**Shabbos Stories for**

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**Weekly Chasidic Story #1222**

**A Torah Scroll**

**For the Generations**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

**Editor of KabbalaOnline.org**



**Rabbi Pinchas Sudak**

 Unlike most Jews living under the Communist Soviet regime, Rabbi Pinchas Sudak did not really lack for anything. He had an underground knitting factory and was a relatively wealthy man.

 He also managed to sustain a Jewish, Torah-observant life for himself and his family. When he escaped from Russia shortly after the Second World War, in the summer of 1946, at the age of thirty-eight, it was not because of any personal material or even spiritual need. On the contrary, he risked being shot at the border for trying to escape.

 In the home of Rabbi Pinchas, commitment to *Yiddishkeit* [Torah Judaism] was a way of life. The oldest of the three children, Batsheva, as a young girl would ride alone on a donkey for several miles through the desert to bring home the necessary wheat to be later grinded and prepared under exacting supervision for the Passover matzah. (That was her task because, as a child, she was not as subject to questioning by the authorities.)

**Not an Unusual Sight**

 Nor was it an unusual sight in the Sudak home for music books to be swiftly spread over the piano as soon as a stranger entered their home, hiding the religious books nesting beneath. In this way, Batsheva was able to pursue her Jewish studies with her "piano teacher."

 Rabbi Pinchas recognized that his children, raised to fight for the preservation of their faith, would gain inordinate strength and faith to persevere in following the path of their tradition - no matter what the circumstances.

 "I am not leaving Russia for my own children," he said. "They will always know that they are Jews and will remain loyal to their faith. But what will become of my children's children-to-be? That I do not know. It is for them that I must leave the clutches of this regime."

 Fortunate to have crossed the Russia-Poland border alive, the Sudak family found themselves in Cracow with a group of forty-six other Lubavitcher Chassidim escaping the Stalinist dictatorship, with their final destination unknown.[1]

**A Polish Jew Offering a Torah Scroll for Sale**

 While still in Cracow, Rabbi Pinchas met a Polish Jew who was offering a Torah scroll for sale. This seemed to him extraordinary, like it was arranged specifically by G d.

 Immediately he decided to purchase the Torah with money he had managed to smuggle out of Russia. "How can so large a group of Jews travel without a Sefer Torah in their midst," he said, "wherever this journey may lead us."

 So he bought the Torah, and quickly had a heavy wooden case fashioned to carry and protect it.

 It was time for the group to move onwards on their dangerous trek, walking through Steczen, to cross the Czechoslovakian border on their way to Prague. They left late at night, allowed by their guide to carry only their most basic necessities; all other worldly possessions were abandoned. Rabbi Pinchas had diamonds sewn into the soles of his family's shoes.

 In the blackness of the night, Zeidy Pinchas and his wife, Batya, and their three children, each tightly grasping the coarse rope designated to keep the the group together, trudged silently through a dense forest.

 Rabbi Pinchas clutched his beloved Sefer Torah as he marched behind Batya, who carried their youngest child, 3-year-old Bracha.

 The way was difficult. As the hours passed, Rabbi Pinchas' wife grew more and more weary. Finally, she motioned to her husband that she could no longer carry Bracha.

 Rabbi Pinchas understood at once that if he would take the baby, he would have to leave the Torah behind. With tears in his eyes, he took his Sefer Torah out of its wooden case, and silently mouthed an apology.
 "My priceless Torah, you know that it is for you that I have left Russia. I would not have left to an unknown future for myself. Nor would I have for my children. I am fleeing to ensure that my children's children will know you and live with you.

 “Forgive me, dear Torah, for abandoning you now. It is either you or my child. I part with you now, so that my children and children's children should live a life where you are a real and meaningful part."
 Weeping, Rabbi Pinchas embraced the precious scroll one last time. Then he gently laid it in its case under a tree and, after lifting his youngest child in his arms, journeyed forward.

