**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas behar-behukosai 5781**

Volume 13, Issue 36 26 Iyar/May 8, 2021

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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**The Power of Seeing**

**Good in Others**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**



 R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld [pictured above] related the following incident about R’ Nachum Shadiker (cited in Tiv HaMaaseh):

 R’ Nachum was a young yeshiva student in a town whose inhabitants were persecuted by a moser (informer). He hated his brethren, but every Shabbos he would come to shul and demand an aliyah, and he would receive it because everyone feared what he would do if he were denied it.

 Once, as he was walking, he encountered a Jew carrying a case of eggs and summarily demanded them, but the man refused to hand them over. The informer became infuriated. He promptly grabbed the carton of eggs out of the man’s hands, and smashed all its contents over his head, covering the poor man in eggs from head to toe.

**The Victim Demanded a Din Torah**

 Deeply pained, the man ran to the rav to request a din Torah. The rav’s patience had already worn thin from the moser’s abominable behavior, and he sent his attendant to summon the informer to court. The moser grabbed the summons, but did not show up on the appointed day. Nor did he respond to a second and third summons.

 The following Shabbos, the moser came to shul as usual and demanded an aliyah. As he approached the bimah, though, the rav rose from his place and shouted, “You arrogant rasha! Leave the shul immediately! You have been intimidating the residents of the town, and you scorn daas Torah. You have brazenly ignored the summonses to a din Torah, and you therefore have no permission to step into the House of G-d.”

 As the moser walked past the rav, he threatened, “I will get my revenge on you.”

 That same week, the rav set out for a bris in a nearby city accompanied by two of his students, one of whom was R’ Nachum Shadiker. On the road, they saw the moser with a gun in hand pursuing them, and they became very frightened.

 However, when the informer approached, he fell at the feet of the rav and begged for his forgiveness. He then gave the rav a large sum of money to pay for the carton of eggs he had broken and to compensate the poor man for the embarrassment and pain he had caused him.

**The Rav Sternly Warned the Moser**

**Against Any Further Wrongdoing**

 The rav accepted his contrition and sternly warned him against any further wrongdoing.

 As he was leaving, though, the moser remarked, “I will have to break the bones of these two disciples,” and with the gun in his hand, he struck R’ Nachum Shadiker.

 The rav later explained to his students what had transpired. “When I saw this evil person in pursuit, I tried to justify his actions. I considered possible events in his life that could have fostered such cruelty in him – his parents, his teachers, his education. Surely it was not his fault that he acted this way, I speculated. Perhaps I should not have embarrassed him as I did in public.

 “It was as if he intuited my feelings. His mindset and demeanor began to change, and he realized that perhaps I had been correct in rebuking him so harshly. He understood that I had no other choice but to deal with him in the way that I did so that people would know that they could not defy the rav or reject daas Torah. With that recognition, he began to truly regret what he had done.

 However, the two of you were consumed with negative thoughts and hostility toward him, so he was hostile and antagonistic toward you in return.”

*Reprinted from the April 15, 2021 website of The Jewish Press.*

**Waters of Goodness**

**By**[**Hillel Baron**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/24128/jewish/Baron-Hillel.htm)



 An innkeeper arrived at the court of the famous Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, known as the “Bnei Yissaschar,”1 complaining that his landlord planned to evict him from his inn.

 The rebbe asked the Jew if he lived in a certain city, and if his inn was designed a certain way. When the Jew answered yes, the rebbe asked if there was still a well with good tasting water in the courtyard. When the innkeeper nodded again, the rebbe said that there was nothing to worry about, and everything would work out.

 As a reply to the man’s befuddlement, the rebbe told him the following story:

 A young man once traveled to his rabbi. After three days, he arrived at an inn. The innkeeper was busy with his patrons, and no one took notice of the young man. He waited for a while, and then got up to leave.

 Looking from the window, the innkeeper’s son noticed the young man walking away. He ran after him and told him that his father would soon be able to care for him.

 The young man was given tasty food to eat, and then he asked for a drink. He waited for water for quite a while, but the water did not arrive. The innkeeper explained to him that though they had a well in the courtyard, its water was not desirable, and so he had sent someone to bring water from the city’s well. The young man said that he would try water from the inn’s well, as he was very thirsty. He tasted it and said that in fact it was quite enjoyable.

 Surprised, the other patrons tasted the water as well. It was true—a transformation had occurred. Word soon spread that the innkeeper had delicious water in his well. Selling the clean water at a neat profit caused him to prosper.

