

Stories about Sofrus

Engraved In Stone

An elderly Chassid related the following story:

In the 1940's, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneersohn, sent emissaries to visit various Jewish communities. Their purpose was not to collect funds for the Frierdiker Rebbe's sacred institutions; in fact, these emissaries would refuse even unsolicited donations. Fund-raising was not the function of these special emissaries; these emissaries had a purely spiritual assignment: to bring Chassidic warmth, with new inspiration and vitality, to the communities they visited.

When I lived in Chicago, I was privileged to join in the hearty welcome of the distinguished emissary whom the Frierdiker Rebbe had sent to Chicago. In the midst of his packed schedule, the emissary inquired after a certain individual, a Mr. L. He told us that the Frierdiker Rebbe had specifically instructed him to pay a visit to this Mr. L., who happened to come from a long line of distinguished Lubavitcher Chasidim.

However, having arrived in this country when he was a young boy, he gradually became "Americanized" and drifted somewhat from Judaism. The Frierdiker Rebbe, therefore, sent his emissary to give him a spiritual "booster shot."

It turned out that Mr. L. was a prominent businessman, with whom some of us had a passing acquaintance. This information seemed encouraging to the Frierdiker Rebbe's emissary.

We put a call through to Mr. L.'s office and an appointment was arranged. Several local rabbis, including the rabbi of the Lubavitcher Shul where Mr. L. was a dues-paying member, accompanied the emissary to Mr. L.'s house. I was also one of the visiting party.

Mr. L. received us with sincere warmth.

An intimate and animated conversation followed, in the course of which the emissary reminisced about his acquaintance with Mr. L.'s grandfather. Mr. L. warmed up, and he too, spoke nostalgically about his parents' and grandparents' homes, where the Chassidic customs were a daily experience, and where Shabbos and Yom Tov were truly joyous occasions of lasting inspiration.

The mission accomplished, the venerable emissary rose to take leave, whereupon Mr. L. brought out his checkbook, and asked to whom he should make his check payable.

"My dear friend," the emissary told him, "I did not come to solicit financial contributions, and I trust you will not be offended if I absolutely decline to take any money from you."

This obviously puzzled Mr. L. "Surely you did not come all the way from New York in order to pay me a social visit," Mr. L. said.

"Let me explain it to you," the emissary replied. "You know that a Torah scroll is written in a special way, by a scribe, with a quill and special black ink on special parchment.

"It sometimes happens, especially when the Sefer Torah is not used for a length of time, that a letter fades, and according to Jewish law, if a letter is missing in the Torah it is no longer 'Kosher.' It therefore must be repaired by a scribe.

"The Frierdiker Rebbe has taught us that every Jew is a Sefer Torah.

"There are letters and words, which the Jew spells out in his daily conduct – Shabbos, keeping kosher, Jewish Marriage Laws, raising children to a life of Torah and Mitzvos – all these are the 'letters' which make up the living Sefer Torah, namely, the Jew.

"Sometimes it happens that one of these

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letters becomes faded. So the Frierdiker Rebbe sends us, the 'scribes,' from time to time, to freshen up some of the faded letters, and make each one of us a perfect Sefer Torah."

Moved and grateful, Mr. L. bade us farewell, and we left him to digest the food for thought which was so aptly provided for him.

When the emissary returned to New York, he reported to the Frierdiker Rebbe on his activities and included a detailed description of what had transpired at Mr. L.'s home.

The Frierdiker Rebbe said, "It was indeed a very interesting explanation that was given to Mr. L., but the analogy was not true in all respects. It is true that a Jew is a Sefer Torah, but with a slight difference."

The Frierdiker Rebbe went on to explain: "There are two ways of making an inscription. One can write with a quill or pen and ink, or one can engrave like the Ten Commandments which were engraved in stone.

"What is the difference between these two methods? Writing with a pen, or quill, means applying ink to paper or parchment.

"The ink and the parchment are separate entities, but they are skillfully joined by the writers. But because they are

separate entities, it is possible for the ink to fade, or be erased.

"On the other hand, engraving means forming letters and words within the very stone itself; nothing is superimposed upon the material – the material and the letter are one. Such letters cannot be erased, nor can they fade.

"So long as the material exists, the letters are there. However, while no actual fading or erasure is possible in this case, there is a possibility of dust and grime gathering and covering up the engraved letters. If this happens, one must only clear away the dust and grime, and the letters will again be revealed in their original freshness."

The Frierdiker Rebbe concluded: "A Jew is a Sefer Torah, but not a written one. He is rather like the Ten Commandments – engraved.

