**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shemini 5773**

**Volume 4, Issue 30 27 Nissan 5773/ April 6, 2013**

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**Chassidic Story #799**

**The Real Reason**

**Behind a Visa**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/8?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000iSW0:001HIPTf00003X4Z&block=1&msgNature=all&msgStatus=all&count=1363787633&randid=515699069&content=central##)

 In 1920, after the establishment of the brutal Soviet regime, the fourth Rachmastrivka Rebbe, Rabbi Dovid Twersky, and his family were forced to flee their native town and live in Nikolayev, which was known for its large Lubavitcher community. Our **Lubavitcher Rebbe**, born in 1902, whose grandfather was the chief rabbi of the city, had opportunities to meet and work with the Rachmastrivka Rebbe and establish a network of underground yeshivas throughout Soviet Russia.

***Israeli passport of Rebbe Yochanan Twersky of Rachmastrivka, with his photograph and handwritten signature (from // ArtFact.com, an auction site).***

 The Rachmastrivka Rebbe lived in Nikolayev for six years until 1926, when he had his family finally left for Israel and he rebuilt his Chassidic court in Jerusalem.

 About thirty years passed since those difficult days in Russia. In 1950, after the passing of his father, R. Dovid, **Rabbi Yochanan Twersky** became the new Admor [Hebrew acronym for Chasidic Rebbe] **of Rachmastrivka**, in Jerusalem. He continued to lead the chasidim and rebuilt their branch of Chasidut almost from scratch, after years of suffering and exile. His leadership was noted for its warmth and straightforwardness.

**Travelling to New York for the Wedding of His Son**

 In 1954 R. Yochanan went to Williamsburg, New York for the wedding of his son, Rabbi Chaim-Yitzchak Twersky (the present Admor based in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn). Taking advantage of his stay in Brooklyn to renew his connection with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Zt”l Yochanan Twersky arrived one night at 770 for a private audience which lasted quite some time.

 During this time the Rebbe asked the Admor whether he remembered a certain student in the underground Junior Yeshiva in Nikolayev. When the Admor said yes, the Rebbe explained how this student had emigrated from the Soviet Union to the United States, where, ironically, in a free country he could observe the religion without persecution, he had chosen instead to leave the path of Torah and mitzvot. The Rebbe said that Lubavitcher chasidim had met with him and tried to get him back on track, but to no avail.

**Requesting that the Rachmastrivka Admor**

**Try and Influence the Former Student**

 Perhaps you will have an influence on him, the Rebbe suggested, and he asked the Admor about possibly devoting some time in New York to visit with this man and inspire him to return to the fold.



***Israeli passport of Rebbe Yochanan Twersky of Rachmastrivka, with his photograph and handwritten signature (from // ArtFact.com, an auction site).***

 It is remarkable that the conversation between these two tzadikim focused on a Jew from decades ago and how to get him back to Jewish ways and traditions. The Rachmastrivka Rebbe, saddened to hear about the poor spiritual state of the former student, promised the Rebbe to try to reach this person.

 The Rebbe did not delay. Immediately he picked up the phone and dialed the man’s number. “I have Rabbi Yochanan Twersky sitting here. Do you remember him?”

 Apparently the man said yes, for the Rebbe continued, “Rabbi Twersky is interested in meeting with you. When can you meet?”

 When the man said that Friday afternoon would be convenient, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Twersky to receive him then and gave the man the address where the Admor was staying.

**A Highly Emotional Reunion**

 Friday afternoon, the former student from Nikolayev went to Williamsburg to see the Rachmastrivka Rebbe. After nearly thirty years separation, the meeting was highly emotional and time was spent reminiscing about unforgettable people.

 When the man asked the Admor why he had come to New York, the Admor simply replied that he had come for his son’s wedding. The former student, guessing the reason for their meeting and feeling gratitude for what the Rebbe had done for him years ago, took out a checkbook, wrote a generous check, and presented it to the Admor.

 To his surprise, the Admor would not accept it. “I won’t take a check until I finish our conversation,” he declared. “I want to discuss your religious observance.”

**A Man Cut Off from His Jewish Roots**

 The man, by then entrenched in the American way of life and thinking, explained that he was a respected member of his Jewish community and even went to shul occasionally. He seemed pleased with himself.

