**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas shoftim 5776**

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**The Segulah of Reciting Birchas Hamazon Properly**

 Reb Shimon is an elderly Yid who lives in Yerushalayim. When he was young, he lived in Lublin (before the Holocaust). Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l once came to his cheder to test the students. Generally, after testing the children, Reb Meir Shapiro would distribute gifts or sweets to the children, but this time Reb Meir Shapiro didn’t have anything to give them.

 "Instead of a gift, I will tell you a wonderful segulah," Reb Meir Shapiro told them. "If you will follow my counsel, you will be successful and always lead a tranquil life. He told them about the wonders that happen to people who say birchas hamazon properly. He quoted the Ba'ch who says, "Whoever recites birchas hamazaon with kavanah, neither wrath or destruction will ever befall him."

 And he told them the Chinuch, who says, "Whoever is careful with birchas hamazon will have parnassah bekavod his entire life." He also told them the Be'er Heitav who concludes, "Those who are careful will always say the birchas hamazon from a siddur and not by heart." Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l quoted these sources and concluded, "This is my present to you."

 Reb Shimon took the lesson to heart. He decided right then and there that he would be careful with birchas hamazon. He kept this kabalah throughout his entire life. In cheder, his friends would bench quickly and go out to play, while he lingered behind, in order to bench properly. It was challenging, but he didn’t want to abandon this wonderful gift that Reb Meir Shapiro gave him.

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 A few years later, the Nazis invaded Poland. Reb Shimon was standing in line for a 'selektzia.' Whoever was short was being sent to the left for execution. Reb Shimon prayed that he should be saved from 'wrath and destruction' in the merit of birchas hamazon. When it was his turn, he stood on his toes to appear higher; the Nazi signaled him to the right. His life was saved in the merit of birchas hamazon. Soon afterwards, Reb Shimon found himself standing in line again. This time, each person had to tell the Nazi in charge what he could do for parnassah. Reb Shimon didn’t know what he could say. He was only a teenager, taken away from yeshiva to this cursed place. As he waited in line he prayed, "In the merit of birchas hamazon, which is mesugal for parnassah, Hashem, please support me…"

 The person behind him in line tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Tell the Nazi that you are a cook and that I'm your helper." He said this and they were both sent to work in the kitchen. As the Chinuch promised, he had enough food to eat because he was careful with birchas hamazon.

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 In the camps, Reb Shimon continued to be extremely careful with birchas hamazon. For example, if he understood that he wouldn’t have enough time to say the birchas hamazon properly, then he wouldn’t eat bread to begin with.

 Once, a Nazi saw Shimon working in the kitchen and he wasn't pleased that he had this 'good' position, surrounded with food.

 "What are you doing here? You look like a young child."

 "I work here," Shimon explained. "I am a cook."

 The Nazi took Shimon outside and showed him a stony area, outside the kitchen. "Dig a two meter ditch here. You have two hours to finish, or you will be buried in it." He gave him a tiny shovel.

 At that time, the Nazis were building trenches to hide in, in case they would be attacked by the Russians. But the task the Nazi gave Shimon was absolutely impossible. The ground was covered with heavy stones, he only had two hours to finish the chore, and he was given only a small shovel to work with.

 Reb Shimon raised his eyes to heaven and said, "I say birchas hamazon with kavanah. This is mesugal to save me from 'wrath and destruction.' I was saved before. Please save me again in this merit."

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 A few moments later a German jeep drove by, filled with Nazis, and they saw this young lad trying to dig a ditch with a small shovel. To tease him, they threw tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables at him.

 Reb Shimon thought wryly, "I see that in the merit of birchas hamazon, I once again received the blessing for abundance. Now I need the blessings for protection from wrath and destruction as well." Shortly afterwards a jeep with Russian POWs showed up. When they saw all the vegetables around Shimon, they stopped and asked for them. (They were hungry, because the Nazis hardly fed these prisoners.)

 With an authoritative voice, Shimon told the Russians, "When there is a pit two meters deep here, I will give you the vegetables."

