**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas toldos 5781**

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**The Marriage That**

**Was Meant to Be**

**By [Elchonon Isaacs](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/22162/jewish/Isaacs-Elchonon.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Browse%20more%20articles%20by%20Isaacs%2C%20Elchonon)**



**Illustrated by the Rivka Korff Studio**

 It was a joyous day in the Ukrainian city of Mohyliv, where the Jewish community was inaugurating the new women’s mikvah. Times were difficult and the fact that they had scraped together the funds to build a spacious and welcoming mikvah was certainly cause for celebration.

 The atmosphere was jubilant at the crowded reception, especially among the women, who treasured the mitzvah of mikvah and looked forward to using the new facility. The rebbetzin and the butcher’s wife found themselves sitting together; both women shared a common sorrow, they were childless. A well-wisher came over and wholeheartedly blessed them that they should merit to have children.

 The rebbetzin was so moved that she declared to the butcher’s wife, “If we merit, with G‑d's blessing, to have children, you a girl and I a boy, or vice versa, let’s marry them off. What a fine *shidduch* that will be!”

 When the rabbi heard that his unborn offspring had been promised to the butcher and his wife, he was none too pleased. But time passed, and the entire episode was all but forgotten.

 Years passed and the rabbi of Mohyliv was looking for a suitable young man for his daughter. He traveled from one yeshivah to another, searching for a young man who was learned, sensitive, G‑d fearing, and from fine, respectable stock. In one yeshivah, he met the son of the rabbi of Kyiv, who impressed him, and the engagement was soon announced.

 During the engagement period, the groom was invited for an extended stay in Mohyliv, his wife’s hometown. The excited groom was warmly welcomed. As the visit wore on, a sense of unexplained anxiety seemed to overcome him. His change of mood could be traced to a certain house on the way from the bride’s home to the synagogue. Whenever he walked by, a woman would stand at the window and stare him down. At times, he even noticed her weeping.

**The Groom Approached the Weeping Woman**

 His curiosity got the better of him and one day he approached her and asked her to explain her tears. “It is my personal story and does not have anything to do with you,” she said with saddened eyes. The groom gently pressed her, and at last, she acquiesced.

 As she told the story, the groom became pale and asked to be allowed into the house to sit down. A long while passed, and he struggled to regain his composure. Finally, he went back to the home of his future in-laws. It was from that moment on that the unexplained anxiety was apparent in the young groom.

\* \* \*

 The date of the wedding arrived. Excitement filled the air. The rabbi of Mohyliv and the rabbi of Kyiv were escorting the groom to the *chuppah*. Friends and relatives had gathered from the entire region to celebrate this important occasion with their venerable leaders.

 Before the ceremony began, the groom asked to say a few words. The surprised crowd listened in silence.

 He began by confiding how he had noticed a woman crying every time he walked past, and then revealed what she had told him on that fateful day. The woman, the butcher’s wife, told him what had happened some two decades prior, on the day of the mikvah inauguration, when she and the rebbetzin had given their word that if blessed with children, they would marry them to one another.

**The Tragedy of the Butcher Wife’s Son**

 “The rebbetzin had a girl, and I had a boy,” the butcher’s wife explained, “but my dreams for my son’s future were short-lived. My domestic helper took my baby in a wooden tub to the river together with the laundry. As she was working, a wave swept away the tub with the baby inside. The tragedy was so awful, we never recovered.

 “Now, when I see you walking by, I remember my lost child, who, according to the plan, was supposed to marry the rabbi’s daughter.”

 This part of the story was well known to the townspeople, and they understood the heartache of the butcher’s wife. However, what followed is what shocked the crowd.

 The groom continued: “I asked the woman if she still had any of the kerchiefs she had used to swaddle her son. When she replied in the affirmative, it was my turn to be shocked.

**The Most Shocking Revelation**

 “I must reveal a family secret: I am not the biological son of the rabbi and rebbetzin of Kyiv. They were childless and adopted me after someone found me on the Dniester river bank, next to one of the Jewish neighborhoods. My adoptive parents only had one sign that would identify me—the cloth I was wrapped in.”

 “When the butcher’s wife showed me the cloth she had wrapped her baby in, I recognized that I was standing before my biological mother. I am now about to be married, and my birth parents are sitting home and mourning!” the groom concluded.

 The emotion that washed over the crowd is nearly impossible to describe. All the guests escorted the groom to his parents’ house. The rabbi embraced the butcher, as the rebbetzin hugged the butcher’s wife. Twenty years after they had made up to marry their children, they set off to the chuppah, all three sets of parents together. The joy that pervaded Mohyliv that night, was never [again] matched.

