**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Re’eh 5781**

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**From the Trash Heaps**

**He Lifts the Poor**

**By Chaim B**



 He finally found work that starts early in the morning and ends in early afternoon at a good salary. The offer pleased him very much, but he passed on the job despite his dire financial situation because they did not give him enough time to daven Shacharis with a minyan. They did not care if he did not daven at all.

 “If I cannot daven with a minyan, then this is not for me. Is this not what we learned in shiur that if there is a flaw in ruchniyus, it is a sure sign from Heaven that this job is not for you?!”

 That is what he said to me. He asked me to help him find a job. He left another job when it became clear that there was a problem with seeing inappropriate things. This too was not good for him. I know that some will say ‘What is the problem?’ It is clear that this is not for someone who keeps Torah and mitzvos.

 I went with him and I helped as much as I could to get chickens for Shabbos and Yom Tov and other things he needed during his difficult time. This challenge is not easy for a man in this situation especially when there are children to feed. He lost his income through no fault of his own, he gave up work for the sake of Yisbarach.

 About two weeks later, he called me and this time he was happy to tell me he found work that suited him, with time to daven. I was very happy that he found work after a long stretch of difficult challenges for his family. But now the story is just beginning.

 A year later I happened to meet him as he passed me in the street as he was looking for someone specific to return a lost object. I asked him what he found, and he said he found a digital wallet (of Bitcoin) and he was looking for the owner to return it. We found out that the owner died and there were no heirs. We researched the matter on the halachic level and the Rav ruled that the wallet belonged to the finder.

 When I asked him what do you do with a wallet when you do not know the access code? My friend replied, “The One Who gave me the wallet will also open it if He wants to, and if not, then I accept everything with love.” About two weeks later we happened to meet again, and he explained that the Creator of the World sent him a messenger who reset the access code, something which is quite difficult to do and our friend became very rich. I saw that one who withstands challenges, his end is profit and greatness.

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

**The Arab Cookie Eater**

 THERE WAS ONCE AN ANGRY ARAB official. His wife always left his palace in a terrible mess. All she did was read the paper all day. One day, the fellow declared, “My wife, I am about to eat this cookie. If you do not get up and do something by the time I finish this cookie, I swear that I will throw you out of the palace!”

 The Arab finished the cookie, yet she had not budged. Immediately, his servants sent her away. The next day, the fellow was sad, as he wanted his wife back.

 He called an emergency meeting with all of his advisors, but no one was able to help him with his oath, until he heard about a wise Rabbi.

 The Rabbi asked him, “Tell me, was your cookie a hard cookie or a soft cookie?”



 The fellow thought to himself, “This Rabbi must be quite foolish. What difference does it make if it was hard or soft?” He then answered that it was a hard and crunchy cookie.

 The Rabbi told him, “Dear fellow, if it was a hard cookie, then there must have been some crumbs. If there were crumbs, you never finished the cookie. You can take your wife back into your palace.”

 It was the “little” crumbs that made the “big” difference.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5781 email of the Eitz Hachayim parshas sheet.*

**Show Me the**

**Waze to Go Home**

**By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

***“Come to Cheshbon” (21:27)***

 I well remember, before setting off on a trip, pulling out my somewhat dog-eared maps and carefully planning my route. I carefully considered the prevailing traffic at my estimated times along journey, and committed to memory the route, jotting down the names or numbers of the highways that I would need to take.

 Who'd a-thought that that just a few short years later, my maps would be gathering mold at the bottom the trunk of my car, and a satellite miles above me in the sky would be guiding me to my destination on a screen in my car? And not only that, but if the traffic situation changed, it would reroute me as I was driving!

 Waze sure is a wonderful invention. Only problem is if the satellite doesn't work, or your phone can’t pick up the signal. A few years ago, one of my sons was attending a Yeshiva in the south of Israel, and my wife and I made several trips to visit him. I jumped in the car, fired up Waze, and off we went. We must have made the journey at least five or six times, when one day I realized that Waze had gone “on the blink.”



 I suddenly started to pay attention to the road signs and cast my eyes to the left and the right, trying to recognize the scenery. I had absolutely no idea where I was. Or how to get to where I wanted to get. Our lives are full of labor-saving devices that can make our lives full of labor. When the personal computer first came out, I suggested that every computer that left the factory should have a little sticker on it saying, “You can waste your life saving time.”

