**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas TOLDOS 5782**

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**A Rebbe’s Prayers**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser**



The great R’ Chaim Meir of Vishnitz, the Imrei Chaim, once traveled to Tzfas. As he would walk through the city with his entourage of chassidim and visit the shuls in the area, he became a familiar sight in the neighborhood.

One day a deeply distressed couple came to see him about their only daughter. Despite all the love and affection they had showered her with over the years, their daughter had become disaffected from Yiddishkeit. Recently she had informed them that she would like to marry out of the faith. They were understandably grief-stricken and brokenhearted. They wanted to know if the Rebbe could suggest any way they could prevent this from materializing.

The Rebbe spent a long time with the parents, reassuring them and trying to lift their spirits. He spoke of the power of *teshuvah,*citing R’ Shimon Bar Yochai that “nothing in the world can stand in the face of *teshuvah.”* The Rebbe forbade their being despondent or giving up hope, and encouraged them to prepare to accept her with great love when she returned to the ways of Torah.

When they left and the door closed behind them, the Rebbe broke out in bitter tears. He cried inconsolably, and the *gabbaim*were unable to calm him down. After a long time, his tears subsided, and the *gabbaim*asked, “If this affected you so greatly, how did you calmly encourage the parents, and only begin to cry after they left?”

The Rebbe explained, “I could not allow them to lose hope. Therefore I expended much self-control to withhold my tears. Only after they left did I allow the tears to come so I could pour out my heart to Hashem, and pray that the girl should repent completely.

The Vishnitzer Rebbe kept the girl and her family in his thoughts constantly and prayed for them continually. As he was returning to Bnei Brak, deeply sunk in thought, the Rebbe suddenly mentioned the situation again and noted that it was foolish for people to envy the honor he commanded and his retinue of admirers and followers, for they did not perceive the sorrow and pain that he bore.

Eventually the prayers and tears of the Imrei Chaim and the girl’s parents were productive. The girl did *teshuvah*and returned to the fold.

*Reprinted from the August 26, 2021 website of The Jewish Press.*

**A Greek Survivor of**

**The Holocaust’s Son**

The Jewish population of Greece was the oldest of its kind in mainland Europe. Dating back to shortly after the Churban Bais HaMikdash, when Jews were dispersed all over the world and the long exile began. Over 80 years ago, sixty-thousand Jews lived peacefully in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki. It was a valued and vibrant community. Thessaloniki at one time, was the largest center of Sephardic Jews in Europe, who nicknamed the city “La Madre de Israel” (Mother of Israel) and “Jerusalem of the Balkans.”

Most Thessaloniki Jews worked at the port and they controlled the commerce. To the point that the Port of Thessaloniki was even closed on Shabbat, the Jewish day when religion forbids working, as there were no people around on that day. Great rabbis lived and studied there. It was a close knit community and people liked each other.

World War II brought disaster for the Jewish Greeks, as the Germans occupied Greece and began actions against the Jewish population. On April 6, 1941, Hitler invaded Greece in order to secure his southern front before launching the infamous Operation Barbarossa and his great offensive against Russia. Of the 60,000 Jews who had been living peacefully in Thessaloniki, over 50,000 were exterminated at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

**A Prominent Sephardic Family**

The wholescale massacre of the Jews of Greece was brief but intense. Very few escaped. A reported 2,000 Jews survived in total. Among the few Greek survivors was a family known as Bourla. They were a prominent Sephardic family of jewelers and real estate developers who had fled Spain and had been living in Greece for more than five centuries.

During the Holocaust, Mrs. Bourla was minutes away from execution by firing squad when she was spared via a ransom paid to a Nazi Party official by her brother-in-law, while Mr. Bourla happened to be out of the Jewish ghetto when the residents were taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp. He went into hiding and remained there for the duration of the war. He never saw his parents again.

The couple married after the war and in 1961, a son was born into this miraculous family. His parents called him Israel Abraham. He grew up and studied veterinary medicine in Greece. A brilliant student, Abraham got his doctorate in reproductive biotechnology at the veterinary school of Aristotle University in Salonika. At the age of 34, he decided to move to the United States.