 The Russians had the right tools for digging. They took them out of their jeep, and began digging the trench. There were several of them, so they were able to finish the job in a half-hour.

 The Nazi returned and saw that the task was completed. He said, "I always knew that G-d takes care of you. I just didn’t realize to what extent." Shimon was saved once again, in the merit of birchas hamazon.

 When he came to Eretz Yisrael after the war was over, he continued to enjoy many blessings of abundance. He always had parnassah, and he married off all of his children honorably, never going into debt – all in the merit of birchas hamazon.

*Reprinted from “Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman” as compiled by Rabbi Boruch Twersky.*

**It Once Happened**

**The Reward of**

**Helping a Poor Bride**

 A young girl approached the rabbi of her village. With tears in her eyes she described her situation to the kindhearted rabbi. She was engaged, but her joy in her upcoming wedding was marred by the fact that she was an impoverished orphan, and her intended was also very poor. There was no money for a wedding gown or even a proper wedding feast.

 The rabbi turned to her and said, "Don't worry, my child. With G-d's help we'll celebrate a fine wedding." The young girl went home, comforted by the rabbi's optimistic words.

 No sooner had she left when the rabbi immediately donned his coat and set off to visit some of the wealthier members of the community to attempt to raise money for the wedding.

 His first stop was at the home of a very wealthy and generous man, and the rabbi felt confident that he would find success there. When he arrived, the wealthy man greeted him warmly.

 "Peace unto you, Rabbi," he said. "I am greatly honored by your visit. Please allow me to fulfill the mitzva of welcoming guests properly." With that, he offered the rabbi a seat and served him some fruit.

 The rabbi pointed to the fruit and said, "While I enjoy the fruit that you have so kindly offered me, I want you to enjoy the fruit that I have brought."

 The man looked puzzled, and the rabbi went on to explain:

 "As we say in our morning prayers, 'These are the things, the fruits of which a man enjoys in this world and the remainder is held for him in the World to Come: Honoring one's father and mother, giving charity, hospitality, visiting the sick, endowering a bride...'

 "You see, my friend, I am collecting money to enable a poor orphaned girl to get married, and I have come to offer you a chance to partake in this great mitzva (commandment) of endowering a bride."

 His host smiled at him and replied, "If you will stay and enjoy some refreshments, I will take upon myself the full expense of the wedding, And if your time permits, I would like to tell you a story which will explain why I'm so eager to fulfill the mitzva of endowing a bride."

 The rabbi was indeed curious to know what motivated his host to make such a generous offer, settled himself comfortably and listened intently to the man's story.

 "This happened soon after my own wedding had taken place. It was my first time heading out to the market to seek my fortune. I had a substantial amount of money in my pocket, and I was eager to get involved in the noise and excitement of trading in the marketplace.

 "As I was about to get started, I noticed a poor woman standing off to the side, crying quietly. I was greatly affected by her obvious distress, and went over to her to uncover the cause of her sorrow. When I inquired as to what was wrong, she informed me that her daughter was to be married shortly, and she had no money to cover the expenses, and both she and her daughter were heartbroken.

 "At that moment, the bundle of money in my pocket began to feel like a heavy burden. I took it out and handed it to the woman without saying a word, and then I left quickly before the woman could even thank me.

 "I had no choice but to return home, as I had no money to purchase goods in the marketplace. As I made my way home, a stranger stopped me and greeted me warmly, and then he offered me some diamonds for sale. As my father had been a diamond merchant, I was able to examine the stones competently, and I judged them to be beautiful stones offered at a fair price. I told the stranger that I would be happy to purchase them, but I had no money.

 "The stranger didn't seem surprised by that, and he said, 'I knew your father, and I know you to be an honest man. Take them on credit, and when you resell them you can pay me back. You will be able to find me in the study hall.'

 "I had no problem selling the stones at a substantial profit. At the end of the day I hurried to the study hall to pay back my debt. I searched the study hall, but the stranger was nowhere to be found.