 “What about Shabbat observance?” asked the Admor.

 The man began to justify his lack of observance, saying that although it is true that Shabbat is very important, he couldn’t be closed while all his competitors were open on this busiest day of the week.

 “What about keeping kosher?” persisted the Admor.

 Again the man mumbled that in spite of his desire to keep kosher, he lived in an area where kosher products were almost impossible to obtain, which left him no choice but to eat non-kosher.

 The Admor listened quietly. “What about tefillin?”

 The man agreed that tefillin was a major mitzvah but that he did not always have time for it.

 The Admor’s eyes filled with tears. At last he cried bitterly.

 “Was it for a Judaism like this that we invested so much effort into you in the underground schools in Nikolayev? Each of your teachers put his life in danger, and for what? Only so you would grow up to be a G-d-fearing and observant Jew. See how far you’ve strayed…”

 The man was touched, and he too began to cry. “You are absolutely right! I promise that from now on I will do teshuva [repent and return] and keep the mitzvot as I learned them.”

 The Admor was pleased. He blessed the former student with success in returning to his roots.

 Before they parted, the man again tried to hand him the check, but this time again, the Admor refused. “I will take the check only after I find out that you kept your word and did teshuva. How will I know when I don’t live here?”

 He then answered his own question, “When the Lubavitcher Rebbe will tell me that you did teshuva, only then will I accept your donation.”

 With a strong handshake the Rachmastrivka Rebbe and his guest said goodbye.

**Update**

 The Admor’s visit in New York lasted a few more weeks, during which he received many people who came to him for blessings and advice.

 One day, the phone rang at his host’s house. The Rachmastrivka Rebbetzin answered.

 The voice on the line asked to speak with Rabbi Twersky.

 “Who is speaking?” she asked.

 “Duh redt men fun Lubavitch (I’m calling from Lubavitch)” was the Yiddish response.

 Realizing it was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, she excitedly gave the phone to her husband.

 The Rebbe gave the Rachmastrivka Rebbe the update: their former student had done teshuva and begun keeping mitzvoth.

 “Yochanan,” said the Rebbe, “you think you came here in order to marry off your son? You came here so that a Jew would do teshuva. Now this man is fully observant!”

**The Story Behind the Visa**

 Rabbi Nachman-Yosef Twersky, grandson of R. Yochanan and nephew of R. Chaim-Yitzchak, the source of this story, adds:

 When I spoke with my uncle about his wedding, I thought about what the Rebbe had said to my grandfather and I put the following information together:

 When my grandfather went for his visa to the U.S. for the first time, he was refused. The people at the American embassy saw he was a former Russian citizen, and in light of the tension between the United States and Russia at the time, that was reason enough to be refused a visa to the U.S. The Americans were afraid to allow possible Russian spies into the country. My grandfather was turned down again and again, and he despaired of being able to attend his son’s wedding. The chatan [bridegroom] went to America by himself and the family made peace with the fact that the father of the chatan would not be attending. A few days before the wedding, the American embassy contacted him and said he could submit another request. He did so and this time the visa was granted.

**Orchestrated by Divine Providence**

 When the family reviewed what the Rebbe had said to my grandfather, they realized that Divine Providence had orchestrated matters so he could travel to the United States in order to save that Jew and not necessarily because of the wedding of his son.

 Source: Adapted and expanded by Yerachmiel Tilles from an emailing of the Avner Institute (Rebbebook#Gmail.com).

 Connection: Friday, 11 Nissan, is the 19th yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

 Biographical notes: **Rabbi Yochanan Twersky of Rachmastrivka** (1903 20 Kislev 1981), became the 5th Rebbe in the Rachmastrivka dynasty in 1950, after having immigrated to Israel together with his father and grandfather in 1926. He rebuilt this branch of Chernobyl Chasidut almost from scratch, including founding the Meor Einayim Yeshiva in Jerusalem, after years of suffering and exile. His two sons, Yisrael-Mordechai and Chaim-Yitzchak, became the Rebbes after him, each with thousands of followers, in Jerusalem and Brooklyn respectively.

