**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Ki sisa 5776**

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**A Miracle During**

**The Gaza War**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

 Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky tells an amazing true story of the garment of Jews we call sisit. The story takes place in Gaza during an operation that took place a number of years ago. As the fierce fighting in Gaza continued, the list of the dead and wounded grew longer.

 In America the Jewish people looked for ways to increase the spiritual armor that protected these young soldiers. People prayed for individual soldiers, said Tehillim for them, and learned Torah on their behalf. One project that caught on in shuls and communities throughout the country was a campaign to supply the soldiers with sisit, the strongest armor a Jew can wear.

 Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff participated in this project and raised money to purchase sisit for tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers who did not have their own. After the war Rabbi Leiff heard a story that illustrated the life-saving power of this

protection.

 The soldiers of the Yahalom Counter-Terrorist Unit were a subdivision of the IDF’s renowned Golani Brigade. They were assigned a delicate and dangerous mission that would take them, undercover, into enemy territory to search for a certain group of terrorists. To do the job, they had disguised themselves in Hamas uniforms, but underneath, they wore sisit they had just received from the American sisit campaign.

 They entered the building in Gaza and began searching for the terrorists, knowing that any moment they could be discovered and shot. All at once, the mission went wrong. Shots rang out form hidden places in the building. The soldiers returned fire, while running to the roof of the building to lose their attackers or at least draw them into the open.

 As they reached the roof of the building they saw a welcome sight. Glinting

above them in the blazing sun, an Israeli helicopter had come to save them. But in one terrifying moment, their relief turned into panic. The helicopter was not positioning itself for a rescue; it was getting ready to fire!

 Suddenly, the men realized that because of their disguises, they had become targets. There were only seconds left before the helicopter would open fire. There was no time to make radio contact, and no place to

take cover. The group’s leader screamed out to his men, “Take out your sisit!” Frantically the men grabbed for their sisit and began jumping up and waving them in the air. Viewing the strange sight, the helicopter gunner held his fire. No matter what the men on the roof were wearing on the outside, their sisit had shown instantly who they were on the inside. They were saved.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Tesaveh 5776 email from the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**Story #951**

**Beware of Praising the Sick**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?session_redirect=true&userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1455720583&randid=286376753)

 When **Rabbi Avraham of Sochatchov** was a little boy he once fell dangerously ill, and his father, Rabbi Ze'ev Nachum of Biala, set out at once to ask his rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk, to intercede in heaven on his behalf. When he arrived there, he began to tell the *tzadik* of the intense desire and assiduity with which his brilliant son studied Torah.

 "You call that studying?" the *tzadik* said, half to himself.

 The father was alarmed. Why should the rebbe seek to utter such a negative appraisal of his son in the hearing of the Heavenly Court? And why especially now, when the child stood in mortal danger?

 By the time he arrived home he found his son on his cheerful way to recovery. But when he asked his father exactly what the *tzadik* had said when he had asked for his blessing, the father was at a loss for an answer. Then when the boy begged him repeatedly, he could only say: "Believe me, my son, I too do not understand what he said."

 Finally, he persuaded his father to repeat exactly what the *tzadik* said. The response of the prodigy was: "What is difficult to understand in that? His words are exactly parallel to what we find in the Talmud Yerushalmi. We learn there that when Rabbi Tarfon was ill, his mother said to the Sages who came to visit him: 'Pray for my son Tarfon, who honors me even more than one is obliged to do.'

 And when they asked her: 'Why, what does he do?' she told them that one Shabbat, when she was about to return to her house after strolling in the courtyard, he had gone out and put the palms of his hands under her feet, moving them step by step so that she could walk on them, until she reached her bed. The Sages then retorted: 'Even if he does that a thousand times a thousand, he still will not have reached one half of the respect which the Torah commands children to show their parents.'

 "Now father," concluded the young boy, "surely we should ask the same question here. Could it possibly be that the Sages wanted to play down Rabbi Tarfon's merits in the eyes of heaven at the very moment that he stood in need of mercy? Is it not likelier that they were apprehensive lest his task on earth had thus reached its fulfillment? If so, he would now have nothing to do in This World. And just as they wanted to remind the Heavenly Court that there were even higher levels at which that *mitzvah* could be fulfilled, in order that he should live on, so too with the rebbe of Kotsk.

 When you told him how well I study, he was fearful lest I had already completed my life's work. So he too wanted to make it clear that there were many challenges still waiting for me in This World, in the field of Torah study."