**Met His Wife Miriam in the U.S.**

Albert, as he was known to all, met his wife Miriam in the U.S. and together they raised two children. In the United States, Albert was integrated into the medical industry. He was industrious and smart and he progressed very quickly. He joined a pharmaceutical company where he climbed the corporate ladder and became a senior manager. From there, the road was short for Albert to rise through the ranks and become Chief Operations Officer (COO) for a short period of time, before obtaining his appointment as CEO of the company in 2019.

Throughout 2020, Albert decided to direct all the efforts of his company to try to find a vaccine against a new virus which had just struck the world. Known as Covid-19 or Novel Coronavirus, Albert expended great financial and technological efforts to achieve his goal. He was tireless and fearless. It took some time, but one year later, his work paid off and the WHO (World Health Organization) and U.S. government authorized his company to produce the long-awaited vaccine.

For months, this vaccine has been distributed all over the world and just this week, it was the first to receive full FDA approval (it only attained emergency use status beforehand) to produce and market to the world, a life-saving vaccine that has helped billions of people worldwide, an unprecedented accomplishment in the field of in pharmaceutical technology.



**U.S. President Joe Biden listens as Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla makes a statement in St Ives, Cornwall, on June 10, 2021, ahead of the three-day G7 summit.**

Ironically, this vaccine which has saved so many people all around the world, including many Germans, was led by a Jew from Thessaloniki, son of Holocaust survivors, most of his people exterminated by Nazi Germany. Albert remained true to his heritage. He struck a deal with Israel to produce the vaccine in exchange for important data and that is why Israel became the first country to receive the vaccine. In memory of his grandparents who died as proud Jews, and his parents who gave birth to Israel Abraham Bourla, known today as Albert Bourla - the CEO of Pfizer Inc.

*Reprinted from Rabbi Dovid Hoffman’s Parshas Ki Savo 5781 email of Torah Tavlin*

**No Sugar in the Rabbi’s Tea**

**By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

In addition to being an outstanding Talmid Chacham and world renowned posek, Rav Hershel Schachter is one of the most prolific Torah teachers of our time.  He recently celebrated his 80th birthday but hasn’t slowed down a bit, bli ayin harah.  During his recent visit to our community over Shavuos, he gave almost 25 shiurim.



With all the public speaking, he often drinks hot tea to sooth his throat.  When offered sugar or Splenda, he always declines and says he takes his tea plain.  Once, the Schachters were guests in someone’s home and when offered tea, Rav Schachter graciously accepted but asked for it plain.  The host, curious as to Rav Schachter’s preference for no sugar, asked why he wanted it so bland. After being asked several times, Rav Schachter finally relented and explained.

On a trip to Israel with the Rebbetzin when they were first married, he was at a meeting at someone’s home in a Kibbutz. The person offered Rav Schachter hot tea but he was concerned that the person may not be aware that ma’aser must be taken from sugar, so he happily accepted the tea but when offered sugar, responded, “I don’t take sugar in my tea.”

“So,” explained Rav Schachter, “to be true to what I said that day, for the last fifty years, I have never taken sugar in my tea, even if in truth, I would prefer it sweetened.” (His son, Rav Shay Schachter, shared with me that none of his children knew why he didn’t drink sugar in his tea until that day he was pressed by his host.  It is one of many examples of his personal practices that he not only doesn’t impose on others but humbly doesn’t even share with those closest to him.)

*Reprinted from the August 26, 2021 website of The Jewish Press.*

**A Tainted Donation**



The Steipler Gaon, Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, was born in Ukraine in 1899. He later moved to Eretz Yisrael, where he lived until his passing in 1985.

Every year the Steipler received $20,000 from two brothers who lived in America; the money was to be distributed to the poor under the Steipler’s guidance. One year, when the gabbai came to bring the money, the Steipler refused to accept it.

“This money isn’t kosher,” he said as the gabbai held out the envelope. “I cannot take it. Please give it back.”

Bewildered, the gabbai called one of the brothers and explained what had happened. “The Steipler Gaon refuses to accept your money. He says it isn’t kosher.”

The man was silent for a moment and then replied, “Give me a few minutes.” A few minutes later the man called him back. “Okay, now you can give Rav Kanievsky the money.”

The gabbai returned with the envelope and handed it to the Steipler. This time the Steipler smiled and accepted it. The gabbai couldn’t believe his eyes. Curious, he called up the brother to tell him what had happened and to ask for an explanation.