 **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**, ***the Lubavitcher Rebbe*** (11 Nissan 1902 - 3 Tammuz 1994), became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away in Brooklyn on 10 Shvat 1950. He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.Org, a project of Ascent of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentofsafed.com*

**British Prime Minister Cameron and U.S. President Obama Offer Passover Greetings to the Jewish People**

 LONDON/WASHINGTON (EJP) --- British Prime Minister David Cameron paid tribute to the Jewish community’s “significant historic and continued contribution to life in the UK” in his official greetings to mark the Jewish festival of Passover Monday, as he said the input of its 300,000-strong Jewish community had “helped make Britain the richly diverse and inclusive place it is today”.

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| http://www.ejpress.org/ImageGallery/dc4f4253-88b5-4d1d-9cc5-f6cf3f8a4a7a.jpg |
| *US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama hosted the White House's annual Seder night festivities Monday. Previewing the fifth such event he has presided over on his visit to Israel last week, Obama said the story of the Jewish festival of Passover "from slavery to salvation, of overcoming even the most overwhelming odds - is a message that’s inspired the world"* |

 Invoking the festival’s marking of the exodus of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, from where they travelled to Canaan (modern-day Israel), he reflected on the international community’s continued concerns over the stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process, as he said shared in global Jewry’s “hope and determination that a lasting peace can be found for Israel and the wider region”.

 Adding his own message of goodwill, Foreign Secretary William Hague heralded British Jews’ celebration of their release from slavery, as he paid tribute to their ability to celebrate the eight-day festival in “liberty and freedom”.

 Elsewhere, ahead of his fifth annual White House Seder night Monday, US President Barack Obama recalled the “powerful” story of Passover, as he reaffirmed his message of “unbreakable” friendship with the Jewish State – a recurring theme of his official visit to Israel last week – as he too equated the Middle East peace process with the Jews’ own history of slavery in their own land.

**Invoking Israel’s Responsibilities to the World**

 Invoking Israel’s responsibilities to all races and religions residing there, he said: “Passover is a celebration of the freedom our ancestors dreamed of, fought for, and ultimately won. But even as we give thanks, we are called to look to the future. We are reminded that responsibility does not end when we reach the Promised Land, it only begins.”

 Expressing his hopes for the resuscitation of direct peace talks, following his well-received meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian administrations, he concluded: “I am hopeful that we can draw upon the best in ourselves to find the promise in the days that lie ahead, meet the challenges that will come, and continuing the hard work of repairing the world.”

**Discussing the Lesson of Afikoman**

 Previewing the Seder night in Washington, introduced by Obama when he first entered office in 2008, speaking at a state dinner hosted by his Israeli counterpart Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, the American leader said the traditional breaking and hiding of the matzah (unleavened bread) which forms a key part of the proceedings, “speaks to the scope of our human experience - how parts of our lives can be broken while other parts can be elusive; how we can never give up searching for the things that make us whole,” as he conceded that “few know this better than the Jewish people”.

 Invoking the “centuries of persecution and pogroms” which faced global Jewry culminating in the Holocaust, he said that the survival of the Jewish people served as “the ultimate rebuke to hate and to ignorance - survivors would live and love again”.

 The message of survival was replicated in the story of Israel’s own comparatively short existence, he added, in spite of opposition to its right to exist from many of its neighbours. “This story - from slavery to salvation, of overcoming even the most overwhelming odds - is a message that’s inspired the world,” he concluded.

**Reaching Out to the “Hidden Jews” of Southern Italy**

**By the Staff of Arutz Sheva**

 Rabbi Pinchas Punturello, 36, has been appointed to serve as the new emissary for the Shavei Israel organization in southern Italy and Sicily. In his new position, Rabbi Punturello will serve as the area’s chief rabbi, and will work to strengthen the local Jewish community in regions such as Puglia, Campania, Sicily, and Calabria, while also reaching out to the Bnei Anousim (whom historians refer to by the derogatory term Marranos) throughout the area, many of whom are looking to reconnect with the Jewish people.



