**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Lech Lecha 5775**

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**L’Maaseh…A Tale to Remember**

**A Test of Shabbos Mesiras Nefesh in a Siberian Labor Camp**

**By Rabbi Yissachar Frand**

Rav Yissachar Frand tells the story of the *Z'viler Rebbe*, Rav Gedaliah Moshe Goldman, who was sent to a Siberian labor camp during World War II. It was a miserable, back-breaking experience, but the one solace was that it was not a Nazi extermination camp. One Shabbos, the commandant summoned both the Rebbe and another Jew, a frail old man, to his office. He said, “You are both free to go. All you have to do is sign these papers, and you can leave.”

Rav Gedaliah Moshe reached for the papers and stopped. How could he write on Shabbos? True, it was a release, but could he desecrate the holy Shabbos? After all, as bad as it was in Siberia, it was not life-threatening. He was young and strong. Even if he would be detained there for a few more years, he would survive.

The Rebbe said, “I am sorry, sir. While I appreciate your kind gesture, I cannot desecrate my Shabbos by signing my name.”

The commandant was incredulous and screamed him, “Are you insane? I am granting you freedom! How can you waste such an opportunity like this?!”

Rav Gedaliah Moshe again replied, “I understand and appreciate your kindness, but today is Shabbos and it is my day of rest. I may not write anything, not even to sign my name so that I can leave.”

With disgust, the commandant said, “If you do not sign, then you will rot in this place!” He then pushed the papers to the old Jew and said, “Now, you sign the release papers, and then you can leave.”

The old man said, “I am afraid that I cannot sign either. The same law applies to me, and I cannot violate Shabbos.”

The commandant said to them, “You two are both insane,” and took back the papers. Suddenly, Rav Gedaliah Moshe yelled, “Wait! I will sign his papers for him! Let him go free!”

The commandant was perplexed. He said, “I do not understand. You just told me that you can’t write on Shabbos. Yet, you are willing to sign the papers for this man but not for yourself? Have you totally lost your senses? Why are his papers different from yours?”

The Rebbe explained, “There is a major difference. I am young and strong, and I can survive here. This man, on the other hand, is old and weak, and he will not make it if he stays here much longer. Therefore, if he is not prepared to sign, I will sign for him, because one may violate Shabbos in order to save the life of another.”

The commandant was so impressed by this act of selflessness that he allowed them both to leave without demanding their signatures!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights.*

**How Yankel Survived the Brutal Boxcar Train Ride to Auschwitz**

In Crown Heights, there was a Jew, Yankel, who owned a bakery. He survived the camps.

He once said, “You know why it is that I’m alive today? I was just a teenager at the time. We were on the train, in a boxcar, being taken to Auschwitz.

“Night came and it was freezing, deathly cold, in that boxcar. The Germans would leave the cars on the side of the tracks overnight, sometimes for days without any food, and of course, no blankets to keep us warm.

“Sitting next to me was this beloved elderly Jew from my hometown. I recognized him, but I had never seen him like this. He was shivering from head to toe, and looked terrible. So I wrapped my arms around him and began rubbing him to warm him up. I rubbed his arms, his legs, his face, his neck. I begged him to hang on.

"All night long, I kept the man warm this way. I was tired, I was freezing cold myself, my fingers were numb, but I didn’t stop rubbing the heat on to this man’s body. Hours and hours went by this way. Finally, night passed, morning came, and the sun began to shine. There was some warmth in the cabin, and then I looked around the car to see some of the other Jews in the car. To my horror, all I could see were frozen bodies, and all I could hear was a deathly silence.

‘Nobody else in that cabin made it through the night. They died from the frost. Only two people survived: the old man and me.”

"The old man survived because somebody kept him warm; I survived because I was warming somebody else.”

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad of Great Neck, NY.*

**Story#882**

**The Greeks vs.**

**The Jews Again**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**editor@ascentofsafed.com**

A few years ago Greece was not a good place to be. Angry, violent mobs with grievances to the government set to the streets, destroyed property, set fires, rioted and battled the police and bedlam reigned.

Vacationers shunned the place and trips, hotel reservations and plane tickets were cancelled, but for Rabbi Yoel Kaplan, the Chabad representative in Salonika, it was just another major challenge.

Rabbi Kaplan thrived on the unusual. His home, like nearly all the hundreds of Chabad Houses throughout the world, was open to the public 24/7 with the goal of helping Jews and Judaism, and thereby the entire world. And that required expecting the unexpected.

