



BE A MENTSCH

Rabbi Yitzchok Sanders



GRANDPARENTS!

פְּרִשֶׁת בַּא

There is a special connection between grandparents and their grandchildren. Grandparents' health and strength may not be what it once was, but on the other hand, they are much wiser now. Then, there are those people who are young, who are still not fully grown, yet full of energy and excitement. They have not had the chance to fully understand what life is all about. Together, they can fill what the other group is missing. The Torah commands grandparents to teach their grandchildren all about Hashem's Torah and Mitzvos. The Torah commands grandchildren to respect their grandparents so that they can gain from their wisdom.

In this week's Parsha, when פְּרַעֲהַּ wants to know who is going to be leaving מִצְרָיִם, he asks מֹשֶׁה, "מִי וְמִי הַהוֹלְכִים?" Which people do you want to take out with you? Aren't they all going to die in the מִדְבָּר? Moshe answers that we are going to be taking the young and the old. Those who are under 20 and those over 60-they will not die in the מִדְבָּר. They will be the ones who will enter into אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. The foundation of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל will be built on a partnership between these 2 groups. The bond of strength and wisdom found in the unity of these different generations will establish the future of our people. So "*Being a Mentsch*" means listening to, learning from and appreciating having our Grandparents. We must make an effort to be in touch with them either by talking on the phone or writing letters and telling them how much we love and care for them. We must never forget how much a grandchild can do to make a difference in the lives of his or her grandparent. Here is a story how an elderly person turned their life around!

The Smell of Shabbos
Rabbi Eytan Feiner

As a young boy eagerly approached his bar-mitzvah, his family arranged for the davening and meal to take place in a hotel over Shabbos along with a celebration after Shabbos. Of course the family invited their Rabbi, Rav Simcha Wasserman and his Rebbetzin to join them. Not feeling too well, however, Rav Simcha declined and apologized for being unable to join in the celebration. Nevertheless, he wished the family much *nachas* and conferred his warmest blessings upon the boy's upcoming milestone.

Rav Simcha, though, had one request to make. "Please make sure there is cholent in the hotel for Shabbos. You cannot have a Shabbos without cholent!" As the parents of the bar-mitzvah boy heard what Rav Simcha had to say, they tried to politely excuse themselves. "With all due respect, we are spending Shabbos in a hotel and do not want to get involved in any halachic dilemmas that accompany making hot food on Shabbos. We already worked it out with the caterer that we will be serving cold food. Besides, the big celebration will be taking place later that night after Shabbos. Then we will provide hot culinary delights. For Shabbos, though, we will keep it plain and simple. There will be challah, fish, chicken and other dishes. There will be plenty to eat, except for cholent."

"Please," persisted Rav Simcha, "I just want to ask this one favor. I have a tradition that you need to have hot food for Shabbos. There has to be cholent for Shabbos." Wishing to listen to the directions of their Rav and having no other choice, the family made sure that cholent would be served. Contacting the caterer and making sure hot plates would be set up, a significant amount of cholent was prepared.

As the parents of the bar-mitzvah boy had become religious later in life, a large number of their family remained irreligious. Not wishing for their relatives to drive to the bar-mitzvah on Shabbos, they announced that everyone was welcome to attend the celebration that would be taking place after Shabbos. If they in fact wished to participate in the bar-mitzvah on Shabbos, though, they were more than welcome to come Friday afternoon and join the family in the festivities.

Notwithstanding the parents' request, an elderly aunt and uncle who lived near the hotel did not wish to deviate from their normal Friday night schedule. And so,

after spending Friday night at home, they drove to Shul on Shabbos and entered the hotel hall as everyone else filed in.

As they stepped inside, the fragrant aroma of the delicious cholent wafted through the air. Seeing where their family was situated, the aunt and uncle made their way over. But then, all of a sudden, the aunt stopped in her tracks. Turning to her husband trembling, she said, “We have to go home.” Not sure what had transpired, the uncle worried if everything was alright. “I’ll tell you later,” she said.

Heading back to the car, the husband looked at his wife who was well into her seventies for an explanation. “I have never seen you like this in all the years we have been married. What happened all of a sudden that shook you to this degree?” Turning back to her husband, the wife explained:

“My last memory as a six-year old child in the Holocaust was German soldiers taking me away on a Shabbos afternoon. I remember enjoying the aroma of the hot cholent in the house. Cholent always represented Shabbos to me. Ever since that incident, my last fond memory and attachment to Judaism has been the hot cholent I enjoyed so much.

I haven’t smelled cholent in close to seventy years. But when I walked into the hotel and smelled cholent for the first time in years, right away, those memories took me back to my youth and that Shabbos afternoon cholent. Smelling the cholent woke me up and made me question what I am doing with my life. During those years of childhood, I felt a connection to G-d, understood the beauty of Judaism and knew what a true Shabbos meant. How can I now be missing that? I must get it back!”

Henceforth, this woman changed her life. From then on, she decided she would keep Shabbos for the rest of her life. And where did this tremendous journey back to her Jewish roots begin? With Rav Simcha Wasserman who made sure that his student would serve cholent on Shabbos.

*We can never underestimate the impact one little decision can make. “What will cholent do other than fill one’s appetite?” we wonder. But we would be wise to think again. Perhaps that small act of kindness will warm the heart of another Jew and put a smile on his or her face. And just perhaps, that delicious smell of cholent from a **young boy’s** bar mitzvah blowing through the air will change the life of a **fellow elderly Jew**. Who would ever have imagined!*

Have a Great Shabbos!