



לזכות
הת' יקותיאל זוסמן שיחי'
לרגל הכנסו לעול המצוות
ח' טבת, ה'תשע"ז
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' צבי אלימלך
זוגתו מרת העניא חסיה
רבין

The Forgotten Defendant

“If he dies, be sure to delay the burial until I return.”

With these clear and rather somber instructions, Reb Michel Zlotchiver left the bedside of his ailing son, Yosef, and rushed off to defend the honor of Chassidus. An urgent message had just reached him and his immediate attention was needed. In a nearby town they were burning the *sefarim* of Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa¹ and he was determined to take control of the situation.

Back in Zlotchev, his son made a miraculous recovery and after a few days broke a heavy sweat and related what had occurred to him while his life hung in the balance:

“I went up to heaven and was brought in front of the heavenly court; the most important case of my life began. In came angels holding bags and bags of all my deeds. The ones carrying

my sins outweighed the good ones and it looked like I would be found deserving of death. Suddenly another angel came running in with a bag containing all the suffering and challenges I faced down in this world and that erased some of the sins, but after it was all tallied up the transgressions were still more.”

At the same time that his son was being judged, Reb Michel stormed the heavens making quite a commotion that *sefarim* of Chassidus were being burned. He screamed that Reb Yaakov Yosef hadn't written them for his own honor but for Hashem's.

At that point he noticed his son standing there and he asked him what this was all about. Yosef explained to his father that he was being judged and he asked that his father advocate on his behalf. Reb Michel promised that he would if he remembered but

immediately continued making a ruckus about the tragedy of the *sefarim*. Finally they told him that they were not able to deal with it and he had to go to a higher court.

As he left to beseech higher authority, his son's plight stayed behind.

A short while later Reb Yaakov Yosef himself came to see how he could save the *sefarim* and a similar thing occurred when he noticed Yosef standing there.

Once again, however, he forgot about the poor Yosef.

And then there was a major commotion.

“Make way make way! The Baal Shem Tov himself is coming through to rescue the *sefarim*.”

As the *tzaddik* passed by Yosef he also asked him what was going on. The young man explained his predicament and hoped that this time he would be helped. Sure enough, the Baal Shem Tov went to the

Beis Din and convinced them to let Yosef live.

Seeing the tumult in heaven, and curious to see how the Baal Shem Tov would deal with the situation, Yosef, although pardoned, wanted to stay and watch how things would develop.

At that point an angel grabbed him and tried to force him back into his body. Yosef, however, had no intention of leaving just yet so he fought back. After a short grapple, the angel finally forced him back into his skin.

“It was that exact moment when I woke up in a terrible sweat that my soul returned to my body,” concluded Yosef the account of his incredible journey. ①

(Adapted from *Shivchei Baal Shem Tov*)

1. He was a Talmid of the Baal Shem Tov and the first to transcribe Chassidus into *sefarim*.