

Each Mitzvah Counts

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the sefer, Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah, Shaar Ha'gadol, perek 5, which mentions a tzaddik by the name of Rav Moshe Eiveyer, who would perform specific customs in honor of Hashem. He proceeds to describe the areas in which this righteous man distinguished himself. Rav Zilberstein writes that for some time he had searched for data concerning Rav Moshe's life and endeavor. He finally found a story in the Bais Avraham from Horav Avraham zl, m'Slonim which records the following episode.

Prior to his passing, Rav Moshe assembled members of his community in his home and attempted to inspire them concerning the significance of Birkas Ha'Mazon, Bentching after meals: "I assure you that whoever recited Birkas Ha'Mazon from a written text, his house will not sustain the damages of fire." This was stated during a time in history when every blaze carried the potential for destroying an entire community. Everyone in the community heeded Rav Moshe's advice. Well, almost everyone. There was one person who simply refused to read the Bentching from a written text. It was not convenient. The Jewish community was spared the effects of a conflagration as a result of their adherence to Bentching from a written text.

One night, the wife of the individual who refused to comply with Rav Moshe's request woke up to a noxious odor. It smelled like fire! She looked out of the window and saw a non-Jewish house down the block that was ablaze. She woke her husband and they both stared in shock and disbelief. Their home was in the line of the fire. What were they going to do? Suddenly, the wife looked at her husband and said, "Quickly, run to the cemetery and pray at the grave of Rav Moshe. Ask his mechillah, forgiveness, for your disregard of his warning and ask him to intercede on our behalf."

The man might have been obstinate, but he was not a total fool. He ran to the cemetery and prostrated himself in front of the tzaddik's grave, begging forgiveness for his insolence. He promised that he would never again separate himself from the community and would always recite Bentching from a written text.

It did not take long for the miracle to occur. The man returned home to notice that all of the homes belonging to gentiles were gone, while his home was standing, unscathed, because the fire had just been put out - at his door step.

The lesson is there for all of us to heed.