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Respect for the Physically Challenged

By Rabbi Yoni Schwartz



Rabbi Eliezer Geldzhaler, ZT”L, the Rosh yeshiva of Ohr Yisrael in Brooklyn, was known by his students as a great role model. Unfortunately, he was killed in a bus accident. Two years afterward, his daughter pulled into a full-service gas station where a “vertically challenged” individual approached to fill her tank.

The short man saw a picture of her father, Rav Geldzhaler, in the car and asked, “You know this man?”

She responded, “Yes, that was my father.”

The man replied, “What do you mean ‘was’ your father?”

She took a deep breath and explained that he passed away two years ago in an accident. After hearing this, the man started to cry.

Puzzled, she asked, “You knew my father?”

He replied, “Of course I knew him! Every week, he would come to fill up his car. Normally, when people see my height, they avoid making eye contact with me. However, when your father saw me, he said, ‘You’re an inspiration.’ I asked what he meant. He continued, ‘You are physically challenged - yet you got yourself a job and you’re doing something with your life. You are an inspiration!’

“I have a yeshiva full of students and I am going to tell them all about you. What you are doing is an amazing thing.’ Your father made me feel like a million dollars and every time he came, he gave me a smile and a good word.”

Those encounters changed his life and are experiences he never forgot.

Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5784 email of Torah Sweets.

Teaching the Doctor a Lesson

An amazing story happened to the to the Sklarz family. Seven years ago, Mr. Yossi Sklarz’s thirteen-year-old son was crossing Route 59 a little after 8pm when he was hit by a driver who did not have their headlights on. His son went flying forty feet in the air and landed directly on his skull. The doctors said there is no chance of survival.

After a risky operation, the boy was left in a coma for 18 months. At one point, the doctor came into the room, put his hand on the father and said, “You should treat your son like a 95-year-old man. He is done. He will not make it more than a couple of days. Just try to keep him comfortable.”

Disagreeing with the Doctor

Yossi looked at the doctor and said, “Can we please have this conversation outside the room, not in front of my son, the patient.” The doctor looks at the father with a smile and says, “Your son cannot hear anything. There is no reason for us to go outside.”

Mr. Sklarz looked at the doctor, with complete emunah in Hashem, the true healer of the sick, and says, “I will not tell you how to practice medicine, you do not tell me how to practice my faith.”

Fast forward four years after the accident, Yossi brings his son, who Baruch Hashem has had a major recovery, to the hospital for testing. The doctor from years earlier, now promoted to an even more senior position, walks in with the interns.

When he sees Yossi, he can't even look at him. He does not greet him and does not shake his hand.

“This Boy is a Miracle”

He just says to the people in the room, “This boy is a miracle. I’m humbled to say, I stand corrected, this boy is a pure living miracle. Faith works. Yossi was right when he said, ‘I won’t tell you how to practice medicine, you do not tell me how to practice faith.’ Wow. Yes, there is an Aibishter—One Above in this world.”

Reprinted from the Parashat 5784 email of Jack E. Rahmey, based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

Treasures of Emunah

The Twenty Lashes of the Wicked Manager

As Told by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

We've established that everything is from Hashem and everything is for the good. But how is everything for the good? How can bad be good? To answer this question, we begin with a mashal from the Chofetz Chaim zt'l (Macheneh Yisrael):

A poritz rented out one of his taverns to a Yid for three hundred rubles a month. The poritz had to travel, so he appointed someone in his stead to run his estates and collect the rents.

A Greedy Rasha (Wicked Man)

This temporary manager was a greedy rasha and immediately raised the rent to five hundred rubles a month. The tenant tried to raise five hundred rubles, but by the end of the month, all he had was 480 rubles. He gave them to the manager, and promised that the following month he will pay the outstanding twenty rubles.

The manager was livid, "For each ruble that's missing, you will receive a lashing," and he gave him twenty lashes with his whip. The Yid returned home crying and bruised. His wife asked him what happened, and he told her.