 Amazed at this son's perception, the father repeated his explanation to Reb Menachem Mendel when he was next in Kotsk.

 "Now, now!" said the *tzadik*. "Do you mean to say that he already guesses at what I have in mind?"

 **Editor's note:** The Kotzker must indeed have been impressed. When the Sochatchover was a mere 13 years of age, the Rebbe took him as a husband for his oldest daughter, Sarah-Tzina.

***Source*:** Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in *A Treasury of Chassidic Tales* (Artscroll), as translated by R. Uri Kaploun from *Sipurei Chasidim* by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin.

***Biographical note*:** **Rabbi Avraham Bornstein of Sochatchov** [of blessed memory: 5600 - 11 Adar 5670 (October 14, 1839 - February 1910 C.E.)] was a descendant of the Ramah and the Shach. Years before his bar mitzvah he was recognized as a Torah genius. At age 13, he married a daughter of the Kotzker Rebbe, with whom he learned almost daily for nearly 7 years, until the latter's death, whereupon he became a follower first of his uncle, R. Yitzchak-Meir of Ger, and then of R. Chanoch-Henech of Alexander.

 Already a leading authority in Jewish law, in 1883 he became the rebbe of thousands of chasidim and the founder of the Sochatchover dynasty. His writings include the classic *Avnei Nezer* (seven volumes of posthumously-published responsa,) and *Eglei Tal*(on the laws of Shabbat). He was succeeded by his only son, R. Shmuel (1856-1926), author of Shem MiShmuel.

***Connection*:** Seasonal-106th yahrzeit of the Avnei Nezer rebbe.

*Reprinted from last week’s (Parashat Tetzaveh 5776) email from KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed. www.ascentofsafed.com*

**Love of the Land**

**Tiberius Hot Springs –**

**Tomb of Rabbi Yirmiyahu**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, zt”l**

 It is not often that the tomb of a Talmudic Sage is reached on a main road. Rabbi Yirmiyahu’s tomb is on the grounds of the Ganei Hamat Hotel next to the Tiberius Hot Springs. Tradition has it that this Sage asked his disciples to bury him on a main road so that he would be prepared to rise the moment that the Mashiach arrives.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Terumah 5776 email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Daily Emunah**

**Many Messengers**

**By Rabbi David Ashear**

 It is so important for a person to live with the emunah that his livelihood comes only from Hashem. It is not dependent on any account or any person or any circumstance. הרבה שלוחים למקום- Hashem has many ways of sending it.

 Yes, we have to put in our effort; and yes, we have to pray for it. However, once we have done that, we become receptacles to receive Hashem's blessing. If a person worked on a deal for two weeks, but didn't make money on it, it wasn't a waste. He now has two weeks of hishtadlut credited to his account; the money will come a different way.

 We are not desperate people. If somebody doesn't come through for us, we say, "No problem, baruch Hashem. Hashem wants the money to come a different way." Hashem knows what we need and when we need it. We should always feel calm and secure that if a financial need arises, Hashem will find a way to help us.

 A restaurant owner told me that during school's mid-winter break, he does very little business. However, usually on the Saturday night before, he does outstanding business which compensates for the vacation lull. This year, there was a snowstorm, and he didn't make a penny that night. By mid-week, he was in need of cash but didn't have a place to draw from.

 All of a sudden, a friend of his comes into his store and gives him an envelope. Inside was a check for five thousand dollars, a repayment of loan that he took fourteen years before. The man decided to pay him back just at the moment that he needed the money. That was Hashem taking care of him at his time of need. The money didn't have to come from his restaurant, he did his hishtadlut, and Hashem sent it another way.

 Another man told me that he was renovating his house and needed $100,000 for the project. One of his friends offered to lend him the sum, starting off with $50,000. The project was underway and moving smoothly, but the friend called him and apologized, saying he's not going to be able to lend him the other $50,000. This man was not in a position to get a loan from a bank, and he didn't know other people who could lend him that sum of money. He owns a small gift shop in Flatbush that pays his bills, but it does not earn enough for things like this.

 As the weeks passed by, he paid his workers with the remaining money, praying every day to Hashem to please send him the other $50,000 he needed. Last week, the agent of a famous actress walked into his store and saw something that he liked. He introduced himself and said he was buying gifts for hundreds of people. The man made $30,000 on the sale. This is a small store in a quiet area of Brooklyn. The actress and her agent are stationed in Manhattan. There are probably dozens of other gift shops in between. What were they doing in this little store? That was Hashem bringing them there to give the man the money he needed.