**The “Negative Drive”**

 One of the most dangerous things in life is to travel through it on “auto-pilot.” Although we may have traveled though similar situations in the past, life choices require constant reevaluation. The “Negative Drive” is a master of misrouting. And what may have been a necessary strategy in the past — or even a mitzvah — now, on this particular journey, the road that we are on may take us far from our goal.

 “Come to Cheshbon.” The Talmud (Bava Batra 78b) expounds this verse in this manner: “Therefore, the allegorists say, ‘Come to Cheshbon.’ …

**The Balance Sheet of the World**

 Those who rule over their negative drive say, ‘Come and evaluate the cheshbon (“balance sheet of the world”) — the loss of a mitzvah versus its gain — and the gain of a transgression versus its loss…’ ” When we fail to do life’s essential map work, we may find ourselves far “awaze” from where we want to be.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chukat 5781 email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Dreamers**

 

**Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**

 Dreams are often a time when the hidden is revealed. The Sages in fact tell us that dreams have a power equivalent to one-sixtieth of prophecy. In the following incredible true story, Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser tells about one amazing dream in which a little bit of the hidden was revealed…
          It was well past midnight on a particularly warm June night. Having had a busy week, I was intent on making sure that my sleep would be uninterrupted. As I drifted off, I became oblivious to the conscious world.
          A few hours later I began dreaming, but the dream was frighteningly real.
          I dreamt that I was riding in the passenger side of a car with a man whom I had never met. As he barreled down the highway, I noticed that his eyes had closed and he had fallen asleep. To make matters worse, we were quickly approaching a sharp curve in the highway. With the speeding oncoming traffic approaching from the other side of the median, I immediately shouted, "Wake up! Wake up!" However, the driver, whoever he was, lowered his head slightly and seemed to descend into an even deeper sleep. Desperately, I shouted the first thing I could think of-"Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!"

**The Dream was a Horrific Experience**

 With those words, I woke up in a cold sweat. Somewhat relieved that I had been dreaming and was not actually in the car, I calmed myself with the words, "It's only a dream!" I looked at the clock on my night table. It was exactly three a.m. Needless to say, the dream was a horrific experience. I decided to give tzedakah and thank the Almighty that this event had not really happened.
          The next morning, I bumped into one of my closest friends. He startled me by saying. "You will never believe what happened last night. My brother called me shortly after three a.m. He was driving his car on the Long Island Expressway, returning from North Carolina. I guess the trip was too much for him and he fell asleep at the wheel.
          All of a sudden, he heard a

voice screaming, 'Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!' Thank G-d he did!

Boruch Hashem, he tricked the Angel of Death by executing a harrowing maneuver, steering his car around a dangerous curve on the highway. My brother-who as you know is not a religious man-instantly became a believer. He called me to ask if there was anything special that he should do to thank G-d for sparing him. I explained to him that it would be appropriate for him to donate money to charity."
          I was stunned by my friend's story. I still vividly remembered my dream and was a little shaken up because of it. I related my dream of the previous night to my dear friend; we both were astounded. (from Stories of Inspiration by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, page 81).

 Everything is real: the soul, Hashem, Torah and mitzvahs.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Chukas 5781 email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**Concerned About the Wives**

 Rav Aharon Leib Steinman, ZT"L, was known to be meticulous in the observance of many Talmudic prohibitions, even when the reasoning for the prohibition no longer applied.



 For example, the decree against drinking liquid that was kept uncovered. The Gemara was concerned about snake venom in the water. Or, the decree against eating food that was under the bed because of the spiritual impurity there. Although these no longer may be a concern, there are Kabbalistic reasons for preserving the prohibitions, and it is still proper to observe them.

**A Young Scholar**

 A young scholar authored a book delving into the reasons for some of the Gemara’s prohibitions and he asked Rav Shteiman for a *haskamah* (letter of approbation). Rav Shteiman read the book and praised the author, but he refused to write a letter. He explained, “Although I am personally stringent to follow these prohibitions, most authorities permit them. I am concerned that if I attach my name to this book, some well-meaning men might accept these stringencies, causing unnecessary hardship for their

wives’ food preparation. I don’t want to be the cause of any marital strife. (Story from *More Power Points*, by Rabbi Ephraim Nussbaum)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chukas 5781 email of Reb Mendel Berlin’s Torah Sweets Weekly.*

**The Man Who Sold**

**His Place in Heaven**

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



 A businessman, whose affairs had gone downhill, came to see his rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta.1 His daughter was of marriageable age, he explained, and he could not see how he would come up with the dowry needed to marry her off.