*The story, printed in Hebrew in Sichat Hashavua #513, was recorded by Kalman Bar-David (Burstein), who heard the story from his father Rabbi David Burstein, rav of Rădăuti (Radevits), Romania.*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chaya Sarah 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**JUDGING FAVORABLY #109**

**Elana’s Abrupt Behavior**



 As I spotted Elana walking towards me, I made up my mind to ask her where she had bought the outfit she was wearing. She was pleased with the compliment and gladly shared the name of a private person who sells exclusively by appointment in her home.

 It wasn’t until a couple of weeks later that I found the time to look up the name she had given me. When I saw there were too many “Kaplans” listed for me to know which was the right one, I decided to call Elana for more exact information.

 Elana answered the phone, and in reply to my question said curtly that the lady’s first name was Miriam and I could look it up again. I thanked her and I asked her if she could give me one more clue, the street name. I was a bit taken aback when she answered with obvious impatience, “Anchor Drive,” and hung up. “Talk about being abrupt!” I was tempted to say something but I decided to drop it. And am I glad I did. At the end of the week I received a notification from the shul:

 “With profound sorrow,” it began, and announced the passing of Elana’s husband. At the shiva, while Elana and I spoke, I listened remorsefully as Elana chokingly tried to explain her behavior that day on the phone. “You couldn’t have known,” she said, “but while other friends were calling about my husband’s state of health, you were calling up to ask about clothing!” (The Other Side of the Story by Yehudis Samet)

*Reprinted from the Chayei Sara 5781 email of The Weekly Vort.*

**Reb Chiya and the**

**Malach Hamaves**

![[micrography.jpg]]()

 The Gemara (Moed Kattan 28.) tells stories of the how the holy Tana'im and Amoraim gave the malach hamaves (the Angel of Death) a hard time taking their lives because they were always learning Torah and were constantly clean from sin. One example was Reb Chiya. Heaven sent the malach hamaves to take Reb Chiya up to heaven, but as much as the malach tried, Reb Chiya remained alive. The malach hamaves came up with a plan. He dressed up as a pauper, knocked on Reb Chiya's door, and asked for food.

**The Question of the Malach Hamaves**

 Reb Chiya told his family to give him bread. The malach hamaves said to Reb Chiya, "I see you have compassion for the poor. Why don't you have compassion on me? I was sent to take you, I'm trying, and I'm not able to."

 The malach hamaves showed him a staff of fire. This is how Reb Chiya knew that he was the malach hamaves (Rashi). Others say that with the rod of fire the malach hamaves showed Reb Chiya that he was being beaten with fiery rods, because he didn't yet bring Reb Chiya's soul, as he was supposed to.

 He therefore requested that Reb Chiya have compassion on him (Anaf Yosef). Reb Chiya had compassion on the malach hamaves and allowed the malach hamaves to bring his neshamah to Olam Haba.

 Let us think about this Gemara. The malach hamaves told Reb Chiya, "If you have compassion on the poor, why don't you have compassion on me?" But how can you compare having rachmanus on the poor, to having compassion on the malach hamaves, and to willingly allow oneself to die?

**The Importance of Charity**

 The answer is that Reb Chiya's charity was definitely done with mesirus nefesh. With self-sacrifice, he helped the poor. Therefore, the malach hamaves told him, "If you do so for the poor, why don't you have mesirus nefesh and have compassion on me, too?"

 This means that our desire and attempts to help the poor should be done with all our strength and self-sacrifice. For some people, it is mesirus nefesh just to be kind. When they see a pauper, they are tempted to shout, "Why don't you get a job!" or some other humiliating words.

 They don't realize that if it weren't for Hashem's help, they would be just like the pauper, begging at people's doors. And for some, it is mesirus nefesh to part with their money. Helping the needy isn't an easy mitzvah, but, as we see this is the mitzvah that Avraham excelled in, and we should follow in his footsteps and seek to help our fellow man.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Lech Lecha 5781 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Insights of Rabbi Eli Biderman.*

**If The Man Who Found This Is A Liar And A Thief…**

 A poor Jew finds a money clip with $700 in it. At his synagogue, he reads a notice saying that a wealthy congregant lost his money clip and is offering a $100 reward for it. He spots the owner and gives him the clip.

 The rich man counts the money and says, “I see you already took your reward.”

 The poor man answers, “What?”

 “This clip had $800 in it when I lost it.”

 sThey begin arguing, and eventually come before the rabbi. Both state their case. The rich man concludes by saying, “Rabbi, I trust you believe me.”



 The rabbi says, “Of course,” and the rich man smiles.

 The poor man is crushed.

 Then the rabbi hands the clip to the poor man.

 “What are you doing?!” yells the rich man.