In the days of the rioting there was nothing to do; it was life-threatening to leave his house. And even weeks after the rioting ceased, signs of vandalism were everywhere and tension filled the air. Still, the dedicated Chabad rabbi was determined to resume his normal activities.

It wasn't easy. There were no tourists, Jews or otherwise, and after all the violence it seemed wise to just stay indoors for a few more weeks. But he had a job to do. Maybe there was even one Jew out there. Anyway, there were other matters that were pressing, like going to the post office to get his mail, a daily necessity. But even such a seemingly simple task was fraught with danger. The post office was located in a part of downtown that was a youth hangout and had been hit the hardest by violence. There were days that he took side roads to get there and used the back entrance, which meant a serious detour and time loss, just to avoid trouble.

However, one day he was running late and forgot to worry about trouble. He took the direct route to the post office. But as he neared his goal he began to regret it. A group of about ten mean-looking young men, some of them with tattooed arms, punk hairdos and other bizarre and frightening adornments, were staring at him with hatred in their eyes. His full beard, black hat, long black coat and entire Jewish demeanor were like a red flag before a maddened bull, so he was an ideal target for their frustrations.

He should have turned back, taken an alternate route and avoided them, but something told him to just keep walking. From afar he heard the anti-Semitic curses they directed at him--first in Greek and then in English, which they knew he spoke.

He had experienced Greek anti-Semitism before. Usually he just ignored it but for some reason this time he glanced up, and as he got closer, raised one hand in greeting and said in as friendly a tone as possible, "Hello! Good morning."

"Someone talking to you?" the biggest of them replied sarcastically while the others got ready for some action.

Suddenly the Rabbi realized something. Just like Abraham, the first Jew some 4,000 years earlier, who was alone in his quest to bring meaning into a hostile world, trusted G-d to protect him,\* so this same G-d of Abraham would protect him now.

He smiled and said, "Maybe you weren't talking to me specifically, but you certainly are talking about my people."

"That's right, Jew!" The young man replied with burning venom laced with terms not fit to print. "About your cursed nation of thieves, liars and cheaters we certainly were talking. And we'll keep talking until you are exterminated," etc.

The smile did not depart from Rabbi Kaplan's face as he calmly replied, "You look like intelligent people. You have no reason to hate me or any other Jew. In fact, if you knew the truth I'm sure you wouldn't treat any of us badly."

This was too much for the leader. He was livid with anger as he made a fist and held it before the Rabbi's face. "I'm an experienced boxer," he snarled. "Unless you want to taste a few of these you'd better get away as fast and far as possible and don't come back!"

Rabbi Kaplan realized that things were about to get out of hand, so he calmly turned to the others, blessed them warmly with a good day and good news and continued on to the post office.

After he finished his business there and left the building, again something told him not to take the detour back home, but rather to return the same way he came, by the gang. After all, he was only here in Greece to do good; the same G-d of Abraham that protected him on his way here would protect him on his way back.

But this time when he passed the group they were quiet, although still emanating hostility. He again blessed them with a good day and when he came abreast of the leader, the one that had threatened him previously, he approached him and offered him his calling card, saying, "If you ever want to talk over a cup of coffee, call me or come to my house."

The boxer accepted the card sullenly, and whatever doubts Yoel Kaplan had about talking to these people in the first place began to melt away. Perhaps he would yet have a chance to dispel some of the hatred in the streets and maybe convince some of those fellows to live better lives

A few days later, Erev Shavuot 5710 (May 2010), he got a phone call. "Hey Rabbi, This is Alexandros calling. Remember me? I'm the fellow you gave your card to the other day. You know, the boxer. Were you serious about that cup of coffee? If so, I'm right outside your house."

Rabbi Kaplan was pleasantly surprised. He warmly invited Alexandros to come in, and in just moments he was introducing him to his wife and children.

Then they sat down and the conversation began. His visitor had good questions and was a great listener. Eventually, at the third or fourth cup of coffee, when the topic of 'Who is a Jew' came up and the Rabbi explained that only someone born to a Jewish mother, or who genuinely converts to Judaism, is considered a Jew, Alexandros' demeanor became serious. He began to rapid-fire questions. "Mother? What about father? What about grandmother? What about grandfather's mother? What about grandmother's mother?"

