



Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

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Parshas Vayeitzei

Second, Best

Sunday Morning 6:15 AM

Ezra was excited. He was going to visit his cousin Yona in Chicago for a week. He hadn't seen Yona in three years and was really looking forward to the trip. He was also excited to see Yona's neighbor, Kenny. Kenny was a boy a few years older than him whose family had become frum only five years ago and had moved to Chicago from Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was still new to Yiddishkeit and Ezra really enjoyed telling Kenny about things that he learned in Yeshiva. Ezra loved learning, but he wasn't the best in his class in Boro Park and it made him really feel good to be able to help someone who knew less than him.

Ezra and his family arrived at Yona's house and after they had put their suitcases in their rooms, the two boys went to the backyard to play catch. Ezra glanced over the fence and saw a yeshiva bochur he didn't recognize sitting at a shtender in the yard shuckling over a Gemara.

It looked like Kenny must have moved away! Ezra felt a bit disappointed - he had really been looking forward to telling Kenny all about Meseches Yuma and how the Kohen Gadol did the Avoda on Yom Kippur.

But then suddenly after a few minutes of throwing the ball back and forth, Ezra heard a familiar voice calling him. "Hi Ezra! It's so great to see you again. Yonah told me you were coming this week but I didn't know it was today."

Ezra looked up in shock at the yeshiva bochur standing near the fence with a big smile. "Kenny?!" Ezra said in amazement, "Is that you?"

"Of course it's me. But you can call me Kalmen - that's what all my friends call me now."

Ezra could barely speak. Kenny, the boy who only a few years ago had been new to Yiddishkeit, was now Kalmen, a yeshiva bochur learning Gemara in his free time. How did that happen?!

Over the next few days, the three boys spent every second together, just like the good old days when Kalmen was still Kenny.

One week later

Finally it was time for Ezra to head back to New York and Ezra went next door to say goodbye to Kalmen.

“I’m just curious,” Ezra said after hugging Kalmen goodbye . “A few years ago you were so new to Yiddishkeit and now you’re like almost a talmid chochom already! How did that happen?”

“I’ll tell you,” Ezra said. “It was actually right after your last visit, I was feeling a bit sad about my situation. I felt like I was always second best to everyone, the one who “didn’t belong”. But one Shabbos when I was eating the seudah by Rabbi Cohen down the block, he said a dvar Torah that changed my life.



“Did you ever wonder why even though Rochel was supposed to be the main mother of Klal Yisrael (Bava Basra 123a) it turned out that Leah ended up having more Shevatim? Today almost all of Klal Yisrael comes from Leah who was really the second choice! We’re even called “Jews” or “Yehudim” after Yehuda, who was Leah’s son.”

“So Rabbi Cohen told me,” continued Kalmen, “that he heard from his rebbi Rav Avigdor Miller that sometimes Hashem puts somebody in a more difficult situation because that brings out the best in a person. When you feel like you’re the second best, or the third best, or even the last best like I always was, Hashem is doing that because he knows that you have special strengths that will come out when you work hard.

“That’s what happened to Leah. Just **because** she was the one who was not expected to be the mother of Klal Yisrael, just because she always knew that she was just the second wife of Yaakov, she davened extra hard to Hashem that she should also be the mother of the Am Yisroel. Knowing that she wasn’t born to be the first just made her work harder in her avodas Hashem to become the best she could be and as a reward for her hard work Hashem made her the mother of most of the twelve shevatim”.

“When I heard that,” continued Kalmen, “I realized that I had it all wrong. Instead of sulking about my background I had to learn from Leah. From that day I decided that I was going to do my best to be the best that I could be! If Hashem put me in this situation it’s because He knows I could grow. From that day on I began working harder than everyone else in my class and davening every day, asking Hashem to help me grow in my learning. And the rest is history – that’s how Kenny became Kalmen.”

On the trip home, Ezra spent a lot of time thinking about what Kenny had said. Ezra wasn’t either the best learner in his class. But that meant that he now had to work even harder. And if he did, Hashem would give him the opportunity to be even greater than the “smart kids” in his class who were so much better at learning.

Ezra smiled to himself as he thought “wow, I never imagined that I would learn from Kenny that I can be a talmid chochom!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos



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