



Toras Avigdor

Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

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פְּרֻשֶׁת כִּי תֵשָׂא

The Birthday Surprise

Sponsored in honor of:

Yehoshua Mordechai Penson and Family



The Birthday Surprise

Rabbi Caplan's Classroom

Yitzy raised his hand. "Rebbi, I don't understand," he said. "Klal Yisroel just said 'naaseh v'nishma' and got the Torah — and the second of the Aseres Hadibros was to not do avodah zarah. But immediately after, they made the *eigel hazahav*. It doesn't make sense — how could they possibly do that when they had just heard Hashem tell them no a few days before?"

"Excellent question, Yitzy," said Rabbi Caplan. "I'd like you to think about it on your own tonight and let's discuss it tomorrow."

Yitzy Comes Home

"Hi, Ma! I'm home!" called Yitzy. But there was no answer. "Hello?" he called again.

His younger brother Shimmy was sitting on the couch reading a book. "Hi, Shimmy — where's Mommy?" asked Yitzy.

Shimmy looked up. "Oh, she just left. There's a note for you on the kitchen table."

"Thanks," said Yitzy. He walked into the unusually clean kitchen and picked up the note.

Dear Yitzy,

I hope you had a great day in yeshiva! I had to run out and I'll be back by 6:00. Please keep Shimmy busy and make sure the house stays absolutely clean. I left you a snack in the fridge, but please clean up after yourself.

Love, Mommy

Yitzy put down the note and took his snack. He sat down to eat and made sure to wipe up the crumbs when he finished. Suddenly he jumped up and ran to the living room. "Shimmy! Do you know what today is?!"

Shimmy looked up from his book. "Tuesday?"

"It's Totty's birthday!" Yitzy shouted. "He's turning forty tonight!"

"Oh," said Shimmy. "Maybe we should hide under the table, and when he comes home we should pop out and sing Happy Birthday."

“No Shimmy! That’s not enough! Mommy had to run out to take care of something and probably forgot all about it! We have to do something big! How about we bake a cake for Totty?”

“Bake?!” said Shimmy. “Didn’t Mommy say she doesn’t want us making a mess?”

“Shimmy! This is different,” said Yitzy, taking out a cookbook from the cabinet. “Mommy would want us to do this. You’ll see — she’ll be so proud!”

“I don’t know...” began Shimmy, but Yitzy was too busy reading the recipe.

“Totty likes chocolate and I found one called ‘Tanteh Rochel’s Chocolate Cake.’ It shouldn’t be too hard to make.”

An Hour Later

“Hi, boys, I’m back!” called Mommy, as she entered the house carrying a huge box. “I have a surprise for you. I bought a chocolate ice-cream cake because tonight is Totty’s...”

Mommy’s voice trailed off as she entered the kitchen. The kitchen looked like a hurricane had just hit it. Chocolate batter was splattered everywhere. And standing in the middle of the mess were Yitzy and Shimmy, their hands and faces splotted with flour, oil, and chocolate.



“What – happened – here?!” whispered Mommy, trying to keep calm.

“We’re making a birthday cake for Totty!” Yitzy said. “We thought you forgot about it and we were going to save the day!”

“But – didn’t you see my note?” Mommy asked.

“But Mommy, we thought you and Totty would be so proud of us for remembering Totty’s birthday and making a cake before he came home! We did it for you!”

Later that evening

“Yitzy,” Totty said as they sat on the couch together. “I want you to know how touched Mommy and I are that you tried to do something special for my birthday. But you need to understand — even with the best intentions, you still must always listen to Mommy and me. No matter how much you want to do something for us, if you’re doing something we asked you not to do, it’s wrong. Do you understand?”

Yitzy nodded. “I’m sorry, Totty. It just made so much sense to us. We really thought it would be what you wanted. But I definitely learned my lesson – in the future I’ll try not to overthink when you or Mommy tell me something.”

The next day in class

“Good morning, Yitzy!” said Rabbi Caplan. “Did you think about the question you asked yesterday?”

“I did,” said Yitzy. “And I think I know the answer. *The Am Yisroel* was so afraid when Moshe didn’t come back from Har Sinai because he was their strongest connection to Hashem. And they so badly wanted to connect to Hashem that they used their own brains to try to figure out the best way to do it. They didn’t realize the eigel was avodah zarah! They wanted it to be their constant reminder of Hashem.

But they forgot the most important thing — whatever Hashem says is what He wants, and that’s the final word! No ifs, ands, or buts! And that’s why they ended up doing a terrible aveirah.”

“That’s right, Yitzy!” exclaimed Rabbi Caplan. “It is extremely important to remember that while Hashem wants us to use our brains to serve Him as best as we can, we cannot think we know better than what Hashem Himself wrote in the Torah. We should always do *what Hashem told us* He wants from us, not what we *think* He wants.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos.