

The Jewish Weekly

You Didn't Deserve Greater Blessings ... Until

By Rabbi Chaim Mentz

Some two hundred and fifty years ago in the Ukrainian city of T'shish'nik lived Reb Berel; a devoted Chassid of the great Tzadik, Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl .

Reb Berel had a fairly large house and was respected by the entire community for his good heart and good deeds so it was understandable that whenever Rebbe Mordechai came to T'shish'nik he stayed at his house.

Indeed, Reb Berel and his family waited for those visits impatiently the entire year, or even longer. His whole life was centered around his Rebbe. The Rebbe was his friend, his inspiration, his teacher, his leader his very soul. The Rebbe's teachings, his motions, his advice, his eyes, that is what kept Reb Berel happy and optimistic in the midst of the misery, tragedy and oppression surrounding the Jews from every side.

So we can imagine Reb Berel's joy when he heard that in one week's time the Rebbe would be arriving in T'shish'nik for a week's visit!!

Reb Berel and his family had spent the entire week cleaning and polishing every corner of the house, preparing food, books, a quiet place.. like the Rebbe liked. And sure enough, as every year, the big day came! The Rebbe's personal secretary came to Reb Berel's house to see if everything was ready.

But this time the secretary had a strange look on his face; something other than the usual enthusiasm and joy.

"Listen, Reb Berel" the secretary said seriously as he took him to a table in the corner and sat down opposite him.

"Is something wrong?" Reb Berel asked, a look of bewilderment replacing the smile on his face.

"Well, it's like this" the secretary said leaning forward earnestly. "The Rebbe said he's not staying by your house."

"What!?" gasped Reb Berel, tears forming in his eyes "Why? What happened? Is everything...?"

"Everything is all right" said the secretary "But the Rebbe said that he's not staying here and he never wants to see your face again unless you bring him two thousand rubles." Reb Berel's mouth fell open and his eyes widened in horror as his head shook 'no' in disbelief. The secretary continued as he began standing up.

"The Rebbe says that he doesn't want you to attend his meals, to be in the Synagogue when he prays or even to watch him walk in the streets, nothing. In fact, he said he never wants to see you again, ever! Unless you bring the money."

With this he shook poor Reb Berel's hand, who was sitting there like a stunned cow whispering to himself, "two thousand", shrugged his shoulders as to say he wished he could help and left.

Reb Berel was swooning. He meekly called to his wife and when she came running into the room and heard the news she held her head in her hands and fell, almost fainted, into the seat opposite him.

Two thousand rubles was a fortune!!

After a short reckoning they realized that even if they sold everything including their house and took out loans they would barely reach one third the amount. Usually they would go to the Rebbe with their problems! But now!! OY!! Why had the Tzadik left them? Why was he being so severe? They searched and searched their deeds of the past month, the past year, the past ten years for as far back as they could remember . but they couldn't figure it out.

Their only recourse was prayer.

They both grabbed books of Psalms and began pouring out their souls, reading and rereading aloud most of that night and the entire next day, then the next day and the next, over and over again; weeping and pleading with broken hearts to HaShem that He have mercy and send them the money.

But the week ended and nothing happened; No money, no Tzadik and no hope. They were alone.

Then, just as they thought it couldn't be worse, it got worse! An entire battalion of barbaric Russian soldiers who had just returned from some sort of successful raid swept into town and took over the houses; twenty five soldiers were assigned to Berel's house. He had to vacate his own bed as well as provide food and lodging for them on punishment of death.

In just moments his sparkling clean home became a shambles. The soldiers wasted no time in eating everything they could and laying down to sleep anywhere they wanted. Reb Berel and his wife had to sleep in the hay loft. But he thanked G-d that things weren't worse, at least the soldiers left them alive!

Then, suddenly in the middle of the night Berel was awakened by the sound of trumpets. He peered out the window of the loft to see soldiers running out of all the houses on the block, as well as his, with all their gear. It was a call to order. Berel hoped they weren't going to be given orders to kill everyone. He began reading Psalms again. But the soldiers all mounted their horses and rode off like a huge horde of locusts just as they had entered.

Reb Berel and his wife dragged themselves back into their house, it looked like a hurricane had hit the place but they thanked G-d that the invaders had left. They went to their room to sleep in their own beds when suddenly Berel's wife noticed that from under Berel's bed protruded a wide, low wooden crate. But they were too tired to do anything about it. They left it for the morning and went to sleep.

It Once Happened...

The next morning they woke up, pulled out the crate and opened it to see that IT WAS FILLED WITH GOLDEN COINS!

In fact, what had happened, was that shortly after the soldiers left, they realized that one of their chests of booty was missing.

Their commander immediately dispatched twenty men to return to the town and find it and in no time they were back in T'shish'nik, waking every family and ransacking every house one at a time.

But for some reason they kept missing Reb Berel's after a few hours of futility they concluded that either they made a mistake in calculation or had lost it somewhere else and returned to their commander empty handed.

But all this was completely unknown to Reb Berel; he slept through the whole thing. He held on to the crate for another few months, waiting for someone to claim it and when they didn't, finally decided to ask the Rebbe what to do. The crate had no markings on it, no names and he certainly had no idea where the soldiers were; maybe it was his.

He took two thousand rubles of the money, only a small portion of it, and traveled to the city of Chernobyl.

He arrived with trepidation and immediately got an audience and when he entered the Rebbe's room the Rebbe was smiling.

"The money is yours". He said. "All of it. And you can keep this money also.


"But, but I thought." Berel stammered. "I thought you wanted two thousand rubles. See? Here's the money."

"No, Berel" answered the Rebbe "I saw that a fortune was waiting for you but you were missing two things; humility and prayer.

The fact that you hosted me every year in T'shish'nik gave you a bit of false self-confidence and the fact that you never really broke down and prayed to G-d with all your heart for anything in your entire life . those two things prevented the blessing from reaching you. The money they left is really yours. You just had to want to leave your present state with all your being."

Needless to say, Reb Berel gave a lot of what he had to charity, for the rest of his long and generous life.

Reprinted from an email of "Chabad of Bel Air".



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Shemot

| | Candle Lighting | Motzei Shabbat | Motzei Shabbat ר"ת |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Jerusalem | 4:13 | 5:29 | 6:07 |
| Tel Aviv | 4:27 | 5:31 | 6:03 |
| Haifa | 4:17 | 5:28 | 6:03 |
| Be'er Sheva | 4:32 | 5:33 | 6:08 |



Master Of The Universe: Enough Already!

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

There was a servant in the house of the Tzadik, Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl, who used to stoke the fire in the winter stove. He was afflicted with severe psoriasis, and was covered from head to toe with painful boils and other skin eruptions. It seemed like he was always bleeding, whether from the disease itself or from being unable to refrain from scratching at the relentless itching.

Whenever the Rebbe saw him, he never said a word to him, even though he undoubtedly noticed the young man's terrible suffering. His household and his chasidim were astonished, for the Rebbe's tremendous empathy for Jews in pain of any form was well-known.

One day, upon rising early in the morning, the Chernobyler came upon the servant crying and groaning in pain, furiously scratching at his head and other parts of his body, with blood oozing down from all over. The Tzadik lifted his eyes and said, "Master of the Universe: let it be enough already!"

That same day, the servant suddenly died.

Now the Rebbe's household and the chasidim were even more amazed. Realizing that the turn of events was certainly out of the ordinary, they pleaded with the Rebbe for an explanation. Finally, he told them the following story.

His father, the famous Tzadik Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, was desperately poor; the family was always teetering on the brink of starvation. There was, however, a certain rich person in the town who loved the Tzadik very much, and he used to provide the Rebbe with nearly all his household needs.

It came to pass that when this rich man realized how dear he was to the Rebbe, it went to his head and he proposed to R. Menachem Nachum that the Tzadik's son marry his daughter. Of course, he would pay all the expenses of both sides, as well as provide a handsome dowry, he confidently told the Chernobyler.

The Rebbe turned him down.

The man continued to argue and plead his case, but the Rebbe was steadfast in his refusal. As a result, the man transformed from the Tzadik's biggest supporter into his fiercest enemy. Not only did he cease his financial aid, he actively sought to aggravate him, and was constantly inventing new plots to make the Chernobyler's life even more difficult.

One time, he somehow found out that Rabbi Menachem Nachum's married daughter was due to go to the mikveh that night. His antagonism had so festered in him that he actually decided to hire some ruffians to pursue her through the streets on her way home afterwards. They did so in a brutish obnoxious manner, and she was forced to flee with all her might through narrow side streets and filthy back alleys. Finally she reached the haven of her home exhausted and upset. She crossed the threshold, collapsed on the floor, and fainted.

As you can imagine, this caused a great commotion in the Rebbe's home. It was only after immense effort that the household was able to bring her back to herself. When Rabbi Menachem Nachum found out that his daughter's suffering was a result of the rich man's evil plan, he was enraged.

Shortly thereafter, the rich man died.

When his case came before the Heavenly Court, the judges were about to issue a harsh judgment against him because of his aggression towards a great Tzadik and the suffering he caused him. But then a defending angel arose and pointed out the rich man's large number of good deeds, his accomplishments in Torah-study, and how he had even generously supported the Rebbe and his household for many years.

Other heavenly beings joined in, pro and con. Finally it was decreed that he would be given the chance to appease Rabbi Menachem Nachum. If he succeeded, he would be granted the rewards for the many good deeds he had accomplished in his lifetime.

He was assigned to two angels who would escort him to R. Menachem Nachum, and subsequently bring him back to the Heavenly Court.

The rich man's soul came to the Chernobyler and begged forgiveness for all the pain and aggravation he had caused him while still alive in this world. The Rebbe told him to enumerate one by one each of the offenses he had committed. At each one the Tzadik responded, "I forgive him with all my heart."

Finally, they reached the episode with Rabbi Menachem Nachum's daughter. "NO!" cried out the Rebbe, "This I may not forgive. This was a crime against my holy ancestors and against Heaven; not just against my daughter and me."

Immediately the escorting angels took him and returned to the Heavenly Court, where a second decree was issued. He would be reincarnated again, and in his next lifetime would suffer from terrible physical afflictions.

After the Chernobyler passed away and his son Rabbi Mordechai succeeded him, Rabbi Menachem Nachum appeared to his son in a dream and asked him to take the youth with the skin diseases into his house. The second Chernobyler Rebbe did so. When he saw how much the man was suffering, he refrained from offering to help, because he knew it was an atonement for the sins of the man's previous life. Finally, however, Rabbi Mordechai could no longer hold back. He forgave the man for the abuse of his family, the soul's spiritual rectification was completed. Then the man's soul returned to Heaven.

This Shabbat we'll be commencing the reading of the book of Shemot, which some people call the book of Exodus. Interestingly, the Rambam calls the book Sefer HaGeula, the Book of Redemption, for obvious reasons.

But I find most fascinating the fact that the Baal Halachot Gedolot, calls Shemot by the name 'חומש' שני', the second of the chumashim.

We know that there are 'חמשה חומשי תורה,' five chumashim – the five books of the Torah. But why doesn't the Baal Halachot Gedolot call Bereishit 'חומש ראשון' – the first chumash? Why doesn't he call Bamidbar, 'חומש רביעי', the fourth of the chumashim? Why is it only Shemot which is called the second?

The Netziv, in his masterful work HaAmeck Davar, gives a beautiful explanation. The Netziv says as follows. The Baal Halachot Gedolot wants us to know that Sefer Bereishit is incomplete without Sefer Shemot. Sefer Shemot is the continuation of Bereishit, and the reason is because Bereishit is all about the Creation and the first generations on earth, while Shemot is about the prelude to the giving of the Torah, the actual giving of it, and the housing of the Torah in the Tabernacle. The message for us therefore is that the Creation was incomplete without the existence of the Torah

So here, we are reminded yet again about the centrality of Torah in our lives. Without Torah, we are nothing. That's both at an individual level and also as far as our nation is concerned. In addition, we have a responsibility in all of our deeds and in our teachings to always reflect the values of Torah and ultimately, in this way, we will enhance our environment because we also recognize that the entire world is incomplete without Torah values.

Please join me by praying with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi



The Jewish Weekly's
PARSHA FACTS
NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 124
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1763
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6762

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23
Sephardim: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

שמות

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