



A Story for the Shabbos Table

סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

The Great Zechus of helping children learn Torah – Part 1

Moshe Shlomo was a simple Jew, not much of a Talmid Chochom, but a Yerei Shomayim. He had many fine virtues. His love of Hashem matched his love for the Torah and for fellow-Jews. He was one of those simple but sincere and pious Jews, for whom the heilike Baal Shem Tov had a special affection, and Moshe Shlomo was greatly attached to the Baal Shem Tov, and used to visit him from time to time.

The Baal Shem Tov blessed Moshe Shlomo to be successful in his undertakings, and the bracha came true. On his part Moshe Shlomo would bring large amounts of money to the Baal Shem Tov for *tzedaka*, and was very happy to know that he could have a share in the very worthy Tzedakos that the Baal Shem Tov carried out in secret, to help Jews in distress. Sometimes it was a Jewish innkeeper who was thrown out of his inn because he could not pay the rent, and the landlord, the cruel Polish Poritz, held his children as hostages; sometimes it was a prominent merchant or storekeeper who had lost his wealth in a fire, and was ashamed to ask for help. The poor and needy were many, and the Baal Shem Tov, more than anyone else, knew about them.

Moshe Shlomo and his wife led a simple and contented life. They would have been completely happy if they had been blessed with children. But this was one blessing which Hashem withheld from them. This made Moshe Shlomo and his wife sad.

On several occasions when he was in the presence of the Baal Shem Tov, Moshe Shlomo could not control himself, and asked the heilike Rebbe to bless him so that he would become a father. But, each time the Baal Shem Tov would reply with a bracha to be successful in his business! Never did he mention to him the bracha of children.

Another ten years passed. Moshe Shlomo and his wife Rivkah were getting older, and each day their hopes to be blessed with a child grew slimmer. They began to feel sorry for themselves, very disappointed and distressed.

One day the Baal Shem Tov sent for Moshe Shlomo and his wife and said to them, "Why do you feel so downhearted? After all, Hashem has blessed you with many blessings, with such fine dispositions and qualities, with ample *parnossa*, so that you can do, and are doing, so much good."

Tears welled up in the eyes of the elderly people, Moshe Shlomo and his wife. "We are getting old, and we have no son or daughter to take over after we are gone, and to remember us and carry on our work and name.

Again, the Baal Shem Tov did not say anything more about it. He only told them that he had invited them to join him on a journey which he was about to make together with some of his Chassidim.

Early the following morning, a number of carriages stood ready to take the group on the journey. The first one was for the Baal Shem Tov himself, the next ones were for ten of his Chassidim, and in the last one Moshe Shlomo and his wife Rivkah were to follow.

In all the towns and villages that they passed, Moshe Shlomo and his wife handed out *tzedaka* in generous amounts. On the sixth day of their journey, they came to a town not far from the city of Brody. The Baal Shem Tov ordered the driver to stop at a certain house in which one of his Chassidim lived. They were made very welcome, and after they had rested, the Baal Shem Tov said that he wished to take a walk and look around the town, and he invited all the company to go with him.

In a street nearby they saw a group of young boys playing. The Baal Shem Tov called to one of the boys and asked him his name.

"Baruch Moshe," the boy replied. "And what is your name, my child?" the Baal Shem Tov asked, turning to another. "My name is Baruch Moshe." "Is your name Baruch Moshe, too?" the Baal Shem Tov asked a third boy. "Baruch Moshe it is," the boy replied. Strangely enough, the fourth boy was also called "Baruch Moshe," but the fifth was called "Moshe Mordechai," and the sixth gave his name as "Baruch Elia."

A little further there stood a little girl. She did not wait for the Baal Shem Tov to ask her name; she called out, "And my name is Brachah Leah!"

Needless to say, the Baal Shem Tov's Talmidim, as well as Moshe Shlomo and his wife, were quite surprised that almost all the children had the same or very similar names. The Baal Shem Tov did not seem at all surprised. A kind and warm smile was the only sign on his face. None of his Talmidim dared ask him the meaning of so many namesakes in this town.