 The rabbi answers, “You are, of course, an honest man, and you say the clip you lost had $800 in it. Therefore I’m sure it did. But if the man who found this clip is a liar and a thief, he wouldn’t have returned it at all. Which means that this clip must belong to somebody else.

 “If that man steps forward, he’ll get the money. Until then, it belongs to the man who found it.”

 “What about my money?” the rich man asks.

 “Well, we’ll just have to wait until somebody finds a clip with $800 in it…”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sarah 5781 email of Lekavod Shabbos Magazine.*

**No Shelter for Lashon Hara**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**



 During one of the wars in Israel, Rav Eliyahu Lopian needed to take refuge with other Jews in a shelter while bombs were exploding all around them. He was sitting and learning in a corner when someone rushed over to him and said, “They are all speaking lashon hara in here!”

 The Rabbi jumped up and said, “What?! Then we must leave here right away!”

 The two of them ran out of the shelter and through the streets of Jerusalem to a different shelter. When the situation calmed and they were able to come out of the shelter, they received word that the shelter that they had left had taken a direct hit leaving no survivors.

  It says in Mishlei, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”

 We can use our speech to encourage someone or we can potentially cause someone great pain with a thoughtless or sarcastic remark. The first step is to recognize the tremendous effect our words have, both on others and on ourselves.

 A kind word at the right time can change a person’s whole day. Especially now when we can’t see each other smile (because of the masks), it’s so important to use our speech to lift our fellow man’s spirits and give them moral support when needed. Let’s try to pay more attention to the way we speak to our spouse, our family members, friends, co-workers and to anyone else we happen to meet up with in the course of the day, and through that we will bring a greater level of shalom and berachah to our lives.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Noah 5781 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**The Mentor’s Request to the Bachur to Quit Smoking**

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**Rav Laizer Shach**

 In the Yeshivot of pre-war Europe, young bachurim were often paired up with older bachurim who would serve as their chavrutot and mentors. When a fourteen-year-old orphaned bachur arrived in the yeshivah of Slutzk in 1920, he was assigned to an older bachur named R’ Laizer Shach, later to become the famed Rosh Yeshivah of Ponevezh.

 The young bachur, too, would later become one of the gedolei Yisrael (Torah leaders). In those days, most people were still unaware of the dangers of smoking, and, like many bachurim, this orphan smoked.

 One day, R’ Laizer Shach approached his young charge and said gently, “From now on, I never want to see you smoking again.”

 “Why not?” asked the young bachur, surprised. “Everyone smokes.”

 “I can’t explain my reason to you right now,” replied R’ Laizer, “But I beg you to please listen to me.”

 Implicitly trusting his beloved mentor, the bachur complied and quit smoking immediately.

 Many years passed and the two gedolim (prominent Torah leaders) eventually made their way to Eretz Yisrael, where they both settled. When they finally met up with each other, the younger chavrusa reminded his former mentor of how he had forbade him from smoking. “Now can you tell me why you were so insistent that I stop smoking?” he asked. “For years I’ve been wondering about it.”

 Rav Shach smiled warmly and explained, “In those days, Communism was a powerful force to be reckoned with, as many bachurim were captivated by its ideals and led astray from the path of the Torah. I knew that the Communists were actively targeting brilliant bachurim like yourself, and the finest and the best were being swept up in Communist fervor.

 I was worried that perhaps they would succeed in convincing you too to join their ranks. I insisted that you stop smoking, so that if you were to chas veshalom (G-d forbid) be drawn into their clutches and become a mehalel (desecrater of) Shabbat, at least you wouldn’t smoke on Shabbat. I was ensuring that even if they succeeded in influencing you, the desecration of Shabbat each week would be somewhat minimized because of the fact that you were not a smoker.”

 Even as a young man, Rav Shach had the outlook and foresight of a gadol beYisrael, taking into consideration all the possibilities that the future might bring, as he made every effort to minimize the transgression of the Torah. (Sparks of Majesty by Genendel Krohn, Feldheim.)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Noah 5781 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**The Kabbala of Not Talking During Davening**

 The Imrei Shefer Beis Medresh in Williamsburg is careful that no one speaks during the tefillah. One of its members had become ill, and all participants of this beis medresh made a kabbalah not to talk during davening for forty days – even if davening elsewhere. (The Imrei Shefer shul was only open on Shabbos.) They hoped and prayed that in this merit, their friend would have a refuah sheleimah.

 One morning, during Shacharis, someone started talking to a yungerman of Imrei Shefer. The yungerman didn't respond as it was still in the middle of the forty days, and he wouldn't break his kabbalah.

