

"Help!"  
She reeled around the town square, clutching her kerchief.

"Good people, help me!"

Her high-pitched shriek gave way to a wail.

"My pocketbook . . . GONE!"

The merchants and shoppers, bartering on either side of the stalls, had abandoned them at her first scream. Some eyed her in grief and sympathy; others searched on the ground for the lost object; still others fished in their pockets for their own day's earnings, for reassurance — then a silent prayer of thanks for escaping such a tragedy.

youngest, may she be well, is about to wed and begin her own life. She too only seeks to follow in Your ways. How can You deny her this supreme moment of happiness?"

With that she collapsed to the ground.

### The Stranger

One gentleman, dressed in a shiny silk caftan, bade the crowd part. He was recognized at once as Reb Moshe the horse dealer, for only he could afford to wear silk during the week. He also sported a gold watch chain, which swung like the pendulum of an enormous clock in front of his breast pocket.

become a mother herself . . . this person should not have to suffer such indignity."

He rotated so that the sheen from the silk dazzled in the sun. "I, Moshe, blush for shame that a theft should occur among us."

A low voice came from the outer stalls. "Madam, I have found your money."

The crowd buzzed, and heads turned.

A man of about forty, with a mop of hair and a beard sprouting wildly over his cheap suit, stepped forward. On his palm a silk handkerchief rested. It might have been mistaken for a cutaway piece of Reb Moshe's suit; it

# Credit Due

By CHAYA SARAH CANTOR

The woman finally halted. Hoarsely she cried, "Three hundred rubles . . . vanished! My daughter's dowry . . . for months I have saved . . ." At last she broke down.

A pair of her friends weaved through the crowd and rushed over. Leaning against them, she whimpered, "All my hard work . . . my efforts . . . now poor Raisel shall have to borrow for her trousseau, like a beggar."

She broke loose and raised her wrinkled face. "G-d in heaven! Is this how You reward Your creatures? I am an old woman. All my life I have tried to follow in the right path, and train my children likewise. Now my

He positioned himself squarely in the center of the crowd, so that his shadow enveloped everyone.

"Good people," he announced, "a calamity has befallen this woman. A market woman . . . who with G-d's help has sat, day after day, selling her fruits and vegetables for Sabbath meals." He threw up his hands. "This woman, this . . . G-d-fearing individual . . . who has brought up . . ." He spun around. "Uh, how many children?"

"Eight," she murmured.

"Eight children." Reb Moshe expanded his chest. "Such a person . . . a mother in Israel whose daughter, G-d willing, may soon

was small, somewhat dingy, and bulging with the shape of coins.

Some eyed the man appreciatively, others with a trace of cynicism. This man was one of the eccentric new breed — *chassidim*, they liked to be called. With their ill-fitting clothes and unwashed bodies they cut quite a swath through more respectable circles.

Certainly this specimen, holding out his hand, might prove an exception. Not only was he clean, but he at least displayed some kind of manners, which others of his ilk had blithely discarded. With a contempt for good deeds, they instead spent their days dancing and indulging in other sorts of

vulgarity. Even their style of worship differed. Faces beaming, they shouted and screamed to G-d, as if to mock rather than submit.

Now this chassid advanced. Avoiding direct eye contact with anyone, he held out the bulky handkerchief.

"I found it on the ground," he mumbled.

Nervously he dropped the coins into the woman's apron. Then he turned away.

"G-d bless you, sir," declared the woman, rising and counting the pieces. Slowly the crowd began to disperse.

But they reassembled quickly when she emitted another shriek. "Part of the money is missing!"

The chassid had already walked about fifty paces when he heard, "Thief!" He spun around.

The old woman's eyes bulged with fury. "Fifty rubles are missing! What did you do with the fifty rubles?"

The man returned and faced the woman, bowing his head slightly. "Madam, I gave you two hundred and fifty rubles. I'm afraid that the rest is mine." He grinned apologetically. "Finder's fee."

"Finder's fee?!" howled the woman. Instantly the crowd responded.