He paused for a few seconds, but before the Rabbi could respond, he announced that his maternal grandmother once told him that she had been born Jewish.

Indeed, she had even been observant. However, in the war, after her husband and children were arrested and murdered by the invading Germans, she ran and hid in the mountains for several years. She figured that all the Jews had been killed and she would be too if anyone found out, so when she returned to civilization, she married a gentile and began going to church.

Shortly thereafter she gave birth to a baby girl who grew up and married a religious Greek Orthodox man. Their first child was Alexandros. Alex was Jewish!

All of a sudden Alex was transformed from one who knew nothing about Jews to being a Jew himself. He took the Rabbi to visit his aged grandmother, who verified the story and even agreed to put a *mezuzah* on her home. Alex then agreed to put on *tefilin* for the first time in his life and every day thereafter.

Rabbi Kaplan soon met the rest of Alex's siblings and had some influence over them too. A half a year later Alexandros made a pilgrimage to Israel. There he met several religious Jews of Greek origin and they influenced him to study Torah for a while at Yeshiva Ohr Samayach. Subsequently he also studied in a Yeshiva in the USA.

Nowadays he has returned to live in Greece, and still is in contact with his first rabbi, R. Yoel Kaplan.

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Source: Freely adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of his friend and colleague, Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, and supplemented and corrected based on a conversation with Yoel Kaplan (who was in Israel for the wedding of a younger brother who happened to have been born in my Subaru!).

\* Editor's note: Therefore we refer to G-d as "Shield of Abraham" in the first blessing of the thrice daily Amida prayer.

Connection: The end of last week's reading, Noach, covers the first 70 years of Patriarch Abraham's life, before he moved to the Holy Land at G-d's command.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of the Ascent Institute of Safed.* [*www.ascentofsafed.com*](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) *ascent@ascentofsafed.com*

**A Tzaddik’s Tear**

**By** [**Yerachmiel Tilles**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/1080/jewish/Yerachmiel-Tilles.htm)

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| Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan (1838-1933), the ''Chafetz Chaim'' |
| Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan (1838-1933), the "Chafetz Chaim" |

About 30 years ago, an American rabbi visiting Miami, Florida gave a lecture on the life and accomplishments of the famed "Chafetz Chaim" (Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan, 1838-1933). He described the life of the great sage who lived a humble life as a shopkeeper in the village of Radin, in Poland, yet was recognized throughout the Jewish world as a great scholar, *tzaddik* (righteous person) and leader.

There was another story the rabbi wanted to tell, but he hesitated, for he only knew part of it. As he stood at the lectern, he thought for a moment and then decided that he would tell it anyway. He rationalized that even an unfinished story about the Chafetz Chaim would have a meaningful message.

He began to relate an incident about a teenage boy in the Chafetz Chaim'syeshiva who was found smoking a cigarette on Shabbat -- the sacred day of rest. The faculty and student body were shocked, and some of the faculty felt that the boy should be expelled. However, when the Chafetz Chaim heard the story, he asked that the boy be brought to his home.

At this point, the rabbi interrupted the narrative and said, "I don't know what the Chafetz Chaim said to the boy. I only know that they were together for a few minutes. I would give anything to know what he said to this student, for I am told that the boy never desecrated the Shabbat again. How wonderful it would be if we could relay that message -- whatever it was -- to others, in order to encourage them in their observance of Shabbat." The rabbi then continued with his lecture.

After his talk, the hall emptied of everyone except for one elderly man, who remained in his seat, alone with his thoughts. From the distance, it seemed he was trembling, as if he was either crying or suffering from chills. The rabbi walked over to the elderly man and asked him, "Is anything wrong?"

The man responded, "Where did you hear that story of the cigarette on Shabbat?" He did not look up and was still shaken. "I really don't know," answered the rabbi. "I heard it a while ago and I don't even remember who told it to me." The man looked up at the rabbi and said softly, "I was that boy." He then asked the rabbi to go outside, and as the two walked together, he told the rabbi the following story:

"This incident occurred in the 1920's when the Chafetz Chaim was in his eighties. I was terrified to have to go into his house and face him. But when I did go into his home, I looked around with disbelief at the poverty in which he lived. It was unimaginable to me that a man of his stature would be satisfied to live in such surroundings.

