

The Jewish Weekly

Granting Wealth to a Rebbe

By Rabbi Meir Itamar Rosenbaum

The following story depicts how tzadikim provide great blessings for the world: In the times of the Ruzhiner Rebbe, there lived a teacher named R' Menashe who taught Torah to young children in a small village near Ruzhin. R' Menashe was a devoted, wonderful rebbe, but he was also extremely poor. He was so impoverished that he didn't even have enough money to properly feed his growing family.

As his children grew older and were nearing marriageable age, he began to worry how he would be able to marry them off. R' Menashe would travel to Ruzhin every year on Hoshana Rabba, and he would bask in the holy atmosphere until after Simchas Torah, when he would return home. This year, he decided that he wouldn't leave Ruzhin until he got a bracha from the Rebbe for sufficient livelihood to cover his basic expenses and to marry off his children.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe was accustomed to daven in a private room on the side of the bais medrash, where he would seclude himself and engage in his holy avodah. The chasidim would gather near the door to his room, hoping to have the zechus of hearing the Rebbe's tefillos. On Hoshana Rabbah, R' Menashe was standing near the door during the recitation of Hoshanos when it suddenly opened a crack. The Rebbe looked at the chasidim standing there and, when he saw R' Menashe, he motioned for him to come closer.

R' Menashe nervously approached the door and the Rebbe said to him, "L'chaim, R' Menashe. It has just been decreed that you will become very wealthy. The wealth will come to you in an unexpected way. L'chaim. I bless you that you should not forget your brethren even when you are rich!"

After davening, dozens of chasidim who had heard about the Rebbe's bracha came over to wish R' Menashe "mazal tov" on the wealth he was about to receive. None of them had any doubt that the Rebbe's words would be fulfilled. Some businessmen offered to be his partner in business but he did not accept any offer. The Rebbe had told him that his wealth would come in an unexpected way, so he did not want to accept a standard business arrangement.

On Motzoei Simchas Torah, several wealthy men approached him and offered him a ride on their fancy carriages – as is befitting a wealthy man – but he also refused this offer. He began to walk home with his traveling bag slung over his shoulder, with a heart full of joy because of the good tidings he had received. As he walked, it began to rain heavily. He looked for a place to seek shelter from the elements, and saw a small roadside inn, which he hurried to enter.

There were about 50 Russian soldiers staying in the inn at that time. They were playing cards and drinking whiskey when one of them suggested they play a different game. He suggested a game where everyone would try to say the most outlandish lie, and the one with the best lie would get a 100 ruble prize, which they all would chip in for.

One of the soldiers said, "Yesterday, I saw a donkey with eight legs!" A second soldier tried to outdo him and said, "A month ago, my neighbor's cow gave birth to a calf with two heads and a donkey with eight legs!" This went on for a while, with each soldier trying to tell a lie that was more unbelievable than his friends' lies. However, the judge kept saying that none of the lies were outrageous enough, as all of them could possibly happen.

R' Menashe was standing on the side and built up the nerve to step forward and say that he wanted to join the competition. The soldiers eyed him hatefully, enraged by the fact that a Jew dared to interrupt their conversation. The judge, however, told him, "You know what? Let's make a deal. If you win, you can take the 100 rubles. If you fail, however, we'll give you 100 lashes." Menashe was unfazed and said he was ready to start. The judge quieted the crowd and told him to begin.

Menashe looked at the judge and said, "First of all, I want to tell you that I recognize the judge. Did you know that he is a Jew?" These words caused a great commotion. Everyone began to scream, "That's a lie!" Suddenly, they realized that the Jew had succeeded in telling a lie that none of them believed, and that they had to give him the 100 rubles.

The judge was very impressed by the Jew's wisdom. He gave him the money and asked him to come visit him in the army camp, where he was the commanding officer. He also handed him a pass, confirming that he had the right to visit him in the camp. He signed the pass with his name, Anatoli Ivanov.

Two weeks later, R' Menashe went to the camp and showed his pass to the guard. He was allowed in and shown to the commander's room. Ivanov was happy to see him and said, "I know that Jews are not only smart, they are also trustworthy. I am in command of 5,000 soldiers who faithfully serve Czar Nicholai. Recently I noticed that the soldiers are getting weaker. It is clear to me that the person in charge of providing them with food is a fraud and a swindler and does not buy good food for them. Therefore, I want to hire you to be in charge of buying the soldiers' food."

R' Menashe immediately thought that this must be what the Ruzhiner Rebbe had predicted, and he accepted the job. From then on, R' Menashe's life totally changed. During the week, he lived in the army camp, where he was in charge of the food. Everyone saw how honest and trustworthy he was, and the soldiers regained their strength. While he now had sufficient parnassah, he wondered why the Rebbe's blessing had not been fully fulfilled, as he still was far from wealthy.