 The rebbe asked him how much money he had on him.

 “My pockets are practically empty,” the man replied. “I only have one coin left.”

 “Go home,” the rebbe advised, “and accept the first business proposition which presents itself to you. Through it, you will obtain the means to marry off your daughter.”

 The man headed home, wondering how he would possibly procure such a sum with only a single coin to invest.

 On his way, he stopped at an inn where he happened to observe a group of diamond merchants discussing business. One turned to him and asked, “Why are you looking at us? Would you like to buy a diamond?”

 Remembering that the rebbe had told him to accept the first business proposal he received, he said yes. When the merchant asked how much the man was able to spend, he proffered his single coin, which was all he had. The diamond merchant began to laugh. “With one coin, he thinks he can buy a diamond!”

**Offers to Sell His Olam Habah**

 “You know what,” he said, “I do have something I can sell you for that amount. I can sell you my *olam habah—*my place in the World to Come—for a ruble.”

 A contract was written up, and all the assembled merchants had a good laugh.

 When the diamond merchant arrived home and told his wife the humorous story his wife was less than pleased. “Why would I remain married to someone without a place in the [World to Come](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1069795/jewish/The-Messianic-Era.htm)?!” she fumed. “Who will I be with there?

 “If you have no [*olam habah*](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1069795/jewish/The-Messianic-Era.htm)*,* divorce me,” she said. “If you wish to remain married, go right back to that man and reclaim your *olam habah*.”

 So he went back to the inn where he found the destitute chassid.

 “I’ll give you back your coin if you give me back the contract,” he offered. “Let’s arrange a refund.”

 The [chassid](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4079238/jewish/17-Facts-Everyone-Should-Know-About-Hasidic-Jews.htm) refused.

 “OK, I'll give you more than what you paid, just give me back my portion in the World to Come!”

 Still the chassid refused.

 “How much do you want?”

**Insists on One Thousand Coins**

 “One thousand coins,” the man finally replied, based on the rebbe’s promise that this transaction would procure the funds he needed for his daughter’s wedding. He explained as much to the desperate mechant standing in front of him.

 The merchant tried bargaining, but to no avail. The chassid stuck to his guns. The sum was delivered and the contract annulled, restoring the merchant’s share in the World to Come.

 A while later, the merchant’s wife came to see the Rebbe of Apta.

 “Is it true that my husband’s*olam habah* was worth one thosand coins?! Was such a great share of *olam haba* awaiting him? Or was it worth the single coin it was originally bought for?”

 The rebbe responded using her phrasing: “When your husband sold it, his *olam habah* was truly only worth one coin. But, when he bought it back through giving the other man the money he needed to marry off his daughter, his *olam habah* absolutely became worth one thousand coins—if not more.”

 How much is our *olam habah*worth? What can we do to increase it? Do we follow the instructions of our sages, even when it doesn’t necessarily seem sensible to us at the moment? Do we possess full trust that the outcome will be as good as we are assured?

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5152317/jewish/The-Man-Who-Sold-His-Place-In-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a5152317) 1748-1825. Also known as the Ohev Yisrael—Lover of Jews.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Balak 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.* *(Adapted from Tzaddikim Lemofet, pg. 72.)*

**Amazing End to Story of the Apostate Who Spoke With**

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

 It was at the weekly ceremony of distribution of dollars by the Lubavitcher Rebbe O.B.M. Thousands of people from all over the world, both Jews and gentiles, flocked to the famous house in Brooklyn to receive a dollar and a blessing from the Rebbe.

 On this occasion a man approached the Rebbe and said: “I'm a Christian. I'm from a Jewish family but I became a Christian at age 29. I'm a Catholic today and I write these books”.

 The Rebbe characteristically did not request to remove the apostate, but he responded “If a person is born a Jew - he is a Jew for his entire life. He cannot change that. He can only make his life more complicated and more miserable.”

 The renegade Jew retorted to the Rebbe by saying: “My life is not miserable today”.

 The Rebbe answered: “If somebody thinks that his sickness is something healthy, it’s a sign that his condition is severe and he requires a cure and immediate treatment”.



 The Rebbe added: 'I'm speaking about your big sin that you converted- ostensibly - from being a Jew.”

 The apostate started to apologize: “My parents never took me to a synagogue, ever”.

 But the Rebbe did not concede the point. “There's no reason for someone healthy to become sick just because his parents want it that way”. The apostate was left speechless.

