**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas v’zos haberacha 5782**

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**“Rabbi, Why Are You Wasting Your Time on that Cranky Old Man”**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar**

Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar and his wife Rebbetzin Chani Lipskar have been living in Miami, Florida since 1969, the year after he received smicha (rabbinical ordination) from the Central Lubavitch Yeshiva in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

Upon arriving in Miami Rabbi Lipskar and his wife established the Landow Yeshiva Center that continues today as an elementary school, yeshiva academy and high school. In 1981 Rabbi and Rebbetzin Lipskar with the encouragement of the Lubavitcher Rebbe started The Shul of Bal Harbor which is near the site of the tragic collapse of the Champlain Towers South beachfront condominium in Surfside, Florida on June 23rd.

Rabbi Lipskar also in 1981 established the Aleph Institute that helps Jewish prisoners across the nation and also assists the families who have a parent in prison. In the aftermath of the Champlain Towers building collapse, the Lipskars were interviewed by Rebbetzin Chani Weisberg of Toronto in a youtube video titled “It Happened in Our Community – Surfside Rabbi and Rebbetzin Lipskar.”

**The Challenges of Opening The Shul of Bal Harbor**

In addition to discussing the tragedy of the collapse that shocked the world and even resulted in a visit of consolation by U.S. President Joe Biden and the challenges of trying to comfort the families of those killed; the Lipskars were asked by Rebbetzin Weisberg about the challenges of opening their Shul of Bal Harbor which at the time was a very restrictive neighborhood. In 1981 most of the Jews were in the area were secular and absolutely did not want to be invaded by a Chassidic couple trying to convert them to a more Orthodox form of Judaism.

Rabbi Lipskar explained that in the winter many out-of-town visitors come to the Miami region to escape the cold. In the summer back in 1981 when he and his wife were trying to start The Shul at Bal Harbor it was a very difficult challenge to get a Minyan during the week. Once there were nine men and the rabbi went out of the shul and onto the sidewalk to try and find a tenth Jew. On Shabbos they were able to make a Minyan because they offered a Kiddush with a delicious chulent.

During the week to make a Minyan which Rabbi Lipskar needed as he was saying Kaddish for his father, he would call a local taxi company and ask them to send him a Jewish driver. When the driver arrived the rabbi told him to keep the meter running and join them inside to make the Minyan.

**The Rabbi Saw an Elderly Man Passing By**

One summer day, they couldn’t get a Jewish taxi driver. Rabbi Lipsker saw an elderly man passing by and stopped him to ask if by any chance he was Jewish. The man barked back at him “What is it to you? Don’t bother me?”

The rabbi pleadingly explained that he had eight other friends and they needed a tenth Jew to help make a Minyan. But the old man snarled back that he wasn’t religious and didn’t believe in religion and therefore wasn’t interested in doing anything religious. Furthermore he had no time to waste as he was going to get breakfast.

**Tracked Down the Old Man to a Corner Restaurant**

When the rabbi returned to his shul he realized that some of the eight other men were getting restless and couldn’t continue to wait. So he rushed out again looking for that old man and tracked him down to a nearby corner restaurant and saw that his prospect was finishing off a plate of bacon and eggs. He put down $5 and pleaded with the man to help make his Minyan. The non-religious Jew was impressed by the fact that the Minyan was so important that the rabbi was willing to pay for his breakfast. The rabbi told Rebbetzin Weisberg that this was the first [and hopefully last] time that he ever would have to pay for a bacon and egg breakfast.



**Stock photo**

The man continued to argue that he wasn’t religious and didn’t know what to do; but Rabbi Lipskar assured that they just needed his warm body. And the man came. The rabbi went out of his way to profusely thank the old man and let him know that he had done a beautiful mitzvah by helping the others to pray with a Minyan. The rabbi continued to invite the man to join the Minyan and surprisingly the older man agreed to come. Perhaps despite his tough stance, he appreciated the fact that he was being appreciated by the rabbi and he continued to come to the Shul while continuing to be a snarling presence in the Minyan.

**The Shul President’s Question to the Rabbi**

The president of the Shul once pulled aside Rabbi Lipskar and asked him, “Rabbi, why are you wasting your time with that cranky old man?” The rabbi answered quite simply that we need him for the Minyan.

But the rabbi non-threateningly encouraged the old man to do more than just be the tenth man. One time, everyone in the Shul one morning noticed that the old man had disappeared and now they only had nine men. The rabbi said that he thought he knew where the old man was. Indeed he ran into the men’s room and saw his “friend” the old man staring with great fascination into the mirror. When he saw the rabbi, he said, “Rabbi, your right! The tefillin you put on me really do look like a crown on my head!”

