

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** This week, we begin the book of Devarim. The commentator Ramban comments that the book of Devarim is largely a repetition by Moshe of many of the mitzvahs that the Bnai Yisroel will need when they enter Eretz Yisroel. One of the themes of this final book of the Torah is therefore repetition. The Bnai Yisroel who had not learned the mitzvahs the first time when Hashem commanded them, were given a second chance to learn the mitzvahs before entering the Holy Land.

We too stand poised to enter Eretz Yisroel. The Rambam teaches us that one of the foundations of Jewish faith is believing that Moshiach will come any day. Thus, with the imminent coming of the Moshiach, Jews will gather from around the world to live once and for all in peace and tranquility in the Holy Land that Hashem has promised us. Just as Moshe repeated many mitzvahs to teach the Jews before they entered the Holy Land several thousand years ago, so too, do we have an obligation, before we return the Holy Land, to teach our fellow Jews who have not yet had a chance to learn about the mitzvahs of the Holy Torah.

In the late last century the Russian Imperial Government decreed that none of the Rebbes of the Twerski family, who belonged to the Chassidic dynasty of Chernobyl, were to leave the bounds of the various towns in which they lived. Reb Mordechai Dov of Hornisteipl was one of those compelled to sign their assent to this decree, for he too was a scion of this dynasty.

One day Reb Mordechai Dov found himself faced with a dilemma. His son, Reb Baruch David, was soon to be married in Homil. How could he attend? But then again, how could he not attend? He quickly disguised himself as a merchant, and smuggled himself out of town. On his way out of town, a chassid of the Rebbe looked at the Rebbe's face very intently, and then said: "Shalom to you, Rebbe!"

"You're a fool yourself!" retorted the Rebbe to the Chassid, not wanting him to reveal his identity due to the danger. But nothing would help. By the time the Rebbe arrived at the chuppah under which the bridal couple were soon to be led for the wedding ceremony, thousands of people from all the towns and villages around had converged on Homil, if not to receive his greeting of Shalom then at least to catch a glimpse of the unassuming nobility (the Rebbe) which rested on his features.

But for the Rebbe this was a grim prospect: who could know where the Evil Eye of the authorities might be lurking? He asked that a wagon be prepared so the he would be able to leave immediately after the ceremony. Someone secured the services of the first wagon -driver who happened to pass by, and the Rebbe hastened away.

As they passed through a forest on their way, the wagon-driver suddenly called the horses to a halt, and turned to his lone passenger: "I would like you to know that I am a professional robber. What I ask of you is that you give me your blessing that I should succeed in my work. If you don't, I will kill you on the spot."

The Tzaddik was not alarmed, and answered calmly: "Here, let me tell you something. You know, a very similar thing once happened to Reb Zusya of Hanipoli. He was traveling out on some highway when he met a gang of robbers. They too asked him to bless their work with success, and threatened to kill him if he would not oblige. So Reb Zusya said: 'A wealthy squire is soon going to come past your way. You won't have to kill him, because he is going to die anyway while he is quite near you. This landowner will leave a considerable sum of money behind him. Now if you satisfy yourselves with that amount, and become penitent, and abandon your present careers completely, then I promise you that you will prosper in all your ways.'

But if (Heaven forbid) you persist in your evil ways, then you will most certainly fall into the hands of the authorities, and the day will come when you will be led in fetters before the very door of my house.' And that is exactly what happened.

Some of that gang repented, and followed the straight road, and did well; others continued to rob and murder until they were himself out of town and they were in fact led in chains past the cottage of Reb Zusya in Hanipoli.

"Now as far as I am concerned," concluded Reb Mordechai Dov to his wagon-driver, "I don't promise you any fat squire. But this much I can tell you: that if you decided to abandon your crooked ways and follow the straight road, good for you. If you don't, then you will certainly come to a bitter end. I have warned you!" And now, if you want to kill me — kill me." But the wagon-driver accompanied him home in peace. (From A Treasury of Chassidic Tales, R. S.Y. Zevin, p. 469)

The Sages tell us "One who comes to do evil, Hashem opens the door for him." (Yoma 38b) The simple meaning is that if one wants to do evil, Hashem will give him the opportunity to do the evil. However, there are those who interpret this in another way. Namely, one who is going to do evil, Hashem, opens up for him a way of doing teshuvah - repentance. Once we conclude this period of mourning in the Jewish Calendar with Tisha B'Av next week, we will begin the countdown to Rosh Hashana. Are you ready? **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."**