

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's parsha, we read about some of the mitzvahs which are tied to the land of Eretz Yisroel. Part of the tithing-of-produce ceremony requires the person to make a declaration. As part of that declaration, the person asks Hashem: "Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens, and bless Your people Yisroel, and the ground that You gave us, You swore to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey." (Devorim 23,15) The following story illustrates this Brocha.

Yaakov Chaziza has always lived on a moshav located on the border with Lebanon. Thus, his life has always been filled with worry about the possibility of an attack. He and his neighbors live every day knowing that at any minute they may have to grab their machine-guns and be called into action. Yaakov used to be the only religious person on the moshav. When the others played cards in the social hall in the evenings, he would be learning in the moshav's shul.

As a farmer, he was, of course, careful about keeping all the halachos pertaining to farming and agriculture. For example, he kept the laws of orlah — not partaking of a tree's fruit during the first three years of its life — and Shemittah — letting the land rest in the seventh year.

Aside from the plots he owned himself, he also owned a few plots in partnership with some local farmers, who were not religious. As a result, he would occasionally find himself in conflict with them about halachic issues. Usually, they were able to work things out; one time, however, they were not able to come to an agreement. That event would change the lives of the people on the moshav forever.

As was normal for farmers in the area, Yaakov rented the farming equipment he needed each season. One year, one of his partners took charge of the rental without checking the day and date with Yaakov. The equipment was rented on a Friday, and had to be returned by Sunday morning, because the partners intended to do the work, which consisted of harvesting the crops, on Shabbos.

For Yaakov, of course, this was completely unacceptable. He would never allow work to be done in his fields on Shabbos, and he begged his partners to push off the harvest to a later date. However, they would not give in to his wishes.

In the end, the others' fields were harvested, while Yaakov's portion of the crop remained standing uncut. It had been a very bad year for the crops. The lack of significant rainfall had led to a poor return on the produce. The three other partners were happy to have salvaged at least a small portion of their fields. They mocked Yaakov and told him how foolish he had been to allow his crop to continue to grow. The inevitable result would be that Yaakov's entire crop would be lost.

Yaakov ignored their taunting, knowing that he had done the right thing. Three weeks passed. During that time, it rained very hard — unusual for this time of year. As a result, Yaakov's crop flourished, and when he eventually harvested it he found that it far surpassed all his previous harvests. Not only that, but the yield was greater than that of his three partners put together. The other farmers were astonished!

This time there was no doubting Yaakov or the laws he followed. Yaakov's harvest caused a tremendous buzz among the members of the moshav. They were inspired to begin a change of lifestyle and started learning Torah instead of sitting around playing cards. It started with a few men, but the number grew, and within a few weeks there was a large group learning Torah. It changed their lives, but they could never imagine just how much.

It was a mere three weeks after Yaakov had begun his shiur. As the men left their makeshift beis midrash, happily discussing what they had learned, they heard a tremendous explosion. As soon as they realized it was a bomb, they all ran to their homes, afraid of what they would find. Their families were huddled together, shaking from fear; thankfully, there were no injuries or casualties.

Upon checking the moshav for damage, they were shocked to find that the bomb had hit the very social hall where they had usually spent their weeknights, playing cards. But this week, they had been elsewhere, learning Torah with Yaakov. They hugged each other and thanked Hashem for sending them a messenger who had introduced them to the beauty, truth and salvation of Torah. (from A Touch of Warmth, p. 124, Reb Yechiel Spiro) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**