 After telling his tale, the rebbe told the villager that he had been that young man in the story. By that point, the villager remembered the story as well, recalling that he had been the young boy who had entreated the rebbe-to-be to return to the inn and enjoy his family’s hospitality.

 The rebbe explained that when he heard that the well was still providing its tasty water, he understood that the mitzvah of hosting guests, which was the source of the family’s change in fortune, was still being kept. This is why he could assure the man that all would be well.2

\*

*How generous are we with our hosting? Do we look out for people who may be in need of hospitality? If we experience goodness in our lives, do we recognize the positive behavior for which we are being rewarded, and do we make sure to continue with those good deeds?*

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5102906/jewish/Waters-of-Goodness.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a5102906) Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov (1783-1841) was a student of the Chozeh (“Seer”) of Lublin, and was a prominent rebbe in his own right.

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5102906/jewish/Waters-of-Goodness.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a5102906) Adapted from *The Storyteller*, vol. 1 pg. 118.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Acharei Mos-Kedoshim 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**The Incredible Midrash**

**On Eliezer, Servant of Abraham**

**By Rabbi David Bibi**



 We begin Perasha Chaya Sarah with the death of Sarah. We explained previously that Avraham was the tikkun or the repair of Adam and Sarah was the tikkun of Chava. At the moment of Sarah’s death her soul went up to heaven and returned with Rivka (although this is why the midrashim say Rivka was three years old when Eliezer came calling.

 It’s possible that instead of being born at that moment, Rebecca was so to say reborn as at that moment taking on the soul of Chava through Sarah.) Rivka’s job was to further the refinement of Chava’s soul. At the same time there was a feminine aspect of the soul of Isaac which was perfected as he lay on the alter and went up as Abraham brought the knife to Isaac’s neck.

 Isaac was then revived but with a new soul, with his own masculine soul as the Ohr HaChayim explains.

 Now that three years have passed allowing Isaac own soul and Rebecca’s new soul to take root, it is time for them to get married and continue the process.

**Abraham Call from His Trusted Servant**

 Abraham calls his trusted servant. Who is this servant? We know him as Eliezer. He is the one Abraham referred to as his heir before being blessed with his own children. He is the son of Nimrod [and he] accompanied Abraham after Abraham emerged unharmed from Nimrod’s fire at Ur Kasdim also in a sense leaving his land, his father’s palace and his birthplace to serve Abraham. Eliezer is the Head of Abraham’s Yeshiva. He is the general who assists Abraham at war. He rules Abraham’s house, has the combination to the safe, the keys to the lock box and power of attorney to act on behalf of Avraham.

**The Nameless Servant of Abraham**

 Yet as we begin the story he is nameless. Although a man of many possible titles, the Torah refers to him and he refers to himself simply as Abraham’s servant.

 Abraham makes his servant swear. One must ask, if this is Eliezer, chief of staff with the keys and power of attorney, doesn’t Abraham already trust him? The Midrash tells us that Eliezer had hopes that his own daughter would wed Isaac, but Abraham explains that Eliezer as all those of Canaan who descend from Noah’s son Ham, are cursed, while Isaac, a descendant of Shem is blessed.

**Flying Camels Led by an Angel**

 So Eliezer gathers ten camels and again the Midrash jumps in telling us that this 17 day journey from south of Israel all the way up to Syria was shortened to three hours. While we fret over El Al’s strike this week, Eliezer had something better than even Aladdin’s magic carpet; he had flying camels led by an angel.

 And we are told the same about the return journey as they leave after breakfast and arrive at lunch time. The Midrash comments that Hashem made the miracle so that Rebecca would not be forced to spend the night in the company of Eliezer. But what are we worried about? He had ten servants with him, she had her nursemaids and he was the Rosh yeshiva?

 The story which repeats itself twice tells us how Eliezer prays and suddenly Rebecca appears offering to draw water for him as well as the camels. The Torah comments, “Now the maiden was of very comely appearance, a virgin, and no man had been intimate with her”.

**The Unique Innocence of Rebecca**

 Why do we need to know how pretty she was and that she was a virgin with the added note that no man had been intimate with her? Rashi explains that the daughters of the gentiles would preserve their virginity but were promiscuous in unnatural ways. Scripture attests that she was completely innocent.

 Eliezer places upon Rebecca a nose ring and bracelets formalizing a proxy marriage between Rivka and Isaac. The story continues with Eliezer meeting the family. Laban seeing the jewelry is hoping for more gold. “And he said, “Come, you who are blessed of the L-rd.”

 Wait, I thought Eliezer was cursed. Then Eliezer explains that he is Abraham’s servant – again, no name and no other title, just Abraham’s servant. He recounts the events at the well and the proxy marriage and asks for permission to leave with Rebecca.

