

Good Shabbos Everyone. Rabbi Solomon Maimon, is the Rabbi Emeritus of the Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation in Seattle, Washington. That particular shul was founded about 80 years ago by Sephardic immigrants who came to Washington from Turkey. Rabbi Maimon is a direct descendant of the RaMbaM, Reb Moshe ben Maimon (1135 - 1204).

During the many years of his tenure, Rabbi Maimon, has hosted thousands of guests in his home in Seattle. Most if not all of the "Meshulachim" - men who come from Eretz Yisroel to gather tzedaka for needy families - stay at Rabbi Maimon's home. The following account, is an amazing story which one of the "Meshulachim" retold at the Rabbi Maimon's Shabbos table Friday night.

It is well known and unfortunate, that there are many needy Jewish families in Yerushalayim. There is one such family which we will call the "Klein" family (not their real name.) The Klein family is, Boruch Hashem, blessed with many children. The father of the Klien family, Reb Boruch Klein does his best to makes ends meet to put food on his table, working three jobs.

One week as Shabbos approached, the family did not have what it needed to make Shabbos properly. There is was no wine, no challahs, no fish, no chicken soup, no meat and not even any kugel! Mrs. Klein was beside herself and approached her husband asking him what would be for Shabbos. Reb Boruch told her, "Es vet zein gut... Yehiyeh Tov Bezras Hashem... it will be good, with Hashem's help." By Thursday evening, when the situation did not become perceivably better, Mrs. Klein approached her husband and urged him to do something. Reb Boruch had worked hard all week, spending their hard earned money on the bare essentials. But now, as Shabbos approached, there was no money left to prepare for the holy day.

Reb Boruch told his wife that he would go out shortly and try to raise the necessary funds to make Shabbos. First however, Reb Boruch wanted to learn a little Torah with his younger son who would shortly thereafter, have to go to sleep. So, Reb Boruch sat down with his son and opened the Mishna and began to learn with the beautiful and sweet sing song of Torah.

Suddenly, one of the little girls came running into the dining room, where Reb Boruch learned with his son. There were two men at the door and they wanted to speak with the man of the house. Reb Boruch at first dismissed his daughter telling her to tell the men to come back later, for Reb Boruch was learning with his son and he could not be interrupted.

The girl ran back to the door and Reb Boruch continued to learn with his son. Moments later the girl returned to his father and told him that the men were insistent that they wanted to speak with her father and they would not go away. "Nu, Nu..." said Reb Boruch as he pried himself from the learning and went to the door. When he appeared at the door, he saw two faces he did not recognize. The men were two non-religious looking Israelis, and they were not smiling. As Reb Boruch approached the door, one of the men drew a short barreled pistol from his coat pocket and said in Hebrew to Reb Boruch the equivalent of "your money or your life."

Reb Boruch was not fazed. With a shrug, Reb moved aside and told the men to take what they wanted, nodding with his head to the empty cupboards and vacant china cabinet. The men took one step inside the apartment and looked around with astonishment. They had picked the wrong guy to rob...

The robber with the gun put the gun back in his pocket and looked at the other robber. The other robber nodded in agreement. Reb Boruch looked on, not knowing what to expect. He looked heavenward and sent a prayer up to Almighty that he and his family be spared any cruelty.... Before we finish this week's amazing story, let us pause for a moment to discuss the concept of prayer.

In this week's portion Tzav the Torah continues its discussion of the Korbanos, the animal and flour offerings which served as one of the main avenues of Jewish worship in the times of the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Yerushalayim. These sacrifices served to bring Jews closer to Hashem. This is hinted to in the root of the word Korban which is "Karov," meaning "close." One of the most important of the Korbanos-sacrifices is the Korban Pesach. The Torah describes the Korban Pesach in Parshas Bo: "They shall eat the meat [of the sheep or goat] on that night – roasted over the fire – and matzos; with bitter herbs shall they eat it." (Shemos 12:8)

Until the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, we are unable to bring the Korban Pesach. What can we bring to Hashem in place of the Korban Pesach and all the other sacrifices that for so long served to connect us with Hashem? Hashem would not have taken away the Korbanos (sacrifices) without giving us an alternate route to grow closer to Him.

The Prophet Hoshea answers our dilemma: "Let our lips compensate for the bulls [which we used to bring as sacrifices.]" (14:3) Hashem is telling us through the Prophet's words that in place of the sacrifices, we can use our mouths to serve Hashem through prayer. As we say before prayer "My L-rd, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise." (51:17)

Pesach is a special time to reflect on the power of prayer, because it is through the prayer of the Bnai Yisroel that we were redeemed from Mitzraim - Egypt. The word Pesach reflects this concept, as the word is a contraction of the words "Peh" - mouth, and "Sach" - speak, which alludes to the power we Jews have in prayer.

Let us now conclude the exciting story... Reb Boruch looked on, not knowing what to expect. He looked heavenward and sent a prayer up to the Almighty that he and his family be spared any cruelty. One robber nodded to the other one. Then, one of the robbers reached in into his pocket and pulled out a thick wad of bills. Without hesitation, the robber handed over the money to Reb Boruch. Reb Boruch was stunned. He accepted the money and mumbled "Todah Rabbah - thank you very much." The robbers disappeared down the steps in the dark apartment building stairway... Back at Rabbi Maimon's Shabbos table in Seattle, the listening guests sat in silence, shocked by the story. Then, one of the guests said that he knew that the story was true, because Reb Boruch is his bother!

As we approach Pesach, let us rededicate ourselves to the service of Hashem with our mouths in thoughtful Prayer. Then we will merit the ultimate redemption and we will be able to bring the real korban Pesach this year in Yerushalayim. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**