



A Story for the Shabbos Table

סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

THE TEFILAH OF THE SIMPLE MAN – SQUEEZE THE HEAVENS

Once in the days of the Baal Shem Tov, in the Baal Shem Tov's village, Mezhibuzh, there was a fierce drought, which means that there had been no rain for a long time. The burning sun shone in the sky day after day. The villagers kept looking in the sky for some sign of clouds or rain, but they did not see even the slightest sign of rain.

As time went on, and the situation became serious, the entire Jewish community gathered in the Shul to daven to Hashem and ask for His mercy.

Everyone was davening and crying, and one man caught the attention of the Baal Shem Tov. He was a simple Yid, and he kept repeating the same Posuk over and over – ועצר את השמים ולא יהי מטר. This must have seemed strange to the Baal Shem Tov and anyone who heard this, because this Posuk is from שמוע והי' אם שמוע ולא יהי מטר, and it is talking about the punishments that will Chas VeShalom come if the Yidden do not listen to the Mitzvos of Hashem. The Posuk means that Hashem will stop up (עצר) the heavens, so that there will be no rain.

Here everyone is davening for rain, and this man is saying a Posuk that seems to be the exact opposite of what he should be saying. Say the Pesukim that ask for rain, not the one that says there will be no rain.

What would you do if you heard someone say this? Would you tell the man, "What are you doing? Stop saying that!"?

Well, the Baal Shem Tov did not stop him, because the Baal Shem Tov saw that this man's Tefilah was being accepted by Hashem. He saw that because of his sincere davening, the whole village will be saved and their Tefilos will be answered.

Sure enough, soon after, a strong wind started blowing heavy clouds across the sky, and the rain came pouring down.

The Baal Shem Tov wanted to understand the power behind the unusual Tefilah of this simple Yid, so he asked him, "Tell me please, what did you have in mind when you were saying this Posuk - ועצר את השמים ולא יהי מטר. Why did you choose to keep repeating this Posuk, and no other?"

The Yid answered him, "My reason was simple. I translated the word ועצר to mean squeeze¹. So I had in mind that Hashem should squeeze the Heavens so much, that ולא יהי מטר, no more rain should be left in them, but it should all come down to earth and to our village."

The Tefilah of this man, said with sincere Kavanah, brought the salvation for the entire Mezhibuzh. Even though, he made a mistake in his translation of the Pasuk, his pure Kavanah (intention) went straight to Hashem, and turned over the terrible decree that was on them.

There is an important lesson for Cheder boys to learn from this story. Sometimes, someone can translate a word in Chumash wrong, because they can get mixed up with the שרש or something like that. It is important not to laugh, but to realize that as long as we are trying our best, even if we make a mistake, Hashem appreciates it, just like in the story, where even though the simple Yid did not translate the Posuk correctly, his Tefilah was accepted more than anybody else's, (even the Baal Shem Tov's).

[Source: Kesser Shem Tov #385 (p. 234 in the newest print)]

¹ We find this translation in the Targum on Bereishis 40:11, that it translates the word ועצירת as וואסאשט.