“My brother and I own a business together,” the man said. “Every year we make a joint donation of $20,000 to help support the poor in Israel. This past year my brother and I weren’t speaking to each other, but despite our estrangement I knew he would still want to keep our yearly tradition and seed the money. I sent off the money without consulting him. That is why the Steipler refused to accept it.

“When I heard this, I immediately called my brother and told him what had occurred. It was the first time we’d spoken in months, and we apologized to each other and made amends.”

The gabbai now understood. The money, in effect, had been stolen since the two brothers had not consulted about it, and in addition, it had been tainted by discord. Such money cannot be used for charity.

*Reprinted from the Hidabroot.com website.*

**The Mirror**

**By Chana Scharfstein**

The mirror was large and square, with a wide, thick gold frame carved with beautiful designs of leaves and flowers. Everyone that saw the mirror admired it, but everyone also noticed that it was imperfect. On one of the corners, you see, the silver backing had been scraped off so that this part of the mirror was plain glass. People would remark upon its beauty and then say, "Oh, what a pity! Too bad the mirror is damaged."

To everyone's surprise, the mirror's owner would tell his visitors that it was he himself who had deliberately scraped the silver backing off! Can you imagine owning such a costly mirror, a work of art, and then ruining it? But let me tell you the story of that mirror.

**Abraham was Not a Rich Man**

Many years ago, in a small town in Poland, there lived a man called Abraham. He owned a small store and he earned just enough money to take care of his family. He was not a rich man, but he also was not a very, very poor man. He had only a few customers. Sometimes people left without buying anything because Abraham did not have many things to choose from. They went to the big stores instead where they could find what they wanted.

**Always Had Enough to Share with Others**

Abraham was happy with his life. Though he was not rich, he always had enough to share with others. No visitor that came to his home ever left hungry. Every time a poor person needed help, Abraham always found money to give him. Abraham and his wife lived a very simple life. Their home was small. The house really needed a paint job, but there was never enough money for that. It seemed to them that it was more important to help someone in real trouble than to paint a house.

Their furniture was old for the same reason. The curtains on the window had probably been washed a hundred times. Abraham and his wife had no carpets on their floor. Their clothes were plain, and they did not often buy new things. Many of their cups and plates had chips and cracks. The food they ate was simple.

Yes, it was not a very fancy home. But it was a real home. It was a warm and happy place. Everyone felt comfortable and relaxed there. Abraham had many visitors because everyone knew that he was kind and liked to be helpful.

**Suddenly Noticed a Stranger**

One day Abraham was standing in the doorway of his little store waiting for customers. Suddenly he noticed a stranger walking toward his store. Abraham lived in a small town so he knew all the people there. When the stranger was near the store, Abraham asked him how he could help. "Maybe you would like to come to my home and rest awhile," he said. "If you are hungry, please be my guest. If you are thirsty, please come with me for something to drink. Perhaps you need money? We will help you."

Abraham's invitation was so warm and friendly that the stranger decided to stop in his house for a rest.

**A Very Holy, Wise and Famous Rebbe**

What Abraham did not know was that this was no ordinary stranger. This was a very holy, wise and famous Rebbe from a town far way. He was on his way to a wedding and happened to pass through Abraham's town. The Rebbe was an important man and many people in Poland traveled long distances to listen to his words of wisdom, or to ask for a blessing or prayer in time of need. It would have been a great honor for any home to have this Rebbe as a guest.

The Rebbe soon noticed Abraham's kindness and generosity. He knew many rich people who could have helped the poor much more easily than Abraham, but who did much less than he. The Rebbe enjoyed his short stay. Before he left he blessed Abraham with riches, so that he should be able to continue helping the poor and needy more easily.

After the Rebbe left, Abraham's store suddenly became a very busy place. All day long customers were coming in. Everyone found what he wanted, and no longer did people leave his store to shop somewhere else.

**Became More Successful and**

**Richer with Each Passing Day**

With each day that passed, Abraham had more new customers and more money to bring home. Soon he had to make his store larger to fit all his new customers. After a while, Abraham became a very big, important and rich storekeeper. He became one of the richest men in the town. The Rebbe's blessing that Abraham should become wealthy had been fulfilled.

To be rich seems mighty good when one is poor. People sometimes think that if they were rich, life would be beautiful. But being rich can be a problem too. Now that Abraham had a big store, he had a lot more work to do. He worried about robbers breaking into his store or home. He worried about his business. He wanted his store to keep on growing. He wanted a very beautiful home. He wanted new, fancy clothes.

