

This פרשת דבר תורה is dedicated in honor of our אייניקל Tzvi Asher Bennett, whose birthday is on פרשת לך לך. Around the time he was born, he had a ברית, like every other יידיש boy.

We know that ספר בראשית, which we are currently in middle of, has only three of all the תרי"ג מצות, one of which is ברית מילה, at the very end of פרשת לך לך. I've always enjoyed finding insights at the end of the פרשה to give it some special חשיבות, since most divrei Torah focus on the beginning. So here, we'll talk about ברית מילה.

Interestingly, as I was preparing, it occurred to me that the three מצות in פריה ורביה, ספר בראשית - ברית מילה, and גיד הנשה - are foundational מצות, each integral to Jewish life. ברית מילה, in particular, requires little introduction or explanation; it is a mitzvah that every Jewish family ensures for their sons, unless, of course, there is an unavoidable health issue. ברית מילה is the cornerstone of our covenant, going back to אברהם אבינו. While all מצות were formally given to us as a nation at סיני הר סיני, ברית מילה originates with אברהם אבינו, and even though it was reconfirmed at סיני הר סיני, it is inherently a מצוה of ספר בראשית.

In connection with ברית מילה, the ספר עוצר פלאות התורה includes an incredible מעשה that took place involving the חת"ם סופר. I thought sharing this מעשה would be a meaningful gift for our birthday boy, Tzvi Bennett. This מעשה פלא comes from a ספר called זכרון למשה, and tells a fascinating story about performing a ברית מילה on a גוי.

The story goes that during the time of the חת"ם סופר, a גוי from a small hamlet near פרסבורג, where the חת"ם סופר lived, approached the רב of his town. The גוי expressed a sincere desire to become a גר. After examining his intentions and confirming that he was לשם שמים, the רב performed a conversion כדת וכדין, including a ברית מילה. However, on the third day after his מילה, the גר fell seriously ill.

The local doctors could not cure him, and they declared that he would die. This illness caused a great disturbance among his goyish relatives, who accused the Jews of killing him with their ברית מילה. Their accusations escalated into a סכנה, not only for that town but as a threat of a nationwide pogrom.

Desperate, the רב sought guidance and went to פרסבורג to consult the חת"ם סופר. The חת"ם סופר strongly reprimanded him, asking how he could perform a ברית מילה in such a small town without the necessary expertise or medical facilities, risking everyone's safety. However, since the deed was done, the חת"ם סופר advised him on how to address this dangerous situation.

He told the רב that because he had endangered כלל ישראל, he must be מוסר נפש for the welfare of the community. The חת"ם סופר instructed the רב to take the גר and the מוהל in a wagon to a nearby river, and to stage an accident by driving the wagon into the water, drowning them all. This way, the גוים would believe the man had died from an accident, not from the ברית מילה, and the community would be saved from the threat of retaliation.



With a deep acceptance of his duty to כלל ישראל, the רב, along with the מוהל, prepared for this act of self-sacrifice. They said וידוי, took the wagon, and began their journey toward the river with the gravely ill גר. On the way, a Jew suddenly appeared and stopped them, urging them not to proceed. The רב explained their mission, and the stranger revealed himself as a חכם. He assured them he had a remedy, producing a flask containing a special liquid. He instructed them to apply it to the ברית מילה, promising it would heal the גר.

They followed his instructions, and immediately, the גר's health improved, sparing the רב and מוהל from the need for self-sacrifice. The entire town rejoiced, and peace was restored.

When the רב and the מוהל returned to the חת"ם סופר, he revealed that he had sent אליהו, the מלאך הברית, to intervene and save the גר. The חת"ם סופר explained that they merited this miraculous assistance only because they had been willing to be מוסר נפש for כלל ישראל. In essence, he knew from the start that they would be protected, fulfilling the promise that כי שומר - those who fulfill מצות will be shielded from harm.

Bezras Hashem, we should all be In this זכות, may we be blessed to observe all מצות, especially the מצוה of ברית מילה, for which כלל ישראל has always shown self-sacrifice. May we soon witness משיח במהרה בימינו אמן and the coming of גאולה