 A few days later, the man gets a phone call that he is due to receive a check for $20,000 from a lawsuit involving a car accident that he had been in 1998, almost eighteen years ago. At the exact moment he needed the money, Hashem sent it. Thirty thousand plus twenty thousand- he got his fifty thousand.

 -Hashem has many messengers. He is the only One who is sending us our **פרנסה**-livelihood. If we live with this realization, we will have much more peaceful lives.

*Reprinted from the February 9, 2016 email of Daily Emunah.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Rabbi and the**

**Two Hungry Lions**

 When the rains came in the right time and the crops grew and flourished, the Jews in the Land of Israel lived and prospered. But, when the sky burned with fierce heat and no rains fell, suffering was the lot of the unfortunate people. In such years, the community was forced to turn to their fellow Jews outside the land of Israel to come to their aid.

 One such year disaster struck the holy land and the elders of the community met to choose an emissary to travel to the Diaspora to collect funds. The natural choice was Rabbi Abraham Galanti, since he was respected by everyone as a wise and honest man; no one had a bad word to say about him. And so, although he was not young and traveling was difficult for him, Rabbi Galanti agreed to go.

 Rabbi Galanti gathered a few belongings and made his way to the port of Jaffa, where he would board a ship to sail to the great city of Constantinople which had a large Jewish community. The trip was not very long, and soon land was spotted in the distance. However, when the ship was close enough to see the shore, the captain and crew saw unusual activity in the city. People stood on the rooftops waving and shouting. They seemed to be warning the ship to turn back.

 The captain didn't know what to do. He wanted to go ashore, but, it would be irresponsible to risk the lives of his passengers and crew. Finally, he made his decision: the ship would continue to the next port. When the news reached the passengers, Rabbi Galanti approached the captain. "Sir, it is imperative that I disembark here in Constantinople. I have been sent on a mission of mercy by the Jews of the Holy City of Jerusalem who are in danger of starvation. There is no question, but I must insist that you fulfill your contract and bring me directly to Constantinople."

 The captain was impressed by the regal bearing of the old Jew and his insistence to go to shore, and despite his reluctance, he decided to do as the rabbi requested. He dispatched one of his sailors to bring Rabbi Galanti to shore in a small boat. As soon as the rabbi reached the shore, the sailor would return to the ship and they would be off.

 The plan went well, and Rabbi Galanti landed on the shore of Constantinople. But as soon as he set his foot on the ground, two soldiers ran up to him and said, "Take shelter at once, old man, if you value your life!"

 "Why, what is happening here?" Rabbi Galanti asked.

 "Two wild lions have escaped from their cages in the Sultan's gardens, and they are roaming the streets of the city and menacing the people. They haven't eaten in days, and no one dares approach them, for fear of being ripped to shreds. The people are hiding in their houses or on the rooftops!"

 No sooner had they finished speaking than one of the lions appeared. The soldiers disappeared in a wink, leaving Rabbi Galanti standing before the gigantic lion. The rabbi showed no fear at all. Then the lion walked up to the rabbi and sat down at his side like a huge, gentle, golden dog. Rabbi Galanti gently took the animal by its ear and began leading it to the palace garden. As they continued their progress, the other lion appeared and joined the strange group. The people of Constantinople couldn't believe their eyes as they watched the trio, an elderly rabbi in the middle, holding two seemingly tame lions by their ears, walking peacefully toward the Sultan's gardens.

 When they neared the royal palace, the Sultan, who had been watching from his palace ramparts, showed the rabbi where to deposit the two lions.

When they were safely ensconced in their cages, the Sultan and his retainers descended from the roof and greeted the rabbi. The Sultan welcomed him with tremendous honor and invited him to enter the royal palace. He had a dozen questions for the rabbi, but of primary interest was how he had managed to subdue the fierce lions which had terrorized the entire city. Was it some magic, or witchcraft, the Sultan asked.

 "Your Majesty," Rabbi Galanti replied, "I am a simple Jew, who has traveled here from the holy city of Jerusalem to collect funds for the poor and destitute. As for witchcraft, our Torah forbids such things. However, our great Sages have taught that at creation, G-d implanted in the nature of animals a natural fear of humans. It holds true, however, only when the human beings act as they were created to, in a G-dly manner. I, your Majesty, have always worked on controlling my nature. Therefore, I have no reason to fear animals. Indeed, I fear only G-d. Therefore, the lions exhibited their natural fear of humans when they saw me, and I was able to calmly return them to their cages."