 The Rebbe blessed him that he should merit to “be a Jew in public and announce to all those around you that it was a big mistake (to convert) but Hashem has such mercy that He forgives even the biggest sins that people commit”.

 After blessing him the Rebbe told him not to get involved in arguments with people because he was born a Jew and would always be one. He added that he should act like a Jew publicly and “all those around you- especially your family - you have the ability to bring them back to Jewish observance by declaring that even one who has sinned grievously has the power from Hashem to recover from his deep sickness”.

**Accepts the Book in Order**

**To be Able to Trash it**

 The apostate asked the Rebbe if he could give him a copy of his book, and to his surprise the Rebbe agreed, explaining that in this way he would have one less book to give out and in this way he might prevent another Jew from mistakenly accepting his ideas. Immediately afterwards the Rebbe threw the book to the side.

 The amazing conclusion to this story came this past summer: In a summer camp for Chabad Yeshiva students in Lugano, Switzerland, the boys found this same Jew, adorned in Talit and Tefillin, studying Torah. Thus the blessing of the Rebbe was fulfilled - he indeed merited to act like a Jew in public.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Balak 5781 website of Hidabroot.com To see the actual video google youtube – Pray for Me, Rebbe.*

**Rebbitzen Beileh Meislik – Part 2**

**By Shlomo Zalman Sonnenfeld**

 The Meisliks' home was an open house to many Jewish people who needed a place to stay in Kiev. Their hospitality could have landed them in Siberia, but they never took anything in the world seriously except the Torah and its mitzvos.

 Reb. Beileh Meislik would cook for many guests, serving them food even when they had none for themselves. She would say, “The way to treat guests is to make them feel not that you’re giving to them, but that they are giving to you.”

**Looking Through the Windows**

 Through the two windows of her apartment, she would be able to count the legs of any approaching guests. If there were more than the two legs of her husband, she would quickly add some water and salt to the soup. When the guests entered, shy and embarrassed, she would make them feel as if they were doing her a favor by eating at her home.

 “It is such luck for me that you came! I just don’t know who made the soup today; it must have been the angels. You can see, there are only the three of us. Three plates of soup, that’s what I make every day. But today there’s so much soup in the pot that we could never finish it ourselves. We don’t have an icebox, and by tomorrow the soup would be all spoiled. How fortunate that Tatteh brought guests today!”

 By then, even the shyest of guests was sitting down with a good appetite. She would often repeat, “When they ask me in Heaven ‘What good deeds did you do in your life?’ I will ask them to bring our table. It will tell them everything.”

**17 Steps Below Street Level**

 Their apartment in Kiev was 17 steps below street level. Reb. Meislik used to say, “It must be sad for people who live in a beautiful house to move into a narrow grave at the end of their lives. Boruch Hashem I don’t have to worry about such things. For me, a grave will be a step up from my present life – it’s 17 steps down to our apartment, and no one every digs a grave that deep. So it won’t be hard at all for me to leave this world.”

 During the two years that Rabbi Meislik was imprisoned in solitary confinement, his family did not know his whereabouts. They had very difficult moments of loneliness and despair. During their first Pesach Seder without him, their daughter began to cry.

 Reb. Meislik comforted her by saying, “It says in the Haggadah, ‘kol yemei chayecha, all your days; eilu ha’leilos, those are the nights too.’ What the seder teaches us is true in the night of galus (exile) as well as by day. No matter how dark that night gets, we must always wait for the dawn of the redemption, and then we’ll get out of this slavery and be free.”

**An Amazing Seder Night**

 On that Seder night, Reb. Meislik shone through with all of her greatness and strength of spirit. The wonderful things she said throughout the night would have made a splendid mussar sefer.

 Shortly before his passing, as Rabbi Meislik lay deathly ill in his bed, Reb. Meislik went about her usual Shabbos preparations, with her tears flowing like a river. She said, “What else can we do for Tatteh except have these poor Jews eat their fill at our table, talk Torah, bentsh, and pray for his recovery?” The doctors said there was nothing they could do to help him, so she decided to at least do whatever mitzvos she could, in order to gain merit for him.

 After Rabbi Meislik's passing, Reb. Meislik and her daughter applied to emigrate to Israel. They were denied seven times. In August 1969, Reb. Meislik fractured her leg in six places. She had to lay in the hospital in traction. Just then, after nine years of waiting, they were granted permission to emigrate. But they had to leave within a month, and Reb. Meislik could not leave with a cast on her leg, as they had to be searched down to the skin prior to boarding a plane. If they did not leave within a month, they would forever forfeit their chance to leave.

