

1

With the help of God. Thursday, Behar-Behukotai 5710 [1950]

My honorable friend, the rabbi and hasid Rabbi Tzvi Jacob Abraham, may his light shine.

I received your letter, and I would like to let you know that in the meantime, Rabbi Barukh Shiber moved to the Holy Land, and it is difficult to find people who could undertake the writing of stories. Nevertheless, I will try to take an interest in this matter. I hereby send you several stories. Please confirm upon receipt. With God's help, I will send more. Your friend who blesses you with all that is good, forever, and that your stature should be elevated.”

Yitzchak, son of my master and teacher Rabbi Sholom Yosef

2

This wondrous story I heard from a young man who was a follower of the saintly master R. Aaron of Karlin (1802-1872), of blessed memory, and this Jew heard the story from the saintly master R. Nahum Dov (1843-1883), the son of the saint R. Shalom Joseph (1813-1851), and the son-in-law of the Hasidic saint R. Abraham Jacob of Sadigura (1820-1883), may his merit protect us. He told this story after the sanctification of the new moon. In Vilnius, a city in Lithuania, there lived a rich man who had an only daughter who became blind, God save us. The rich man spent a lot of money on doctors, but it did not help. At that time, the rich man was frequented by a teacher who was from the region of Sadigura, and at that time, the Hasidic saint of Ruzhin (1797-1851) was already residing in Sadigura.

The teacher knew about the daughter's misfortune, so he told the mother, "Listen to me and travel to Sadigura where there is the saint, the Ruzhiner who, with God's help, will heal your daughter." Hearing this, the mother began to pester her husband to travel to the Ruzhiner, of blessed memory. The Lithuanian was, of course, a Mitnaged and refused to consider it and said, "I have been to enough sorcerers. You also wish to go to another one?" But the habit of women is to pester, so she would pester him greatly every day until he agreed to travel to Sadigura.

It is a long way from Vilnius to Sadigura, so he ordered to harness a wagon with good horses and arrived in Sadigura and came to the court. The Ruzhiner, of blessed memory, sensed with his holy spirit that a Lithuanian had arrived, and he ordered that he not be allowed entrance. The Lithuanian heard people recounting miracles, so he approached the [rebbe's] assistant and asked that he be allowed to meet with the rebbe to which the assistant replied, "Soon" and subsequently denied his requests. The Lithuanian waited there for several hours and realized that he was being refused entrance, so he returned to his guesthouse and complained to the people as to why he was not being allowed in. Everyone is allowed in, but he is not. They replied to him, "You surely have never been to a rebbe. Don't you know that you must give the

assistant a worthy sum and then he'll let you in?" "Woe," he says and goes back to the court and tells the assistant, "I'll give you three rubles if you let me in." The assistant replies, "It's impossible. However, I'll give you some advice. There stands one of the rebbe's children; give him a ruble, and he'll go in to his father and arrange for you to be allowed in." The child took the money and went to his father and said, "Father, let the Lithuanian in." His father asked him, "What's your obligation to him?" to which the child replied, "I accepted a ruble from him." "I see," said the Ruzhiner, "If so, then let him in." The child then told the assistant, "Let him in."

The Lithuanian prepared a petition (*kvitel*), entered and handed over the petition and soul redemption (*pidyon nefesh*). The Ruzhiner said to him, "I cannot treat (*praven* with) you." The Lithuanian asked, "Why? I see that you treat all Jews, am I not a Jew? Is my money not money? The Ruzhiner replied, "With what power do we treat a Jew? With the power of faith. He believes that we pray to the master of the world and the master of the world helps. You, however, you have come here with another power, the power of sorcery. This we do not know." The Lithuanian replied, "Listen, rebbe, if you will treat me then I will say that there is a God in this world and there is a Ruzhiner rebbe. If you will not, I will say the contrary, God save us." "If so," the Ruzhiner, of blessed memory, replied, "we must sanctify God's name."

He tells the Lithuanian, "Believe me when I say I cannot help you, but I can give you some advice. Travel to Jassy and go to the courtyard of the synagogue. There you will find a Jew selling bagels. I will give you another sign –he has six fingers on his right hand. Tell him I sent you to him that he help your daughter. And when God helps you, bring me a wagon with horses from Jassy." The Lithuanian left for Jassy and indeed he found the Jew and said to him: "The Ruzhiner sent me to you that you help my daughter." "Woe," the Jew sighed and said, "What does he want from me? He just sent me to Czar Nikolai, and now he burdens me with a Lithuanian?" The Lithuanian takes a wagon and tells the Jew he should join him so that they may go to the hotel where his daughter is staying. The Jews said to him, "You go. I will be by you shortly."

