

bs"D From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Story # 1274 (5782-35) 8 Iyar 5782 (May 9, 2022) FREE [email subscription](#)

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Far, Near and Expensive

An agitated Reb Mordechai Liepler, a wealthy devoted chasid, was traveling to Petersburg. Next to him in his carriage was his son, withering in pain. Perhaps the doctors in the big city would be able to find a cure for his ailment.

After a thorough checkup, the medical team came to a grim conclusion. "A virus appears to have infected his bone marrow and his bones are withering away," they diagnosed. "We know of no cure."

Reb Mordechai immediately dispatched a letter to his rebbe, the "**Mitteler Rebbe**" of Chabad, explaining in detail the desperate situation. He calculated that it would take five days for the letter to reach Lubavitch, and then another five days for the Rebbe's answer to arrive. Thus, he expected to receive an answer in ten days [assuming the Rebbe read the letter and answered on the same day he received it].

Ten days passed. An anxious Reb Mordechai stood outside waiting impatiently for the postman.

"Sorry, nothing for you today," called the postman as he passed by, shaking his head. Reb Mordechai met with the same disappointment on the following day as well.

Finally, to his great relief, on the third day, the postman had some news. "Yes, I have a letter for you, but I am in a terrible rush today and don't have time to look for it," he called as he hurried along.

Reb Mordechai ran after him, pulled at his bag and searched frantically for the long-awaited letter.

"What's your rush today?" he asked as he fumbled through the envelopes.

"One of the Czar's young relatives living in our district fell ill and a royal physician was summoned all the way from Austria to treat him. Today, he is scheduled to return to Vienna and I was charged with the task of arranging a horse and carriage for his journey," explained the postman.

Just then, Reb Mordechai found the letter and opened it quickly as the postman busied himself straightening out his bag.

"I received your letter," the note from the *Mitteler Rebbe* stated. "I see that your salvation will soon come from far and near." Added at the bottom of the letter was a note of advice: "Do not stint on money."

The information I just received from the postman may be that very assistance the Rebbe foresaw, thought Reb Mordechai. "Where is that doctor now?" he asked the postman.

Upon receiving the address, Reb Mordechai set out immediately towards the house. When he arrived, he discovered that he was not the only one who had heard of the doctor's presence. Dozens of people were trying to push their way in, hoping somehow to be allowed a consultation.

Being a prominent and well-respected figure, Reb Mordechai was allowed to slide his way through the crowd. Finally, he managed to push into the house and call out to the doctor. Describing his son's severe condition, Reb Mordechai begged the doctor to come and treat him.

"I'm sorry, my time is very limited. I am the king's personal physician and I must be on my way back to Vienna," came the curt reply.

Reb Mordechai recalled the Rebbe's final piece of advice. "I will pay you one thousand rubles for your trouble," he offered. This staggering sum of money persuaded the doctor to delay his departure, and he accompanied Reb Mordechai to his home.

After examining the boy, he declared, "Your son has an infection which started in his mouth due to a tooth ailment. Now it has spread to his bone marrow. Though this disease is considered incurable here in Russia, a new medicine has recently been developed in Austria. I may by chance have a sample in the case of medication I brought along with me."

Sure enough, the medicine was found in his physician's bag, and after the initial application, the king's physician announced that the healing had already begun. He directed the father to summon a local doctor so that he could instruct him regarding its medicine's continued application.

In due time, Reb Mordechai's son recovered. Thus, the *Mitteler Rebbe's* words were fulfilled in their entirety. Help came "from near and from afar." The doctor from Vienna came "from afar." The appropriate medication was found "from near," in his case, and were it not for the advice not to spare money, the doctor would not have agreed to see his son.

Source: Compiled and adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation of Rabbi Eliyahu Touger from *Reshimat Devarim* (vol. 1, p. 96), as published in his *"From My Father's Shabbos Table"* (1991) by Rabbi Yehuda Chitrick, and the translation (and terrific title!) in "A Chassidsher Derher" monthly magazine (Tammuz 5779/2019).

Biographical note: **Rabbi DovBer Shneuri** [9 Kislev 1773 - 9 Kislev 1827] was the eldest son and successor to Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of the Chabad movement. The author of numerous deep, mystical texts, he is known in Lubavitch circles as "the *Mitteler* (Middle) Rebbe."

Connection: We are in the 2nd week of the Jewish month of Iyar, colloquially called "the month of healing" because the Hebrew letters of its name abbreviate "I, G-D, am your healer."