

קונטרס תפארת פינחס

# STORIES AND LIFE LESSONS

FROM RABBI DR. YOEL BERMAN

Written and adapted by Rabbi Doniel Staum  
Heichal HaTorah 5784 / June 2024



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LIFE LESSONS FROM  
RABBI DR. YOEL  
BERMAN



Dedicated in loving memory of  
Dr. Berman's father

**Captain Phillip Berman**

ר' פינחס בן יוסף ע"ה  
נפטר ט"ז שבט תשע"ט

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# PREFACE



Rabbi Dr. Yoel Berman has soldiering in his blood. He personally served in the IDF, his father served in the United States army, and his grandfather was an unwitting soldier in the Czar's army. His father-in-law also fought in the United States army.

During the many years since he completed his service in the IDF, Dr. Berman has become a peace activist, albeit not in the classical sense.

Allow me to explain:

Chazal state בעולם שלום מרבים חכמים תלמידי חכמים - Torah scholars increase peace in the world. *Chasam Sofer (Drashos Volume I, page 183)* explains that Hashem created everything in the world for a purpose. If we use it for its intended purpose, it is a great boon for Klal Yisrael. But if we don't, the opposite is true. Hashem created the concept of *machlokes*, of disunity and disagreement. When that "fighting" is utilized properly, it will not be used in war.

Chasam Sofer answers that *machlokes* in Torah is the pursuit of truth. Such *machlokes* eventually fosters great love among its adherents. In addition, when *talmidei chachamim*, argue in Torah, the divinely ordained *machlokes* is used positively.

In that sense, *talmidei chachamim* increase peace in the world. Their disagreements and battles in Torah ensure that there doesn't need to be fighting and disagreement on the battlefield.

Dr. Berman has passionately taught students for decades. He teaches physics with an emphasis on recognizing the wisdom of our Creator. But in Heichal he is also a beloved Rebbe. He primarily teaches by example, as we have all consistently seen him bent over a Gemara.

He continues to be a loyal and committed soldier, though now in a different manner. He utilizes the lessons from his years as a soldier to teach invaluable lessons about how to be a soldier of Torah and Avodas Hashem.

Dr. Berman is also a beloved storyteller. In his inimitable fashion he transports his listeners into the situations he describes. The most beautiful part of his stories is that they always contain practical lessons and messages for Torah living and growth.

Towards the end of the 2023 school year, after Dr. Berman related one of his classic stories to the Heichal students, one of our rebbeim, Rabbi Dovid Komet quipped to Dr. Berman that he should write his stories. Dr. Berman replied, perhaps half-jokingly, "Only if Rabbi Stum writes them." I told Dr. Berman it was a deal.

Since then, I have typed up a collection of Dr. Berman's stories and sent them back to him for review.

While this project is far from done, we felt publishing this collection would be a fitting tribute to him. In addition, it is a beautiful gift for our graduates as they take their place among our distinguished alumni.

It is an honor to publish this collection in conjunction with the Heichal 2024 Graduation. It was and remains a labor of love. I daven that Hashem give me the opportunity to complete this work.

We are dedicating the pamphlet to the memory of Dr. Berman's father for whom he completed Kaddish in the last few months.

I am grateful to Mrs. Berman for encouraging the project and for providing us with a picture of Dr. Berman from his years in the IDF.

I am also grateful to Rabbi Stechler for being the driving force of this pamphlet, along with everything else he does for the yeshiva constantly. It is an honor and a zechus to be part of the distinguished team of Heichal Rebbeim and talmidim who are מבקשי ה'.

May Hashem grant Dr. Berman many more healthy and happy years to continue to inspire his many students and admirers.

I am proud to include myself as a student and admirer.

With admiration,

**Rabbi Doniel (Dani) Staum**

*Yeshiva Heichal HaTorah*

*Sivan 5784 / June 2024*



## Divrei Beracha from Dr. M. Weisberg

I have had the distinct pleasure of being close with Dr. Berman since we met at Ohr Somayach in 1993. He took me into his home for Shabbos and we grew together in Yeshiva. After we left Yeshiva, we stayed close. He became a friend and role model and showed me that you can leave Yeshiva, but Yeshiva never leaves you.

Dr. Berman brought Yeshiva with him to work and represented what a Ben Torah embodies. He always finds a way to bring Torah into Science and bring Torah into the lives of His students and colleagues.

Whether with kind words, a smile, thought-out advice or just a listening ear, Dr. Berman finds a way to connect with his students. His stories are real and inspirational.

Since 2003 we have been chavrusas, and our Torah learning has allowed us to form a Keshet that is special. I have learned from him such invaluable lessons as derech heretz kadma latorah and that Shalom Bais takes precedence to everything. I have learned that Torah is not only learning, but it is life itself!

Dr. Berman loves to teach and loves to learn, and with Hashems help will continue to do both.

Thank you for all you have taught me, and I look forward to learning much more for you.

**Brocha and hatzlocho,**  
*Menashe Chaim*

# “Bameh He’erich Avicha Yomim”?

## *A Detail in the Mir-Shanghai Story*



**I**t was my father’s 4th yahrtzeit, 16th of Shevat 5783. After leading Shacharis at Heichal HaTorah, I was approached by Rabbi Michoel Parnes, 12th grade iyun Rebbe, who asked me, “*Bameh he’erich Avicha yomim?* In what merit did your father merit longevity? People don’t live past 100 without a zechus”. I told him I wasn’t sure, but that the following story came to mind:

My father a”h, Reb Pinchas ben Yosef, was an infantry officer in the American army/Airforce from 1940-1946. He fought the Japanese during Worl War II. His job was to overrun Japanese air force bases and afterwards convert the bases to accommodate American planes.

The last island he fought on was Okinawa beginning April 1, 1945. Like the rest of the island-hopping campaign, it was a violent and bloody mess. His unit eventually overran the great air force base, Naha. The war ended in August with the dropping of the atomic bombs.

A few days later my father was contacted by the Jewish secretary of the base. He told my father that he just learned that there was a Jewish community in Shanghai China in dire need. He explained that there was a cargo plane leaving that day for Shanghai, bringing supplies to the American Consulate. Perhaps there was something they could do.

My father had just been made supply officer of the base. He told the secretary to secure a spot for him on the plane. The number of supplies on the base was literally beyond count. It was impossible to keep tabs on what was there. For that reason, it was fairly easy for my father to procure many barrels of coffee loaded on the cargo plane in hopes of selling them on the black market and giving the funds to the Jewish community.

Once in Shanghai, my father had to secure a jeep at the consulate garage. The sergeant in charge of the consulate motor pool told my father that he would give him a jeep and enough gas for a week if my dad would give him his officer's Eisenhower jacket. The deal was struck.

Somehow my father made arrangements to meet with representatives of the black market. Unfortunately, the black marketeers told him, they couldn't help him very much. This is China, they explained. People here drink tea... not coffee! My father got very little money from the effort.

My father was never one to give up. He flew back to Okinawa and this time he filled up the plane with duffle bags and duffle bags filled with cartons of cigarettes. My father explained to me that people were so addicted to cigarettes that they would give up a day's rations for a few cigarettes.

The base secretary forged a new request from the Shanghai Consulate asking for masking tape. Another cargo plane was secured. My father threw a single roll of masking tape aboard along with the cigarettes. My father sold the cigarettes on the black market and was able to get (in his words), "a king's ransom" for them.

The money was delivered to the Shanghai community.

It was our understanding that the considerable funds generated from this second venture helped to secure visas for the Yeshiva and members of the Austrian Jewish community who were also in Shanghai.

I related this story at my father's *levayah*. Afterwards, Rabbi Stechler approached me and shared that I may not realize the true significance of what my father had done. Many of the Torah leaders of the previous generation all survived the Holocaust because they were in Shanghai. If your father had a hand in getting them from Shanghai to America, he has some incredible *zechusim*.



## You Never Know



**F**or several years my father lived in an assisted living facility in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. On one occasion while I was visiting him there, he related to me the following story:

During World War II, my father was a captain in the United States Armed Forces, leading a battalion of about 160 soldiers while in Okinawa fighting the Japanese. They called my father Captain Babe because he was the youngest of nine kids.

During that time, whenever the army would conquer a Japanese air force base, my father's battalion would then work to convert it into a supply station that could also be used for American planes.

On one occasion, they conquered the immense Nahan base, and my father's soldiers were working on converting it to accommodate US planes.

At that time, new uniforms had arrived for the soldiers. Their old ones were tattered and looked terrible. My father grew up in Providence, Rhode Island near the ocean and loved swimming in salt water. He told his soldiers to jump into the ocean so the ocean salt water would act as a therapeutic and antiseptic cleanser of their bruises and wounds.

After they had all enjoyed the water, they donned their new uniforms. They received bread machines, and the soldiers were treated to fresh bread. After their swim, new clothes, and eating fresh bread, the soldiers felt rejuvenated. They had two large tents set up – one for enlisted men and the other for officers. Everyone was inside the tents enjoying their fresh meal in their fresh clothes, happy to be clean after their swim.

Suddenly, a colonel walked into the tent. A colonel is a very high rank in the army, only one step below a general. They never saw that colonel before or after. The colonel demanded silence and announced to the assemblage: "Gentlemen in a half-hour, you all have graves patrol!"

Graves patrol is the bane of every soldier. It was the absolute worst task to have. When a marine or soldier died during combat, there was no time to properly bury him. Instead, his fellow soldiers quickly dug a couple of feet and threw the dead body in the ground as quickly as they could. Then they jabbed his rifle above the "grave" as the marker and wrote down on the map that every soldier carried, the place where the soldier had been buried.

When the fighting proceeded away from that area, soldiers were assigned graves patrol to return to those places to dig up and retrieve their dog tags and the dead bodies so they could be sent back to the United States and buried properly. The war in the Pacific was in the Tropics where it was hot and bodies rotted very quickly.

Typically, there were four soldiers on patrol who would dig and then an officer would stick his hand into the dug area rummaging around until he located the dog tag. The bodies were generally putrefied, and the smell was unbearable. My father also related that the bodies also had the consistency of warm glue.

When the soldiers heard that they were assigned graves patrol they began cursing and kicking. My father recounted that he saw seasoned warriors cry.

There was a helicopter pad about a hundred yards away from where the mess tents were situated. Helicopters were a new innovation to the Pacific war. My father suggested that they should head up to the helicopter pad and there they would divide themselves up into teams of four to get it over with, as they had anyway lost their appetites.

Moments after they arrived at the helicopter pad, a kamikaze plane purposely flew into the tents, and both were instantly blown to smithereens. My father testified that there wasn't a piece of canvas more than six by six inches left. It was utterly obliterated.

After my father finished telling me the story I replied, "Dad, that colonel was Eliyahu HaNavi! You thought it was the worst thing possible. But, in reality, he came with the best news in the world. You and your soldiers were instructed to do graves patrol, and, therefore, no one was hurt when the kamikaze plane exploded into the tent moments later."

My father replied to me,<sup>1</sup> "You think I don't know that? That's what kept me going when your mother died. It taught me that whatever Hakadosh Baruch Hu does is for the best, even when it doesn't seem that way to us!"

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<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Berman recounted this point, he became emotional....

## Ascending The Mountain<sup>2</sup>



**I**n 1979, I and a company of soldiers had just finished Basic Infantry Training in the IDF. The training lasted about 6 months and consisted of rigorous and relentless maneuvers and exercises. We started training with 45 soldiers. Only 22 successfully completed the training.

We now had two weeks off and couldn't be happier. The combined feeling of having mastered the challenges combined with two weeks of complete freedom was euphoric. We changed into our aleph uniforms and boarded the bus for the trip back to civilization.

Suddenly, a soldier from Army Intelligence<sup>3</sup> boarded the bus and informed us that due to an unforeseen emergency, we all had to return to base and redon our bet uniforms. He assured us that it would only last a few hours and we would be back on the bus heading home shortly. We were quite disappointed but had to comply, hoping it would be over soon.

They held us on the base for 10 and a half days. Over four decades have passed since then, and I still have no idea what the emergency was. When we finally got back on the bus for our long-coveted vacation, we expected that the two weeks would begin from then. We were quite upset when we were told that the time we had been ordered to remain on base doing nothing, was counted as part of the two weeks, and we had to be back in three-and-a-half days.<sup>4</sup>

We begrudgingly returned a few days later, this time for Advanced Training. At that point each soldier was sent to a specialty unit, such as *tzanachanim* (paratroopers), sniper training, medics, etc. I was sent to a Mechanized Infantry/Anti-Terrorist unit.

My training was led by a lieutenant named Shmulek. Shmulek had been in the elite commando unit, and he worked us very hard.<sup>5</sup> For three days and three nights we were subjected to intense training. There was no night or day. He constantly pushed us to stressful situations that challenged our endurance. After the three days we would get a half day off to rest a bit and recharge, before beginning another intense three-day cycle.

At the end of one of the three-day exercises he had us climb an extremely steep mountain and take a position known as a "פיטה סורית", a Syrian Pita. The Syrians would take up positions on top of steep mountains and would dig trenches around it, hence the name Syrian Pita. They would then station snipers and gunners every few feet. We were all carrying heavy weight in our backpacks, a few soldiers even carrying up to 90 lbs. The difficult climb became exceedingly harder. We grabbed bushes, branches and anything else that could help us gain traction. If a soldier lost his footing, he would fall backwards about 20 feet. There was nothing to break his fall.

There was a big burly soldier in our unit, Dovid Matityahu, who was a heavy machine gunner. He told the soldier behind him "תפוס החגורה שלי" – grab my belt". Then the soldier behind the second soldier grabbed the belt of the soldier in front of him, and so on, until there were 20 soldiers holding onto the belt of the soldier in front of them in a long line, all being pulled up by Dovid. But the ascent was still treacherous and painstaking.

Suddenly, I heard a noise next to me and saw something racing towards me through the undergrowth. At first, I thought it was an animal jumping out of the bushes. I soon realized it was actually a can of Coca-Cola and I jumped out of the way. A moment later, on my left 3 cans of Tempo (Israeli soda) came rushing down the hill. It became clear that the soldiers up ahead of me were throwing out any extra non-essential weight they were carrying to ease their climb. We were expected to climb in silence, just as they would in a true such army maneuver. So, no one said anything and just kept climbing past the discarded items.

Within a few minutes the sides of our path were strewn with *Bissli*, *Crembo*, *Metzupeh*, *Vaflo*t, and other Israeli snacks, cast away by soldiers.

Unmarried soldiers were able to return home only once a month. But married soldiers were given leave every other week. As I was the only soldier in my battalion who was married, I had a break from service more frequently than the other soldiers. In order to ensure that they wouldn't become resentful or jealous, when I returned from leave, I would bring back my wife's homemade cookies and brownies for my comrades to enjoy.

In my backpack I had a compartment to carry rocket grenades<sup>6</sup>. Being that I didn't need the grenades for this exercise, I stuffed that compartment with my wife's cookies. As I struggled up the mountain, I decided that I too would rid myself of extra weight. As I opened the compartment and grabbed the bag containing my wife's cookies, I heard shouts, "**לא יואלו! לא! אל תזרוק את העוגיות!**" – **No Yoel, No! Don't throw out the cookies!**"

Despite the pleas, I threw them out anyway...

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim<sup>7</sup> – מי יעלה בהר ה' ומי יקום במקום קדשו? נקי כפיים ובר – לבב – Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem and who will stand in His place of holiness? One who has clean palms and has a pure heart”.

It is understandable why one must have a pure, or strong heart to reach the summit of divine service. But what do clean hands have to do with it?

Chazal say ידיים עסקניות – hands are “busy” and involved. We touch things and our hands become sullied<sup>8</sup>. When a student arrives in yeshiva at the beginning of ninth grade, he is busy with a lot of things that occupy his mind. When he subsequently wants to grow in Avodas Hashem by “climbing the mountain of Hashem”, it’s not enough to have a pure heart and proper goals. He must also have “clean hands” by throwing away things he was holding onto until now that will interfere with his ability to internalize his newfound growth. Any excess baggage will weigh him down and not allow him to properly climb.

The Mishna (Avos 3:4) states “One who stays awake at night or who travels alone on the road, ומפנה לבו לבטלה – and turns his heart to idleness – he bears guilt for his soul.”

Rabbi Berel Wein explains that turning one’s soul to idleness is another way of saying that one has forgotten where he has come from and where he is going. He has lost his perspective and value system and has slid down the mountain to retrieve the cast away Bissli and Coca-Cola. That is why the Mishnah states that he bears guilt for his soul.

As a ben-Torah anticipates vacation, he must set goals for himself and ensure that he keeps busy with positive things so that he doesn’t bear too much negative spiritual weight that will cause him to lose his footing upon the Mountain of Hashem that he has worked so hard to climb during his days in yeshiva.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From a speech given to the students of Heichal HaTorah about how a ben-Torah prepares for summer vacation.

<sup>3</sup> Following my experiences in the army, I often ruefully note that that title is an oxymoron. There is an army and there’s intelligence. But the two don’t always mix...

<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew there’s an expression “Zabash!” which is an acronym for זה הבעיה שלך – this is your problem. That was basically their reply to us when we complained about the lost time.

<sup>5</sup> Comparing advanced training to commandoes is like comparing the Boston Symphony to the Heichal band...

<sup>6</sup> My gun was a Galil, an Israeli submachine gun. In combat the magazine could be removed, and a rocket attached to the top of the Galil from which it could be fired.

<sup>7</sup> 24:3

<sup>8</sup> That’s the reason why one must wash his hands before eating bread.

<sup>9</sup> Ed. – Hall-of-fame Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter quipped: “I attribute much of my success in New York to my ability to understand and avoid unnecessary distractions.” Being successful in anything is not only about what you do, but also about what you “let go of” and block out to ensure that you don’t compromise your focus from your ultimate goal.

## The Miraculous Tefillin<sup>10</sup>



**O**n March 11, 1978, eleven terrorists from the Palestine Liberation Organization, infiltrated Israel from Lebanon by sea, and took control of an Israeli civilian bus. The bus was traveling along a coastal road near Tel Aviv. 35 civilians, including 13 children, were killed, and 71 were wounded in the attack.

The attack, known as the "Coastal Road Massacre" (טבח כביש החוף), demonstrated a clear desire to sabotage the peace process with Egypt.

In response to the attack, three days later, the Israeli government launched Operation Litani (מבצע ליטני) against the PLO's terrorist infrastructures located in southern Lebanon, to push the PLO beyond the Litani River.

On the night of March 14th, 1978, the IDF launched a vast operation in southern Lebanon, led by Infantry brigades from the 36th Division and the Headquarters of the Chief of Infantry and Paratroopers Corps. The troops were then joined by Armored Corps and smaller operational units. The objective was to destroy the bases of the PLO south of the Litani River in order to restore a sense of security in northern Israel.

