

The Jewish Weekly

Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov and the Wood-Chopper

By Rabbi Shmuel Butman

Long ago in the small village of Sassov there lived a Jewish wood-chopper, a man of deep and pure faith. No one knew his name, and so, he was known simply as "the villager."

All week he made his way into the forest and chopped wood which he sold in the town. During the week, he and his family lived frugally, eating just enough to sustain themselves. But for the Holy Shabbat, he joyfully bought challahs, candles, and other delicacies. Not only did the family enjoy the Shabbat treats, but despite their poverty, they always invited others to join them. At times they even went without food themselves so that their guests had enough to eat.

One Friday morning the villager stood with his bundles in the village square waiting for customers to buy his wood, when a woman came and bought the whole lot for six silver coins. He was about to begin his customary Shabbat purchases, when the Tzadik Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov approached him with a request.

There was a woman in the town who had recently been widowed. She was so overcome with grief that she lay in bed all day weeping, and so was completely unable to take care of her two young children. Her health was failing and the poor orphans were going hungry. Could he help?

Now the villager was a good-hearted man. He immediately took two silver coins and handed them over to the Tzadik. "Thank you so much, but could you perhaps give a bit more?" The wood-cutter reached into his pocket and handed over another two coins. Again, the Tzadik thanked him and asked for maybe a bit more for the family.

"I'm sorry Rebbe, but I can't give any more. I have only two coins left. As it is I won't have enough money to buy wine and challah but I must leave enough to buy candles to brighten our Shabbat."

Reb Moshe Leib was moved by the man's kindness, generosity and his love for the mitzva of Shabbat candles. He turned to the man and asked, "Do you have any valuable object in your house?"

"No, Rebbe, I have nothing except an old cow."

"When you return home," said the Rebbe, "sell the cow, and with the money you make, buy the first thing that comes your way. I give you my blessing that G-d will grant you success."

The wood-cutter ran home happily, brimming with anticipation. But when he told his wife

of the plan to sell the cow, she absolutely refused. "How can we sell the cow? Its milk is our main source of food. How do you imagine we'll live?" And with that the discussion ended.

When Shabbat was over the couple went to the barn to feed their cow. No sooner had they entered the barn when a carriage with two men pulled up. "Do you have a cow for sale?" they asked. The astonished Jew saw the words of the Tzadik materializing before his eyes. His wife blurted out: "We'll sell only for a hundred rubles!" The men agreed to pay the absurd price. Now, it was clear that the blessing was having its effect.

The next morning the wood-cutter went to town with the hundred rubles intending to carry out the Rebbe's instructions. He noticed a group of landowners gathered for the auction of a choice estate. The Jew's simple faith was so great that he pushed himself into the crowd intent upon buying the estate regardless of the fact that he couldn't afford it.

The wealthy landowners looked at the poor Jew. What a nerve he had to try to bid against them! They would punish him for his chutzpa and at the same time help themselves. They agreed not to bid on the property at all. When the Jew's offer would be accepted, he would lose everything because there was no way that he could afford the complete payment. Their plan succeeded. The wood-cutter bought the estate, giving the one hundred rubles as a deposit, and returned home feeling very satisfied.

That night as the Jewish family slept, there was a loud knock at the door. They were shocked to see the village priest standing in the doorway. "I understand that you bought an estate today, and I would like to be your partner," the priest said. Having heard about the low price, he figured he could take advantage of the simple wood-cutter.

"I agree to the partnership if you will pay the total outstanding amount," answered the Jew. The priest eagerly accepted, handed him the money, and agreed to formalize the deal in a few days. When the day came to complete payment on the estate, the furious landowners couldn't believe their eyes as the Jew paid up the entire balance.

The earnest Jew set out to visit his newly acquired estate. Travelling down the road he saw a group of people crowded around an accident. "What happened?" he inquired.

"The priest was just killed in an accident when his horses overturned the wagon," was the reply.

The Jew approached the accident site. It was his "partner" in the estate! Now, the property belonged to him alone. The blessing of Reb Moshe Leib had been fulfilled, and in gratitude the villager distributed large amounts of charity to the poor throughout his long and prosperous life.

Reprinted from an email of L'ChaimWeekly.

It Once Happened...

Separating Gold, Silver and Copper

By Rabbi S. Y. Zevin

Rabbi Zalman of Dubrovna and Rabbi Pinchas of Shklov were leading disciples of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad dynasty and movement. They both were outstanding in their scholarship and piety. In addition, they were both rich, and exemplary in generously sharing their wealth with the flood of poor people who beseeched them.

They were also quite humble. In his will, R. Zalman wrote that he foresaw no merits which could save him when he came to his Heavenly trial, other than the power of his Rebbe and his good deeds of charity.

This same chasid used to keep the money he had available for charitable distribution in three separate containers: one for gold coins, one for silver coins and the third for copper ones. When a poor person would come to his house and request from him a donation, he would first make a quick evaluation about which pile of coins it was appropriate to take from for this particular petitioner, and then he would dip his hand into that box, remove a quick fistful and give its entire contents to the waiting man.

R. Pinchas heard that R. Zalman had a wondrous manner of donating to the poor, so he decided to journey to visit him and hopefully pick up a few tips about how to improve his own methods of giving to the poor. Afterwards, at his next opportunity to speak to his Rebbe, he told R. Shneur Zalman that he had learned a new method for distributing tzedaka from R. Zalman. He described it to the Rebbe and then added, "Even though I adopted his way, there still exists a difference between us in how we do it."

"When Zalman gives the poor man the fistful of coins, he doesn't even bother looking to see how much he is giving. I, too, give the entire fistful that I scoop up, but I just can't seem to resist taking a quick peek first to see how much is in there before giving it away. I have not yet attained his level!"

Reprinted from Sipurei Chasidim.



Y-GRAPHICS
Shabbat Times – Parshat Mishpatim

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:44	5:58	6:38
Tel Aviv	4:59	6:00	6:35
Haifa	4:49	5:58	6:35
Be'er Sheva	5:03	6:01	6:39

My Special Wine Was Stolen. Would I Recover My Loss? By Sofya Sara Esther Tamarkin

I was strolling along my favorite trail a few hours before Shabbat, enjoying the beautiful weather, when my phone started buzzing with strange text messages asking me to authorize bank charges. At first I thought it was simply spam, but then the phone rang and the person on the other end was from my bank, asking if I'd lost my credit card because someone other than me was trying to charge it at Walmart.

I ran frantically towards my car, anxiety fueling my speed. Immediately, I saw shattered glass all over my vehicle. My car window had been smashed, and my entire purse stolen. Feeling completely violated, a sudden realization added to my overwhelm: the tiny bottle of wine I'd received from the Lubavitcher Rebbe in June of 1990 was in that purse. I never left home without it, and now the inevitable reality was sinking in: my treasure was gone.

I managed to dial my husband's number, crying indecipherably into the phone. "Bottle ... Lubavitcher Rebbe ... gone ... stolen ... park trail ... car window ... broken." My husband knew my deep connection to the Rebbe's bottle of wine and immediately understood what had happened. I assumed he called 911 because within minutes a police officer arrived at the crime scene. Trying to regain control, I started to explain to the officer who the Lubavitcher Rebbe was, and the indescribable loss I was feeling by having the bottle stolen.

Needless to say, the bewildered policeman was more interested in details about the theft and recommended that I urgently cancel all my credit cards. He suggested I call my husband and ask him to help with this urgent task. When I dialed and began to speak Russian, the officer switched to Russian as well, and we discovered that we had both immigrated from the former Soviet Union.

This surreal "coincidence" helped me gain my composure, for I saw it as a sign that my ordeal was part of the Divine Plan. In my native tongue and in a more coherent way, I explained that while it is very unpleasant to face fraudulent charges and have a purse stolen, I was not crying about lost things, but about an irreplaceable sentimental item that was given to me by a very righteous person.

The policeman nodded in understanding but made it clear that it was unlikely my purse would ever be

recovered. He explained that thieves take valuables and throw away the rest of the contents. The reality was that my bottle was gone forever. I don't remember how I managed to get home and prepare myself for Shabbat. When I lit the candles and recited the blessings, I instinctively sensed that this loss held a special lesson that I was meant to internalize. I spent the entire Shabbat in deep contemplation about my journey. If the bottle was taken from me, I asked myself, then perhaps there's a reason it's no longer needed in my life?

My entire adult life, I held on to that bottle as a token of who I was meant to become after my encounter with the Rebbe. It was a symbol of transformation, a symbol of hope for a little Soviet girl to connect to G-d and her nation. The Rebbe himself taught that "One moment of Torah and mitzvot is eternal, for through them you are bound to the Eternal G-d and entirely transcend the boundaries of time."

