

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** On the first day of Chol Hamoed Sukkos over 25 years ago, Reb Moshe Holczler, Z"l and his wife received a carefully wrapped package in the mail. They opened the package and discovered an old book with Hebrew writing. The book was a Sukkos Machzor, printed in Lineville, France about two hundred years ago. On the front flyleaf of the prayer book, a Jewish father had carefully listed the births of his nine children, born between 1835 and 1851. On the rear flyleaf, the father had listed the yarhzeits of his ancestors who died between 1851 and 1894.

The wife of a German lawyer had sent the prayer book to the Holczlers. The Holczlers had recently met with the German lawyer to discuss Holocaust reparations. What was the story behind the prayer book? How did the Sukkos prayer book end up in the hands of the gentile German lawyer and his wife? How did the Germans know to send the prayer book during Sukkos?

We will try to answer our questions by looking into some of the deeper meanings behind our double portion this week Behar-Bechukosai. The Torah tells us this week, "If you will follow my decrees and observe my commandments and perform them... I will walk among you and I will be a G-d unto you and you will be a people unto Me." (Vayikra 26:3,12)

The commentator Sforno explains that Hashem is telling us: Be good, keep my mitzvahs, and I, Hashem will go with you the Jewish nation wherever you go in exile. Our lesson for this week is therefore the following: As long as we stay loyal to Hashem, He will walk with us; even if some of the sheep may get lost, the flock will remain intact, no matter how dark this exile may seem. As Dovid Hamelech tells us "Hashem is my shepherd, I shall not lack anything..." (Tehillim 23:1)

We can now begin to understand how and why our friends the Holczlers happened to visit Germany. In the summer of 1974, Reb Moshe Holczler and his wife had traveled to Germany to meet with a certain lawyer to discuss reparations. Reb Moshe, of blessed memory, had represented many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who were seeking compensation for their suffering and for their lost and stolen property as the result of German persecution during the war.

The Holczlers were uncomfortable about traveling to the land of hatred, however they had the interests of their clients in mind when they arrived in Germany. The Holczlers were surprised when they received a warm reception from the German lawyer and his wife. Weeks later, they were even more surprised to receive an old Sukkos Machzor (Yom Tov prayer book) from Germany. The Holczlers could not figure out why the German lawyer and his wife had sent them a Sukkos prayer book.

The answer came two days later, in the form of a letter in German written by the wife of the lawyer:

*Dear Mr. and Mrs. Holczler, I had a dream two nights in a row that I had given you the Hebrew books which my mother had saved from Krystallnacht in November, 1938. As you probably know, [Krystallnacht] was the shameful night when on orders of the Nazi government, all Jewish synagogues were vandalized and burned throughout Germany. All Jewish prayer books and other holy volumes [which had been seized] were piled up and publicly burned. My mother, who is a very brave woman, somehow had an urge to run out to the plaza in Koeln and grab two Hebrew books, before they could be consumed by the flames. [My mother] said that millions of broken glass chips of the synagogue windows covered the ground, like crystals in the flickering flames of bonfires of Hebrew books. That is why it was called "Krystallnacht." My mother gave me these books for safekeeping, and somehow I felt they were like a good luck charm in our house. [After dreaming] a second time that I gave them to you, it was about 3 in the morning. I got up and made a note so that I should not forget it in the morning. When I woke, I decided to keep the one with a German translation from which I often pray, because I enjoy the depth of your prayers and I feel that all prayers go the same place. The other one I mailed to you. I do not know what this book is about, but you will surely know how to use it. I feel that with you it will be in the right place. With regards...*

The Holczlers finished reading the letter and marveled at the Divine Providence which had brought the Sukkos prayer book into their hands just in time for the Yom Tov of Sukkos.

Hashem was walking with the Holczlers as they traveled to the house of that German lawyer. The Holczlers themselves had experienced amazing miracles in being saved from the hands of the German monsters during World War II. During those war years, Hashem walked with the Holczlers. So too, Hashem is walking with all of us. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**