"The Torah and Mitzvos are an integral part of the Jewish soul; they are engraved in his mind and heart. You do not have to 'rewrite' a Jew; all you have to do is help him brush away the dust and grime of environmental influences which have temporarily covered up his true self- the 'Pintele Yid'. This is why a Jewish heart is always awake and responsive."

Writing A Sefer Torah

Story of the Rebbe

Salek and Chaya Beim of Morristown, New Jersey, commissioned a Sofer, a Jewish scribe, to write a Sefer Torah in the merit that their two daughters, who suffered from a severe Lupus condition, should each have a complete recovery. On September 11, 1992, six months after the Sofer started this year-long project, the Beim's son, Danny, became the proud father of a six-pound, twelve-ounce baby boy.

As an obstetrician, Danny had seen

many newborns, and his bright-faced, blonde-haired baby boy looked quite healthy. Danny's wife, Pam, needed a couple of days to rest up, but she looked forward to going home with her baby and taking an extended break from her work as a dentist.

Two days after the birth, a nurse went to get the Beim baby from the hospital nursery and noticed that he was barely breathing. She rushed him into the intensive care unit. The doctors could not find the cause. After two days of testing, they believed that the faulty

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breathing stemmed from a congenital metabolic disorder which, in turn, was affecting the heart.

The doctors did an EEG on the baby. "Neurologically, it doesn't look good," the neurologist told Danny and his parents. He explained that the heart apparently was not pumping enough oxygen-rich blood, resulting in a lack of oxygen to the baby's brain.

"The EEG indicated extensive brain damage. He will never walk, talk..." the neurologist said.

Later, the neonatologist advised Danny and Pam to forget about surgery and let nature take its course. "If we fix the heart, your baby may survive, but he will be institutionalized for the rest of his life," the doctor said.

That evening Danny's sister Betty called and asked to speak to Pam. Betty worked for El Al.

"I'm going to get you a Brocha," Betty said. "What does that mean?" asked Pam.

"A Brocha? A blessing. There's a rabbi who works in the El Al terminal at Kennedy Airport who knows a rabbi who can pray for your baby. His name is Rabbi Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

Betty had recently met Rabbi Yekutiel Rapp, the Lubavitch emissary in Kennedy Airport.

Rabbi Rapp called to report, "The Rebbe's answer is that the baby's brain will be okay; just fix his heart."

With this needed encouragement, the parents transferred their baby to Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, famous for its advanced work in neonatology. The doctors there discovered that the trunks of the two main arteries leaving the baby's heart, the pulmonary and the aorta, were fused together.

The "old" and the "new" blood were mixing together, resulting in a severe lack of oxygen reaching the brain. Many risky operations had to be performed to

fix this rare defect, termed persistent truncus arteriosus, before the baby would be able to use his own heart. In the meantime, Danny and Pam became co-sponsors in the writing of the Sefer Torah, in the merit that their son would live and be healthy. So with the baby also in mind, the Sofer continued inscribing letters in the Torah Scroll. The baby had been in Columbia-Presbyterian for three weeks while the doctors evaluated his condition. "This is the worst case I have seen in 22 years of practice," said the neonatologist. "You have a very sick baby. I am very sorry, but you will never be able to take him home."

"I guess I just want a miracle for my son," Pam cried.

Relying on the Rebbe's blessing, Danny and Pam decided to transfer their baby to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. There, a team of doctors, headed by a Dr. Norwood, specialized in operating on babies with truncus.

The doctors at CHOP scheduled surgery on the baby's tiny heart. The delicate surgery involved dividing the arterial trunk: taking tissue from the baby's lung, and creating a wall between the divided trunks of the two arteries. This procedure had been developed only four years earlier and there were only 25 doctors in the world who were skilled at doing this type of heart surgery.

The Beim's baby was not strong – he weighed less than 10 pounds – so the surgery was doubly risky, but the Beim's gave the go ahead with it.

The Sofer dipped his quill in the black bottle of ink, day after day, month after month. Then, on July 4, 1993, under an open tent on the lawn of Congregation Ahavas Yisroel in Morristown, New Jersey, the final 250 letters of the Torah Scroll were filled in by many friends of the Beim family.

Salek Beim filled in the last letter of the Torah, and exuberant singing erupted. The Torah was rolled up and covered

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with a velvet mantle, and everyone danced the Torah down Sussex Avenue to the Rabbinical College of America campus.

A robust, ten-month old boy, held in the arms of his smiling father, leaned over and gave the Torah a kiss. This healthy, bright boy was Avraham Chaim "Alex"

Beim.

"What can I say? You saw my baby today," said Danny, at the dinner following the Torah dedication ceremony. "I attribute Alex's miraculous recovery to the Rebbe's blessings and guidance. The Rebbe is proof that there is a G-d in this world."

