



Only Six Words

The following story of the tzaddik Reb Michel of Zlochiv is recorded in the sefer "Sippurim Nora'im" by Reb Yaakov Caidanner. As the Rebbe records in Reshimos Hayoman (page 376), the Rabbeim were very fond of this sefer and its author.

A Jewish family lived in a village in a home that belonged to an important count. The father of the family owed the count lots of money but had no way of repaying the debt. The count's patience wore thin and he sentenced the entire family to rot the rest of their lives in prison.

A while passed and the family suffered terribly; but then they had a new problem that could possibly also be the very break they so desperately needed. The wife had just given birth to a baby boy and they very much wanted to give him a *bris* at the age of eight days. A number of influential personalities convinced the cruel count to allow this to happen and under the watchful eyes of many armed guards, they were released to fulfil this important mitzvah.

They quickly gathered ten men from the surrounding area and performed the *bris*, which was then followed by a *seuda*. Present at the *bris* was the chief of police of the area. As the meal wore on, the alcohol flowed freely and loosened some tongues. Highly intoxicated, the chief of police offered the participants at the party a daring proposal: "I have three extremely fast horses that run like deer, if you all pay me well, I will take the Yid and his family away to a distant place and no one will ever know what happened to them."

They all agreed, and paid the chief of police a hefty sum. It was a long winter night, the roads were slippery so a chase would be very difficult and the escapees would be able to cover a large distance.

After making sure that the guards were completely intoxicated, they went off into the night.

A short while into their dangerous journey the parents came to a horrifying realization; the baby had been left behind! Weeping bitter tears, they begged their gentile benefactor to turn around and pick up the infant. However,

the man refused to do this in fear of his life lest the guards awake and discover them to be missing. The horses continued as planned and they arrived at the city before daybreak, he bid them farewell and rode off into the night.

At midnight the guards had shaken off the effects of the strong drinks and were wide awake when they realized that the prisoners had made a run for it. They quickly told the count what had happened and he ordered his men to take the fastest horses and conduct a manhunt far and wide to locate the escapees; however as hard as they searched they were not able to relocate them. Meanwhile, they informed the count about their shocking discovery of a bundle that was left behind in the courtyard, which was in fact the little baby boy.

Despairing of recapturing the baby's parents, the minister decided that he would keep the infant and raise him to be his servant.

When the chief of police returned home and got wind of the whole incident he decided that he wanted the boy as his child, because he and his wife were childless. The count was very fond of the chief of police and agreed to give up the boy.

As the years passed on, this little boy grew up believing that this policeman and his wife were his real parents. At the age of eight they taught him how to shepherd cattle and he did so diligently.

One day out on the pastures, the young boy got into a quarrel with some of the other shepherds. Names and taunting were slung freely through the air, until eventually they teased him that he was actually a Jew boy and not a child of the honorable officer. Of course at first the boy didn't believe them and dismissed it as childish teasing, but

they continued tormenting him about this and told him that the proof was that he had a *bris*.

Realizing that indeed he was a Jew and these were not his real parents, he decided that he wanted to discover his true roots and find his father and mother.

He began hatching a plan of how to escape and the perfect opportunity arose when his adoptive parents left on a trip for a few of days.

Running with every ounce of strength, the boy arrived in a city that had a Jewish community.

After hearing his incredible story, the compassionate Jews stripped him of his gentile attire and dressed him like a good Jewish boy complete with *tzitzis*. For one year he remained in this city and learnt the Aleph-Beis, but then for fear of discovery he left to another town where he furthered his education and learned Chumash, Gemara and had a proper bar mitzva. At that point it was time for him to leave once again and he headed for a yeshiva where he became a big *lamdan*.

The owner of the local tavern, a Yid who was a chossid of Reb Michel Zlotchiver, hired this young man to learn with his children.

On one occasion that the Yid was planning to travel to his teacher, Reb Michel, he invited the young man to join him on the trip, if he so desired. The young man replied, "Why wouldn't I want to come along? In fact this would be a great opportunity for this great man to help me find my parents."

When the young man was allowed to speak with Reb Michel, he poured out his heart to the *tzadik* and told him all that had happened, begging him for help in finding his true roots.

Reb Michel listened carefully to the whole story but didn't say a word, instead he took out a piece of parchment and wrote a few words on it. Turning to the young man and handing him the scroll, which he had sewn into a pouch, he said, "Take this and always keep it on you but don't open it. On the day of your wedding, under the *chupa*, have a rav tear open the stitching and read it. You will then be able to marry according to *halacha*."

Following the *tzadik's* instructions explicitly, although without any comprehension of its meaning, the young man returned home and continued his lifestyle of teaching and learning.

At the age of nineteen he was ready to take suggestions for marriage and began looking into different proposals.

It just so happened that the man who he worked for had a wealthy acquaintance who lived some distance away but from time to time would come to town, and they would do business together. This man noticed the teacher and was very impressed by what he saw; he felt that this young man would be perfect for his daughter.

Everything went as planned and the engagement took place shortly after. The rich man was very excited with the *choson* and brought him to his city amidst great honor and fanfare.

The day of the *chasunah* arrived and hundreds of people gathered together to join in the *simcha*. Standing under the *chupah*, the *choson* suddenly remembered the scroll from Reb Michel. He turned to his future in-laws and told them, "The *chupa* can't be today, it will have to be rescheduled for tomorrow because we need a rav here first." He then went on to relate all the details of the meeting with Reb Michel.

A messenger was quickly dispatched to a nearby town to bring a rav so the *simcha* could go on.

The next day the *choson* handed over the mysterious scroll and waited to see the rav's reaction. As he opened it, he noticed that it had only six words written on it, "How can a brother marry his sister?" The rav was completely dumbfounded by what he read and had no idea what it could possibly mean, but when the *choson* saw it, he became very joyous and began clapping his

hands, and ran towards his *kallah's* house.

Meanwhile all the guests and family became slightly concerned by the odd behavior of the young man and thought he had gone crazy. Seeing the worry on the face of the *kallah's* father, the rav asked the *choson* for the meaning behind those words. At that point he related his entire life story from beginning to end, and he was very happy because he was certain that the words of the *tzadik* were there to help him find his family, and that the *kallah* was none other than his sister, and her father was also his father.

After doing some research and asking some questions, all the facts matched up. He was nineteen years old, which was the exact age of the missing boy, and they realized that a miracle had just occurred.

Father and son embraced emotionally after so many years of being separated from one another. The joy that day was much greater than any *chassuna* would have been. **T**

(*Sippurim Nora'im p. 11b*)

THE CHUPA CAN'T BE TODAY, IT WILL HAVE TO BE RESCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW