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To Receive the Torah B'simcha Ub'pnimious

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



There was an innkeeper who lived on the outskirts of Lubavitch. During the lifetime of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek, he managed to earn a living. Even for a regular Shabbos numerous guests would come to Lubavitch, and the inns that were located in the center of the town couldn't host everyone, so this innkeeper who we will call Yisroel always had a few customers.

However, after the histalkus of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek and especially a few years later when a few of his sons established their courts in other towns the number of visitors to Lubavitch fell drastically, and this innkeeper felt it much more than those who were located closer to the Rebbe Maharash's residence and Beis hamidrash.

The Innkeeper was Very Downcast

It was Erev Shavuos and Yisroel was downcast, it is Erev Yom Tov and he hasn't had a customer for weeks. He had no money to buy food for his family so he decided to look for some work and perhaps earn some money.

He passed by the Rebbe's house and the Rebbe was standing on his porch/balcony. Seeing him, the Rebbe said, Reb Yisroel it is Erev Shavuos and one is supposed to receive the Torah with joy and bpnimious (that it should permeate in you) and you are downcast.

The innkeeper replied, Rebbe what should I tell you, it is difficult to be upbeat and joyous when I haven't had a customer in my inn for weeks.

The Rebbe Maharash raised his eyes, looked at the horizon, and then said, Reb Yisroel I see a large group coming and they will be staying in your inn for Yom Tov, go home and prepare for them.

For how many should I prepare? asked the innkeeper

A large amount replied the Rebbe

Three or four? asked Yisroel

More, replied the Rebbe

A minyan? asked the innkeeper in excitement

More, replied the Rebbe

Twenty, asked Reb Yisroel

No more, the Rebbe replied

Slowly he started adding another five and another ten with the Rebbe continuing to answer more and more. Finally, when he asked if the Rebbe meant he should prepare for seventy people, the Rebbe replied, no more than double than that.

How Could He Afford to Buy All that Food

Hearing this, Reb Yisroel was thrilled, having such a large group can provide for his family for months, however, if he had no money to buy food for his own family, how will he be able to buy provisions for 150 people? Gaining some courage, he said Rebbe I don't have any money how will I obtain provisions to feed so many people?

The Rebbe took out some coins and gave them to him and told him, I am positive that the storekeepers will give you credit as well.

Reb Yisroel ran home and asked his family to help prepare for all their anticipated guests and then went to the market and began ordering large amounts of food. When he told each vendor that the Rebbe told him that he will have around 150 guests and that the Rebbe himself lent him some money each storekeeper was willing to give him the merchandise on credit, knowing that immediately after Yom Tov they will be paid in full. This was going to be their lucky day as well.

The butcher went to the shochet to ask him to shecht extra chickens, the baker told him he will deliver the freshly baked challah in a few hours, as he didn't prepare for so many people, and the winemaker delivered a barrel of wine right away.

Late in the Afternoon, Not One Visitor Had Come to the Inn

His neighbors and friends heard the wonderful news and they were all happy for him and came over to help him prepare so much food in a short time. But as the hours passed and it was becoming late in the afternoon and they didn't see not one visitor they began questioning him. Are you positive that the Rebbe told you that you will have a large number of customers today?

Perhaps the Rebbe said it is possible that you will have customers in order to uplift your spirits, they said to him.

But Reb Yisroel was firm, I heard it directly from the Rebbe, and no, it wasn't just said as an encouragement, it was a statement a fact, and the Rebbe gave me money and told me for how many people I should prepare for. If the Rebbe said I will have guests, I will have guests.



**This Shavuos edition of the Shabbos Stories is dedicated by
Mr. & Mrs. Dov & Naomi Solkowitz in memory of
Yosef ben Yisroel
(Joseph Franco)
On the occasion of his 44th Yahrtzeit Anniversary
4 Sivan 5739/May 30, 1979**

Everyone Thought that Poor Reb Yisroel was Going to Be Ruined

A few more hours passed, the neighbors and friends slowly went home, many of them thinking that Reb Yisroel was dreaming or worse than that. He is now going to be ruined and what will he do with all the food, it will spoil over Yom Tov.