**Rabbi Pinchas Punturello**

**Helping “Hidden Jews” Reconnect**

**With the Jewish People**

 Shavei Israel, which reaches out to communities of “hidden Jews” and helps them to reconnect with the Jewish People and State of Israel, is undertaking this project in conjunction with the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, the official umbrella organization of Italian Jewry. It marks the first time that a rabbi has been appointed to work specifically with the Bnei Anousim of southern Italy and Sicily.

 “We are pleased that Rabbi Pinchas Punturello has joined the ranks of Shavei Israel. This is a direct result of the expansion of our activity throughout southern Italy in light of the growing desire of Bnei Anousim to reconnect with Jewish life,” said Shavei Israel Chairman Michael Freund. “In recent years, a growing number of Bnei Anousim in southern Italy have begun rediscovering their Jewish roots and expressing a desire to draw closer to Israel and the Jewish people. It is incumbent upon us to reach out to them and help them to do so,” he said.

**Coming Home After 500**

**Or 600 Years is Not Easy**

 “The Bnei Anousim in southern Italy need to be helped from a cultural point of view, as well as in a spiritual way, and we are here to guide them in this journey”, said Rabbi Punterello. “After all, to come home after 500 or 600 years is not easy, but it's wonderful.”

 Rabbi Punterello will work to expand Shavei Israel’s activities throughout Italy, which will include: convening seminars and symposiums for the Bnei Anousim, organizing prayer services and regular classes on Jewish subjects, publishing newsletters and other Italian-language material on Jewish topics and distributing them among various communities in southern Italy; as well as providing assistance with the aliyah, conversion and absorption processes for those members of the community who choose to immigrate to Israel.

 He will also head the “Sud Italia” project organized by Shavei Israel and UCEI, Union of Italian Jewish Communities, aims to recover traditional, spiritual and religious rights of all groups, families and individuals, in Puglia, Sicily, Calabria and Campania who are rediscovering their origins and need help.

**Among Those Who Sought Refuge in**

**Southern Italy was the Abarbanel**

 Southern Italy, much like Spain and South America, cries out for its Jewish past. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, many of them sought refuge in Naples, Puglia, Sicily and Calabria. They included Don Isaac Abarbanel, the great Torah scholar and Biblical commentator who also served as Finance Minister to Spanish King Ferdinand, along with his family. But when the Spanish monarchs captured the region in 1510, a series of further persecutions began, which included forced conversions and expulsions.

 The Inquisition was active in the area for centuries and burned Marranos and conversos until 1700 and possibly later. But the Bnei Anousim of the area clung to their Jewish identity handing it down from one generation to the next, and nowadays it is their descendants who are beginning to return.

 The Jewish presence in Sicily dates back some two thousand years. Some historians say the first Jews were brought there as slaves by the victorious Roman legions during the Second Temple period. The community steadily grew in the ensuing centuries despite various periods of persecution, and produced an array of great scholars and rabbis.

**Once There Were 52 Jewish**

**Communities throughout Sicily**

 Towards the end of the 14th century, Sicily’s Jews were confined to ghettos and faced increasingly harsh decrees as well as massacres and forced conversions to Catholicism. At the time, Sicily was under the control of the Spanish crown and in 1492, the anti-Semitic measures reached their peak with the Edict of Expulsion, which ordered the remaining Jews to leave.

 There were 52 Jewish communities spread out across Sicily, numbering at least 37,000 people. Many left by December 31, 1492, but large numbers of forcibly-converted Jews were compelled to remain behind, where they suffered under the heavy hand of the Inquisition. The first auto-da-fe in Sicily took place in Palermo in June 1511, when the Inquisitors executed nine Sicilian Bnei Anousim for secretly practicing Judaism.

*Reprinted from the March 28, 2013 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**Courage is a Journey:**

**Seven Years Ago I was**

**Diagnosed with Breast Cancer.**

**By Sasha Yonah Bas Kunah Chana**

 I was 29 years old and a newlywed. The doctors told me I was lucky. A routine physical exam found the lump; early stage cancer was discovered before it had a chance to spread. After lumpectomy surgery and radiation treatment they said there was a 95% chance I would be cured for the rest of my life.

