**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas ki sisa 5781**

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**Betzalel the Milkman's Precious Find**

**By**[**Elchonon Isaacs**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/22162/jewish/Isaacs-Elchonon.htm)



One of the unique characters in Jerusalem’s Shaarei Chesed neighborhood was Betzlael the Milkman. His knowledge of the Talmud and its commentaries was masterful, and while he transported the milk and filled his customers’ pitchers, he recited words of the Mishnah from memory. He worked just enough to provide for his family each day, then he’d return to the study hall and spend the rest of his waking hours engrossed in the timeless words of Torah.

One morning, a fellow scholar spotted Betzalel standing in the middle of an alleyway holding a large bag. He was frozen in place, absorbed in thought, unaware of his surroundings.

The scholar approached Betzalel and inquired what was going on.

**Just Found a Bag with a Lot of Money**

“I just found this bag filled with money,” explained Betzalel, showing him its contents. The bag was heavy, filled with coins.

“This is a large sum indeed!” the scholar exclaimed.

Yet Betzalel showed no sign of excitement or even appreciation. All he could think about was the mitzvah of *hashavat aveida*, returning lost objects.

He began to share his thoughts as if in the study hall, discussing a totally theoretical question. “If one returns a sum of money, does it count as one mitzvah, or is there an additional mitzvah for each coin returned? If it is the latter, then I have a great opportunity to accumulate many mitzvot!”

The question went unanswered as they moved to a private corner to count the fortune in the bag. They counted and counted, and the sum grew and grew.

The scholar paused and asked, “Who says you are even obligated to return the money? We have yet to find any unique identifying signs on the bag or its contents, and the law states that in such cases the finder can keep it.”

**Scrutinized the Bag for an Identification Sign**

But Betzalel refused to give up and scrutinized the bag for any identifying sign.

As they debated, Betzalel’s face paled, and he began to quiver.

The startled scholar asked for an explanation, and in a cracked voice Betzalel began: “We just counted a few thousand coins, and if there is no obligation for me to return the find, then I will have missed the opportunity to accumulate thousands of mitvot...”

“We are believers, and we know that whatever G‑d does is for the good,” countered the scholar. “If, indeed, you are not obligated to return the money, perhaps this is G‑d’s way of enabling you to dedicate yourself to your Torah studies, undisturbed by the burden of supporting your family.”

“That is out of the question,” countered Betzalel. “Even if I were absolved from looking for the bag’s owner, it is inconceivable that I would sit home and enjoy my fortune while another family cries over their loss! Besides, thank G‑d I have what I need, my bread and salt.”

“Would it be so bad if you had a second slice of bread with some butter?” rejoined the scholar.

**Thousands of Mitzvot in One Bag**

But Betzalel did not buy this argument, citing the Sages who said, “One ought to pray that Torah, not food or delicacies, is absorbed into his innards.”[1](javascript:doFootnote('1a5052528');)

“Butter is not a delicacy as it was in the past,” argued the scholar, trying to convince his friend to take the much-needed money.

“Even if you are right that butter is a staple nowadays, how will it taste knowing that I bought it with money someone else is crying over?!” Betzalel insisted. It was his final argument.

Seeing that Betzalel was intent on returning the bag even if he was under no obligation to do so, the scholar helped him inspect the find. After a short while, they found an identifying mark at the bottom of the bag. With this, Betzalel calmed down and the color returned to his face. “Indeed,” he smiled, “today I bumped into a great find—thousands of mitzvot in one bag!”

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5052528/jewish/Betzalel-the-Milkmans-Precious-Find.htm" \l "footnoteRef1a5052528) Tana Devay Eliyahu Rabbah 26; Mesilat Yesharim 13, the Explanation of the Trait of Self Restraint.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**How to Become a Masmid**

Rav Binyomin Rabinovitz, zt”l, was Dayan for the Eidah Chareidis of Yerushalayim, and Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Toldos Ahron. The boys of his Yeshivah learned from his Shiurim and also from his example, as he was an extraordinary Masmid, and he was very diligent in his learning.

Once, on [the fast day of] Shivah Asar B’Tamuz, the boys of the Yeshivah were astounded when they saw him learning for nine straight hours without interruption.