It came time for his wife to light the candles and not one guest had arrived. She also silently was worried about what has happened today with her husband and what will be, but Yisroel looked around and just thanked her for preparing so much for their guests in such a short amount of time.

Going outside he noticed a cloud of dust on the horizon and a few minutes later a wagon pulls up and the driver asks, where is the closest inn?

Right here, he replies, and how many individuals are you?

In this wagon, we are ten, the wagon driver said, but there are fourteen more wagons coming. It is almost sunset so if possible we will all be staying by you, as you are the first inn of the town.

My pleasure, replied Reb Yisroel, I have enough food for everyone, he said reassuringly.

Additional Wagons Were Seen Coming

Looking up Reb Yisroel saw the additional wagons coming and he ushered them all in.

After they quickly changed he led them to the Rebbes' Shul and everyone was astonished, yes he has the guests just as the Rebbe had said he would.

One person asked but if they arrived so late, how did the Rebbe see them in the morning?

Another person responded the Rebbe was on his porch so he was higher than us and can see much farther than we can.

So, since he saw them, to him it was as if they were nearby, but in actuality, they were quite a distance away and that is why it took them so long to arrive.

Concluding this story, the person said, Chevra the question only is are we conducting ourselves as the innkeeper did, whose faith in the Rebbes' words never wavered even as the time came for his wife to light the candles and not one guest had arrived, or are we like the neighbors who thought that perhaps the Rebbe was encouraging us and praying that the geulah is coming, but never meant it as a promise and guarantee.

Sometimes we should learn from the simple and pure faith of what otherwise we would consider him being a simple Jewish innkeeper.

Reprinted from the 5782 Shavuos email of Rabbi Avtzon's Weekly Story.

I Love to Learn

By Rabbi Ari Bensoussan



Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt”l, the late and esteemed Rosh Yeshiva of Mir Yerushalyim, was a man of extraordinary strength and perseverance. For the last 28 years of his life, he lived with the degenerative disease of Parkinson’s. But for Rav Nosson Tzvi, it may have been a debilitating illness, but it was not demoralizing. It robbed him of his ability to control his muscles, but he was in full control of his life. And his life’s accomplishments speak right to that.

After Rav Nosson Tzvi passed away, a man from Jerusalem came to visit the family and lend them his comfort. This Jew, though, had something in common with Rav Nosson Tzvi that many others did not. He also suffered from Parkinson’s disease.

“Your father,” the man began, “will force me to endure a very strong judgment before the Heavenly Court after I pass away.

Before I developed Parkinson’s,” he explained,” I was known as the ‘Masmid of Beis Yisroel,’ a neighborhood in Jerusalem. I would learn day and night, as much

as I could. However, ever since I have gotten sick, it has become extremely difficult for me to concentrate, even slightly, on my learning. I am bedridden and on medication, and my mind is often numbed.

“But I just want you to know, that your father, Rav Nosson Tzvi, had Parkinson’s much worse than I do, and he still never stopped learning. Every day, he walked to the Yeshiva and davened, despite the enormous effort and energy he needed to exert. People would beg him to take medication to alleviate the pain, but he would always tell people, ‘My body is my problem; my brain belongs to the Jewish people. I need to be clear-headed to offer guidance and encouragement to my fellow Jews. I cannot take that away from them.’

And so, your father would sit on the couch and throb in discomfort, as throngs of people would line up to see him.

On one occasion, a student of your father, said, “Rebbe, I cannot bare to see you like this. Why is Hashem doing this to you?” Rav Nosson Tzvi replied, “You know, I love learning Torah so much that before I got sick, I couldn’t ever think of how Hashem will give me reward for learning. I personally enjoyed it too much. But now that it is so difficult for me to concentrate and learn, and I do it nonetheless, I know that I will receive reward...”

For all of us, the privilege to learn Torah, for even a few minutes, is an opportunity not worth giving up for anything else. And if it comes with any among of difficulty and struggle, then how much greater our reward will be.

Reprinted from the Parshat Bamidbar/Shavot 5779/2019 edition of the TorahAnytime Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.

Life Itself

By Rabbi Yisroel Besser

With regard to the Torah, the pasuk states: Ko lo davar reik hu mikem ki hu chayeichem, It is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life (Devarim 32:47).

To refer to something as “empty” indicates that it exists, just that it is devoid of content. A milk bottle may not have any milk in it, but it remains a bottle. A wealthy person who loses their money is still a person and a busy person who is suddenly idle remains a person as well.

When a person is no longer living, however, one does not say that they are empty of life, but rather that the person is no longer. This, said the Chofetz Chaim, is what the pasuk is teaching us here: It is not an empty thing for you; Torah is not just another acquisition a person can have and remain a person if they lose, just

“empty” of that particular possession — rather, a person devoid of Torah is not a person!

Why is this? The pasuk explains. For it is your life! Without a connection to Torah, a person has no real existence. It is the purpose of creation, the purpose for which we were given life, and the mission with which each and every one of us is tasked.



Rav Yaakov Moshe Shurkin

The patient was extremely weak, barely able to speak. Yet, when a talmid came into the hospital, Rav Yaakov Moshe Shurkin found the energy to sit up in bed and greet him.

The talmid asked how the rebbi was feeling and Rav Shurkin thanked him for coming and exchanged a few words with him, a conversation ensuing.

Rebbetzin Shurkin, looking on, was concerned. “The doctor does not want you to speak,” she told her husband.

He nodded in agreement. It was true.

“But this bachur just came from Eretz Yisrael and he learns in Ponevezh. Should I not ask him how they learned the sugya of ‘Manah ein kan, mashkon ein kan’ (a sugya in Kiddushin 8a) over there?”

Later that night, Rav Shurkin passed away, but on his final day, he had heard how they learned the sugya in Ponevezh, the very reason for which he had been created, the reason for the world itself.

Reprinted from the Parshas Bamidbar/Shavuos 5783 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table. Excerpted from Tefillas HaShelah with commentary and stories by Yisroel Besser

The “Legacy” of Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah

The Riyatz of Lubavitch zy”a (Sefer Hama’amarim) says an amazing story on this topic: The Baal Shem Tov zy”a once visited a city near Brod, together with his students. They noticed that the majority of young boys in that city had the same name – “Boruch Moshe” – while most of the girls were named “Bracha Leah”.

After Tefillas Minchah, the Baal Shem Tov turned to a local man and asked him why so many of the children had the same names. The man answered by relating a story.

Both a Torah Scholar and Very Pious Man

He said: Over 100 years ago, there was a man named Isaac Shlomo who lived in this city. He was a Torah scholar and a very pious man. He earned his living as a butcher and he gave tzedakah with an open hand to the men of the city who sat and learned Torah all day. He would give them free meat every erev Shabbos and erev yomtov.

For many years, he had no children. 15 years after his wedding, he and his wife had a boy, whom they named “Boruch Moshe”. The boy grew up and started going to cheder, but he did not succeed in his studies. When he was almost bar mitzvah, it became obvious that learning was not for him. When his father saw this, he took him into his meat business to serve as his apprentice. After just a year in the business, Boruch Moshe had become an expert butcher and he used the money he earned to help the poor, just like his father taught him.

Boruch Moshe Marries the Daughter of Rav Yaakov the Porush

As he got older, R’ Isaac Shlomo began spending less time at work and more time sitting and learning. He would leave Boruch Moshe in the store to take care of business as he learned. After about 10 years of working in the butcher shop, Boruch Moshe got engaged to Bracha Leah, the daughter of a talmid chochom known as Rav Yaakov the Porush.

After their wedding, they took up residence in Rav Yaakov’s home. Boruch Moshe continued taking care of the business, while his father sat and learned, and the business continued to thrive and succeed. Boruch Moshe kept giving large amounts to tzedakah, as he had seen his father do.

Several years later, R' Isaac Moshe passed away. The entire town attended his funeral and he was eulogized as a good, upright man. A short time later, Boruch Moshe's mother also died, as did his wife's parents, leaving the young couple alone in the world.

Boruch Moshe wanted to learn Mishnayos in memory of his father, so he hired a Rov to teach him. However, to his great sorrow, he was unable to understand even one Mishnah. His teacher, whose name was R' Shlomo Yitzchok, tried very hard to explain the Mishnayos to him, but he simply couldn't understand.

