respecting One’s Wife**

**By Rabbi Ozer Alport**

 Rabbi Aharon Kotler was legendary for his devotion to studying and teaching Torah. Once, shortly after leaving his home on his way to yeshiva, he asked his driver to turn around and return to his house. His driver couldn't imagine what he had forgotten that could possibly be so critical, but he immediately returned to Rav Aharon's home.

 The driver offered to run inside to fetch whatever was forgotten, but Rav Aharon insisted that he would go to the house himself. The curious driver followed to observe what was so important and was astonished to observe Rav Aharon tell his wife "Goodbye, and have a wonderful day," and return to the car.

 Rav Aharon explained that every day he bid farewell to his wife before leaving. That day he had accidentally forgotten, and he didn't want to hurt his wife's feelings. Only after expending the time to return home and personally say goodbye was he able to proceed to the yeshiva to give his lecture.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbos Candle Lighting.*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Importance of**

**Seeking Advice**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 The 24-year old boy studying in a yeshiva in Israel was anxious to get started on shidduchim since almost every one of his peers was already married. His only obstacle was an older brother back in the States who was still unmarried.

 His high hopes for a breakthrough in the situation through a shidduch in which his brother was involved were dashed when a call came from home that once again nothing had come of this attempt to find a marriage partner.

 He then began to seriously consider passing up his brother despite the pain this might cause him. When he finally decided to do so he phoned his parents to inform them. His father’s reaction was to inquire whether he had asked a rosh yeshiva’s advice on the matter. Although he was absolutely confidentthat he would receive confirmation of his decision, he consented to immediately seek his advice.

 Since his own rosh yeshiva was officiating at a wedding out of town and he was anxious to fulfill his promise to his father, he decided to consult the head of a yeshiva not far away from his own. After hearing his situation the rosh yeshiva said it was permissible for him to pass up his brother but also asked him for some details about that brother’s personality and what type of girl he was looking for. Upon hearing his description the rosh yeshiva told him that he knew a family in the States whose daughter would be an ideal match and gave him their telephone number.

 The happy ending was that the older brother became engaged to that girl and our hero’s problem was solved by heeding his father’s advice to seek advice.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*



**Parshat Vayishlach**

**THE HOME**

**By Simcha Groffman**

 "Mom, I'm home."

 "Devora, shalom! Welcome home. How was school?"

 "Wonderful, Mom."

 "Take off your coat and let me give you a big hug."

 "Mom, you're the best. What's that delicious smell?"

 "Vegetable soup. I have a nice hot lunch for you."

 "Yum. I'm so hungry."

 "Okay, go wash and sit down so we can eat together."

 "Mom, it's so nice to eat with you every day."

 "It's my pleasure, Devora."

 "Mom, can I tell you something personal?"

 "Of course, my dear."

 "You make our home such a wonderful place. You always greet us with a smile, a hug, and a kiss. You have a warm meal waiting for us. You take care of all of us. Our home is always clean, orderly, and well stocked with food. You always have the time to listen to us, and to give us good advice. You make Shabbos and Yomim Tovim so beautiful and special. I just love coming home!"

 "Devora dear, you make me feel so good. I work so hard on all of these things. It is wonderful to hear your appreciation. Can I tell you a secret?"

 "Sure, Mom."

 "This is the most important thing that I can be doing."

 "Why, Mom?"

 "What is the most precious thing in the world?"

 "Gold? Diamonds?"

 "No."

 "What, Mom?"

 "People."

 "Really?"

 "Do you know what a person can accomplish? People can move mountains. They can create cities. They can write beautiful **Chidushei Torah** (original Torah thoughts). An evil person, **cholila** (Heaven forbid) can destroy a whole world. People are worth more than anything."

 "What's the secret that you wanted to tell me, Mom."

 "Do you see those two house-plants over there, Devora?"

 "Yes, Mom. One looks very strong and healthy. But the other one is barely alive."