 When I arrived home, I calculated my earnings, and they were ten times what I had given that poor woman. I put the money aside, but I have not seen him since. Since then, I have, thank G-d, been very successful, and I have always been aware of the importance of this mitzva. Permit me then, rabbi, to arrange the wedding of the orphaned bride in my home."

 With that, the wealthy man handed the rabbi an additional sum of money to pay for the wedding gown and to cover additional expenses of setting up a home.

 The wedding was celebrated amidst great joy and festivity, and the young couple was able to set up a true Jewish home which was the pride of the community.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’eschanan 5776 edition of “L’Chaim Weekly,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Orginally pubished Talks and Tales, published by Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch*

**Two Children**

**Because of Two Nights**

 Rebbe Ahron of Belz zt'l was once in Lizensk in order to daven by the kever of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zy'a. Reb Ahron's chassidim arranged a place for him to stay, not far from the tziyon, but the Rebbe didn’t want to sleep in the bed that was prepared for him. (He pointed to the ceiling.

 At first, the chassidim didn’t understand his intention, but they soon found out that above this room was a women's room. The rebbe sensed it with his ruach hakadosh, and due to his refined holy sensitivities, he didn’t want to sleep there.)

 A child from the household offered the rebbe his bed. The rebbe didn’t want to take the child's bed away. The child insisted that he had many relatives in the city where he could stay, and he is glad to give him the bed. The Belzer Rebbe accepted the offer and stayed for two nights.

 Years later, this boy grew into an adult, but didn’t have any children. He came to Rebbe Ahron of Belz – by that time, they were both living in Eretz Yisrael – and asked for a brachah for children.

 The rebbe knocked on his table, "Two nights, two children. You allowed me to sleep in your bed for two nights; therefore, you will bear two children."

 One of the wonders of this story is that Reb Ahron recognized this man many years later, but it is also a lesson in hakaras hatov.

 Reb Yitzchak Shlomo Ungar zt'l repeated the above story at a beis avel. This turned out to be an amazing hashgachah pratis, because the aveilim said that it happened to their father. They were the two children born from the rebbe's brachah.

 Rebbe Ahron of Belz zy'a once said to the Rebbe of Biala zy'a, "I have hakaras hatov to you, because your great-great-grandfather, the Yid HaKadosh, zy'a, did favors for my great-grandfather, the Sar Shalom of Belz."

 And as we wrote, when one has hakaras hatov to others, he will also have hakaras hatov to Hashem. He will know and recognize and remember that all the goodness that he enjoys, are presents from Hashem.

*Reprinted from “Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman” as compiled by Rabbi Boruch Twersky.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Russian to do Mitzvahs!**

 For many long years of his life Rabbi Ytizchok Zilber, of blessed memory, suffered from the Communist regime in Russia and its brutal persecution of anything Jewish.

 When he was eighteen, Rabbi Zilber applied to the Institute of Chemistry and Technology so that he would be able to observe Shabbos. In order to get into the Institute, he had to pass an entrance exam, but he had no means with which to obtain the textbooks, and so he came to the test without ever having seen the material on which he was to be tested!  He then uttered a short prayer: Hashem, You know how hard I work in order to keep Shabbos. I will do mine, and so please, do Yours!"

 For some reason, he showed up to the test a half an hour late. He was rebuked soundly but they agreed to admit him and ordered him to wait until he was called. As he waited, he saw a student perusing the book "History of the [Communist] Party" and he asked the student to borrow it for a few minutes.  Rabbi Zilber opened it "randomly" to a chapter which discussed the seventh convention of the Communist Party, and which detailed the speeches of Lenin and Bukharin.

 After reading and a page and a quarter he was called in. He "randomly" took a card from the box of questions, and on it was the subject he would have to deliver a lecture. His card stated: "The Seventh Convention of the Party - The Speeches of Lenin and Bukharin."   Needless to say, he passed the exam and he was accepted.

