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## **Moshe & Moshe, A & M**

Once a chasid travelled with a dire problem to **Rabbi Dovber**, the second Rebbe of Chabad Lubavitch known as **the *Mitteler Rebbe***. He was renting an inn from the local *poretz* (landowner), and was about to be evicted because he was unable to pay his debts. The *poretz* was unwilling to wait any longer, and the Jew was in danger not only of losing his livelihood, but also his home.

The chasid entered the Rebbe's room for a private audience and told him the predicament. He requested that the Rebbe write a letter for him to a wealthy businessman named Moshe A. This man was a personal friend of the *poretz* and therefore a good potential intermediary.

The Rebbe agreed and wrote the letter. The chasid left, letter in hand, sure that his situation would shortly change. However, when he looked at the letter, he had a shock, for the letter was addressed to the wrong person. Instead of being addressed to the wealthy Moshe A., the letter was addressed to Moshe M., who was as poor as he himself.

The Rebbe must have made a mistake, thought the chasid, for what could Moshe M. possibly do for him?

The chasid turned around and went right back to the Rebbe's residence and said to the Rebbe's attendant, "I must go back in to speak with the Rebbe. He gave me the letter, but he made a mistake in it, and I need it changed."

"I'm sorry," replied the gabbai. "You cannot see the Rebbe again so soon. There are many others waiting to be received."

"But, you don't understand," the chasid protested. "This is a matter of the greatest importance, and it can't wait, even a day. I won't take much of his time. The Rebbe just has to change a few words. You see, he addressed it to the wrong person."

The conversation was overheard by the Rebbe's son, Rabbi Nachum, who turned and commented, "A Rebbe doesn't make mistakes." The chasid turned and left, meditating on the words he had just heard, "A

Rebbe doesn't make mistakes." He took this to heart and resolved to go the next day to see Moshe M. and present him with the Rebbe's letter.

When he arrived at Moshe M.'s humble cottage, he told him about his audience with the Rebbe and showed him the letter. Moshe M. was confounded by the request that he intercede. "I would be very glad to help you, but what can I possibly do? I have nothing whatsoever to do with the *poretz*."

But the chasid, who had become convinced that the Rebbe must have had something in mind, was persistent. Finally, Moshe M. agreed, although of course, one couldn't say that he knew what he was agreeing to.

In the middle of the night there was a pounding on the door. Moshe M. roused himself and went to the door. "Who's there?" he asked.

"Open, please. It is I, the Count," came the reply.

Moshe M. opened the door, and to his astonishment, there stood the *poretz*, the very man he planned to visit the following day, soaked and shivering with cold.

"Please, come in, Your Honor," he said. and within an hour he provided the *poretz* with dry clothing, food, vodka and tea.

The *poretz* explained that that evening he was deep in the forest when he had been caught in an unexpected storm. This house had been the first one he had encountered when he left the forest, and that is how he came to be the guest of Moshe M.

At once Moshe M. saw the Divine Providence in the unusual situation, and when they all went to bed for the night, he retired in a state of high anticipation as to how events would play themselves out.

The next morning the *poretz* arose fit as before, and readied himself to go home. Turning to his host, he said, "I am very grateful for everything you have done for me, and I would like to repay your kindness. What can I do for you?"

Moshe M. answered, "Please, Sir, just having had the honor of helping you is all the payment I need."

The poretz wouldn't take no for an answer, and repeated his request to repay the Jew. When the offer was made a third time, Moshe spoke up:

"Sir, I have a brother who rents one of the inns on your Honor's property. Due to financial hardships of the past few years, he has been unable to pay his rent, and he is due to lose his lease on the inn. Might I ask Your Honor to reconsider his case?"

The poretz was immediately receptive to the request. "My friend, you are such a good fellow, I am sure that your brother is just like you. I will not only renew his lease, but I will also forgive his past rent.

"And you know, it is very lucky that you are speaking to me about it today. Why, I was planning to give the lease to the relative of a good friend of mine. My friend Moshe A. spoke to me recently about his relative that needed a position, and tomorrow I was planning to take care of the matter."

Later, when the two chasidim met, they discussed the workings of Divine Providence as foreseen by the Mitteler Rebbe. For had the letter been addressed to the "right" rather than the "wrong" Moshe, the situation would have come to a very different and unhappy end for the chasid. They saw that indeed, "A Rebbe doesn't make a mistake."

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*Source:* Expanded and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from LChaim Weekly #1597, with permission.

*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:* *Tet* [9<sup>th</sup>] *Kislev* (Wednesday) is the birthdate and the *yahrzeit* date of the Mittler Rebbe, while *Yud* [10<sup>th</sup>] *Kislev* the anniversary of his release from interrogation and false arrest.