One young man asked him how he was able to attain this great level of Hasmadah, and Rav Binyomin explained to him, “When I was young, I wanted very much to be able to learn with Hasmadah, so I accepted on myself to learn for five minutes straight without any interruption. When I was able to do that easily, I took on another five minutes and learned for 10 minutes straight without stopping. “A few weeks later, I added another five minutes and learned for 15 minutes straight. Now, after many years of doing this have passed, Baruch Hashem, I’m able to learn for many hours without interruption!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**Rav Yisroel Salanter’s Famous Train Ride**



Rav Yissocher Frand relates a story about Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt”l. Rav Yisroel was once traveling by train from Salant to Vilna. In those days, it was not prohibited to smoke on the train, and Rav Yisroel was smoking a cigar. (It may be hard for us to picture the founder of the Mussar Movement, Rav Yisroel Salanter, smoking a cigar, but in those days, it was a sociologically different experience.)

A much younger person came up to him and started yelling that the cigar smelled up the car. Although technically he was within his rights to keep on smoking, being who he was, Rav Yisroel extinguished the cigar. He felt so bad about it that he opened the window to air out the car.

**Again the Young Man Yells at Rav Yisroel**

Then, this same fellow started yelling at Rav Yisroel that the car was too cold because he opened the window. He humiliated Rav Yisroel with his tirades, and Rav Yisroel closed the window.

When they arrived in Vilna, the young man noticed there were hundreds of people waiting to greet Rav Yisroel Salanter. He quickly found out who Rav Yisroel was, and he went over to him crying, with profuse apologies.

Rav Yisroel said he forgave the man. The man then began pouring out his heart to him. He told Rav Yisroel that he came to Vilna because he needed a livelihood and had no job. He was a Shochet, but in order to receive a slaughterer’s license he needed a K’sav Kabalah, written Rabbinic permission, from one of the Rabbis in Vilna who issued such licenses.

Rav Yisroel told him that he had a son-in-law who was a Rav in Vilna. He offered to write him a letter of recommendation and sent him to his son-in-law to be tested for his Shechitah license. Unfortunately, when this man went for his test, he failed it miserably.

He returned to Rav Yisroel and again cried to him with his tale of woe. Rav Yisroel found tutors to learn with him and they prepared him for the test, which he was eventually able to pass, and he finally received his K’sav Kabalah from Rav Yisroel’s son-in-law.

**“Why Were You So Nice to Me?”**

When this man was about to leave Vilna, he came back to Rav Yisroel and said to him, “It was nice enough that you forgave me for my rudeness on the train, but then you sent me to your son-in-law with a letter of recommendation and found tutors for me when I failed the test. Why were you so nice to me?”

Rav Yisroel responded, “Anyone can say the words ‘I forgive you,’ but the only way I felt it would be possible for me to really forgive you was to get to like you, and the only way to get to like someone is to help them. The key to becoming someone’s friend is not to take from him, but to give to him.

“I wanted my forgiveness to you to be sincere, and not merely just in words. In order to be able to forgive you with a full heart, I really had to be able to go out of my way a bit to help you. This was not your golden opportunity. It was my golden opportunity!”

**The Secret to Overcoming Feelings of Enmity**

Rav Frand emphasizes that the only way to overcome feelings of enmity that my exist between one another, is by helping them. He said, “There used to be a bumper sticker: ‘Love your enemies — It will drive them crazy’. This is not a Mussar idea. The Mussar idea, and the proper thing to do, is, ‘Love your enemies, and they won’t be your enemies anymore!’”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**‘If Not for You,**

**I Would Be Dead’**

**By**[**Batya Schochet Lisker**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/13542/jewish/Lisker-Batya-Schochet.htm)



“If not for you, I would be dead,” were her first words to me after I told her who was calling. It had been more than 40 years since the last time we spoke.

I had tapped her number into my phone completely unprepared for her reaction, despite having just had a lengthy conversation with her mother.

It was early Friday morning when the Facebook messenger app on my phone buzzed incessantly, contrasting sharply with the healing sounds in my room. I was 10 minutes into the exercise routine prescribed by my physical therapist for a severe foot injury. My focus was ruined, so I checked my text: “Just saw your name and I wonder: Are you originally from Toronto?” asked Mrs. X.

**“I Didn’t Recognize Her Name”**

I responded with a thumbs up, although I didn’t recognize her name.

“Are you Rabbi Dovid Schochet’s daughter?” I again responded in the affirmative, expecting to hear a story about my father, a renowned man who has had a great impact on countless people’s lives.