"Suddenly he was in the room where I was waiting. He was remarkably short. At that time I was a teenager and he only came up to my shoulders. He took my hand and clasped it tenderly in both of his. He brought my hand in his own clasped hands up to his face, and when I looked into his soft face, his eyes were closed for a moment.

"When he opened them, they were filled with tears. He then said to me in a hushed voice full of pain and astonishment, 'Shabbat!' And he started to cry. He was still holding both my hands in his, and while he was crying he repeated with astonishment, 'Shabbat, the holy Shabbat!'

"My heart started pounding and I became more frightened than I had been before. Tears streamed down his face and one of them rolled onto my hand. I thought it would bore a hole right through my skin. When I think of that tear today, I can still feel its heat. I can't describe how awful it felt to know that I had made the great tzaddik weep. But in his rebuke -- which consisted only of those few words -- I felt that he was not angry, but rather sad and fearful. He seemed frightened at the consequences of my actions."

The elderly man then caressed the hand that bore the invisible scar of a precious tear. It had become his permanent reminder to observe the "holy Shabbat" for the rest of his life.

Biographical note: Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan (1838-1933), popularly known as "the Chafetz Chaim" after the title of one of his many influential books, was one of the most important and beloved rabbinical scholars and leaders of the 20th century. His other works include *Mishna Berura*, an authoritative, almost universally accepted compendium of Jewish Law, and *Shmirat HaLashon*, about proper and improper speech.

[**Yerachmiel Tilles**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/1080/jewish/Yerachmiel-Tilles.htm)

A master storyteller with hundreds of published stories to his credit, [Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles](mailto:editor@ascentofsafed.com) is co-founder of Ascent of Safed, and managing editor of the [Ascent](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=84321) and [Kabbalah Online](http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/default.htm) websites.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**The Mysterious Visit**

**Of Rebbe Shmuel**

**By Rabbi Tovia Bolton**

The following story is connected to a saying of the Baal Shem Tov: G-d's commandment last week to Noach (7:1): "Enter the Taeva (Ark)" means that we too must 'enter' the 'Taeva' (words) of Torah learning and prayer.]

The fourth leader of Chabad; Rebbe 'Shmuel' (1834-1882) often would take mysterious carriage rides in the country.

Once he directed his driver out of his usual path and told him to stop his carriage before an inn.

The Rebbe entered the inn and found it empty except for two Jewish children. He asked them why they were alone and they explained that their mother had gone shopping and their father, who owned the inn, had left that morning and was supposed to return any minute.

The Rebbe asked the children if they knew how to read Hebrew and if he could test them. They readily agreed and ran to get their books. The older one knew how to read and explain from some of the Five Books of Moses but the younger knew only how to read a few Psalms.

"Good!" said the Rebbe, "Let's say some Psalms together." They brought two books of Psalms and began reciting; the Rebbe led, reading each word slowly and clearly in an emotional melody and the children chimed in.

Meanwhile their mother returned but when she saw the Rebbe's carriage and heard the melodies coming from inside she went around to the back door, quietly entered the kitchen and stood there listening from behind a closet.

The Rebbe's voice was so beautifully plaintive and deeply touching that she began crying silently. Bitter tears ran down her cheeks all the time they were reading.

After some fifteen minutes the Rebbe closed his book, and got ready to leave the house. But as he reached the door, he stopped, thought deeply for a few seconds, returned to the children opened his book again and said, "Come let's read a bit more".

After five more minutes of saying Psalms together he again closed his book, said Shalom to the boys and left the house.

Their mother moved to her very soul at what she had just heard then entered the room drying her eyes. She asked the children if they knew who the man was and why he came but they had no idea. They were just sure that he was someone very special and couldn't wait for their father to arrive so they could tell him about it.

But he didn't arrive.

Hours passed, the sun set, they fell asleep in their chairs worrying and waiting. What could have happened?

Then, after midnight suddenly they heard a rapping at the window and their father's voice. "Let me in! Open the door!" They ran to the door and opened it; their father stumbled in and fainted on the floor!

Several minutes later when he came to, his wife made him a warm cup of tea he sat down and told his shocking story.

"I went early this morning to collect a debt from one of the local farmers. He received me cordially and told me to follow him to the barn, about a ten minutes walk from his house, where he kept his money so he could pay me.

But as soon as we got there he locked the door behind us, suddenly spun around, knocked me to the ground, tied my hands and feet so I couldn't move and announced that he decided to settle the debt his own way by killing me! I couldn't run and I simply had no chance against him.

