

"For the Sake of Heaven" *

A festive atmosphere permeated the town of Rodnik in Poland. The cause was the presence of the three *tzadikim* in the home of **Rabbi Chaim of Sanz**, who lived in Rodnik at that time. A feeling of spiritual elevation dominated in the *Beit Midrash* (study hall).

But then, in the middle of the Morning Prayer, an unpleasant incident occurred.

These were the days after *Pesach Sheni* ('Second Passover'). The cantor (prayer leader) concluded the recitation of the prayer, whereupon Rabbi Chaim of Sanz instructed him not to say *Tachanun* (prayer of supplication said on most weekdays), as written in the Holy Zohar. According to the Zohar, during the seven days following *Pesach Sheni*, one does not say the prayer of supplication, because at that time the Gates of the Garden of Eden are open.

Suddenly, the voice of **Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga of Shenova**, Rabbi Chaim's oldest son, was heard.

"Forgive me father," he said, "but the *Rama* (a 16th Century eminent Polish rabbi and Jewish-law authority) writes that on *Lag b'Omer* one does not say *Tachanun*. From this one concludes that it is *specifically* on *Lag b'Omer* that one does not say *Tachanun*, and therefore on the other seven days one *does* say *Tachanun*."

Rabbi Chaim insisted that *Tachanun* should not be said, but his son argued vehemently that it should be said. In the end Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga left the *Beit Midrash* with ten of his followers, said *Tachanun* and finished the prayers outside.

The argument between father and son continued after the prayers, back inside. One maintains this point and the other brings a different proof, both of them holding steadfastly to their opinion.

At one point Rabbi Chaim exclaimed, "I order you not to step over the threshold of my house again!"

Upon hearing this Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga left the building through the window, in order to obey literally his father's order about the threshold of his house.

Among the people present was **Rabbi Mordechai-Dov Twersky of Hornisteipol**, the eighth son-in-law of Rabbi Chaim. Like the others of the congregation he was shocked by the serious confrontation between the father and his oldest son.

The whole matter was incomprehensible to him since he was aware of the respect Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga felt for Rabbi Chaim. Therefore, he was astounded when his father-in-law approached him and whispered in his ear: "I do not know how I merited to have such a holy son!"

Rabbi Mordechai-Dov immediately responded, "In my eyes that is no wonder at all."

After some time, when Rabbi Chaim sat down for his meal, he sent for his son, Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga but the latter refused to come. His refusal caused more amazement among those gathered there. Had the disagreement between the two reached such an extent?

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Years went by. Rabbi Chaim had passed away, his sons and sons-in-law were now the shepherds and leaders of different Chasidic communities.

One day, Rabbi Mordechai-Dov, [now the highly respected Hornisteipol Rebbe] visited Sanz. It was during the seven days after Pesach Sheni. At the Morning Prayer his brother-in-law, Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga, was also present. The cantor who was familiar with the *minhag* (custom) of Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga to say the Tachanun prayer during those days, started to say Tachanun.

But Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga turned to him and told him to skip the Tachanun prayer and to continue to *Kaddish*.

"Heaven forbids to change the ways of my holy father!" he explained to the cantor.

Rabbi Mordechai-Dov was astonished at this behavior. He remembered very well the argument between Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga and his father, his determined opinion in favor of saying Tachanun. To the extent that he went outside with his followers to finish his prayers.

As soon as the prayers concluded, he turned to his brother-in-law and asked him to explain what it all meant.

Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga smiled. "I'll tell you," he said. "That day in Brodnik, very early in the morning, I intended to go to my father's room. All of a sudden a drowsiness overcame me, I fell asleep and had a dream.

"In my dream I saw my holy father sitting on a chair, surrounded by hundreds of chasidim, when suddenly they all turned away from my father toward me and exclaimed, 'Long live our Rabbi!' My father was left alone on his chair.

"I woke up agitated and afraid. I understood the dream to be a hint from Heaven that my father was to pass the scepter of leadership to me, and because 'One kingship cannot touch another kingship' [Talmud Yoma 38b], the terrible meaning of this was that my father was to pass away in order to give his place to me. I was overcome by intense fear.

"Right away I took an oath to do a "Dream Fast". After calming down a bit I tried hard to find a way out of this frightening decree, and with Heaven's help I was successful. I came to the conclusion that 'One kingship doesn't touch another kingship' is only valid in the case of the *same* kingship but if there are two different ones, 'touching' does not apply.

"This did indeed remove the death sentence that was hanging over my father's head, but I was still in the middle of the Dream Fast so I couldn't participate in the meal with my father.

"As for the custom here, in Sanz, there should not be a change from my father's custom," Rabbi Yehezkel-Shraga concluded.

So finally the Hornisteipoler understood both the Shinover's instructions that day as well as the mysterious words of the Divrei Chaim that were whispered to him years earlier.

Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation by **C. R. Benami**, long-time editorial assistant for www.AscentOfSafed.com, of the version in *Sichat Hashavua* #1533, which is based on the report in the book, '*Tzvi Tiferet*'.

**Connection* – weekly Torah reading of *Korach* (Num. 16): “Which is a controversy for the sake of Heaven? The controversy between Hillel and Shammai [and, in this episode, between the Divrei Chaim and his son, the Divrei Yechezkel]. And which is not for the sake of Heaven? The controversy of Korach and all his faction.” [Avot 5:17].

Biographical notes:

Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz [of blessed memory: 25 Nissan 5553 - 25 Nissan 5636 (April 1793-April 1876) was the first Rebbe of the Sanz dynasty, from which emerged also the dynasties of Klausenberg and Bobov. He is famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of tzedaka and also as one of the foremost Torah scholars of his generation; his voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title *Divrei Chaim*.

Rabbi Yechezkel-Shraga Halberstam of Shiniva, (of blessed memory: 20 Shvat 5573 - 6 Tevet 5660 (Jan. 1813- Dec. 1899), was the eldest son of the *Divrei Chaim*. As an emissary of his father, he founded the Sanz community and synagogue in Tsfat in 1870. He served as the rabbi of Shineva from 1855 till 1868, and then again from 1881 till his passing. A major Torah scholar, many of his Torah insights into Scripture, Law and Kabbalah are collected in *Divrei Yechezkel*.

Rabbi Mordechai-Dov Twerski of Hornisteipel [of blessed memory: 1840 – 22 Elul 1904] was named after his two maternal great-grandfathers, Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl and Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch. He was also a direct descendant of Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli and the son-in-law of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz. A highly respected Talmudic scholar, he was the author of a popular book of Chasidic guidance, *Pele Yoetz*.