



Shloimie Paporovich enjoys a lot of things:
collecting stamps, playing baseball, his Bubby's
cinnamon rugelach, and spending time
with his best friend, Hershel.

But when faced with a whole series of
unexpected events, will Shloimie find the
strength to do what's difficult?

When things look bleak, will he accept
that whatever happens is truly good?

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Shloimie's Letter



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Shloimie's Letter

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For our parents, who gave us a strong foundation passed on from their parents... and for our children, may they always build on it and bring continued nachas for generations to come. F.G.S.B. & M.B.

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Meet the Main Characters



**Shloimie
Paporovich**

A responsible ten-year-old who does well at school, Shloimie is an avid stamp collector and loves to play baseball with his friends.



Hershel

Smart and dependable, Shloimie's best friend is always ready to lend a hand.



Gittel

A bright eight-year-old, she wants to be part of everything her big brother Shloimie is doing.



Ma

Mrs. Paporovich is warm, capable, and proud of her Jewish home and family.



Bubby

Tatty's mother who lives with the family, Bubby shares a room with Gittel. She loves feeding people and says Tehillim in her every spare moment.



Tatty

Mr. Paporovich works very hard as a presser in a clothing factory to provide for his family.



**Fetter
Zalman**

Ma's brother lives nearby and works as a peddler.



Mr. and Mrs. Barclay

The only couple on Shloimie's block to own a car, the Barclays have no children and keep to themselves.

Please note that Shloimie, his family and friends are made up characters. This story gives readers an idea of how people lived and the challenges they may have faced just after World War II.

Chapter One

CRASH!

“Shloi-mie! Shloi-mie!”

As his friends chanted his name, ten-year-old Shloimie Paporovich loosened up his pitching arm and stretched his short, stocky frame. With the weather unusually mild for fall in Toronto, it was a perfect afternoon for a game of baseball, and most of the boys from Shloimie’s Talmud Torah class were there.

There were two kids on base in the empty lot, with Shloimie’s best friend Hershel at bat. Hershel’s round freckled face was tense with concentration. Shloimie took a deep breath and narrowed his eyes while considering his options. *Okay, it’s time for a fast ball.*

Suddenly, Hershel lowered his bat and called a time out.

Shloimie looked puzzled. "What? Afraid of my next pitch?"

"Not a chance. But it's pretty late and we're all getting hungry."

He glanced around regretfully. "Okay, fine. Just one last pitch."

"Better make it a good one," said Hershel, grinning.

Shloimie straightened his cap and got a good grip on the ball. Then he wound up, pulled his arm back, and snapped the baseball toward home plate. The pitch went wild! The catcher flung himself sideways, mitt in the air, but missed. Hershel's mouth opened as the ball flew by like a missile and landed with a shocking CRASH!

The noisy players grew silent.

Shloimie's heart sank. A crash like that could not be good.

"Hershel," Shloimie said, covering his eyes, "please tell me I did not just break one



of the windows of Mr. Barclay's house."

Mr. Barclay and his wife had just recently moved into the neighborhood, into the red brick house next to the empty lot. Mr. Barclay was an impressive height, at least six feet tall, if not taller. The neighbors knew he had some kind of important job, and he always looked dignified. He and his wife were the first non-Jewish people to move to the block and they mostly stayed to themselves. They were also the only ones on the street to own a car, which Mr. Barclay polished every weekend. The kids could always tell that he was annoyed when they were playing outside and making noise. He never said anything directly to any of them, but he always had a very stern look on his face.

"Nope, you did not break one of the windows of Mr. Barclay's house . . ." Hershel answered.

"Oh, *Boruch Hashem.*" Shloimie let out a sigh of relief.

“. . . but, you did break one of the windows of Mr. Barclay’s car,” Hershel concluded.

“Oh no!” Shloimie groaned. “Not Mr. Barclay’s car!”

One by one, the Talmud Torah boys joined the huddle around Mr. Barclay’s dark grey Chevrolet. As always, the car was sparkling clean, but – to Shloimie’s horror – the side passenger window had shattered into a spider web pattern that spread all across the glass. The ball itself was nowhere to be found.

An uncomfortable silence fell over the group. As if on cue, every single boy had to hurry home at that exact moment. Nobody wanted to be around for Mr. Barclay’s reaction to the damaged car.

Hershel patted Shloimie on the back. “I’d better go, too. It sure is getting late.”

“You’re leaving?” Shloimie squeaked. “I was going to ring my neighbor’s bell and tell him what happened. But, if I don’t... I mean, it’s not like anyone would tell him

I was the one who threw that pitch..."

"I know you," Hershel broke in. "You'll never feel right if you don't tell him the truth. Besides, this whole street is filled with Jewish families. Imagine what he'll think about Jewish boys if you don't. Want me to come with you? You threw that pitch to me, so I guess it's partly my fault."

Shloimie shook his head. "You're a good friend, Hershel. But I'm the one who threw that ball. I'll have to pay the price. The thing is, our teacher said '*Gam zu l'tova,*' that everything is for the best, remember? What could possibly be good about this?"

"I don't know," Hershel said, "but I'm still coming with you."

"You're a real pal," Shloimie said. "I'm glad I don't have to do this alone."

His chest felt stiff, as if he couldn't take a full breath. This was a disaster. All Shloimie could think was "My parents can't afford to fix this broken window!"