At the time, I was in the Mechanized Infantry of the IDF.<sup>11</sup> There was a soldier in the Golani brigade, that fought alongside us, who was a Chabad chassid. He had a wonderful personality, and everyone enjoyed his company. During lulls in the fighting, when most soldiers would sleep or sit around and smoke cigarettes, this Chabad soldier would come around with a pair of tefillin and ask the soldiers if they wanted to put them on. Because they liked him and had nothing better to do anyway, many soldiers agreed. That may have been the only time some of those soldiers wore tefillin in their lives.

Years later, in the early 1990s, I was living in Monsey and learning in Ohr Someiach. One Erev Shabbos, one of the Roshei Yeshiva asked me if my wife and I would host a new student who had recently joined the yeshiva. We were happy to oblige. During the seudah, the guest told us that he had been in the IDF and had fought in Lebanon shortly after me.

I asked him if he remembered a Chabad chassid with a great personality who would put tefillin on the soldiers. He immediately knew exactly who I was talking about and even remembered the soldier's name. When I asked him, what had become of that soldier, our guest related the following:

"During the Lebanese war in 1981, Syria had entered the war for a few days. During a Syrian artillery barrage, a piece of shrapnel had hit an artery on the top of that Chabad soldier's leg, and he bled to death in minutes.

"Sometime later, I had been lightly wounded and was recuperating in a military hospital. The mother of that Chabad soldier came to the hospital to visit her fallen son's comrades. She told me that in 1984, when the area was completely secure and safe, the IDF offered the families of the fallen soldiers to take a bus ride into the now pacified southern Lebanon, to see the place where their sons had died.

"She had gone on the bus. When they arrived at the general area where her son had been killed, the bus driver told her that she should remain relatively close to the road because there was still a danger of mines in the fields.

"She descended the steps of the bus and walked a few feet off the road when her foot got caught on something, causing her to trip. She stood up and dusted herself off. Then she went to see what had caused her to trip, and she dug out... her son's tefillin! He had carried them with him into combat. Who knows how many soldiers had worn them, even shortly before his death? Somehow, they had been left behind and now his mother found them. His mitzvos and chessed outlived him and would remain forever."

Our guest concluded that the Chabad soldier's mother actually offered him the tefillin when he was in the military hospital, so he could put them on every day. He related that he foolishly turned her down. But, he added, that in a way it was better because the family should have the tefillin. 8 years later, he had begun learning in yeshiva, and was wearing tefillin every day.

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<sup>10</sup> After a lecture I gave about Yom Hazikaron in Iyar 5781/April 2021, to the students of Heichal HaTorah, Dr. Joel Berman approached me and told me that what I said had triggered a memory from his days in the IDF. With red eyes he related to me the following powerful story:

<sup>11</sup> Infantry units equipped with armored personnel carriers (APCs) or infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) for transport and combat.

## Seek Out Hashem<sup>12</sup>



**M**any years ago, I was learning in Ohr Somayach, happy to be in the Rosh Yeshiva's shiur, Rabbi Yisrael Simcha Schorr shlita. I and most of my peers had been learning in Yeshiva for a number of years and we were married and raising our families.

We would often be asked to host some of the newer students who weren't yet familiar with living a Torah life. Spending time and eating a meal with Torah observant families was a great way for them to get a feel for the beauty of living a Torah lifestyle. It was part of their education.

One erev Shabbos we received a call from the yeshiva secretary asking us if we could host a new student. We happily agreed.

I returned home after Shabbos davening, a few minutes after our guest. My wife and children greeted me with unusual expressions. Until that time and ever since, I have never seen anyone so covered with tattoos. They were on every visible part of his body, including his neck and between his fingers. The tattoos had Jewish themes - Hebrew letters mostly - written in wild fonts.

We began the Shabbos seudah. The conversation was warm and pleasant. He was a polite young man. At one point I built up the nerve and said that he looked like he had a story. He replied that indeed he had a story and would be happy to share it with us.

He was born into a nominally Reform family, with practically no connection to Judaism whatsoever. More than a decade earlier, when he was barely a teenager, he got heavily involved with heavy metal music. Over time, he became the lead guitar player of a heavy metal band. The band enjoyed a modicum of success.

After giving a performance one Erev Yom Kippur, the band members were sitting at an outdoor cafe schmoozing and drinking. The young man shared



that he had recently felt that his lifestyle had become "old." He looked at his friends and listened to the conversation. He was sick of what he saw and heard. It struck him that this was not where he belonged. What was he doing with his life? But what options did he have?

Just while those thoughts were swirling around his head, he heard a tremendous crash. He jumped up and ran around the corner to find that there was an accident. A Jeep had flipped over pinning a young black man underneath the roll bar. A lot of people were standing around, but no one was doing anything. He was a take charge type of guy, and he pointed to someone and instructed him to call 9-1-1. He then suggested to the 15 men standing there that together they try to lift the Jeep off the man. They succeeded. As soon as it was moved, he kneeled alongside the victim asking if he was okay. Then he cupped his ear close to the victim's mouth so he could hear the man's faint response. The man said, "the heavy metal is gone; it's all kosher now!" Those words shocked him to the core. He saw it as a clear message from G-d that if he left behind the heavy metal, his life could become "kosher".

That was what prompted him to begin his journey that eventually led him to learn Torah in Ohr Somayach.

After he finished his story, he grew very emotional. He told me how he wanted to raise a Jewish family. "But how can it ever happen? Look at what I look like. I've wasted the last 14 years of my life."

There was silence for a moment and then my wife said to him, "Hashem grants special consideration to the tefillos of people like yourself. Don't give up. Keep on learning Torah and growing and davening three times a day, asking Hashem to grant your aspirations."

The story has a happy ending.

The ba'al habattim associated with the yeshiva raised money so that he could undergo a procedure to remove the tattoos. There are two gradations of tattoos. The first fades over time. The second-high quality type are seared into the skin and don't fade at all. Unfortunately, his tattoos were of the latter type. He would go to weekly appointments where his tattoos were removed by laser ablation. It was an extremely painful and protracted process. But he persevered and had all the visible tattoos removed.

After two years he left the yeshiva, and I lost touch with him. About ten years later I met him. At that point, he was married and was raising a beautiful Torah observant family. The dream he felt could never happen had been fulfilled.

I often think of this story on Fast Days when the opening words of the haftorah state: דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בהיות קרבו - Seek out Hashem when He is to be found; call out to Him when He is close." *If you seek Hashem, you will find Him. Not only that, He was close all of the time!*

This man was paying attention to a message Hashem sent him. He called out to Hashem and his tefillos were fulfilled.

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<sup>12</sup> From a lecture given by Rabbi Berman in Heichal HaTorah to the students of the yeshiva, Cheshvan 5780.

# Faded Glory



**O**n the night of April 7, 1980, five Palestinian terrorists from the Iraqi-backed Arab Liberation Front (ALF), armed with AK-47 assault rifles and grenades, crossed the border between Lebanon and Israel and snuck into Kibbutz Misgav Am.

Kibbutz secretary Samuel Shani was on his way to make electrical repairs at the children's dormitory when he encountered the terrorists outside the building and was killed by gunfire.

The terrorists then entered the building, killed a two-year-old child, and took two babies from their cribs as hostages.

Israeli military forces surrounded the dormitory building and began to negotiate with the militants. Two rescue attempts were made. The first attempt by the Golani Brigade was unsuccessful resulting in more casualties. The second attempt took place a few hours later by a group of Commandos who broke into the building by literally walking through glass doors and windows. In seconds they eliminated all the terrorists and released all the hostages.

Following the attack there was speculation about how the terrorists penetrated the border. Along the entire length of the Israeli Lebanese border there is a security fence. It isn't an electrical fence but rather has sensors along its entire perimeter. Anytime any part of the fence is touched, a sensor is activated and seen on a screen being monitored by IDF soldiers in the nearby border city of Metulla. The monitoring soldier can see where the fence was touched and will radio to patrols stationed at the border to immediately investigate.

In addition, along the length of the border there is a wide strip of flat white sand. The paved road runs parallel to the sand. Patrolling soldiers constantly gaze carefully at the sand to ascertain if there are any footsteps or other marks that indicate that something/someone crossed the area.

On the night of the attack the border fence had not been touched and there were no footprints in the sand.

The IDF concluded that the terrorists used a step ladder to straddle the fence. The height of the ladder was higher than the fence and when the ladder was fully opened the terrorists were able to descend on the other side of the ladder completely bypassing the sand. Doing so necessitated there being accomplices in Lebanon who removed the ladder after the terrorists descended on the other side.

Our battalion was dispatched to cross the border to scout the area for lurking terrorists. That meant traversing a minefield on the Lebanese side of the border.

Our commander had a map which showed the location of all the Israeli placed mines located in the field. However, as it had been a very rainy winter, erosion had shifted many mines, and we couldn't be totally sure that they were still in their original locations. In addition, slowly walking through an open field made our entire battalion easy targets if there indeed were any lurking terrorists.

As we walked across the border spread apart and inching slowly ahead, I thought my heart was going to pop out of my chest. My heart was loudly racing with utter fear at the thought that every step forward could be my last. I thought the commander was going to send me back because my heartbeat was making too much noise.

Apparently, I wasn't the only one shaking with fear. As we proceeded in silence, I heard my comrades praying and negotiating with G-d. Many of the men in my unit were not even remotely observant. But at that moment they demonstrated that there truly are no atheists in the foxholes. They were promising to be better Jews, to pray every day, to eat kosher, keep Shabbos, stop speaking profanity, put on tefillin, and attend yeshiva if only they would survive the ordeal.

Thankfully, we made it across the minefield and scoured the area and didn't encounter any terrorists. We then turned back around and carefully made our way back to the safety of Israeli soil.

As soon as we crossed the border into Israel, the men of our battalion cast off their helmets and lit up cigarettes. Within minutes they were again playing cards and cursing and talking profanity as if nothing had occurred. Gone were the commitments of moments earlier and with it the inspiration and opportunity to grow from the experience.

When reflecting on that incident I thought about a pasuk in Tehillim where Dovid Hamelech says, *Adam bikar bal yalin, nimshal ka'beheimos nidmu*, "Man is precious, but if he does not understand, he is like animals that are silent" (49:21). In other words, a person who ignores an opportunity for growth is no better than an animal.

Man has opportunities when he feels inspired to grow. But if *bal yalin* he doesn't understand that the inspiration will not last and he, therefore, doesn't act on the inspiration, *nimshal ka'beheimos nidmu*, he is like an animal that also remains uninspired, no matter what events are transpiring around it.

In a similar vein, Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l noted that when a horse is hitched to a coach, the driver continually whips the horse to goad it forward. The reality is that the horse could easily turn around and overpower the driver in a moment. The horse doesn't do so because it lacks the intelligence to recognize that.

The same is true regarding a person. *Adam bikar* – A person is precious and has tremendous capabilities to grow and accomplish. However, if *v'lo yavin*, he doesn't understand or recognize his potential or doesn't take advantage of his abilities, *nimshal ka'beheimos nidmu* – he is like the horse who is ignorant of its own power and ability, and instead allows itself to be whipped and driven against its will.

# Perfectly Imperfect



"One day I was part of a 9-man team lying in a rare daytime ambush in Southern Lebanon near the Christian town of Hula. For many hours we lay quietly in place with our guns poised. It was mostly boring and quiet, but we had to always be ready. There was a rotation - three soldiers were able to sleep, while the other 6 remained awake."

"I was lying next to Salach, a singularly skilled and well-trained Druze soldier. He was peering into his pair of binoculars. Suddenly, he handed me the binoculars cupped his hands to my ear and whispered, "Berman, *tistakel v'tagid li mah atah ro'eh* - look and tell me what you see." I looked and told him that I saw a tree. He kicked me in the foot and told me to look carefully again. I did so and replied that I still only saw a tree. He smacked me and told me to look again. I looked again and, this time, I indeed saw a perfectly straight stick moving up and down ever so slightly among the branches. Salach then explained, "It is a fact that nothing natural is perfectly straight. If something is perfectly straight, it is man made. If there's a straight stick in the distance, it clearly means that the enemy is there with a radio and the protruding antenna is what we are seeing."

"Salach then took out a plastic-covered map, unfurled it and figured out the exact coordinates of the antenna. He then radioed the coordinates back to our base. Moments later a shell was shot from Israel at that precise location utterly decimating the enemy."

It's an amazing concept. Hashem did not create anything perfectly straight in nature. Rivers, sticks, flower stems, blood flowing through our veins, our bones, etc. - nothing is perfectly linear. Yet, we want our lives to be perfect and we want to plan our lives and that everything should work out perfectly. But we should note that if nature itself doesn't follow straight lines, we shouldn't expect our lives to be perfect. The circuitous route of the trajectory of our lives is the path which Hashem leads us on. It may often be challenging but it builds and molds us into the great people we are meant to become.

In addition, we are not angels. Angels have nothing to work on because their path and mission is indeed perfectly straight and predictable. But humans have challenges that force us off our intended paths. An angel is referred to as an *omed* - one who stands, in the sense that it cannot grow, while we can use our challenges as opportunities to grow, potentially to levels greater than angels.

## Sweetness Of Torah



**O**n the morning of June 6, 1944, the American forces landed in Normandy on the coast of France, attacking the Germans in World War II, and opening the Germans to a two-front war. It was the largest seaborne invasion in history. The battle is commonly viewed as a turning point in the war that helped propel the Allies to victory.

Two U.S. infantry divisions, the 1st and the 29th, landed at Omaha Beach, the second of five landing beaches of D-Day. It was the bloodiest fighting of the morning. The troops had to fight through waist-deep water, while being fired upon by German strong points throughout. The invasion came with heavy costs. 9,387 US soldiers are buried in the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach.

My father-in-law, Kalman Goozner, Klamen ben Yiddel Leib HaKohen z"l, was in the 29th infantry. He recounted that shortly before they landed on the beach of Omaha, in the predawn darkness of June 6, the soldiers were served a steak breakfast. Apparently, someone had thought the fancy meal would help the soldiers fight better. It didn't turn out too well. The waters were extremely choppy, and the soldiers became nauseous from the meat and many vomited. They became miserably seasick and were looking forward to being in the water just to clean themselves off from the vomit. They finally landed on the beach amidst fierce fighting.

After two bloody days the Allies finally took Normandy and pushed back the fleeing German soldiers.

In the intense fighting many soldiers had not eaten or drunk anything. When they finally made the high ground, the soldiers realized just how hungry and thirsty they were. They saw in the distance some grazing cows. My father-in-law was born 17 years earlier in rural Romania and knew how to milk cows. He told his comrades how delicious cow's milk is when it is drunk straight from the cow. He volunteered to crawl out to the cows (there were still German snipers in the area), milk the cows, and fill their canteens with fresh milk. He filled up all their canteens and handed them back to his comrades, who gratefully took the canteens and took a swig of the milk, anticipating the delicious taste of fresh milk. But one by one they each spit out the milk exclaiming that the flavor was bitter and disgusting.

They were confounded and disappointed. Had someone put something bitter into their canteens?

As they walked through the nearby field, they realized that there were many onions growing in the area. The cows had obviously eaten those onions and, therefore, the milk they produced was bitter and almost inedible.

To a believing Jew it's axiomatic that Torah study is sweet and pleasant. In fact we daven each morning *והערב נא* that Hashem make the Torah sweet in our mouths. The pasuk says <sup>13</sup> *לשונך תחת דבש וחלב תחת לשונך* comparing Torah to milk and honey.

Yet, we often wonder why the Torah is unpleasant when we learn.

The reality is that even something sweet and delicious will taste bitter if one's taste buds are soured.

If we want to enjoy the sublime sweetness of Torah, we have to make sure we aren't tainting our spiritual taste buds by "ingesting" spiritual pollutants through our ears, eyes or otherwise.

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<sup>13</sup> *Shir Hashirim 4:11*

## Guard's Vigilance



**I**n January 1979, during my years of service in the IDF, on a very cold rainy January day I was part of a 6-man team manning a *machsom* - a security check point.

That day we were stationed outside the beautiful Muslim city of Tulkarm in the West Bank, east of Netanya. We stopped each car to check the driver's IDs and license plates to ensure that they weren't on any terrorist lists. It was boring and tedious, especially on a cold day and we were eager for our shift to end.

One of the members of our team was a Druze named Salach. The Druze are fiercely loyal to Medinas Yisroel and are highly committed, disciplined soldiers. Salach was an outstanding soldier.

At one point a black Mercedes station wagon pulled up to the *machsom*. The driver of the elegant car was a stately elderly Muslim man, wearing a sharp blue pinstriped suit. In the back were six young children, ranging from about 2-8 years old. Each was holding a wrapped package on his/her lap.

Salach routinely approached the window and the driver handed Salach his identification papers. The driver explained that he was taking his grandchildren to a birthday party outside of Tulkarm. We checked his license plate and ID, and everything looked good.

I was about to wave him through when Salach suddenly thrust the front of his gun into the driver's jaw and in Arabic ordered the driver to place his hands on the wheel and not dare take them off. While keeping the index finger of his right hand firmly on the trigger of his gun, Salach gingerly stuck his left hand into the car and pulled the car keys out of the ignition. He then calmly told me to call the *משטרה צבאית* - the military police.

The police arrived and investigated. It turned out that in every one of the boxes on the laps of those children were two sticks of dynamite, packed with gravel to amplify the damage, with a very primitive windup device that easily could have gone off and blown up the car and the people inside it.

Afterwards I asked Salach, "איך ידעת - how did you know there was something suspicious?"

Salach replied, "Tell me, if you want to give your friend a birthday present but don't have the proper box for the gift, would you place it in a shoebox?" I replied that you definitely could use a shoebox. But what did that have to do with anything? He told me to be patient and continued, "And if you didn't have wrapping paper, might you use a paper bag, taped down nicely?" I agreed again, still not knowing where he was going with this. "What if you didn't have ribbon, could you use regular string?" I nodded again. "And if you didn't have

scotch tape, could you use duct tape or masking tape? I nodded again. Salach then said, "But I'm sure you agree that you would never use electrical tape to tape up a gift. Electrical tape is used for wires, not for a birthday present. It just doesn't look nice."

Salach then explained that while standing next to the car, he noticed that in the corner of one of the packages the tape had become slightly undone, and it was retaped with electrical tape. That tipped him off that something was wrong.

It is incredible that this evil elderly Muslim was willing to risk the lives of his own grandchildren to perpetuate his evil.

Salach's vigilance was incredible. He was able to notice one small piece of tape in the corner of a box on the lap of one of the children in the back and realize that there was something strange about it.

Such is the responsibility of a guard. By definition, a guard cannot be lackadaisical or nonchalant. At all times, he must be focused and conscientious.

In the IDF, if a soldier loses his gun, he is sentenced to five years in military prison. A soldier who falls asleep at his post, however, is sentenced to seven years in military prison. Falling asleep and failing to be vigilant can endanger numerous lives and is therefore a more serious violation than being careless with a weapon.

Those who are Shabbos observant are not referred to as *Mekaimai Shabbos* - those who fulfill Shabbos, but rather as *Shomrei Shabbos* - those who guard Shabbos. The Torah instructs us "*V'shamru b'nei Yisroel es hasShabbos* - The Jewish people must guard the Shabbos." We sing on Shabbos about "*Hashomer Shabbos haben im habas* - The one who guards Shabbos - his son with his daughter - it is pleasing to Hashem like a Mincha offering on a flat pan."

Similarly, observant Jews are referred to as *Shomrei Torah uMitzvos* - those who guard Torah and mitzvos. To be a Torah Jew entails not only observance but also effort to upkeep, preserve and ensure proper Torah observance. With so many laws and details to adhere to, one's observance cannot just be another facet of his personality. It requires commitment that encapsulates his entire being and he must always be wary of letting his guard down when in the line of duty.

In a similar vein, we refer to Hashem as *Shomer Yisroel* - the Guardian of the Jewish People. During the Seder on Pesach, we bless Hashem who guarded His promise to Yisroel - ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל. Hashem does not merely preserve the Jewish People; He is also the guardian of the Jewish people. A parent not only provides for a child but is constantly worried and concerned with his/her child's welfare and growth. That is how Hashem relates to us as well.

The Ba'al Shem Tov emphasized that Hashem relates to us with *hashgacha pratis* - particular vigilance and affinity. That is indicative of His love for us.

We guard His Torah and He guards His people.



## The Little Big Things



**A**fter a 4-weeks army stint stationed in Lebanon, I returned home for a break in my army service. During those four weeks I had not been able to take a normal shower.

When I arrived home, I immediately went to shower. When I came out, however, my wife took one look at me and told me to go back in and wash myself again. The dirt had become caked into my body after weeks of living in grimy sweat. I took 4 showers before my wife felt that I was clean enough to walk around our small apartment. She then made me a delicious lunch.

It was Erev Shabbos, and my wife told me that I had time to take a nap. It was my first time wearing fresh clothes and being able to enjoy a homecooked meal. When I settled into my bed onto the fresh bedding, I was able to smell the detergent in the sheets. It was a beautiful day, and the window was open, and a gentle breeze wafted through the room. I remember thinking to myself that this must be the feeling of Gan Eden. What could be better? I also promised myself that I would never forget how much I appreciated that moment and I would always appreciate these small pleasures that are often overlooked...

Several weeks later, back in the army, nine of us had spent the night lying in an ambush in a muddy shallow trench in Lebanon. Army intelligence had assured us that "הערב באים" tonight the enemy was coming. Thank G-d nothing happened. We were shivering, wrinkled messes by the time we were extracted early the next morning.

The nine of us were in a tent in Metulla awaiting a change of clothes. The first change of clothes to arrive were thick wool socks. There was a soldier in my unit named Shimon. He was a heavy machine gunner and an excellent soldier. He was also a non-believer. I was therefore shocked when he turned to me and asked me, "what is *Olam Habah*"? I laughed and asked Shimon to tell me. He made the V for victory sign and said that "*Olam Haba* isn't a Volvo, video, or a villa. It's having dry socks". The nine of us agreed.

30 years later, on a beautiful Shabbos in May, I was stricken with a terrible stomachache, the likes of which I had never suffered from before. I was rushed to the hospital for emergency colon surgery. I woke with an ostomy bag that I had to wear for 3 months. Three months later I was reattached. After a few days in recovery, the surgeon told me that as soon as I was able to go to the bathroom, I could be discharged. The head nurse told me that walking encourages digestion. For a day and a half, I walked around the ward. When the time came, I said "*Asher Yatzer*" with incredible *kavanah* and many tears.

Every now and then I remind myself of that incident and recite *Asher Yatzer* slowly. Sometimes I remember to appreciate my thick socks on a cold winter day. Sadly, however, the memory and appreciation of clean sheets, dry socks, and a healthy digestive track have faded. This is part of the tragedy of the human condition. Shimon was right. Those little things are *Olam Haba*. I think that most of us would rather have warm, dry feet for the rest of our lives, than cold wet feet and a billion dollars.

The little things are really the big things.

We must remember to be grateful.

## The Key To Kabbolas Hatorah<sup>14</sup>



I want to tell you about a few people I knew from my days in Ohr Sameiach. Each of these individuals taught me a valuable lesson about Avodas Hashem.

Dovid was brilliant. My chavrusa and I would struggle for days to understand a piece of Rabbi Akiva Eiger. But Dovid would take a look at it and study it for a few minutes and he would understand the whole thing with perfect clarity. But he had no desire to grow in learning. Eventually, he left Yeshiva.

It was very frustrating - here was a person who had the capacity to be a great talmid chochom, but because he had no drive or motivation for it, nothing became of him.

I had a chavrusa named Avi who wanted very much to grow in learning, but he had a very hard time understanding and following the flow of Gemara. He struggled a lot with his learning and would invest a lot of time trying to comprehend it. He became increasingly frustrated that it was such a struggle for him.

Rabbi Avrohom Braun, one of the rebbeim in yeshiva, arranged for Avi to meet with Rebbitzin Gifter<sup>15</sup> when she was visiting Monsey. They sat at a picnic table outside and conversed for a while. At one point she bent down to look at the grass and asked him if the grass was growing. When he replied that it was indeed growing, she noted that it didn't seem that way to her. She then walked over to a nearby tree, looked up at its majestic branches and asked the same question. He said that it was growing, and she again replied that it didn't seem that way to her. She looked at him and said, "Of course it's growing. But because its constant growth is so subtle, we don't notice it. You too are growing constantly even though you don't see it. Have patience with yourself and keep working at it. You'll get there!"

Today he's a Ben Torah with a beautiful family.

One week there was a yeshiva shabbaton at a campground in the mountains. On Shabbos morning, a teenager walked onto the campus. His hair was shaved on both sides, and he had a mohawk haircut. The hair in the middle of his head was gelled like spikes and dyed pink.

He walked over to Moshe, a student in the yeshiva who had a long beard and was the most yeshivish looking person there, and asked Moshe if he could ask a question regarding קידוש במקום סעודה. After Moshe answered his question, he asked the young man to explain what he was doing there. He didn't exactly look like the type of person to be concerned about, or even familiar with the halachos of קידוש במקום סעודה.

The young man explained that he had become religious during the last few months. His irreligious parents always drove to visit his uncle on Shabbos mornings for a barbecue lunch. When he told his parents he could no longer attend, they became very angry and told him that he had no choice. He gave himself a Mohawk haircut so his parents would be embarrassed of him and wouldn't want him to come!

The *mesiras nefesh* for Shabbos was amazing. Imagine how a mohawk haircut could be used to help someone observe Shabbos.

Our growth in ruchniyus is very much connected to our aspirations and goals.

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<sup>14</sup> From a lecture delivered to the students of Heichal HaTorah in May 2022/Iyar 5782

<sup>15</sup> The wife of the late Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l

## Good Fence



One day my battalion was stationed at the Good Fence<sup>16</sup>. At that time, any injured Lebanese citizen who approached the fence could get free medical attention in Israel, no questions asked. There were many enemies of Israel who took advantage of Israel's magnanimity.

A middle-aged Muslim woman came to the border with two young, wounded children. They were bleeding and in obvious need of immediate medical attention. We allowed them across the border and an Israeli doctor tended to the children.

Almost invariably, whenever a patient left the Good Fence Clinic, the patient would say "*shukran*" ("thank you" in Arabic) to the attending physician. However, when the doctor finished bandaging up her children, this Muslim woman muttered a few words that didn't seem complimentary. I asked Salach, who spoke fluent Arabic, what she said. He replied, "*Hee keelalah oto*- She cursed him."

I was stunned. He had just helped her children without charge. How could she be so incredibly ungrateful? Salach threw up his hands and replied, "*Levanonim!* - Lebanese!".

When I recounted this story to my chavrusa, Dr. Menashe Chaim Weisberg, he suggested that the explanation may be rooted in the words of Reb Zadok Hakohain. In parshas Chayei Sarah, Avrohom Avinu sent his faithful servant Eliezer to find a worthy wife for Yitzchak. Chazal relate that Eliezer harbored hope that his daughter would marry Yitzchak. Avrohom sensed that and told Eliezer that such a match could not happen because "one who is cursed cannot connect with one who is blessed." (Eliezer was a descendant of Canaan who was cursed by Noach, while Yitzchak was the son of Avrohom who was blessed by Hashem.)

It seems that the wording of Chazal should be reversed, "One who is blessed cannot connect with one who is cursed." However, Rav Tzadok explains that evil abhors good and cannot tolerate it. Therefore, it is evil that cannot connect with good. It was the daughter of Eliezer who would not be able to bear a deep connection with Yitzchak, not vice versa.<sup>17</sup>

I assume that is the deeper reason behind why this Muslim woman could not have any appreciation to an Israeli doctor who spent time and effort to help her, expecting nothing in return. She actually found the doctor's kindness repulsive!

It is important for us to understand the extent of the hatred our enemies feel towards us.

*Unfortunately, this is far from an isolated event. Top leaders of Hamas and other enemies of the Jewish people have benefitted from Israeli medical expertise. In 2008, Yahya Sinwar, the current the Hamas leader in Gaza, was an Israeli prisoner. He had a brain tumor removed by Israeli doctors at an Israeli hospital, saving his life.*

*Over a period of seven years, the daughter of Ismail Haniyeh, a senior Hamas leader, as well as his mother-in-law and one-year-old granddaughter all received medical care at hospitals in Tel Aviv. His niece was treated for cancer at Ichilov Hospital. In 2014, the sister of Hamas leader Moussa abu Marzouk was also treated in Israel for cancer.*

*Israeli medical teams treat all who need care. Over the past decades, thousands of Palestinian children have benefitted from lifesaving surgery at Israeli hospitals.*

*Despite the life-saving medical care provided by Israel for them and their families, Sinwar and Haniyeh have rained down murder, torture, kidnappings and general terror on Israeli civilians.*

*Truly, evil cannot tolerate good!*

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<sup>16</sup> The Good Fence referred to Israel's mountainous 80-mile northern border with Lebanon during the period following the 1978 South Lebanon Civil War. It was so called because the Lebanese, at several locations were allowed to cross into Israel to seek medical aid, and secure temporary work in Israel. When Israel withdrew in 2000, the crossing was shut.

