

HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE The Whole Story

THE GENEROUS DONATION

There was once a heartbroken fellow who, after losing a close family member and experiencing other challenges, approached **R' Shlomka of Zeville** with the following question:

Chazal say that upon losing a family member, one must make the *brachab* of *Dayan Ha'emes*, and that the *brachab* should be made with the same joy as one would have when making a *brachab* on good tidings, *Ha'tov V'Ha'meitiv*. But why is it that only someone confronted with challenges makes that *brachab*? Shouldn't there also be a *brachab* for someone who doesn't have any problems? That's also worthy of a *brachab*! Why is there only a *brachab* for one faced with extreme difficulty?

R' Shlomo answered him with a powerful analogy:

When one comes collecting for a certain cause, and the donor asks him for two-dollars change before giving him the donation, what enters the collector's mind at that moment? That the donor is giving him a five-dollar bill. If he asks for five-dollars change, the collector expects he's getting a ten-dollar bill. If it would be thirty-dollars change, he'd expect a fifty-dollar donation, etc. In short, the more the change, the greater the donation.

"In the same vein," continued R' Shlomke, "Hashem follows suit. The more 'change' we have to give Hashem, i.e., the more we have to endure, the greater the 'donation' we can expect Hashem will give us. Thus, when one has to 'give Hashem' more, the more he can anticipate receiving.

"That is why one must make a *brachab* on the bad and not on just having tranquility and stability. Only the one who has bad has this extra good awaiting him, and that's the cause for this *brachab*. The other person doesn't have this excitement facing him, so how can he make this *brachab*? He doesn't have the assurance that anything's awaiting him, and thus he can't make the *brachab*."

When one has a big challenge, in the light of his *emunah*, he can see the ultimate salvation coming. That is surely reassuring and exciting, as it means that extreme good is waiting for him. Hence, already at the time of the difficulty, he makes a *brachab*.¹



THE CATERER'S MENU

One of the major parts of a *simchab* is the food one serves at the event. By many *simchas*, the *baalei simchab* hand over this task to a caterer, freeing themselves to be involved in the other elements.

If one would go into a *simchab* hall's kitchen, it isn't always evident what type of event they're catering for. But, by looking at the amounts of food being prepared, one can usually guess what they're catering for.

¹ One day, a person told Reb Moshe Kliros, זצ"ל, the Rav of Teveria, about his many difficulties in life. Reb Moshe told him, "Why are you telling me only half of the story?" The man didn't understand.

If he sees them making a pound of *chrein*, horseradish, then it's probably a family Shabbos meal, maybe a *sheva berachos*. If there's five pounds of *chrein*, then it's more likely a bar mitzvah meal. Ten pounds of *chrein* are probably more for a *chasunab*, while twenty pounds would be more for a "Rebbishe" *chasunab*, and so forth. Again, the bigger the amount, the larger the party.



R' Elimelech Biederman uses this *meshal* to explain a similar point to what we've brought above. When a person confronts a bit of *chrein*, i.e., bitterness in his life, then he could anticipate a nice Shabbos ahead. While it's certainly an enjoyable meal, it doesn't compare to that of a bar mitzvah. If there's more bitterness, he can look forward to something better. The greater the darkness, the better the salvation awaits him.

So, when someone feels like he is encountering the greatest darkness, you know what he should expect? He should expect extreme good. The greater the darkness, the greater the forthcoming light.



Remember: "When the pot is bubbling, something good is cooking."



THE UNWANTED VISA

There are organizations in Israel that help US citizens living there get visas to travel out of the country. One day, a boy came into their offices, requesting that they help him get a visa immediately. The issue was of utmost importance, he told them, and he needed a visa ASAP. They took his information and said they'd get on the case.

Later that day, the man in charge of his case got a call from a lady, asking if her son had come to them requesting a visa. "I'm begging of you," she pleaded, "do whatever you can to ensure that he doesn't get approved. Unfortunately, he has left the proper path, and I'm very worried that if he leaves Israel, he is liable to lose whatever religion he has left. He may even fall to rock bottom, ר"ל."

As much as the man sympathized with her, he had to follow protocol and couldn't just refuse to help. He did tell her that he would try to make the boy's case look bad, as the boy had a few negative points in his application. He was both single and unemployed, which didn't sit well with the American consulate, who didn't want bachelors and poor people coming to America.

Despite this, the boy got his approval for a visa. The mother was so distraught that she hired someone to go to the organization's offices to destroy the visa! However, the boy was so desperate that he had rushed over there faster and had gotten his visa before anything could happen to it.

"You are in the middle of the story," Reb Moshe assured him. "Wait a bit, and you will see how everything turns out well."

זכרו תורת משה

The mother had been davening from the depths of her heart to stop her son from leaving, but it seemed that she was not answered. If we'd stop the story here, we'd think that the boy's connection to Yiddishkeit was over. But, as we know, Hashem always has a light at the end of the tunnel.