It Once Happened..

A short while later, Czar Nikolai had a foolish idea enter his head. He announced that all the soldiers of the army would need to train to march a long way with heavy loads because he eventually wanted to hold a big march in his presence, and everyone would march a long way with a heavy rucksack on their shoulders. Commander Ivanov took pity on the soldiers and, knowing that they would not be able to withstand it, decided to ignore the order and not to train them to do this. Indeed, all the soldiers in other camps got this training, but Ivanov's camp remained the only one that didn't do it.

Ultimately, the order came from the Czar that on a certain day everyone must report to a designated place.

The next day, when Menashe arrived at the gates of the camp, Ivanov greeted him with a sullen face. He told him, "I have to tell you goodbye."


Menashe asked him what happened, and the commander told him, "I did not listen to the Czar's order to train my soldiers to march a long way with heavy loads. When the Czar sees during the parade that the soldiers serving in my camp are dropping like flies at the very beginning of the parade, he will surely remove me from my post, and he might even execute me as punishment for not listening in him."

R' Menashe suggested to him that he fill the soldiers' bags with straw, which does not weigh much, so that they could easily walk on their feet the whole way. The commander was very happy to hear his suggestion. He immediately gathered all the officers and soldiers and made them swear a solemn oath that they would not tell anything about this idea.

When the big day arrived, Czar Nicholai arrived with a large entourage of high-ranking officials. After the trumpets sounded, the soldiers began to march with heavy packs on their backs. After just a few minutes, they all began to fall down. The Czar face turned red with anger, and he decreed that they all be sent to a prison camp. But when Commander Ivanov's unit started marching, they walked all the way with their heads held high.

The Czar was so happy to see that at least one commander obeyed him that he did not think to check what they had put in their sacks. He promoted Ivanov to the position of general. As a sign of gratitude, Ivanov appointed R' Menashe to be in charge of providing all the food for all the soldiers in the Russian Army. Now, he became extremely wealthy, as the Rebbe had promised. He did not forget the Rebbe's words, and he always remembered his poor brothers and gave tzedakah with an open hand.

Reprinted from an email of The Way of Emunah.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Tazria - Metzora

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:44	8:00	8:38
Tel Aviv	7:00	8:03	8:35
Haifa	6:52	8:03	8:38
Be'er Sheva	7:01	8:02	8:37



Passover Seder in the Safed Prison

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

During the years of World War II, loads of Jewish refugees were fleeing Nazi occupied lands and arriving on foot in the Holy Land, after having been smuggled across Israel's northern borders with Lebanon and Syria. These were still the days of the British Mandate, and the desperate Jewish immigrants were deemed illegal by the British administrators, despite their endangered lives.

Many of these refugees made it to the town of Tsfat. There, Yitzhak Moshe Zilber, a modest Jewish shopkeeper, made it his life's work to help them. He developed a quiet, efficient network: find the refugees, move them safely south, hide them in places they were unlikely to be found.

Zilber's store - a dusty little place selling paint and tools in what is now Tzfat's 'Kikar HaMagenim' - was rarely open. It wasn't really much of a business anyway. Rather, it was Zilber's 'office,' for his real job? Helping Jews in trouble.

Everyone knew what he was up to - the smugglers, the refugees, even the British. In fact, the British trusted him. When they caught a group of immigrants, they'd call him in. He'd vouch for them, work out a deal, and promise to bring them to court on the appointed date.

And he always did - even if it meant chasing people down all over the country, paying for their travel, calming their nerves. Sometimes he even paid them for the day they'd miss at work just to show up.

And if the court ruled someone must be deported? Zilber worked his quiet magic, pulling strings with sympathetic officers to delay - or quietly cancel - the order.

But one time it was much more complicated.

A few days before Passover, a British military jeep screeched to a halt outside his little shop. Out stepped a British police officer. "A large group of Jews was caught trying to cross the border," he said crisply. "They're in custody. Come with me."

The dozens of refugees, including many women and children without the heads of their families, had been caught near Metula [the town nearest the Lebanese border]. The smugglers fled, leaving the frightened families behind. The group was being held at the Canaan police station. Not that there was any intention to send them back to Nazi territory - but there was talk they'd be deported to some distant camp in another land. Meanwhile, the holiday was approaching. They asked for kosher food for Passover.

The British officers were at a loss. Kosher food? Passover? They called Zilber.

"How can I possibly do this alone?" he asked the officer, eyes widening at the sight of the crowd. "I don't have the means to provide the large food supplies required, or even large enough pots to cook for this many! However, if you would release them into my

care, I could place them with families here, or possibly in local hotels."

The reply was swift and final: "They're not leaving the jail."

