



## A Story for the Shabbos Table

## סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

### The Great Zechus of helping children learn Torah – Part 2

[In Part 1 we read about a couple who wanted a Bracha from the Baal Shem Tov to have a child. The Baal Shem Tov invited them to join him on a journey. They met many boys with the name Baruch Moshe and a girl called Bracha Leah.]

The group of the Baal Shem Tov moved on. They met a little girl, and the Baal Shem Tov stopped to ask her name. "Brachah Leah," the little girl replied.

Turning into a side street, the Baal Shem Tov and his party chanced upon a group of little girls playing. The girls stopped playing as they saw the heilike-looking man and his followers.

"What's your name?" the Baal Shem Tov asked one of them. "Brachah Leah." "And yours?" "Brachah Leah." Each time the girls called out their names, the Baal Shem Tov smiled happily. Most of them were called by the same two names-"Brachah Leah." One girl was called "Brachah Miriam."

On they went, until they heard the voices of school children coming from a window. Here was a *cheder* where boys were learning under the care of a *melamed* (teacher). The Baal Shem Tov entered, and the melamed and the children rose to their feet and greeted the heilike Baal Shem Tov respectfully.

The Baal Shem Tov asked the melamed's permission to call in the elderly couple that was waiting outside. When Moshe Shlomo and Rivkah entered, they found there some twenty boys. The Baal Shem Tov then asked one after the other of the boys to tell him his name. Their replies amazed Moshe Shlomo and his wife more than ever. It turned out that about six of them were called "Baruch Moshe"; several were called either "Baruch" or "Moshe" or had one or the other in combination with another name, such as "Baruch David," "Moshe Yitzchak," and the like. One of them even had the name of "Moshe Shlomo."

"What could be the meaning of this?" Moshe Shlomo and his wife asked themselves. All the boys and all the girls in this town had identical names, or very similar ones!

The Baal Shem Tov and his talmidim, followed by Moshe Shlomo and his wife, continued on their way. They visited several *talmud torahs* and also the local *yeshivah*, where not only local boys learned, but also boys from the villages around. The Baal Shem Tov made a point of asking the boys their names, and almost all of them had the same names!

*Minchah* time came, and the Baal Shem Tov, with his company, went up to the *Beis Hamedrash*. Rivkah went up to the Ezras Nashim. The Baal Shem Tov's talmidim could not take their mind off the curious fact about the names of the boys and girls of that town. They decided that there must have lived in that

town a *tzaddik* named "Baruch Moshe," who had a wife named "Brachah Leah," and that all the newborn children were called after them, so that they would follow in the path of their heilike namesakes, who would daven for them in Shamayim.

After *Minchah*, the heilike Baal Shem Tov asked one of the elderly local Jews, "Can you tell us, why is it that most of the boys in this town are called 'Baruch-Moshe', and most of the girls are called 'Brachah-Leah' "?

"It is quite a story," the local Jew replied, "and I will gladly tell it to you." Some hundred years ago, or more, there lived in this town a Yid called Yitzchak Shlomo. He was a great Torah scholar, a very pious man. He was a butcher by trade and he made a good living. Generosity was part of his nature. In addition to giving substantial sums for *tzedaka*, he would also supply meat to the Rav and the *yeshiva* students free of charge every Friday and on the days before Yom Tov.

"For many years Yitzchak Shlomo and his wife had no children. About fifteen years after their marriage, they were blessed with a boy, whom they named Baruch Moshe, after the boy's grandfather.

"The boy grew up and began to go to Cheder. But he was not very good in his studies; he did not seem to have a good head or a good memory. Yitzchak Shlomo hired the best teacher for his son and hoped very much that his son would grow up to be a Talmid Chochom. But his hopes were not fulfilled.

Baruch Moshe reached his Bar Mitzvah and continued to learn for a year afterward. Seeing that his son would not be very successful in his learning, the father decided to take him into his butcher store to learn the trade. Surprisingly or not, Baruch Moshe turned out to be very good in the store. He quickly learned all he had to know as a Jewish butcher. At the same time his father taught him to be careful to give good weight, not to overcharge any customer, be kind to the poor, and above all not to forget to send in meat free of charge to the Rav and the *yeshiva* students on Erev Shabbos and Erev Yom Tov.

"Soon Yitzchak Shlomo was able to leave the whole business in the capable hands of his son, while he devoted himself entirely to the study of the holy Torah and to the affairs of the community.

"Some ten years passed. Yitzchak Shlomo found a good wife for his son. She was the daughter of Yaakov Porush, a learned and saintly man. Baruch Moshe and his wife Brachah Leah lived contentedly and were well respected.

[To be continued ... Source: Sefer Hammamarim 5711 p. 304-309]