In the end, the boy did go to the US, and there he met up with some very special young rabbis who took an interest in him, spoke to his heart, and gave him the right *chizuk*. They helped him come back to Torah and mitzvos, and he became a fully observant Yid.

Ironically, when he reached out to his parents in Israel a few months later to tell them he wanted to return, his mother tried to deter him from coming! She was scared that he would reconnect with his old friends in Israel and be influenced negatively by them.

This story illustrates how what we may imagine to be "extremely bad" may very well be the actual "cause" for the *brachab*. This mother never thought that this visa would be the actual cause for his full return and bring the ultimate success in his life. And yet, over time she saw the *yad Hashem* how the darkness itself was the source of the salvation.

The darkness in life is there only to be the cause for the light. Rabbeinu Yonah teaches us that the believer knows that the darkness is the mere cause of the light. So, the darker the darkness, anticipate the greatest light.



THE ROSH KOLLEL'S QUANDARY

A Rosh Kollel from Bnei Brak found himself in a quandary. He was faced with bills from the Kollel that were adding up, and he was unable to cover the Kollel's expenses. He was unsure how to proceed. He heard from other Kollel fundraisers that going to America didn't always bring them the necessary funding, and sometimes it barely covered the cost of their plane tickets and trip expenses.

He therefore went to the **Chazon Ish** and posed the question to him. The Chazon Ish responded that should go to America for the money.



"Does that mean that I'm getting a *brachab* that I'll get all the necessary funds in America?" asked the Rosh Kollel. "Are you saying that it'll be the salvation for my dilemma?"

"No," responded that Chazon Ish. "All I said was that you shall go. I did not predict the outcome." The

Rosh Kollel accepted the Chazon Ish's words, and left his home.

After two weeks of humiliation in America, he saw in the end that he hadn't even raised the money to cover what he laid out for his trip, certainly not to cover the Kollel's budget. He didn't quite understand why the Chazon Ish therefore suggested he go in the first place, and was plagued with disappointed thoughts the whole way home.

When he landed in Israel, he took a *sheirut*, shuttle, to Bnei Brak. Next to him sat a man who introduced himself, and they started a nice conversation. The Rosh Kollel asked him why he'd come, and he responded that he had come because of his father. Eleven months ago, his father had passed away and had requested to be buried on the outskirts of Bnei Brak. Although he'd lived in England, he nevertheless was close to many rabbanim in Bnei Brak,

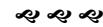
and thus had a big yearning to be buried there. The son had fulfilled his father's request, and now was returning to put up the *matzeivah*, gravestone.

The man asked the Rosh Kollel where he could find ten people for the *Kaddish* that he wanted to say following the placing of the *matzeivah*. The Rosh Kollel replied that he would be happy to arrange it. And so, before placing the *matzeivah*, the Rosh Kollel took some of the Kollel *yungeleit* to attend and make the *minyán*.

After the placing of the monument and saying *Kaddish*, the man was so moved by the conduct of these *yungeleit* and their kindness in willing to attend this event despite their busy schedules. He offered the Rosh Kollel a donation toward his Kollel, which the Rosh Kollel happily accepted. Upon looking at the sum on the check, he saw that it was written for the staggering sum of one million dollars! The Rosh Kollel had gotten the entire sum needed to cover the Kollel's budget, and more.

He then understood what the Chazon Ish had intended for him. The sum he received was much greater than anything he could've anticipated from all the donations he had been awaiting in America, but he wouldn't have received it had he not been on that *sheirut*. (Heard on *Stories to Inspire*, from R' Duvri Bensoussan)

There are several lessons that can be learned from this story. One is that one should always follow the advice of *gedolim*; by following them, we will always gain. But another lesson, along what we've been saying here, is that this Rosh Kollel got the *yeshuah* only after it seemed that he had no way out. After seeing his "last ditch effort" go nowhere, that is when the *yeshuah* originated and he was able to cover his Kollel's bill.



L'CHAIM

Someone complained to Rebbe Sholom of Kaminka about his bitter lot in life. Rebbe Shalom told him, "Everything is sweet. You just think that it's bitter." The man replied, "How can you say my life is good?"

Rebbe Shalom answered, "Alcohol tastes bitter for those who aren't accustomed to it. But this bitter drink leads to joy... Similarly, although things seem bitter, it is really joyous. Something good will come from it."



This can be compared to a person lost in a forest for a long time. Finally, after wandering for days, he notices a clearing in the distance. He rushes there and sees that it is a cemetery. He is overcome with relief because he knows he is near an inhabited area.

Generally, finding a graveyard isn't a joyous occasion, but for this person, it was a joyous sign because it signified he was near civilization.

The *nimshal* is that people don't generally associate hardships with happiness. Nevertheless, when you know that the difficulties are a sign that something very good will follow, you will be happy with the hardships too.