So Zilber got to work. He rallied food suppliers, hotel owners, kitchen volunteers. Yet, whenever he visualized the Seder - in the police station - his enthusiasm waned. A flicker of thought kept disturbing him: "How can I willfully imprison myself on Passover?"

As the holiday rapidly approached, a bright idea popped into his mind. On the day before Passover, he requested an urgent meeting with the police chief and the military governor.

"My honorable sirs," he began, "as much as I long to lead a Seder for those poor souls, I simply cannot. Passover is 'The Festival of Our Freedom,' the celebration of our emerging from imprisonment to liberty. A Jew must feel free. I cannot, in good conscience, lock myself up to celebrate it. They might not have a choice. But I do. Please understand: I cannot lead a Seder in a jail. I just can't."

The British high officials paused, unsure. They stared at each other. They had been relying on Zilber; they knew he was irreplaceable.

Finally, they shrugged and one of them said, "Fine. Take them. Take them all. After the holiday we'll decide what to do."

And so a large truck rumbled up to the jail, and the detainees - all of them - were delivered not to a courtroom, but to Zilber's home. He quickly moved them into a freshly cleaned and koshered school building. From the hotels 'Herziya' and 'Meiberg' came giant cooking pots. White tablecloths were laid out, candles were lit. Matzah came from the 'Lodmir' factory, while wine flowed generously from the Carmel Mizrahi Winery in Zichron Yaakov above the Mediterranean Coast.

And then there were the local residents. Volunteers were stirring bubbling pots in the kitchen. From every corner of the Jewish Quarter of Tsfat, pots of homemade food had appeared - unasked.

Not only that, most of the locals wrapped up their Seders early that night so they could go join the celebration at the big Seder with the refugees. Zilber even invited the British police chief, who came, nibbled on some matzah, drank wine (a lot of wine), and left with a whole crate of it as a gift.

After the holiday, most of the group was moved to local hotels, but none of them saw the inside of the Canaan police station again. Nor was a single one ever brought before a judge.

In the years after, whenever he was asked about the episode, Zilber would say with a sly smile, "Drinking good wine can bring very different people closer, and that's all I shall say."

Heavily revised from a "ChatGPT" translation of an article in the Hebrew weekly Sitchat HaShavua, based on the book, "Sefer Meron."



The second Parsha of this double Parsha, Parshat Metzora introduces us to the fascinating subject of צרעת הבית, 'Leprosy of the House'. The Bnei Yisrael were informed that upon entry into the Land of Canaan, there could be a possibility that their houses could become leprous. If there was discoloration of the walls, that could spell the ultimate scenario in which a house would have to be raised to the ground.

As can be expected, the Midrash Tanchuma explains that this would come as a punishment for a serious sin that the householder would have committed. The Gemara in Masechet Erchin identifies that sin as dishonesty.

The Midrash Rabbah tells us that actually this would come as a punishment for somebody who was wealthy and yet acted in a miserly way, always claiming that he had nothing to give to charity. As part of the process of צרעת הבית, he would need to take all of his possessions outside his front door, and therefore everybody would see how wealthy he actually was.

Fascinatingly, the Midrash in Vayikra Rabbah tells us that צרעת הבית comes as a reward. Now how can this be possible? You lose your home and it's a reward? Explains the Midrash. When the Canaanites were fleeing from the Holy Land, they hoped that one day they would return to their homes. And so they hid their most valuable possessions inside the walls of those homes. And so Hashem identified those homes by placing the discoloration on the walls.

Consequently, once the homes were raised to the ground, the owners were able to find that hidden treasure.

'Sometimes the greatest of treasures in life come through difficulty and travail.'

I believe that there is a powerful message here for all of life. Sometimes things go wrong, and we cry out to Hashem and we say: 'Why have you cursed us in this fashion?' Little do we realize that actually we are taking a few steps backwards in order to move hundreds of steps forwards. Sometimes the greatest of treasures in life come through difficulty and travail. This is how the Gemara in Masechet Brachot puts it, כל מאן דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, Whatever G-d does, He does for the good.

So let's try to see everything for the good and let's pray with all our hearts, for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, police officers, medical professionals, firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

תזריע - מצורע

This week is dedicated in memory of all the fallen soldiers and civilians who perished in terror attacks while protecting us

The Jewish Weekly staff salute you

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The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

Parshat Tazria	Parshat Metzora
NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 7	NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 11
MITZVOT ASEH: 5	MITZVOT ASEH: 11
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 2	MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0
NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 67	NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 90
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1010	NUMBER OF WORDS: 1274
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3667	NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4697

HAFTORA:
Malachim II, 7:3 - 7:20

This Shabbat we study Chapter 2 of "Pirkei Avot."