Eventually, the poritz returned. The Yid immediately went to him and told

him how much he suffered while he was away. "The manager raised the price to 500 rubles, and on the first month when I paid him only 480 rubles, he gave me twenty lashes."

One Hundred Rubles for Each Lash

The poritz was very upset when he heard this and he said, "For each lash, I will obligate him to pay you one hundred rubles. He whipped you twenty times, so I will make him pay two thousand rubles... I know what I'll do; he owns a large property in the city that's worth four thousand rubles. I'll make sure that you get half of it."

That night the Yid returned home crying. His wife asked him, "What happened this time? Did the manager beat you again?"

"No. This time I'm crying that he didn't hit me more. If he would have hit me another twenty times, the manager's entire estate would have been mine."

This mashal is a reminder that suffering serves a purpose. As the Midrash teaches, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, 'When I give you suffering in this world, remember how much goodness I am giving you in Olam Haba.'"

There are several aspects of goodness that comes from suffering. One is that it atones aveiros, preparing us for Olam HaBa. Another is that the pain and hardship is often a forerunner for the chessed and kindness that will come afterwards.

Reprinted from the June 27, 2024 email of the Torah Times Media.

The Flying Four-Cornered Garment

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

On Oct.12, 2023, 5 days after the Simchat Torah-Shabbat massacre, at a sheva brochos (post-wedding week of celebration meals) in Kiryat Sefer, **Rabbi Chayim Zaid** told the following incredible story:

This week one of the girls from Ohr Hachaim seminary contacted me and said she had 6000 shekels saved up, which she wanted to use to help Klal Yisroel (the entirety of the Jewish People). She asked me to buy 6000 shekels worth of **tzitzis** [thin sleeveless four-cornered garments with tzitzis ("tassels" twisted strands) attached to each corner, usually worn by Jewish males between their shirt and their undershirt [1]) to distribute to soldiers in the south of the country. I tried

to dissuade her from giving away all her savings, telling her there's a limit to how much one is allowed to give to tzedaka ('charity'), but she was adamant.

In the end, I managed to find a way of acquiring 6000 shekels worth of tzitzis without her having to pay the entire sum. After I got them, she said to me, "Wonderful. Now I would like you to go with my brother to the south and distribute them."

"You've got to be kidding!" I retorted. "I helped you until this point, but look for someone else to do the rest."

But this girl was persistent. She said, "You can do it. You have protektzia ('connections')."



Rabbi Chaim Zaid

After arguing for a while, I agreed to try to find a way to do it. I contacted the Hidabroot organization and they arranged for an army officer to take me in an army vehicle to a base in the south.

We set out in a car full of tzitzis garments and drove until we reached Route 262. There we were stopped by an army blockade. "You can't go any further," they said.

As much as we explained and argued, they wouldn't give in. Eventually they told us that 3 terrorists had infiltrated nearby. Two were intercepted, but one got away and was somewhere in the vicinity, so no civilians were being allowed into the area.

After waiting about an hour, I approached the officer in charge and used all my powers of persuasion to get him to let us through. He agreed to try to see what he could do. He walked off and made some phone calls, and then came back and told

me that they would arrange for a convoy to accompany us to the base - a few jeeps in front of us and a few behind us. (a Brigadier General) got into my vehicle and we set off.

As we were driving, he said to me, "After this is over the government will certainly appoint commissions to investigate all the mistakes and omissions that took place on that Simchas Torah morning. But I already know what the conclusions will be. It's as clear as day - "It was the hand of G-d" (Psalms 118:23).

The Soldier Didn't Want the Pair of Tzitzis

We traveled until we reached the base, where we got out of the car and started giving out the tzitzis. I saw a soldier standing a little distance away and wanted to go over to him to give him a pair of tzitzis, but he motioned to me not to come closer. So, I rolled the tzitzis up into a ball and threw them to him. It was windy, and a gust of wind blew the tzitzis ball away from the soldier towards a bush.

