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## ***Married for Money?***

A prosperous Jewish man who had recently become a widower also tragically lost most of his vast wealth. He managed to retain his house, and the services of the maid who worked for them when his wife was still alive.

Every week, he and the maid would buy lottery tickets, hoping to strike it rich. When the lottery was drawn, he would check both of their tickets to see if either of them won.

One week he was astonished when his Jewish maid's ticket actually won the lottery; she had become a wealthy woman! Because of her new wealth, he decided he would propose marriage to her. But he knew that if she would be aware of her wealth she would want to marry someone rich like herself, and so would refuse to marry him.

Therefore, he decided that for the time being he would not tell her that she won the lottery, and that same day he asked her to marry him. After considering that she was a poor maid with no prospects, while he was an established house-owner (even if not as wealthy as in the past), and how they had known each other for a long time, she agreed.

In the morning after the seven days of wedding celebrations, he told her, "I have good news for you. You won the lottery."

She didn't respond. "Maybe she didn't hear?" he thought to himself.

"I said that you have good news. Your ticket won."

No response. In fact, she appeared sad.

"What's the matter? Why do you seem sad about such good news? You chose the winning numbers!"

"I heard you," she replied, "I understand. But I must tell you that it isn't my money. Last week I sold any future gains of this lottery ticket to my father."

The shocked man immediately thought to divorce her. He only married her because of her money, but now she is poor. How disappointing. He no longer wanted to remain in this marriage.

Nevertheless, he did not say anything to her about this right away. Having heard about the wisdom of the **Kotzker Rebbe**, he decided to visit him and seek his counsel.

After listening to the whole story the Rebbe told him: "Haven't you yet understood the ways of G-d? He made you a widow, caused you to lose your money, had the maid win the lottery, and had you conceal it from her. All of this was so that you would marry her. And now you want to divorce her? [Do you really think it wise to oppose G-d's will?]" \*

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*Source:* Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Torah Wellsprings" (gleanings from the teachings of **Rabbi Elimelech Biderman** of Jerusalem) Mattos Massei 5778 (2018), as translated by R. Baruch Twersky.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Menachem-Mendel of Kotzk** [of blessed memory: 5547 - 22 Shevat 5619 (1787 - Jan. 1859 C.E.)], was not from a chasidic family, yet he became a disciple of the "Seer" of Lublin, [the "Holy Jew"] of Pshischah, and ultimately of Rebbe Simcha-Bunim of Peshischah. "The Kotsker" was known for his practice and insistence upon a zealous and unrelenting search for truth, his active opposition to self-centeredness, his emphasis on properly motivated Torah study, and for his sharp, pithy aphorisms. The last two decades of his life he spent isolated in his room. After his passing, the majority of his followers turned to his disciple R. Yitzchak Meir of Ger to be their rebbe. [Based on an appendix entry in "A Treasury of Chassidic Tales" (Artsroll).]

*Connection:* In this story, 4 distinct events were orchestrated by the Al-mighty over a period of a year or two; in the next-to-last verse of the Torah reading, Balak, read this past Shabbat in Israel and read this week outside of Israel), five events had to miraculously happen almost simultaneously (see Num. 25:8 with Rashi and Talmud Sanhedrin 82b) for the execution by Pinchas to be considered justified and valid, not murder.

**\* Adds Rabbi Biderman:**

This is a deep lesson in trusting G-d: When we view the things that happen in our life, we only see half the picture. We only see our point of view, and forget that He is behind the scenes, watching and directing from a different dimension. This man was convinced that he wanted to marry the maid for her money. He forgot that the Creator also has a plan. He wanted them to marry each other, so He set the stage to enable this to happen.