"Rogue!"

"Robbing an honest woman!"

"Disgusting! Just like the rest of his kind!"

"Money-grubbing sneak!"

Reb Moshe did not miss his chance. Waving his hands like a sailor flagging down a ship, he summoned silence. "Good people! Such an act will not go unpunished. Let's catch this criminal and bring him to the court. *There* he'll get his just reward."

Before the stranger could respond,

arms grabbed him and dragged him through the square. The tips of his boots streaked the gravel. He was finally deposited before a wooden bench.

### The Court

Seated behind the bench, Rav Uri Feivel stiffened as regally as possible. Although he didn't claim to know all

the Jews in Poland, he could tell who was of his world and who was not. A chassid was definitely not.

"Who are you?" the rabbi demanded.

"My name is Zusha, from Anipoli. However, I now live in the town of Koritz."

Rabbi Uri Feivel had no regard for chassidim. He found their manner of



"Finder's fee?!" howled the woman.



dress contemptible and their life style abhorrent. And how they could be arrogant! Reb Zusha wordlessly stood while Reb Moshe and the old woman hurled accusations.

The chassid made no mention of the pocketbook. Quietly he declared, "I felt it best to retain fifty rubles, sir, for

"Certainly not," answered the chassid. "I simply took what I felt was due to me."

"You don't think that fifty is a rather large sum?" pressed Reb Uri.

"It depends on the mitzvah." Reb Zusha stepped forward. "Sir, I helped this woman retrieve her life savings.

Moshe. "What kind of Jew is this? Not only asking for a reward but . . . expecting it." Reb Moshe swept around, addressing his audience. "Why, right before he came along, I was about to offer her my help. And would I have asked for such a thing? *Never!*"

He squarely faced the rabbi. "Sir, this thief must be punished! Not only did he have . . . the utter nerve to help himself, but he somehow thinks that G-d owes him something."

Rabbi Uri Feivel tapped the warped wood while probing the defendant's features. Reb Zusha remained rooted to the floor, like a powerful tree of ancient lineage. Not even the vilest insults could shake him; his countenance was placid and strangely radiant.

His impassivity irritated Rabbi Uri Feivel even more. Here he was, this chassid, having just committed a crime, yet acting as if these proceedings were beneath him. Not only that, but he cared little for having helped the old woman; his only concern was how the mitzvah he had done was to be rewarded.

Finally the rabbi sighed. "It pains me to see the attitude of so many . . . types of people. One who has just stolen, yet displays no remorse, no awareness of right and wrong. Such a person is contemptible among his fellow Jews — not only for his dishonesty, but for an appalling lack of humility."

He leaned forward. "I am afraid, then, that the punishment must be meted out measure for measure. He shall be chastised. I order Reb Zusha flogged, then banished."

The sentence was carried out. Reb Zusha offered no protest — neither cries nor curses. Swiftly the chassid



**"I helped this woman retrieve her life savings."**

myself. It is a finder's fee."

"You mean you just took it upon yourself to garnishee a sixth of her earnings?" demanded Reb Uri.

"Yes."

"In other words, you were looking to freeload!" bellowed Reb Moshe.

Not to mention the money for her daughter's wedding. I have a daughter of my own to marry off. Not that I am avaricious, mind you, but . . ." He sighed. "I do appreciate some kind of reward."

"What impudence!" shouted Reb

was dragged out. The woman received the rest of her change, while Reb Moshe declared to whoever might listen that he would hire more police to keep out such riffraff. In the courtyard, secluded by a row of buildings, came the smug sound of whipping.

In the end, everyone felt good. Justice was done.

### The Meeting

It was not until a month later, on his way to Koritz, that Rav Uri Feivel reflected on the incident. The chassid had not cried once during his flogging. He had borne his pain in silence — even defiance, it was later said. But all that was history. The man had slunk away, with three rubles in the handkerchief for a “finder’s fee” — enough to pay for his ride back to Anipoli. Fair enough.