Healthy Tefillin

Story of the Rebbe

"I woke up one morning, a month and a half ago," Dr. Nirken explained to the Shliach, Rabbi Shimon Lazeroff, "with a numb hand. I tried to restore sensation, but I discovered to my horror that I could not move my hand at all. For six weeks, the finest doctors in the field have been treating me, but they have not been able to determine the cause of the paralysis or to suggest any therapy. They also warned me that the paralysis may soon spread."

Rabbi Lazeroff had but one suggestion for the agitated doctor: "Why don't you write a letter to the Rebbe?"

Dr. Nirken readily agreed.

Six weeks later, the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Klein, called Rabbi Lazeroff. The Rebbe had three messages for Dr.

Nirken:

The Rebbe inquired about the doctor's condition;

The Rebbe gave him a blessing for a complete recovery;

The Rebbe instructed him to check his Tefillin.

Rabbi Klein added that the answer was given the previous night after Yechidus, shortly before 1:00 AM.

Rabbi Lazeroff contacted the doctor immediately and conveyed the Rebbe's answer. Dr. Nirken could not contain his excitement. "Incredible!" he exclaimed. "Last night at 12:45 AM. I was suddenly able to move my hand for the first time since it became paralyzed."

Rabbi Lazeroff asked the doctor if he

had Tefillin. Dr. Nirken explained that he used a pair of Tefillin which he had inherited from his grandfather. They had been the subject of a unique miracle: Once the doctor's house had burned down, and everything he owned was destroyed except for the Tefillin.

Now, after hearing the Rebbe's directive. Dr. Nirken gave his Tefillin to Rabbi Lazeroff, who immediately flew to New York to have them checked.

That evening, the scribe called the Rabbi, "The parchment scrolls inside the Tefillin are not Kosher. In the verse, 'And you shall bind them as a sign on your arm,' the word, 'Yadecha' – 'your arm', is missing."

The story continues several years later. Once the renowned opera singer Jan Peerce attended a Bar Mitzvah in Houston. When asked to speak a few words, he told a moving story of his own illness and recovery. Ten years earlier, while in San Francisco, he had fallen critically ill. The doctors had given him no more than a few days to live. A friend rushed to the Shliach in San Francisco, asking him to write to the Rebbe for a blessing. Almost immediately, the Rebbe gave Mr. Peerce a blessing for a complete recovery. And to the amazement of the doctors, that is exactly what happened. "In gratitude," explained Mr. Peerce, "I resolved to put on Tefillin every day. "On his Bar Mitzvah," Mr. Peerce concluded, "a young man begins putting on Tefillin. Let us join him in fulfilling this practice daily."

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The guests at the celebration were visibly moved. Among them was Dr. Nirken, who subsequently arose and

told his own story.

The Child's Sight Will Return

Story of the Rebbe

Michael was an English teacher in a Jewish day school in America. He had taught alongside observant people for many years, but did not feel connected to his Jewish heritage in any way. He did not want to discuss religion with his colleagues, even though more than one of them had tried to bring up the subject with him. Michael was a very stubborn individual who stood by his own opinions.

When Michael was thirty, he got married. A year later, a baby was born to the delighted couple. When the baby was only ten-weeks old, something happened that became a turning point in Michael's life, not to mention that of his family.

It began with Michael and his wife being disturbed at all hours of the day and night by the crying of their small baby. They noticed light spots on the baby's eyes, and took the baby to the doctor to see if that was the cause of the problem. The doctor prescribed some eye drops and they bought them from a local pharmacy. As the doctor had instructed, they put the drops into the baby's eyes three times a day. Two or three weeks passed and there was no improvement. If anything, things seemed to have become worse. So they took the baby back to the doctor along with the eye drops that had been prescribed.

When the doctors saw the child's eyes and the label on the medicine bottle, he was horrified. A terrible mistake had been made. The pharmacist had accidentally given the parents ear drops instead of eye drops, and for a number of weeks they had been putting them in the baby's eyes. The doctor was very

upset, but it was too late. The mistake had already been made. The wrong drops had destroyed the baby's pupils and ruined the eyes. The child was now blind. The parents were absolutely devastated, and the doctor could do nothing to help the poor baby. The blindness was permanent and there was nothing medical science could do. When Michael told the school principal what had happened to his baby, the principal advised him to write immediately to the only person who could possibly help them – the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

However, Michael was not ready to give in on his principles and did not want to bow to what he saw as religious pressure.

"If the doctors can't find a cure, then surely this Rabbi can't either! I'm not going to go against my beliefs and turn to someone I don't know."