 The Sultan was highly impressed with the words of the venerable old Jew. He called his Chief Treasurer to bring a store of silver and gold coins. He presented them to Rabbi Galanti and sent them in gratitude to aid the poor residents of Jerusalem. In addition, he prepared a fine ship and filled it with precious cargo to transport Rabbi Galanti back to his home in great honor and comfort.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Tetzaveh 5776 edition of L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**Cast Your Bread… #36**

**The Reward for a Kindness**

 Sadie was a widow who arrived in America in the early 1900’s. She was meant to live with her children, but it painfully never worked out. Mrs. Davis, a warm-hearted and kind young woman living in New England, took Sadie in. She moved her oldest daughter in with the three youngest ones and told them that “Bubbie Sadie” was coming to live with them.

 At first glance, not many people would have taken in Sadie. Her appearance was quite odd, almost frightening. She had white hair pinned back in a bun and except for two almost fang-like front teeth, she was toothless. She wore men’s shoes and outdated clothing.

 But up close, one could discern her warm, child-like eyes. She became a member of the Davis family. In those years, home births were quite common. When Mrs. Davis would give birth at home, Dr. Pine would come over. It was time for Mrs. Davis to give birth to her youngest child. After waiting for a while, Dr. Pine fell asleep in his arm chair. It turned out that “Bubbie Sadie” had been a midwife in Europe and now helped Mrs. Davis to give birth.

 Dr. Pine eventually woke up, but the baby did not cry when she was born. After turning and shaking the baby several times, Dr. Pine told Mrs. Davis that the baby was not alive.

 Bubbie Sadie grabbed the baby from the doctor and screamed, “No! This baby is very much alive!” She put the baby in cold water and then in warm water, back and forth several times, until the baby let out a little cry.

 Bubbie Sadie kept holding the baby, comforting her, until she knew the baby was okay. When Mrs. Davis would gratefully relay this story, she would say, “What would have happened, G-d forbid, if I hadn’t taken Sadie in!” (A Mother’s Favorite Stories)

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshas Tetzaveh’s email of The Weekly Vort.*

**A Trip to Atlantic City**

 R’ Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, the legendary Rosh Mesivta of Yeshivah Torah Vodaath and Founder of Torah Umesorah, was ill and weak in the year 1942. To everyone’s astonishment, however, one morning R’ Feivel insisted on journeying to the resort of Atlantic City, New Jersey.

 In those days the highways had not yet been built. R’ Feivel made the long, tiring trip from Brooklyn via ambulance. The ailing man arrived at his destination, the hotel where the well-known philanthropist, Sam Feuerstein, was staying, and was wheeled into Mr. Feuerstein’s room.

 Mr. Feuerstein was astonished to see R’ Feivel before him. R’ Feivel quickly came to the point of his visit: “I cannot rest! Now is the critical moment to establish yeshivos in America. The war in Europe is destroying all our old Torah centers.

 At this time, one Yeshivah - Torah Vodaath is not enough. We must build yeshivos to educate our youth. That’s why I’m here today. I’m asking you to start an organization that shall direct the establishment of yeshivos in America.”

 Sam Feuerstein was amazed by this display of devotion to a noble goal, and by his absolute disregard for his own person.

 R’ Feivel continued, “I have not come for money. I could have solicited funds on the telephone. I want something else – encouragement, a warm heart, devotion. I need your assurance that you will take the responsibility of directing such an organization.”

 Mr. Feuerstein readily agreed and a short while later, organized a banquet at the Waldorf Astoria, which raised the then princely sum of $40,000. This was how Torah Umesorah was founded. It proceeded to build yeshivos all over America, preparing the ground for the thousands of orphaned young Jews who would seek refuge from war-torn Europe.

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshas Tetzaveh’s email of The Weekly Vort.*

**Shabbos Treasures**

**A Unique Partnership with Rav Yitzchok of Alexander**

 A store owner who did not observe Shabbos once came to Rav Yitzchok of Alexander with a complaint that his business was unsuccessful, and he seeked the Tzaddik’s Brachah and advice.

 Rav Yitzchok advised him, “If you will take me as a partner in your business, you will be successful.”

