

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's Torah portion Bo, Hashem commands us regarding the mitzvah of tefillin. As the Torah tells us, the tefillin "shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes - so that Hashem's Torah may be in your mouth - for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Egypt." (Exodus - Shemos 13:9) The Sages teach us that "Man always needs a sign of his bond with G-d. Shabbos itself is such a sign, but on weekdays, the sign is tefillin." (Eruvin 96a)

We began reading last week about the Reb Yitzchok Zilber who managed to smuggle Tefillin into a labor camp in Russian, where he put on Tefillin secretly under the threat of death. Every Jewish male reading these words must ask himself: How much do I appreciate the opportunity to put on Tefillin every day? We now conclude last week's inspiring story...

...One day, all of the inmates were summoned to the dining hall for an emergency meeting. The tables were filling up quickly, and at the front of the room, sitting alone at a long table, was the camp commander. The room, although filled to capacity, was dead silent. The men looked tensely at the floor, at the ceiling, at each other. No one wanted to meet the commander's eyes, for it could never be good to be noticed.

"Yitzchok Zilber, come to the front," the commander's somber voice announced.

Reb Yitzchok sat frozen in place. He could not imagine what he had done to draw this terrifying attention to himself. One of the camp officers rose to his feet and delivered the withering accusation. "Everyone in this camp is treated equally," he proclaimed. "We all work as hard as we can for our country. We all share in a common goal. However, you ..." and the officer pointed a finger at the rabbi, "think you are different. You think we are fools, and that we don't know that you never work on Saturdays. You are a lazy traitor!"

The word caught like a wildfire. The inmates began chanting "Traitor, traitor," and threatening to kill the man who dared beat the system. Reb Yitzchok feared that the enraged mob of inmates would get him before the authorities even had their chance. Either way, it was in Hashem's hands; he whispered a prayer. A small commotion broke out in the crowd as two big Ukrainians inmates rose from their seats.

These two were known as hard-core anti-Semites, but it wasn't only the Jews who needed to fear them. They were tough, sadistic men whose eyes seemed more animal than human. "Listen, everyone!" they shouted. "No one had better dare to touch the Kaziner (the name by which Reb Yitzchok was known in camp). If they do, then we will kill them. Do you hear me? We are here for life, so trust me when I say this. I have nothing to lose.

"I have been in this camp for 15 years and there has never been enough water to drink. But ever since the Kaziner has come, we have had enough water." Their point made, the men sat down. Reb Yitzchok sat in his seat in shock; the most unexpected of saviors had come to his rescue. The inmates, including Reb Yitzchok, were all dismissed.

Reb Yitzchok spent many long, hard years in that camp. One day, he was informed that he would be transferred to a new location. The news was unwelcome, for although life was extremely difficult where he was, he had succeeded in obtaining what he considered the necessities of life. Nevertheless, he was given no choice, and he would have to go where they took him.

As the inmates stood in line to leave, each was told to empty his belongings onto the snow. There, the guards would inspect the items, searching for contraband and valuables. Reb Yitzchok knew that if they found his religious articles, he would be shot right there. He had hidden them under a plate, spoon and cup that he had taken with him to avoid eating from the camp's treife dishes.

However, if the guard chose to make a more aggressive search, the tefillin and sefarim would easily be found. Fortunately, the guard found the tableware enough of a subject of mockery that he not longer feel the urge to look further. "Look!" he shouted to his fellow guard. "Our plates aren't good enough for the Rabbi! He came with his own!" His taunting smile turned to a ferocious scowl as he slammed the suitcase shut. He lifted it up high and brought it crashing down on Reb Yitzchok's head. "Here's your plate and spoon. Get out of here!" he sneered, and walked on to the next inmate.

Reb Yitzchok's head was stinging from the blow, but his heart was laughing. He thanked Hashem for saving him once again. It seemed certain that just as he would never give up on Hashem, Hashem would never give up on Reb Yitzchok, either. Eventually Reb Yitzchok merited living in Eretz Yisroel where he founded the organization Toldos Yeshurin which helps to educate Russian Jews. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."