 Eventually, the Sudaks reached the free shores of Israel. His children --Batsheva,[2] Nachman[3] and Bracha[4] -- each grew up to become Rabbis or Rebbetzins serving their respective communities and promulgating faith in Torah.

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 Sixty-five years later, in 2011, Rebbetzin Batsheva Schochet, was visiting in California where she was invited to the home of Mrs. Faigy Estulin, a family friend.

**Rabbi Tzemach Gurevitch**

 Faigy was describing her own parents' exodus from Russia - several weeks after the Sudaks' escape - and attributed the longevity and robust health of her father, Rabbi Tzemach Gurevitch, to an incident that happened in their perilous journey.

 Rabbi Gurevitch and his wife, Chana Rivka, were escaping Russia on a dark night. Along the way, their five year old daughter wandered away from them and was momentarily lost. Frantically, the parents searched for her, crawling on their hands and knees through the forest.

 Suddenly Rabbi Gurevitch felt a hard surface. Upon further investigation, he opened a wooden box to discover a Sefer Torah. Next to the case sat his young child, as if she was just waiting for her father.

 Kissing both passionately, he took the Torah from its box, unraveled it and wrapped it around his body, tying it with his gartel (prayer sash). Eventually, that Torah scroll made its way to its current home, in a shul in New York City.

 Mrs. Estulin ended by crediting her grandfather's long and healthy life to the merit of this significant act.



**Rabbi Tzemach Gurevitch**

 As she concluded her story, she was astonished to observe that Rebbetzin Schochet's face had gone completely ashen and tears were streaming from her eyes. When she was able to collect herself, she told her hostess the story of that Torah scroll and her father's self-sacrifice, and how happy she was to learn that the legacy of her father's precious Sefer Torah had come full circle.

 She concluded her story by saying, "It was Divine Providence that brought me now to your home in Los Angeles. It was also Divine Providence that directed our conversation to our stories of rescue from Russia and childhood memories. It was Divine Providence that I learned from you that the Torah scroll found a home, and obviously, it was certainly worth it for my father to to purchase it, even though he had to abandon it in the forest."

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Footnotes:
[1]Included in this group was the Lubavitcher Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson.
[2]She married Rabbi Dovid Schochet, who became a highly respected rabbinical judge in Toronto and the president of its Vaad HaRabbanim (Rabbinical Council).
[3]Rabbi Nachman Sudak was the Lubavitcher Rebbe's chief emissary to the UK and director of Chabad there for 55 years, from 1959 until his passing in 2014.
[4]Her husband, Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, is an important rabbinical leader in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Chabad community.

*Source*: Compiled, adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from two slightly differing renditions of the story by Rebbetzin Chana Weisberg posted on //chabad.org, one for adults and one for children. She is the daughter of Batsheva Schochet and the granddaughter of Pinchas Sudak, both prominently featured in the above story.

 The 'adult' version was originally published in one of her six books, *Divine Whispers*: *Stories that Speak to the Heart and Soul* (Targum Press, 2005).

 The children's version was originally published in *The Moshiach Times,* a high-quality children's magazine, published by *Tzivos Hashem*. I added footnotes 2-4 and some more factual detail from a 2018 article in *Beis Moshiach Magazine.*

[Chana Weisberg is the editor of //*TheJewishWoman.org*. She lectures internationally on issues relating to women, relationships, meaning, self-esteem and the Jewish soul.]

*Connection*: SHAVUOT: the celebration of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai 3333 (!) years ago (plus: in the second of the Ten Commandments appears the phrase, "to the 3rd and 4th generations").

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*Reprinted from the Shavuos 5781 email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

**The Day of Days**

 Those were solemn days in the camp of Israel in the desert of Sinai. Walking among the tents, one saw no idlers. Everyone was busy washing clothes, cleaning the camp, and preparing for the great event. No idle conversation or vain laughter was to be heard. Young and old alike were preoccupied with the great event about to take place.