**Had Less Time to Study Torah,**

**Pray or Help the Poor**

Because Abraham was busy with his store, he found less and less time for studying Torah and going to shul to pray. He did not even have time to bother with poor people. Abraham could only be seen by special appointment. His secretaries were told to give money to needy people who came for his help, but Abraham had no time to listen to their stories or problems.

Abraham and his wife built a brand new house that almost looked like a palace. It had many rooms, and all the rooms were large and beautiful. On the windows hung soft velvet drapes. The floors were covered with thick rugs. There was wallpaper on the walls. The kitchen was filled with new pots and pans. There were lots of fine dishes in the cabinets.

**The Furniture was all New and Expensive**

All the furniture was new and expensive. The dining room table was made of shiny wood. The chairs in the living room were soft and plump. On the walls hung paintings by real artists. And on one wall in the living room there hung a huge mirror. It was so big it almost covered the whole wall. All around this mirror there was a wide, thick frame of gold. No one else in town had such a fine mirror. Everyone who saw it spoke of its beauty. It was truly a masterpiece.



**The House Became Too Fancy for Beggars or Poor People**

There were many servants in this new house. But this house was so fancy that Abraham did not want to let beggars or poor people come in. Strangers were no longer invited for a meal. Servants would open the door and give some money to the needy, but that was all.

"Abraham is different," people said. "He has changed since he became rich. What a pity! He was always so kind and good, and now look at him. He has no time for any of us any more." And they would shake their heads sadly and remember the good old times when Abraham had never been too busy to help others.

**A Long Distant Messange Came to Visit Abraham**

Time passed. One day a messenger came to visit Abraham. He had been sent a long distance from the famous Rebbe who had given Abraham the blessing of riches. The news of Abraham's good fortune had reached the ears of the Rebbe and now he needed his help. An innocent Jewish man had been put in prison on false charges and a great deal of money was needed for his ransom. Of course Abraham was happy to help. He gave the messenger the money and sent him off with good wishes for a safe trip home. He also sent regards to the Rebbe.

The messenger had completed his job, but he did not feel happy. It had been difficult for him to speak to Abraham in person. His secretaries had not wanted to let a stranger into Abraham's private office. Abraham had given him the money, but he had not invited him to his home for some food and rest. The messenger was surprised. The Rebbe had praised Abraham and often spoken of his hospitality and charitable ways. The messenger could not understand what had happened.

**The Rich Man’s Heart of Gold**

**Has Transformed into Stone**

When he came back to the Rebbe, he gave him the money and told him everything about his trip. The Rebbe shook his head sadly. He understood that Abraham, the poor man, had a heart of gold, but Abraham, the rich man, with all his gold, seemed to have a heart more like stone. The Rebbe decided to visit Abraham to see what could be done.

When the Rebbe arrived at Abraham's house, Abraham welcomed him warmly and invited him into his home. This house looked very different from the home that Abraham had lived in when the Rebbe first visited him. It was big and beautiful, but gone was the friendliness and warmth one had felt in the simple, old home.

**The Rebbe Noticed the Mirror**

**With its Shiny Gold Frame**

The Rebbe walked on the heavy rug. He saw the costly paintings. He looked at the expensive, new furniture, and at the drapes made from the finest, softest velvet. And then he noticed the mirror. He looked at its shiny gold frame. It was the biggest mirror he had ever seen.

"Quite a change, is it not?" said Abraham with a pleased smile on his face. "And that mirror, " he continued, "is my favorite treasure. Of all the lovely things I own, I like that mirror the best. It cost a great deal of money, but it was worth it. It is truly a masterpiece, a work of art, is it not?" he said and turned to the Rebbe.

**Quite a Change in Abraham’s Home**

"Yes," the Rebbe answered. "Quite a change. Quite a change." He said this softly, in a low, serious voice, and his face looked sad.

Suddenly, the Rebbe called to Abraham. "Come here," he said, and asked him to walk over to the mirror and stand in front of it. The Rebbe then walked away a bit and asked Abraham to tell him what he saw.

Abraham was puzzled at this, but answered, "Myself. That is what I see in this mirror. My own reflection — that is all I can see."

"Look closely," the Rebbe said. "What else do you see?"