 Once as a teacher, Rabbi Zilber almost died of starvation.  After completing university he began teaching in the village of Stolovichi in the Kazan region, where he would stay the entire week and go home only for Shabbos.

 One winter day in 1942, he made his way to the village assuming that he would be able to eat breakfast there before beginning school.   It was forty-two degrees below zero, and he ran the twelve miles to the village, arriving within three hours. By eight o'clock in the morning he was already at the school, but he found that the bakery ovens could not be fired up because the wood that fueled them could not be transported due to the cold, and that nothing had been baked.

 Because of the weather the students were also let off from school, but the authorities made sure that the teachers did not remain bored, and sent them to conduct registration for the following school year in nearby villages. Still hungry, Rabbi Zilber set off for the village he was assigned to, three miles away. He began navigating his way through the accumulated snow, but felt his strength waning rapidly.

 He relates:  "I stuck my hand in my pocket and felt an object wrapped in paper: it was a small block of halvah. For three years we had barely seen butter or sugar, and here I was holding halvah! Where had it come from? I didn't know. Later on I found out that my mother had succeeded in purchasing the delicacy from a neighbor, and put it into my pocket. It was the only food item in the house at the time of my departure. I ate it and immediately felt better. I used the last reserves of my energy to get to the village, register the children, and return to the school."

 Rabbi Zilber did not receive bread that evening, nor the next morning. Only on the second evening did they light the ovens and bake bread. "I took and ate four-and-a-half pounds of bread, but I was still hungry afterwards!"
 "Davening in Stolovichi was an ongoing difficulty. I couldn't pray where I slept because I shared a room with the landlord's sons; outside, people were constantly passing by. I found an interesting solution- the doors of the school's entrance were extremely wide. I had never seen such wide doors. When I stood behind them, no one could see me. 'Praised be Hashem for creating such doors,' I thought to myself and began to pray.

 "After the first lesson, I peeked through a crack in the door and saw the students playing ball in the schoolyard enthusiastically, and decided it was the perfect time to put on tefillin. I did the same thing every day. One day the bell rang just when I was about to begin Shemoneh Esrei (Amidah). I heard someone calling my name and had to stop my prayers, put away my tefillin and come out of my hiding place. How would I teach the lesson — I couldn't speak?!

 "I began to explain myself using hand motions. I opened the book, pointed to the problem that I wanted and chose a student to come and stand at the board and work it out. The students began asking me about my strange behavior: "Are you angry at us?" I was quiet.

 "Tell us what the problem is and we'll fix it." I was quiet until the lesson was over. Only during the next lesson, by which time I had finished davening, did I "explain" myself to my class.

 Eventually he was transferred to Kazan, where he taught history, but here too he continued in his secretive davening.  Minchah in Kazan was a serious problem. The lesson finished at a quarter to five, while sunset was a few minutes after five. As such, Rabbi Zilber would leave school to pray at a nearby bus stop, being particular to leave exactly at 4:45 pm. There was a small wooden newspaper stand where Pravda (Truth [sic!]) newspapers were sold.

 Fortunately, there weren't inappropriate pictures in the paper at the time, and he was able to pretend he was reading while in reality he was praying. When he reached the passages that required bowing, Rabbi Zilber would lean forward as if wishing to closely examine the names in the ads.

 One day while he was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei (Amida) two teachers from the school approached him: Anna Fodorovna and Fyodor Terasovitz. The latter was a known informer, and no one wanted to get on the wrong side of him, because wherever he worked he made sure to get employees fired on trumped-up charges.   And this was the man who was approaching Rabbi Zilber as he davened.

 "Yitzchak Yakovlevitz!" Fyodor called out. "What great timing! We wanted to consult with you about the final exams. What do you say? Where and when should we hold them?"

 Rabbi Zilber did not even dream of disrupting his davening. He pointed to his heart and his mouth, as if he wasn't feeling well and couldn't even speak from the pain. The two panicked and called an ambulance. By the time it arrived, Rabbi Zilber had already finished davening and reassured the doctor and his two colleagues that he was feeling better and could even speak already.

