



A New Beginning

Rabbi Mottel Krasnjanski of Melbourne, Australia, relates the following story:

I was in New York for my sister's wedding and the leader of the band that was playing music at the *chasunah* came over and introduced himself, "Hi, my name is Shlomo.¹ I wanted to tell you that in general, our band won't play in this area of Brooklyn, no matter the price. But we came tonight because we heard that the bride's name is Krasnjanski."

"You don't remember this, Rabbi Krasnjanski, but many years ago I was a camper in Gan Yisroel, and you were my counselor."

Shlomo came from a non-observant but very traditional Jewish family. In the nine weeks that he was in camp, Shlomo decided that he wanted to become observant. He wanted to keep Shabbos and *kashrus*—just like his counselor. But he returned home to a home and family where the *mitzvos* were not being kept. So he called his counselor, "What should I do?" Rabbi Krasnjanski gave him advice and instructions on how to go about keeping Yiddishkeit as best he could under the circumstances—what should he do if the family went to the beach on Saturday? What should he do if his family went to the movies? And so on.

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But eventually, Rabbi Krasnjanski went on shlichus, part of the first group sent to the yeshiva in Caracas, and he lost touch with Shlomo, who slowly lapsed back to the way he had lived before. Shlomo grew up, went to college, and met a non-Jewish girl. Before long, she wanted to marry him. Shlomo was hesitant, however. His family had strong Jewish values, and intermarriage was unthinkable. Shlomo didn't feel he had the strength of character to refuse, so he thought of a way to make a decision. "Let's meet my family and tell

לזכות מאיר, מנחם מענדל, לוי, ישראל, נחום,
שמואל, שניאור זלמן ואיטא שיחיו

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק הכהן ומרת נחמה דינה
שיחיו בלעסאפסקי
לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
ולהצלחה רבה ומופלגה בכל עניניהם

ולזכות החתן והכלה לוי הכהן בלעסאפסקי
וחנה הרצוג
שיזכו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל בנין עדי עד



them we want to get engaged,” he suggested, certain that they would be met with shock and fierce opposition.

But that’s not what happened. His parents welcomed them and thanked them for sharing the good news. “We’re so happy you found someone, Shlomo.”

Now he felt he couldn’t say no and they set the wedding date for two years in the future.

A few years earlier, Shlomo’s grandfather passed away and left him a trust account of a few million dollars, that could only be used after a certain age. As they were preparing for the wedding, his fiancée convinced him to make her a co-signer on the bank account and to start a business together, which they did. One day Shlomo returned home and to his shock, his house had been cleaned of everything. All that was left was his clothing—his erstwhile fiancée had robbed him blind, maxed his credit cards and he was left with nothing. When he called his parents, they blamed him. “If you would have been kinder and more supportive, this never would have happened.”

This was the last straw for Shlomo. He went to the Brooklyn Public Library—this was 1988—and started reading books on how to commit suicide. He already decided that he saw no point in living, and was only looking for the easiest, most painless way out. He had already set a date.

Over that week he sat in his apartment reminiscing about all the major events in his life. Among the highlights were his memories from camp back in the 70s, and he suddenly remembered how not long after camp was over, Rabbi Krasnjanski had arranged for his entire bunk to visit the Rebbe on Simchas Torah, and they had stood and danced on a bench all night. When the night was over, the bunk had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Shlomo remembered specifically how the Rebbe’s eyes were looking through him and how he got a big warm smile from the Rebbe at the end of the *yechidus*.

So Shlomo decided that before doing anything rash, he would like to visit the Rebbe once more, hoping that if there

was something to live for and he wasn’t a total failure, the Rebbe would help him. At this point, in the late 80s, that meant going for dollars. So Shlomo stood in line, expecting to be able to have a conversation with the Rebbe, at least for several minutes. But as he drew closer to the front of the line, he realized that each person had only a few seconds before it was the next person’s turn.

His mind raced—what should he say? Quickly he decided what he would say but as he stood across from the Rebbe, he froze; he couldn’t say anything.

The Rebbe gave him a dollar and said “*Bracha v’hatzlachah*.” And that was it. The line kept moving. Now Shlomo was completely lost. This was, he felt, his one chance to save himself.

But then Rabbi Groner called him. “The Rebbe is calling you back.” Shlomo once more stood before the Rebbe. The Rebbe gave him another dollar and said, “This is for a new beginning.”

He realized that the Rebbe saw everything: his fiancée, the money he had lost, the Yiddishkeit he had abandoned—and the Rebbe was giving him a *bracha* to start anew. He walked into the upstairs *zal* in 770, sat down on a bench, and started to cry.

“As I left the line, you were there,” Shlomo told Rabbi Krasnjanski, “You walked by me!” Rabbi Krasnjanski was in town for the wedding of one of his sisters. “You looked at me, you recognized me, but you didn’t say anything because you could see how overwhelmed I was. And I didn’t say anything either. But just seeing you, the person who taught me about Yiddishkeit, at that moment in my life, encouraged me to indeed start my life over again.”

Indeed, Shlomo became observant again and started a band, making people joyous, and indeed, had a new beginning. **T**

1. Shlomo’s real name has been withheld at his request.