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## The Tzadik that Slapped a Donkey

When I was seventeen years old, in spite of my diligent study in the Porat Yosef *yeshiva*, I enjoyed playing football<sup>1</sup> in my free time. When my grandfather [the **Chacham Menachem Menashe**] would leave on Shabbat morning to speak in different *shuls* (synagogues) till late in the day, I would have time to play ball with a boy who lived in the neighborhood. I always made sure to end the game before my grandfather was expected to come home. I didn't want him to find out about it.

One Shabbat I was late and my grandfather saw me playing in the square of the neighborhood of Beit Yisrael next to the *shtiblach* (the building with small synagogues). He stopped, called me over and asked what was the meaning of my playing ball on Shabbat!

I was embarrassed; I loved my grandfather. For me he was a 'golden man' with a kind heart and a very generous hand. There wasn't anything I asked him for that he wouldn't do for me right away. Of course I quickly let go of the ball and followed him home.

On Thursday of that week my grandfather turned to me with a request.

"Do me a favor, take this letter and bring it to **Chacham Rabbi Yehuda-Leon Patilon** who lives in Yafo. It is very important to me that I receive an answer."

Chacham Patilon was a painter who then lived in Yafo on Eliezer Street, next to Shabsi Street. Both my grandfather and my father *obm*<sup>2</sup> were very close to him and aware of his high spiritual level. In certain families of Turkish descent, he was regarded as a hidden *tzadik* (righteous person). They went to him to get blessings and advice.

He looked like a very simple person, so I wasn't impressed by him, but my grandfather asked of me to go, so I took the letter and went.

The letter was written in Turkish in order that I shouldn't understand. Still, I knew just enough to get the gist. In short, what it said was "My grandson is going in the wrong direction, please take care of him."

The trip from Jerusalem to Yaffo took about two hours. Because of the rocks on the road as a result of the work being done to widen it, I only reached his house at two thirty in the afternoon.

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<sup>1</sup> In USA [only] called "soccer"

<sup>2</sup> "of blessed memory"

He was sitting on the couch wearing a cap, with a week old beard. I told him "My grandfather sent you a letter, he is waiting for an answer."

He took the letter, looked at it and said, "Come, sit next to me."

After I sat down he started telling me stories about reincarnation. For example, he told me the following story.

"In Turkey I had a neighbor who shaved with a blade. I always pointed out to him that shaving with a blade is against Jewish law, but he would laugh at me.

"Years passed and I immigrated to Israel. One day I was walking in Allenby Street in Tel Aviv, when suddenly I noticed that a donkey had got away from his owner and was running in my direction. When the donkey reached me, it spoke! It said, "Listen, I am your neighbor from Turkey, please give me a rectification!"

"In front of all the people who had gathered around us I gave him a slap. 'I will not give you a rectification,' I announced. "Suffer the rectification you go through now!"<sup>3</sup>

He continued to tell me stories about all kinds of reincarnations. His tales took me away from reality into the past of a totally different world.

Regretfully, being young and a bit lighthearted at that age, I didn't believe him. His stories went in one ear and out the other -- I didn't take them seriously.

He noticed but continued to spin his tales.

Suddenly a cat entered the room. I wasn't surprised. When I arrived I had noticed a big yard with geese, chickens and cats. Since it was a one floor house, the entrance of cats was natural.

The cat started meowing. Turning to the cat, Chacham Leon said, "Go, come back in half an hour." The cat left.

He looked at me and asked: "What time is it?" I told him it was exactly three o'clock.

He again began telling me stories about people who passed away and reincarnations, especially about people who reincarnated in animals.

The cat returned and the Chacham asked me what time it was. It was exactly three thirty.

"You see" he said, "she came back after half an hour. Give me a few minutes with her."

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<sup>3</sup> (Seemingly, this reaction was to help the soul in some way. - Rabbi Yisrael Abergel)

She stood in front of him on her hind paws, looking directly at his face and meowing.

I only heard the meowing. I noticed with amazement that she was moving her head like a person in conversation.

When she stopped meowing, she remained standing there looking at him as if waiting for an answer.

He was so deep in thought, eyes closed, it seemed to me that he was in another place.

After a few minutes that to me seemed like an eternity he opened his eyes and said to her: "Go! Everything is rectified."

The cat turned and left the room.

I asked him in astonishment "You speak to cats?"

He answered me as if it was the most natural thing: "No, no. That was a seventeen-year-old girl who was sewing on Shabbat and came to ask for a rectification for the serious sin of desecrating the Shabbat, which is the reason she was reincarnated in a cat.

"I just told you about reincarnations. Well, that was one of them."

"What happened to the cat?" I asked him.

"The cat died. The soul is already above. I see her giving account for other things."

"I don't believe you!" I said and went outside.

In the corner of Shabsi Street, about 200 meters from Chacham Patilon's house, I saw her crushed body on the street, obviously a car had driven over her and killed her. I recognized her from the white stripe on her back. We hadn't heard the screech of sudden brakes or anything like that.

