

Binyamin Gets His Chance

By Leah Dolinger
for Olomeinu Magazine

Sometimes we do things that people notice, and sometimes we do things that we think don't get noticed at all. But Hashem notices everything - and no good deed goes unrewarded...

In Eretz Yisrael, about four years ago, Binyamin Newman began to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. For six months Binyamin practiced reading the words and the proper sounds of Parshas Yisro (the section of the Torah that was read the week he was born), so that on the Shabbos of his Bar Mitzvah he would be able to read it from the Sefer Torah perfectly. When those six months were up, not only did Binyamin know it, so did everyone else in his family!

On the bright and sunny morning of the Bar Mitzvah Shabbos, the Newman group - grandparents, great-grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends - gathered at the shul for davening (praying). Then Binyamin's big moment arrived. The Sefer Torah was taken out of the Aron HaKodesh (the holy Ark) and placed upon the Bimah, where the Torah is read.

Binyamin and his father began to walk towards the Bimah from one side of the shul. To everyone's surprise, at the same time, Shlomo Pam and his father began walking to the Bimah from the opposite side of the shul. The Pams were new in the neighborhood, and Mr. Rutkin, the Gabbai in charge of the shul's affairs, realized with a shock that he had completely forgotten Shlomo Pam's Bar Mitzvah was also that Shabbos.

The Gabbai stood between the two Bar Mitzvah boys. "I'm so sorry, I forgot that there are *two* happy occasions this Shabbos," he said. "You both have practiced many long hours in order to be able to read the parsha. Let's divide the parsha between you."

Binyamin saw the disappointment in Shlomo's eyes. "Mr. Rutkin," he said, "I would like Shlomo to read the whole parsha."

"Why?" asked the Gabbai, surprised. "After all...."

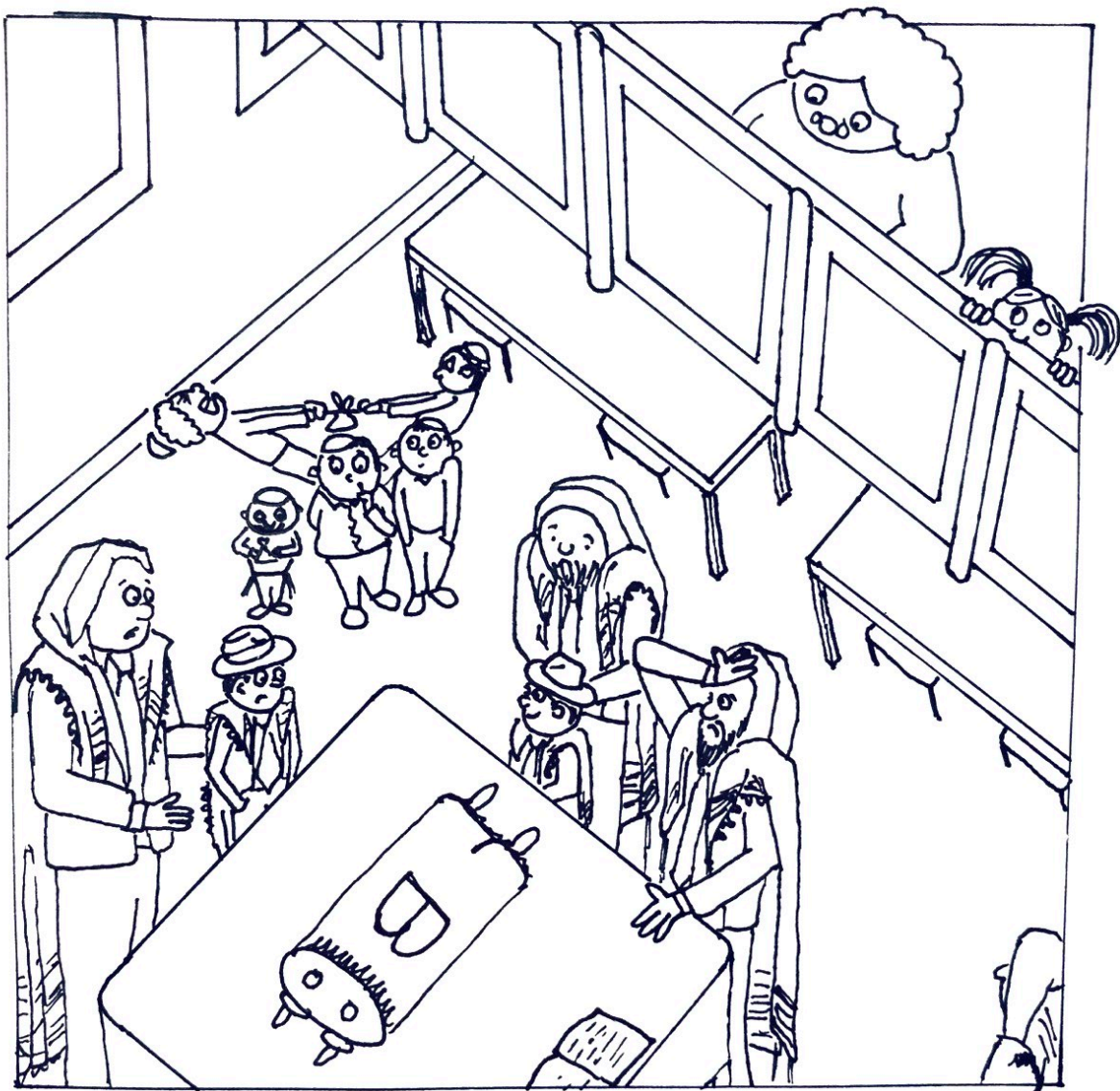
"I won't be any less a 'Bar Mitzvah' because I did not read," said Binyamin with a smile. Then he leaned over, shook his new friend's hand warmly and said, "Mazel Tov, Shlomo!"

