

Understanding the Rebbe's Words

Poverty and privation seemed to be his destined lot.

Chaim¹ lived on the outskirts of Lubavitch and attempted to make a living from a motel he had built there. His location was far from the center of town and his business venture was not the most profitable.

One year on Erev Shavuos, Chaim left his house early in the morning and began pacing the streets of Lubavitch completely oblivious to where he was going. His mind was weighed down by his plight and financial strain. As he continued on his absentminded stroll, he unknowingly passed through the courtyard of the Rebbe Maharash who was then standing on his second story porch.

THE LOAN

The Rebbe Maharash called his name and asked him, "Why are you so worried? Today is Erev Shavuos, and at approach of a Yom Tov we need to be happy!"

Startled with the honor of the Rebbe personally addressing him, Chaim replied, "How can I be happy?! It's the day before Yom Tov but I don't have enough

money to buy food for the Seudos."

The Rebbe Maharash placed his hand on top of his eyes as if he was peering into the distance and said, "Look into the horizon and see how many guests are on their way to Lubavitch for Yom Tov. How is it that you are just standing here?! Go home very quickly and prepare a lot of food, so that you will have enough to feed the many guests who will be spending Yom Tov in your motel."

Chaim, a simple man, took these words at face value and was completely convinced that the Rebbe had seen wagonloads of Chassidim snaking their way in to Lubavitch. He had no doubt that within a half hour they would arrive by the dozen.

However, even with these words of assurance his problems were still not solved. "Rebbe, I don't even have the money to buy the ingredients and foods I need to prepare for the guests."

The Rebbe Maharash reached into his pocket and took out ten Rubles (a considerable sum) and handed them to Chaim. "Now hurry to the marketplace and get ready for the guests."

He raced home and hitched his horse to the wagon. He gathered his wife and children and they began shopping for all

the Yom Tov necessities, they barely had enough space in the wagon for all they had bought.

THE PREPARATIONS BEGIN

Arriving home, the kitchen was soon taken over with a flurry of activity. Chaim had his hands full trying to direct and instruct everyone with what had to get done. Neighbors and friends were invited in to help and everyone put in their best effort. In addition to the abundance of food that needed preparing, one hundred beds were also set up to accommodate the expected influx of visitors.

Chaim, for the first time in a long while, was quite content knowing that he would finally be making some money.

As the preparations dwindled down and the delicious smell of Yom Tov food wafted through the air, the excited family waited around for the big moment when their guests would arrive.

But it never did.

With the passing of each hour, bringing Shavuos closer and closer with it, the expression of joy slowly vanished from Chaim's face. However, he held strong to the words of the Rebbe and did not lose trust. "They will come, surely they will come" he repeated to himself multiple

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times.

DESPAIR

The sun began to sink low into the sky and took along with it the last vestige of his hope and inner strength. It was time to light the Yom Tov candles and there was not a soul in sight.

The joy of the anticipated salvation quickly turned into worry and despair. It was nearly Yom Tov and there was plenty of good food but there was no one to eat it, never mind that he would never be able to pay back the loan of ten Rubles. "It seems that it was decreed in heaven the little that I had," sighed Chaim.

With a heavy heart and no other choice, he set out to Shul. On his way, a large commotion caught his attention. Looking all around for the source of the noise, his eyes fell upon the sight of tens of wagons passing his home. His immediate reaction was that a crazed band of murderers had come to town, however each one of them stopped in front of his house and he saw groups of Chassidim hastily getting out. Seeing Chaim standing nearby, they begged him, "Reb Yid please help us. In the next few minutes Yom Tov will begin and we have nowhere to stay. We were on our way to the Rebbe, but the wagoners got lost and at the last moment we found another route and barely made it to Lubavitch."

Hearing the details of their fiasco, Chaim calmed them down, "Don't worry my fellow Chassidim, I have adequate space for all of you to both eat and sleep."

After the initial excitement died down,

it was discovered that there were three hundred guests and they had only setup and prepared for one hundred people. With only a few minutes to spare and no other choice, Chaim took advantage of the warm summer weather and placed lots of extra mattresses in the courtyard outside.

GRATITUDE AND THANKS

The Chassidim were truly grateful for his efforts on their part, and they each made do with a smaller portion of food to insure that everyone had something to eat.

When Shavuos drew to a close, the group of Chassidim thanked Chaim profusely for his generosity and care. They each paid him a handsome sum of money for his services. Indeed, those few days turned out to be very profitable for him and he had ample money with which to pay back his loan.

He immediately set out to the Rebbe Maharsh to thank him for his help. Before he even had a chance to say anything, the Rebbe greeted him with a big smile, "Nu, how was your Yom Tov?"

"Oy Rebbe," he replied, "Boruch Hashem, gratitude and happiness fill my heart and I thank the Rebbe with all my heart for the kindness that he has bestowed upon me." And with that Chaim took ten Rubles from his pocket and handed them over, paying up his loan in full.

SEEING AND SEEING

He got up to leave the room and approached the door, but before he made his exit he turned to the Rebbe Maha-

rash. "I have one small question I want to ask," He began, "There is one thing I don't understand, if the Rebbe decided to help me why did there need to be so much pain and heartache on Erev Shavuos?"

The Rebbe replied, "You see, when one stands on a high location and the sun is shining brightly one is able to see into the distance!"

To the simple Chaim this was quite a straight forward explanation and he took it a face value. The Rebbe, who had been standing elevated, had actually seen the wagons making their way to Lubavitch.

The true meaning of the Rebbe Maharash's words was much deeper and referred to a spiritual seeing. "When one stand on a high location" – on a spiritually elevated level like that of the Rebbe, "and the sun is shining" – and the physicality doesn't cover over anything in front of the Rebbe, "Then one is able to see into the distance."

When he had told Chaim that he saw that wagons were coming, he did not mean that he physically saw them approaching Lubavitch but rather, because physical limitations do not get in the way of a Rebbe, he meant he saw that they were destined to come. Chaim, however, understood it in its literal sense and therefore had been expecting them at any moment, because "the Rebbe had seen them coming!"

Thanking the Rebbe once again he went home happy and content. ■

1. No name is cited in the original text. We have assumed the name Chaim for clarity purposes.