



A Story for the Shabbos Table

סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

The Great Zechus of helping children learn Torah – Part 3

[In Part 1 & 2 we read about a couple who wanted a Bracha from the Baal Shem Tov to have a child. The Baal Shem Tov took them with him to a town where almost all the boys had the name Baruch Moshe and girls Bracha Leah (or one of those names). The shamash in the Shul started telling them the story why they are all called with these names. There was someone called Boruch Moshe who married Bracha Leah. He could not learn well, but was a yerei shomayim and gave a lot of Tzedakah.]

Several years after their wedding, Baruch Moshe and Brachah Leah's parents passed away, and the young couple were left alone.

"Baruch Moshe wanted to learn mishnayos for the neshamos of his departed parents. He hired a teacher to teach him mishnayos, but try as he would, he just could not learn even a single mishnah by heart. This gave him much aggravation. He also joined the other men in the Beis Hamedrash who sat around a long table and listened to a daily lesson in Midrash, although he did not understand much of what was said. However, one time he heard something which deeply entered into his heart.

The melamed was saying that one who teaches Torah to the children of his neighbor is like a real father to them, as if he actually gave birth to them. These words caused him much pain. Not only did he have no children of his own, but he could not even teach other children, for he was so ignorant himself! He was truly heart-broken, and when the time came to *davven maariv*, he shed a good many tears over his sad lot.

"Walking home from the Beis Hamedrash that night, together with the melamed, a deep sigh escaped from his heart which the melamed could not help notice. Knowing what was troubling the butcher, the melamed tried to comfort him. 'Don't be down-hearted, Reb Baruch Moshe,' the melamed said to him. 'After all, you and your wife are still young. Hashem will yet bless you with children. You must not lose faith in Hashem.'

"Baruch Moshe's eyes welled up. 'When I heard you say that one who teaches other children Torah is as though he gave birth to them, it broke my heart. For I am so ignorant that I don't know anything more than the davening. How can I teach others? I have no children of my own, and I cannot be a father to others,' Baruch Moshe said feelingly.

"The melamed then told Baruch Moshe that he misunderstood him. 'It does not mean that you must actually teach them yourself. It is just as good if you *make it possible* for them to learn Torah! For example, if you hire a teacher for poor boys, or if you support the yeshivah students and make it possible for them to learn Torah, it is just as good, and you are regarded as their real father,' the melamed assured him.

"Baruch Moshe's face lit up. 'You've made me very happy,' he said to the melamed, and he hastened home to tell his wife the wonderful news. Brachah Leah was just as happy as her husband to learn of the wonderful way to 'have' children. Together they decided that they would hire teachers for all the poor children in town!

"The years rolled on. Baruch Moshe and Brachah Leah grew old, but they were completely happy. For, over the years, they had 'given birth' to countless Jewish children. Year after year they had increased the number of teachers they hired to teach poor children, until their number was thirty.

Fortunately, Baruch Moshe was very successful in his business undertakings, and the more money he spent on teachers and yeshivot, the more he earned. He and his wife continued to live as modestly as ever, and spent most of their earnings on tzedaka and the hiring of teachers for the children of their community and for the children in the neighboring villages.

"Most Jews of our town," the old man continued, "myself included, as well as the Rav and others of the older generation, have all been students in the Talmud Torahs and Yeshivos which this wonderful couple had established and supported all their life.

It's already some fifteen years since Baruch Moshe and his wife Brachah Leah passed away. They departed from this world without children of their own, but many are the children who bear their names. For each and every one of us who owes our learning and knowledge to them, having been a student of theirs, have all called our newborn boys 'Baruch Moshe,' and our newborn girls 'Brachah Leah,' after our beloved and unforgettable 'father' and 'mother.' When their *yahrzeit* comes, the Rav himself leads in prayer and we all say *kaddish* for them, and we visit their graves and remember them, just as if they were our real father and mother, which indeed they are. For, if our natural parents have brought us into this world, our 'adopted' parents have brought us into the everlasting world. Their sacred memory will always be cherished by us."

When the Baal Shem Tov and his Talmid returned to where they were staying, the Baal Shem Tov explained to Moshe Shlomo and his wife the lesson to learn from this story. They no longer were sad that Hashem did not bless them with children of their own, but they were truly happy in the thought that by helping other Jewish boys and girls learn Torah, they have "given birth" to many children. They were grateful to Hashem for enabling them to "adopt" all those lovely children, and they decided to follow the example of Baruch Moshe and his wife Brachah Leah who fathered and mothered all those wonderful parents and children whom they had met that day. [Source: Sefer Hammamarim 5711 p. 304-309]