

The Stuffed Lion and the Half Suit

Translated by Basha Majerczyk

The city of Brod was renowned for its Torah scholars, the most famous of whom was the sage Rabbi Moshe Leib. Like many of his colleagues at the time, he was wary of the new Chassidic movement that was then making inroads.

The sexton of Rabbi Moshe Leib's synagogue had a daughter who had been suffering for some time from a mysterious digestive disorder. When the sexton heard about the Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, he decided to go to him to ask for a blessing for his daughter. The Rebbe gave him some food his wife had prepared, and instructed him to feed it to the girl. As soon as she tasted it her pains went away.

The sexton was filled with wonder and appreciation. He was so impressed by what had happened that he decided to share the good news with Rabbi Moshe Leib. He urged him to go to Rabbi Elimelech to see for himself.

At first Rabbi Moshe Leib was adamantly opposed to the plan, considering it a waste of time that could be better utilized studying Torah. "And besides," he countered, "you know I don't really believe in these newfangled wonder workers..."

But the sexton was persistent. "On the contrary," he said. "You, as a rabbi, have an obligation to check him out for yourself. If you determine that Rabbi Elimelech isn't a true tzadik (righteous person), you can persuade people not to go to him. But if you find that he really is a holy man, you will have succeeded in dispelling a lot of false notions."

In the end Rabbi Moshe Leib consented and traveled to Lizhensk. The whole way there he thought about what he would say to the Chassidic master, and composed various questions to test his scholarship and piety.

Rabbi Moshe Leib arrived in Lizhensk on a Friday afternoon. He was surprised when he saw that Rabbi Elimelech lived in a tiny little house - not the grand mansion that he had imagined. His surprise grew when he realized that Rabbi Elimelech himself was standing on the threshold, waiting for him. The tzadik extended his hand in greeting.

"Come in, come in," he said to him warmly. "I've heard so much about you. They say that you're one of the most distinguished Torah scholars in all of Brod." Rabbi Moshe Leib felt a surge of pride.

"Therefore," Rabbi Elimelech continued, "I'd like to tell you an interesting story." Rabbi Moshe Leib's face fell, but the tzadik didn't seem to notice.

"There was once a brave warrior who did battle with a ferocious lion and succeeded in slaying it. To commemorate his heroic deed, he skinned the animal and filled its hide with straw. He then placed the stuffed lion in front of his house so that everyone would know how strong and courageous he was.

"When the rumor spread that there was a lion guarding his door, all the animals of the forest came to see for themselves. They stood at a distance, too fearful to approach. But there was one clever fox who quickly perceived that the lion wasn't moving. He crept closer, and with one paw swiped at the beast. When he saw that it wasn't alive, he tore the skin apart and the straw fell out. All the animals laughed and returned to the forest."

Rabbi Moshe Leib looked at the tzadik, not comprehending his meaning. Why had he made the long trip from Brod to Lizhensk? To hear animal stories? He couldn't believe that Rabbi Elimelech had nothing more important to do on a Friday afternoon than tell tales. He was about to say good-bye and return to his inn when the tzadik continued. "No, don't leave just yet. I have another story to tell you.

"There was once a very poor man who had never in his life owned a new set of clothes. One day his luck changed, and he came into a large inheritance. The first thing he did was to summon a tailor and commission a fine new garment as befits a nobleman. The tailor measured the man from head to toe, and a few days later returned for the first fitting.

"The man put on the half-completed suit as the tailor rearranged the pins and basting stitches and made little markings with chalk. Ignorant of the way a custom garment is made, the man assumed the tailor was mocking him and threw him out of the house, despite his protestations."

That was the end of the story. Rabbi Moshe Leib, completely confused, went back to the inn to prepare for Shabbat.

Then it hit him: Perhaps the tzadik was talking about him with his strange tales? Maybe he was trying to tell him that he was only a "stuffed lion"? And like the poor man with the new set of clothes, could it be that he was only posturing as a nobleman? His whole life would have to be reconsidered...

That evening in the synagogue Rabbi Moshe Leib studied the tzadik in an entirely different way. He became an ardent disciple of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, and later a Chassidic master himself in the city of Sasov.

Reprinted from an email of lchaimweekly.org.

It Once Happened...

Kindness Surrounds Us

By N.B.

"You have to take a group up north on Friday. You will leave the bus in the north and return with the other drivers by private car before Shabbat. Immediately after Shabbat, you will go back up north by private car to bring the group back to Jerusalem by bus."

I did a quick calculation, and I concluded that I would return very close to Shabbat, and I am usually already prepared for Shabbat by 12:00 on Friday, and there is no way I am going into Shabbat like this.

The boss offered me double salary, but I apologized and told him it was not a matter of money, but a principle that I would not forego for any amount of money in the world.

The month before, at the insistence of my boss, I took some extra trips at the expense of my steady shiur (class) in Daf Yomi and Sha'ar HaBitachon in Chovat Halevavot Yeshiva. My vehicle was in an accident and I had to pay part of the damages which came to my whole salary for the month. So I did not see blessing from that extra money, and I accepted on myself not to miss a shiur again.

The boss was obstinate and said that he was taking away my steady morning and afternoon runs and giving them to another driver. I replied that he was not the one sustaining me, and if he thought I was beholden to him then he could find another driver. The reason I did not go to work for another company is because I did not want to miss a shiur, and this was fine with me. In short, he told me I no longer worked for him. This was on Wednesday.

On Thursday, my cellphone rang at 7:00 AM and would not stop. I looked at the caller ID, and it was my boss pleading with me to take my steady runs. He explained that the new driver simply did not show up. I felt sorry for him and I took the runs.

