

bs'D



From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles editor@ascentofsafed.com>

Story #1336 (5783-43) 28 Tammuz 5783 (July 17, 2023)

Discover! the "TillesTells Saturday Night Stories" [WhatsApp group](#)

THE HELPFUL GENTILE WOMAN ON THE AIRPLANE

One man stood out among all those present at the *Melaveh Malka* (the Saturday night meal after the conclusion of Shabbat) of the **Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam**. As was usual at festive occasions like this, all those in attendance wore the traditional chasidic *shtreimel*, (round flat fur hat). Only he, **Reb Pinchas Valston**, wore a Chabad-style hat.

Reb Pinchas is, of course, a Chabad chasid. He lives in Sidney, Australia, yet from time to time he used to travel to New York to the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**.

On this trip, he met a friend, a Bobover chasid, who asked Reb Pinchas to join him in a visit to his Rebbe.

In the course of the meal, the Bobover turned to Reb Pinchas, who had been introduced to him as a Chabad chasid, with a request.

"I want to make you a messenger for a *dvar mitzvah* (a sacred deed). A little while ago it became apparent that a young couple in our community here in Boro Park (a strongly Torah-observant Jewish section of Brooklyn) was having problems. Not long after the wedding, the woman made it clear that she was unwilling to continue living with her husband. For several months her parents negotiated between husband and wife, trying to influence their daughter to reconcile, but without success.

"It became clear that the parents were incapable of accepting the fact that their daughter would not budge from her desire to divorce. They pressured her as much as possible to stay and try to make the marriage work.

"As a result, the life of the woman became a hell. In her marital home she felt out of place, while in her parents' house she received no support. It got to a point where she could bear it no longer, and she ran away without letting anyone know where she was going.

"Her parents were beside themselves with worry. Her husband, who now was willing to give her a *gett* (document of divorce) so he could move on with his life, was also distraught.

"I would be glad," continued the Rebbe, "to get advice from your great Rebbe in this matter. Would you be willing to serve as my emissary and forward my request to him?"

Reb Pinchas was happy to agree. A few days later he was able to fulfill his mission, when those who were from overseas were admitted to private audience with the Rebbe for a departing blessing. When Reb Pinchas's turn came to enter, he told the Rebbe what Reb Shlomo of Bobov had requested.

The Rebbe listened attentively. After, he answered with a short sentence: "When you land in Sidney [22 hour flight], continue to fly to the city of Brisbane [1.5 hr]."

The Rebbe didn't elaborate, but for Reb Pinchas that was not necessary. Being a chasid, he followed the Rebbe's instructions exactly. Just a few hours after having arrived in Sidney International Airport, he was on a plane to Brisbane. Where he should go when he arrived, and what he was supposed to do there, he had no idea.

* * *

During the flight a woman who occupied a nearby seat addressed him. "Excuse me sir. I see by your appearance that you are a Jew. May I ask you something?"

Reb Pinchas answered warmly, "of course you may".

"Tell me, what is the attitude among Jews about those who distance themselves from their religion?"

Reb Pinchas scrutinized her face trying to decide if she was referring to herself. He decided not. She was obviously a gentile.

"I am the manager of a chain of women's clothing stores in Brisbane," she continued. "I am asking, because some time ago a Jewish woman applied for a job in one of the branches. I hired her and with time we became close. I learned that she comes from a religious family, but because of certain circumstances she ran away from home and eventually distanced herself from her religion entirely. That is why I am curious to know what your attitude is toward a woman like that."

A red light immediately lit up for Reb Pinchas. He had a strong hunch that the woman in question was the one he was going to Brisbane for. How extraordinary that this woman was sitting near him...and that she decided to speak to him, he thought.

"Well," he told the woman next to him, "Judaism teaches us to relate kindly to anyone who stumbles, no matter what the reason, and to help him or her to return to the way of their fathers.

"From the tone of your question," he added, "I understand that the young woman you're talking about is rather lonely."

"True," she answered. "She doesn't have many friends, to put it mildly."

"If so, maybe I can help her," Reb Pinchas said. "Specially to assist her, *if* she is willing, to reconnect with the world she separated from. Would you mind to give me her name and address?"

She agreed and gave him the information he requested. The name was a non-Jewish name and gave no clue to who she was. But Reb Pinchas's heart told him that 'Someone' is pulling the strings and leading him to the person he was sent to help.

As soon as he left the plane he hurried to the address he was given. His first encounter with the woman was not easy. She was shocked to see a religious Jew in front of her and refused to interact with him.

Reb Pinchas didn't give up. He related the miracle of his finding her through the Bobover Rebbe sending him to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the Rebbe instructing him to fly further, specifically to Brisbane. Despite all that, however, he assured her, he had no intention of forcing her to do anything.

Slowly she started to mellow, although she made it clear that returning to the neighborhood of her parents was out of the question.

She did say that if she will receive a *gett* from her husband, she then would be willing to return to Israel and make a new start.

And that is what happened. Reb Pinchas was able to obtain the *gett* for her. After she received it she moved back to Israel, where she became involved in the study of chasidut Chabad. Eventually she married a Chabad chasid, all with the help of Reb Pinchas.

~~~~~

*Source:* Freely adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the excellent first-draft translation by **C. R. Benami**, long-time editorial assistant for [AscentOfSafed.com](http://AscentOfSafed.com), from LchaimWeekly.org (#864).

*Connection:* **Rosh Chodesh Av** (this week, Wednesday) is the *yahrzeit* of Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov

*Biographic notes* (in order of appearance):

**Rabbi Shlomo (ben BenZion) Halberstam of Bobov** (1907 – August 2000), survived the Holocaust along with only 300 chasidim, succeeding his father who was among those martyred. Settling in Manhattan and then different locations in Brooklyn, he served as the third rebbe in the Bobover dynasty for over 50 years, rebuilding Bobov to an even more thousands than his father had before the war. In addition to being wise and pious, he was noted for his commitment to not taking sides in disputes. Interestingly, he passed away on the same Hebrew date as Aharon the first High Priest, who was the first Jew to be known for "loving peace and pursuing peace" (see Avot 1:12).



**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe** (11 Nissan 1902 - 3 Tammuz 1994), became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law, *Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn*, passed away in Brooklyn on 10 Shvat 1950. He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Many hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, and hundreds of English renditions too.