Certainly, mused the rabbi, while jostling up and down in the carriage, he would have an interesting conversation with Rav Pinchas Koritzer. Perhaps this man, whom Rav Uri was about to visit, might abandon his own reverence for the Ba'al Shem Tov.

When Rav Uri entered the study, the body of Rav Pinchas greeted him in embrace.

“*Shalom aleichem, Uri. How good to see you again!*”

Rav Pinchas’s twinkling eyes dispensed all negativity. The airy, sunlit room, the volumes of Talmud, the oaken furniture hugging the polished cabinets exuded more than scholarship — rather, the mirth of a man in love with life and all the ambience it had to offer.

Rav Pinchas served his guest tea, as well as fruit and cake. Rav Uri nibbled, all the while staring out the window.

Beyond him the village unfolded — whitewashed structures slouched against each other like sleepy children, quilted off by rotting wooden fences and weed-infested gardens. Beyond a cornfield a sow grunted in and out of the gentiles’ yards, her litter squealing after her in despair.

In bemusement, Rav Uri shook his head. His own town of Dubenik was

not much better. But at least it was redeemed by a clean-cut set of Jews. He knew unfortunately well of Rav Pinchas’s penchant for a certain type. In dozens they clogged the streets, gabbling and gesticulating, blocking the pavement with their wagons and elbowing out decent individuals.

As if reading his mind, Rav Pinchas laughed. “It was certainly difficult for



“What impudence!” shouted Reb Moshe.



you to come, Uri. I know how much you love Koritz."

"Yes," mumbled the other. He sipped his tea. "It has changed." For the worse, he was tempted to add, but resisted.

Rav Pinchas drained his cup and helped himself to another. "It has, to say the least, become more crowded. Ever since Rav Elimelech passed away."

"Rav Elimelech?"

"Their leader. Now they all come here, looking for a new rebbe." Rav Pinchas swelled with pride. "Who would ever think that *my* town should merit such honor? This isn't exactly Lublin."

"Definitely not," said Rav Uri, observing the squalor. A group of Jews danced down the street, whipping up storms of dust which, along with their frenzied cries, climbed up the study window. "So this Rav Elimelech lived here, then?"

"No, he lived in Lyzhansk." Rav Pinchas added, "But his brother lives here. There is talk that he might take Rav Elimelech's place."

"Really?" Rav Uri tried to take in the thought of a whole dynasty of chassidim.

"Not that he wants it," continued Rav Pinchas. "I think he's happier among his own clique. But he would be the most fitting choice. Besides being the brother of Rav Elimelech, he is also a disciple of the Maggid of Mezhirech." He raised his voice beatifically. "A shining example, too! Such a saint!"

Rav Uri sniffed. A fervent opponent of the chassidim, he despised the practices they believed passed for Jewish observance; in his eyes these were nothing more than charades. Unfortunately, everyone else, even in

his own village, was succumbing to the madness. The Maggid's minions had done their work well — invaded the towns and left the Jews totally deluded. And it galled Rav Uri what they had got away with.

Rav Uri had done his utmost to keep the chassidim out. Oh, yes . . . he had fought to keep out these self-righteous paupers — wreaking havoc among the population, seducing them with their so-called piety and acts of grace. It was bad enough — their disregard for scholarship. But they coated their mitzvos with a modesty

There, sprawled  
on the desk,  
lay a silk  
black handkerchief.

about as genuine as a gold-plated watch.

His thoughts drifted again to the chassid. He too had imagined himself high and mighty, for returning a woman's pocketbook. Yet this charlatan had had the nerve afterwards to help himself to her cash — like a beggar! Even their mitzvos were self-serving.

"So you've become a 'believer' too?" Rav Uri snapped.

Rav Pinchas smiled. "You haven't changed a bit, Uri. Stubborn as always."

"No, not stubborn. Just *sensible*." Rav Uri threw down his cup. "That's more than what I can say for the rest of Poland these days."

"You are saying, then, that our Jews aren't capable of recognizing goodness?"