Years went by and I embraced a life of Torah and mitzvot. That little girl found her place amongst the Jewish people, and the Rebbe's bottle of wine was no longer the only symbol of my Jewish identity.

Along my journey, I discovered that there are 613 mitzvot that bind us to our Creator. With each passing year, I made small steps and connected more deeply to my Jewish heritage and traditions. By the end of Shabbat, I had come to a profound realization: Although I was sad about the loss of this incredibly important keepsake, I wasn't lost without it. I knew that it had served its purpose, and I no longer needed the "training wheels" to be able to find balance in my life.

In the following weeks I restored most of the lost documents and made peace with what had happened. Then, unexpectedly, when my brother Ilya visited me he casually mentioned that he had an identical bottle to the one that was stolen. I was speechless. Apparently, our grandmother Zelda gave her own tiny bottle to my brother who wasn't with the family that day when we drove to see the Rebbe.

Ilya had it all these years and decided to give it to me. I couldn't believe it. I later learned that my 7-year-old nephew and 11-year-old niece who attend Chabad Hebrew school in Newtown, Pa under the leadership of Rabbi Yudy Shemtov and Rabbi Aryeh Weinstein asked that their dad give me his bottle. They felt that I built a special relationship with Hashem because I chose to live a "Jewish life," and thus deserved to have the Lubavitcher Rebbe's bottle.

The next day, filled with overwhelming gratitude, I picked up an exact copy of the bottle that was stolen on that fateful afternoon. With tears running down my cheeks, I held it in my hands for a long time, and then placed it into a special display case in my dining room, near the picture of my 13-year-old self on that visit to the Rebbe.

This is its new place—near the Shabbat candles, overlooking our beautifully set Shabbat table. I will continue to carry it with me, not in my purse but in my heart.

Reprinted from an email of Chabad.Org Magazine.

What is the best way in which we can give financial help to another?

The Shulchan Aruch in Choshen Mishpat tells us that when one gives a loan to a needy person, of course the Torah tells us we may not receive interest, but when giving that loan, one should have a contract, and there should be witnesses. This is in order that the receiver should not claim at a later time, that he wasn't given the money. You need to have proof in order to protect yourself.

However, the Shulchan Aruch also tells us in Yoreh Deah that if you're giving charity to a poor person, the finest way to do it is in secret. In fact, the ultimate form of charity is when the receiver doesn't even know who the giver is.

So how is that possible? On the one hand, we need witnesses, and on the other hand, it needs to be done in secret.

The Chida derives an answer from a passuk in Parshat Mishpatim. It is a seemingly clumsy verse. The Torah says, "אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך," translated literally as, "If you give a loan of money to someone within the people, the poor are in your midst."

What sense can we make of these words?

The Chida tells us to read it as follows: "אם כסף תלוה," – If you are giving a loan, "את עמי," – if you would like to receive that money back, and you want to have proof, it must be done "את עמי," in the presence of other people within the nation, in order that you should be protected. However, "את העני," – "if you're giving money to a poor person, as an outright gift or perhaps even as a loan just to save his dignity, so that the person feels better but you don't ever expect to get it back, then "עמך," – it should be just with your knowledge only. No announcement, no contract and no witnesses.

So therefore in our rich, G-d-given heritage we can see how within Jewish tradition, the rights of those who give are always protected and at the same time, we should go the extra mile in order to preserve the dignity of those who are receiving.

So let's go the extra mile and join together to ask Him to keep our soldiers, police and medical professionals safe, especially through these trying times by adding a special prayer for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 53
MITZVOT ASEH: 23
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 30

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 118
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1462
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5313

As yesterday and today is Rosh Chodesh, we take out two Sifrei Torah; seven Aliyot read in first Sefer Torah from the weekly Parsha, Re'eh, Maftir is read in the second Torah from Parshat Pinchas the two paragraphs "ובניום השבת" and "ובניום חדישיכם" ובראשי חדישיכם

HAFTORA: for Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh "השמנים כסאי" (Yishayahu 66:1-24, repeating verse 23 at the end), (ענין סוטה);

משפטים

This week is dedicated
in memory of
Reb Shlomo
ben R' Binyamin
Philipson