בס"ד

זכרו תורת משה

לעילוי נשמת ר' משה בן החבר צבי זצ"ל ור' משה יצחק בן אברהם צבי הכהן זצ"ל

פרשת מטות מסעי ה'תשפ"ו

HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Vol. #263

Who Took the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?

In Eretz Yisrael, not every *kollel* has its own beis midrash. It is common for several *kollelim*, sometimes made up of *yungeleit* from very different backgrounds, to share the same building. Although they may be learning different *limudim*, they inevitably cross paths in the kitchen, coffee room, or coat area. Those interactions often lead to friendships and mutual respect. Occasionally, they become unforgettable lessons.

One such story took place in a shul in Ramat Beit Shemesh that housed two very different *kollelim*: one for English-speaking working men and another *Chassidish kollel* for aspiring *dayanim*. It was customary for people to bring *kibbud*, some food to the kitchen as a *zechus* for a loved one's *neshamah*, allowing the *yungeleit* to enjoy a light refreshment before learning.

One morning, **R' Saul Barron** arrived more than an hour after *seder* had begun. He had spent the morning taking care of several matters for his children and had not even had a chance to eat. When he entered the kitchen, he spotted a tray with two generous slices of babka accompanied by a note requesting that anyone eating it make a *berachah l'ilui nishmas* the deceased.

Not wanting anyone else to assume the babka was still available, R' Saul picked up the tray and moved it off to the side. Satisfied that it was "claimed," he turned around to prepare himself a cup of coffee. A few moments later, he heard someone enter the kitchen. Before he even had a chance to turn around, the newcomer walked directly over to the tray and began eating one of the slices of babka.

R' Saul's heart sank. There went his breakfast. But why would someone take food that had clearly been set aside? Ordinarily, he might have spoken up. But the man was one of the Chassidim from the *dayanus kollel*, and between the language barrier and the cultural differences, R' Saul hesitated.

The Chassid, however, sensed that something was wrong. Looking at R' Saul, he asked, "Would you like the other piece?" R' Saul didn't immediately answer. After all, he was quite hungry, and had thought both pieces were his. The Chassid smiled, unconvinced.

Realizing he had to say something, R' Saul finally admitted, "I... had actually taken them both for myself." The Chassid looked at him thoughtfully, then handed him the remaining slice.

"Let me tell you a story," he said. R' Saul was puzzled, but listened.

Mrs. Levi* was once waiting in Jerusalem's central bus station before a two-hour bus ride. To make the wait more pleasant, she stopped at a kiosk and bought herself a bag of cookies. She found a seat at a table in the food court beside another woman she had never met. After settling down, she reached into the bag of cookies on the table and took one. As she ate, she casually watched the crowds of travelers, the buses coming and going, and the constantly changing departure board. She paid little attention to the woman sitting beside her.

A few moments later, she reached for another cookie. At that exact moment, the other woman also reached into the bag and took one. Mrs. Levi froze. "Is she taking from my cookies?" she wondered. She could hardly believe it. Of course she would have gladly shared had the woman asked. But simply helping herself?

Trying to judge favorably, Mrs. Levi reasoned that perhaps the woman was embarrassed or in a rush. She decided not to say anything.

A few minutes later, the woman took another cookie. Then another. Back and forth they went, each quietly taking cookies from the same bag without exchanging a single word.

Mrs. Levi became increasingly uncomfortable. "Doesn't she realize how awkward this is?" she wondered.

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Finally, only one cookie remained. The woman picked it up, broke it in half, and placed one half in front of Mrs. Levi. That nearly pushed her over the edge. "After eating half my cookies, she's *generously* giving me half of the last one?" Before Mrs. Levi could respond, the woman stood up, blended into the crowd, and disappeared toward her departing bus.

"What *chutzpah*," Mrs. Levi muttered as she recited her *berachah acharonah*. She then reached into her shoulder bag to retrieve her bus card. There, sitting untouched inside her bag, was the unopened package of cookies she had purchased. She had spent the last several minutes eating someone else's cookies!

R' Saul sat silently as the Chassid finished the story. Then he looked at him curiously. "If you're telling me that story," he said, "I suppose I should also be *dan l'kaf zechus*. Tell me... were you the one who brought this babka?"

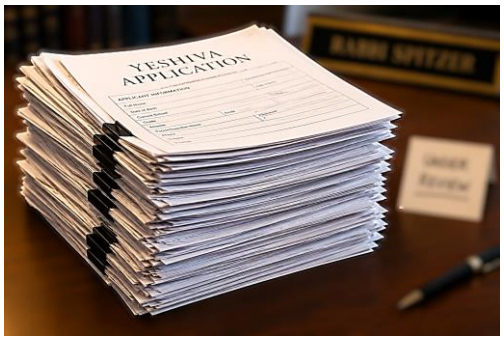
A broad smile spread across the Chassid's face.

"I had brought it this morning *l'ilui nishmas* my grandmother. When I saw it was still sitting there more than an hour into *seder*, I assumed nobody wanted it, and therefore took one slice for myself, and would move the remainder one to the central giveaway spot."

Pointing toward the remaining slice, the Chasid said warmly: "Please, enjoy."

Lost in Translation

Rabbi Spitzer heads a prestigious Chassidish *mesivta* and *bais medrash* with more than three hundred *bochurim*. Known for its exceptional level of learning and outstanding student body, it is one of the most sought-after *yeshivos* in the area. As a result, each year many more boys apply than can possibly be accepted.



One day, Rabbi Spitzer received a phone call from the principal of a local elementary school. The principal was advocating strongly on behalf of one of his finest *talmidim*, hoping the yeshiva would find a place for him. Curious about the application, Rabbi Spitzer approached the staff member responsible for processing admissions and asked to see the boy's file.

The admissions officer searched through the stack and eventually pulled out the application. To Rabbi Spitzer's surprise, it had already been placed in a separate pile along with several others that were unlikely to be accepted. "Why was this application set aside?" Rabbi Spitzer asked.

The admissions officer pointed to a large handwritten note on the application. "Look what the principal wrote," he said. Across the page were three bold words: "*Tateh ohn bord* — father without a beard."

Since parental background was one of many factors considered when difficult admissions decisions had to be made, and in their circles, a father without a beard was a big minus, the application had been set aside.

Rabbi Spitzer immediately called the principal.

"I don't understand," he said. "You called to recommend this student so enthusiastically, yet on the application you wrote that the boy's father is without a beard. If you felt the need to point that out, why are you now advocating so strongly on his behalf?"

The principal was completely bewildered.

"That's not what I meant at all," he exclaimed.

Then the misunderstanding became clear.

"I wrote, '*Tateh ohn bord*,' meaning the father is 'on board.' He is completely invested in his son's *chinuch*. Whenever the yeshiva needs him, he is available. Whatever his son requires — whether it's time, effort, or financial support — he is fully committed. I meant it as one of the strongest recommendations I could possibly give!"

The entire issue had stemmed from a simple misunderstanding. What one person read as a liability was, in reality, intended as glowing praise.

How often does the same thing happen in life? We see an action, hear a comment, or observe a situation and instinctively interpret it in a negative light. Yet we rarely know the full story. What appears to be a flaw may actually be a virtue. Before rushing to judge, it is worth remembering that sometimes we are simply reading the words the wrong way.

Edited by: Binyamin Lieb

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Please do not read during davening or learning ⊙ Have a wonderful Shabbos