The school principal was troubled by the baby's suffering, and he decided to take some kind of action himself – even without the consent of the child's stubborn father. Therefore, he wrote a letter to the Rebbe containing all the details of the baby's condition: the initial eye problem, what happened with the wrong medicine, and how it had resulted in complete blindness. A few days later, the principal received the following reply from the Rebbe:

"If the baby's father will begin to put on Tefillin every day, the child's sight will return."

It was the end of the school day, and the teaching staff were about to go home. The principal, Rabbi Azriel, hurried over to Michael just as he also was about to leave, and asked him to come into his room for a moment, as he had

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something very important to tell him. Michael was surprised by the principal's request, as Rabbi Azriel did not invite him into his office very often. They walked to the office in silence.

After they had sat down, Rabbi Azriel told Michael about the letter he had written to the Rebbe. He then showed him the reply which he had received. "Maybe you are upset that I did something like this without asking you. But please understand that I was so concerned for your sake, that I felt I had to do something."

Michael was not sure how to react to the concern of his employer, or to the answer the Rebbe had given him. He sat without saying a word, absorbed in his thoughts. His conflicting emotions pulled him in many different directions, and he felt torn between all of them. On the one hand, how could he go against the opinions he had held for so many years and start putting on Tefillin – something that represented the complete opposite of everything he believed in? On the other hand, his baby was suffering so much. How could he, as the child's father, stand by and not do anything?

For many nights now he had been plagued with worry and nightmares about how his child would grow up. He imagined his son at sixteen years old, a white stick in his right hand, and his left hand holding onto a helper who would take him out for some fresh air. The people around would cast pitying glances at the blind boy and move out of his way.

One part of Michael's emotions told him that a Tzaddik had assured him that his son would be completely cured if he would start putting on Tefillin daily. How could he deny his child this chance just because of his principles?!

Rabbi Azriel, seeing that Michael was absorbed in thought, sat opposite him without saying a word. He understood that this rather stubborn teacher was

engaged in an inner personal conflict, the outcome of which could change his whole future. Therefore, he did not rush or pressure him, but waited patiently. He felt sure that Michael's "good side" would win the battle, and it would change the direction of his life.

The principal got up and very quietly left the office so as not to disturb Michael's thoughts. A few minutes later he returned, holding a Tallis and a pair of Tefillin. When a whole hour passed and Michael had still not said anything, Rabbi Azriel saw that he had not yet made up his mind. He noticed that Michael had tears in his eyes. It was the first time that Rabbi Azriel had seen Michael show any emotion in all the years that he had been teaching at the school.

The words of the Rebbe had caused an internal battle between his Yetzer Tov and his Yetzer Hora, which would hopefully break the shell of stubbornness and open his heart to Torah and Mitzvos.

The arguments of Michael's evil inclination were very strong: "Imagine if you were to start putting on Tefillin and you became a religious person. How could you show your face to your educated friends? How could you wear a Yarmulka in front of your ex-university friends without being embarrassed? What will you say when they ask why you have suddenly become observant?"

These thoughts kept swimming around in Michael's mind. His good inclination, however, was equally convincing:

"You fool! A Tzaddik has said that there is a way to cure your son, but because of your obstinacy and stupidity you are going to deny him the chance of a complete recovery! Would you really prefer to see the child stuck at home for the rest of his life; lonely and miserable, without any friends, all because of your pride and stubbornness? And what will you say to him when he finds out one

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day that there had been a chance for his eyesight to return, but because of you, he is permanently disabled? Won't you be ashamed of yourself? He will never forgive you for this! And all because you refused to follow the Rebbe's instructions?"

"Michael," Rabbi Azriel said quietly. Silence. Rabbi Azriel tried again.

"Michael!" Still no answer.

Rabbi Azriel asked him very gently, "Michael, would you like to put on Tefillin with me now?"

Michael shifted slightly in his chair. The principal continued, "If it is difficult for you, I can help you. It's no problem."

Michael got up from his seat. He held out his left arm towards the principal without saying a word. He had put on Tefillin only once before in his life, when he was thirteen, at the time of his Bar Mitzvah.

Rabbi Azriel rolled up Michael's shirtsleeve and put the Tefillin on his left forearm. Then the principal said, "Say after me; Baruch..."

"Baruch," Michael repeated quietly.

"Atah," Rabbi Azriel continued, and waited for Michael's response.

However, this time Michael just felt unable to say the words and fell silent again. Rabbi Azriel tried again, but Michael still said nothing.

"What happened? Why don't you continue to repeat after me?" Rabbi Azriel asked kindly.