 After being imprisoned in 1951 on false charges, Rabbi Zilber continued davening in his prison cell, where his company consisted of criminals and informers. He had to work hard to find a place in the crowded cell that was four cubits away from the waste buckets and their repulsive odor.

 A week after he was transferred to a labor camp was Rosh HaShanah. Rabbi Zilber knew the tefillos by heart, but he wanted a machzor in order to show the other Jews with him. He remembered Vishnev, a Jew, who served as the Communist secretary of the camp and decided to enlist his help. Despite his communist education and the fact that he greatly admired Stalin, Vishnev was an honest person by nature and Rabbi Zilber appealed to him: "If I give you an address, will you bring me a sefer from there?"

 The man agreed, and brought a machzor, mishnayos, a Tanach and a Hagaddah, but warned Rabbi Zilber: "Even if they tear these books up, don't reveal who brought them to you." Many years later, in 1992, Rabbi Zilber held a Pesach Seder in Moscow, where he retold the story of the Seder night in the labor camp and mentioned Vishnev's name as the one who had brought him the Haggadah. Present at the time was a couple from Kazan. After returning home, they found Vishnev's son and told them the story.

 The son immediately came to Moscow to meet Rabbi Zilber and told him: "I was only five years old, but I remember my father telling me how he admired this Jew in the labor camp who didn't work on Shabbos." Rabbi Zilber studied some Tanach with the son, and then taught him how to say Kaddish for his departed parents.

 "Everything was worth it for this Kaddish," Rabbi Zilber told him. Years passed, and one day the phone rang in Rabbi Zilber's home in Jerusalem. On the line was Josef Vishnev from Kazan, with a request: He was about to undergo a serious operation and wanted Rabbi Zilber to daven for him. After years of davening in secret, he could finally daven at the Kosel, which is exactly what Rabbi Zilber did! And Boruch Hashem, the surgery was a success.  (From Mishpacha Magazine, Issue 167)

**L’Maaseh**

**A Most Unusual Family Reunion in Yerushalayim**

 Rav Moshe Kormornick relates a powerful story. When a train filled with a large transport of Jewish prisoners arrived at one of the Nazi killing centers, many Polish goyim came out to watch the Jews being taken away.

 A Nazi officer in charge called out to the villagers standing there, “You may take anything these Jews leave behind, because they will not be coming back to get them!”

 Two Polish women who were standing nearby saw a Jewish woman wearing a large, expensive coat. They ran to her, knocked her down, grabbed her coat and ran away. They rummaged through the pockets and discovered gold jewelry, silver candlesticks and other treasures, and to their astonishment, in a secret pocket in the lining they found a tiny baby girl!

 Shocked at their discovery, one woman took pity on the baby and said, “I don’t have any children. You take the gold and silver and let me have the baby.” The Polish woman took her new “daughter” home, and raised the Jewish girl as her own. They treated her very well, but never told her anything about her history.

 The girl excelled in her studies and eventually became a doctor, and worked as a pediatrician in a hospital in Poland. When her “mother” passed away many years later, the mother’s friend came by to visit. She said to the daughter, “The woman that passed away last week was not your real mother”, and she proceeded to tell her the whole story of how they found her.

 The daughter did not believe her at first, but the woman insisted and said, “When we found you, you were wearing a beautiful gold pendant with strange writing on it, which must be Hebrew. I am sure that your mother kept that necklace. Go and see for yourself.”

 The daughter looked in her mother’s jewelry box and found the necklace just as the friend had described. She was shocked. It was hard to fathom that she had been Jewish, but the proof was right there in her hand. As this was her only link to a previous life, she cherished the necklace, and wore it every day.

 Sometime later, she went on vacation abroad and came across two Jewish boys standing on a main street, trying to interest any Jewish person passing by to put on Tefilin or accept Shabbos candles to light on Friday afternoon.