 At the time so many people told me how they admired my courage through the whole thing and I never understood why I was considered so brave. I felt guilty putting myself in the category of 'cancer survivor.' I didn't undergo a mastectomy. I never had chemotherapy with its dual challenges of hair loss and nausea. I never even got the sunburn that is common with radiation therapy.

 Shortly after my diagnosis I actually separated from my new husband. He was not able to be there for me during my illness. Because of the separation, I moved back in with my mom and dad who took care of me as only one's parents can. They handled nearly all my adult responsibilities. Mom did my laundry and made me dinner. Dad took me to appointments and played endless rounds of cribbage with me to keep me occupied.

 My boss took away all deadlines and let me come and go as I pleased with full pay, never charging me one day of sick or vacation leave. She checked with me regularly to see if I needed a break, wanted to leave early or if I just wanted to chat.

**Spending Shabbos with the Springers**

 I began going to a new community for Shabbos and wound up being hosted regularly by the Springers\* -- a rabbinic family who eventually became like my second parents. Rabbi Springer could always make me crack a smile no matter how sad I felt about my situation. He knew me well and helped me understand why G-d gives personal challenges and how one can grow by facing them with strength. Mrs. Springer always knew the right words to penetrate my heart and mind that would inspire my trust in God's goodness.

 With such a good prognosis for recovery and physical and emotional support, I didn't think I was so brave in handling my cancer diagnosis and treatment.

 I felt G-d's presence in my life so strongly at that time. I credited G-d for directing me to people who would give me guidance to get through my hard times and come out stronger. With G-d's help I finished treatment and recovered. I also got out of a bad marriage and re-married to a fantastic man one year later.

**The Breast Cancer Strikes**

**Again Seven Years Later**

 Fast forward seven years to the summer of 2006. I'm now a mother with three adorable children under age six, running a busy home – and breast cancer struck me again.

 My treatment would not be so simple this time. Thanks again to early detection, this new tumor was caught before it had a chance to spread. I wouldn't need chemotherapy or radiation this time; a left breast mastectomy and subsequent reconstruction was my only option for a cure and recovery. I felt angry, frustrated, and scared.

 A tidal wave of fear washed over me... I feared not waking up from the general anesthesia and the pain and disfigurement after surgery. I wondered how my husband and young children would manage without me during my recovery. Dark images of bleeding to death, or dying during the operation through some freak medical mistake disturbed my sleep.

 My thoughts ran wild. How could G-d do this to a mother of three little children who depend on me so much? How could G-d cause such disfigurement to a 36-year old woman only six years into her marriage? Would I ever look normal in my clothes? Would I ever be attractive to my husband again?

 For a variety of reasons, I delayed the surgery for a few weeks. These were very difficult days indeed, but they led me on a journey of understanding. Within those five weeks between my diagnosis and surgery, I grew to see these events as evidence of G-d's loving involvement in my life. And this was my real discovery of courage.

**Finds Herself Angry at G-d**

 At first I struggled mightily to accept my diagnosis and was so angry at G-d. I felt like G-d was punishing me, for how could He do this if He loved me? I knew it was wrong to be mad at G-d, but I just couldn't help it. On top of it all, I felt like a bad Jew too.

 My anger caused me to stop praying. I just couldn't say the words in the *siddur* (prayerbook). I tried to say psalms as Jewish women have done throughout the ages in times of trouble, but I just couldn't make myself say those either.

 My one saving strength throughout this time was that I didn't want to wallow in my anger and fear; I wanted to conquer it for my own sake and for the well being of my family. I spent a lot of time talking to Mrs. Springer and to our shul rabbi. They assured me that my angry feelings were normal, and that helped.

**Day by Day Making Our Peace with G-d**

 "Only a tremendous *tzaddik* (a very righteous person) can get a cancer diagnosis and immediately find the good," Mrs. Springer explained. "For the rest of us it's a process." Day by day we make our peace with G-d, working through feelings of fear and anger, and eventually we come to look for ways that even painful events in our lives can be to our benefit. We attain courage little by little.

 That bit of clarity enabled me to gradually end the guilt and even overcome my anger towards G-d. Then I started praying again. A friend advised me to just use my own words to plea for a complete and speedy recovery. I begged G-d to make my convalescence period as easy as possible for me and my family. My tears cleansed some of the fear and anger out of my heart and eventually I was able to open a prayer book again.