"No. Only that they are too dazzled by the veneer. Anyone who walks

around, eyes to the ground but nose in the air, has suddenly become a 'saint.' " The rabbi snorted. "Why, just last month one of them came to my town — from yours, in fact. Zusha, I think his name was."

"Reb Zusha?" Rav Pinchas of Koritz leaned closer.

"Yes. Pompous hypocrite; after graciously returning a woman's pocketbook, he claimed she owed him for his having performed the mitzvah of *hashavas aveidah* — returning a lost item. Helped himself to fifty rubles, too. I gave the tramp his comeuppance; I had him whipped."

"Pocketbook?" Rabbi Pinchas fumbled in his desk. "Did you say it was a pocketbook?"

"She did," said Rav Uri. Then he paused. "Why . . . what difference does it make?"

Rabbi Pinchas removed something from his desk. "Are you sure it wasn't *this*?"

Rav Uri gasped. There, sprawled on the desk, lay a silk black handkerchief.

"I gave this to Reb Zusha," Rav Pinchas explained. "It contained three hundred rubles. For his daughter's dowry, you see. That is why I specifically asked you to come, Rav Uri. Since I know you like to run after mitzvos, I thought you might help me raise more money for Zusha. He was robbed last month, on the way to your town."

"Robbed?" Rav Uri exclaimed. "I . . . I don't understand."

"He said he was beaten up by thugs. Poor fellow — he came staggering back, all bruised and bloody. They left him with just a few coins, and the handkerchief."

Rav Uri paled. "He . . . never told me . . . *that*. And he never said

anything about the money being his. Only that fifty rubles were his for a finder's fee."

They two men parted in complete bewilderment — Rav Pinchas, who wondered what had really transpired

at Dubenik, and Rav Uri, who wondered if chassidim really were sincere.

### Charity

When summoned to the rabbi's

office, Reb Zusha kept casting his head sideways, as if plotting an escape. Finally he faced the floor.

Rav Pinchas Koritzer eyed him sternly.

(Continued on page 26)

## Tremendous Spirit

**R**abbi Zusha of Anipoli and Rabbi Elmelech of Lizhansk were both disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, who succeeded the Ba'al Shem Tov as leader in the early days of the Chassidic movement. The brothers became leaders in their own right, as well as two of the most prominent figures in Polish Jewry.

Reb Zusha of Anipoli, born five years before Reb Elmelech, outlived the latter by another thirteen. Stories of Reb Zusha's exceptional modesty, such as the one above, reverberate with their lessons in ideal character traits.

Another story conveys not only this personage's extreme sensitivity toward his fellow Jews, but the essence of a leader:

**W**hen Reb Elmelech died, many of his followers naturally turned to Reb Zusha to take his place. However, some, having grown attached to their original rebbe, were not quite ready to choose a successor, no matter what his credentials.

Thus, two chassidim, one of them a man named Gavriel Shach, packed their bags and prepared to leave for Anipoli. On the way they got stranded in a distant woods and found an inn to spend the night.

The inn, run by a non-Jew, was primitive, and lacked in bare essentials. The two men asked for a basin of water in which to wash their hands in the morning (*negel vasser*). But there was none — only in a distant lake. And it was too late at night to trek across the forest.

The men decided instead to study Torah all night. In that way they would not have to worry about falling asleep and removing the impurity that remained on their hands when they awoke.

For several hours they studied Talmud, until Gavriel found himself growing sleepy. In vain he tried to stay awake, but his eyelids grew heavier and heavier. At last he decided to lay down. Though he still had no water, he reasoned that, this being unavoidable, he would be allowed to move about in the morning until he found water. Soon he fell asleep, while his friend quietly spent the rest of the night learning.

In the morning Gavriel awoke. Later they went to the lake, performed their ablutions, and continued on their way.

At Anipoli the two men immediately made contact with Reb Zusha. But to Gavriel's surprise, the saintly man spoke freely with his friend, while ignoring Gavriel completely. The same thing happened the next day: Reb Zusha conversed with the friend on scholarly subjects while virtually turning his back on Gavriel.

