**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas vayishlach 5781**

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**Lessons in Emunah (Edited by Naomi Mauer)**

**In the Middle of the Night**

By Naomi Brudner



We’ve all heard of *Kabbalah*, the mystical teachings of Judaism. But *kabbalah’* is also the Hebrew word for ‘resolution’. Often one takes a resolution upon himself or herself in order to increase his merits and thereby hopefully Hashem will answer his prayers for something he longs for.

For instance, a person who is in need of *parnassah*, income, might take on a *kabbalah* to give an increased amount to *tzedakah*, or they might even take on a *kabbalah*in another area such as not to speak *lashon hara*, slanderous talk and in that merit they ask Hashem to improve their financial situation.

Often people who are sick or who know someone else who is sick, take on a *kabbalah* as a merit for receiving a *refuah sheleimah*, a complete healing. An older single girl might take on a *kabbalah*to dress more modestly and in that merit she prays that Hashem will answer her prayers and send her her *beshert*.

So for whatever a person wants, he might take on a specific *kabbalah* and pray that in that merit his prayers will be fulfilled. It’s important to know that when a person takes on a *kabbalah*, it’s best to do this in his thoughts, rather than out loud, and he should think or say it in a way that *doesn’t imply* absolute commitment because that would be tantamount to making a vow which we shouldn’t do.

Instead, the person should think or say that he’s going *to try to* do such and such. And whenever he considers taking on a *kabbalah*, he should also think and say – *bli neder*– without a *neder* (vow) because it’s possible, if not likely that there will be situations where he won’t be able to do what he intends to do.

**A Kabbalah Not to Say A Blessing**

**Unless There is Some to Answer Amen**

And so it was that in this true story that took place in *Eretz Yisrael*, a man named Daniel Cohen\*, for some reason took upon himself a *kabbalah* not to say a blessing over food or drink unless there was someone there to answer *‘amein’* because he learned that a *berachah* without an *‘amein’* isn’t complete. Though we are always supposed to make a *berachah* out loud so that someone can answer *‘amein’*, if one has taken on a *kabbalah* to do so, then it’s even more of an obligation to do one’s best to fulfill it.

One hot summer night Daniel woke up at about 4 o’clock in the morning and was terribly thirsty. Everyone else was sleeping and he knew he couldn’t wake them up to say *‘amein’.* But on the other hand he was feeling very weak and knew that he had to have a drink of water as soon as possible. But he had made a *kabbalah*.

What should he do? As he was feeling weaker and weaker, he asked Hashem to help him somehow and suddenly Daniel had an idea. He went to the kitchen, poured himself a glass of water and then picked up the telephone and called 144 – telephone information in *Eretz Yisrael*.

**“How Can I Help You?**

A voice answered! “Shalom. Ayala\* speaking. How can I help you?” “Shalom Ayala,” said Mr. Cohen. “I need a favor.”

“Are you okay?” she asked, a bit startled by his words.

“Yes, I’m okay, but I’m very, very thirsty and I . . . . ”

Ayala probably thought he was a bit off and suggested the obvious – that he drink a glass of water.

“I know,” Daniel said. “but I took on a *kabbalah* that I won’t make a blessing unless there’s someone to answer *‘amein’* and everyone here is sleeping.” “I don’t know what you’re talking about, sir,” Ayala responded.

“It’s okay,” said Daniel, “just listen to me make a *berachah* and when I finish, when I say *‘shehakol nihiya bidvaro*‘ you answer *‘amein’*. Okay?”

“But why? I don’t understand what . . . ”

“I’ll explain it to you later, but if I don’t drink soon I’m going to faint, so please, when I finish the *berachah*, just answer *‘amein’*. Okay?”

**Clear from His Voice that He Wasn’t Feeling Well**

It was clear from his voice that he wasn’t feeling well and except for his unusual request, he sounded normal, so Ayala agreed. And with that Daniel took the glass of water and said “*Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam shehakol nihiya bidvaro*.”

“*Amein*” answered Ayala, and Daniel gratefully and quickly drank the water. “Thank you so much”, he said. “Hold on, I’m going to drink another glass.”

“Do I have to say *‘amein’* again?” Ayala asked.

“No, it’s okay, once is enough.” And he drank a second glass of water. “Listen, he said to Ayala. “Thank you very much, you can’t imagine what a big thing you did for me. And now I have to make another blessing and when I finish, when I say “*Baruch* *Chai HaOlamim*” then you say *‘amein’* again. Okay?” “Okay,” she said “but after that I want you to explain what this is all about because I have no idea.”