 "When I bought both of them Devora, they looked the same. I planted one in a flowerpot filled with good, rich soil. It grew big, strong, and beautiful. The other one was planted in weak soil. It hardly grew at all."

 "Mom, tell me the secret."

 "A person is like the plant, and the home is like the soil in the pot. When a person grows up in a good home, he will flourish. His body and soul will receive the nourishment that they need to bloom into a healthy, strong, productive adult. If not, cholila, the person will find it much more difficult to meet life's challenges. That is why my work in the home is so important. It helps to make you into beautiful people. This is the secret to the most precious thing in the world."

 "Mom, how do you know this?"

 "We have a hint in this week's parsha. The Torah writes that Dinah, the daughter of Leah went out to see the daughters of the land where they were living (Bereshis 34:1). Unfortunately, a terrible thing happened to her when she went out.

 “The Medrash Tanchuma comments on this event by quoting a verse in Tehillim (45:14), 'All of the honor of a princess in inside.' When a woman is modest within her home, she atones for her family members. Just as the Holy Altar atones for the Jewish people, so too she atones for her people. When a woman is modest within her home, she becomes like a fruitful vine. Her children become like strong olive trees."

 "Mom, that is beautiful."

 "The home is the woman's field of endeavor. That is where she can be creative. That is where she can create life's most valuable possessions. Devora, you are my valuable possession."

 "Mom, someday I hope to become as good a mommy as you are."

 "Devora, with G-d's help you will be."

*Reprinted from the archives of the Ohr Somayach Yeshiva website (ohr.edu)*

Today's Featured “Ask the Rabbi Question”

Is Buying German

Products Permissible?

 I’ve heard the argument made that Jews should not buy German products, for example Volkswagen cars which used Jewish slave labor during the war. It is wrong for Jews to support German industries?

 My cousin says we should just forgive and forget. I would like your thoughts on the subject.

 The Aish Rabbi Replies:

 The great rabbi known as the Chazon Ish once said that if a Torah scroll was found burning, and a man used it to light his cigarette, there is no Jewish law that forbids it. Nevertheless, doing so would show a lack of sensitivity. So too, Jewish law does not forbid purchasing a German car.

 Regarding the "demand for forgiveness," people often quote the Bible that when one is struck, it is proper to "turn the other cheek" and allow that cheek to be struck as well. But that only appears in the Christian Bible. Jews believe in fighting actively against evil.

 Almost all people are inherently good and so we should forgive their lapses. But some people are truly evil – for example, Amalek, the ancient nation which wantonly attacked the Jews leaving Egypt.

 Over two millennia ago when Haman (a descendant of Amalek) was commanded by the king to lead his enemy Mordechai through the streets of Shushan, Mordechai was too weak to climb on to the horse. Haman had to stoop to allow Mordechai to use his back as a stepping stool. In the process, Mordechai delivered a vicious kick to Haman which obviously startled him.

 Turning to Mordechai in bewilderment, Haman asked: "Does it not say in your Bible, 'Do not rejoice at your enemy's downfall?'" Mordechai responded that indeed it does, but it refers only to people less evil than Haman. So too, we have no reason or allowance to forgive the Nazis and their helpers. Those who scraped the concrete in the gas chambers gasping for air can choose whether to forgive the Germans. We cannot.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Aish.com*

What Was Saved

From the Hurricane?

**By** [**Rabbi Benjamin Blech**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48865417)

What’s the Most Precious Thing We Own?

 Our homes are cluttered with “stuff.” We pride ourselves on many possessions. For some we paid very hefty prices. We tend to think of these as extremely valuable. The more they cost, the more we are inclined to treasure them.

 In a world that all too often confuses price with true worth, we can easily lose our proper perspective.

 Hurricane Sandy gave too many of us the sudden wisdom and stark certainty which of our belongings is actually the most invaluable.

 Imagine the terror that took hold of those in her path. Picture what it must be like to see the torrential waters about to wash away your home. The first thought, without a doubt, is to save your life and the lives of your loved ones. Following that comes the desire to preserve those things you can’t possibly imagine being forever without.