In a short period of time that old snarling man [perhaps without even realizing it] became a baal teshuvah. He looked like a hobo and his apartment was rundown. Indeed when he became ill before his peritrah (death) the rabbi thought he was going to have to raise money from members in the community to ensure that his old friend would get a decent traditional kever Yisroel (Jewish burial).

To Rabbi Lipskar’s great surprise just before that former “old cranky” man died, he called the rabbi to his apartment and gave him all of his bank passbooks and a will donating them to the Shul. It added up to about a million dollars and significantly helped the new Shul expand. Today The Shul of Bal Harbor dynamically serves hundreds of families and individual members.

**Praying and Praying**

**And Praying**

**Adapted from the Teachings**

**Of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l**

**By A Ben-Ami**

**10 A.M., in a jail cell in Yerushalayim**

Rav Volender, the Rov of the jail, was making his rounds, when he heard a buzzing sound. As he approached the next cell, he saw Tzadok “Hatzadik” holding an electric shaver - and half his beard was missing! “Good morning, Tzadok,” called Rav Volender. “Why are you getting rid of your beautiful beard?”

As Tzadok looked up, a shower of freshly-cut beard hairs fell to the floor. “Because I don’t need it anymore,” he said. “Hashem obviously doesn’t like me or my beard, so what’s the point?”

“What are you saying?” asked Rav Volender. “Why do you think that Hashem doesn’t like you?”

“Because He doesn’t listen to me!” Tzadok exclaimed. “I davened to Hashem to make me rich and then spent many hours inventing segulot to sell to people. And then I got arrested and the police took all of my money.

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**Illustration By Yocheved Nadell**

**He (Hashem) Didn’t Answer Any of My Teilot!**

“After all that, I asked Hashem to give me a more comfortable bed in my cell, to give me grilled steaks instead of the soy schnitzel that they serve here, and for the police to release me from jail. And He didn’t answer any of my tefilot!” “Wow,” said The Rov. “You davened for all that?”

“Oh no,” continued Tzadok. “I also davened that I should be taller and for a jacuzzi next to my bed. But not only that - I actually put a petek in this crack in the wall here in my cell. And He hasn’t given me anything I asked for! So Hashem clearly doesn’t want my tefilot and He hates me too!”

“Wait,” Rav Volender interjected, puzzled. “Why would a petek in the wall of your jail cell do anything? It’s not the Kotel.”

“Oh, but it is,” explained Tzadok. “You see, I made up a special tefilah that turns any wall into the Kotel, so you can daven to Hashem wherever you are and it’s like you’re right by the Makom Hamikdash! I used to sell that tefilah along with my segulot.”

**Putting His Hand to His Face**

Rav Volender put his hand to his face as he considered whether he should reply to this last statement. However, he chose to ignore it and instead addressed Tzadok’s complaint about Hashem not answering him.

“Tzadok,” he said gently. “First of all, it is important to remember that Hashem doesn’t just automatically give you everything that you ask for. Of course we can and should daven for what we want and need - and the tefillah itself can make us deserve something - but Hashem only gives us what He decides we should have.”

“But I davened for a whole ten minutes!” protested Tzadok. “Surely, that’s worth something!

“Ten minutes???” said Rav Volender. “You know, Parsha Eikev tells how Moshe Rabbeinu davened for 40 days after the chet ha’egel that Hashem shouldn’t destroy the Am Yisroel - FORTY DAYS!!! Can you imagine?”

“40 days?” echoed Tzadok. “Why did he keep davening? Hashem obviously didn’t want to answer him.”

“He didn’t???” exclaimed the Rov. “Well then how do you explain the fact that you and I are standing here?”

Tzadok thought about this for a second. “Well I guess Hashem just got tired of Moshe’s tefilos and just gave in.” he offered.

**Hashem Loves OurTefilos**

“TIRED???” Rav Volender was almost shouting. “Are you even listening to yourself? It’s the exact opposite! Hashem NEVER gets tired of our tefilos. That’s the whole reason He didn’t answer Moshe Rabbeinu right away. He loved his tefilos so much that He wanted him to keep davening.

“But it’s not that Hashem needs our tefilos - oh no, just the opposite. The reason that Hashem loves our tefilos is because when we daven properly, it makes us think about Hashem. And the more time we spend thinking about Hashem, the closer we get to Him and the more perfect we become.

“So by Moshe Rabbeinu davening his heart out for forty days, he achieved even greater levels of perfection and closeness to Hashem. That’s exactly why Hashem waited so long before answering him.”