**The Delicate Experimental Operation**

 It was the typically malicious Russian attitude. There was one option: a delicate experimental operation could be performed, which would allow her to board the plane on a stretcher, without a cast. Reb. Meislik was a staunch woman of faith in Hashem. She told her daughter to arrange for the operation immediately. When Basyah hesitated, she said, “Don’t ask a lot of questions. I have never asked questions of Hashem. When He took all my children away from me, I didn’t ask Him what I did to deserve it. Time and again I was sick and hovered between life and death: but I didn’t question Hashem’s ways. I remember those terrible days in Samarkand, when you lay unconscious, burning up with fever… I never doubted His goodness through all the hardships we had, and He never ceased showing me His kindness.

 “How could we think of giving up now, when our hope of a lifetime is about to be fulfilled? I put my life in Hashem’s hands, and my faith is strong that He is not about to abandon us, just as He has never abandoned us before. Soon I’ll be kissing the stones of the Western Wall. So go ahead now and sign the paper. May the angel Raphael go with you and hold your hand as you sign.”

 Later, as she was being wheeled into the operation, Basyah burst into tears. Her mother said, “I’ve reminded you time and again that the Chernobiler Rebbe promised me that I would live to a ripe old age and see the Western Wall. If you’re going to be weak in faith now, you might endanger my life! But by trusting in Hashem, you’re saving my life.”

**The Russian Surgeon’s Amazement**

 After the surgery, the Russian surgeon would not take any money, as he said, “I ought to be paying you for the privilege of seeing a woman behave so courageously.” He even learned the phrase “Eloka d’Meir aneini” from Reb. Meislik, who repeated it time and again, even though she had felt extreme pain due to local anesthesia, which did not cover the entire area of the surgery. She told the doctor prior to the operation, “Don’t’ be afraid, Professor. The angel Raphael is standing by your side. Let’s both pray to G-d, you in our language and I in mine, and ask Him to help you to heal me.”

 Reb. Meislik then developed double pneumonia, and their family doctor predicted that she was close to death. When the doctor left, Reb. Meislik opened her eyes and said to Basyah, “I can put him up my sleeve! The Chernobiler Rebbe promised me I would reach old age and get to Yerushalayim; and I’m not old yet, nor have I reached Yerushalayim.

**Confident of the Tzaddik’s Promise**

 So I’m not leaving this world yet, not until I’ve taken you out of this Russian Gehinnom. Hashem will keep the tzaddik’s promise – you’ll see. And you tell the doctor to stop talking nonsense!” Reb. Meislik did recover, and the surgical incisions healed much faster than usual. They were thus able to leave Russia before the deadline.

 On her first visit to the Kosel, she asked that they let go of her wheelchair a few yards before the Kosel. She struggled out the wheelchair onto her crutches, and began tottering toward the Kosel, becoming stronger as she got closer. Suddenly, she thrust aside the crutches, reaching out to the stones, crying, “Ribbono Shel Olam, I’m here!”

 Her pent up prayers came pouring out. She, who had endured so much hardship, had only words of praise and thanks to Hashem for all His kindness. She only asked that she be given a few more years of life, for her daughter’s sake, and so that she could continue to serve Hashem. She never mentioned the tragedies she

suffered in her davening – only praise and thanksgiving to Hashem.

 She chose to spend her final years in an old age home in Yerushalayim, where she would sit in her chair, talking with Hashem, like a daughter to her Father. All her life she ran different chessed funds. In her old age she ran an “ear fund” – listening to others speak out their troubles. When she could not hear well, she found another mitzvah to do – guarding her life. Indeed, Hashem granted her renewed physical strength in her final years.

 She spoke of death with utmost simplicity. She was not ill before her death, but then again, she was always prepared for it, as she lived her entire life purposefully, planning for her final journey ahead of time.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Balak 5781 email of The Weekly Vort. Excerpted from the book Voices in the Silence.*

**Choosing the Right Path**

**Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l**

**By: A. Ben-Ami**

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**Illustrated by Yocheved Nadell**

***Continued from last week:***

 Yitzy and Shimmy had just walked away with Totty from “Tzadok Hatzadik” and his table full of “segulot”, when then the loud sound of a police siren was heard.

 “Stop! Police!” shouted two cops as they jumped out of their police car. Tzadok looked up, startled. “What’s going on?” he asked. “You’re under arrest,” one of the officers replied. “We have received reports that you are swindling people, selling them useless things and claiming that they have magical properties.”