 Seizing the opportunity, she told them her entire story and showed them the necklace. The boys confirmed that a Jewish name was inscribed on the necklace, and they recommended that she write a letter to their teacher, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and explain everything to him to seek his advice. She sent a letter that very same day, and received a quick reply which said that it was clear from the facts that she is a Jewish girl, and perhaps she would consider using her medical skills in Israel where talented pediatricians were needed.

 Her curiosity was piqued and she traveled to Israel where she consulted a Rabbinical Court, a Bais Din, who declared her Jewish. Soon she was accepted into a hospital to work, and eventually met her husband and raised a family.

 Many years later in Israel, a terrorist blew up a busy cafe in the center of Yerushalayim, and the injured were rushed to the hospital where this woman worked. One patient was brought in, an elderly man, who was in a state of shock. He was searching everywhere for his granddaughter who had become separated from him.

 This pediatrician tried to help him, and asked how she could recognize his granddaughter, and the frantic man described a gold necklace that she was wearing. Eventually, they finally found this girl among the injured patients. When the pediatrician saw the necklace the girl was wearing, she froze in her place.

 She asked the old man, “Where did you buy this necklace?”

 He responded, “You can’t buy such a necklace. I am a goldsmith and I made this piece of jewelry. Actually, I made two identical pieces for each of my daughters. This is my granddaughter from one of them, and my other daughter did not survive the war.”

 With tears welling up in her eyes, the pediatrician pulled out the necklace she was wearing and showed it to him, who also began to cry. They quickly realized that after almost sixty years, a father and daughter had finally become reunited!

*Reprinted from the Parshas Devorim 5776 email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**EMUNAS CHACHOMIM #13**

**A Promise to the**

**Yeshiva’s Cook**

 That night there were only three students learning in the Beis Medrash of the great Chevron Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. Only three? Where were the hundreds of young men who were usually absorbed in Torah study – arguing, gesticulating, debating…? They were attending the wedding of one of the yeshivah’s outstanding students which was taking place in another city.

 The three stayed behind so that the light of Torah should not be extinguished for even one night. The shrill ring of the telephone shattered the quiet of the night. The three yeshiva students chose to ignore the loud ringing of the phone in the yeshivah office.

 But when it rang incessantly for the third time, with no less than twenty rings each call, they felt it must be an urgent matter. It was. Shaarei Tzedek Hospital was calling to inform the yeshivah that Mrs. Minna, the yeshivah’s cook, had just passed away. Arrangements had to be made for the funeral.

 A childless widow, Mrs. Minna had poured her entire soul into the food she cooked for the yeshivah boys, treating them as she would have her own children. The labor of her heart and hands helped to assuage her loneliness and bitter fate. But even more so, the promise, nay the guarantee, of the Rosh Yeshivah, R’ Yechezkel Sarna, alleviated her anguish.

 R’ Sarna had promised that at her funeral, hundreds of Bnei Torah would accompany her to her final resting place. She held fast to this promise and her belief in R’ Sarna’s words breathed strength and comfort into her bitter life. And everyone knew of this promise, because Mrs. Minna would speak of it often.

 But now, at 9:00 pm, it seemed that Mrs. Minna would have to be buried with the promise unfulfilled. The yeshivah students would not return for at least three more hours and one cannot leave a body unburied overnight in Yerushalayim. The three students rushed to R’ Zvi Pesach Frank, Rav of Yerushalayim, and explained the entire situation. He ruled that the funeral must take place immediately with a small minyan, and should not be delayed until morning.

 Before the three ran over to the hospital to make the arrangements, they first returned to the yeshivah to close the lights and lock up the Beis Medrash. Just then they heard the shrill ringing of the phone. It was the hospital again. It seems that a few hours ago, Mrs. Minna’s vital signs had been checked numerous times and since there had been no heartbeat or breathing and her blood pressure had plummeted to zero, she had been declared dead.

 Now there was an uproar in the hospital. The “dead” Mrs. Minna was moving under the sheet and she was pulling it down, away from her face, her eyes wide open! The hospital staff was shocked! It was unmistakable techiyas hamaysim! They were calling now to inform the yeshivah. The three students were relieved, and happily returned to their studies.

