בס"ד

זכרו תורת משה

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פרשת חוקת – בלק ה'תשפ"ו

HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Vol. #261

The Prepaid Van

Leaving shul one hot summer day, Reb Levi,* a respected *yungerman*, received a distressing phone call. A friend of his was drowning in debt; with thousands of dollars weighing heavily upon him, he was pleading for help. Though it stretched him beyond his comfort zone, Reb Levi understood the urgency and committed to giving his friend $5,000.

Shortly afterward, Reb Levi served as a *mohel* at a *bris* on the opposite side of Flatbush from where he lived. On the way back with his wife and children in the van, a vehicle suddenly veered into his lane and slammed head-on into them. *Baruch Hashem*, everyone was fine.

However, they right away saw smoke rising from under the hood of the van. Reb Levi and his wife jumped out and frantically began unbuckling their children, pulling them to safety before the van could explode. In the chaos, he noticed the other driver — the one clearly at fault — backing up and fleeing the scene.

Reb Levi's van was totaled, and the responsible party had disappeared. To make matters worse, he only had liability insurance. There would be no compensation for his own loss.

When the police arrived a few minutes later, there was little they could do. But then, in an unexpected turn, the tow truck driver noticed something lodged beneath the wreckage: the bumper of the other vehicle, with its license plate still attached. They would be able to track down the other driver! But once again, disappointment followed. His minimal "dollar-a-day" insurance wouldn't cover any of the damage. Reb Levi seemed stuck.

Eventually, he discovered that his insurance had a clause providing compensation in such cases. After an evaluation at the body shop, he was issued $5,000, the estimated value of his destroyed van. Surprised, he asked the body shop owner if that was a fair assessment.

The man replied, "This is the best anyone ever got for a van like this. Usually, they'd value a van like yours for pennies. But when the adjuster came down, I asked him to quote what it would cost to rebuild the van, not what it's worth as junk. That's the only reason you received such a substantial amount."

The next challenge was to find a suitable minivan for his family at that price, which was nearly impossible. Reb Levi searched and found a listing for a minivan priced at $19,900. It was far beyond his means, but it seemed like a good deal, and he figured he would somehow make it work.

"You're one minute too late," the seller told him. "Someone is already in the process of checking it out." Reb Levi asked him to keep his number in case the deal fell through.

The next day, his wife returned from work with startling news. A coworker shared that her husband had gone to inspect that very minivan and had taken it to a mechanic before deciding whether to purchase it. The verdict was grim.

"Dead," the mechanic declared. "Completely dead. Your best option? Take it to auction and hope for $5,000."

"Is there any chance to revive the vehicle?" they asked.

"It is over. Over as over." Then, placing his feet together, he began chanting in a deep Chassidishe tone, *"Yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei Rabba…"* The potential buyers immediately walked away.

Reb Levi stood in awe. The very vehicle he had nearly stretched himself to buy was, by all appearances, worthless. Hashem had saved him from a costly mistake. But he was still left without a van for his family.

With nothing to lose, Reb Levi asked the seller if he would allow another mechanic to take a look. The seller, wary after the previous report, was hesitant but ultimately agreed.

The second mechanic inspected the vehicle and reached a very different conclusion. "The van is actually in good condition," he said. "The engine only appears dead because oil sprayed during a faulty change. It's a simple fix. The AC does need a bit of freon, and the heating requires minor repair. But for about two hundred dollars, you can have a fully functioning van."

Reb Levi was stunned. The seller, already spooked by the first mechanic's dramatic diagnosis and no longer willing to take chances, agreed to sell the van for the amount the primary mechanic estimated it would get at the auction.

Reb Levi took the deal. He brought the van in, and the "dead" vehicle was revived.

He was astounded. Every dollar he had given had come back to him — exactly, and precisely, through the hand of Hashem. Not only had he not lost, but he had gained by being spared from

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overpaying and being granted a generous insurance evaluation, affording him a newer van. Most importantly, he was given the *zechus* to help another Yid in the process.

The lesson is unmistakable. When a person gives with trust and loosens his grip to place his reliance on Hashem, he may feel, in the moment, that he is losing. But in truth, nothing is ever lost. It is simply being redirected to be returned in a way far better than he could have planned himself.

Because what we hold onto, we risk losing. What we give over to others, we never lose.

The Double Breakdown

Mrs. Bronspegler* shared an incredible story that happened just a few weeks ago:

The day before *Erev Shavuos*, two major appliances in our home suddenly stopped working. Our kitchen refrigerator was no longer cooling properly, and at the same time, the freezer in our garage also started malfunctioning.

At first, we were not overly concerned. The refrigerator had been loaded with hot food the night before, so perhaps it simply needed time to cool down. As for the garage freezer, its door had accidentally been left slightly ajar overnight, which could have explained why it seemed warmer than usual.

By the afternoon, however, it became clear that something was genuinely wrong.

With Yom Tov rapidly approaching, I felt increasingly uneasy. It was far too late to call our regular repairman, and I was hesitant to contact a random technician, uncertain whether anyone would even be available and how much it might cost at the late hour.

Instead, I turned to Hashem. I davened that everything should work out smoothly and with the least expense possible.

Looking back, the first miracle may have been my own reaction. Under normal circumstances, I would have been extremely stressed. Yet throughout the ordeal, I remained surprisingly calm. I truly believe that years of reading and hearing stories of *bitachon* helped me place my trust in Hashem and remember that He was in control.

Several weeks earlier, I had been informed that I qualified for a new refrigerator through the SCN program. Since our refrigerator had now broken, I called to ask whether final approval had been granted. To my delight, they informed me that it had.

I explained the situation and asked whether there was any possibility of receiving the refrigerator before Yom Tov. They promised to try and immediately forwarded my information to the appliance store.

The paperwork took some time to process, but at approximately 3:45 PM, I received an extraordinary phone call. The store informed me that they would arrange a special *Erev Yom Tov* delivery to help us out.

The replacement refrigerator was not as large as our regular one, but together with the small overflow refrigerator we normally use for Yom Tov, it was more than sufficient to get us through the holiday.

After Yom Tov, our repairman came to investigate both appliances.

The problem with the garage freezer turned out to be relatively simple. The drain had become blocked, causing ice to build up around the fan that prevented it from operating properly. He showed my husband how to melt the ice and clear the drain, restoring the freezer to full operation.

The refrigerator was more puzzling. It appeared to be functioning, yet it simply was not getting cold enough. The repairman suspected that the thermostat might have been defective and gave us information on how to order a replacement. In the meantime, he suggested removing the accumulated ice from the bottom of the freezer compartment.

He told us he would return to install the thermostat once the part arrived and would charge us at that time. To our surprise, after clearing out the ice and restarting the refrigerator, it began working normally. By the next morning, it was fully cold once again.

We called the repairman to let him know that we no longer needed the thermostat installed and asked how much we owed him for his visit. His response left us speechless.

He told us that it was his mother's *yahrtzeit*, and in her memory he wanted to do a kindness. He would not charge us anything. Not a penny.

To this day, I can hardly believe that both our kitchen refrigerator and garage freezer stopped working on *Erev Yom Tov*, and yet everything was resolved so smoothly. We received a replacement refrigerator in time for Yom Tov, both appliances were ultimately repaired, and the entire ordeal cost us nothing.

Edited by: Binyamin Lieb

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