



Flame Contained

לזכות
החייל בצבאות ה'
דוד מענדל שיחי'
לרגל הולדתו כ"א שבט ה'תשע"ז
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' ישראל מנחם
וזוגתו מרת חי' אסתר טובא
ריטשלער

“Where is the Rebbe? Why has he not arrived yet?”

The elder Chassidim of Homil had gone to the outskirts of town to greet the Alter Rebbe, as planned. They had requested that he visit them and today was the day he had responded that he would come.

As they stood there waiting, their silent concern quickly turned vocal as they tried to figure out why he hadn't yet arrived. For three days they waited but to no avail, something had obviously occurred; but who are we to question the ways of a Rebbe?

On the third day from the scheduled date, they received word that the Alter Rebbe would be coming quietly and without fanfare, for reasons known to him.

On that same day a devastating fire broke out in the city and the wild flames began licking everything in

their path, seeming intent on leaving no standing structure in the whole city. The firemen and volunteers could do nothing about it.

The Chassidim informed the Alter Rebbe about the fire sweeping through town and the danger it proposed.

Hearing the news, he walked outside and gazed firmly at the flames for a few minutes. At that point the wind suddenly changed direction and pushed the flames out towards the river, turning them off their destructive course through the city. A short while later, to everyone's great relief, the fire subsided and died out.

The *poritz* of the land heard the incredible story of how the Alter Rebbe has succeeded in putting out the fire with a mere look when all the most advanced fire-fighting equipment were useless. He expressed a desire to meet with this miracle worker and sent a

message to try and arrange this.

He told his attendant to find out when and where the Rebbe would like to meet him and if it was easier he would gladly come over to where he was staying.

The Alter Rebbe responded that if he wanted to meet him he should come to him. The *poritz* agreed to do so and they set the time for after *shacharis*.

At the appointed hour, the *poritz* arrived and they let the Alter Rebbe know that he was waiting.

The moment he saw the majestic face of the Rebbe he cried out emotionally, “You are still alive?”

The Rebbe answered, “You are mistaken, I am the student of the student of whom you are thinking of.”

With that strange exchange the meeting ended and the Rebbe went back

inside, closing the door behind him.

The members of the community immediately surrounded the *poritz*, who seemed rather pleased with the encounter, and asked him to explain what had taken place.

Let me tell you a story that I heard from my father:

My father was a soldier in the army and it happened once that he was called up to join his regiment in Mezibuz where there was a large training camp. He left my mother at home to care for the family and went on his way for an unknown amount of time.

Those were dangerous times they were living in and even the regular mail didn't run. If one wanted to send a letter it had to be done by a courier, which had its fair share of dangers and expenses. On the front lines, it had been a while since my father had received

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a letter from my mother and he began to worry about her and about the wellbeing of our family.

One day the army got word that the chief of staff would be coming for a visit and they sent my father to the tailor to arrange the uniforms for the different high ranking officers.

The tailor had known my father for some time and he noticed that he always was jolly and carried a smile, yet today something seemed wrong.

“What’s the matter today? Why are you so upset?” He inquired.

My father appreciated the kind gesture and explained that he hadn’t received a letter in a while and therefore he was quite nervous.

“Well why don’t you go to the great rabbi and miracle worker that we have in town? I am sure he can tell you what is going on with your family.”

My father got the directions to the rabbi’s house and thanked the kind tailor.

He sent a messenger to the rabbi—who was none other than the Baal Shem Tov—to see if he would come see them or if they should go to him.

The response was that “if he wishes to see me he should come here.”

When my father came into the Baal Shem Tov’s house, he walked him over to a window and gave him a small eye glass. He then instructed him to look through it and relate what he was seeing.

My father followed the instructions and began to say how he sees himself flying out of the city, over rivers and lakes.

He continued his virtual tour and said that now he was passing over the city of Kiev and then on to the outskirts of Homil where he lived. Entering the city, he closed in on his property and saw the gardens and porches that surrounded his home.

He then peered through the metal gates that surrounded his estate and saw the servants and attendees scurrying about, to and fro. He then overheard one servant tell the other that the mistress had just given birth to a boy. At that point he could see no longer and he ‘returned’ to the Baal Shem Tov’s home and heard him say,

“In a few days a messenger will arrive with the news of the birth of your son.”

“Sure enough that is exactly what happened, and here I am—I am that son,” concluded the Poritz to the amazed crowd.

When I heard that the Rebbe had redirected the fire with his gaze, I thought that most certainly this was the same miracle worker. Therefore I asked him if he was still alive and he replied that he was the student of his student.

“This meeting was very pleasing to me indeed,” he finished. **T**

(Based on Shmuos V’sipurim vol. 2 p. 139)