 The next morning, when the entire yeshivah had already returned from the wedding, the hospital called to inform the yeshivah that Mrs. Minna had indeed passed away. At midday, hundreds of yeshivah students respectfully followed Mrs. Minna on her final journey, in perfect fulfillment of R’ Yechezkel Sarna’s promise, in which she had believed with her entire heart and soul. (Tales for the Soul, Vol. 4)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’ay 5776 email of The Weekly Vort.*

**'עד שיבלו שפתותינו מלומר די'**

**‘Until Our Lips Wear Out From Saying, Enough’**

**By C.H.**

 There was a profound silence throughout the business, there were no customers in the store and no orders even came in by phone. The workers and I, each in our own way turned to the Master of the Universe and asked for mercy. Not ten minutes passed and the store began to fill with the movement of shoppers, the phone rang repeatedly with order after order and the bracha had indeed arrived. But the bracha was so great that we did not have enough working hands in the store. We made every effort to serve all the customers but we felt control of the situation slipping through our fingers.

 One of the employees saw the excited situation and said while he ran from one task to another: “See what bracha our tefillos brought to the place!”

 The second responded to him: “bracha, bracha but we are losing control!!!” The third said: “Why are you under pressure? If the Creator of the World sent a bracha then he will send vessels to hold the blessing!!!”

 I listened to the dialogue between the workers and I asked of the Creator of the World that He send us vessels to receive the abundance, for if you find disappointed customers then your gain will be offset by the loss.

 The pressure kept building until there was no longer any control over the situation to do all the work at once, and just when we were all feeling choked, two former employees walked into the store to pay a visit, they saw the situation and without much discussion they rolled up their sleeves and went to work energetically, they worked two solid hours and they served the unexpected crowd and they did not leave the place until calm was restored in the store.

 When the storm subsided I asked them why they suddenly showed up when they had not visited for two months? They answered that they themselves did not know why, but the driver made a wrong turn and when they passed the store they decided to stop in for a short visit.

 From then on we added to our tefillos that Hashem should send a bracha along with the vessels and hands to easily receive the abundance. It is important for me to note that we see similar salvations every day:

 One worker suddenly did not feel well and another worker called asking for extra work and so on and other examples of this kind, but this was an exceptional case so we decided to share with the readers of the ‘Tiv HaHashgacha’ column. .ה.כ

*Reprinted from the Parshas Re’eh 5776 email of Tiv HaKehilla, the parsha sheet of Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz’s Shul in Yerushalayim.*

**Dashing to Hear the Shabbos Mincha Torah Reading**

**By** [**Tzvi Yaakovson**](https://yated.com/author/tzvi-yaakovson/)

 Our story is about a gentleman whom we will call Betzalel. This Shabbos, Betzalel left his home late for Minchah and rushed madly toward the shul. “I have never been late for Kerias HaTorah at Minchah on Shabbos,” he gasped to his companion, Feivel, who was barely managing to keep up with him. “I am certain that I will make it there on time today as well.” Betzalel’s confidence seemed to be contradicted by the late hour, and Feivel doubted that his prediction would come true, but he chose to remain silent. Meanwhile, Betzalel raced down the street at an impressive speed; it was hard to believe that he is a man who rarely climbs more than four steps without resting in between.

 When Betzalel rushed into the shul, he found a fellow named Minkowitz reciting the brachos over his aliyah. Betzalel nearly burst into tears; Minkowitz is a Yisroel, and if he was beginning his aliyah, it seemed that the first two aliyos had already gone by. You can imagine that Betzalel was overjoyed to hear the baal kriah reading from the beginning of the parshah. He soon realized that there were no kohanim present, and Minkowitz had been called up in place of a kohein.

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**The Stranger from Spain**

**By**[**Menachem Posner**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm)



 For centuries after the expulsion of Spanish Jewry in 1492, pockets of Jewish people clung to their faith in secret. While giving the appearance of being devout Christians, they maintained Jewish practice in hiding.