“Wow. Too emotional.”

I countered that I would love to hear her story. She continued: “Do you remember a kid from the Lubavitch camp back in 1976 and 1977? Her name was Xx. She is my daughter.”

I had been the head counselor of the Toronto Lubavitch camp during those years; however, the name didn’t ring a bell. Since it seemed important to her that I remember, I softened my reply and said, “Vaguely.”

**“You Made All of Us Religious”**

“You influenced her so deeply; you made all of us religious,” she responded. She proceeded to relay to me that her daughter was married to a wonderful man who runs a *yeshivah* in Lakewood, N.J., and has six incredible children and four grandchildren to date. This was too momentous a conversation to have through text messages, and within minutes, she called me.

“For more than 40 years, I have wanted to thank you,” she said. “You were the driving force behind Camp Lubavitch, and the driving force in all of our lives without even knowing it.”

Spellbound, I listened to her saga.

“I was a completely unaffiliated, single mom to an 11-year-old daughter who wanted more than anything to attend Camp Lubavitch. I didn’t know anything about it other than having seen the posters advertising the camp that had attracted my daughter. I wasn’t sure if I would feel comfortable entrusting these people with my daughter’s care. I decided to go into the Lubavitch main office on Edinburgh Drive and see what they were about.

“Your father is the one I encountered there. ‘Camp registration can wait,’ he said. ‘What’s important is that it is only a week till the Passover holiday begins. Do you have enough food to eat for Passover?’

**“Obviously, I Registered My Daughter”**

“I broke down in tears. I did not require financial assistance or the food he offered, but no one in my entire life except for my own mother had ever cared enough about me to worry that I had food to eat. It was so heartening. Obviously, I registered my daughter.

“She loved her months at camp and was excited to return again the next summer. She was profoundly influenced by everything that she learned and experienced. She just took to all of it. Whether it was the Jewish traditions, the stories, the songs, the challah-baking, the relationships with other campers, the counselors, and, of course, her connection with you.

“A few days after camp ended, she told me that she had made an appointment for the next day with a rabbi at a Jewish day school because she wanted to attend. All I knew about rabbis was that you don’t shake hands with them, nothing more. I worked for a very religious man who was a widower; he owned a string of shops. He noticed that I was unusually anxious at work that day and inquired what was wrong. When I explained to him the reason for my nervousness, he offered to accompany us to the meeting.

“We met with Rabbi Hochler, a representative of the administration of Eitz Chaim Day School. He explained to us that they were impressed with my daughter. They had evaluated her and were willing to provide her with the support that she needed in order to succeed academically.

**Did Not Have the Luxury of Much Time**

However, he said that being that it was an Orthodox day school and the majority of the children came from Shabbat-observant homes, she might feel more comfortable if some of the traditions were reinforced at home. At that point, I had not even agreed that my daughter could go to a Jewish day school, and taking on traditions was something I had never even fathomed. I told him that I needed time to consider everything we had discussed. He told me that since school was starting the following week, I really did not have the luxury of much time.

“For the next three days, I didn’t go to work. I didn’t answer the phone. I was in a quandary. I knew that in order for my daughter to thrive at Eitz Chaim, I would have to observe Shabbat. It was a package deal. On the third day, I had a revelation. Rearing a teenager alone is a difficult undertaking. It might be easier to raise her religious. I met with Rabbi Hochler again and registered her. He refused the tuition I offered to pay and gave me a huge subsidy instead.

“The following day, I returned to work and told my boss that I decided to give my daughter a holistic Jewish education. I was not only going to observe Shabbat, but I called Lubavitch to come and kosher my kitchen as well. I did not know it then, but in that moment listening to my noble resolve, my boss had decided that he wanted to marry me.

**“We Wed After I Studied the Laws of Family Purity”**

“In 1980, we wed after I studied the laws of Family Purity. Two years later, we were blessed with a son. He studied in a *yeshivah* in Israel. He is married and has five beautiful children.

“Do you, now, understand, Batya, how you changed all of our lives? You were the driving force. You gave me a husband, a son, grandchildren—a life I would not have had without your impact.”

I was speechless, overcome with emotion and desperately in need of time to process it all. Before I hung up, she provided me with her daughter’s phone number, telling me how she had found me by sheer “luck” when a friend had just “happened” to add me to a Facebook group.

An hour later, I was ready to call Mrs. X’s daughter. I presumed that Mrs. X had filled her daughter in on reconnecting with me, but this was not the case.

