

Stories About Kosher

Story of the Rebbe Keep Kosher

A Shliach of the Rebbe from South America relates the following story:

Mr. And Mrs. H. had finally been blessed with a son. When he had not been feeling well for some time, they consulted their doctor. The doctor frowned worriedly as he looked at the results. "I am afraid that your son has a tumor. Here is the name of a cancer specialist. I suggest you make an appointment to see him immediately."

The specialist did not waste a moment; he started the boy on a long and often painful course of treatment to shrink the tumor. Nevertheless, month by month, the child became weaker and weaker. Finally, after six months, the doctor had exhausted all possible treatments.

Mr. and Mrs. H. could bear the uncertainty no longer, "Doctor, we beg you to tell us the truth about our son's condition!"

The doctor looked away, as he could not bear to face the unfortunate parents. How could he tell them the terrible news that within a few months they would lose their only son? Half a year ago, he had the courage to tell them about the terrible disease that was eating away at their son's body. Then, however, he had been able to give them some hope that there was a slim chance to halt the relentless growth of the tumor. Yet today, half a year later, what could he say to them when the disease had spread throughout the child's body, and there was no hope of stopping it?

When the parents saw that the doctor was hesitant to answer them, they understood that the situation was very grave. However, the mother did not want to give up and pleaded with the doctor again, "Please, doctor, tell us honestly, is there any chance for our son to live?"

The doctor could no longer remain silent. He had to tell them. "For many months you have shown amazing strength. You have looked after you son with tremendous love and care. We doctors have also spared no effort and have worked to the best of our abilities to ensure that your son should have the best treatment to try to stop the spread of his illness. However, there is really no hope. There is only one more thing left for you to do: to make the last months of his life as pleasant as possible..."

The parents left the doctor's office, understanding one thing very clearly: their son was nearing the end of his life, and there was nothing more to be done for him.

On the way home, the two of them decided to make

the rest of their son's life as pleasant as they could, by brightening his last days with all the delights they could find...

The family left their South American home for New York. They went touring and explored the wide city streets. They were amazed by the large buildings, tall skyscrapers, and fancy stores. They spent as much quality time as they could with their young son.

One day, during a trip to Fifth Avenue, one of the busiest parts of the city, the boy called out to his parents. He was pointing towards a strange looking vehicle, "Daddy, Mommy, look!"

The parents looked up in surprise and asked their son, "What did you see?"

"Look at that van. It has 'Mitzvah Tank' written on it. Daddy, what's a Mitzvah Tank?"

"I don't know. Let's go and find out," his father answered.

As they approached, a young man came over to them and asked the father with a smile: "Are you Jewish?"

"Of course," the father answered, smiling in return. "I am a good Jew and a regular supporter of Jewish causes."

"If so, would you step inside our Mitzvah Tank and put on Tefillin?" continued the young man.

"To tell you the truth," said the father, "I don't know how to do that. However, I would be pleased to give a nice donation to your organization, even without putting on Tefillin."

"Thank you," replied the young man. "But we are not here to collect donations. We're here to give Jews that we meet an opportunity to do a Mitzvah, and I would like to give you the chance to perform the special Mitzvah of Tefillin."

For a short while, the father stood arguing with this young man, who kept begging him to enter the Tank and put on Tefillin. The little boy then interrupted their discussion. "Daddy, let's go inside the Tank. I would like to see how you put on Tefillin."

The father gave in to his son's request and entered the Mitzvah Tank. The young man helped him to put on Tefillin and say Shema Yisroel. The child did not stop watching his father for the entire time he was performing the Mitzvah.

After the young Chassid had explained the importance of putting on Tefillin every day, he asked what had brought the family to New York. The man told him about his son's terrible condition

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and about their decision to make his last weeks as pleasant as possible.

"Have you ever heard of the Lubavitcher Rebbe?" asked the young man. Mr. H. searched his memory, but he had never heard the name before.

Without even waiting for a reply, the young man began to tell him about the Rebbe, who lived not too far away, in Crown Heights. He told him about the many people who had been helped in the most difficult situations by the Rebbe's blessings and advice.

"It is certainly worthwhile for you to visit the Rebbe and tell him about your son's condition. I am sure that he will be able to help you!" the young man added.

On a piece of paper, he wrote down the address of the Rebbe's office with the telephone number of the Rebbe's secretary. He advised them to visit the Rebbe without delay. Although it was usually very difficult to see the Rebbe on such short notice, they were to say that their situation was a matter of life and death.

The father thanked the young man for his suggestion. However, he did not think that the Rebbe could help them. "We have already visited specialists and professors, and all of them said that our son is beyond help."

