



A Story for the Shabbos Table

סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

THE MISHNAYOS BAAL PEH CONTEST

In Connection with the Talmidim in Cheder learning a lot of Mishnayos Baal Peh, we are printing this story about when the Frierdiker Rebbe was a boy in Cheder, and the Nachas he gave his father, the Rebbe Rashab by his recital of Mishnayos Baal Peh.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe was a young boy, he used to learn Mishnayos Baal Peh. His father would give him money (5 Kopeks) for every Perek he learned Baal Peh. The Frierdiker Rebbe used the money to start a Gemach (to lend money to people) and also to buy Seforim.

The Rebbe loved learning Mishnayos Baal Peh and used to review over the Sedarim of Mishnayos that he already knew, very quickly, but he also made sure to say all the letters and words correctly.

Once, when he was 10 or 11 years old, he had a contest with an older Chassid, Reb Abba Person. Reb Abba was an expert in Mishnayos and Tanya Baal Peh. He knew them perfectly. The Tzemach Tzedek told him in Yechidus that he should learn Mishnayos Baal Peh. He explained that Mishna (משנה) is the same letters as Neshama (נשמה). Through saying Mishnayos Baal Peh – the Neshama lights up the body and the body becomes more *lichtig*, (brighter).

Following is the story of the contest, as the Frierdiker Rebbe recorded it:

This story happened in Adar. I was in Cheder and we were learning Hilchos Pesach from the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Oruch. Suddenly Mendel, the *Meshares* (helper in the Rebbe's house) came and told me that my Tati (the Rebbe Rashab) is calling me.

I ran home and went into my Tati's room. I saw that Reb Abba was also there, sitting on a chair across from my father. "Yosef Yitzchak," my father said, "How long will it take you to say the whole Seder Zeraim (Baal Peh)?"

I didn't know why my father was asking me this; I got nervous and did not know what to answer. Should I say longer than it really

takes (to make sure I can really do it), or should I say less. I answered, "I think that in a little more than an hour I can say the whole Seder."

Then Reb Abba said, "It takes me one hour and twenty minutes to *chazer Seder Zeraim*. I may be able to do it in five minutes, or at the most ten minutes, shorter.

(I then realized that my father wanted to see who could *chazer* the Seder of Zeraim faster.) My father said, "Let's test and see." He took out a watch and looked at it, and then he took a small Mishnayos and told me to *chazer* the whole Seder Zeraim. I *chazered* the whole seder without interruption, and in 58 minutes I had finished the whole *seder*.

My father was very happy. This was the first time that had the zechus to see my father's face shining with Nachas.

Afterwards, my father said that he is worried that since I am saying the Mishnayos so quickly, maybe I will not speak clearly, so he arranged a teacher to teach me dikduk and how to read the Torah with *trop*.

As a present for my excellence in learning Mishnayos, my father gave me a present, a Sefer of Shaalos UTshuvos Tzemach Tzedek, written by the Tzemach Tzedek in His holy handwriting (כתב יד קדש). The Rebbe Maharash had given it to my father, and now my father gave it to me.

[Source: Likkutei Dibburim Volume 4]