



# The Imperfect Watch

"Rebbe," cried the distraught Chossid, "Who would want to marry my daughter? She is completely mute and hasn't spoken a word in her life!"

The Alter Rebbe listened to the anguished cries of the father and instructed him to go to the yeshiva and seek out a poor young man who was learning there. "Perhaps he will agree to the match," he concluded.

The man quickly made his way over there and found the individual who matched the description he had been given.

"Would you be willing to marry my daughter?" he began cautiously. "In return, I will give you an enormous dowry and you can also become a partner in my flourishing business. One thing you need to know is that she doesn't talk. She is mute. But she

is a fine young girl and will make a wonderful wife and mother."

Every moment of silence was torture. Finally he heard the words he had long been praying to hear. "Yes! I agree to the *shidduch*."

Life began happily for the young couple. They soon had children to care for and the husband saw great success in his business activities, greatly supported and guided by his father-in-law.

But as time went by, the young man decided that he no longer had any interest in living with a mute wife and that he didn't want to live this kind of life. Soon after, he separated from her with the intention of giving her a divorce.

Her father, of course, was devastated by the news.

He immediately went to his son-in-law to plead with

him to change his mind. "After all," he argued, "All your wealth is because of me." But to no avail. The man had made up his mind.

Brokenhearted, he made the trip to Petersburg (where the Alter Rebbe was at the time) and begged the Alter Rebbe to help him.

"Where is he now?" asked the Alter Rebbe.

"He is here in this city."

"In that case have him come here so we can talk."

"Nu...!" questioned the Alter Rebbe, when the son-in-law appeared before him. Brazenly the man replied, "You would not want to live with such a woman. I also refuse to." With those words he stormed out of the room.

Once outside on the streets, he tried having a conversation with a passerby but not a word came out of his mouth. "I am now mute as well," the

horrified thought entered his mind.

He knew exactly what had caused this and he went running back to the Alter Rebbe. He grabbed a paper and pen and quickly wrote a note how he truly regrets his actions and words and he is doing complete *teshuvah*.

As suddenly as it had disappeared, his power of speech returned to him. As he began speaking again, it was noticeable that he had a stutter. "Rebbe," he cried, "I did *teshuvah*, why hasn't my speech been fully restored as it was before." The Rebbe replied, "A watch that is broken and later fixed does not function as smoothly as before!" <sup>1</sup>

(Reshimas Sippurim,  
Reb Chaim Eliyahu  
Mishulovin, p. 15)