At last Gavriel confronted him. "Reb Zusha," he said, "Is there something I have done? Have I offended you, or, G-d forbid, committed some other sin?"

Reb Zusha stiffened, and he waved his finger. "My brother spent years with you instilling *kedushah* — holiness. In one night you managed to throw it all away."

This comment left Gavriel perplexed. At last he realized what night Reb Zusha was referring to, and Gavriel understood: even from afar, Reb Zusha could sense the actions — and transgressions — of another Jew.

Gavriel trembled with joy. "Such a man, who would know the simplest things about each Jew, must possess tremendous *ruach hakodesh* — Divine Inspiration. Such a man is worthy to take his brother's place." Reb Gavriel Shach promptly became one of Reb Zusha's most fervent chassidim.



## Credit Due/ (Continued from page 7)

"Reb Zusha," he began, "I want to know . . . what actually happened in Dubenik?"

Reb Zusha swallowed. "Why, I—I already explained, sir. I am afraid I have nothing else to say."

"Zusha, did you give your money away to a certain woman?"

Reb Zusha looked up. "Money?"

"You know, the three hundred rubles I gave you?"

The chassid blinked in confusion. "Why, how on earth did you find out?"

"From Rabbi Uri Feivel."

Reb Zusha trembled. "I would rather he hadn't told you, sir."

"Now I want to know. That money you returned to the woman . . ."

"Yes?"

"It was *yours*, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"*Your* money, Reb Zusha — money that you needed for yourself! And you gave it away to her. *Why?*"

Reb Zusha mumbled, "It was charity."

"Yes, but . . . *you* were as much in need as she."

"Sir, the suffering of another Jew saddens me more than the loss of a few rubles. That poor woman needed help. Obviously G-d had placed me in the town square at that moment for a reason."

"But why didn't you at least *explain* to her that it was your money, instead of hers?"

"Sir, aren't there several levels of charity? Among the highest, I believe, is to give in secret. That was something difficult to do, under those circumstances. The woman's misfortune was known throughout the

market place. Why cause her further embarrassment by openly handing out gifts? Obviously I had to think of an excuse. I told her I had found the money."

"So instead you allowed *yourself* to be embarrassed! No . . . worse than embarrassed — physically abused. Beaten, jeered at. Why . . ." Rav Pinchas raised his arms dramatically. "Because of you, Rav Uri Feivel humiliated a scholar and an innocent man."

Rev Zusha smiled slightly. "No, sir. He did not humiliate me. He *humbled*

I actually  
relished the praise  
I was receiving.

me. He performed G-d's work by his doing so as much as I did by giving the woman the money."

"I . . . I don't understand."

The countenance beamed. "Pinchas, why is it that secrecy is important in charity? It is not only to avoid putting another person to shame. It is for us to learn the proper way to perform a mitzvah. Quietly, unpretentiously, with no thought of glory or reward. We are doing what G-d has put us on this earth to do."

"In that split moment, when I was ready to hand over my earnings, I actually relished the praise I was receiving. Here I was, I thought, being terribly generous. I almost told the woman that the money was mine in order to elicit admiration."

"But then I stopped. I told myself, you are a chassid, a follower of the Maggid. Were that man alive, would

he ever condone performing a mitzvah due to ulterior motives? A Jew is a servant of G-d; like a servant, he performs his Master's will with lowliness of spirit. I was about to do something out of self-aggrandizement — and for publicity. What better way to make a favorable impression for Chassidism? I already know of our rather poor image."

He momentarily became silent.

"But truth need not advertise itself. Good deeds show through; only falsehood is the stuff of braggarts. Nevertheless, I was tainted with human weakness, even if for a brief moment. And because of it, my mitzvah became meaningless and incomplete."

Reb Zusha looked down, avoiding human gaze. "In a flash I thought of a remedy for my sickness — the sickness of *ga'avah*, pride. I took away fifty rubles, knowing the woman would make a scene. Then I invented an excuse for having done so — that the money would serve as a finder's fee."

