

bs"D From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Story # 1268 (5782-30) 25 Adar Beit 5782 (March 28, 2022) FREE [email subscription](#)
Discover! the "TillesTells Saturday Night Stories" [WhatsApp group](#)

Beyond Expectations

The police did not give explanations. They just ordered the daughter, a young and innocent girl to accompany them. The desperate cries of the family made no difference. The police officers took the daughter and left.

The house of the girl's family was situated at the edge of the town of Vitebsk. The girl's father was a simple Jew, a blacksmith by profession. He always got up early in the morning, and joined a regular group of men for the saying of *tehilim*. Between *Mincha* (the afternoon prayer) and *Ma'ariv* (the evening prayer) he would attend a lecture in the book "*Eyin Ya'akov*" [a collection of all the non-legal sections of the *Talmud*]. From the morning till the evening he stood in the smithy, working hard for his meager earnings to support his large family.

They were all in shock. The girl's parents tried to find out at the local police station what was behind the arrest of their daughter, but to no avail. Only after much effort, involving the town's influential citizens, was the situation clarified.

It turned out that a few gentiles claimed that, in her father's smithy, they overheard the girl say that she was willing to abandon Judaism and convert to Christianity. This was an absurd falsehood, since the girl was innocent and G-d fearing. Perhaps the non-Jews had misunderstood a remark she made, or maybe they decided to invent an incident that never took place.

These men went to the town Slovda, a Christian settlement close to Vitebsk, and told to priest there that the daughter of the blacksmith wants to convert but her family is preventing her. They argued that since the girl was already eighteen years old, she wasn't subject to her parents' authority anymore and she should be allowed to do as she chooses. The priest used his connections in the police department, and officers were sent to take the girl.

Now all efforts were concentrated on trying to find out where the girl was kept. It was discovered that she was in the house of the priest in Slovda, crying constantly and begging to be allowed to go home to her family. The priest tried hard to tempt her, but she did not waver from her position.

This information relieved the parents somewhat, but soon they received a worrying message. The priest had despaired of succeeding in convincing her and so it was decided to transfer her to an unknown location in the city of Orsha. Only one option to save her remained, to pay 500 rubles to a certain person.

The blacksmith immediately sold all the valuables he had in his house and managed to raise 250 rubles. He had no choice but to turn to his neighbors and ask for their help. They immediately undertook to assist him and went all out to find the rest of the money. By the end of the day they had collected a similar sum from generous, good hearted Jews.

As nightfall they were still 70 rubles short. The story became known in the Chabad *shul* (synagogue) in town. Quickly another 25 rubles were collected. Then the chasid Chaim Moshe stood up and promised to pledge another 45 rubles from the money he would earn from commissions in the coming weeks.

Chaim-Moshe Alexander was a well-known figure in Vitebsk. He was a simple Jew. Poverty reigned in his house. He was in debt over his head. The *Rebbe Rayatz* (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson), the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from whom the story is known, said that as a child he once visited Chaim Moshe at home. He lived in a dilapidated house, more like a ruin, in a side street near the river. Shocking destitution was lurking in each corner.

Chaim Moshe earned his living from brokerage businesses between dealers in cotton and the owners of the produce of the forests. This is how he lived for about twenty-two years.

Despite his own precarious situation, he was an extremely generous man and give a lot of charity. Even when he did not have a penny in his pocket, he would dedicate a great deal of his time taking care of the sick and poor, negotiating between the rich and the poor, who, because of his assistance, received help and support.

Everybody was astounded at the enormous amount he pledged to pay for the release of the girl. Thanks to him the whole sum was now available. The next day the good news became known, the daughter of the blacksmith was freed!

Some time after this, a respectable merchant from the town of Smolensk came to the *Rebbe Rashab* (Rabbi Shalom Dovber) the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe. The merchant was in urgent need of advice concerning his forests that were mortgaged to the bank. The Rebbe looked at him and said "My advice is that you go to the main directors of the bank, in Petersburg, and take Chaim Moshe of Vitebsk with you. He should speak to the bank managers for you."

The merchant didn't hesitate. He traveled to Vitebsk and gave Chaim Moshe the message of the Rebbe. The chasid gladly agreed and together they set out for Petersburg.

The bank manager was charmed by the personality of Chaim Moshe. He generously agreed to the deal Chaim Moshe's suggested. The merchant couldn't believe his ears. He never dreamed of such an agreement. He gave Chaim Moshe a generous brokerage commission of 2500 ruble!

But this was not the end of the story.

The bank manager invited Chaim Moshe and proposed to him to come be his secretary and deputy. He promised him a high salary and that the bank would arrange for him a permit of residence in Petersburg.

There and then Chaim Moshe received 5000 ruble moving expenses to Petersburg and to buy any furniture he might need. This is how Chaim Moshe the pauper became the vice president of the most respected bank in Petersburg.

In his luxurious apartment in Petersburg many charity gatherings were held, and Chaim Moshe was always the first donor. Every time he would point out that he knew the taste of poverty, penury and lack.

Also, each year, on the anniversary of the day that he signed the contract with the bank, he would gather his relatives and friends and start his story with the announcement: "I used to be poor..." At the same opportunity he would give much charity openly and secretly.

The Rebbe Rayatz ended the story, "From this previously poor person one can learn a lot, but we can learn from how he was as a rich person even more."

~~~~~

Source: Translated by **C. R. Benami**, long-time editorial assistant for [www.AscentOfSafed.com](http://www.AscentOfSafed.com), from the popular Israeli weekly, *Sichat HaShavua* (#1348). Edited and supplemented by R. Yerachmiel Tilles.

*Biographical notes:*

**Rabbi Sholom-Dovber Schneersohn** 20 Cheshvan 5621 – 2 Nissan 5680 (Oct. 1860 – April 1920)], known as the **Rebbe Rashab**, was the fifth Rebbe of the Lubavitcher dynasty. He is the author of hundreds of major tracts in the exposition of Chasidic thought. In 1915, after 102 years of four Chabad rebbes living in Lubavitch, he transferred the center of the movement to Rostov-on-the-Don.

**Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneersohn** [12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (Jan. 1880- June 1950)], known as the **Rebbe Rayatz**, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 5680 to 5710 (1920-1950). He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chasidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 5700 (1940 C.E.) he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched a global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign that was continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor.

*Connection:* Saturday night – Sunday, *Nissan 2* (2022: April 3), is the 102<sup>nd</sup> yearzeit of the *Rebbe Rashab*.