This time, Michael burst into tears. The sight of Michael's crying also made the principal's eyes fill with tears, and for a while the two of them wept together. Michael sat down in his chair again. "The time has come," thought Rabbi Azriel. "Slowly the Yetzer Tov is getting stronger, so the Yetzer Hora is going to try harder. However, the Yetzer Hora surely cannot overcome the words of the Rebbe!"

Michael could not stop crying. He had not shed a single tear for many years, and now that he was able to do so, he felt tremendous relief.

Eventually, Michael began to calm down. He stood up again and said the blessing with Rabbi Azriel. When he had finished, they read the words of the Shema together and sat down again.

"Rabbi Azriel, I have come to a decision," said Michael, "I shall put on Tefillin every day in the hope that it will bring both me and my family to lead a good Jewish life. I would like you to help me. I did not grow up in an observant home, and I have no idea how to go about this. I feel like today I am making a new beginning."

Michael did indeed change his lifestyle. He began to use his Hebrew name and put on Tefillin every day. After a while, the baby's eyesight began to improve noticeably and eventually, after special treatment, it returned completely!

For The Sake Of Tefillin

Many years ago there lived in Poland a wealthy Jew. Baruch had indeed been blessed with everything a Jew might desire: good health, a good wife, and lovely children who were a source of real Jewish Nachas to their parents. Business – mainly in forestry, saw mills and flour mills – was good and

expanding. Tens of Jewish families made a comfortable living by working for this enterprising businessman, who treated them fairly and generously. Baruch was altogether a most charitable man. He did not wait for the needy to come to him for help, but went out of his way to look for anyone who was

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possibly in need. At Yom Tov time, nothing gave him greater pleasure than to have a house full of guests. Especially when Pesach, the Festival of Our Freedom, came around.

Every year, right after Purim, Baruch would leave his business affairs in the hands of his trustworthy employees in order to be able to give his full attention to poor families that might be in need of help for Pesach. And before Pesach came, he would seek out any stranger that might be passing through town, and any other homeless Jew, in order to be his guest for the entire Yom Tov.

One year, it so happened that Baruch found no one to invite to his house for Pesach. He was very upset, for Pesach would not be the same joyous Yom Tov for him and his family without any guests. Came Erev-Pesach and Baruch sent out his sons to every Synagogue in town, to see if any stranger had arrived, and – joy of joys! – they returned with two strangers who had arrived in town that morning.

The men got ready for Yom Tov, and before sunset, they all went off to Shul to Daven.

When Baruch returned with his sons and guests, the house was brightly lit, the long table beautifully set for the Seder: the lighted candles in their shining silver candlesticks, the containers of sparkling red wine, the Shmurah Matzah, dishes with roasted Zero'as, bitter herbs, Charoses, hard boiled eggs and Karpas – all ready for the Seder Plates.

Baruch settled himself comfortably on the Seder-couch, with his two guests near him. The children, their faces shining, their eyes bright with anticipation, sat around, waiting for the Seder to begin, so that they could ask the Four Questions.

Just as Baruch had arranged his Seder Plate and was ready to make Kiddush, there was a knock at the door. Presently, a poor beggar entered, carrying a

bundle. “Good Yom Tov,” he murmured, “sorry I’m so late...had a rough time getting here...”

Baruch rose from his seat, went up to the stranger and held out his hand to him. “You are welcome. Come right in, you’re just in time. Get washed and join us.”

“I haven’t Davened yet,” answered the beggar.

“That’s all right; we have time. Here’s a Siddur, we’ll wait,” Baruch reassured him graciously.

The beggar washed his hands and began to pray quietly. He was apparently not able to read well, for the words came out slowly and painstakingly. But everyone waited patiently. Baruch studied the beggar’s face intently and with compassion. When he finally finished Davening, Baruch took him to the head of the table and gave him a seat right next to him. He gently showed the stranger how to arrange everything on his Seder Plate, and immediately upon completing Kiddush Baruch asked the beggar to recite his own Kiddush. Again the poor fellow barely struggled through it. When the family joyfully recited the Haggadah, the beggar’s lips remained silent; he just stared blankly at the open pages.

The kind host that he was, Baruch sensed that the beggar was very hungry, so he hurried through the first part of the Haggadah, so that the meal could be served without undue delay.

After the meal and the recital of Grace after Meals, and the drinking of the third cup, there was no reason to hurry. And so, before returning to the Haggadah, the host turned to all present and began: “My friends, at the beginning of the Haggadah, we are told that the more one tells of the miraculous departure from Egypt, the more one is to be praised. Our Sages also said that this night of Pesach is a fitting occasion to relate any miracle that one experienced personally, and to express gratitude to Hashem for

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it.