 Some of these crypto-Jews held positions of great prominence in Spanish government, finance, culture and academia. One such Jew was a very high official in the royal court who enjoyed a close relationship with the reigning monarch.

 But the day came when the powerful arm of the Inquisition caught up with him, and he was accused of living as a Jew. He was summarily tried and sentenced to death by *auto-da-fé*.

 Since he had many important duties, he asked the king to defer his punishment for a year so that he would be able to put the kingdom’s affairs in order before being burned. Although the king rarely involved himself in Inquisition matters, he requested that his friend be granted a year, and his wish was honored.

 The year passed all too quickly, and the king once again asked that the punishment be delayed by one month. This was followed by a request for an additional week and then a day.

 Finally, word was given that the treacherous Jew, who had pretended to be a faithful Catholic, would be put to death by burning in the city square.

 People gathered from miles around to witness the event. The pyre was burning, and the priests were performing their last rites.

 Suddenly, the ground shook. Buildings crumbled. The bleachers wobbled. The crowd dispersed in panic as the city was gripped by an earthquake. In the mayhem, the accused managed to slip away from his captors.

A few weeks later, he escaped out of Spain to safety.

 Well versed in classical philosophy, the Jew knew no rest. Was the earthquake sent by G‑d just to save him, or was it simple happenstance? Could it be that G‑d was intimately involved in his personal affairs and cared about him?

 After giving the matter some thought, he decided to further contemplate the issue. If he would conclude that it was simple coincidence, then he would continue to live his life in the relative safety of his non-Jewish persona. If, however, he would come to understand that G‑d had ordained the earthquake for his personal protection, he would have no choice but to live according to G‑d’s will, as an open and proud, practicing Jew.

 He immediately began discussing the issue with the philosophers and thinkers whom he met in Germany, where he had come to reside. He always talked of a theoretical minister, never letting on that it was he himself who had experienced such an amazing turn of events.

 The opinions flew fast and furious, and every wise man had his say, but there was no answer that satisfied the stranger from Spain.

 In desperation, he decided to travel eastward to seek the council of RabbiIsrael Baal Shem Tov, the leader of the nascent Chassidic movement.

 As the travel-weary man came to the courtyard of the famed rabbi, he saw a man stroking the horses. It was none other than Reb Volf Kitzes, one of theBaal Shem Tov’s star pupils.

 In response to the Spaniard’s query, Reb Volf indicated that the Baal ShemTov was inside the house.

 As soon as the stranger entered, even before he was able to speak, the Baal Shem Tov called out, “Welcome, minister from Spain!”

 Shaken by the fact that the Baal Shem Tov knew who he was without being told, he stood silently. “Regarding your question,” continued the Baal Shem Tov, “you would do well to speak to my student, Reb Volf. He’s the one you met outside stroking the horses.”

 After hearing the man’s story, Reb Volf explained: “It is entirely conceivable that this earthquake had been preordained since the beginning of time. However, the fact that your punishment had been timed just so that it happened neither before nor after the earthquake is clearly a miracle that G‑d has brought about through His many messengers.”

 Satisfied at last, the man began to live openly as a Jew and as an adherent of the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings.

Source: Adapted from Otzar Sippurie Chabad, p. 119-120.

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**Thoughts that Count**

You shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your needy neighbor (Deut. 15:7)

In performing mitzvot, complete simplicity and sincerity of heart are the highest motivations. We observe G-d's laws without asking questions. Yet there is one mitzva in which a little discretion is required: the giving of tzedaka (charity). The giver must always make sure that the recipient is not embarrassed.

*(Arono Shel Yosef)*

It states in Psalms (51:16): "Save me from bloodshed ('damim'), O G-d, G-d of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." In Hebrew, the word "damim" also means money; King David was thus praying that he never make the mistake of considering money to be G-d.

*(Rabbi Moshe of Kovrin)*

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