 Of course, the man happily agreed.

 Rav Yitzchok said, I’d like to own one seventh of the business, and the man, again, was more than happy to oblige. Rav Yitzchok asked him to draw up a contract which they both signed.

 Rav Yitzchok then said, “Since I now own a seventh of the business, it works out that essentially, I will be running the business for one day a week, and you will be running it for six days. I’d like my day to run the business to be on Shabbos.

 “You can have the other six days to run it as you choose. I choose to run the business on my day to be closed, and if you agree, I will forgo any profits that you make on your six days, if you forgo any profits that I make on my day. We each keep what we earn.”

 The man was hesitant to agree, but he looked down at the contract he just signed with the Rav, and agreed to the arrangement, and from then on, his store remained closed on Shabbos.

 Word soon got out that Rav Yitzchok of Alexander was now a partner with this man in business, and people started buying more from him, and he became very busy. His business prospered, and he realized the brilliance of Rav Yitzchok, and he decided to become a true Shomer Shabbos! (Ma’asiyos HaGedolim)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5776 email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Stories compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The Siddur Speaks**

**The Steipler Gaon’s**

**Unusual Promise**

 Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski once said over the following story: A man once related how he had been married for many years and didn’t have children. He said that he went to visit Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, for a Brachah, and the Steipler had promised him a son. The man said that this promise was fulfilled, and soon after, his son was born.

 Rav Shach visited the Steipler and commented about this story, “It is not our practice to perform miracles. How could you have made such a promise to that man?”

 The Steipler responded, “I will tell you what happened. This man pleaded with me for a child, and I gave him a Brachah that Hashem should bentch him with children. However, this man was not satisfied with a Brachah and wanted a promise from me. I told him I couldn’t promise him anything, as everything is in Hashem’s hands.

 “He was insistent and would not leave. I have to admit that I was getting frustrated because I wanted to get back to my learning, so to placate him, I said, ‘Alright, I promise you a son.’

 “Afterwards I thought to myself, “How could I have done such a thing and make such a promise?! To make up for it, I said Tehilim for him, and soon later he had a son.”

 Rav Shach replied, “You said Tehilim for him? Then that’s not performing a miracle. That is the power of saying Tehilim that brought a salvation!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Mishpatim 5776 email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Stories compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The Rebbetzin and**

**The Librarian**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 The following story occurred some 60 years ago (Chabad Yagel magazine, Kislev 5768) The Lubavitcher Rebbe's wife Chaya Mushka, in addition to being a very holy woman was gifted with extraordinary intelligence and regularly visited the Manhattan Library to take out and return books.

 On one of her visits the librarian, a young Jewish woman in her 30s, noticed the name 'Schneerson' on her withdrawal form and asked if she was any relation to the great Rabbi in Brooklyn.

 "Yes", she replied "He is my husband." The librarian sighed and said,
"Ahhh, I once got a blessing from your husband. Two years ago I went to visit him and told him my problem. But it didn't help.

 “My husband and I had been married for almost ten years but still had not been blessed with children and the doctors said they couldn't help. So when someone told me that the Rebbe was a great and holy man and his blessings were pure and powerful I went to him and it was a very amazing experience.

 “A very amazing man! I got a private audience with him and I asked him for a blessing for a child. He said that he would give me the blessing but blessings are like the rain; they require a proper vessel. For rain to work the ground must be plowed and seeded, for blessings to work I have to accept on myself to do a commandment

 "I asked him which one and he suggested that I light Shabbat Candles. In fact a long time ago in Europe when I was a girl my mother used to light them. So I started lighting Shabbat Candles and I've been doing it for two years.

 “But, not that I regret lighting the candles…. I am very happy that I began to light them, but for some reason the blessing isn't working. We still have no children."

 The Rebbe's wife listened and tried to comfort her

 "I'm very sorry to hear this.  Believe me, I know exactly how you feel. You see… I also have no children. There are simply some things that we don't understand."

 But the librarian's eyes filled with tears as she almost whispered.

 "But, I'm different. I'm a survivor. My family… I have no family… they were all wiped out in the holocaust… all of them. Only I survived. If I don't have children no one will be left….. no one. This is why it is so important for me to have children. It means continuing the family."

 The Rebbe's wife thought for a few seconds and cautiously asked

 "Tell me again. Exactly what did my husband tell you?"

 She answered, "I asked him what commandment I should do and he told me to light Shabbat candles every Friday. So I agreed."

