



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KI TAVO

Full Circle

R' Yehoshua Zitron recounted a fascinating story brought down by the "Emuna Sh'lema."

There was a ba'al teshuva by the name of Ophir, who came a long way. Growing up, his father had passionately hated religion. After he had finished serving in the Israeli army, Ophir went to travel the world, and at one point felt a spiritual awakening. He felt the void in his life, and was thirsty to learn about Judaism. He came back to Israel and approached a rabbi, asking him to quench his soul's thirst. And so, the rabbi learnt with him, and as he taught him more and more Torah, the rabbi saw the genius inside Ophir. Within two months, the Ophir who hadn't observed Shabbat previously was nearing his way towards his first siyum, celebrating his monumental achievement of completing a tractate of Talmud – masechet Megillah. Ophir worked on planning a special siyum, and invited his rabbi with whom he had been learning to join him for the celebration that was to take place in his home. "I would love to come," the rabbi admitted, "But I know your father. He hates religion, and I brought you closer to religion... I'm afraid to possibly cause a dramatic scene in your home..." Ophir explained that everything would be okay, and there would be nothing to worry about. "I'll take care of it, if anything happens..." The rabbi acquiesced, and marked his calendar for the grand siyum.

The big day finally came, and when the rabbi walked into Ophir's home, he noticed that he was sitting all the way at the front, by the center table, seated next to two other people. Adjacent to him sat a big Israeli man who looked like a part of the mafia, wearing a tiny white kippah atop his shaven-bald head. And next to him was a rabbi-looking figure with a long, white beard. As the celebration commenced, Ophir stood up and delivered a speech, discussing the gemara in great detail. It was a beautiful d'var Torah... a long d'var Torah. Finally, after tying everything together and concluding his grand speech, he made the siyum, and everyone wished him a heartfelt "mazel tov." Ophir took his seat, and the rabbi-looking man with the long, white beard stood up to speak. "I grew up in Sanhedria," he began. "I had a brother who was six years my senior, who was a genius. After he finished elementary school, every high school was begging for him to come. This kid was destined for greatness. He got into a good yeshiva, and he learnt well... but by 12th grade, he started drifting off. He got involved with a few bad

friends, and their negative influence started taking my brother off the path of Judaism. My parents saw what was happening, and they begged my brother to please come back. Instead of coming back, however, he went even further off, until he even left the house. My parents thought he would eventually come back, thinking that he would eventually need food, money, or lodging... but he never came back. I remember how every Friday night, my mother would light the Shabbat candles and for 40 minutes, she would sit and cry, praying for her son Yaakov to come back to Judaism. She did this for no less than 18 years – for 18 years straight she would bawl her eyes out for 40 minutes every Friday night. But he never came back, not even for food or money. After 18 years, my mother passed away, and at that point, my father took over the tradition, crying and praying by the Shabbat candles for 40 minutes every week, and continued doing this for 7 years. Afterwards, my father passed away, and Yaakov still never came – not even for the funerals or yahrzeits. Today, it is has been 30 years since Yaakov left the house. And today, I got a phone call from my long lost brother, and he told me that his son, Ophir, is making a siyum, and that he wants me to come." He motioned to the young man, "This is the siyum of my nephew, Ophir, and this is his father – my brother – Yaakov." He paused; the crowd was confused as to where Ophir's uncle was heading with all this. "I timed the speech that Ophir just gave," he continued. "It was exactly 40 minutes! For decades I couldn't help but wonder where all the tears and tefillot of my parents went. My mother cried for 40 minutes every week for 52 weeks a year for 18 years! And my father did the same for an additional 7 years! What happened to all those prayers? They never saw Yaakov come back even once! Now, though, I see the fruition of their cries. They were never fortunate to see it themselves, but here it is. Yaakov's son, Ophir, came an incredibly long way and even finished a masechta, delivering a speech for a whole 40 minutes...."

As the story goes, Ophir went on to become fully religious, ended up learning in yeshiva, marrying into a religious family, and even inspiring his father back to Judaism.

Even when it all seems hopeless, your prayers are never wasted or futile! You may not see it now, but Hashem has a plan and knows exactly when to save your tefillot for the ultimate moment...

"If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that G-d has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and what is ugly in the world, then it is you yourself that needs repair." (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida	Frida Bat Yaffa	Esther Bar Frida	Yoel Ben Tana	Chana Bat Malka
Heleni Orna Bat Chen Chana	Noah Yisrael Ben Victoria Yaffa	Yitzchak Ben Naama		
Miriam Bat Bakol	Ariel Ben Olga	Yehuda Ben Tzivvia	Zilpa Bat Simcha	Leah Bat Sara
Nir Gutman Ben Miriam	Rahamim Ben Shifra	Sara Bat Tzipora	Nissan Ben Tzipora	
Yosef Shlomo Ben Risha	Sultana Bat Chatun	Yaakov Akiva Ben Chaya Liba		