<sup>17</sup> תקנת השבין סימן ו' - "דלעולם הרע שונא את הטוב ואין ארור מדבק בברוך ושמעתי מדיק לשון זה ולא אמר בהיפר אין ברוך וכו', דרצה לומר דגם הארור אינו רוצה".

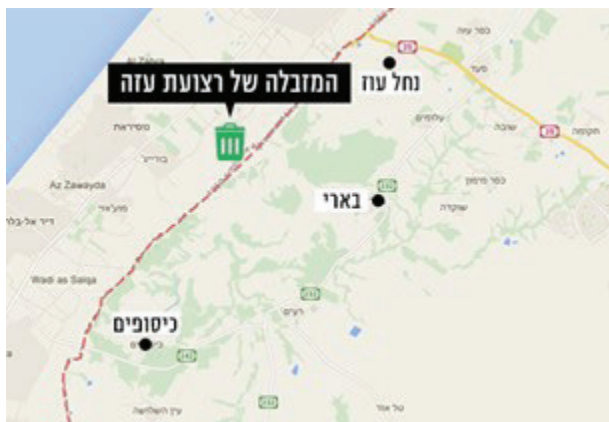
## The Mizbeleh Of Gaza



**I**t was a freezing day during the winter of 1979. I was shivering in an armored personnel carrier, stationed for a short time on the Gaza border.

On the edge of Gaza is the *mizbeleh* - the garbage dump of Gaza. It was a huge pile and took up acres. It's only gotten bigger over the years.

The smell it generates is awful. In it is rotting food, dirty diapers, and all sorts of liquified garbage.



As we patrolled, I noticed that on top of this disgusting mound of garbage, a bunch of Palestinian kids were running around and having a great time. I turned to Salach, a remarkable Druze soldier in our unit, and asked him what in the world they were doing there.

He replied, "*Berman, cham lahem; na'im lahem* – It's warm for them and pleasant for them."

Putrefied waste is like a compost pile. Even in cold weather, when organic material decomposes, it's an exothermic chemical process and it generates a lot of heat. The kids liked playing on top of the dump because it was warm. The kids liked playing there and their parents seemed to have no problem with it.

Salach then elbowed me and said, "Imagine a Jewish mother or a Druze mother sending their child to go play on the garbage dump! If these people don't care enough about their own children to not let them play in a dump, how can we deal with them?"

I realized that they aren't only raised on a diet of hate, but also on a diet of garbage. If you live in and enjoy garbage, then that's how you'll behave as well.

Contrast that with how we strive to live and raise our children:

When we recite "Birchas Hachodesh" during the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh we daven for many blessings which connect to an enhanced and gratifying life. It is enigmatic however, that one of those requests is repeated, "Long life, life of peace, life of goodness, life of blessing...life that contains fear of Heaven and fear of sin, life that has in it love of Torah and *fear of Heaven*..." Why do we repeat our request for a Fear of Heaven?<sup>18</sup>

Rav Pinchos Teitz zt'l, Rabbi of the Elizabeth, NJ community, explained that the answer lies in a careful reading of the preceding words. The first time we request, "*chaim sheyesh bahem*" a life that inherently possesses fear of Heaven. This is a prayer that we should be surrounded with neighbors, friends, and acquaintances who are G-d Fearing so that it will infiltrate into our souls and will inevitably have a positive effect on us.. The second time we ask for "*chaim shyesh lanu*" fear of Heaven within ourselves, that we ourselves become G-d Fearing.

We seek to educate our children (and ourselves) by surrounding them with "*chaim sheyesh bahem*" life that is surrounded and engulfed in fear of Heaven so that they can become G-d fearing by osmosis.

A Jew prays for life that is surrounded by fear of heaven. Our enemies live a life surrounded by and engulfed in garbage.

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<sup>18</sup> The old joke is in between we ask for wealth, so we need to ask for Fear of Heaven again.



## The Thorn Patch



**O**n the first day of our basic training in the IDF, there was a fellow in my unit, an immigrant from Scotland, who was bragging that he was going to be the best soldier of all time. He was confident that he was going to build up such a sterling reputation as a soldier that enemies would tremble at the mere mention of his name.

We had a corporal who was in charge of us named Amir who was very cruel and worked us very hard with unusual gruffness. To say we disliked him intensely is an understatement.

Amir never smiled. But one day, about three months into our basic training, he showed up with a big smile on his face. He told us he was going to officer's school and was happy to be leaving our unit. We shared his enthusiasm.

Ten days later, however, he returned. The smile of a week earlier had been replaced with a dark scowl. Amir told us that when he had been in basic training, he didn't wear ear plugs at the shooting range as soldiers are supposed to. As a result, he lost some of his hearing. His hearing was below the permitted threshold, and he was therefore not permitted to train to become an officer. As can be imagined, he was in a foul mood. He had always hated his job, and now he took out his misfortune on us.

Soon afterwards, we were training in the northern Galilee in a place called Sindiani when we came across an acre-sized thorn patch. Israeli thorns are particularly long and sharp. Amir announced that we were going to practice in the thorn patch. We were ordered to jump, roll left and right, dig, attack, crawl etc. Within a half hour, we were all scratched up, and bleeding. There were bruises and wounds all over our faces and hands, and our bloodied uniforms were torn up.<sup>19</sup>

Suddenly, the soldier from Scotland who bragged that he would be the best soldier ever, stood up. He was bawling his eyes out and he screamed, "I've had it! *Ani holeich habayta* – I'm going home!" He threw down his MK-16 and ran to the highway to hitch his way home.

I assume he ended up in military prison, but we never saw him again!

It's easy to make plans and to brag about all the successes one plans on having. But the real challenge is if one can follow up on one's dreams and commitments.

In his bestselling book, *The Last lecture*, Randy Pausche, who knew he only had a few months left to live, quipped, "The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough."

Whenever one plans on achieving great things, he has to be ready for the inevitable challenges that will impede his path. Only one who is truly committed will be able to actualize his dreams and ambitions.

This is an important idea to keep in mind particularly before Yom Kippur. It's not enough to take on *kabbalos* that one hopes to do in the coming year. He must also be proactive in pondering the difficulties he will have in maintaining those *kabbalos*. He needs to plan how he will keep himself going and not become overwhelmed by the thorn patches along the way.

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<sup>19</sup> A year and a half later, my wife and I were students in Rutgers University. One day my wife asked me why there was a black line in my neck. I felt a lump there, so I took a tweezer and pulled out... a large thorn, a souvenir from the thorn patch.

# Shtinker



**M**any times, a Muslim is willing to rat out his comrades in exchange for American dollars, Marlboro cigarettes, or protection from the IDF. The code word for such an informant was “Shtinker”.

On one occasion while we were patrolling near the Lebanese border, we were told over the radio, “*shtinker eileichem*”, meaning a potential informant would be approaching imminently and we should be ready for him.

When the Muslim man approached, Salach went to meet him and to converse with him in Arabic. After patting him down to make sure he wasn’t carrying any concealed weapons, Salach asked the informant what information he had. The man replied that the following day early in the morning, 3 terrorists were going to infiltrate the border and come into Israel to kill and wound Israelis.

Salach then asked him what he wanted in exchange for the information, as he had cigarettes and cash with him. The Muslim Shtinker replied that he didn’t want anything. Salach grew suspicious and asked him why he would give over such information for nothing. The Shtinker explained that he wanted to date the sister of one of the terrorists who was planning to infiltrate the following day, but that terrorist wouldn’t allow him to. He figured if he could get the girl’s brother killed, then he would be free to date her.

The following day the information proved accurate, and the three would-be terrorists were neutralized before they could get across the border.

*It is important to realize what kind of people our enemies are!*

## A Day In Court



**C**hazal teach us that names are important and can influence our decisions and life mission. The letters of a person's name contain a window into his soul.

It is for this reason that evildoers cannot remember their names after death. When they are asked for their names, the real question is, "What did you do with the *kedushah* of the letters of your name, i.e. with the abilities granted to you? How much *kedushah* did you produce for the world with those letters? Shamefacedly, the wicked have nothing to show for themselves.

Dovid Hamelech wrote, "Come and see the works of Hashem, who has placed devastation/*shamos* in the land."<sup>20</sup> The Gemara<sup>21</sup> comments: "Don't read it as *shamos*, but as *sheimos*/names." What's the connection?

Hashem placed in the world *sheimos*, the holy letters of His name. *Tzadikim* utilize that potential to serve Him. *Resha'im*, however, leave those names empty and desolate.

Our task in life is to convert *shamos* into *sheimos*.

I had just finished my first tour in Lebanon in the winter of 1979. My unit was brought down south to get refitted. After that we were given a much-anticipated week off, called *regilah*.

I was very excited to go home and spend the week with my wife and to sleep on clean linen and have a shower and home-cooked food.

My unit was dropped off at the central train station in Tel Aviv in a very busy area. I planned to cross the street and catch a train heading towards home.