Suddenly, someone stood up from behind the bush. It was the terrorist. He saw something flying towards him and it startled him.

The soldiers shot at him and propelled him to his deserved place in the Afterlife wrapped in tzitzis!

Source : Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a report by Mrs Devorah Plaut, whose son was present when Rabbi Zaid told the story.

Why this week? The last Aliyah of Parshat Shelach's Torah section, Shelach, presents the mitzvah of attaching tzitzit to four-cornered garments. [The text also comprises the final paragraph of the Shma Yisrael prayer.]

Biographical note :

Rabbi Chayim Zaid is a head of the mesivta [yeshiva for younger teenage boys] in Yeshivas Nachalat Shlomo, located in the Kiryat Herzog neighbourhood of Bnei Brak. He is well known for the hundreds of video and audio shiurim (lectures and lessons) in Hebrew, many with English subtitles, he has provided for KolHaLashon.com and TorahAnytime.com.

[1] Each corner has eight twisted strings knotted five times along their length. The numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew word "tzitzis" is 600, + 8 (strands) + 5 (knots) = 613, the total number of Torah commandments. Thus, the tzitzis serve as a constant reminder for their wearer of all the mitzvot.

Reprinted from the Parashat Shelach 5784 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent Institute of Safed.

The Power of Mizor L'Sodah (A Psalm of Thanksgiving)

Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz shared a story that was submitted to Tiv HaHashgacha: On my way from Yerushalayim to Beit Shemesh, a friend gave me a ride to the outskirts of the city. From there, I planned to take the Mehadrin line to Beit Shemesh.

However, I noticed that there were three boys already standing at the stop, and I realized that the Mehadrin line was not coming any time soon. I asked them what they were going to do, and they replied, that they would say Mizmor L'Sodah and rely and have faith that Hashem would provide a ride to take them home.

There Was Not One Time When They Did Not See Salvation

I raised my eyebrows, and I asked them where this trust came from? They calmly replied that this was their way, to say Mizmor L'Sodah before they needed help, and once again when leaving their ride, and there was not one time when they did not see salvation.

They began to say Mizmor L'Sodah and I observed from the side. It seemed a little strange, but I waited to see what would happen. Not five minutes passed, and an empty taxi stopped by and invited us to ride with him. The driver, when he heard where we wanted to go, offered us a very cheap rate because of the late hour, and also because he had no other passengers. I was happy to take this offer and I told the group that this was a really good price.

Hashem's Help Would Come Without Having to Pay Any Money

But they disagreed and said that Hashem's help would come without having to pay any money. My curiosity was aroused, and I waited to see what would happen. About four minutes later, a large car stopped, and a man asked if any of us needed a ride to Beit Shemesh. He said that he was going to the exact neighborhood where these boys and I lived. We were all happy to accept the ride, and we got into the car and went on our way. Of course, the boys had already said Mizmor L'Sodah an additional time, but I was still curious how all this came about.

I asked the driver where he was coming from. The driver said he was coming from a Simchah at Zevul Hall. I wondered and asked why he did not take Highway 9, which was shorter and faster.

The driver smiled and said that he really intended to take Highway 9, but suddenly, he thought that perhaps at this late hour there might be people looking for a ride, and since it was only a few minutes out of the way, he decided to go the longer way and see if he could help anyone. He added that his hunch was correct, because we were all waiting and hoping to get a ride.

When I asked him when he left Zeviv, it turns out it was at the precise moment when the boys began saying Mizmor L'Sodah! Had I not witnessed this whole incident, I would have found it very hard to believe, but now it was obvious about the power of giving thanks to Hashem. I decided to publicize this story so that people will learn from it and rejoice at this amazing Segulah!

Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Boy with the Terrible Scar



There was a Yeshivah Bochur who was having difficulty with Shidduchim, and he went to ask Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, for a Brachah. The Bochur told Rav Chaim that he had a terrible scar on his face since his childhood, and he thought that it was because of this scar that he was having so much trouble dating.

Rav Chaim advised him that the next time he has a date, he should tell the girl right at the beginning how he got his scar, and perhaps the explanation will allow her to look past it. A few weeks later, another girl was suggested for this boy, and a date was arranged.

Right at the beginning when they first met, as per Rav Chaim's instructions, the Bochur told her that before they really get started, he wanted to explain that he had a scar on his face since he was little.

He told her that when he was about thirteen years old, he was walking down a small alley in Yerushalayim, and he saw a group of Arab boys who were attacking a young girl. He ran over to them and pushed all the Arabs off of her, and the girl was then able to run away. The Arabs then turned on him instead, and he ended up getting hit in the face with a metal rod, which had left a scar.

The girl then said to him, "I have been looking to thank you my whole life! I was that girl that you saved in the alley that day. Thank you for saving my life!" Just a short while later, they were engaged to get married!

Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5784 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Letter

By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Dov was a brilliant boy, excelling in every aspect of his schooling. His rebbeim and teachers did their utmost to challenge him, but he far surpassed the rest of the students in his class. Growing up in England, it wasn't always easy for the young man. He'd lost his father, Reb Asher, at a young age, and he worked hard to bring Yiddishe nachas to his mother.

He knew how much she cared and how badly she wanted him to succeed, how she did her utmost to hire the best melamdim so that Dov could maximize his vast potential. It showed. Dov was always at the top of his class in every subject, both in limudei kodesh and limudei chol.

One day, the school announced a mathematics competition, with the participation of students from all over the area. Feeling up for the challenge, Dov entered the contest. In his teens at the time, Dov's brilliance and prowess in mathematics blew away the competition.

An Astonishing Display of Mathematical Genius

Question after question, problem after problem, equation after equation, Dov provided the answers in rapid-fire succession. As the rounds went by and more and more contestants were eliminated, the level of the questions increased in difficulty, but Dov managed to answer them almost as soon as they left the questioner's mouth. It was an astonishing display.

Everyone present was awed by the young boy's prodigiousness. By the time it was over, Dov was crowned the undisputed math champion of the entire region; he was the talk of the town. But it went far beyond the town. The entire country was abuzz over Dov's astounding knowledge and sharpness. It didn't take long for letters to begin arriving in the mail.

Many of the English secondary schools fawned over the prodigy. Hoping to lure him to their schools, each one offered him a full scholarship. Landing such a big fish would lend prominence to their schools and attract other bright children. None of them caught the attention of Dov's mother; she was simply not interested in their offers.

Then one day, the doorbell rang. Standing in the doorway was an official courier holding a letter. This letter stood out. The courier handed the letter, encased in an elegant envelope and embossed with a gold stamp, to Dov's mother, who wondered about its contents.



Sir Winston Churchill

She opened it up and began to read. Dear Dov, On behalf of our entire country, I wish to congratulate you on your outstanding achievement. It is really quite an accomplishment. No doubt, your brilliance will lead you to much success in your endeavors. As such, it gives me great pride to offer you a full-fledged scholarship to

the most prestigious university in the entire land, Oxford; I know you will be successful there.

It is my fervent hope, wish, and prayer that you continue to bring great pride to your country and hopefully, one day, you will grow up to become prime minister of England! Sir Winston Churchill Yes, the Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain!

The Mother's Strange Reaction

At this point, most mothers would have called together the family, read the letter to all who were interested, and then folded it up and put it away in a safe place for posterity. Not Dov's mother. She didn't hesitate for a moment — and she did what no other mother would have done. Though she committed the letter to memory, she did not want to have it in the house. So, she promptly tore the letter into many pieces and discarded it. It would never be seen by another set of eyes.

