



RABBI JUDAH

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Take Heed!

Reb Zev Wolf Kitzes was the Rav of Tulchin and later became one of the most dedicated disciples of the Baal Shem Tov. When Reb Zev was preparing to embark on a journey to Eretz Yisrael, he stopped in for a blessing from his Master. The Baal Shem Tov blessed him with a safe and uplifting journey, adding a cryptic comment on the way out: “Reb Zev! When you meet someone *baderech*, along the path, it is for a reason; take heed and be sure to take him seriously.” Reb Zev didn’t think much of it, gathered his belongings and began his journey.

A *nesiya* to Eretz Israel was the opportunity of a lifetime: davening at the Kotel, in Meiron by Rebbe Shimon Bar Yohai, at Kever Rachel, and of course, a visit to *Ir haAvos*, Chevron. At the end of his journey, after pouring his heart out at *Me’aras haMachpela*, the hour was late. He had extended his tefilos longer than expected and his fellow travelers were waiting for him. There was a bit of commotion as they tried to catch their ride to the port of Acco so they could board their ship and begin the arduous trip back to Medzibuz.

They hastily returned to their lodgings, gathered their belongings, and set out in the winding alleyways of the old city of Chevron. They passed an old man on the street who looked up at them and wished them a ‘*Shalom aleichem*.’ The travelers were under pressure,

and barely noticed the man, but the *alter yid* was walking next to them and he strained for their attention. “I see that you’ve come from a faraway land. Where are you from?” Barely turning around, Reb Zev muttered, “We’re from Mezbuzh and are on our way back right now. I’m sorry, we’re *manish* running late!”

As the travelers approached their wagon, the old man pressed, “Please, just one thing... can you tell me, how are my *kinder* doing over there?” With a harried, distracted look, Reb Zev answered, “*Baruch Hashem*, day by day, we’re managing!” They quickly climbed onto the wagon and clutched their seats as the agitated driver took off toward the port of Acco. The interaction with the old man was quickly forgotten.

It was Erev Shabbos when the group arrived back in Mezhibuz. Reb Zev could not wait for the opportunity to ‘give Shalom’ and provide an update to his Rebbe. How shocked he was to find the cold reception that awaited him; completely ignoring his presence, the Baal Shem Tov wouldn’t even look in his direction. The scene repeated itself throughout Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov turning a cold shoulder to his dedicated student, who was now disappointed and confused. By the end of Shabbos, he



Hadassah & Steve Jacob and family on
the birth of their **great-granddaughter**

couldn't take it anymore, and cried out, "Rebbe, what have I done wrong? Please, What did I do to deserve this treatment?"

The Baal Shem Tov shook his head in disappointment. "Reb Zev, *ayy* Reb Zev, what was the one thing I told you? To pay attention to everyone you meet. You were *zocheh* to a *gilui*, a revelation of Avraham Avinu, who came to ask of you regarding the well-being of his children, so many of whom are facing poverty, starvation and hardship. There are *gezeros* of conscription and anti-semitism, not to mention *hisnagdus*, *machlokes* and *sinas chinam*. Families are torn apart, communities are suffering... and all you could muster was that 'We're managing?!' You had the opportunity to ask, to beg, to plead for the coming of *Moshiach*, for the completion, for the fulfillment of the *Bris ben haBesarim*. 'We're managing??' – Gevalt, Reb Zev, did you ever blow it...."

On one of the pillars inside the "Avraham Avinu Shul" in Chevron is a plaque featuring the 'shaar', the cover page of *Sefer Emek haMelech*, a Kabbalistic work by Rav Naftali Hertz Bachrach, published in 1648. There is a short and impactful *maaseh* mentioned in the *hakdama*, the introduction. On the eve of Yom Kippur (in 1619), nine men were waiting for a minyan. Most of the residents of the city had ascended to Yerushalayim, a day's walk. As the sun set and the reality sunk in that there would not be a minyan for Kol Nidrei night, the assembled cried out to Hashem over their inability to form a proper minyan on the holy night....

"And they lifted their eyes and there stood an elderly man, in the distance, and they were overjoyed to see him, for he had completed

the minyan. They worshiped on the holy day and honored the man greatly. At the end of the sacred day, the chazan led the way toward his home to break the fast, with the honored guest walking behind him. When he arrived at his home, the chazan turned around and saw that the guest was gone. That night, the man appeared to the chazan in a dream, telling him that he was Avraham Avinu, who had come to complete the minyan."

From then on, the shul was known by the name *Beit Kneset Avraham Avinu*.

In the midst of war, as we read of the acquisition of the holy city of Chevron, let us redouble our yearning for the entirety of the Land of Israel and take heed and pay attention to each person who joins our minyan, and all those we meet *baderech*, along our path. This Shabbos, let us not be satisfied with simply 'managing'! May we awaken *zechus Avos*, merit the revelation of Avraham Avinu as well as all of our forefathers and mothers, and bring in the coming of the true and complete Redemption, *b'mheirah!* ■



Mazal Tov to  **Binyamin & Nancy Chernofsky** 
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