The Lithuanian left and went home. His daughter ran out to greet him and said, "Father, a Jew was just here, and he gave me a piece of bagel. I ate up the bagel and began to see. My eyes can now see well." "Where is the Jew?" "He already left with his bagels." The Lithuanian ran to the courtyard of the synagogue to thank him, but he was no longer able to find him. This man was one of the hidden ones (*nister*) of the thirty-six saints. So the Lithuanian purchased several good horses and a good carriage and traveled to Sadigura to the Ruzhiner, of blessed memory.

3

A story that I heard from the master of Behush, the saint R. Menahem Mendel (1876-1942), of blessed memory, about the master, the saint R. Mordechai of Chernobyl (1770-1837), of blessed memory. A simple Jew, a leaseholder (*arendor*), once came to the above-mentioned saint, and he rejoiced greatly together with the great hasidim.

They asked him, “Why are you so joyful? What teaching did you hear? What did you learn from the rebbe?” He replied, “When I had my audience (*gepravet*) with the rebbe, he asked me about my routine in the village, so I told him that I get up before dawn and run to the village and engage in business until ten or eleven o’clock. Then I come home and pray and eat. The rebbe said to me, ‘This is called praying?’ So I said to him, ‘The rebbe does not know business. If I would go later than this, the gentile will leave, and there will be no buyers left at home.’

The rebbe said to me, ‘I will tell you a story. A wealthy son-in-law lost his money, God save us. He was a refined young man, so he went far away from home and became a teacher. He spent several years and earned several thousand rubles. So he changed them all to gold, which filled many sacks of gold. Just one copper coin remained. This was called in Russia a piatak (five-copeck coin).

On the way, he had to keep the Sabbath on the road. He had arrived several kilometers from his town but could not go on as it was nearly sundown. He considered with whom to hide it – he was afraid to leave it with the leaseholder (*arendor*) of the village, but he shivered to keep the Sabbath by himself. However, he was a pious young man, so he decided to give it to the leaseholder. As soon as he handed it over, he could not wait until Sabbath’s end. The leaseholder noticed that the man could not bear it, so he cut short the third meal and quickly performed the Havdalah and threw him his pack. Once he counted and saw that the gold was there, he did not bother to look for the copper coin as well. Said R. Motele Chernobyler, the soul is gold. If she is given to you, you are not allowed to look out for yourself [i.e. worry too much about your livelihood]. You can trust the master of the world. May his merit protect us.

4

A story that I heard from the holy mouth of the Hasidic leader, the saint, R. Israel Shalom Joseph of Bohush (1855-1923), of blessed memory. It is well known that the Hasidic leader, the saint, R. Abraham (d. 1776), of blessed memory, the son of the saint and Hasidic leader the great Preacher of Mezritsh (d. 1772), of blessed memory, called by all R. Abraham the Angel, was the son-in-law of our master, the saint R. Faivushel of Kremnitz (d. c. 1790), of blessed memory. Once, on a weekday, during the time that he was being supported by his father-in-law (*kest*), he gathered his quorum (*minyán*) and told them to lock the door and said that no matter how much they knock on the door, they should not open it. He then ordered them to recite the Hallel prayer. As soon as they began to recite the Hallel, they began to knock on the doors and yell fire. However, they did not open until they had finished reciting the Hallel. When they opened the doors and went out to the street, they saw that the church that had been near his house had burned to the ground.

5.

This story I heard from the above-mentioned saint. The first-born son of our master, the saint of Ruzhin, R. Shalom Joseph, was the son-in-law of R. Dan (d. 1841), the son of

R. Isaac of Radvil (d. 1835). R. Shalom Joseph was supported for a while (*kest*) by R. Isaac of Radvil. Once, R. Isaac came to R. Shalom Joseph and asked him, "My son, why don't you study the language of the animals and birds?" R. Shalom Joseph replied, "I cannot do that because I fear that it might interrupt my worship of the creator. R. Shalom Joseph's son, R. Isaac of Bohush (1834-1896), who heard this story from his father, said that "My father was correct" and stated as follows: "Yesterday in the morning a bird came and sat at my window and cried so that it tore out my heart. I then saw that my father was correct."

6.

With the help of God. I heard from the wealthy man R. Avigdor, the son of the rabbi of the city of Orhei (Bessarabia), of blessed memory, that his father had told him that when the master Israel of Ruzhin, of blessed memory, came to Kishinev, he came thanks to the efforts of R. Joseph of Rashkov (d. c. 1820), of blessed memory. The Rashkover said that the rectification (*tikun*) of Bessarabia could not take place unless the Rabbi of Ruzhin would come to Bessarabia. However, the Rabbi of Savran (d. 1837) was against it, and since the rabbi of Orhei was a follower of Savran, he did not go to meet the rabbi of Ruzhin. However, after the Rabbi of Ruzhin had been in Kishinev for two weeks, on the last day, "his spirit was troubled" within, so he came to meet him. The Ruzhiner was already preoccupied, and the rabbi was unable to speak and apologize properly.