“Okay, fine, but first the *berachah* and *‘amein’*.” And he made the *berachah* made after drinking water and Ayala answered: “*Amein*!”

And then she said: “Listen, I did what you asked, but I have no idea what this is all about. Why blessings? What do they mean?

Why *‘amein’*? What does that mean? I have no idea, I never learned about any of these things.”

**Daniel Explains Why One Makes a Blessing on Food**

“So I’ll tell you”, said Daniel. “Hashem created the whole world and He created everything in it. If we use part of the world, like if we eat or drink something without blessing Hashem and thanking Him, then it’s as if we stole what we ate or drank – because it’s not ours. Hashem created our food and drink for us, but it’s still His. So before we eat or drink we bless Him for giving us what we’re about to eat or drink. With water, for instance, and many other foods we bless G-d, our L-rd, the King of the World Who created everything, and when we finish, we bless Him Who is our Creator and Who created all the things He created to sustain us. It’s expressing awareness, and appreciation and gratitude for all the goodness that we’re given.”

“Very interesting,” she said. “I never heard anything like that before. Thank you for explaining it to me.”

“Thank you for answering *‘amein’,*” said Daniel gratefully and then wished her all the best, *kol tuv*, and Ayala responded in kind *kol tuv*, and they hung up.

**A Wedding Invitation Arrives in the Mail**

Time went by. A year, two years, and one day Daniel received a wedding invitation in the mail. He opened it and read it but didn’t recognize the names of the bride or groom, or their families. He asked his wife and she didn’t recognize them either.

There was a phone number for RSVP’s on the invitation so he called to find out who it was who invited him. He heard a young lady answer “Shalom.” “Shalom,” he said. “I just received a wedding invitation but my wife and I don’t know who it’s from. Who’s getting married? Who invited us?”

“I know who’s getting married,” she answered, “because I’m the *kallah*. Maybe you were invited by the side of the *chattan*. What’s your name?” “Daniel Cohen.”

There was a silence and then when the girl spoke it was with a voice filled with emotion. “I guess you don’t remember me,” she said. “You called me once a couple of years ago in the middle of the night when you were very thirsty and you wanted someone to answer *amein* to your *berachah*.”

**Remembering that Unusual Night**

It didn’t take more than a couple of seconds for Daniel to remember that most unusual incident. He looked again at the invitation. By the way it was written, expressing on top gratitude to Hashem for bringing this couple together, it was clear that it was going to be a religious wedding.

After a moment, he said: “You told me that you don’t know anything about Judaism but I see you’re having a religious wedding.”

“Yes,” she said, “I didn’t know anything, but what you explained to me was so special, so meaningful and so different from the kind of life that I was living that I decided to look into Judaism and find out what it’s about. And I did. I bought books, and then I went to lectures and classes and everything I was learning was so wonderful, so true that I enrolled in a seminary for girls like me who wanted to learn more about Judaism.

“I loved everything I was learning and experiencing and I decided to change my life – to be religious. I’m a *baalat teshuva*now, and I’m marrying a boy who’s a *baal teshuva,* too. And with Hashem’s help we’re going to build a home of Torah and holiness, and happiness that comes from living a life of truth and meaning.” Daniel listened, stunned by what he was hearing, and she continued: “That night after you hung up, I felt that my life was going to change, and it all started with you, so I wrote down your phone number, because it came up automatically when you called, and I found out your name and address just in case I would ever want it. And now I wanted it, because I wanted you to know what happened after you called me at four in the morning to say *‘amein’*.”

*Reprinted from the November 13, 2020 email of the Jewish Press.*

**The Stolen Ring and**

**The Surprised Thief**

**By [Elchonon Isaacs](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/22162/jewish/Isaacs-Elchonon.htm" \o "Browse more articles by Isaacs, Elchonon)**



**Illustration by the Rivka Korf Studio**

Yaakov, a brilliant Torah scholar in Brod, had no interest in business and refused to accept handouts. As a result, he and his family lived in extreme poverty. So when he received an offer to relocate to Sasiv as a private tutor, he gladly accepted. This would allow him to retain a life in the study hall and still earn a modest livelihood.

As luck would have it, the move to Sasiv did not end well. Shortly after moving Yaakov became deathly ill. His son, Moshe Leib, was good-hearted and pious but found academics challenging. While standing near his father’s death bed he heard his father sigh and say, “If I die and leave a hungry widow and orphan, G‑d Al-mighty will surely provide for them. But who will teach my son Torah?!” These words left a deep impression on the young boy’s heart.