“Hello. This is Batya Schochet,” I said when she answered her cell phone.

“From Toronto?” She shrieked with joy after I answered in the affirmative. “If not for you, I would be dead!” she declared. “I tell everyone what you did for me.”

Dumbstruck, I mumbled, “I just spoke to your mother. She enlightened me on the domino effect of your experiences in camp and the positive consequences on your entire family. But ... I still don’t understand your statement.”

**That Summer in Camp Lubavitch Made a Great Impact**

“My mother has her narrative, and I have mine,” she asserted. “My first summer in Camp Lubavitch, the summer after fifth grade, impacted me greatly. In the loving, nurturing atmosphere, I connected to my Jewish identity and sense of self—to the warmth, beauty and vitality of Judaism. I connected to you, to my counselors and to other campers. I related to it all. It was mine in a way that nothing in my life before ever was.

“The last week of camp, I was so sad it was ending and that I would go back to the isolation, pain and trauma that was part of my normative life experience. I didn’t say anything to you. From an early age, I had learned never to reveal much about my family. I hid my needs and vulnerabilities. I was unable to truly let anyone in.

“But somehow, you sensed how alone I felt. You pulled me aside one day to talk. You told me that we are all children of G‑d; our loving Father in Heaven lives eternally with us in any time, place or situation. G‑d never leaves us. We are never alone; G‑d is there always through all our ups and downs, even when He appears hidden.

**Deciding When to Transfer to a Jewish School**

“You told me that you were worried, and rightfully so, that my classmates in public school were beginning to experiment with drugs. You read me a poem about someone who died from an overdose. I said that I did not want to end up like that. I told you that I wanted more Jewish learning, and that I didn’t want to go back to my public school. Since I felt that way, you asked me when I would be ready to transfer to a Jewish school. I said after sixth grade.

“From that day on, regardless of what I experienced in life, the existence of a stable binding relationship with G‑d, characterized by love, has been a vital force throughout my life. I learned that Judaism was mine, and I turned to G‑d in my own quest for meaning, authenticity, security and self-validation.

“Sixth grade was a terrible year for me. It didn’t even make sense how everything fell apart; my friends turned against me because I did not want to be drawn into the things that they were mixed up in. I was bullied. My teachers were not sympathetic to me. I was uncomfortable every single day. To me, it was almost like G‑d was saying, ‘Enough is enough. It’s time you need to go to a Jewish school like you told Batya.’

“My childhood was traumatic, Batya. My parents were both Holocaust survivors. They wove Holocaust imagery into the fabric of my daily life. Before I learned to speak, I heard stories that no child should ever hear. Anxiety and fearfulness were encoded in my genes. I did not get the benefit of adult, parental scaffolding, and in many ways, I raised myself.

**Suffered from Holocaust Nightmares**

My parents desired for me to be completely self-sufficient—independent enough to survive at the young age of 3 because the tragedy they survived would repeat itself. Holocaust nightmares in which I played a starring role, reeking of death and encompassing darkness, fear, hunger and cold, pursued me and became a part of my psyche.

“And then there was the prolonged and repeated maltreatment I suffered in silence. My parents showed their damage from trauma with anger. My father’s triggers were many, and he often flew into a rage when I didn’t do things exactly to his liking. I grew up very isolated without an advocate. My association with other people was limited.

“Carrying the burden of concealing the abuse denied me healing; you cannot heal from something you pretend never happened. My own needs and feelings about whole aspects of myself were restricted from expression.

“I would have despaired completely. I would have definitely ended the constant pain, suffering and aloneness, if not for you. You gave me G‑d. I redefined myself and my approach. G‑d is there with me, 24/7, guiding my life. My fate is in His hands. No human can alter my state. Nothing just occurs. It is all directed by G‑d. Life is sacred, and each of us is made in the image and likeness of G‑d.

**A New Awareness of G-d Gave Resilience and Hope**

“I felt a fidelity and awareness to G‑d that I always tried to honor. It is a mindset, and it brought me tremendous consolation, and promoted my resilience and hopefulness. The obstacles pointed me in the direction I needed to grow closer to G‑d. G‑d will take care of me, no matter what.

“My newfound sense of security freed me from my nightmares and gave me coping alternatives to suicide. I constantly asked myself, ‘What does G‑d desire of me in this situation?’ G‑d wants me to have the will to live because only then can I fulfill His desire that I accomplish my mission and purpose in this world.