Inspired by the Words of Sanhedrin 19b

One day, Boruch Moshe was sitting by a table in the shul, when he heard the sounds of a shiur being given on Gemara. Although he couldn't understand what was being said, he sat there and listened. He heard the teacher reciting the words of the Gemara (Sanhedrin 19B) that anyone who teaches his friend's child Torah is considered as if he bore him. These words entered Boruch Moshe's heart and caused him a lot of pain. When he davened Maariv that night, he cried many tears.

After Maariv, Boruch Moshe walked home together with R' Shlomo Yitzchok. As they walked, he let out a loud moan of pain. R' Shlomo Yitzchok knew that Boruch Moshe and his wife were childless, and he assumed that this was why he had groaned so sadly. He told him, "You and your wife are still young. Hashem will surely grant you sons and daughters!"

Boruch Moshe replied, "Amen! But today I heard the words of the Gemara that one who teaches his friend's son Torah is considered to be his father. This means that not only do I not have any children of my own, because I am an am ha'aretz, I also can never teach Torah to someone else's child in order to be considered that child's father."

You Need Not Personally Teach the Child Torah

R' Shlomo Yitzchok told him, "The Gemara doesn't mean that you have to personally teach the child Torah. Rather, it means that if someone grants his friend's child the opportunity to learn Torah, it is as if he bore him. If you can't learn with children yourself, you can hire a melamed to learn with him and, in that way, it will be considered as if you gave birth to the child."

This made Boruch Moshe very happy. When he got home, he repeated what R' Shlomo Yitzchok had said to his wife, and they decided to hire melamdin to teach Torah to the children of the town so that they would become "their" children. And that is what they did. Just a few days later, they hired qualified teachers to learn with the town's children. This went on for the next few years.

Boruch Moshe had begun selling cows wholesale and he had become very wealthy by that point. He became richer by the year, but he still had no children.

Despite their wealth, Boruch Moshe and his wife continued to live in their small, modest home, choosing to give the vast majority of their income to tzedakah. The main cause they continued to fund was paying for teachers to learn Torah with the youth.

When Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah were 60-years-old, they had over 30 melamdim working for them in their city and in the surrounding area. They paid all of these teachers to learn with the local children.

“What Remembrance will be Left of Us?”

One day, Bracha Leah said to her husband, “You told me that one who teaches a child Torah is considered to be like his parent. However, that’s only true as long as we are alive. After we pass away, what remembrance will be left of us? If we at least had real children, we would be leaving something over in this world.”

Boruch Moshe became upset at his wife and asked, “Bracha Leah, what are you trying to say? The Gemara says that one who teaches his friend’s child Torah is considered like his parent. Therefore, you have to fully believe these words. Whatever benefits a parent has from a child, one who teaches him Torah will have the same benefits!”

The man concluded the story by saying that the majority of the Yidden in this city and in the surrounding area were students of the chadorim that were established by Boruch Moshe and his wife. He said that Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah had passed away 15 years ago, at a very old age. They entrusted all of their money to the Rov of the city and asked for it to be divided into four parts.

Naming Their Children After Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah

One part was to be given to their relatives, one part was to go to support poor people, one part was to be used to continue paying melamdim to learn with the children, and the final part was to be set aside for gemilus chasadim.

From the time that Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah had died, all those who had studied in their chadorim had named their children after them. And every year on the Yahrzeits of Boruch Moshe and Bracha Leah, the Rov of the city would give a shiur in their memory and everyone would go to visit their graves, like children going to their parents’ kevarim on the Yahrzeit.

After Maariv, the Baal Shem Tov and his students went back to their lodgings and he said to them, “The Navi says (Yeshaya 56:5):

‘I will give them in My house and in My walls a place and a name, better than sons and daughters; an everlasting name I will give him, which will not be discontinued.’ The words: ‘I will give them in My house’ refer to Torah, which is ‘Hashem’s house.’ The word ‘and in My walls’ refers to Klal Yisroel, who are like

a wall to uphold His holy name. This creates ‘a place and a name, better than sons and daughters; an everlasting name...which will not be discontinued.’”

Reprinted from the Bamidbor 5783 edition of “The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Meir Ismar Rosenbaum.