**The Hard and Painful Realty Quickly Set In**

The hard and painful reality quickly set in. In addition to his studies, he now had to help his widowed mother make ends meet. Learning had challenged him enough previously; now it became virtually impossible.

A caring friend offered to employ the young orphan as a guard in her husband’s shop, which allowed the struggling family to put food on the table in an honorable manner. So young Moshe Leib became a night watchman. While standing guard, he kept his father’s words in his heart and waited for the right opportunity to arise.

While digging in their yard one day, Moshe Leib uncovered a trove of coins. He and his mother reasoned that the previous occupants must have hidden their savings there to avoid looters during the all too common anti-Jewish riots. There was no way to return the money, and it was now rightfully theirs.

With their financial state improved, Moshe Leib decided that the time had come to fulfill his father’s wishes. He informed his mother that he wished to exile himself to a place of Torah study, as the sages suggest, so that he would merit to mature into a scholarly Jew. With mixed feelings, she gave him her blessing.

Moshe Leib took himself to Nikolsburg (Mikulov), where the rabbi was the acclaimed Reb Shmelke, a student of the Maggid of Mezritch. Reb Shmelke welcomed the young orphan into his yeshiva and allowed him to board in his home.

**Arriving in Nikolsburg on a Friday**

He arrived in Nikolsburg on a Friday. That night his father came to him in a dream and said, “How lucky you are that you merited to be in the presence of great *tzaddik* whose Torah is accepted in heaven. Open your heart and mind, and your eyes and ears, to absorb every word and form of conduct of this great man.” Moshe Leib woke up happy and joyful, ready to enjoy his first Shabbat in Reb Shmelke’s presence.

His first lesson was not long in coming.

The rabbi’s house was a hub for the townsfolk. One day, the Rebbetzin went to the basin to wash her hands before eating bread. In order to allow the water to reach the entirety of her hand, she took off her ring and put on the windowsill. As she put down the washing cup, she noticed an unkempt figure running away from the house. A glance at the windowsill explained everything.

She quickly recited the blessing and ate a piece of bread and began to wail, “The ring is worth one hundred coins.” Meanwhile, the thief gained some distance from the house.

Reb Shmelke heard his wife’s cry and turned to Moshe Leib. “You are young and agile; run after the thief and tell him that he can have the ring as a gift. It is worth one hundred coins and he should not sell it for less.” Moshe Leib ran and caught up with the thief, gripped his shirt and whispered into his ear the message from Reb Shmelke.

**The Thief Was Utterly Confused**

The thief was utterly confused. He thought the young man would drag him back to the rabbi’s house with shame and insults, but he heard the exact opposite. He murmured, “If this is the reaction of the Rabbi, how can I harm him? I am coming to return the ring.”

Moshe Leib told the thief, “Reb Shmelke will not accept the ring from you now that he has given it to you as a gift.[1](javascript:doFootnote('1a4926279');) If you want atonement, sell the ring for no less than one hundred coins, and use the money to buy and distribute jewelry for poor or orphaned brides. Then you will have achieved atonement.”

**Words Penetrated the Heart of the Poof Thief**

These words penetrated the heart of the poor thief and he resolved to mend his ways. He began to work and earn honestly and supported many worthy causes.

This was the first lesson Moshe Leib learned from Reb Shmelke. With time he grew in Torah and acts of kindness, and ultimately became known as the great *tzaddik,* Moshe Leib of Sasiv.

Translated and adapted from Sichat Hashavua # 619

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4926279/jewish/The-Stolen-Ring-and-the-Surprised-Thief.htm" \l "footnoteRef1a4926279) Seemingly to save the thief from the great sin of stealing Reb Shmelke relinquished ownership of the ring. It is presumed that Reb Shmelke would have replaced the ring on another occasion.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sarah 5780 email of the Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**The Rebbe Is Rebbe**

**By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon**



*Those who were acquainted with my father HaRav HaChossid Reb Meir, a”h, knew that he enjoyed relating chassidishe stories. In that spirit, I chose to share with you one of his classic gems, from the upcoming book Sippurei Meir – Stories of a Chossid, which I hope bezras Hashem to have published next year by his 20th yahrzeit.*

One day, one of the Maggid’s *talmidim* arrived in Mezeritch extremely distressed. Not only was his son refusing to follow the chassidic way of life, he was becoming very lax in the observance of all the *mitzvos*. The chossid shuddered every time he thought of what would be if, *chas v’shalom*, this continued.

