

Good Shabbos Everyone. Several years ago, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin was on his way to St. Louis, Missouri. He was driving through rural Iowa late one afternoon when he realized that the sun was setting, and he would have to find a place to pray mincha - the afternoon prayers. He happened to be passing through a small town just then, so he pulled up to the post office and went inside. "Do you know if there are any Jews around here?" he asked the woman behind the counter. "There is a Jew who lives about a mile from here," she told him. "His name is Rosenfeld." (the name has been changed)

The woman in the post office gave Rabbi Gruskin directions and he was soon on his way to old Mr. Rosenfeld's place. Soon, Rabbi Gruskin arrived and knocked on the door. Rabbi Gruskin told Mr. Rosenfeld that he was looking for a synagogue to pray mincha. The old man laughed, telling Rabbi Gruskin that there were no synagogues anywhere nearby. Rabbi Gruskin then asked the old man if he could pray in his house. After finishing praying, Rabbi Gruskin asked Mr. Rosenfeld if he minded if he also ate his supper in his house. Mr. Rosenfeld agreed, but he invited Rabbi Gruskin to instead join him for dinner at his table. Rabbi Gruskin refused the generous offer, telling Mr. Rosenfeld that he had brought food with him from home and that all he needed was a place to wash his hands.

"I know what you are thinking," said Mr. Rosenfeld. "But really you can eat with me. I am Shomer Shabbos." Rabbi Gruskin was floored. A Shomer Shabbos Jew in these parts?!? Mr. Rosenfeld smiled at the reaction of surprise. Mr. Rosenfeld then proceeded to tell Rabbi Gruskin the amazing story of how he became Shomer Shabbos after being arrested several decades earlier...

In this week's parsha Vayechi we read about the death of another famous Jew who was arrested - Yosef Hatzadik. Because of false accusations, Yosef was arrested and sat in an Egyptian prison. After leaving prison, Yosef eventually became one of the most powerful men in Egypt. Although it was difficult for Yosef to be in prison, as he neared the end of his life, Yosef realized that even his imprisonment was for the good. As Yosef tells his brothers, "...Hashem intended it for the good; in order to accomplish - it is clear as day - that a vast people be kept alive." (Bereishis 50:20) If Yosef had not been arrested in Pharaoh's palace, he would not have interpreted Pharaoh's dream and he would never have become so powerful so that he could feed his father and their families. As Yosef neared death, he realized that everything that had happened to him was for the best.

We can learn from the example of Yosef, who recognized that everything that Hashem does is for the best. The Sages in fact teach us that one should practice saying "Everything the Almighty does is for the best." One who can internalize this message and the lesson of Yosef, will live a happier life. Let us now return to our story...

Like Yosef, Mr. Rosenfeld also spent time in jail. Mr. Rosenfeld had immigrated to the United States shortly after World War II. As an immigrant with poor English skills, Mr. Rosenfeld resorted to becoming a traveling salesman. One day, Mr. Rosenfeld found himself in a small town near Akron, Ohio. He knocked on doors and tried to sell his wares, but everyone in the town slammed the door in his face. He was baffled. He tried one last door - it turns out, it was the door of the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police arrested Mr. Rosenfeld on two counts: 1) for selling merchandise without a license, and; 2) for violating the Saturday ordinance laws. (The town was populated and governed by the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists, who observe their Sabbath on Saturday.)

The next morning, Mr. Rosenfeld appeared before the court. Mr. Rosenfeld pleaded ignorance of the law. The judge told Mr. Rosenfeld that he would not mind acquitting him (letting him go) on the count of selling without a license. However, the judge could not understand why Rosenfeld - a Jew - was selling on Saturday. "Surely you must know about Saturday ordinances, after all, they are biblical prohibitions. For that I cannot pardon you. Fifty dollars or thirty days in jail." Said the judge.

"Please, I really did not know any better," pleaded Mr. Rosenfeld. "Rosenfeld," said the judge, "I will tell you what I will do, I will pardon you if you promise me faithfully that from today on, you will observe your Sabbath." Mr. Rosenfeld promised, and the judge released him on the spot.

The next Saturday morning, Mr. Rosenfeld woke up as usual and began to ready his horse and wagon for a day of peddling. As he walked to the horses, his mind went back to the previous week. He thought to himself: "last Saturday I promised to keep the Sabbath! How could I break my word?" From that point on, Mr. Rosenfeld was Shomer Shabbos. (From Visions of Greatness, R.Y.Weiss, p.32)

It was through his experiences in jail that Mr. Rosenfeld became Shomer Shabbos. Although it was difficult for him at the time of his arrest, Mr. Rosenfeld realized years later that everything that Hashem does is for the best. Because he was arrested, Mr. Rosenfeld was introduced to the beauty of Shabbos. He began to see Saturday as a day of rest from the noise of the workweek. Shabbos became a special time of happiness and inner peace. He was forever grateful to the judge who made him a Shomer Shabbos Jew.

Let us learn from Yosef and Mr. Rosenfeld. Everyday let us remind ourselves that "Everything the Almighty does is for the best." **Good Shabbos Everyone.**