 “But these are segulot!” cried Tzadok, as the policemen pulled Tzadok’s hands behind his back. “Look, this one will give you success in your job!”

 “I’m doing my job pretty successfully right now,” said the other officer, as he placed handcuffs on Tzadok’s wrist.

 “No, I promise!” cried Tzadok. “My segulot help everybody!”

**Why Aren’t Your Segulot**

**Helping You Now**

 The first policeman smiled. “If your ‘segulot’ work so well, then why aren’t they helping you now?”

 Tzadok paused. “Well, you see,” he stammered. “The segulot only work when you pay me. Since I can’t pay myself, they don’t work for me. I do this just to help others - I don’t even get anything out of it! You can’t arrest me - I’m a tzadik! It even says so on my sign!”

 One of the officers emptied the big box of cash under the table into an evidence bag. “Hey Erez!” the cop called. “These rocks labeled ‘Har Sinai Rocks’ aren’t even rocks at all! They are just pieces of bricks.”

 “Of course they’re bricks!” Tzadok shouted as he was helped into the back of the police car. “These are the bricks the Bnei Yisrael made in Mitzrayim, which they brought with them to Har Sinai.”

 “Enough.” said the policemen as they started driving Tzadok towards the jail. “You can tell the rest of your stories to the judge.”

 Later that evening in Jail Tzadok sat in his cell, getting ready to go to sleep, when a voice made him look up. He was surprised to see a man with a kapote and hat standing outside his cell door.

**The Rabbi of the Jail**

 “Shalom,” the man said. “I am Rav Volender, the rabbi of the jail. I’m sorry to see you got yourself into trouble.”

 “But I didn’t do anything wrong!” said Tzadok. “They just arrested me for selling segulot to help other Jews.”

 “I’ve seen you selling that junk before,” said Rav Volender. You and I know that those aren’t real segulot. You were selling pieces of junk to frum Jews and claiming that they were real.”

 “What do you mean?” said Tzadok, insulted. “I did nothing wrong. I was successful and made a lot of money. Hashem wouldn’t have let me make so much money if I was doing something wrong!”

 “Now, Tzadok, do you really believe that? Come on, think about this week’s Parsha”

 “Parsha?” asked Tzadok.

 “Yes,” said Rav Volender. “You do know what Parshat Hashavua is, right?” “Oh yes, yes, of course,” said Tzadok uncertainly. “This week is uh - Parshat Lech Lecha?”

 “Lech Lecha?” asked Rav Volender incredulously. “Oy vey, no. It’s Parshat Balak. Do you know the story of Bilaam?”

**The One with the Talking Donkey!**

 “Oh yes, he had a talking donkey!” said Tzadok excitedly. “I sell hairs from that donkey which I found in a cave in the Negev!”

 “Listen,” said Rav Volender, starting to get a bit exasperated. “The point I want to make is this: When Bilaam first wanted to go and curse the Am Yisrael, Hashem told him, ‘No way!’

 “But you know what happened? Bilaam kept asking and asking, and finally Hashem gave Bilaam permission to go, so he went. Now, do you think Bilaam could say ‘Well, Hashem let me go so obviously that’s what He wanted?’ Of course not!

 “Chazal say that we learn a very important lesson from the story with Bilaam: In the way that a person chooses to go, Hashem will allow him to go. The Torah tells us what we should do, but we still have bechira, free choice. And not only do we have bechira, but we see from Bilaam that if a person keeps trying to do wrong, Hashem might even help him! That’s why Hashem finally said, ‘Go!’ Because if you want to ignore what Hashem wants, don’t be surprised if He helps you!

 “Hashem told you ‘No!’ many times,” said Rav Volender. “Hashem told us in the Torah not to steal, lie, or cheat other people in business. But you insisted on continuing down the path of sheker, even though many Rabbanim asked you to stop. Chazal Just like Bilaam was able to go against Hashem’s will, if we insist on not listening to the Torah, Hashem won’t stop us.

**The Same Thing Also**

**Works the Other Way**

 “But I want to tell you something, Tzadok, something very important. Chazal tell us that the same thing works the other way too. When a person wants to do something good and he tries and tries and tries to do good, Hashem helps him do that too. And so, if you want to do teshuva, if you really want to do a real teshuva, you can get started today. And you can be sure that Hashem will help you! And one day you can be a real Tzadok Hatzadik!”

 And with that, Rav Volender wished Tzadok a good night and walked away from the lonely jail cell.

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