As I walked across the street, I was thinking about how much of a soldier I had become. Being stationed in Lebanon for some time I was very far removed from civilian life. Suddenly, as I was crossing the street, I was stopped by a small woman in uniform on a motorized scooter. She called out to me, "*Chayal, teudot shelcha* - soldier, let me see your documents." I didn't think much about it and I handed her my documents including my week pass to be out of the army. She took them and told me that I could retrieve my papers at the military court in Tel Aviv. Without even telling me what I had done wrong, she got back on her scooter and was getting ready to drive away. I grabbed her and pulled her off the bike and tried to grab my documents. But she had the grip of a pit bull, and she wouldn't let go. I lifted the papers up and down and the little officer went up and down with the papers, but she wouldn't let go.

A crowd quickly gathered around and called out to her to leave me alone. Military police are often very unpopular in Eretz Yisroel. Some of them are former convicts themselves who are doing the job as part of their mandatory service. After I had spent a few months defending the *medinah* I wasn't about to be ordered around by a young, low-ranking officer who decided to take away my papers for some "crime" I wasn't even aware of.

After a few minutes I realized that whatever I was doing wasn't helping my case. So, I let go and I asked her, "*mah asiti* - what did I do?" She replied that I had jaywalked.

When I heard that, I began seething. At that moment I didn't think about my wife or about going to jail. I was really angry, and I went after her. I grabbed the papers and literally dragged her along the ground trying to grab back my papers. But incredibly, she wouldn't let go. It went on for a few minutes until I finally gave up and let go. Covered with dirt and motor oil, she dusted herself off and drove off.

With no choice I headed to the military court. I introduced myself to the clerk who replied that they were waiting for me.

The court was a small and dingy place. There were some nasty looking people there. One guy was in handcuffs, another guy had handcuffs and a leg iron around his foot, and a third guy had leg irons and was handcuffed on both sides to two different policemen. I don't know what those guys had done but they must have been accused of serious crimes.

I took my rightful place among them as an accused jaywalker. At the time I was the third lowest ranking officer in the army. The rule was that the higher ranked officers were tried first. So, I had to wait two hours until it was my turn. The entire time I was getting angrier and angrier that instead of being home relaxing, I was sitting in a military courtroom because I had jaywalked.

Finally, a clerk told me that it was my turn next. I was instructed to open the door, take one step into the room, close the door behind and salute the presiding officer. I was in a really foul mood and didn't care about anything at that point, but I did as I was told.

I walked into the judge who was a general and a paratrooper. At first, he looked very stern. But then he looked down at the paper in front of him and saw the

stated crime. At that point it became clear that he was trying to hide a smirk on his face. For jaywalking he fined me the equivalent of a quarter for three months.

Why had he been so lenient with me? My unit had been in Lebanon with three other units. He was the general of the paratrooper brigade, one of the three. As an officer he was part of a rotation and had to preside as a judge for the military court for a set amount of time. That's why he had come in from Lebanon to be there. Although he didn't know me personally, he knew my unit.

But then he gave me a mussar schmooze that I will never forget. I can still hear his voice in my mind saying it to me: "Berman, you need to remember that you are army property, and it is your responsibility to take care of yourself. G-d forbid that you get run over by a car or a truck. Tzahal has invested thousands of shekalim to help train you. Therefore, you have a responsibility to take care of yourself."

I was very angry and took my papers and left. But as I sat on the train and reflected, I realized that the judge's words were very poignant. We too are sent on a mission into this world and Hashem has invested in us. He has given us tools to use to be successful with our personal mission. We need to be responsible for what He gave us and to use it in the best way we can.

We need to use our time, abilities and resources wisely!

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<sup>20</sup> Tehillim 46:9

<sup>21</sup> Berachos 7b

# Yom Kippur



**O**n Yom Kippur there are many laws forbidding us to do things we do all year round. The Torah says ועניתם את נפשתיכם, on Yom Kippur there is an obligation of עינוי. However, it's permitted to take a caffeine pill before Yom Kippur even though it will help a person fast easier on Yom Kippur. Why isn't it a detraction from this obligation to afflict ourselves on Yom Kippur?

We were part of a rare-daytime observation/ambush team in Lebanon. We were laying down with our guns poised, hiding behind rocks and trees. While there we saw a procession of Muslims walking down the street about a football field's distance away, holding boards or crowbars and mumbling. At one point they all stopped in unison and banged themselves on the heads. It wasn't a tap. They banged themselves hard. Then they kept walking for a bit and then stopped again and banged themselves in the head again. The process continued – walk and chant and then bang, walk and chant, and then bang.

They were literally covered in blood. A lot of them were wearing white shirts and blood was flowing down their shirts.

When they were finally out of view, I turned to Salach, our Druze soldier, and asked them what they were doing. He replied “*Zeh Yom Hakkipurim shelahem* – This is their Yom Kippur.”

Contrast their behavior with our conduct on Yom Kippur. We have a misconception of what ועניתם את נפשתיכם means. It doesn't mean that we are supposed to hurt ourselves. Rather, ועניתם is connected to the word ענוה-humility. The mitzvah is to “knock yourself down a notch”, realize that I have to fulfill Hashem's will, and not my will.

On Yom Kippur we try to become better Jews. The goal of the day is to become humbler, not to physically hurt ourselves. We do remove some of the pleasures we are used to on Yom Kippur. But the goal of that is to shift our focus from physicality to spirituality, but not to make us suffer needlessly and be miserable.

*It's worth adding that if these people are capable of acting this way to themselves, imagine what they are willing to do to us. That's how suicide bombers and terrorists are bred.*

# Ask Away



When I was a student in Graduate School, they would often bring in speakers who would share their research while giving long boring lectures. One such professor came and was presenting. I wasn't particularly interested and was only listening with half an ear. But a girl sitting a few seats away was listening intensely.

At one point she raised her hand and respectfully asked the professor about something he said which seemed to contradict something he said earlier. The professor replied by lashing out at her, shouting how her question was idiotic and the questioner doesn't deserve to be in a graduate program. The woman ran out in tears.

I thought her question was valid. It seems that the presenter didn't have a good answer, so he replied by trashing the questioner and making her think it was a foolish question.

A few years later, I was learning in Ohr Someiach and I approached the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Rokowsky. I noted that something he said seemed to contradict something else I had seen in Rav Schwab's Sefer. As soon as I asked the question, Rabbi Rokowsky stood up and hugged me, lifting me off the ground, and then kissing me on the head. He told me that it was such a good question that he wasn't going to go to sleep that night until he figured out an answer.

On Shabbos morning when I walked into shul, he was waiting for me with a Sefer open and a big smile on his face. He proceeded to share with me the answer he thought of.

What an incredible difference in the way to approach a question!

Torah is not something to be mastered as much as it is to be internalized.

The Greeks did not seek to make us forget Torah, but "Your Torah". They wanted to reduce Torah into just another branch of wisdom, alongside philosophy, science, and mathematics. The Greeks loved wisdom and they appreciated the wisdom of Talmud. But for us Torah is life itself. When Torah is just another topic it ceases to be "Your Torah", the Torah of Hashem.

We have to ponder, wonder, think and question. We should not accept the timeless wisdom of Torah at face value but should seek to understand it for ourselves. That is how Torah becomes internalized. The deeper we plunge into its depth, the more connected we become with its "Author".

The light of Chanukah is reflective of the deep internal light of Hashem's Torah. It's a time to re-dedicate ourselves to - not as much Torah learning, as much Torah studying and internalizing.



## Shocked Into Reality



**I**t was a beautiful, hot Sunday morning during the spring of 1979. I had been granted leave to go home for Shabbos, and I had to be back on base by 11 am that morning. If a soldier returned late to base after a leave, he would forfeit his next weekend pass, and have to remain on base<sup>22</sup>. My base was next to Metullah at the foot of the Golan and I wanted to make sure I would be there on time.

I left my apartment with ample time to catch the bus in Acco. When I arrived at the bus station however, the bus was nowhere to be seen. I ran to the office and asked where the bus to Metullah was. The operator replied that it had already left. I complained that it had left before the scheduled time. The operator shrugged and replied ש"ב<sup>23</sup>.

My only option then was to try to hitch a ride. I went to the closest *trumpiada*, where all hitchhikers gathered. To my chagrin, when I arrived there, there were a dozen female soldiers also trying to hitch. I had little chance of getting picked up before them. At that point, I started panicking as I realized there was no way I was going to get back on time.

Suddenly, a huge Mercedes-Benz tractor-trailer pulled up right in front of me. When he opened the door, I felt the refreshing breeze of the air conditioning blowing from the truck. I immediately jumped in.

Although I had slept over Shabbos, I was still very tired. As this was during wartime, soldiers were routinely overexerting themselves on very little sleep. I was looking forward to napping during the drive. That ended when the truck driver stuck out his hand and said, "Shalom Aleichem; my name is Itzik." He was a large and imposing fellow, but also very pleasant. When he asked me what unit I was in and I showed him my tag that said that I was in mechanized infantry, he replied that he was part of the same unit in 1967, during the Six-Day War. In fact, he was with the forces that stormed the Golan Heights. He asked me if I wanted to hear a good story.

Despite my fatigue, I'm always ready to hear a good story, so I nodded, and he began:

At the time the Golan was under Syrian control. The Golan slopes upwards very steeply. It's a very hard climb under the best of circumstances. During The Six-Day war, the IDF soldiers had to climb it while carrying all their gear and under heavy fire. The mountain was ridden with machine-gun nests, bazooka and mortar teams. At the top the Syrian artillery was poised and waiting.

The soldiers were tasked with charging up and taking the entire Golan Heights. As they had been trained, as soon as they were given the signal, they would charge upwards for a second, then immediately drop down and roll two or three times. They would then pop up, shoot without any particular target in mind, hit the ground, roll again, pop up, and shoot. They kept repeating that pattern in the hope that they would "get lucky" and make it all the way to the top without getting shot.