He had decided to put everything in his life on hold to see what could be done for his son. After a while he thought, “If I go to the Rebbe, he will definitely give me a *brochah*, and/or advice and guidance on how to bring my son back to the proper *derech*.”

As much as his son’s situation bothered him, he knew, upon arrival in Mezritch, that a chossid does not rush into the Rebbe’s room. First one has to prepare himself. When he was finally admitted into the Maggid’s room for *yechidus*, he poured out his heart about his son’s improper conduct, and how all of his and others’ efforts had been fruitless.

The Maggid listened intently to every word and shared his *talmid*’s pain. After a few moments of deep thought, he sadly informed him that he was terribly sorry but there was nothing he could do to help guide his son back to the proper path.

**The Heartbroken Chossid was Now Completely Devastated**

As heartbroken as the chossid was up until this point, he was now devastated. If the Rebbe couldn’t help, that meant no one could help, and there was no way to save his son. The thought itself sent shudders through his body. When he left the Maggid’s room, he broke down in uncontrollable sobs.

After a few short moments, his *chaverim*, the fellow *talmidim* of the Maggid, came over to calm him down and find out what was the problem.

Between sobs, they heard his heart-wrenching story. “And now that the Rebbe said there is nothing that he could do, what will be?” The chossid once again began weeping and his *chaverim* cried silently with him.

The Alter Rebbe, who was the youngest of the *talmidim*, spoke up. “Tell your son in my name that if he doesn’t change his ways, I will put him in *kerem*!”

The heartbroken father looked up at the Alter Rebbe in bewilderment. *Kerem* means “a vineyard,” so how was this strange threat going to change his son? However, he also realized that since no one else had offered any advice or ideas, he had nothing to lose, especially since the Alter Rebbe was held in the greatest esteem by their Rebbe the Maggid. So if he was saying this, he wasn’t just saying it as a jest; he must have good reason to believe that it would help.

**Hastily Returned Home and Looked for His Son**

With the blessings of his fellow *chaverim* that this strange advice would help, the chossid hastily returned home and looked for his son.

As soon as he saw him, he said in the sternest voice he could muster, “My son, you know that I made this special trip to Mezeritch because of your improper behavior. You should know that the Rebbe’s favorite *talmid,* HaRav Zalminyu, told me in the presence of all the *talmidim* to warn you that if you don’t change your ways, he will *chas v’shalom* place you in *kerem*.”

The smirk left the young man’s face and in a trembling voice he said, “I didn’t realize [my behavior] was so bad. From this very moment I am going to change.”

Keeping to his word, he indeed changed and a few months later he asked his father to please take him to the Maggid so that he could ask the Maggid to help guide him on his way of *teshuvah*. The father was only too happy to oblige and off they went.

Arriving in Mezeritch, the son had his *yechidus* almost immediately after arriving there. The Maggid instructed him how to conduct himself from now on and what he should learn in order for his *teshuvah*to be accepted.  His father’s *yechidus* was some time later.

When the Maggid spoke privately to the father, he had already had the opportunity to observe the young man and asked with both delight and wonder**,**“Is *this* the son you cried so bitterly about?”

**“How Did You Get Him to Change His Ways?”**

After receiving an affirmative answer, the Maggid asked in astonishment, “So how did you get him to change his ways? Of course I am extremely happy about it, but sadly to say, I just couldn’t see any way to help him.”

The chossid repeated the entire story to him: how, after leaving the previous *yechidus*, Rav Zalminyu and all the *chavraiya kadisha* saw his deep distress and Rav Zalminyu gave him the strange advice. But *baruch Hashem*it had helped. The Maggid then blessed the father, informing him that when he spoke separately to the son, he gave him guidance and blessing him as well. They happily left.

Calling in his prize *talmid*, the Maggid said, “You should be Rebbe instead of me, since it is clear that you are greater than I. It was impossible for me to save him, but you succeeded.”

**Fooled by a Litvak**

The Alter Rebbe replied, “*Chas v’shalom*! The Rebbe is Rebbe. So why was I able to get him to change his ways, while the Rebbe wasn’t? Very simple. I am a Litvak, so I fooled him. I said I would put him in *kerem*. In the son’ssimplicity, he thought that I really said something else [*cher*... which means excommunication from all Jews, *chas v’sholom*]. The son probably thought that his father was afraid to utter that terrible word so he changed the first letter from a *ches* to a *kof* and said *kerem*.