She knew what she was doing. Many years later, after her Dov grew up to become Rav Dov Sternbuch, a talmid chacham who purportedly knew Shas by heart, he shared this amazing story, adding one important point.

“Why Did You Tear It Up and Throw it Into the Fire?”

Many times, his mother was asked, “Why didn't you save the letter? Why not hold onto it as a memento? Even if you didn't want to hang it on the wall, you could have at least saved it in your attic. Why did you tear it up and throw it into the fire?”

To which she responded, “Do you think I could have raised my Dov to become what he did with a letter like that in my house?”

Mrs. Devorah Sternbuch knew the secret to greatness. Singular focus. Even the smallest distraction or temptation diminishes the untainted purity and sanctity of a child's mind and heart.

Another son would become Rav Moshe Sternbuch, leader of the Badatz. Her daughters would also marry Torah giants; her sons-in-law include Rav Meshulem Dovid Soloveitchik, Rav Chanoch Ehrentreu, and Rav Chaim Yaakov Arieli. That's what singular devotion to Torah can produce.

Reprinted from the Shavuot 5784 email of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from the ArtScroll book --

Fishmonger or Torah Scholar?

There was a very special young man that lived in Berditchov. He spent his day immersed in prayer and Torah study in the Beis Hamedrash. As his family grew he realized that he wouldn't be able to continue his present lifestyle but would have to provide some source of income.

He spent time thinking what he could do to earn a living. He decided to buy wholesale a barrel of herring fish and then went to the market place to sell them as single fish and thus earn a meager income. It wasn't a great business but at least his wife and children wouldn't starve.

Chose to Daven in the Shul of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

When Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur arrived, he went to daven in the Shul of the famous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov. He was so glad to be able to spend a few days completely immersed in prayer again. The tears flowed down his face as he poured out his heart to Hashem how difficult it was for him being unable to spend his day in the Beis Hamedrash as in the past.

Instead of study the words of Abaye and Rava, the Rashi and Tosfos, the Ramban and the Rashba instead he was busy selling herring. His memories of those elevating times aroused his emotions and tears. He begged Hashem to allow him to once again be able spend his day in Torah and prayer.

Waiting to Hear What the Great Rebbi Wanted

After Yom Kippur he received a message. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov wants to speak to him. He entered the Rabbis study waiting to hear what the great Rebbi wanted.

The Rebbi said, "I want you to know that your prayers caused a great uproar in Heaven. On the night of Yom Kippur, you cried to Hashem pouring out your heart how you can't spend your day in the Beis Hamedrash studying. You prayed that Hashem should give you 120 gold coins and that would suffice you for a whole year to sit and study.

After a night's sleep and thinking it over you changed your mind. You decided that if you have such a large sum of money in one go, the Yetzer Hara will try and make you open a fish store instead of studying. So, you asked Hashem to give you

60 now and then 60 for Pesach. Then you decided that even that isn't a great idea so you asked Hashem to give you 10 gold coins per month so you would have enough each month. Then by Ne'ila prayer, you decided that the best would be if Hashem would give you 2 and a half coins each week to provide you and your family with enough food. My dear friend, your prayers caused a big uproar in Heaven."

"Yes," replied the young man, "that is exactly what I prayed on Yom Kippur."
"And what did they decide in Heaven," asked the young man?

"The answer was no," answered the Rebbi.

"But why?"

"Who said that is what Hashem wants from you? Who said Hashem appreciates more when you are in the Beis Hamedrash? Hashem decided that He wants you to work honestly for a living, sanctify Hashem's name by your behavior and honesty in business to everyone who meets you. And then when you come home tired at night, you force yourself to go to the local Shul and join a Shiur Torah even though you can barely keep your eyes open. You are a true model of what a working person should be. That's what Hashem wants from you.

Reprinted from the Parshas Shelach 5784 email of Inspired by a Story by Rabbi Dovid Caro.