 "Perhaps you missed a Shabbat?"

 "No! I would never do that!" she replied. "It was the blessing! The blessing for children! I wouldn't dream of missing the blessing. Every Friday, without exception, when my husband came home from work I lit the candles."

 "And when would he come home?" the Rebbe's wife asked.

 "After work; at seven or eight o'clock in the evening… he would even put on a Yarmulke and watch. I covered my head, read the blessing and lit the candles… just like my mother used to do."

 The Rebbe's wife understood what had happened; the woman was lighting the candles too late. She obviously did not know that after the Shabbat begins at sunset it is forbidden to light fire and she was unwittingly transgressing it!

 When the Rebbe's wife explained to the librarian her mistake, the librarian thanked her, promised to correct it and the Rebbe's wife took her phone number and promised to keep in touch.

 Sure enough a few months after she began lighting the candles in the proper time she became pregnant and nine months later gave birth to a boy. From then on a close friendship developed between them and the librarian even visited the Rebbitzin's home in Crown Heights several times.

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshas Tetzaveh 5776 email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**The Half Shekel Donation**

Half a shekel, after the shekel of the Sanctuary (Ex. 30:13)

 This verse contains an allusion to the commandment of charity for the word "shekel" has the same numerical equivalent as nefesh, soul (430). This teaches that giving charity has the power to effect atonement for the soul. *(Baal HaTurim)*

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim Weekly.”*

**May I Shop in a Store and Then Purchase for Cheaper Online?**

**By** Rabbi [**Aron Moss**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/8051/jewish/Aron-Moss.htm)



 Here's the scenario. I walk into an electronics store and ask the sales staff for advice on which digital camera is best for my needs. The guy spends half an hour explaining the pros and cons of all the different models. I say thanks and walk out of the store, then go online and order the exact camera he recommended, but at a much cheaper price. Am I being dishonest?

**Answer:**

 "Thou shalt not steal" does not only apply to outright thievery. The Torah warns against “stealing people's minds,” which means misleading them through words or actions, in order to gain some personal benefit.

 Say you’re getting married, and you send an invitation to an acquaintance who you know won't attend the wedding. If your true motive is just to earn a gift in return, and you don't really want the person to come to the wedding, then that's stealing their mind for selfish gain. But if you are extending the invitation to honor them, or so they don't feel insulted, then that's fine. In such a case, you are not taking, you are giving. It all depends on your intent.

 The Talmud prohibits asking a shopkeeper the price of an item that you have no intention of buying. You are stealing his mind, by making him think he has a customer. It would seem that the same applies to your camera shopping expedition. The sales guy invested half an hour in you, thinking he had a buyer. If you never intended to purchase the camera in that store, you stole his mind, as he gave you his time for nothing.

 Now, you could argue that your case is different from the Talmudic one. The guy who served you doesn't own the store, he is just in sales. It makes no difference to him if he made the sale or not, his job is to answer customers' questions. Okay, but perhaps he gets a commission on each sale, so he wouldn't have bothered wasting his time on you if he knew there was no chance of sealing the deal. And even if not, are you not stealing from the shop owner, who pays his sales team to serve genuine customers?

 You might say that you would be more than happy to purchase the camera from the store, if they would match the online price. So you weren't deceiving, just comparative shopping. That may indeed be the case. Only you and G‑dknow.

In most questions of right and wrong, actions count more than intentions. But when it comes to stealing minds, the action is always defensible. Your intentions should be, too.

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshat Tetzaveh email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**Reb Shlomo Zalman’s**

**Advice to a Young Widow**

 The young widow who entered Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's study was obviously distraught. In addition to the loneliness and pain she experienced, a sense of urgency was about her. She had recurring pangs of guilt. She wanted to do something spiritual to memorialize her dear husband.

 Perhaps she should establish a free loan fund or contribute books to the Yeshiva library. Or perhaps there was an act of spiritual self-improvement that she should perform. Reb Shlomo Zalman waited till she finished and then instructed her to listen to his advice very carefully.

 "I understand your need to do something spiritual as a tikkun (uplift) for your husband's soul. This is my advice to you. Go out and buy some toys for your children, take them to the park and enjoy life with them. Forget the quest for the great spiritual tikkun and help your children rejoice in life. That will bring the greatest tikkun for your husband."

*Reprinted from last week’s Parshas Tetzaveh 5776 email of Torah Teasers.*