"I see my lovely furniture reflected in the mirror. I see my paintings, I see my rugs and drapes. I can see many things in my beautiful home," answered Abraham.

**The Rebbe Opened the Drapes**

**To Reveal the Street Outside**

The Rebbe then walked over to the window with Abraham. He pushed aside the drapes and told Abraham to look out into the street. Abraham's home was on a big street and people were always passing by. Since it was a small town, Abraham knew almost all the people walking past his house.

The Rebbe asked him many questions about all the people they saw. And Abraham told him that the woman with the basket was a poor widow with many small children. She was hoping that kind people would put food in the basket for her family. He told the Rebbe about Bentze, the water-carrier, who was getting old and found it hard to carry the water. He pointed out Yankel the tailor, a fine Jew who went to shul every day, but was very poor and never had enough money for his family.

**Abraham Wondered Why the**

**Rebbe Had so Many Questions**

Abraham was wondering why the Rebbe was asking him all these questions. The Rebbe was a serious man who never had time to waste. Why should he be so curious about all these people?

Then the Rebbe said to Abraham, "It is strange, is it not? A mirror and a window are both made of glass and yet they are very different."

"What do you mean?" asked Abraham.

"Well," said the Rebbe, "when you looked in the mirror you could only see yourself and the things that belong to you. You could see much more when you looked out the window. Then you could see all your neighbors and friends from the whole town."

**Both the Mirror and Window are Made of Glass**

"That is true," said Abraham. "A mirror and a window are both made from glass. The window is transparent. Light can pass right through it. It is clear and you can see everything through it. The mirror, on the other hand, is covered with silver on one side. The rays of light cannot pass through, and therefore a mirror can only reflect what is in front of it."

"I see," said the Rebbe and nodded his head. "I see. The piece of glass that is plain is clear through and through, allowing you to see others and their lives. But when it is covered with silver, then you can see only yourself. Hm, very interesting. It is really quite fantastic, isn't it? Now do you think it will work the other way too? Could you take a mirror and scrape off the silver so that you would be able to see everyone else instead of yourself?"

Abraham's eyes filled with tears. He felt so ashamed. Finally, he was beginning to understand everything that had happened to him since he became rich.

**Abraham Invites the Whole Town**

**To a Party, Especially the Poor People**

That evening, Abraham made a big party in his home. The whole town was invited, especially all the poor people. Everyone had a fine time. Then Abraham asked for silence. He made a short speech and asked for everyone's forgiveness. He told his guests that he was sorry for the way he had acted after he became rich. His life would now be different. He promised them that his doors would always be open for everyone, and that he never would be too busy to help those that needed him.

After all the guests had left, Abraham walked over to his beautiful mirror. With a sharp knife he scraped off the silver covering in one corner. He did not stop until that part was as clear as glass. Only then was he satisfied.

*Reprinted from Rabbi David Bibi’s Parshat Ki Tabo email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Losing the Chance to**

**Make $50 Million**

**By Rabbi Joey Haber**

Many years ago, a friend of mine was telling me about someone who, he believed, owed him about half a million dollars’ worth of goods, and refused to pay him. This issue consumed my friend, and gave him no rest. He was determined to get those half-million dollars.

I tried explaining to him that he was already very wealthy, and this half-million was not going to ruin him.

“Why don’t you just let it go?” I asked him. “Wouldn’t your life be so much better if you just forgot about it? Is this worth all the time and emotion you’re investing in this? Isn’t your focus and energy worthy so much more?”

  “Are you crazy?!” he replied. “You want me to just forget about this, when somebody is refusing to pay me the half a million dollars he owes me? How can I do that?!”

For two years, he was entirely consumed by this problem.

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**Bending down to pick up the proverbial penny**

Years later, I was speaking to a friend of his who had partnered with him in a number of business ventures. He was telling me about a certain very successful venture that he embarked upon, and I asked him whether he had partnered with that friend.

“No, I couldn’t,” he explained. “He was too consumed with the half-million dollars. He didn’t have the time or focus for this venture.”

This fellow told me that his friend would have made $50 million dollars off this venture – which he could not get involved in because he was too busy trying to collect the $500,000 he thought he was owed.

This is what happens when we don’t stop and think, when we live life like a horse galloping to the battlefield. We become irrational, and we involve ourselves in things far less valuable than other things we could be doing.

*Reprinted from Rabbi David Bibi’s Parshat Ki Tabo email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*