

Good Shabbos Everyone. Hillel Avion (not his real name) was enjoying every minute of his visit to Eretz Yisroel. After all, he had much for which to be grateful. Hillel had faced several medical conditions over the past few years, and he was thankful to Hashem for granting him additional years, giving him the opportunity to visit the Holy Land and to spend time with his children and grandchildren.

"So what's on the itinerary today?" Hillel asked his son. "Oh, Abba, I forgot to tell you! Tonight you're in for a real treat. The children will be singing in a yeshiva choir. You will really get your nachas this evening!" Hillel did indeed enjoy the evening. What a pleasure to hear the sweet voices of his offspring blending melodiously with the voices of so many other Jewish children! After the gala performance, Hillel joined his son and headed for home. "Have you davened (prayed) maariv (the evening prayers) already, Abba?" "I did," Hillel replied, "but I'd be happy to accompany you."

While his son ducked inside the building for the evening service, Hillel waited patiently in the courtyard. After several minutes, a saintly-looking elderly man, his beard long and white, wandered into the courtyard. Hillel estimated that the man must be in his mid-nineties. The elderly man addressed Hillel. "Do you know if a minyan for maariv has begun?"

Hillel gestured inside. "My son just went in for maariv a few minutes ago. The minyan has probably just begun." The man's face lit up at this information. He slowly and steadily made his way inside the building, only to emerge a few minutes later. "Back so soon?" Hillel asked. "What happened?"

"I already missed Kaddish and Borchu," the man explained. "But they have ongoing minyanim here until eleven. I'll just wait for the next one." As the elderly man spoke, Hillel thought he detected a Persian accent. So he began conversing in Persian. The other man was surprised. "Are you Persian?"

"Actually, I am Syrian. I live in America now," Hillel replied. "I spent some time in New York once," the man reminisced. "It was about thirty-five years ago. I attended Shaarei Tzion quite often." Hillel listened with interest. Shaarei Tzion was a Syrian synagogue he himself had been frequenting for years. "I have one friend there," the man went on. Hillel's curiosity piqued. "Really? Who is your friend?"

"Hillel Avion." Hillel couldn't believe his ears. He eyed the old man closely, but he did not appear the slightest bit familiar to him. Hiding his surprise, he asked, "How do you know this Hillel Avion?" "I was in America for heart surgery, and Hillel Avion was a tremendous help to me."

Something stirred in the back of Hillel's mind. "What's your name?" Hillel asked, hoping the name would conjure up the memory. "Gorgy. My name is Gorgy."

Yes, that's right! Gorgy! Now Hillel remembered. The man, a father of fourteen, had come from Israel to consult with an expert surgeon in New York. Gorgy had no medical insurance—and no money to pay the doctor's fee. So the surgeon had turned him away: "Fifty thousand dollars, or no surgery!"

Upon hearing of Gorgy's desperate plight, Hillel undertook the tremendous financial obligation. For two weeks, by day and night, through cold and snowy weather, Hillel knocked on the doors of friends, acquaintances and strangers. When he finally amassed a sizeable sum, he presented himself at the surgeon's office. Hillel placed an enormous bag on the table. "Here's the money," he announced. "Please perform the operation." The surgeon summoned four nurses, who sat down to count the bills. Hillel watched nervously until the surgeon looked up with a smile on his face. Every penny was there, and the doctor agreed to go ahead with the surgery. Boruch Hashem, the operation was a complete success.

"Mr. Gorgy," Hillel burst out emotionally, "I am Hillel Avion!" He grasped Mr. Gorgy's hand and kissed it. "Can you please give me a brocha?"

"Hillel ben Rivkah," Gorgy answered earnestly, "there is no need for me to bless you now. Every day for the past thirty-five years I have prayed on your behalf. Every morning I wake up and say 'Hashem, please bless Hillel ben Rivkah.'" The tears streamed down Hillel's face as the two men parted. Hillel shared the remarkable episode with his son when he rejoined him in the courtyard. Both men marveled at the reunion that had transpired. "Every mitzvah is recorded in Heaven, and is paid back." Many a trial and tribulation had passed by Hillel in the past thirty-five years. Hillel was certain now that it was in the merit of helping Mr. Gorgy as well as Mr. Gorgy's daily blessings, that Hillel was alive today, enjoying nachas from his grandchildren in the Holy Land.

The Midrash teaches us that there are a few ways which a Jew can change his "Mazal," i.e., from bad to good. One of these ways is by moving to a new place, as Avrohom Avinu does at the beginning of this week's parsha Lech Lecha. Another way to change one's Mazal is by giving Tzedaka - charity. There is verse in Mishley which states "Tzedaka saves one from death..." (10,2) From our story above we see the power of Tzedaka. Now that we are reading the parshas of Avrohom Avinu, who personified the character trait of Chesed - Kindness, let us all strengthen ourselves in this aspect and resolve to give more and more Tzedaka. Hashem should then help us that by giving more Tzedaka we will all merit to good Mazal, to Mazal Tov! **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."