Upstairs in the women's section, one mother looked down, her heart filled with relief, while another mother's heart was filled with pride.

"Barnch Hashem, Shlomo worked so hard..." whispered Mrs. Pam to her sister. "The move to the new neighborhood hasn't been easy for him." And Mrs. Newman whispered to her mother, "My 'tzaddik.' One who says 'What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours, is called a 'righteous' person (a tzaddik). Thank you, Hashem, for helping us bring up our son Binyamin to be such a man..."

After the Torah reading, Mrs. Pam rushed over to Mrs. Newman. "I can't thank you enough for your son's chessed (good deed). May Hashem repay you and your family many times over."

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Four years later, Mrs. Newman was busy with Erev Shabbos (Friday afternoon) preparations when she felt a sudden terrible pain in her chest. "Binyamin! Quick," she gasped, "call Abba." Ten minutes later Mrs. Newman was in an ambulance speeding to Shaare Tzedek Hospital.

There she was taken straight to the Cardiology Department, where people with heart problems are treated.

A whole set of tests were immediately ordered. Mrs. Newman would have to stay in the hospital until the results were ready - after Shabbos. Mr. Newman told Binyamin to stay with his mother, and he went back home to be with the other children for Shabbos.

That evening, a doctor came into Mrs. Newman's room. "We've found the cause of the problem, Mrs. Newman. We can treat it with a new medicine, or we can operate. But you must decide by tomorrow, because if you want to take the medication we must start right away - and if you prefer surgery, we have to prepare you with other medicines."

Binyamin and his mother didn't know what to do. Mrs. Newman didn't trust herself to decide, and Binyamin was only 17... Binyamin suddenly noticed how noisy it was in the hallway outside his mother's room. He went out to look. "What happened?" he asked someone standing nearby.

"Oh, didn't you hear? Rabbi Yoseif Shalom Elyashiv was admitted to the hospital just before Shabbat."

Rabbi Elyashiv is one of the greatest Torah leaders of our time, an elderly sage who lives in Yerushalayim. People from all over the world come to him for advice and guidance and with all kinds of questions, including medical ones.

He had not been feeling well that Friday and was taken to the hospital. Although they did not find anything seriously wrong, the doctors thought that he should remain there until after Shabbos, just to be sure that everything was okay. "Baruch Hashem," thought Binyamin, "I'll ask Rabbi Elyashiv what to do. Abba always goes to him for advice."

But as Binyamin watched, a crowd of people filled the end of the hallway near Rabbi Elyashiv's room. How would he ever get to see the Rabbi? Then he had an idea! "This Shabbos is Parshas Yisro, my Bar Mitzvah parsha," he thought. "I remember exactly how to read it. I will offer to read the Torah for the Rabbi's small minyan tomorrow, and then afterwards, perhaps I'll have a chance to speak to him."

Later that evening, Binyamin knocked quietly at the door of the Rabbi's room. "May I ask for the privilege of reading the Torah for the Rabbi tomorrow? It is my Bar Mitzvah parsha and I know it very well..." The Rabbi graciously accepted Binyamin's

offer. And so, the next day, Binyamin finally read his Bar Mitzvah parsha - four years late, but just in time now!

After davening, Rabbi Elyashiv called Binyamin over to thank him. Binyamin then told the Rabbi of his problem. "I have to give the doctors an answer right away," he said.

Rabbi Elyashiv is a beloved, very well-known and deeply respected person, so Israel's best cardiologist (heart doctor) had been sent to take care of him. "Don't worry, Binyamin," said Rabbi Elyashiv. "I will ask my own doctor, Professor Shammai Tzivoni, to see your mother. With the help of Hashem, she will recover completely."

That night, right after Shabbos, Professor Tzivoni examined Mrs. Newman and then spoke to Rabbi Elyashiv. He recommended that an operation be performed as soon as possible. The professor decided that he himself would do it, first thing the next morning. Soon after the operation, Mrs. Newman returned to her family in full health.

"Rabbi Elyashiv really did not have to be in the hospital at all," said Binyamin. "Hashem sent him there to save my mother's life."

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