**Fighting Back Against**

**The Fear and Anger**

 My desire to fight back against the fear and anger kicked in. I began to actively counter my negativity. As my surgery approached I often told myself, *"Gam zu l'tovah"* (this too is for the best) and *"Gam zeh ya'avor"* (this too shall pass), and even, "Hey, I won't have to do laundry for the next four weeks."

 I realized that one can actually grow from an experience like mine, and see that G-d truly loves us since He's made His presence in our lives so palpable. This is the essence of *emunah*, belief in G-d. I internalized that all G-d's plans are somehow for the best, even when we don't know why. This is real *bitachon*, faith in G-d. The acceptance of these concepts gave me greater serenity.

 By the time I went in for the surgery, though still terribly scared, I was actually sincerely thanking G-d for this outcome. I would live and be with my family and be rid of my left breast, a part of my body that had twice been caught endangering my life.

**Among the “Lucky” Cancer Patients**

 The doctors told me that after I would eventually look and feel pretty normal again. I am among the "lucky" cancer patients who didn't have to undergo adjuvant therapies since this tumor had not spread. The surgery was a total cure. I was given a long term survival prognosis. I felt truly blessed as I went into the mastectomy surgery and was looking forward to finally putting this long-awaited event behind me.

 Now I felt courageous because I worked hard to come to peace with G-d. With the help of my parents, brother and a network of caring volunteers my family made it through my hospitalization and gradual recovery. A neighbor marveled at the small army it took to replace all the work I did as a wife and mother.

 If I had any remaining doubts about whether G-d loves me, they were all answered a week after the mastectomy when I got the biopsy results. The microscope found several scattered foci of tumors throughout the breast tissue, too small for detection by mammography or MRI.

 My left breast had been a time bomb. Only G-d could have known about those other seedling tumors in my breast. What would have happened to me a year down the road if I had not had that mastectomy? Even a few more months in the future could have meant the spread of cancer and the addition of chemotherapy to my treatment. Recovery and long term prognosis could have been worse off, too.

 As I hung up the phone with the doctor, I shuddered and cried. I thought back to when I first told Mrs. Springer about this cancer diagnosis, she had said to me: "I just want you to know that G-d loves you." I couldn't really integrate her message at the time, but the power of what she said is now deeply ingrained in my heart and mind. The diagnosis and treatment which I had initially viewed as a punishment from G-d had, in actuality, turned out to be a life-saving gift.

**We Can All Try to Accept G-d’s**

**Will and Focus on His Kindnesses**

 Not everyone gets such answers and peace of mind after a traumatic illness, I know. But at least, when facing a threat to our well being, we can all try to accept G-d's will and focus on His kindnesses instead of focusing on "why me" -- something we may never really understand.

 What are G-d's kindnesses when someone has a scary medical diagnosis? Health insurance, a top doctor, loving family, excellent spiritual guidance, supportive friends, caring shul members and neighbors, the list goes on. Look at these things in your struggle with an illness or traumatic event as the gifts from G-d they truly are.

 Here are some tips that helped me through my worst of times and could help others too:

**Prayer:**

 G-d is always open to the heartfelt pleas of you, your family and your community. Regular prayer can help you feel more connected to G-d and may even improve your situation.

***Tzedakah* (charity):**

The sages tell us that G-d treats us the way we treat others. If we desperately want G-d’s help, then we should start by helping others through giving *tzedakah*.

**Work on a character trait:**

Monitor your patience, kindness, generosity or something else and work on improving it. Show G-d that you want to be a better person and He can become more aware of your positive influence in His world.

**Talk to people who can give**

**You spiritual guidance:**

A rabbi or rebbetzin (rabbi's wife) or deeply spiritual person who has been through a tough time himself. They can help you repair your bad feelings and set your brain thinking positive thoughts instead of negative ones.

**Distraction:**

Take up a hobby like knitting, sketching, coin collecting or cooking. I became a gardener and found tremendous relaxation and comfort from concentrating on something other than my medical situation.

**Feed yourself positive messages:**

 Chase away the negative thoughts that pop into your brain with positive ones. Create a few mantras for yourself like "G-d loves me." "This too is for the best." "I will get through this as so many others before me have."