He chuckled. "A finder's fee — can you believe it? For fifty rubles I paid to be beaten. The price of a mitzvah sometimes exceeds the reward. But thanks to Rav Uri, my mitzvah was now complete." He sighed. "Once again, though, it is no longer secret."

Rav Pinchas Koritzer raised his hands. "A thousand blessings on your head! Reb Zusha, the reward for your mitzvah will come — tenfold."

Reb Zusha eventually did get back the three hundred rubles. He also received the seat of leadership among his brother's chassidim, and the honor of the towns of Anipoli, Koritz, and most of Poland. And perhaps Dubenik as well, where quite a few people might have learned the proper way to do a mitzvah.

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# The Jewish Reader

Sivan 5750

Vol. 2 No. 10

June 1990



**From Generation  
To Generation**



## TO OUR READERS

Many important lessons may be learned from stories about the great chassidic rebbes. In fact, very often the story itself is secondary to the lesson it is attempting to teach.

Among the most prominent of the chassidic rebbes was Reb Zusha of Anipoli. His humility and piety are legendary. "Credit Due" is one illustration of the kind of man that Reb Zusha was; we hope you will enjoy the story as you learn about this great leader.

The current issue features the conclusion of "My Brother, My Enemy." "Our Story" will continue next year, but the present chapter brings us to a turning point in the life of the Jewish people: the destruction of the Second Temple.

This issue marks the end of the second publishing year for *The Jewish Reader*. Over the past year, we have tried to present quality literature to our readers, and we hope we have been successful in some measure. We are gratified by your response to our contests, and for your letters — whether laudatory or critical. We wish all of our readers a happy Shavuot and a healthy summer.

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is made possible  
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of the



Laboratories

# MAIL

# ROOM

## Real Life Rum Ball

My warmest compliments for a wonderful magazine. The whole family enjoys it.

I am not a writer, nor in the field of education. What I am is a mother of nine children. I am also involved full time plus over time in making a living for our family. Your story "The Rum Ball Solution," by Sarah Birnhack (Iyar), left a soft spot at home.

My children are deprived, just as the children are in this "family." Also, it is my oldest daughter who has to "rum ball" so many situations — not on account of my *chessed* deeds, but because family finances require this. Whether it's *chessed* or mitzvot or finances, for necessities or luxuries, it still does not make it right to do what such parents are doing to their children — making them take over the parents' responsibilities so the parents can be free to pursue other interests. It is but the "ends justifying the means."

When the father of your article states that "charity begins at home," how does he set an example? By bringing in another person as a burden on the household? If the mother were home to lead the family in bringing Mazal closer to Judaism, I would consider it charity, but, as is, it is but abuse of the children.

I now need to bring out my second point.

I can relate to the teachers for insisting that "help" should not come from household help. In essence, Esther was not helping in the house. What she was actually doing was:

1) teaching a deaf boy for his bar

mitzvah

2) running a charity bazaar for refugees

3) catering to and mothering an Iranian refugee

4) babysitting a family of five

5) being cook, maid, and housekeeper for two adults and five children.

All this work she was doing for others — but she was based at home. Could her parents possibly have pursued their *chessed* without her? Was it necessary for Esther to bring in extra children from another family to fill her *chessed* sheet?

The young readers should realize that, when they help, it is not only the basic help that gets accomplished. There are so many things that get improved and so many people who benefit from this one link in the chain of *chessed*.

Mrs. Yocheved Gelbman  
New Square, NY

□ □ □

## Praise

I really love the short stories in *The Jewish Reader*. Normally I have one favorite story, but this week I had three.

I really liked the Nissan magazine. "The Beggar and the Thief" was an unforgettable story. "If I'd Been There" and "Illness in the Family" were my other favorites. I liked "Our Wonderful World" a lot too.

I really appreciate your hard work in making *The Jewish Reader* the best it can be, so keep up the great work.

Naomi Fishman  
Houston, TX

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