 The verse states: “And Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The matter has emanated from the L-rd. We cannot speak to you either Rah oh Tov – bad or good.” Strange language!

 What’s the meaning of bad or good?

**The Significance of Eliezer’s Gifts**

 Eliezer hands Rebecca more jewelry, clothing and then to the family he gives fruits from the Holy Land. Was their significance to the choice of gifts?

 Eliezer is in a rush to leave. Rebecca says she will accompany him and along with her own servants mount the camels which take to the air and return in time to see Isaac going out to pray. Rebecca is startled by the visible holiness of Isaac and falls off the camel. Apparently she is injured in the fall.

 Eliezer explains all that has happened and Isaac brings Rivka to his mother’s tent and is comforted from the loss three years earlier of his mother. Again the Midrash jumps in and fills in some blanks.

 Rashi writes: He brought her to the tent, and behold, she was Sarah his mother (the soul of Sarah his mother?) ; i.e., she became the likeness of Sarah his mother, for as long as Sarah was alive, a candle burned from one Sabbath eve to the next, a blessing was found in the dough, and a cloud was attached to the tent. When she died, these things ceased, and when Rebecca arrived, they resumed.

 A stranger Midrash explains why it was necessary to test Rivka and see if she truly was virtuous like Sarah who found herself with a snake like person with Pharaoh in Egypt and again with Avimelech in Gaza.

**Both Abraham and Isaac Suspect Eliezer**

 We are told in one midrash Abraham cautioned Isaac to suspect Eliezer. We are told in another, that Isaac suspected Eliezer of sleeping with Rebecca on the way, and Eliezer needed to justify himself to his master. She had somehow lost her betulim (the sign of her virginity).

 So now the Rosh Yeshiva, the general, the keeper of the safe and securities, the ruler of Abraham’s house is accused both by Abraham and Isaac of sleeping with the young Rebecca sometime during that three hour return trip while accompanied with maids and servants?

 The Midrash continues with Rebecca coming to the aid of Eliezer. “Heaven Forbid! Eliezer did not sleep with me, but in falling from the camel I lost the sign of my virginity. Let us travel to that place where I fell, and perhaps Hashem will perform a miracle and we will find there the blood of virginity.”

 “And so did they do; they went and discovered the blood on the tree such that she was a mukat etz {one who had lost her virginity as a result of impact}. And this blood, {the angel} Gabriel guarded so that no bird or wild animal consumed it.”

**The Reward of the Faithful Servant**

 Finally the midrash closes, “And since he suspected Eliezer where he had done nothing wrong, and he had faithfully performed the task set by Avraham, he merited to enter Gan Eden alive.” And we no longer hear of Eliezer.

 Eliezer is cursed, the son of Nimrod, the son of Cush, the son of Cham, the spiritual child of Kayin. Within Eliezer is a part of the nachash – the snake of Eden. The snake should have served man and is depicted on a flying camel. The snake who attacked Chava pushing her into the tree and polluting her in the

process sought to break up the marriage of Adam and Chava.

 Now he arranges the marriage. Rebecca is pure as Chava at creation before she sins. Eliezer and with him that part of the snake who was cursed is now, in being faithful to his mission blessed by none other of Laban, who through his words lifts the curse.

**Rectifying the Snake’s Sin the Garden (Gan Eden)**

 The snake who found Chava naked in the garden now brings her reincarnated in Rivkah clothing. The snake that prevented us from eating of the other fruits of the garden now brings those fruits from the Holy land to her family. The snake who challenged man succumbs under Abraham and takes the title he should have borne, man or Abraham’s (who perfected man, Adam), servant. And in this case it is the tree which bears witness to his innocence.

 Adam and Chava were cursed in separating themselves from G-d, in bringing bread through the sweat of the brow and in distancing themselves from the supernal light of creation which was hidden away. Rivka as the reincarnation of Sarah continues the tikkun of Chavah. She enters the tent where “a candle burned from one Sabbath eve to the next” and hidden within that flame it the supernal light of creation.

 Instead of bread being cursed, we are told, “a blessing was found in the dough”. And finally where Adam and Chava disconnected from the shechina, she represents the opposite where “a cloud – representing the shechina or Divine presence – was attached to the tent”.

 And Eliezer allows even that part of the snake to return to Gan Eden alive.

 Lots of stories in this story, but within it we find one huge lesson. Each of us has within us a piece of that snake as Noah’s wife Naamah was a descendant of Kayin and we all descend from her.

 The Talmud says, all of us exaggerate, most of us lie, many of us steal and some of us commit sexual indiscretions. This is the snake in each of us. Our test each and every day is to resist and to eventually subjugate that snake. Abraham did it. Sarah and Rebecca did it.

 May we each be successful and may each of our homes be blessed with the supernal light of creation, with a blessing on our dough, our parnassa, our health and our happiness. And finally with the shechina – the cloud of Shalom and G-d’s presence, resting over us.

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

**Gracefully Saved**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**



**A volunteer preparing Tomchai Shabbos packages**

          All the packages are prepared and distributed with an incredible amount of sensitivity and understanding. The organizers and volunteers try to maintain a low profile to ensure that those receiving the packages have no idea who brought them. These programs - the “Tomchai Shabbat” or “Mattan Beseter’ or “Ahabat Yisrael” organizations - are often the crowning glory of the cities in which they operate. The following story depicts what these groups and their volunteers are all about.

 Eliezer Gruchkind, a successful businessman, had his hands full. Not only did he run a successful, full-time diamond business, but he also ran the local Tomchai Shabbat near his home - which also turned out to be a full-time affair. Balancing the two was quite a grueling task, but Eliezer managed to do so with professionalism and integrity.

**Dedicated to Attending Every Meeting**

 He made sure to attend every meeting of the organization and to be present when the food packages were distributed. Most of the people in need were from families he did not know. On the rare occasion when he found out that someone he knew was coming to pick up his package of food, he made it a point to keep out of sight and allow the individual his privacy.

           Once, as Eliezer was entering the shul to help prepare the packages, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that his next-door neighbor was coming to pick up a package. Eliezer was shocked. His neighbor was a successful businessman who couldn’t possibly have been in need of handouts - or was he?

           Eliezer’s immediate need was to somehow prevent his neighbor from seeing him; he wanted to spare the man any embarrassment. And he had only seconds to figure out how to get out of the way.

**Fumbling with the Keys**

           Eliezer was fumbling with his keys and realized that he was not going to have enough time to hide himself before his neighbor would see him. The regulars at Tomchai Shabbat knew Eliezer’s schedule, and knew not to arrive when he was coming to prepare the food, to insure their privacy. But this man was a first-timer, and didn’t know the ground rules yet.

           Suddenly Eliezer had an idea; he began to bang loudly on the door, demanding that someone inside open up. As people began to arrive to pick up their packages, they noticed him…and so did his neighbor, who quickly walked around the building to avoid running into him. As soon as Eliezer saw his neighbor walk away, he pretended to mutter and rant to himself, acting like someone who had come for his own package.

           Anything to save a fellow Jew from embarrassment. (Touched by a Story 3)

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

**The Unusual**

**Kiddush Hashem**

**By Rabbi Joey Haber**



 The story is told of an Orthodox Jew who went on a business trip and was at the airport for his flight home. As we he went through security, he experienced everyone’s nightmare – after he took off his shoes and his belt and went through the metal detector, his shoes were gone.

 He looked everywhere, the security personnel looked everywhere, but the shoes were nowhere to be found. There was nothing he could do – he needed to rush to the gate for his flight.

 He walked barefoot to the gate, and he saw that the passengers would have to walk outside on the tarmac to get onto the plane – and it was raining.

 A fellow passenger, a woman, saw his predicament and offered to help. She said she had a pair of slippers with her that she’d be happy to lend him. The woman pulled them out of her bag – and the man saw a pair of bright pink, fluffy slippers. He had no choice, so he put them on, and wore them onto the plane.

 Needless to say, he felt very self-conscious, walking around in these bright, feminine slippers…

 As he was sitting on the plane, he overheard two passengers talking.

 “Look at this guy, his shoes were lost, so he needs to wear women’s slippers!”

 The man said to himself, “As I thought, everyone’s looking at me and laughing at me.”

 But then he heard the other passenger say, “I’m amazed. The whole time, he was perfectly calm. He didn’t angry, he didn’t get upset, he didn’t lose his cool. It’s amazing.”

 The man was afraid he was being humiliated – but in truth, he was creating a beautiful kiddush Hashem.

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

**The Loyal Chattan**

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**Chaham Ovadia Yosef as a young rav**

 Rabbi David Ashear told the following story that depicts the empathy the Jewish nation has inherited from Moshe Rabenu. There was a young man who was engaged to be married. Just weeks before the wedding, the bride-to-be was having terrible headaches, so she went to see a doctor. It was discovered that she had a brain tumor. The doctors were unsure whether she would survive.

 When the young man found out, he was devastated. He told his parents, and they all cried together. His parents then told him that the most logical thing to do would be to break the engagement, but he refused to do so. They agreed to seek counsel from a Torah sage and went to Hacham Ovadia Yosef.