The young man was not ready to give up. He went out to the boy's mother, who had been waiting outside. He invited her into the Mitzvah Tank, as he had something important to say. He repeated his suggestion to go see the Rebbe and that he had no doubt that the Rebbe could help them, despite all that the doctors had said!

Mrs. H. was more receptive to the idea. "Even if there is only the slightest possibility of saving our son, we must try it!" she said to her husband. She was determined to visit the Rebbe.

The following day, the family were fortunate enough to be able to arrange a private meeting with the Rebbe. When they entered the room, they showed the Rebbe a list they had already written of everything that had happened to their son and asked for a blessing. At the Rebbe's request, they pointed out the site of their son's tumor.

The Rebbe said, "I don't see anything there!"

When the father heard this, he became angry, "We wrote down everything which the doctors and specialists have said. We have X-rays that show the malignant growth very clearly. How can you say that there's nothing there?!"

"I don't see a tumor," replied the Rebbe. "What I do see is a sore caused by having eaten forbidden foods. I advise your very strongly to make sure that from now on that your son eat only Kosher food and

that you put on Tefillin every day, and I am sure that this sore will disappear completely!"

They saw that they were not going to change the Rebbe's opinion, and they left his room feeling disappointed.

While the family had been with the Rebbe, the young man from the Mitzvah Tank waited outside. He had been very anxious to know what the Rebbe would say to them.

"Why did you bring us here?" shouted the father when he saw him. "Did we come here just to hear this Rabbi contradict expert medical opinions? For more than seven months my son has suffered through painful treatments because of this illness, and the Rebbe says he sees nothing there!"

The young man tried to calm him down, saying, "If the Rebbe did not see anything, then there is nothing there. Maybe your son did have the illness before, but when the Rebbe looked, it had already gone away."

The parents laughed at the young man's words, and got ready to leave. "Let's get away from here," said Mr. H. to his wife. "This is nonsense."

A week later, the young man was studying in Yeshiva, when he was told that some people were waiting to see him. He was surprised to see the family standing there, with both father and son wearing Yarmulkas on their heads. As soon as the father saw the young man he hugged him, his eyes full of tears. When the excitement died down somewhat, the parents began to tell the young man what had happened since their meeting with the Rebbe.

"A few days after we left," began the mother, "I began to feel uncomfortable about what the Rebbe had said. I told myself that we had to try whatever we could, however slight the chances, to save the life of our beloved son. My husband did not want to hear any of this, but I felt so uneasy about the Rebbe's words that I insisted that we see a famous specialist in New York. This specialist said he would review my son's medical file. After analyzing the reports carefully, he concluded that it was not worth doing any further examinations, as the boy was beyond medical help.

"Yet something inside me told me not to listen to his advice, and I convinced him to take an X-ray. Our son underwent detailed tests while we sat outside waiting for the results. After a two-hour examination, the specialist came out to and said, 'The results of the test do not show any sign of a malignant tumor! I have checked all the documents in his file. I still don't understand what happened here. If what all the reports say is true - and I don't doubt the opinions of all these doctors - then I just can't believe my own eyes!'"

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"We were stunned. The specialist had said there was no malignant growth. This meant that our son was going to live! Apart from a small internal wound that was easily curable, our son had nothing wrong with him!

"We had never felt such happiness! When we left the doctors office, we decided to visit the Rebbe again to tell him what the specialist said and to thank him for saving our son's life. We also wanted to thank you for having been the emissary who brought us to the Rebbe."

What more is there to add, except that after this

wonderful miracle had taken place, the parents changed their way of life completely. They became more and more open to learning Torah and doing Mitzvos. They began to keep Kosher and within a short space of time they became fully observant. To this day their home in South America is a good example of Torah living.

When he finished this tale, he added:

"Do you want to know who the young boy in this story was? He is standing in front of you right now! It was I!"

They Got What They Deserved

Two young Jews once decided to try their luck together and go out in search of wealth. They formed a partnership and traveled forth across the vast country of old-time Russia. Fortune smiled upon them, and before long they had amassed quite a fortune. This seemed to have gone to their heads and they gradually wandered away, not only far from their homes, but, sad to tell, also very far from Judaism.

At first they were careful to observe Yiddishkeit; they Davened regularly and were careful to eat only Kosher food. But gradually they began to be lax. First they found it inconvenient to stop their business deals at the required times for Davening. Then they found it difficult to get food which was Kosher. They had lots of money and could not resist the temptation to spend it on all sorts of forbidden things. At first they felt guilty and uneasy about their new way of life. But repetition made it easier, and before long their conscience stopped bothering them.

One day, feeling particularly pleased with themselves at the way life was treating them, they stopped at what seemed like a luxurious-looking inn, and asked if they might lodge there and get some food.