 And what were they? Most people tried to hold on to memories far more than to material possessions.

 Fleeing residents quickly grabbed irreplaceable photo albums and scrapbooks. Souvenirs of memorable moments were seen as more intrinsically valuable than jewelry. And for those who were just barely able to get out with their lives, these were the things they kept searching for in the storm’s aftermath among the shattered remnants and debris of their now uninhabitable dwellings.

 Memories take precious moments and grant them eternity.

 People cried for their destroyed “stuff” but they were inconsolable for the loss of their heirlooms. Intuitively they understood a truth that our materialistic society so often chooses to forget. It isn’t *things* that really make us happy.

 J.M. Barrie put it beautifully when he wrote, “G-d gave us memories that we might have roses in December.” Memories take precious moments and grant them eternity. Memories are rooted in people we love and who loved us. Memories allow us to relive the most glorious times of our lives. Memories aren’t possessions but reminders of joyous occasions that continue to possess us.

 Photos and scrapbooks and diaries and objects that were owned and handled by those we never want to forget hold the key to our happiness. We build our tomorrows with the bricks of our remembrance of the past.

 Why do we spend so much time striving to accumulate more and more of the physical objects that in the grand scheme of things aren’t as important as the loving relationships that cost us nothing but time and effort?

 I will never forget the beautiful insight of one of my teachers who defined our mission in life as “creating beautiful memories.”

 Whether it be for our families, our friends or the people with whom we interact in our lives, it is only through the memories of beautiful moments that we leave behind something of permanent value. “A happy memory,” he told us, “is a hiding place for unforgotten treasures.”

 Today our task is to rebuild. And for all that we have lost, let us remember that while acquiring new possessions will be costly, creating new memories infused with love, caring and concern for others is thankfully free – and priceless.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aish.com website.*

**Chasidic Story #783**

**Protected by Esau's Angel**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 And then there was the time that a group of Jewish community leaders of Medzhibuz came to ***the Baal Shem Tov***, also a resident of Medzhibuz, to discuss a serious problem.

 "It is not a happy occasion that brings us," they explained with a worried tone of voice. "There is an army officer, who despises Jews and does everything he can to torment us. We have just learned that he is about to become our mayor. What a disaster! He will make our lives unbearable. Only you can help us, Rebbe."

 "I am already aware of this problem but I don't know what can be done. Esau's guardian angel is at this man's right side. I am powerless against him."

 "And so what if Esau's angel supports this man!" the townspeople responded. "Are we not more influential? Are we not G-d's own children?"

 It was such utterances of implicit faith that made these townspeople so beloved to the Baal Shem Tov.

 "We will see. There are good ministering angels on our side too. Let us wait and see how this turns out," he answered.

 The townspeople heard this and were satisfied. "Thank G-d. We can rely on the Rebbe," they said to each other.

 Medzhibuz had an annual fair which was attended by farmers and merchants from near and far. This fair was the main attraction of the town. Everyone found something of interest, be it buying, selling or just having fun.

 On the morning the fair was about to open, the Baal Shem Tov arose early to pray with the Jewish merchants that were hurrying to open their booths. Following the morning prayers, the Baal Shem Tov announced "I am also going to the fair."

 This statement alarmed the merchants. They warned the Rebbe, "You can't go today. The army officer we told you about will ride through the market place on his horse and strike whoever is in his way with a leather whip. He makes a special point of lashing Jews, whom he particularly despises. Please, Rebbe, don't go."

 "And why should I be any different than the other Jews who feel his whip?" the Baal Shem Tov replied. Wearing his *capoteh* (a long black suit-coat) and his *shtreimel* (round, flat fur hat), the Baal Shem Tov walked to the market place, followed by a group of his followers.

 "Good morning," he said to whomever he passed. However, the townsfolk could not bear to look at his glowing face and answered his greetings with averted eyes.