He then began searching for his axe to finish the job and paid no attention to me as I wept and begged for my life.

But I was lucky, actually it was a miracle! He couldn’t find the axe! He looked high and low and finally concluded it must be in his house. So he dragged me to one of the beams, tied me to it, put a gag around my mouth, went to the door and as he was leaving, turned and said, "You can cry all day and night here Jew, no one will hear. And, oh, I'll be right back, don't go away Ha Ha!!!" And slammed the barn door behind him.

But then another miracle happened! A minute later the door opened again and the farmer's wife entered! She had just finished some work in the field and had no idea of what had just transpired. But as soon she saw me tied up and crying she understood that it was her husband's doing.

At first she was afraid, saying that if she untied me her husband would kill her for sure. But finally when I told her she could go back to the field and when she saw her husband leave the house she could come to meet him as though for the first time and he wouldn't suspect her, she listened to reason and set me free.

She then told me not to run far from the barn because her husband might notice me but rather to hide in one of the piles of hay nearby the barn and then leave late at night when no one would notice.

We both ran outside, she back to the field and I to the nearest haystack where I buried myself as deeply as possible and waited and prayed.

Just minutes later I heard the barn door open and then a flurry of furious curses. The ogre came running outside like a madman and was standing just several feet from me yelling and striking at all the haystacks and everything around him with his axe but he didn't hit me. Thank G-d! I've been hiding in that haystack till just an hour ago… I ran here without stopping. It’s a pure miracle that I'm alive!"

When his wife and children told him about the 'mysterious visitor' that came earlier in the day he understood that must have been was the Lubavitcher Rebbe. And then they realized that the two times they read Psalms was what saved him! The first set saved him in the barn and then the second set saved him later in the haystack. Somehow the Rebbe sensed his danger and even more incredibly, went out of his way to save his life.

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**A Bittersweet Jewish Holiday In Nepal After Deadly Blizzard Hits Israeli Hikers**

**By Chabad.org Staff | October 19, 2014 4:53 PM**

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For the past week, Chabad emissaries and volunteers in Nepal have been fielding frantic calls from Israel, assisting stranded tourists, and helping friends and relatives receive information and grapple with the loss of loved ones after an unexpected blizzard hit climbers trying to cross part of the Annapurna trail in Nepal, a country that attracts hordes of young Israelis every year.

More than 400 hikers were out last week when the sudden snowstorm caught up with them on Tuesday, stopping them in their tracks as they aimed to cross the Thorong La mountain pass and stranding many of them. To date, nearly 40 were reported killed, including four Israelis, and some 250 rescued, with a growing list of those missing.

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Rabbi Chezky Lifshitz, who runs the Chabad House of Katmandu and the Chabad House of Pokhara in Nepal with his wife, Chani, has been working to connect Israelis still in the country to their families in Israel. Parents have been contacting the couple since the news broke, trying to get information on children known to be

part of the climbing group. Many young Israelis were in Nepal over the Jewish High Holiday season.



Chani Lifshitz, center, has been working around the clock

with blizzard victims and their families.

[Chabad House of Kathmandu](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=118561)

“We are working round the clock,” says Chani Lifshitz, who has been with the wounded since the tragedy began. “Everyone needs help in some way. People are coming to us with absolutely nothing. They lost everything they own in the snow, so we are giving them everything they need: clothing, supplies, baggage, even spending money.”

“There is an (Israeli) Air Force delegation here to assist trauma victims,” Rabbi Lifshitz told the Israeli web site, Arutz Sheva, adding that he escorted injured Israelis to local hospitals and accompanied many to the airport to fly back to Israel for treatment. “People continue to flow to the area at all times, but there are still a number of missing persons, and as you know, we were all fearing for the life of one of them,” referring to missing hiker Michal Gili Cherkasky of Givatayim, Israel, whose body was found on Tuesday morning, nearly a week after the blizzard first struck.



Rabbi Chezky Lifshitz has been working to connect Israelis still in the country to their families in Israel. Parents have been contacting the couple since the news broke, trying to get information on children known to be part of the climbing groups.

The loss was a personal one. Chani Lifshitz earlier told Israel’s Channel 10 news of a meeting with Cherkasky before she left to travel the mountain pass. Cherkasky told her that she was hiking in memory of a friend who had died during a trek in the Himalayas back in 2001.