“Hearing such a terrible punishment shocked the young man, and *baruch Hashem*he decided to change his ways. The Rebbe on the other hand is completely holy. It would never enter his mind to fool anyone, even if it was for his or her benefit. To lie or fool someone is out of the question. Therefore the Rebbe was not able to help.”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sarah 5781 Weekly Story of Rabbi Avtzon is a veteran mechanech and the author of numerous books on the Chabad Rebbeim and their chassidim. He can be contacted at* [*avtzonbooks@gmail.com*](mailto:avtzonbooks@gmail.com)

**A Phone Call From Momma ...**



Relieved to get a break in her day, Esty jumped to answer the telephone. “Darling, how are you? This is Momma.”

“Oh, Momma, I’m having a bad day. The baby’s upset and the dishwasher broke. I haven’t gone shopping yet, and I banged my shin so hard I’m hobbling around. The house is a mess and on top of all that, the Silversteins are coming for dinner. I don’t how I’m gonna do it.”

“Darling, Momma’s got this. Sit down and do absolutely nothing for 30 minutes except relax. I’ll do your shopping, clean up the house and cook dinner. I have a wonderful repairman for the dishwasher, and I’ll take the baby for a stroll. So stop crying, Momma’s taking care of everything. In fact, I’ll even call Moshe at the office and tell him to come home early and help out for once.”

“Moshe? Who’s Moshe?”

“Why, Moshe’s your husband… Is this 564-7721?”

“No, it’s 564-7712.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry! I have the wrong number.”

Short pause. “Does this mean you’re not coming over?”

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

**Story #1197**

**Necessary Repairs**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](https://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=00011FG0:001VhFxl00003TYU&count=1605710274&randid=864275030&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=2&randid=864275030)



A number of years ago in Israel, two *yeshiva* students decided to take a trip to the north in order to visit a number of the gravesites of the righteous that are situated in the Tsfat area. It was a nice day, and they were able to get hold of a decent car, so they decided to drive.

Things were going smoothly until they noticed that their thermostat was running a bit higher than it should. Fearing that the car 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. 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. In other words they were stuck.

Suddenly, a car pulled up and out came a man adorned with beard, *peyot* and black *kippah*, and dressed in full chasidic garb. He asked, "What seems to be the problem?"

**“…We Have No Idea of What is Wrong:**

"Our car is overheating, and we have no idea of what is wrong," they replied.

"Let me see what I can do," he man said.

He promptly removed his long frock robe and lay down on the ground beneath the car, searching for the trouble spot. After a few minutes, he emerged and said, "I see the problem. Your fan belt tore and must be replaced."

"What should we do?" the *yeshiva* boys 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 boys asked.

"Nothing," he replied. "I did it as a kindness. I enjoy helping people out."

"Well, we cannot force you to take money for the time that you invested, but what about the part? That is an expensive part - why should you pay for it?"

"It’s not a problem. I must do this my way," he replied. “Let me tell you my story and you will understand why.

**He Charged Inflated Prices for the Repairs He Performed**

“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 abandon my life of pursuit of money and pleasure. Seeking meaning and purpose, I decided to return to my true Jewish roots. I prepared myself to live a life completely committed to Torah and *mitzvah* observance.

"As I advanced in commitment, one thing kept gnawing at me. During my years as a mechanic I had been running a lucrative business, but not in a very honest way. I was cheating my customers with exorbitant prices, often for work that was unnecessary. How could my *teshuva*(“return”) become complete until I repaired all of the petty and often not-so-petty theft?

**The Rebbe Gave Him a Way to Get Teshuva**

“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 *teshuva* would have to be of a general, all-encompassing nature. He advised that I should offer my expertise to whomever was in need, free of charge.

“So this is what I do. Twice a week, I cruise 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 *teshuva*. Today, you have enabled me to draw one step closer to the One above. Thank you!"

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*Source*: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Peninim on the Torah*, as printed in the*Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin*and circulated in *Shabbos Stories for the Parsha.*

*Connection:* Years ago he was a lone Chasidic car-repair angel. Now there is an organization with branches throughout Israel called *YEDIDIM*, with a central dispatcher who will send the nearest volunteer to help anyone in distress on the roads who calls and asks for aid, *free of charge*. On the day that I had to decide which story to use for my e-mail story list, I had to make use of Yedidim’s services. I called the number and *three* minutes later someone arrived!

*Reprinted from the Parshat Toldot 5781 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed.*