“And so I would like to tell you a great miracle that happened to me this past winter, during a business trip. I was driving through the forest when a severe snow storm broke out. The road was quickly covered with snow, and my coachman could not see which way to go. Soon we were quite lost deep in the forest, with night falling, and the bloodcurdling wails of the howling wolves sounding ever more closely. The horses were frightened, jumping and pulling this way and that. The coachman had the hardest time to hold them back and calm them down. He attempted to drive on, but we seemed to get nowhere. “Suddenly, we saw a glimmer of light shining through the trees, our hearts lifted. We followed the light and came to a peasant’s hut. Delighted, we knocked on the door. A drunken, unkempt peasant let us in. The scene inside the hut was not inviting. Five or Six fierce looking peasants were sitting near the fireplace, drinking and making merry. The noisy drunken peasants laughingly called to us to come and drink with them. As we sat down near the fireplace to warm up a bit, for we had been chilled to the bone, several of them jumped up and bound us hand and foot! “It became unmistakably clear to us that we had fallen into a den of robbers, but it was too late to do anything about it. “Next, they emptied my pockets, and took away my money, my gold watch and chain, as well as my fur coat. “‘That’s some luck,’ one of them said, looking over the loot. ‘Instead of having to go out hunting in the forest on a miserable night, the birds have flown into our hands! The Chief will be very pleased...’ “Well my friends, you can well imagine how I felt, sitting there bound, and waiting for their leader to come and decide what to do with us. “The night seemed to drag on endlessly. When he finally came in, there was a

welcome in uproar as the bandits told him of a great surprise. He told them to be quiet, and ordered a pair of them to bring in my case from the sled outside. When they brought it in, he told them to empty its contents on the table next to my other things.

“‘What’s this’ a young bandit asked, holding up my Tallis bag, containing also my Tefillin.

“‘That’s something a Jew uses when he prays,’ an older bandit replied, knowingly. ‘But this Jew will no longer need these things; we might as well throw the bag into the fire.’

“I begged the Chief, ‘Please, don’t let them do it; these are holy things...’

“The Chief barked his order to his men, ‘Leave it alone! Don’t touch it!’ Then he sat down at the table, took a bottle of liquor and began sipping it, saying not a further word. He seemed lost in thought.

“Bored, the drunken bandits stretched out on the floor and soon began to snore loudly. We, my coachman and I, were understandably not sleepy, having plenty reason to worry about our fate.

“As the darkness of night outside began to give way to the dawn of what I thought was my last day, I noticed that the Chief began to stir. He opened his eyes and looked at me, and I suddenly felt encouraged to speak to him.

“‘I see, Chief, that you have G-d in your heart. You didn’t let them burn my Tallis and Tefillin. Please, I beg you, allow me to put them on for the last time in my life.’

“Without saying a word the Chief went up to me with a sharp knife in his hand, cut the ropes from my hands and feet, and then handed me my Tallis Bag. I wrapped myself in my Tallis, put on Tefillin, and, with my face to the wall, began to Daven, as I had never Davened before. Tears choked me as I poured out my heart to the Almighty, careful not to wake the snoring bandits.

“From the side of my eyes I noticed that the chief was observing me with a

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strange interest. When I finished Davening, and lovingly put my Tefillin and Tallis in the bag, the Chief untied the coachman. He then handed me my fur coat and my Tallis Bag, and said to me very quietly, 'Run! Get out, both of you, before it's too late!'

"You can be sure I needed no second bidding. But as we were leaving hurriedly. I whispered in the Chief's ear, 'For a Jew, it's never too late!'

"We hurried out, and into the sled, and off we sped, to freedom and life.

"And that, my friends, is the great heavenly miracle that I experienced only a few months ago. And now let's continue with the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim and the conclusion of the Haggadah."

The beggar spent the entire Pesach in the home of his kind host, who paid him every possible attention, so much so that the entire family wondered who the

mysterious beggar might be.

On the morning after Pesach, when Baruch waited for the beggar to accompany him to the synagogue, as each morning, the beggar did not come out of his room. He sent one of his grandchildren to look into the beggar's room. The boy returned, saying that he was not there! Everybody now began searching for him all over the house, but he was nowhere to be found.

Then another one of the grandchildren came in, carrying the beggar's bag.

"Look Zayde," he said, "The beggar forget his bag!"

"Really?" said Baruch, as he looked inside it. There were just two things in the bag, and Baruch easily recognized them: his gold watch and chain, and his purse with the money which he had left in the bandit's den that fateful winter night...