**Accept offers of help:**

Don't be too proud to accept help. There is a tremendous burden on the whole family when someone is sick, so give everyone a break by accepting babysitters, play date offers, hot dinners, rides to the doctor or whatever anyone offers you. With G-d's help you'll be able to repay the favor one day.

 By the way, I authored this article using my Hebrew name, Sasha Yonah Bas Kunah Chana. I would appreciate your prayers for my continued and complete recovery. Wishing all my readers only good health and for us all to grow and merit recognizing G-d's loving hand in our lives.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Aish.com*

**Gold and Silver**

**By** [**Bentzion Elisha**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/15789/jewish/Elisha-Bentzion.htm)

 *Originally told by the Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam, at a community gathering.*

 A follower of the chassidic leader Reb Mottel of Chernobyl had a particular habit which came to light when he visited Reb Mottel to request a blessing. Reb Mottel asked the visitor to recount his typical daily schedule. The young man explained that he began each day by buying goods for his business from the local landowner. Following that, he would recite the morning prayers, after which he began to sell his wares.

 “Why do you buy your merchandise before you pray in the morning?” asked Reb Mottel.

 The young man explained, “Why, if I waited until after prayers, the only goods remaining would be of inferior quality, if not sold out entirely!”

Upon hearing that, Reb Mottel shared a story with his follower.

**A Teacher Who Taught Jewish**

**Children in Distant Cities**

 There was once a teacher of Jewish studies, whose livelihood entailed traveling far from his hometown to teach Jewish children in distant cities. He was often away from his home for a year or more at a time. Meanwhile his wife and children lived the year without him, borrowing and living on credit.

 This teacher was paid for his services with coins. The wealthy gave him gold coins, the middle class paid with silver coins, and people of more modest means paid with copper or nickel coins.

 The teacher had made a belt for himself where he would hang the various bags. Each bag carried a different type of coin. He had a bag for his gold coins, a bag for his silver coins, a bag for his nickel coins and a bag for his copper coins.

**On the Long Journey Back**

**Home to His Family**

 After the year of teaching was up, he headed back home. As the first Shabbat on his voyage approached, he knew he would have to remove his belt, as carrying money on Shabbat is forbidden. But he didn’t know where to hide his money bags.

 He decided to bury his earnings in the ground, and retrieve them after Shabbat. But just as he was about to finish his digging, he heard some people in the distance. Paranoia set in, and he became alarmed by the possibility that if he could hear them, they could probably see him, and his money wasn’t safe.

 Now pressed for time, he grabbed the belt with the bags of coins and ran to the local Jewish inn, where he handed the innkeeper the entire bundle in a furious hurry for safekeeping. Shabbat began, and the teacher was livid with himself. He had just given the innkeeper his entire year’s earnings without even a note or receipt mentioning the amount of money being held. It would be so easy for the innkeeper to deny safeguarding the coins, and his whole year’s pay would be lost.

Thoughts of his wife and children flooded his mind. What would they do? How would they face the creditors? His imagination took off, leaving him worried and on edge for the entire Shabbat.

 The innkeeper sensed his guest’s troubled condition and, as soon as Shabbat departed, he recited the evening prayers very quickly, and placed the belt with the bags of coins in front of the teacher, who was still reciting the silent Amidah prayer.

**The Amazement of the Innkeeper**

 To the amazement of the innkeeper, in the middle of his supplications the teacher opened the bag of gold coins and started counting them one by one. He saw that all the coins were still there. Nevertheless, he took out the bag with the silver coins and started counting them next. All the silver coins were also still there, yet his concern and worry did not dissipate. He then started counting the nickel coins, and then the copper coins, and finally returned to his prayers. The innkeeper, who had observed the entire process, was taken aback and perplexed.

 When the teacher finished his prayers, the innkeeper confronted him. “After you saw I hadn’t taken any of your gold coins, why did you not trust that I hadn’t taken any of your silver coins, which are much less valuable? And after you counted the silver coins too, and saw I took nothing, why didn’t you trust me then? You continued to count the ridiculously less valuable nickel and copper coins.”