Back in Poland, before the Second World

War, Shloimie's father had owned a grocery store. But then the family moved to Toronto when Shloimie was just a baby. They'd spent all their money on tickets to Canada, leaving no money to start a business. They were all grateful Tatty found a job in a clothing factory.

Now he spends long days pressing suits and dresses on a steaming hot garment press. Shloimie knows his father is trying to save up to rent a store of his own, but it is taking a very long time.

Gittel, his younger sister, was born in Canada, and Bubby, his father's mother, lives with them, too. With five people to provide for, Tatty has to work very hard. They need food, coal, and other things, like new shoes for Rosh Hashanah. Ma saves every penny she can, and they never go hungry, but still, there's never extra money. Shloimie sighed. *How could there be anything good about breaking Mr. Barclay's car window?*

His gloomy thoughts were interrupted when Hershel pointed his thumb toward

Mr. Barclay's house. "Let's get this over with."

Shloimie looked around at the deserted lot, which just a few minutes before had been filled with all his friends. He sighed again. *If only I hadn't thrown that last pitch.*

With heavy steps, the two boys went up the path to the red brick house and wiped their feet on the mat. Shloimie's mouth felt dry. *Hashem, please help me find the right words!*

He rang the doorbell and stepped back, holding his mitt behind him. After what seemed like a long time, the door opened, and Shloimie found himself staring directly at Mr. Barclay's shiny black shoes. His eyes traveled upward to Mr. Barclay's fancy leather belt, his silk tie, his crisp suit jacket, his stern jaw. At that moment, Mr. Barclay seemed to grow taller, and his broad shoulders filled the entire doorway.

Looking down at the two boys he asked, "May I help you?"

Shloimie tried to sound confident and friendly, but his voice came out in a whisper.

“Hello, sir.” Mr. Barclay just nodded.

“Umm, my name is Shloimie Paporovich. I live just a few houses down from you, on the first floor.”

“Yes,” Mr. Barclay said, nodding again.

Shloimie gulped. “Well, you see, I was playing baseball with my friends just now, and I was the pitcher. My friend here was at bat, and I guess I threw the ball a little too hard, because it went way past the spot where we were playing, and it well, it, uh . . .”

“Speak up, young man,” Mr. Barclay interrupted. “I can barely hear you.”

Shloimie began again, trying to keep it simple, trying to get the words out. “I was playing ball with my friends, and I accidentally broke your car window. I’m sorry, Mr. Barclay.”

Shloimie held his breath. *Would his neighbor be furious? Would he start yelling?*

“You broke one of my car windows,” Mr. Barclay repeated. “Let’s go take a look.”

Mr. Barclay took a moment to put on his hat and coat. He stepped onto the porch and motioned for Shloimie and Hershel to come with him to the curb. Walking around his car, he checked it from all angles, inspecting the smashed window.

The boys followed his every move, waiting to see what would happen.

Mr. Barclay bent down, reached under the car, and pulled out the baseball that had caused all the trouble. He straightened up and held out the ball to Shloimie.

“Young man,” said Mr. Barclay, “you’ll need this back if your pitching is going to improve.” The boys looked at each other in shock. Mr. Barclay didn’t sound as angry as they had expected. He didn’t sound angry at all!

Shloimie gripped the ball and stared at his neighbor. “I... I’m so sorry. I mean, thank you.”

Mr. Barclay gave a tight smile. “Believe it or not, I was quite a pitcher in my day. Next time you have a game, just ask me to move my car first.”



“We will... I mean, I will,” Shloimie stammered. “And I will pay for a new car window, every penny!”

For the first time, Mr. Barclay looked pleased. “Do you have a plan?”

“Well, I’ve been saving up to buy a stamp book for my stamp collection. I can

give you that money right away.”

“How much have you saved up so far?” Mr. Barclay asked.

Shloimie gulped. “The last time I counted it, twenty-eight cents.”

“That’s a start,” said Mr. Barclay, “but not nearly enough. Replacing a car window costs over five dollars. That’s a lot more than a stamp book.”

Shloimie’s face turned pale. Five dollars was more money than Shloimie had ever seen in his life. It was a whole day of Tatty’s weekly earnings!

Hershel noticed his friend’s shock, and he spoke up. “I was at bat when the accident happened, and Shloimie and I, we’re best friends, so I want to help. I can give you two weeks’ allowance – that’s ten cents!”

Mr. Barclay’s mouth twitched. “You are a good friend. But thirty-eight cents is a long way from the total.”

“Well,” said Shloimie, his heart pounding, “what if I work it off? I’ll rake

your leaves, wash your car, and when winter comes, I'll shovel your sidewalk and clear a path to your front door."

"I'll help, too," Hershel added.

Mr. Barclay thought for a moment. "It's a deal, but under one condition. You must tell your parents and get their permission."

"Oh, I will. I'll tell them. And I really am sorry," Shloimie said. He felt as if a huge weight had been lifted from his chest. *There was a way to fix this!*

As Mr. Barclay strode back toward his front door, the two boys just stood there, side by side. Hershel exhaled a huge sigh of relief. "You were so brave, Shloimie!"

"I guess so. But I still can't see how any of this is good at all... breaking a window, giving up our money, having to work just to pay him back..."

Hershel laughed. "I can think of one good thing! After facing Mr. Barclay, telling your parents should be easy!"