 Suddenly everyone froze. The anti-Semitic officer galloped into the market place on his huge, powerful, black horse. His uniform was pressed, his high boots polished to a sheen, and with a gleeful smile, he flicked his whip right and left in sadistic pleasure. He accompanied his lashes with shouts of fury, "Dirty Jews, out of my way!"

 Everyone tried to flee from his path but few could escape the long reach of his vicious whip. Right and left it swung, tearing at coats, upsetting piles of merchandise, relentlessly striking whomever it could. Only the Baal Shem Tov stood his ground. Following his example, his disciples behind him were equally steadfast.

 The officer soon reached the group of chasidim. When he saw they weren't fleeing, he grew furious. "Out of my way!" he shouted and brought his whip down.

 It was fortunate that the Baal Shem Tov was wearing his *shtreimel*. The whip fell on it, merely grazing the Rebbe's forehead. But its tip did leave an imprint and a drop of blood shone brightly upon his forehead. To add insult to injury, the officer spat at the group and galloped on.

 Everyone crowded around the Baal Shem Tov to make sure he was alright. They were concerned about both his wound and the shame he had suffered at the hands of this cruel officer, a truly despicable person.

 But, the Baal Shem Tov didn't appear to be upset and maintained his usual calm demeanor. "When the fair is over this evening, I want everyone to come to my *shul*," he announced.

 At the end of the day, everyone came to the *shul* and found many tables set with platters of cake and shnaps. "Drink a *'lechayim'*!" he happily urged each newcomer. "Eat something! Rejoice!" exclaimed the Baal Shem Tov.

 Everyone could not help but wonder why they were celebrating.

 Finally, after much anticipation, the Baal Shem Tov arose and spoke. "I have good news for you. Today, when the officer so arrogantly rode through the market place, I whispered a prayer.

 'G-d All Mighty, this evil man, in his great pride and haughtiness, sees himself as the ruler of Your children. Does he really deserve such greatness?'

 "Thank G-d, my prayer was accepted and the heavenly court ruled against him. Therefore, I am happy to inform you, my brothers and sisters, that this wicked man lost his future post as mayor. Now eat, drink and be grateful to G·d."

 And so it was.

 Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of Tzvi-Meir HaCohane (Howard M. Cohn, Patent Attorney).

 Biographical Note: **Rabbi Yisrael, the Baal Shem Tov** ["master of the good Name"], a unique and seminal figure in Jewish history, revealed the Chassidic movement and his own identity as an exceptionally holy person, on his 36th birthday, 18 Elul 1734. He passed away on the festival of Shavuot in 1760. He wrote no books, although many claim to contain his teachings. One available in English is the excellent annotated translation of *Tzava'at Harivash*, published by Kehos. Also, translations from *Sefer Baal Shem Tov* and *Kesser Shem Tov* can be found on //baalshemtov.com.

*Reprinted from this week’s email*

**Hatzolah Pair Saves**

**The Day in Montreal**

 When **Nicole Drapeau** of Montreal slipped on a patch of ice two weeks ago and broke her ankle, she got more than just free medical treatment for her injury. She says she had her faith in mankind restored.



**Lubavitchers Yossi Wenger and Dovid Weinbaum, members of Montreal Hatzolah, saved a life and made a kiddush Hashem.** [**VIN News**](http://www.vosizneias.com/118176/2012/11/26/quebec-montreal-in-letter-to-canadian-newspaper-non-jewish-woman-praises-hatzoloh-for-helping-her)

 In a letter to The [**Montreal Gazette**](http://www.montrealgazette.com/Letter%2BHelp%2Bcame%2Bfrom%2BHatzoloh/7600790/story.html), Drapeau relates her ordeal on Nov. 16 2012, and tells how surprised she was when help came to her from an unlikely source with “a sense of community” – Hatzoloh.

 “On Friday, Nov. 16, I was walking along the sidewalk during my break at work, at about 9:30 a.m., near the corner of Paré St. and Victoria Ave. There was a patch of ice, and, as you might have guessed, I slipped and broke my ankle.

 “There were lots of people around. People stopped to offer their help. Some nice woman called 911 to get an ambulance. Then, we started waiting.

 "After about 10 minutes, a man with a hat and long beard – a Hasidic Jew – comes along and starts asking questions, and after about 30 seconds, takes his phone and starts to call for help," Drapeau wrote.

 "We tell him we have called an ambulance already, but he says it will take a minimum of 40 minutes. After about five to seven minutes, a van arrives with two other men of the same group... They took my vital signs, and put me into their van to keep warm."

 Drapeau says she wrote the letter because she wanted to express her gratitude to Hatzolah – a group she had never heard of – but felt that a monetary donation was not sufficient.

 "I think that people should be acknowledged for their good deeds," she said. "I want to make sure that Team W47N72 of the Hatzoloh D & W Division gets heartfelt thanks from an ever-grateful French-Canadian lady they found on a sidewalk in pain."

 An hour later, the ambulance finally responded to the scene.

 Had it not been for the "charitable man" who called his friend at Hatzoloh, Drapeau says she would have spent those 60 minutes waiting on a freezing sidewalk for help to arrive.

*Reprinted from the November 27, 2012 website of Matzav.com The article originally appeared in the COLLIVE website.*

**Necessary Repairs**

 The following true story took place a number of years ago in Eress Yisrael. Two yeshivah students decided to take a trip up north to visit a number of the gravesites of the righteous that are situated there. It was a nice day, and they were able to get hold of a decent car, so they decided to drive. Things were going along smoothly until they noticed that their thermostat was running a bit higher than it should. Fearing that they would overheat, they pulled over on the side of the road to see what was wrong.

 Neither one of these students was well-versed in auto-mechanics, so they attempted to wave down anyone who could help them solve the problem. A number of motorists pulled over and attempted to solve their problem, to no avail. Apparently, they would need the services of a qualified mechanic. To put it simply: they were stuck. Suddenly, a car pulled up and out came a man dressed in full hassidic garb. He asked, "What seems to be the problem?"

 "Our car is overheating, and we have no idea what is wrong," they replied. "Let me see what I can do," the man said. The fellow removed his long frock and lay down on the ground beneath the car, searching for the trouble spot After a few minutes, he came out and said, "I know the problem. Your fan belt tore and must be replaced."

 "What should we do?" the bachurim asked. "Not to worry," the man answered, as he returned to his car and brought out a giant tool chest with car repair tools. He then opened his trunk and took out a brand new fan belt. After completing the repair, he packed up his car and was prepared to leave.

 "How much do we owe you?" the bachurim asked. "Nothing," he replied. "What I did is a hesed. I enjoy helping people out." "Well, we cannot force you to take money for the time that you wasted, but what about the part? That is an expensive part - why should you pay for it?"

 "It is no problem. I must do this my way," he replied. “Let me tell you a story. I grew up in a totally secular environment, shunning the religious way of life. I was a highly successful car mechanic with a thriving business. Since I knew cars inside-out, I would diagnose a problem which the owner had no clue existed, or I would charge inflated prices for the repairs that I performed. One day, I decided to eschew my life of abandon and was chozer b'teshubah, prepared to live a life completely committed to Torah and misvah observance.

 "One thing kept gnawing at me: During my years as a mechanic, I had been running a lucrative business which was not very honest. I was ripping off my customers with exorbitant prices, often for work that was unnecessary. How was I to perform teshubah for the petty and often not-so-petty theft? I went to my Rebbe, who was guiding me on my journey of return to Torah and asked his advice.

 “He told me that since there was no way of identifying my victims, my teshubah would have to be of an all-encompassing nature: offering my expertise to whomever was in need - free of charge. This is what I do. Twice a week, I drive the highways looking for people in trouble. I carry with me a complete set of tools and many vital parts. Whenever I notice someone in need, I offer my services. This is my teshubah. You have enabled me to draw one step closer to Hashem. Thank you!" (Peninim on the Torah)

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*