EC Eternal Connections
BUILDING OLAM HABA AWARENESS
Mitzvos are opportunites

Olam Haba for a Ruble

Reb Yisrael was a *shochet* and butcher in Slutzk. While not particularly learned, every day he would close his shop early for Minchah, followed by a *shiur* and then Maariv.

Also living in Slutzk at that time was Dr. Abramovitch, an unaffiliated Jew who scorned the town's religious Jews. One day, as he was walking past Reb Yisrael's shop, Dr. Abramovitch was mystified to see that the butcher was closing shop at what seemed to be an early hour. "What is going on here?" he questioned. "Why are you closing your shop when there are still so many customers waiting to be served?"

Reb Yisrael explained that he was leaving to *daven Minchah* and *Maariv.*

"Come on? *Minchah? Maariv?*" he asked scornfully. "You're in the middle of business!"

"Excuse me, Mr. Doctor," Reb Yisrael retorted. "Business in not everything. It's not like I'll be here forever. *Minchah* and *Maariv* and my *shiur* in between – those are investments for the future, for my *Olam Haba*!"

"Oh, please," the doctor scoffed. "Do you really believe in Olam Haba? Ask any educated person: once a person dies, there's nothing more! In fact, I'll sell you my Olam Haba for one ruble!"

Reb Yisrael protested that Olam Haba is worth more than a million rubles; it's priceless. But the doctor kept pushing him, until Reb Yisrael relented. He handed Dr. Abramovitch one ruble, and they shook hands on the deal.

Several years later, Reb Yisrael was disturbed early one morning by insistent knocking. When he opened the door, he found an unfamiliar woman standing there, crying softly.

The woman identified herself as Mrs. Abramovitch, and then went on to recount that her husband had recently passed away and appeared to her in a dream the previous night. He shared that because he had rejected the ways of his parents and led a life devoid of religion, he had been sentenced to *Gehinnom.* In his defense, Dr. Abramovitch protested that as a doctor, he had saved many lives.

The *malachim* then began weighing all the *mitzvos* performed by the Jews whose lives he saved, also factoring in the generations that came forth from each of those Jews. The doctor had now accrued significant merits. But before he could be rewarded for them, a *malach* proclaimed that he had actually sold his portion in Olam Haba to someone else. In the dream, Dr. Abramovitch instructed his wife to give Reb Yisrael a ruble to buy back his Olam Haba.

Reb Yisrael now remembered the original transaction. But as he thought about his own life and the limited time he had to learn Torah and perform *mitzvos,* he felt that he could not afford to give up the doctor's portion in *Olam Haba.* And so, he refused Mrs. Abramovitch's request.

Understandably distraught, Mrs. Abramovitch turned to the *Rav* of Slutzk, Rav Yaakov Dovid Vilovsky, known as the Ridvaz. After hearing the woman out, the *Rav* proclaimed that he would hold a *din Torah.*

The *din Torah* took place the following day, with most of the townsfolk in attendance. Each side presented their case, and then the *dayanim* conferred, after which the Ridvaz announced the verdict. He explained that just as a person who built up his muscles cannot sell them, so too, when one does a mitzvah, he is creating personal "muscles," which are not transferable.

Thus, the sale was invalid. But the Ridvaz continued to say that Dr. Abramovitch had still lost his *Olam Haba.* By equating his portion in the World to Come with just one ruble, the doctor disgraced his *Olam Haba.* To him it was worthless, and therefore, for him it would remain worthless. The *rav* concluded with one final clause. The entire town had come to hear the outcome of the *din Torah,* and they had all learned a profound lesson about the terrible consequences of belittling or disbelieving in *sechar v'onesh* (reward and punishment) – a basic tenet of *emunah.* In the merit of being the catalyst for such a great *Kiddush Hashem,* the doctor would receive a portion in *Olam Haba.*

Mrs. Abramovitch breathed a sigh of relief. But Reb Yisrael was still upset. "Honored Rav," he cried out, "I was also a catalyst for this great *Kiddush Hashem.* I also want a cut of the profits in the Next World!" The Ridvaz blessed Reb Yisrael that he, too, would merit an eternal portion in the World to Come, and both parties left satisfied.

("Olam Haba for One Ruble." *Stories Told by Rav Kalman Krohn*: Israel Bookshop, pages 5-15.)

The *p'sak* of the Ridvaz was based on a *beraisa* in *Sanhedrin* that states that one who doesn't believe in Olam Haba will not receive a portion in Olam Haba!

Take This Home

Take a moment to recite the eleventh Ani Ma'amin:

Ani ma'amin b'emunah sheleimah she'Haborei Yisbarach Shemo gomeil tov l'shomrei mitzvosav u'ma'anish l'ovrei mitzvosav.

I believe with complete faith that the Creator, Blessed is His Name, rewards with good those who observe His commandments and punishes those who violate His commandments.

In Short

When I was sitting *shivah* for my mother, Reb Elyah Weintraub told me, "You can stay connected to your mother. Say a *mishnah* for her; it's like sending her a letter. 'Ima, Mother, Mamma, here, here's a *mishnah.*'"

You're not cut off from your loved ones. That connection is permanent and forever.

(Rabbi Noach Orlowek, "An Everlasting Connection." *To Comfort and Be Comforted:* Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah Publications, page 32.)

It Happened to Me!

My Olam Haba Moment

In a daze, I attended the *levayah* of my dear friend, who had been *niftar* suddenly on the fourth day of *Chol Hamoed Succos.* That night, I tossed and turned, unable to sleep, so shaken by what had happened. The next morning, as I picked up the *lulav* and *esrog* and prepared to make the *berachah* for the last time that year, I was struck by a sobering thought: "Raizy can't do this anymore, but I'm still *zoche* to fulfill the mitzvah of *arba minim.*" Since that poignant *Hoshanah Rabbah* morning, I have a newfound appreciation for this mitzvah, particularly when I do it for the last time each year.

– T.M., Cleveland

לע"נ בלימה בת שמואל יהודה הלוי

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