**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Mikeitz 5775**

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**It Once Happened**

**In the Merit of Matitiyahu, Father of the Macabbees**

A huge group was gathered on the other side of the large table and looked in the direction of their rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Wienberg, the Slonimer Rebbe. He stood opposite the wicks in the Chanuka menora, meditating and contemplating, for an unknown reason not yet ready to kindle the Chanuka lights.

Hundreds of Chasidim stood in awe and with great respect, watching their Rebbe as he stood preparing for this mitzva. They waited with bated breath for the glorious moment when he would take the wax candle in his hand and begin reciting the words of the Chanuka blessings.

Minutes, which seemed like hours, passed and then the Rebbe began chanting the blessings. He infused each word with kabbalistic intentions, and each chasid there was able to hook into the holiness of the moment according to his own level.

"Help me, deliver me!"

The dreadful cry tore through the hearts of all those gathered there and awakened each person from his reverie. Everyone looked in the direction of the voice.

The Rebbe, his face aflame with the holiness of the moment, also turned his head in the direction of the voice toward the end of the synagogue. There stood a women with her hands outstretched toward the heavens, crying with a bitter heart.

It became clear that this woman was not one of the wives of the chasidim gathered there. In fact, she had no connection to the Rebbe or the Chasidic lifestyle. "Who was she?" some murmured.

The distraught woman lived with her family in this town. Her husband was a wealthy and well-respected businessman who had never in his life entered this Chasidishe synagogue. He and his friends were among those who laughed at the Chasidic lifestyle and customs.

For many years the couple had not been blessed with children. When their son was finally born they were already much older. Their happiness knew no bounds. He was always given the best of everything, though he was not especially spoiled.

On the eve of Chanuka the young boy fell ill. The doctors came to his bedside and cared for him with devotion. But they could not help him. To everyone's horror his fever rose from day to day. Tonight, his situation worsened. The boy lost consciousness and the doctors who were standing around his bed raised their hands in hopelessness.

The father of the child was pacing around the house in agony and bitterness. But his mother could not stand seeing her son's suffering any longer and left the house. Suddenly she began walking quickly. Toward what or where or whom she knew not. But her feet seemed to have a mind of their own, and before she knew it she found herself in front of the Slonimer synagogue just as the Rebbe was preparing to kindle the Chanuka lights.

"Rebbe, help me," cried the woman in a voice that echoed throughout the entire synagogue.

"Tell her not to worry," the Rebbe said quietly to someone. "She should go and return home. She should ask her husband to add to her son's name the name 'Matitiyahu' [Matithias]. And in the merit of that great tzadik--father of the Macabbees--who gave up his life for the Jewish people and the Holy One, the sick child's life will be lengthened. And another thing, when the child is fully recovered, his father should bring a 'pidyon nefesh' of chai--life--18 coins which will be given to charity in the Holy Land."

The following day, at about the time when the Chanuka candles were being lit, a new face was seen in the Slonimer synagogue. It was the father of Matitiyahu, who had brought to the Rebbe 18 rubles, a pidyon nefesh for his son who was fully recovered, to the Rebbe.

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