“More recently, I have gotten the help that I need to heal and have my wounds understood. The therapists I have seen marvel at my resilience. I tell them about you. You see, Batya, you had no idea what resulted from your kindnesses and teachings. You changed my world. If not for you, I know without a shadow of a doubt that I would be dead. My children and my grandchildren would not be here. And let’s not forget my awesome brother, who has been such a great blessing to me, and his children. Since he would not have been born if not for you.

“In fact, Batya, the timing of your call is uncanny. Between the harsh reality of COVID-19 and life’s challenges, it was exactly *now* that I needed to reconnect with you and be reminded of the artless sincerity, passion and simple faith of my 11-year-old self to renew my devotion. For that, too, I thank you.”

Stunned, with tears rolling down my cheeks, my mind racing a million miles a minute, I reluctantly ended the conversation with heartfelt promises on both sides to keep in touch.

We don’t have to be anyone special to have a sacred task. And yet, somehow or another, our acts might have consequences that we cannot even begin to imagine.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**A Time for Following**

**The Majority**

When the King of Poland heard about the child prodigy R’ Yonasan Eibshitz, zt”l, he wanted to see for himself the extent of the boy’s intelligence.

He requested that the little boy come to see him and instructed for him to walk to the palace unassisted, and without being told where to go. R’ Yonasan had to navigate the city streets by himself.

R’ Yonasan’s father was uncomfortable with this, but knew he had no choice but to acquiesce to the king’s request. After several hours of walking, R’ Yonasan finally reached the palace gates.



When the king saw him, he said, “Tell me, how did you manage to find the palace?” The young boy replied, “It was actually quite simple, your majesty. When I reached a crossroads and was not sure which way to go, I would ask someone for directions.”

The king persisted, “But did it not occur to you that two people might have given you opposite directions?”

The boy thought for a moment and said: “Your majesty, our Torah says that when one is confronted with contradictory opinions, we should follow the majority.”

The king smiled and looked at the boy and said, “Young man! Why don’t you listen to your own words? If your Torah says that one must follow the opinion of the majority, why don’t you abandon your religion and accept our beliefs? Are we not the majority?”

R’ Yonasan answered, “Forgive me, your majesty. When I said that I would follow the majority opinion, that is true when I was far from the palace and have doubts regarding where it is. When I got closer to the palace, I didn’t have any more doubts about where to go.

“It is the same with our religion. When one has doubts, he should follow the majority opinion. I have no doubts with respect to the truth of the Torah, and that makes me very close to the Palace of Hashem. The rule of following the majority opinion is not applicable in this case!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5781 email of Torah U’Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The Ba’al Shem Tov and**

**The Shabbos Desecrator**

The Ba’al Shem Tov once saw somebody desecrating Shabbos. He got very upset at what happened and decided to look into his deeds, to see what had caused him to see such a terrible thing. Clearly, it must have been a punishment for something that he had done wrong.

The Ba’al Shem Tov finally found something that may have caused this to happen. Once, he had heard somebody speak negatively about a certain Torah Scholar and he hadn’t protested. For this he had been punished, because to Hashem, disrespecting a Torah Scholar is similar to desecrating the Shabbos. It was a sign from Heaven that he should never remain silent in the face of disrespect, and he must change his ways and do Teshuva.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayeitzei 5781 email of Torah Sweets Weekly as edited by Mendel Berlin.*

**A Most Defining Moment**

**For Charlie Harary**



**Charlie Harary being interviewed on Channel 5 KTLA in Los Angeles**

Charlie Harary told a very personal story about a teacher from his childhood who saw and highlighted his strengths. Throughout his high school experience, Charlie was no stranger to the principal’s office. The principal, Rabbi David Eliach, called Charlie’s mother so often that he had her on his speed dial right under with his own mother’s number! Any time he would be called to the principal, his mother would rush to defend her son, no matter what the offense.

Although he was frequently getting in trouble, Charlie Harary knew deep down that he was a good kid who had a problem sitting still. It was not until 11th grade that he began to doubt himself. Every year, the school would post the seminar list, a list of kids that would be in charge of welcoming the incoming Freshmen.

Charlie knew he was a good kid, and that his name would be on the list. His eyes scanned the alphabetical list down to H, “Hmm… No Harary, maybe I missed it.” He read the list A to Z. His name was not there.