"Come in, my friends," said the prosperous-looking owner. "You are most welcome to stay here, but I see you are Jews, so I must tell you that the food may not be Kosher enough for you."

"That doesn't bother us at all," replied the young men. "We are just as ready and happy to eat non-Kosher food as we ever were to eat Kosher."

"In that case, let me show you to your room," said the owner, leading the way to a room off the hall. He told them to sit down

and he would soon return.

The owner was absent for quite a long time. The two young Jews had unpacked their belongings and refreshed themselves and were getting somewhat impatient, as they were rather hungry.

Suddenly the door opened without warning, and in marched the owner with two tall, athletic-looking young men whom he introduced as his sons. Before the guests realized what was happening, they saw, to their horror, that the boys had brought out two murderous-looking knives and were coming towards them threateningly.

"Good heavens," cried out one of the guests, while the other one gaped speechlessly. "What on earth is going on here!" "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the owner with a cruel look on his face. "You have been caught nicely, eh? How do you think I could own such a beautiful place? Just by being a simple innkeeper? Not at all. This is the way we do it. We get rid of such foolish people as you and take their wealth away. And who is to ask questions? No one knows you came here but me. You saw, yourselves, how far away we are from civilization."

"Please have mercy on us," begged the two terrified young guests. "Take what you will from us, but let us live."

"Very well," answered the innkeeper. "We shall leave you in peace until tomorrow, as we are too busy to be bothered with you in any case." Saying which, the innkeeper and his two sons went out, bolting and barring the door behind them.

The two young Jews now had plenty of time to sit and brood about their sorry fate. They forgot all about being hungry; they had something else to worry about now. They tried hard to think of a way of saving

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themselves, but felt little hope of softening the heart of this cruel innkeeper. "Who would have thought it possible that this smiling individual could so suddenly change into so murderous a man! Whatever got hold of him and gave him such a terrible idea!" they sadly pondered.

The following day the innkeeper returned with his two sons. Each of them got a stranglehold on each "guest" and they thought that their end had surely come. With their last remaining breath and strength they pleaded for their lives. When the sons released their hold for a moment, the two guests took advantage of it to beg that they be allowed to live one more day, so that they could pray to G-d to forgive them for all their sins. Then they would be ready to die and go to their Maker as true repenters. They now realized how wrong they had been to think that doing business and amassing wealth were the only worthwhile things. Now in truth they realized that their fortunes meant nothing to them, and only obeying G-d's commands could stand them in good stead.

"As you are to die anyway we'll leave you until tomorrow to make your peace with G-d from whom you suddenly want help because things have gone badly with you. Where were your thoughts of Him when you were prosperous, eh?" the innkeeper sneered at them.

The two Jews were too miserable to reply. They spent the whole day reciting what they could remember of the Yom-Kippur prayers, for they knew that they deserved to die. At least they meant to come to G-d in true repentance, and hoped He would have mercy on their souls.

The following morning they waited in resignation for the innkeeper's coming. They heard his footsteps and they turned their eyes towards the door. It opened, and they could not believe the evidence of their own eyes. What had happened? Were they dreaming?! The innkeeper's face was beaming as he entered, with his two sons following behind him carrying two big trays

loaded with a huge pot of hot tea, plates with rolls and butter, eggs and cheese, and they couldn't see what else!

"My dear young men," began the innkeeper. "Let me explain the meaning of my apparently terrible behavior towards you. But first, wash and eat. You have fasted enough." The two guests needed no second bidding, and as they sat down to their meal, the innkeeper continued, his sons looking on smilingly.

"Some time back, I had the very great honor and privilege of being host to the great Rabbi of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, of saintly memory. I realized what a great personality I was privileged to have in my house, and naturally did all I could to be worthy of the honor done me. Before the Rabbi left he blessed me, saying: "You will have a big and beautiful inn, and many Jews will come to stay with you. If ever two young Jews come to you, saying they are prepared to eat non-Kosher food, you must give them a bad time, until you see that they repent from their wrongdoing and are prepared to become good Jews again."

"I had forgotten about the warning of the Rabbi, as many years have passed by, and no Jew had come here saying they were prepared to eat non-Kosher food until you two misguided young men appeared the other day and so shamelessly expressed yourselves. But I know now that the great Rabbi had you two in mind, and you certainly have learned your lesson, as he knew you would. I, too, believed the matter would turn out so, and this gave me the courage to put on such a cruel and heartless attitude towards you.

"Now, dear friends, you are welcome to stay here for as long as you wish, and I shall give you the best of my services. Naturally, you are free to return to your homes as soon as you wish, wiser and better Jews than ever before. G-d bless you both, now and always."