The Significance of the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah

A suitable time to prepare for matan Torah is during the sheloshes yemei hagbalah, the three days before Shavuos. Rebbe Avraham HaMalach told his chassidim not to come to him during shloshes yemei hagbalah because at that time, he wanted to study Torah by himself.

His chasidim didn't listen and came to him in the sheloshes yemei hagbalah to hear his divrei Torah. The Malach (as the Rebbe was called) locked his door and didn't let them in. He explained, "One's success in Torah for the entire year is dependent upon one's hasmadah in the sheloshes yemei hagbalah."

The custom in Yerushalayim (before תשנ"ח) was that the stores would close at midday, during sheloshes yemei hagbalah, so the shopkeepers could spend the afternoons and night immersed in Torah study.

The Custom of the Yidden in Poland

This was also the custom in Poland. Polish Yidden began their preparations for Shavuos even earlier. Two weeks before Shavuos many batei midrashim in Poland were filled with people studying Torah.

The Imrei Emes zt'l once entered a beis midrash in Yerushalayim during sheloshes yemei hagbalah and said in exasperation, "Where are the Yidden of the alter heim?" Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zy'a would tell the following story:

The batei midrashim of Poland were packed during the sheloshes yemei hagbalah. People would take off from work to immerse themselves in Torah. Once, someone came into the beis midrash during sheloshes yemei hagbalah and enviously watched the passion for Torah that existed. He turned to the wall and cried. He too, wanted to join in the Torah learning.

Rebbe Yehoshua Belzer added, "But he didn't merely remain with a desire to learn Torah. Instead, he reached for the first Gemara he saw, sat down, and was immediately engrossed in Torah study." At that time, he experienced the sweetness of Torah and this changed him forever. He became a masmid and a great talmid chacham. Rebbe Yehoshua Belzer had a bookshelf where he kept the sefarim which were written with ruach hakadosh. That man's sefer was stored on that shelf.

Rebbe Elazar Mendel of Lelov zt'l was one of the honored rebbes in Yerushalayim, and his son was engaged to the daughter of one of his chassidim. The chassid (overjoyed that his daughter did such a fine shidduch)

Sent gifts to the chosson, as customary, but Rebbe Elazar Mendel's family didn't send anything back, and this upset the chassid's wife. "I understand that the Rebbe doesn't have money," she said, 'but they could send at least a pin to the kallah. Why don't they send anything?' (Primarily, this was because the Rebbe gave every penny to tzedakah to support the poor of Yerushalayim. Nothing was left for gifts.)

"Speak to the Rebbe," she told her husband. "Tell him that he isn't acting properly. He should send a gift to the kallah!"

The Chassid's Unfulfilled Promises to His Wife

The chassid promised to do so, but he kept pushing it off. He was, after all, a chassid of Reb Elazar Mendel (and now a mechutan, too), and felt uncomfortable demanding a gift from him. But his wife was extremely upset, and he knew that he had to do something about it.

Each time he went to the Rebbe, his wife reminded him to mention something about the gifts, but the chassid was always in awe of the Rebbe's presence and couldn't bring himself to discuss it.

During the sheloshes yemei hagbalah, the Rebbe's custom was to daven Maariv and count sefiras ha'omer at the kever of Shimon HaTzaddik, and then he would go to the Kosel haMaaravi to daven some more.

The chassid was planning to go along with the Rebbe to these holy sites. His wife told him, "Tonight, you must speak to the Rebbe. I've asked you many times, and you keep pushing me off. This time you must take action. Otherwise, don't bother returning home!"

That's what she told him, and her husband knew that her threat was real. Later that night, he knocked on the Rebbe's door. As he waited for the Rebbe to open, he thought to himself, "My wife is right, after all. The Rebbe is a holy man, that's true, but it would be proper that he give a gift to our daughter, the kallah. Even a small pin would be sufficient. Why doesn't the Rebbe do so?"

The Rebbe answered the door and said, "Mechuten shlita! I am surprised that during the sheloshes yemei hagbalah you are going around with pins in your head." The chassid was astounded. It was ruach hakadosh! The Rebbe knew exactly what he was thinking. The chassid went home and told his wife, "We have a mechutan, a baal ruach hakadosh. Don't talk to me about the presents anymore, or you can leave the house."

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