Charlie was devastated, “Maybe I’m not a good kid who can’t sit. Maybe I’m a bad kid after all,” he thought. His self-confidence took a huge hit, and he went home from school early.

When he got home, his mother’s phone rang. It was Rabbi Eliach. Charlie’s mother rushed to his defense and said her usual spiel, “He didn’t do it, it wasn’t his fault…”

But it was Rabbi David Eliach on the phone, the principal’s son, who was Charlie’s teacher in 9th grade. He wanted to speak to Charlie. He said, “I noticed your name was missing from the seminar board. That’s too bad! You should’ve been on it. You’re a great kid.”

A 30-second phone conversation changed the trajectory for Charlie Harary’s life. All it took was one teacher telling him he saw him, saw his strength, saw that he was **good**, and it helped influence his entire path.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeitzei 5781 email of Jack E. Rahmey as based on the teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

**Kindness Surrounds Us**

**By N.B.**

“You have to take a group up north on Friday. You will leave the bus in the north and return with the other drivers by private car before Shabbos. Immediately after Shabbos, you will go back up north by private car to bring the group back to Yerushalayim by bus.”

I did a quick calculation, and I concluded that I would return very close to Shabbos Kodesh, and I am usually already prepared for Shabbos by 12:00 on Friday, and there is no way I am going into Shabbos like this.

**Refused the Boss’s Offer of Double Salary**

The boss offered me double salary, but I apologized and told him it was not a matter of money, but a principle that I would not forego for any amount of money in the world. In particular, because the month before, my vehicle was in an accident and I had to pay part of the damages which came to my whole salary for the month.

I calculated and concluded that on the account of the insistence of the boss, I took some trips at the expense of a steady shiur (classed) in Daf Yomi and Sha’ar HaBitachon in Chovas Halevavos, and so, I did not see blessing from that extra money, and I accepted on myself not to miss a shiur again.

The boss was obstinate and said that he was taking away my steady morning and afternoon runs and giving them to another driver. I replied that he was not the one sustaining me, and if he thought I was beholden to him then he could find another driver.

The reason I did not go work for another company is because I did not want to miss a shiur, and this was fine with me. In short, he told me I no longer worked for him. This was on Wednesday.

On Thursday, my cellphone rang at 7:00 AM and would not stop. I looked at the caller ID, and it was my boss pleading with me to take my steady runs. He explained that the new driver simply did not show up. I felt sorry for him and I took the runs.

Later that day, I took a trip up north to the mekomos hakedoshim a half hour after shiur. I gladly took the trip since I wanted to go to the mekomos hakedoshim very much, and now Heaven helped me with this trip. I made money and I prayed. What happened that these trips popped up at these moments? They had planned this trip for the following week, but the weather forecast of a storm changed their plans and they moved up the trip to the Thursday before. 'יסובבנו חסד' בה הבוטח’ – 'One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds us’.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tetzaveh 5781 email of Tiv Hakehila.*

**The 16-Year-Old Public School Student’s Donation to a Yeshiva**

For over forty years, Rabbi Chaim Orange has traveled the world raising money on behalf of Yeshivas Torah Ore in Jerusalem, and other important tzedakos. His goal is to not just to raise money, but to reach the people who want to give even when they don’t know they want to give, so that they can get the most for their tzedaka money by supporting Torah.

In his book, “A Collector’s Collection,” he tells an outstanding story of his tenure as a fund-raiser which took place when he went to visit a doctor’s home, accompanied by one of the local rabbis in a certain out-of-the-way town.

“We knocked at the door, writes Rabbi Orange, and a youngster asked, “Who is it?”