 Day of all days! Never has the sun risen so gloriously! Never has the sky been so blue or the air so fresh! A holy light filled the whole world, as Moses led his people out of camp, while G‑d raised Mount Sinai, its peak lost in the heavens.

 As the people stood below respectfully at a distance, Moses fearlessly ascended the mountain until he too was engulfed by the heavens, and could no longer be seen. Then [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm) said to Moses:

**The Wonders of Heaven**

 "Now I will give Israel the Torah. Today, the wonders of Heaven shall be revealed to My chosen people. But since you are here on the mountain with Me, how will the people know it is I who speak and not you? Therefore, go down and join the people!"

 At that instant, just as Moses turned to descend once again, the heavens opened for the children of Israel, and the glories of Heaven were revealed to a spellbound Israel for one unforgettable and awe-inspiring moment.

 Then Moses brought G‑d's words to the people:

 "I am not like earthly kings, the rulers and princes of the nations. I need no servants to clear the way for Me nor attendants to lay carpets for Me to tread upon. I need no candles to brighten My palace, nor purple tapestries to hang over My walls!

 "I have spread the blue heaven under Me, and the entire world is My palace, brightened by My own brilliant light. The green grass and fragrant flowers are My royal carpet, and the sun is but one of My torches. The world is Mine, and I am its King!

**Becoming a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation**

 "Now, therefore, if you will listen to My voice and obey My commandments, I will make you a kingdom of priests and a holy nation - worthy subjects of the King of Kings!"

 And Israel knew that true indeed were the words of G‑d; that upon this earth never breathed a king who could compare with Him, for G‑d is all-powerful, His wisdom boundless, and His mercy unending.

 When Moses had concluded delivering the Divine message to his people, Israel replied as one man: "We will do and learn!"

 At that moment, six hundred thousand angels descended from Heaven, addressing each Jew: "You have made a wise choice. G‑d rejoices that you are prepared to obey His every command, the smallest as well as the greatest. And because you have chosen to do so, behold the beautiful gifts we bring unto you!"

**Two Beautiful Crowns of Glory**

 Then the angels gave each Jew two beautiful crowns of glory. One for promising "to do," and the other for promising "to learn" the words of G‑d.
 The dawn of the sixth day of Sivan found all Jews assembled around Sinai, expectantly trembling with the excitement. A great silence descended upon the earth. All movement ceased and everything stood still. No birds twittered and no ox lowed in the meadow. The waters of the seas lay still, not a wave rose or fell. No leaf fluttered in the wind, for no wind blew. The whole world was breathless with suspense. Bird, beast, and man - all were under the spell of the great event about to take place.And then in the midst of this unbroken silence, the words of G‑d burst forth like thunder:

**"I am G-d Your G-**[**d**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm)**."**

 How these words shook the world to its very foundation! They completely filled the universe and resounded throughut the earth. The smallest child and the oldest of men trembled alike before so much glory and holiness. The mountains trembled and the sea rumbled. Lightning flashed in the heavens and thunder rang out.
 And the words G‑d had spoken became burning flames that floated in the air. The flame issuing from G‑d's words grew brighter and brighter, blinding the people with its brilliance and filling their hearts with terror. When the [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm) looked down and saw them standing nearly lifeless with terror, she turned to G‑d and said, "What good will it do to give me to lifeless corpses? I am to be a source of life for them, not the cause of their death! Revive them, O G‑d, so that they be able to rejoice with Your great gift."

 Then a sweet dew fell upon the people, reviving them and giving them courage and strength to hear the rest of G‑d's word. As the people of Israel stood in awe before Mount Sinai, the angels descended from Heaven, bearing G‑d's Commandments. As one lovingly presents precious jewels, the angels presented the Commandments to the Jewish people, showing them the beauty of every law, the reward for keeping it, and the punishment if it be disobeyed.

*Reprinted from the Chabad.Org website.*