“Incredible!” said Tzadok. “So do you mean that if I daven to Hashem for forty days at my personal Kotel in my cell, that I’ll actually get a jacuzzi and steak dinners right here in jail?”

**Praying will Make You a Better Person**

“No,” Rav Volender answered. “I’m not saying that at all. But if you devote your time here in jail to davening to Hashem with all your heart, you will become a better person and closer to Hashem. And by doing so, you will b’ezras Hashem be zoche to a yeshua.”

Tzadok looked regretfully at the half of his beard that was laying on the floor of the jail, and then back up at the Rov. “Thank you, Rabbi,” he said. “I will right now start davening to Hashem with real devotion so I can become close to Him and become a real Tzadok Hatzadik!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Eikev 5781 email of Toras Avigdor Junior.*

**Just One More Prayer**

**By Rabbi David Bibi**

Some years back, I heard a story. I recalled parts of it, but was looking for it in full so I turned to professor Google for help. I found a version posted on the Yeshiva Bet El website by Rabbi Stewart Weiss.

He writes:

Moshe’s greatest wish was to enter Eretz Yisrael to live - or at least to be buried there. He prayed 515 times, until Hashem finally said, "Stop praying!" What a strange thing for G-d to say, to tell a Jew not to pray?! What gives?

So hear this story:

An elderly Jewish lady living in a nursing home passed away. Her children, who always visited her and took care of her, were notified. They

immediately phoned the burial society and arranged for a proper burial. The woman was buried in the presence of her beloved family; Kaddish was recited and Shiva began.

On the 5th day of the shiva, the phone rang and the daughter answered. On the other end of the phone was......her mother, whom she had just buried! The daughter, in shock, immediately fainted. The phone rang again; it was her mother complaining that no one had come to see her that entire week.

The family rushed to the nursing home to see their "dead" mother alive and well! It turned out there was a mix-up at the nursing home; it was her roommate that had passed away, not their mother. The home had mixed up the names and phoned the wrong family, and so the wrong person was buried! Imagine how terrible everyone felt about such a mistake.

**Informing the Children of the OTHER Lady**

But now, the nursing home had the grim job of informing the children of the OTHER lady that their mother had died 5 days ago and was already buried. They called, the son answered, and as soon as they broke the sad news to him that his mother had died, the son interrupted, "Just have her cremated; we’re not interested in anything else." The nursing home explained that it was too late; she’d already had a proper Jewish burial! When the son heard this, he was awestruck, and related the following story:

"We long debated with our mother about what to do about her burial when she died. She is observant, and wanted a proper Jewish burial. But we told her that we plan to cremate her, as we don’t believe in an afterlife. Besides, cremation is much cheaper and definitely more ecologically correct. Our mother’s response to us was: ‘I will pray to G-d that I receive a Jewish burial.’ Every day, our mother prayed. We told her it was a waste of time, that when she was gone, WE would be in charge of things, and do what we thought was right, but she kept right on praying anyway. And now, amazingly, it seems that her prayer was answered!"

**The Awesome Power of Prayer**

The Rabbi comments: Prayer has an awesome power. So great, so powerful that Hashem knew that if Moshe prayed just one more time – Tefila #516 - even He, the Almighty, the Shomaya Tefila, would simply have to give in! So He asked Moshe to stop right there.

The lesson for all of us: never give up, never stop praying.

The answer to our prayer may be just around the bend; the next bend of the knee may finally do the trick!

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’etchanan 5781 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace*

**Family is Family**

**By Rabbi Yechiel Spero**



           It happened during one of the many skirmishes in the city of Yerushalayim prior to 1948, and shooting erupted in many places. The furious gunfire ignited the streets and alleyways, and merely walking into one of the volatile zones meant risking one’s life. Yet, inexplicably, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was seen trudging hastily through the streets toward the home of one of his brothers-in-law.

           Well advanced in age and quite weak, Rav Isser Zalman was obviously having difficulty walking. Finally, one of his disciples inquired as to what could possibly have been so important that he was risking his life for it.

           At first Rav Isser Zalman avoided the question, instead encouraging the fellow himself to find a safe place for the time being. After both men found somewhere to wait out the worst of the battle, the aging Rosh Yeshivah spoke with incredible sensitivity and compassion.

           “I have just sent a volume of Even HaEzel to the printer for publishing. But as I was leafing through the manuscript one last time, I realized that I had inserted a thought from all of my brothers-in-law except for one. I tried to imagine what he would feel like if he was the only one not included in the sefer. Perhaps he would feel slighted. So I quickly went to his home to ask him for his insight on a perplexing passage of the Rambam. This way I would be able to immediately include what he told me to explain the problematic Rambam.