And Chacham Patilon had said that the soul had already left the cat's body.

I returned to his house in shock. He saw my face and smiled. He realized that I had begun to believe. He said, "Tell your grandfather that *everything is all right.*"

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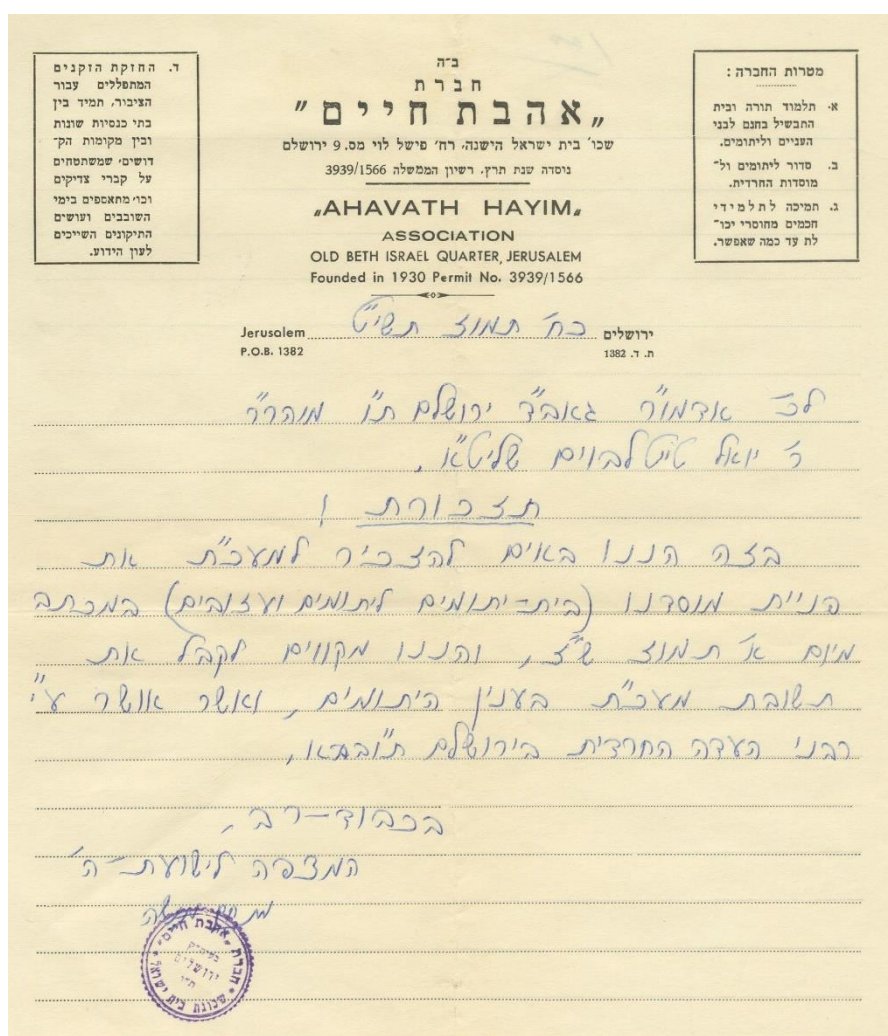
*Source:* Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation into English by CRBA of a Hebrew article in "MESILLOT El HaNefesh," the weekly publication of **Rabbi Yisrael Abergel**, where he cites the book "Tzadikim Nistarim in the Latter Generation." Vol.1, p. 168.

*Why This week?* The weekly Torah section this week is called Pinchas, and the beginning is about him, while the Haftorah is all about Eliyahu *Hanavi* (Elijah the Prophet). That is because, as is widely understood, Eliyahu is considered to be an *incarnation* of Pinchas. [I assume you all noticed right away the very obvious

connection also to last week's reading, Balak. If not, you can ask me; I won't tattle. ☺ ]

*Biographic note:*

**Chacham Menachem Menashe** [1892 - 12 Elul, 1968] was born in Turkey. He learned Torah from the sages of Bursa and Istanbul, including Rabbi Shlomo-Eliezer Alfandri. In 1918, he immigrated to the Land of Israel and settled in Jerusalem's Beit Israel neighborhood with his wife and daughter. He earned his living as a blacksmith, but devoted himself to the community, opening a Torah learning and prayer center called Hevrat Ahavat Haim and excelling in righteous deeds and charity. He also authored many works. The best known one is *Ahavat Haim*, which includes sermons, Halachot and tales on the weekly Torah reading portions. He was the father-in-law of Chief Sephardic Rabbi, **Ovadiah Yosef**, z'l. [based mainly on *Hyomi.org.il*].



Letter of Rabbi Menachem Menashe of Jerusalem, handwritten and signed, to the **Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitlebaum**, in 1959, regarding financial support for an orphanage which was one of the projects of his organization, *Ahavat Chaim*. [from *kedem-auctions.com*]