**Reb Mottel Asks the Same Question**

 Reb Mottel of Chernobyl turned to the young man before him and said, “I want to ask you the same question the innkeeper asked the teacher. Every single morning, G‑d has given you back your soul, your body, your very life—the equivalent of gold and silver coins.

 “What makes you think He won’t also give you your livelihood—your nickel and copper coins? You should increase your trust, and believe that G‑d will give you your physical sustenance too. There is no need to rush off to buy goods before morning prayers.”

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.org*

**It Once Happened**

**The Accidentally Abandoned Son of a Jewish Family**

 There was once a Jewish family too poor to pay their rent to the local poritz (landowner). As a result they lost their home and were thrown into debtor's prison. Every day, bread and water were lowered down into the pit by means of a rope.

 After a while, the guard in charge of providing them with food took pity on the unfortunate family. One day, after the poritz had left, he yelled down to them to tie themselves securely to the rope when he lowered it. He hoisted them up and set them free. The grateful Jews thanked the man and fled, but in their haste to escape they did not take their newborn son along.

**A Furious Poritz Discovers**

**A Tiny Baby in the Pit**

 The poritz was furious when he found out what happened. He went into the pit so he could investigate for himself. Much to his shock, there was a tiny baby, swaddled and crying in a dark corner. The poritz's manager, who had no children of his own, asked the poritz for permission to adopt the abandoned infant. The poritz agreed and the child was raised in the gentile home, calling the man and woman who reared him Father and Mother. He was never told that he was adopted.

 Growing up, the child was frequently taunted by the local children, who called him "Zhid" (Jew). Everyone in the insular village was aware of his origins except for the child himself. As he grew older he realized that something about his past was deliberately being kept from him, but his parents always managed to avoid giving him direct answers to his questions.

**Discovers His True Jewish Origins**

 Finally, one day the boy cornered his mother and was especially persistent. Thus he found out that he was not the couple's biological son, and learned how his Jewish parents had escaped from the pit.

 Although the youngster was not sure what a Jew was, he decided that one day he would join his brethren. His opportunity came a short time later, when he fled the village and ran to the next town. He approached the first person he met, who, it turned out, was the custodian of the local synagogue. "I am a Jew, and I want to be among Jews," he announced in Russian to the startled man. The custodian took him home, treated him like his own son, and taught the boy alef-beit. The eager student soon became proficient in Yiddish, learned how to pray and began to study Torah as well.

 When he was ready to enter cheder the custodian warned him not to reveal anything about his past. At the age of Bar Mitzva, the custodian bought him a pair of tefilin. He continued in his studies until, several years later, he was already considered a great scholar. His new "father" sent him off to a yeshiva of higher learning in another city, where he quickly became one of the best students.

**Meets a Chasid of the Chernobeler Rebbe**

 The young student roomed at an inn that was owned by a Chasid of the Chernobeler Rebbe. The Chasid proposed that the promising young man accompany him on his next trip to his Rebbe. The youth agreed.

 Before going home they went to the Rebbe for a blessing. The Rebbe turned to the young man and said, "I am giving you an amulet. Wear it around your neck at all times. You and the rabbi must open it together on your wedding day."

 The young man returned to yeshiva. A short time later, someone approached the dean looking for a suitable husband for his daughter. The dean immediately thought of the young man, who quickly found favor in the eyes of his prospective father-in-law. A wedding date was set.

**Discovers an “Important” Secret**

 Right before the ceremony the young groom remembered the Chernobler ebbe's instructions. He went to the rabbi and told him he had something to discuss with him in private. Once they were alone he took out the amulet, related the story, and together they opened it. Much to their surprise they saw the following words written inside: "It is forbidden to take a sister as a wife."

 The rabbi was shocked and began to question the young man. The young man told him everything he knew of his early life.

 Next, the rabbi spoke with the bride's father. While relating the young woman's life story, he happened to mention that a certain number of years ago (the age of the groom), the family had escaped debtor's prison, leaving an infant behind. At that moment, everyone understood that Divine Providence had led the long-lost son to his parents. The young man was none other than the infant left behind so many years before.

 The grateful family was awed by the Chernobler Rebbe's foresight and holiness.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*