



A Blessing on a Train

Parshas Yisro

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

Zhetel was a small town near Vilna. The town's people held Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim, in special esteem, because he was born there. They were a G-d fearing congregation and believed that the Chafetz Chaim's merit shielded them from evil.

One of the community members ran errands for a living. He was small, but very strong. He would wait by the train station and offer passengers to carry their luggage for a few coins.

As time passed, he became less observant of the Torah commandments, and specifically the observance of Shabbos. At first he concealed his actions, but then became more brazen.

No one said anything to him about this because they were intimidated by his strength. His father, a communal leader, also turned a blind eye.

After some time, the father fell ill; he decided to visit the Chafetz Chaim to seek a blessing.

As he came to embark the train he met his son. After he settled himself in the train he met Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, Zhetel's rabbi. He told the rabbi of his ailments, and that he was on his way to the Chafetz Chaim.

"The rabbi is on the train," said Rabbi Sorotzkin, "let me take you to him."

Rabbi Sorotzkin thought of running ahead and telling the Chafetz Chaim about the man's son who had gone astray, but did not have time to do so.

The man shared his plight with the Chafetz Chaim, who responded to everyone's surprise: "What do you want from me? Go to the Shabbos, it is the source of blessings."

The man did not understand at first, and the Chafetz Chaim explained: "In the Torah we are commanded: "Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it... you shall perform no labor, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your beast, nor your stranger who is in your cities." If the Torah commands us to do so, it means the father has power over his son."

"Make sure your son observes the Shabbos and you will fully recover," the Chafetz Chaim blessed him.

The verses in our weekly parsha on the Shabbos are some of the most famous in the Torah. They are recited every Shabbos over a cup of wine.

The mitzvah here is unique, as one is commanded to ensure that his household observes the Shabbos, and it is not merely a personal commandment.

Rashi emphasizes that the Mitzvah relates to small children as well. "This is the meaning of what we learned in the Mishnah: If a young child comes to extinguish a fire on the Shabbos, you may not allow him to do so since you are responsible for his resting from work," says Rashi.

Commentators explain that the essence of the Shabbos is a covenant between man and G-d. Each generation is commanded to delegate the covenant to the next and educate them of its significance.

Some Rabbis add that the Shabbos has a special power to bring children closer to all mitzvot through the observance of the Shabbos. The Shabbos has a unique ability to shine light in the Jewish home and to bring the family closer to its Jewish heritage.

The man no longer needed his trip. He got off at the next station and returned home. He had already received the guidance and blessing he was seeking.

He stood at the train station and waited. He spent hours trying to change his son's mind. At first, it seemed his son would not listen, but his father's tears finally worked and he agreed to return to observing the Shabbos.

As night fell it was time for the sick father to return home. His relatives came to assist him, but he surprised them – he stood up and walked home, fully recovered.

The Chafetz Chaim's blessing and the Shabbos's blessing worked.