           Even amidst the perils of war, there was only one thing that mattered to Rav Isser Zalman – the feelings of a fellow Jew, including his brother-in-law. (Touched by a Story 3)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’etchanan 5781 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace*

**The Gardener’s Phone Calls**

**By Rabbi Joey Haber**



A man once overheard someone on the phone – who turned out to be a gardener – asking the person on the other line if he needed a gardener. He explained that he is very experienced and does a very good job. The person on the other line said he already had a gardener whom he is very happy with. The gardener then called somebody else, and got the same response. He ended calling 15 people – and they all said that they already had a gardener whom they’re happy with.

Finally, the man overhearing the phone calls, feeling very bad for the gardener, approached him and offered to hire him to take care of his lawn.

“Sorry,” the gardener said. “I’m booked. I can’t take on any more customers.”

The man was startled.  “You just called up 15 people asking them to hire you!!”

“You don’t understand,” the gardener said. “These are my customers. I work for all of them, but I never receive a single compliment. I called them pretending to be somebody else so I could hear them say that they’re happy with their gardener…”

So many people in our community feel this way. They feel alone, unappreciated, unloved, and ignored. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

Is it that difficult to give a compliment? It is that difficult to be gracious? Is it that difficult to give a warm smile? Is it that difficult to pick up the phone and call somebody who lives alone or who is struggling with some problem, and lend an ear? Is it that difficult to go over to a visitor or new member in shul and warmly introduce yourself?

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’etchanan 5781 email of Rabbi David Bibi’s Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace*

**The Chocolate Nut Cake**

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“I have a surprise for you,” said the man’s wife. “I made your mother’s famous chocolate nut cake for dessert!”

The man looked forward to the treat but after one bite he was sorely disappointed.

Noting his distaste, his wife bristled. “Well, if you don’t like it, don’t blame me,” she said testily. “It’s your mother’s recipe.”

He paused to choose his words carefully, then said, “Um… This doesn’t taste like hers. Are you sure you didn’t change anything?”

“Well,” she answered brusquely, “I didn’t have four egg whites, so I just used two whole eggs. And I don’t like slivered almonds so I used peanuts. And yes, instead of applesauce, I substituted stewed prunes which I think are healthier. But otherwise, it’s exactly your mother’s recipe! If you don’t like it blame her.”

[Editor’s Note: Maybe the above moshel (parable) can teach a lesson to not trying to change Torah mitzvoth or practices.]

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5781email of Rabbi Jonathon Gewirtz’s Migdol Ohr parsha sheet.*

**Hashem Runs the World**

**By Jack E Rahmey**

Throughout the parasha, the Torah reminds us that Hashem is in control, running the world, creating intricate, knotted webs that come together to make miraculous stories. Rabbi Yoel Gold told an amazing story in his Tisha B’Av video “The Wait” about a woman who never lost emunah that Hashem would bring her naseeb.

At 64 years-old, Laurie Fogel had been in shidduchim for over 40 years. Her mom, constantly filled with emunah, supported Laurie through her many years of dating, by saying Tehillim and assuring Laurie that Hashem runs the world, and He will send her match at the right time.

One day, Laurie’s mom suddenly had a heart attack. The doctors worked on her tirelessly in Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and managed to get her stable, B’H.

On May 25th, at around 6:00 PM, Laurie’s mom was ready to be discharged. The doctor removed a tube, and something went very wrong. The words “Code Blue, Code Blue” rang around the sixth floor of the hospital while the doctors and nurses struggled to bring Mrs. Fogel back to life.

After a half hour, they miraculously succeeded, and Laurie’s mom would be okay. She was discharged a few days later, and Laurie and her mom went home together.

Two months later, Laurie was set up with a man named Ron Hass. For their first date, they ended up at a coffee shop on Beverly Boulevard. Things were going great; the conversation was flowing! Laurie noticed Ron kept looking across the street at Cedars-Sinai, so she asked him, “Is everything okay?”

Ron pointed to the hospital and said, “Sitting here reminds me of what a miracle it is that I’m actually alive. Just a couple of months ago, I was in that building. I had a heart attack.”

With his eyes welling up, he said, “I was actively dying. They called my family to come say goodbye. My family even started to organize a funeral for me for the next morning. The doctors took me off life support, and it was a miracle from Hashem. I started to cough and then breathe on my own.”

Laurie said, “Wow! That’s incredible!!” With the emunah instilled in her from her mother, her first thought was, THIS is Hashem. This is meant to be. “When was this?” Laurie asked.