Later that day, a half hour after my shiur, I took a trip up north to the Mekomot Hakedoshim (holy sites). I gladly took the trip since I wanted to go to the Mekomot Hakedoshim very much, and now Heaven helped me with this trip. I made money and I prayed.

What happened that these trips popped up at these moments? They had planned this trip for the following week, but the weather forecast of a storm changed their plans and they moved up the trip to the Thursday before. 'ה'רוש בה' חסד יסובבנו' - 'One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds us'.

Reprinted from an email of Tiv Hakehila.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Ki Tisa

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:52	6:06	6:46
Tel Aviv	5:07	6:08	
Haifa	4:57	6:06	
Be'er Sheva	5:10	6:09	



Betzalel the Milkman's Precious Find

By Elchonon Isaacs



One of the unique characters in Jerusalem's Shaarei Chesed neighborhood was Betzalel the Milkman. His knowledge of the Talmud and its commentaries was masterful, and while he transported the milk and filled his customers' pitchers, he recited words of the Mishnah from memory. He worked just enough to provide for his family each day, then he'd return to the study hall and spend the rest of his waking hours engrossed in the timeless words of Torah.

One morning, a fellow scholar spotted Betzalel standing in the middle of an alleyway holding a large bag. He was frozen in place, absorbed in thought, unaware of his surroundings.

The scholar approached Betzalel and inquired what was going on.

"I just found this bag filled with money," explained Betzalel, showing him its contents. The bag was heavy, filled with coins.

"This is a large sum indeed!" the scholar exclaimed.

Yet Betzalel showed no sign of excitement or even appreciation. All he could think about was the mitzvah of hashavat aveida, returning lost objects.

He began to share his thoughts as if in the study hall, discussing a totally theoretical question. "If one returns a sum of money, does it count as one mitzvah, or is there an additional mitzvah for each coin returned? If it is the latter, then I have a great opportunity to accumulate many mitzvot!"

The question went unanswered as they moved to a private corner to count the fortune in the bag. They counted and counted, and the sum grew and grew.

The scholar paused and asked, "Who says you are even obligated to return the money? We have yet to find any unique identifying signs on the bag or its contents, and the law states that in such cases the finder can keep it."

But Betzalel refused to give up and scrutinized the bag for any identifying sign.

As they debated, Betzalel's face paled, and he began to quiver.

The startled scholar asked for an explanation, and in a cracked voice Betzalel began: "We just counted a few thousand coins, and if there is no obligation for me to return the find, then I will have missed the opportunity to accumulate thousands of mitzvot..."

"We are believers, and we know that whatever G d does is for the good," countered the scholar. "If, indeed, you are not obligated to return the money, perhaps this is G d's way of enabling you to dedicate yourself to your Torah studies, undisturbed by the burden of supporting your family."

"That is out of the question," countered Betzalel. "Even if I were absolved from looking for the bag's owner, it is inconceivable that I would sit home and enjoy my fortune while another family cries over their loss! Besides, thank G d I have what I need, my bread and salt."

"Would it be so bad if you had a second slice of bread with some butter?" rejoined the scholar.

But Betzalel did not buy this argument, citing the Sages who said, "One ought to pray that Torah, not food or delicacies, is absorbed into his innards."

"Butter is not a delicacy as it was in the past," argued the scholar, trying to convince his friend to take the much-needed money.

"Even if you are right that butter is a staple nowadays, how will it taste knowing that I bought it with money someone else is crying over?!" Betzalel insisted. It was his final argument.

Seeing that Betzalel was intent on returning the bag even if he was under no obligation to do so, the scholar helped him inspect the find. After a short while, they found an identifying mark at the bottom of the bag. With this, Betzalel calmed down and the color returned to his face. "Indeed," he smiled, "today I bumped into a great find—thousands of mitzvot in one bag!"

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

In this week's Parsha, Hashem is referred to as the Forgiving and the Unforgiving. How does that make sense? Rashi in Yoma explains, that when one asks Hashem forgiveness, He will forgive, but if you don't ask, He won't forgive. The Mishna tells us that aveirot between man and man, Yom Kippur will not forgive, unless you ask the person himself for forgiveness.

R' Dovid Katzenstein was very involved in the summer camps in the Catskills. He would rent out his house in Monsey every summer most of the time to different tenants. One year he rented out his house to a family with a few children, a few weeks into the rental, he got a phone call from his tenant that there was a terrible smell coming from the freezer in the basement, and it turned out that the freezer had melted and everything, all the chicken and meats had spoiled. They said "גם זו לטובה – This is also for the good", and forgot about it.

Ten years after this story, Rabbi Katzenstein got a knock on the door there was a young man standing there asking to come in. He explained, "remember about ten years ago you had a family with children stay here, and your freezer melted and everything spoiled, it was my fault. You see I was just a young boy then, I unplugged the freezer to use the plug to recharge my toy remote control car, and forgot to put the plug back in, and I was so embarrassed so I did not tell anyone. I am getting married in a week, I don't want to go to the chuppah owing you this money, please accept this money" and the boy pulled out \$500 cash. Rabbi Katzenstein gave the boy the money, and said, "we long ago forgot about that freezer and that meat, don't worry about it, here, take this as wedding gift from me. Besides you were not even Bar Mitzvah at the time so you are not chayav."

Friends, unlike humans, Hashem is forgiving even when He knows we may do it again, yet He forgives us when we come and apologize. Yet, Hashem with His רחמינות – mercy, always gives us another opportunity to do teshuva.

So let's not hold a grudge and let's pray for those who need forgiving, as well as for the recovery of all the sick, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 9
MITZVOT ASEH: 4
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 5

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 139
NUMBER OF WORDS: 2002
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HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Melachim I 18:1-39
Chabad & Sephardim: Melachim I 18:20-39

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