The Better Gift (Mezuzah)

The King of Persia once sent a valuable jewel to honor the great Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi. As was the custom in those days, a suitable gift of worth was expected to be sent in return. After much thought, Rabbi Yehuda sent a Mezuzah to the king. The king was offended by the small gift, to his eye nothing more than a piece of parchment covered with strange writing.

Rabbi Yehuda, however, explained to the king: "The jewel you gave me has to be guarded night and day from being stolen. But the Mezuzah itself guards its owner, even while he sleeps, for Hashem never sleeps, as it says, 'The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.'"

An Unhealthy Mezuzah

Reb Dovid was an elderly man who lived in Lod, Israel. One day he felt sudden, sharp pains near his heart. He was rushed to hospital, where was diagnosed as having suffered a severe heart attack. His condition was very serious, and only after five months of complete bed rest did his condition improve enough to be allowed to go home. However, he was not allowed to

exert himself and had to stay indoors all day. This was very difficult for Reb Dovid, but he knew he had no other choice than to take these instructions very seriously.

One day Reb Dovid was visited by one of his friends, a Chassid by the name of Rabbi Shlomo Greenwald. Reb Shlomo was very happy to see Reb Dovid after such a long time and asked where he had been. Reb Dovid told him

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everything that had happened, including the names of his doctors, which medicines he had to take, and how he felt that nothing was really helping him. "I really feel as if I have given up on life," Reb Dovid concluded his story. "Excuse me," said Reb Shlomo. "But there is one 'medicine' you haven't tried yet – a blessing from the Rebbe."

Reb Dovid found this idea a rather difficult one to accept. He learned Torah, kept the Mitzvos, and had tremendous respect for the Rebbe. However, he felt that as he lived so far away from the Rebbe, how could the blessing of this great Tzaddik help him?

Reb Shlomo, for his part, was not going to let his friend become depressed like this. So he offered to write to the Rebbe on his behalf. Reb Dovid could not refuse such an offer, and in fact asked to see the letter when it was ready, since there was something he himself wished to add.

Reb Shlomo hurried off to write a letter to the Rebbe with the story of what had happened to Reb Dovid and the treatment the doctors had advised.

When the letter was ready, he brought it to Reb Dovid so that he could add to it.

When the letter was then returned to Reb Shlomo, he was both deeply moved and horrified to read what Reb Dovid had added:

"Dear Rebbe, the pains are terrible. I cannot take it any longer...please pray that I will die as soon as possible."

Knowing the seriousness of the situation, Reb Shlomo sent the letter as it was, despite the unpleasantness of this request. A very short time afterwards the Rebbe's answer arrived:

"Please check all the Mezuzos in the house!"

Immediately upon receiving the Rebbe's answer, Reb Dovid called the local rabbi, Rabbi Kaplan, to come check his Mezuzos. He stood by his side waiting to see if the Sofer found anything. Suddenly Rabbi Kaplan turned

pale. He showed Reb Dovid where the word, "Levevcha" – your heart – had faded and was almost unreadable.

"Now you know the reason for your illness," the Rabbi told him, still in shock from what he had just discovered. Reb Dovid immediately had all the Mezuzos in his house replaced with new ones.

That night, when Reb Dovid went to bed, he could hardly sleep. This time, it was not because of pain, but because of his excitement. He kept thinking, "The doctors might have failed with all their expertise, but luckily for me, the Rebbe has succeeded with his Ruach Hakodesh!"

For the first time in ages, Reb Dovid was able to sleep undisturbed by aches and pains. One morning, after a few such peaceful nights, he got up with the intention of leaving the house to go to Shul to Daven.

When his wife saw him getting ready to go out that morning, she did not know what was happening. She thought that he had gone out of his mind!

"What has happened to you?" she asked. "Where do you think you are going?"

"I am going to Shul to Daven," he answered simply.

"You're making a mistake, Dovid! Have you forgotten that the doctors instructed you to stay in bed all day and not to exert yourself at all?"

"Yes, but I am not the same as I was yesterday or the day before that. I told you all about the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the Mezuzah that was invalid. Since I changed the Mezuzos I feel like a different person."

His wife did not want to hear anything about the whole story. She was sure that he was going out of his mind, and was not going to allow him to continue this silly game. As far as she was concerned, the slightest exertion could cost him his life.

Seeing that she was not going to move

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from her position, Reb Dovid suggested a compromise. "All right. Let's find out what my situation is by going to my doctor and seeing what he has to say." His wife readily agreed to his suggestion. "Then he'll see that I am right," she thought to herself.