The Rashkover was a good friend of the Rabbi of Orhei and took him along on the Ruzhiner's coach. Both rabbis stood on the pedestal, on the right and on the left. Having traveled some distance (*tehum shabbat*) from the city, the Rabbi of Rashkov said that the Rabbi of Orhei begs his pardon, the rebbe should not take offense (*makpid zayn*) that he did not come to him this whole time. "Offence?" the Ruzhiner exclaimed, "Offense? I have never taken offence from a Jew. Only once did I take offence from a Jew. Sit down both you rabbis, and I will tell what happened, and you can see whether I was right to take offense from that Jew. My father, the holy rabbi (d. 1802), may his merit protect us – the Rabbi of Ruzhin recounted – travelled for the Sabbath to a town near Berditchev. On the way, they had to fix the wagon, so he went for a walk in the meantime.

There, outside the town, he encountered one of his followers, R. Samuel, leading his cow to graze in the field. He saw my father and immediately ran home and prepared a room and returned and asked my father to come home with him, and my father went.

While receiving the follower Samuel's wife lamented to him that: 1) she does not experience any of the holidays as her husband is always with his rebbe then; 2) their income is unfortunately very meager. They have only the cow to earn money, and her husband is a teacher; 3) it is already been many years, and they do not have any children, heaven forbid. My father replied that she should come along with her husband for the holidays. So they came for Rosh Hashanah. After Rosh Hashanah, she wanted to meet with the rebbe to take leave, but he refused as his custom was to wait

for the rebbe to decide to send him off. In this way, the Ten Days of Repentance, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot passed, and my father did not call them in until Hanukah! When they came to be received (*praven zikh*), my father gave them an apple and blessed them that they should be helped with children.

Samuel's wife further addressed my father that since by now all the students had certainly left and the cow sold – “but the poor man had nothing” (II Samuel, 12:3) – so my father gave R. Samuel a coin for him to buy whenever might happen to appear. They went home and began to have success and to rise more and more until he became a government supplier. He became very wealthy and bought himself a nice house in Berditchev, and there was “Torah and greatness in one place.” He would still come to my brother (d. 1813) in Prohobisht, but to me, he no longer came. Furthermore, a colonel from Berditchev had to come to Ruzhin so he consulted with him about where he might stay, and he advised him to come to me and specifically in my prayer room.” “So,” concluded the Ruzhiner, “I ask you, rabbis, should I have taken offense from this follower Samuel, whose entire salvation came through my father and who sends me such a demon (*sitra ahra*), God save us, in my holy of holies?!” Thus far his holy and pure words.

7.

With God's help. I heard from the great Rabbi Solomon Reisman, a rabbi in the town of Foltshan (Moldova) who heard from the intimate (*mekurav*) the rabbi and Hasid R. Zevi Sternberg, peace be upon him, how he traveled with the master the holy elder of Chortkov (1828-1903), may his merit protect us, to take in the clear air in Germany. The Chortkover traveled to an area in Germany where they hardly recognized a Jew to the point that the assistant could not even go to the post office as they would pelt him with stones. In the inn where the rebbe stayed, there was an elderly German Jew, and every day he would rise before the rebbe, bow to him and greet him good morning with great respect. Once, when the Jew's son came home, his father said to him, “Come my son and you'll see the shining face of a godly man. Let us go greet him.”

When the son saw the holy face of the saintly Rabbi of Chotkov, he was deeply moved and ran over to the rebbe with great enthusiasm. He took out a golden cigarette case and wanted to give it to the master as a gift. The master, about whom “There shall no mischief befall the righteous” (Proverbs 12:21), was very frightened by the sudden sight of a forbidden (*mukza*) object on the Sabbath, and he jumped back in fear and terror and was stopped only by the wall. The German did not understand until the assistant explained that this was forbidden. When the Chortkover finished his baths, he traveled to Sadilkov to the gravesite there.

Afterwards, the master R. Nahum Dov, of blessed memory, inquired into the details of the activities and experiences of the Chortkover, and when he heard the story about that German, he recounted it to his father-in-law the holy Sadigerer. When the two saints were sitting together at the table, the Sadigerer asked the Chortkover about it.

This story he did not want to discuss so as not to recount something bad about another person, how far way he was from Judaism. The Sadigerer asked him, "Holy brother, many people come to you to have their defects rectified and if you don't take notice of the defects, then how will you know how to rectify them?" The Chortkover replied, "We do not look at the defect. We see and consider the pull toward the good, and through this, we already know what to fix. Thus far his pure words.