 The other man replied, mockingly, "Oh, you are also from those people who don't speak during davening?" It was very embarrassing for him, but he remained silent. This yungerman's silence, and the silence of all the others from Imrei Shefer, paid off. The sick shul member had a refuah sheleimah.



 There was an additional benefit: During these forty days, the wife of this yungerman (who was humiliated for being silent during the tefillah) was diagnosed with "the disease" (cancer), and they asked her to come to the hospital for more complex testing. She underwent an M.R.I. test, and it was confirmed that she had a tumor.

 Following their rebbe's advice, they went to another doctor (whom the rebbe recommended) for a second opinion. But this doctor reached the same conclusion. The tumor was at an advanced stage, and she required immediate surgery.

 The husband was in the hospital, waiting for the operation to be completed, but it was taking longer than expected. The doctors had said that the procedure would take an hour and a half, but two hours had passed, and she was still in the operating room.

 The husband went to the family and visitors' lounge, and he davened the following prayer: "Ribono Shel Olam! You know how hard it was for me to be silent and not speak in shul for forty days. But now I take it upon myself not to speak in beis medresh for a half-year. In this merit, let my wife have a refuah sheleimah."

 The operation was completed after two hours and fifteen minutes. The doctor said to the husband, "We were certain there was a tumor, but when we operated, we didn't find it. The operation took longer than expected because we were looking for the tumor that we located in the tests, but it isn't there. I don't understand how it happened…"

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sara 5781 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Insights of Rabbi Eli Biderman.*

**The Cup of Coffee for**

**The Host’s Wife**



 The Vilna Gaon, zy,'a, was once a guest in someone's home. Taking leave of his host, the Vilna Gaon said, "I noticed that every morning you prepare a coffee for your wife, even before you make your coffee. I was wondering why you do this. Is it because Chazal say one should honor his wife more than he honors himself?"

 The host said, "The answer to your question is the story of my life. When I was thirteen years old, I was already talmid chacham. A wealthy person recognized my potential and chose me to as his future son-in-law. The chasunah was scheduled for seven years later when I would be twenty.

 In the meanwhile, he hired private tutors and teachers so that I could grow in Torah. When I turned twenty, I was a recognized talmid chacham, but my to-be father-in-law lost all his money by then. I would have gone ahead with the wedding regardless because I had hakaras hatov to him for hiring Torah teachers for me all those years, but my father refused to let me go ahead with the shidduch. He considered it a disgrace that I, an accomplished scholar, should marry a poor man's daughter. "I married a girl from a wealthy family. Soon after we married, I discovered that I have a health problem, which I didn't know about beforehand. My father-inlaw invested a lot of money to cure me. Doctors earned a nice living, as they pretended to try to heal me until one doctor admitted to my father-in-law that nothing known to medicine could cure me.

 My fatherin-law asked me to divorce his daughter, and I obliged. "First a broken shidduch and then a divorce… I felt my life was in shambles. I became depressed and went to live in the hekdesh (a communal room-and-board for the homeless).

 Someone who knew me was shocked to see me in the hekdesh. 'You have so much potential; how did you end up here?' I told him what happened. Sometime later, that man returned to the hekdesh and offered me a shidduch. 'The girl has the very same defect as you have,' he said.

 "I married her. After the chasunah, she said to me, 'You were born with your defect, but I was born healthy. I developed my health problems later in life.' She explained that she was once engaged to marry a Torah scholar, but since her father lost all his money, the shidduch was called off. She became depressed and ill.

 "I asked her some questions and discovered that I was her first chassan! She became sick on my account! Doesn't she deserve that I should honor her with a cup of coffee each morning?"

 The Vilna Gaon said, "If I came here only to hear this story, it would have been worthwhile." The Vilna Gaon was impressed by this story because it's a demonstration that when a shidduch is bashert, it will happen.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sarah 5780 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts of Rabbi Eli Biderman.*

**The Value of 80 Years**

**Of a Difficult Life**

**By Shloimy Weber**

 Rabbi Avraham Hakohen of Kalisk (1741-1810), O”BM, the Rabbi of Tiveriah, was revered by all. Distinguished-looking and awe inspiring, the wisdom of age reflected in his elderly eyes.

 An old Sefardi Jew once tottered up to Rabbi Avraham with a complaint. “I am tired of living,” he grumbled. “I am so old and feeble. I feel as if life has nothing more to offer me. Of what use are the rest of my days? Eighty years is enough! Who needs more?”

 Rabbi Avraham was dismayed and horrified at this pronouncement. He rebuked the old man harshly, saying, “It is worth living another eighty years, if only to have the privilege of doing just one more Mitzvah!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sarah 5781 email of Torah Sweets Weekly.*