She immediately called the doctor and arranged an urgent appointment. The doctor received them with a worried expression. Since they usually only saw each other in emergency situations, his first question was, "What's the matter, Reb Dovid? You look very well." "Boruch Hashem," he answered "everything is fine, and there is nothing especially wrong. I would like you to do a checkup on my heart."

"You know that a doctor doesn't do an examination for no reason. But I can see that something has happened. Tell me what's going on."

"The details don't matter. We are prepared to pay you for this examination. It's very important to us." The doctor, knowing that Reb Dovid's condition was very serious and that the slightest excitement could bring on another heart attack, did not want to upset his patient. He therefore agreed to the request. He began to prepare Reb Dovid for the examination. He took two electric wires from the heart monitor and attached one end to a machine and the other to the patient's body.

Throughout the examination, Reb Dovid's wife stood there looking worried. She was very anxious about the results of the examination. She watched the EKG monitor and the doctor, who was staring at the screen in disbelief. When he finished the examination, the doctor put the paper with the heart readings on the table. Then he took out

the results of the previous examination and compared the two. He was absolutely amazed to see such a drastic change for the better. He then took out Reb Dovid's whole file in order to examine the entire case. It was obvious to anyone that the results from this examination were noticeably much better. In fact, they were so different from the last five tests that the doctor thought that there was some type of mistake, and so he decided to examine Reb Dovid all over again.

When the doctor did the next test, he looked at the lines emerging on the paper in absolute astonishment.

"I don't understand what's going on here!" he exclaimed. "All the readings that I did previously indicated that your heart was on the point of collapse, and every extra day of life was a miracle. From the first examination I did today, I saw a complete and sudden change. At first, I thought that maybe I'd made a mistake and hadn't done it properly. So I did a second test, as you saw. This was exactly the same as the first one, and the results prove that your heart is completely healthy!"

"Then I thought that maybe you had not been ill to begin with. So I looked at the results over and over again, and I came to the conclusion that something supernatural has occurred. I would like to have an explanation for this." With great excitement, Reb Dovid told the doctor the whole story, sparing no detail.

"Now I understand completely!" exclaimed the doctor. "It was not a mistake in the examination, or a broken machine. If the Rebbe is involved, the answer is clear..."

We Were Like Dreamers

Story of the Rebbe

In Ramat Gan, there lived a non-

observant couple who were survivors of the Holocaust. The husband suffered from a heart problem. The doctors

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recommended open heart surgery, but he was afraid to have such a dangerous operation.

One morning, his wife woke up and excitedly told him about a dream she had just had:

“My mother came to me. She asked me if I was interested in receiving a certain Tzaddik’s blessing -- a blessing for both of us that the operation would be successful.

“First she demanded that I observe a few basic laws of Judaism, and when I agreed, she took me to the Tzaddik to receive his blessing, but he also made a condition. He promised that if we agree to place Mezuzos on the doorposts of our house, then the operation would be successful!”

When she finished telling her husband about her dream, there was an unexpected knock on the door. It was still early in the morning and a young Chabad Chassid was standing outside. He asked them if they would like to place Mezuzos on the doorposts of their home.

The couple looked at one another with surprise. They found it hard to believe what was happening. The wife had just finished telling her husband about the dream, and this young stranger appears at the door and offers them Mezuzos! Their excitement grew, and they turned to the Chassid with a question:

“How come you came to us with such a request? Aren’t there enough other people in Ramat Gan?”

The young man explained himself simply. He lived in New York. He was visiting his family in Israel. Before leaving he had asked the Rebbe for a blessing. The answer came in the form of Mezuzos which he was told to place in some house in Israel. That morning, he explained, he decided to do what the Rebbe wanted: affix the Mezuzos in some house. He had no instructions as to which house he was supposed to place the Mezuzos in. He set out on the

street with a strong belief in Tzaddikim and that G-d would send him to the right house.

“I don’t even know why I came to your house,” he said, “somehow I was drawn here, and here I am, ready to carry out the Rebbe’s request!” With that he ended his explanation and stood waiting for their response.

The woman, of course, tied this unexpected arrival to her dream and she asked him if he had a picture of the Tzaddik who had given him the Mezuzos. He took out his wallet and showed her a picture of the Rebbe.

“Oh my!” the woman exclaimed in astonishment. “That’s the Tzaddik I saw last night in my dream!”

Now the meaning of her dream was clear to her. She saw the young Chassid as a messenger from above who had come to save her husband.

When he took out the Mezuzos, they were even more amazed. Apparently, the number of doorposts in their house that required Mezuzos was five – the exact number of Mezuzos the Rebbe had sent!

Needless to say, the operation was successful and the couple spent many more happy and healthy years involved in the performance of Mitzvos and good deeds.