A Difficult Week

“Over Shabbat and the holiday (last Thursday and Friday), we made *kiddush* in the hospital for the injured, and had mixed feelings of joy and sorrow,” Rabbi Lifshitz recounted to Arutz Sheva. “[There is] joy for those who survived and sadness for those who did not. There were those who understood that if they stayed with their friends, they would die, and there were those who helped their friends, but were killed [in the process].”

He added that “we tried to celebrate the holiday, but there were such mixed feelings. There were people whom we saw on Yom Kippur and left the next day for the hike, with the intent to return on Simchat Torah.”

“Unfortunately, not all of them came back.”

The other Israelis who have been confirmed dead are Nadav Shoham of Mitzpe Hoshaya; Agam Luria, 23, of Kibbutz Yifat; and Lt. Tamar Ariel, 25, of Masuot Yitzchak.

The additional bodies identified were determined to be trekkers from Canada, India, Poland, Slovakia, Japan and Nepal.

Seven injured Israelis were flown to Israel’s Ben-Gurion International Airport on Saturday night. They are being treated at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem and Tel Hashomer Hospital, mostly for issues related to frostbite.

Those wishing to donate to the ongoing rescue effort can click Chabad of Nepel.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Chabad.Org.*

**Tales from Our Gaonim**

[**Deserting His Classification**](http://www.jewishpress.com/kidz/tales-of-the-gaonim/deserting-his-classification/2014/10/02/)

**By** [**Rabbi Sholom Klass**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbisholomklass/)

The Gaon, Reb Yosef Duber of Brisk, saw a very rich man remaining in shul Yom Kippur night after the congregation had left for home. He was saying Tehillim with a few elderly and poor people.

Reb Yosef called him over and said, “Do you realize that if a person deserts his regiment for another he is considered a traitor and will be punished by the generals?”

The rich man looked at the Gaon but didn’t understand him.

“I will explain,” said the Gaon. “Every person is required to serve G-d with all his might and effort. The rich person, before Yom Kippur, should give a lot of tzeddakah and grant loans to the poor who cannot repay their debts. The poor person, who cannot give charity, should remain in shul after Kol Nidrei to say Tehillim. The combined efforts of the two groups, rich and poor, will help to annul the bad decree.

“The rich, who have fulfilled their duty of charity, usually go home after the Kol Nidrei, content in the knowledge that they have helped. But you have not fulfilled your charitable duty, and are now remaining in shul to say Tehillim. You have escaped from your regiment of service and are attempting to enter the regiment of the poor; it won’t work.”

**The Changing Of Regiments**

A similar story is told about the Chofetz Chaim. He once saw a Jewish merchant who knew very little Torah attempt to be very pious. He was a very charitable person who had made a lot of money by supplying the local military barracks with food.

During Aseres Yimei Teshuva, he was in shul every night for Selichos. Although he did not understand the meaning of one word, he davened with great kavannah. But tumbling out of bed at such an unearthly hour made his spirit and flesh sag. After the third night, he complained to the Chofetz Chaim with an apologetic sigh, “It’s hard for me to get up so early every morning. I’m not used to it.”

“My friend,” answered the Chofetz Chaim, “you have business connections with the Imperial Army so you’ll readily understand the point I am going to make. You know that the army is divided into all kinds of departments and services. There are infantry, cavalry, snipers and many other groups. The soldiers in each branch of the service have their own particular function to perform. Now let me ask you, what would happen to an infantryman if he deserted his regiment and went to serve in the cavalry? He would be court-martialed, wouldn’t he?”

“Surely he would,” agreed the merchant. “That’s a serious breach of discipline. But what connection has this with me?”

“I’ll tell you,” said the sainted Gaon. “The soldiers in Hashem’s army are also distributed among various branches of the service. The Torah scholars are the artillerymen; those who do good deed are the infantrymen, and so on. It’s very clear that on account of your money, the Almighty has put you in the charity regiment where you can serve most usefully.

“Your function is to help the poor, support widows, orphans, and destitute scholars. By every rule of discipline, you should be home now in bed and comfortably asleep. Instead, I find you have deserted your regiment, the charity regiment, and have joined up with the heavy artillery regiment, consisting of Torah scholars. You don’t belong here, my friend! Better go back to your own regiment, before G-d, the Commander-in-Chief, finds out you are missing!”

*Reprinted from the October 2, 2014 edition of The Jewish Press.*