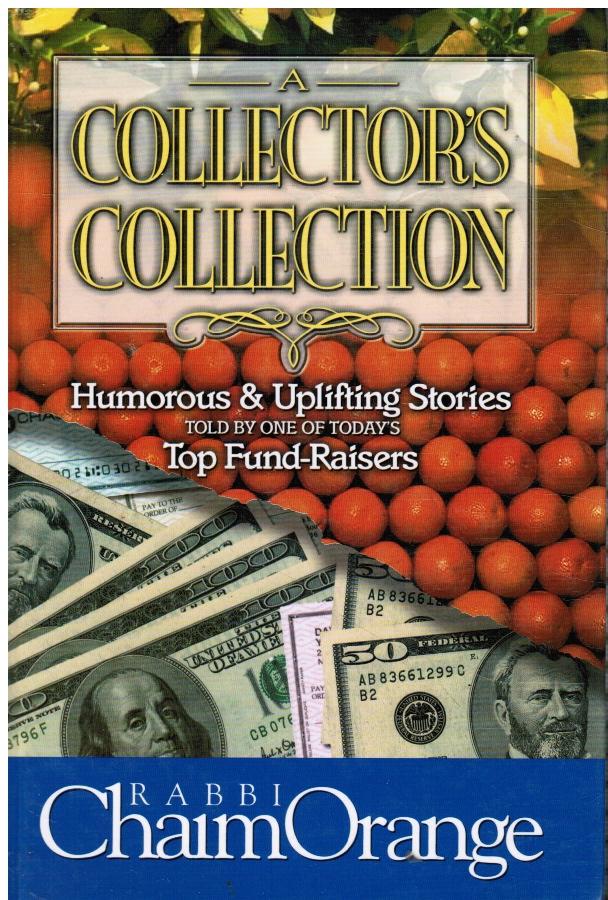
We gave our names and the boy opened the door for us and invited us in. He asked if we were hungry or thirsty.

“No, thanks,” we both murmured politely. We took our seats, and asked if his father was home. The youngster said, “No, he isn’t here right now. Could you tell me something about your mission and why you’re here?”

We were slightly surprised at the forwardness of his request.

“We’re here to collect funds for a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel. Is your mother at home?”

“My mother isn’t here right now, either,” said the boy. “What is the name of the yeshiva? Are donations to the yeshiva tax deductible? Do you have a brochure that I could look at, and have you ever been to our home before?”



Despite our surprise at these types of questions coming from someone his age, we provided him with the information he asked for. He took a few minutes to digest it, and then excused himself, asking us to wait for him where we were.

“I’ll be back in just a minute,” he said. A few moments later, the youth returned with a large check-book, and asked, “Do I make the check out the same way that the yeshiva’s name appears on the brochure?”

Thoroughly shocked at this point, we answered in the affirmative, and he proceeded to write out a check. A very nice check. He handed it to me, we thanked him, and he began to see us to the front door.

Before we left, I asked him three questions that I’m sure would have been on anyone’s mind. “How old are you, if you don’t mind my asking?” He replied that he is sixteen-years-old.

“I hope you won’t be offended,” I continued to press, “but how is it that a sixteen-year-old boy is writing checks like this? Shouldn’t your father or mother be handling this?”

The boy explained that his father was a big-time doctor who lectured all over the country. He was often away from home, and so was his mother. His parents had told him that if a rabbi ever came to the door, he should invite him in and offer him something to eat and drink. Then, he should make sure to give the rabbi a large check so that he didn’t have to come back and waste his valuable time.

In awe, I asked, “What yeshiva do you attend? I must speak to the head of the yeshiva.”

**The Boy Did Not Look Insulted**

“Oh, I don’t go to yeshiva. I go to public school.” The boy did not look insulted even in the slightest at my question. We thanked him again, and took our leave. As soon as we got into the car, I started it right away and asked the rabbi who was with me to please refrain from saying anything. I pulled away from the curb, drove for a few blocks, and then pulled over to the side and parked the car.

I turned to the rabbi and asked him what he was thinking. We both agreed that this was no run-of-the-mill kind of situation. Neither of us had ever heard of anything like it. We both felt a strong desire to do whatever we could to get the boy into some sort of a yeshiva. With all our good intentions, though, this was never translated into action.

The next year, a young girl answered the door and asked us to sit in the den while she summoned her brother. He came, asked us the same questions as he had the previous year, and gave us another check - this time, for slightly more.

During my third visit to the house, I was privileged to meet the parents. I told them what had happened during the previous two years, and asked them the question that had been plaguing me (and the other rabbi) for the last two years.

**Unhappy with the Local Yeshiva**

“Why isn’t he in yeshiva?”

The mother explained, “He used to learn in the local yeshiva, but he was very unhappy there. He wanted to switch to public school, but was willing to make the switch only if he would find two or three rabbis with whom he would commit to learn on a regular basis.”

Smiling, she then said, “He isn’t home right now, because he is learning in Eretz Yisroel this year!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tetzaveh 5781 email of Torah Tavlin as compiled by Rabbi Dovid Hoffman.*