**Nothing Halachically Wrong with Breaking the Engagement**

 First the parents spoke with the Rabbi, then the young man went in to see him. Hacham Ovadia told him that his parents love him very much, and they only want what is best for him. He also said there is nothing halachically wrong with breaking an engagement in such circumstances. Then, he asked the chattan for his thoughts.

 The young man said, “This is the girl I’ve been hoping for. She has so much yirat Shamayim, she has such good middot. She will be the perfect wife. I don’t want to turn away from her now. I am prepared to do whatever it takes to help her, and to marry her.”

**The Rabbi was Crying with the Boy**

 Hacham Ovadia put his hands on the young man’s head and looked into his eyes. The boy broke down, crying, and saw that the Rabbi was crying with him. Hacham Ovadia kissed him and said, “You will marry this girl, and Hashem will give her a complete recovery. You will have generations of righteous children with her, and she will be the best wife, just as you hoped for.”

 The family accepted the words of the Rabbi, and after many treatments, the wedding took place one year later. Hacham Ovadia was the mesader kiddushin. He told the crowd at the wedding what the chattan had done. He blessed the couple and everyone there said, “Amen.”

 Indeed, she was completely healed. They had eight beautiful children together who were all righteous, as the Rabbi had foretold. In this man’s old age, after he already had grandchildren, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He was being cared for by his wife around the clock. Years earlier, he had been prepared to sacrifice to take care of his bride, little did he know that it would be the other way around!

*Reprinted from the Parashat Shemot 5781 email of the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes as written by Jack E. Rahmey.*

**A Last Request**

**From Auschwitz**

 Rav Daniel Ochayon relates that he once spent Shabbos in Antwerp, Belgium. He went into a local Bais Medrash to Daven, and since he had arrived a little early, he began to peruse the Sefarim in the large bookcase at the back of the Shul.

 Suddenly, he came across a Sefer that he had never seen before, which was written by an author with whose name he was unacquainted. The thick Sefer was comprised of a question on a Mishnah in Masechta Keilim, which is one of the most difficult Masechtos to master, and it had one hundred and thirty-seven answers which were given by the author.

**Clearly the Author was an**

**Outstanding Talmid Chacham**

 Clearly, this author was an outstanding Talmid Chacham. As Rav Ochayon was standing by the bookcase and looking at the Sefer in amazement, he had learned and understood the question and was able to read through one answer, when he was approached by a man who was a resident of the community.

 “I want to introduce myself,” the man began. “I am the nephew of the author of the Sefer that you are learning. The author perished in the Holocaust. He was a businessman, a Koznitzer Chosid, who was one of Krakow’s wealthiest Jews. I was able to salvage some of his manuscripts, and this is one of them.”

 The idea that such a volume of brilliant Torah learning was authored by a businessman who did not spend his entire day immersed in Torah, but only learned a few hours in the early morning and late evening, was by itself an incredible feat. It was the rest of the man’s story that was truly stirring.

**Together with His Uncle at**

**Auschwitz for Three Years**

 The man continued, “I had the sad occasion to meet up with my uncle in the Auschwitz concentration camp. We were together for three years. One night, he woke me from a deep, exhausted sleep and said to me, ‘You should know that because of your youth and good health, you will probably be the only one to live through this Gehinom. I have a feeling that tomorrow is my last day on this world. My time has come, and I sense that I will meet my fate in the gas chamber.

 “I ask one favor of you. This will be my final testament, my will, which I ask you to execute. I have been Bentched with a prolific memory. As a result, I remember the entire Shas, both Bavli and Yerushalmi by heart. From the very smoment that I entered the accursed gates of Auschwitz, I have not stopped learning. I have a daily and nightly Seder, where I review all the Masechtos.

 “I estimate that by the time they take me in the morning, I will have reached Masechta Mo’eid Katan, Daf Zayin. I want you to promise me that when Hashem frees you from here, you will complete the Masechta for me.’”

 Rav Ochayon was astounded at the type of Yidden that were lost in the Holocaust. He realized that the other six million Jews who were killed have the same last request from all of us, and they are begging us to complete the Masechtos and Sefarim that they would have completed, but they couldn’t. He said, “If they could ask us, they would request that we do it for them, and finish many Masechtos that they couldn’t get to!”

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

***19th Century Italian Wine Cup***



 **The above large 19th large Italian Silver Covered Wine Cup from Turin was sold in the Nov. 20, 2019 Sotheby’s Auction of the Arthur and Gitel Marx collection for $37,500.**