Many of the 776 Israeli soldiers that were killed during the Six-Day war, were killed trying to rush up the Golan.

Itzik was the sergeant for this mechanized infantry unit. He had a large *kippah serugah* on his head. Most of his unit was religious, but there was one fellow who was "pareve"; he wasn't religious, but he wasn't anti-religious either. If they needed him to make a minyan he would join, but otherwise he wasn't observant.

Itzik continued describing what occurred:

"We were painstakingly making our way up the mountain, and I suddenly noticed this soldier from my unit who was always "pareve about religion" walking aimlessly on the mountain with a smile on his face like he's at the beach. Bullets were literally whizzing by his head, and it was only a matter of time before he would be killed. He had clearly gone into shock (הלם קרב).

"The lieutenant screamed to me "תוריד אותו - Take him down". We used a rifle called a *marnat*; it was made of wood and metal and was very heavy. I ran over to the soldier and slammed the butt of my gun into his back. He fell to the ground and his head hit a rock and began gushing blood. I took out a bandage, but the lieutenant screamed at me, "Azov oto! Azov oto! Kadimah! Leave him! Leave him! Keep on going! The medics will get to him!"

"Thankfully I made it to the top with most of my unit. But many of my comrades were hurt badly.

"From that time on, I always wondered what happened to that soldier. I know I did the right thing because it was the only way I could possibly have saved his life<sup>24</sup>. But I wasn't sure if he survived and, if he did, in what condition.

"Six years later, in 1973, was *Milchemet Yom HaKippurim*. After the war ended was a very difficult time. Reserves were being called up frequently. I was 28 years old at the time. I had been down south in the desert and was granted a pass to return home. I arrived in Yafo and went into a restaurant to get something to eat. I was still wearing my army fatigues when I sat down at a table. At the time the Israeli economy was in bad shape as most money was

being used to rebuild the army. I was the only one in the restaurant.

"A waiter walked up to me and said, "Adoni, ata lo mishalem – Sir, you do not need to pay for anything." I replied that there must be some mistake. I wasn't a celebrity or anyone famous. The waiter replied that there was no mistake. I am a big guy, and I took up the offer, ordering a steak with fries and a nice salad. While I was eating, I noticed that the curtain in front of the kitchen in the back of the restaurant kept being opened, and I felt like someone was looking at me.

"When I finished eating, a Sefardi fellow walked out of the kitchen carrying a little Turkish coffee and a silver decanter on a tray. He put it on the table, poured two cups and asked me if I recognized him. I noticed that he had a massive scar all the way down the side of his face. It was the soldier whose life I had saved on the Golan.

"The fellow was wearing a kippah and he told me that he was religious and had a family. I asked him what happened, and he replied that when he woke up in a hospital bed with his head wrapped up, he made a *cheshbon hanefesh* and decided to change his life."

It was worth giving up my nap for that story.

*Rosh Hashanah literally means the head of the year. However, it can also mean the beginning of changes. It's a time to take stock and recommit to make positive changes in our lives. We don't have to wait until we get clobbered over the head before we realize that we have allowed ourselves to slip away from our true aspirations and goals. Rosh Hashanah offers us a chance to take stock of where we are holding and to implement small improvements to further our growth.*

*Make sure your kabbalah is small and manageable. If you take on something small, it gets bigger. But if you take on something too big, it quickly becomes smaller, until it fades away completely.*

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<sup>22</sup> They would say if you were late, אוכלת הפס - you ate/consumed your פס, נתתם as in bread but פס the pass to go home the next time, a play on words.

<sup>23</sup> זה הבעיה שלך - this is your problem

<sup>24</sup> In combat there is no time for everything, and soldiers are forced to make immediate life and death decisions.

# Anticipation



The worst part is waiting.

After a horrific attack on a kibbutz in northern Israel, our unit was slated to be sent over the Lebanese border to flush out any remaining terrorists waiting across the border. It was an extremely dangerous assignment, and we were very worried. Almost in unison our stomachs became loose and all of us needed the bathroom.

That was/is a gift from Hashem. When a person feels extreme anxiety his body “empties out” as much as it can. Afterwards, the person feels lighter and is more poised for action.<sup>25</sup>

The entire time that we were positioned, with all our gear and ammunition and waiting for orders to proceed, that was the most difficult time. One’s thoughts run wild with all the possibilities of what can happen.

Interestingly, once the call is given to proceed, emotions change. There is an adrenaline rush, and a sense of mission takes over, and all other thoughts seem to dissipate.

There were occasions when I would be granted a weekend leave and would try to hitchhike home. In times of peace, it wasn’t infrequent for me to have to wait long stretches of time until someone finally stopped and agreed to take me.

But in war time that all changed. I couldn’t put my hand out quick enough before a few cars would screech to a halt, vying for the opportunity to drive me.

I remember one occasion when my commander gave me a weekend pass late Thursday night. I was standing at an intersection outside of Haifa in the wee hours of the morning. I had my hand out and a car drove by. He was halfway through the intersection when he must have noticed me in his rear-view mirror. The car went into reverse across the major intersection, and he pulled up in front of me and waited for me to get in.

It is unfortunate that we only seem to achieve *achdus* during difficult times, as people look for opportunities to express their gratitude to soldiers.

Even so, during those times, it gave us soldiers a feeling of purpose, mission, and connection with our people.

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<sup>25</sup> See Yoma 18. The gemara says on Erev Yom Kippur the Kohain Gadol was given certain foods to help “clean out his system” so he wouldn’t be interrupted the following day while doing the Avodah.

## Living Torah



**A** number of years ago, when I was still teaching at TABC, I had a student named Shlomo Klapper. One day, I noticed Shlomo learning Yevamos during his recess break. Obviously, it was surprising to see a young man learning such a hard masechta on his own.

When I commented how impressed I was, Shlomo replied that his Zaydei had learned in Grodno by Rav Shimon Shkop zt"l. In the entire town of Grodno, including the yeshiva, there was only one complete set of Shas owned by a wealthy man who kept it under lock and key. The wealthy man graciously allowed the yeshiva students to use the gemaras in his home. Because the yeshiva didn't possess an entire set of Shas, Rav Shimon would periodically send select students to memorize masechtos. Consequently, when students wanted to look up a gemara in a missing masechta they would approach the bochor who knew that masechta by heart and ask him to rattle off the daf or quote what they were looking for.

Shlomo's grandfather was designated to memorize Yevamos, and he knew the masechta by heart. Therefore, his grandson was learning it in his grandfather's memory.

When I related this to Rabbi Dani Staum, he excitedly remarked that every talmid of Rabbi Berel Wein knows about the fact that select students of Rav Shimon Shkop went to the home of the wealthy man in town who had a set of Shas to memorize a masechta. That's because Rabbi Berel Wein's father, Rabbi Zev Wein zt"l, memorized Chullin. Until the last day of his life Rabbi Zev Wein remembered Chullin by heart.

I wonder if there's any way to find out who memorized the other masechtos...

## Long Term Effects



**B**efore Pesach this year I was having some serious back pain. It was particularly challenging for me to help clean for Pesach as I couldn't schlepp or lift anything.

When I was asked if I had ever had back pain before I recounted the following experience:

When I was a soldier in basic training for IDF, we had a corporal who was extremely tough named Schrem.

Whenever someone stepped out of line, Schrem would bark at the person in heavy sefardic Hebrew, "*had al had (echad al achad)* - One on top of one." That meant the perpetrator had to carry a soldier piggyback for a time while fulfilling certain duties. It was taxing and painful.

On one occasion, Schrem became annoyed with me and instead of the usual "*had al had*", he yelled to me "*had al had al had*". That meant I had to carry two soldiers piggyback, i.e., piggyback on piggyback. I was only able to do it for a short time before I collapsed under the intense weight.

Ever since then, I've had periodic back issues.

That incident brought to mind a story and idea that Rav Shimon Schwab related regarding Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim:

"When I was a child, approximately 5 years of age, I contracted whooping cough, which made my breathing very difficult. The doctor, not having the benefit of today's antibiotics, prescribed hot steam vapor to help me breathe easier. Unfortunately, the boiling hot kettle on the stove which provided the steam

inadvertently tipped over and scalded my left arm, causing me to scream in pain. The scar remained visible for almost one year, at first red, then brownish, until it finally disappeared. This was due to the fact that the cells of the living body constantly renew themselves; the old ones die and are replaced by new ones. Despite the fact that the scar has completely healed, and my arm has, in the meantime, grown to about three times the size it was at the time of the burn, and consists of completely new tissue, I can still point to a spot on my left arm, and say, in all honesty, "Here is where I was severely burned as a child."

Rav Schwab explains that the body of the Jewish people, Klal Yisrael, personally experienced yetzias Mitzrayim. For all future generations, when a descendant of the Jewish people relates the story of the miraculous events connected with it, he is doing so as a part of the "body" of the Jewish people. Although he was not personally there, and neither was his father or grandfather, nevertheless, he, as a part of the body of the Jewish people, was there. This is conveyed by the statement later in the Haggadah, "In every generation a person is obligated to consider himself as having experienced the Exodus from Egypt."

Although the incidents we relate transpired centuries ago, they still continue to profoundly affect us until today. Those events are part of our core identity and shape who we are and who we continue to be.

“

Dr. Berman embodies shleimus. He dedicates himself unconditionally to his personal avodas Hashem and to his talmidim. He inspires us all to see every facet of the physical world as pointing toward our Creator. He has served Klal Yisroel as a true soldier, both on the battlefields of Israel and in the everyday struggles we face as Jews in a complex world.

*Rav Aryeh Stechler*

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