Ron said, “May 25th around 6:00 in the evening.” Laurie was flabbergasted. That was the same date her mother had her near-death experience as well! With some more questions, she found out both Ron and her mother were on the sixth floor, and had the same doctors and staff calling “Code Blue.”

As Laurie told the story with Rabbi Yoel Gold, she said, “This is my theory. My mom and Ron were on their way up to shamayim on May 25th, and my mom must have looked at him and said, ‘Wait a second, you’re going back down. I have a daughter for you!’ And I think Ron looked at her and said, ‘Okay, but you’re coming with me.’ And they both came back together at the same time. Hashem wasn’t ready for his angels just yet.”

Shortly after, Laurie introduced Ron to her mom, perhaps for the second time. Not long after that, Ron popped the question, and Laurie said, “YES!” The morning after her daughter got engaged, Laurie’s mom passed away peacefully. It was as if she and Hashem brought Laurie’s match home from the Gates of Heaven and she returned once he was delivered safely.

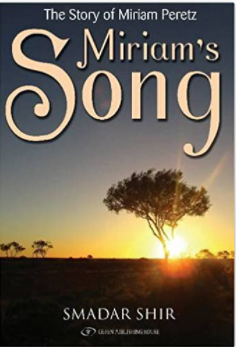
May we all realize that Hashem is in control, and that as long as we follow the ways of the Torah, He will bless us beyond our greatest expectations with children, health, and parnassah. May we always know that everything comes from Hashem, and we must be careful not to delude ourselves into thinking that it’s our efforts that produced anything, because all the gifts that we have are truly berachot from Hashem!

*Reprinted from the Parashat Eikev 5781 email of Jack Rahmey’s parsha sheet based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.*

**Do You Have a List of G-d’s Kindnesses to You?**

Miriam Peretz is a well-known Israeli woman, mother and spokesperson and the face of many Israeli families who have lost sons in battle R”L. Miriam lost two sons in the IDF; her son Uriel (age 22 years) fell in 1998 in battle with Hezbollah in the north, and her son Eliraz (age 31 years) fell in 2010 in battle with Hamas in the Gaza Strip - HY”D. Between the loss of her first and second son, her husband Eliezer a’h died at the age of 56 years old, which Miriam attributes to a broken heart. And yet… incredibly, this woman of valor lives a life of: יִכֹנָא הֵרא constant the noting and, blessings her counting and recognizing - נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיום בְרכָה presence of G-d in her life. Miriam powerfully relates, “In the past few years, I have held a constant dialogue with G-d. I discover His mercy in every step of my life, in every angle and situation.

“On Rosh Hashana eve, I was slicing meat and I almost cut off my finger. At the last second, the knife fell from my hand. I lifted my eyes from the sink, looked through the window to the skies, and said to G-d: ‘Thanks for thinking of me. Thanks for having mercy on me, for permitting me to stand in synagogue this Rosh Hashana without a bandage on my hand. I could have been seriously hurt, but at this crucial moment, You were here with me. Thanks for your kindness to me.



“There’s nothing worse than losing two sons. Yet I, who experienced the worst that could possibly happen, am busy all day long finding G-d’s kindnesses. “One day I decided to do an exercise. I took a piece of paper and drew two columns. “At the top of the first, I wrote ‘List of my complaints to G-d,’ and for the second, ‘List of G-d’s kindnesses.’ The first list was short: Uriel, Eliezer and Eliraz were taken from me before their time.

“The second list was practically endless: my daughter Bat-El got married, little Gili danced and sang at their wedding, Uriel’s friend came to visit, my daughter-in-law Shlomit invited me to spend Shabbat at their home, despite a slipped disc in my back I can still go up the stairs and climb up to my children’s graves, I can open my eyes, stand on my feet, enjoy the blossoming of the trees, laugh with my rambunctious grandchildren - and the list goes on and on.

“My dance with G-d has become a daily event. I feel a deep connection to Him. I get up from bed after a sleepless night, I see the sun in the window and say, ‘Thanks for what I have right now.’ Not for the good that might come tomorrow or the next day, but for now. I say, ‘Thanks, G-d, for not forgetting me, for never being too busy for me. You’re always available to listen to my pain’” (Miriam’s Song, p.375-376).

May we always be blessed with many blessings, and may we have the courage, humility, foresight and hakaras ha’tov (recognition of the good), to realize and appreciate all the brachos that G-d showers upon us.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Re’eh 5781 email of Mrs. Mich Horowitz’s A Short Vort.*