

To weave designs, to work with gold, silver and copper. (31:4)

The Jewish mind has throughout time proven itself to be extraordinary. While we have a reputation for being gifted with an inordinate level of acumen in proportion with the size of our own nation, it is specifically in the area of commerce, i.e. making money, that our worldly reputation seems to soar and take on a life all of its own. While the Jewish mind shines in all areas of human endeavor -- from our primary vocation, Torah study, to the various disciplines of science, mathematics, medicine, law, social services, etc.-- one thing all Jews have in common is the way in which they use their money. As *Rachamanim bnei Rachamanim*, compassionate sons (and daughters) of compassionate ones, we are all in one way or another devoted to *chesed*, carrying out acts of loving kindness, in order to help those who are less fortunate. Money plays a vital role, without which we could not be such great *baalei tzedakah*. Perhaps, we might postulate that our inordinate success coincides with our commitment to helping others. Otherwise, what purpose does money really have? One can live in just so many homes, wear just so many suits, drive just so many cars. The money is not there for us to hoard; rather, it is for us to share.

With the above in mind, I share the following story, which at first reads like any other *tzadik* story. It is the punch line that is different, changing the entire focus and lesson of the story. The **Pupa Rav, zl**, arrived in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, NY, shortly after the Holocaust. His goal was to rebuild the *Chassidic* dynasty that had been decimated during the war. His passion and fervor, coupled with uncompromising integrity and love of his Jewish brothers, helped him to secure a strong group of followers, which quickly grew by leaps and bounds. Soon the building that had served as their home was no longer sufficient. They had to move into larger quarters. They looked to Boro Park as the place where they would establish their *chassidus*. As part of the foundation of a strong *Chassidus*, it was vital that Pupa establish its own *yeshivah* from *cheder* through *bais medrash*, where the students would receive a strong education based upon the principles of learning which distinguished Pupa *Chassidus*. One problem held them back from seeing the realization of their dream: money. The vast majority of Pupa *Chassidim* were not men of means; they were barely eking out a living. Therefore, the steering committee decided to arrange for a dinner which would, hopefully, generate funds for their building project.

In order to motivate attendance, the committee arranged to have the *Rav* attend the dinner. Not to waste the *Rav's* precious time, they decided that tickets for the dinner would cost one thousand dollars. This way, only the seriously committed would attend. The crowd of well-to-do supporters were very inspired by the *Rav's* presence. Toward the end of the dinner, each person's contribution was publicly announced, followed by a blessing from the *Rav*. As per pre-arrangement, every gift was one thousand dollars or more. It was, therefore, surprising when one of the wealthiest *Chassidim*, an individual who was not only a man of means, but also a scholar and a devout follower of the *Pupa Rav*, announced that he was contributing two hundred dollars toward the project. Surprised, the *Rav* commented, "I thought that we had requested a thousand dollar

minimum contribution.” The man replied, “*Rebbe*, I have been blessed with only daughters. Thus, I will not personally benefit from the school. Two hundred dollars is what I feel I should contribute.”

“If this is the case,” the *Rav* countered, “if you give a larger donation, you might be blessed with a son.”

Hearing this, the *Chasid* asked, “*Rebbe*, is that a guarantee?”

“There are no guarantees,” the *Rav* replied. “However, I am certain that a sizable donation will generate much *nachas*, Heavenly pleasure. I cannot imagine that your gift will be overlooked.”

“If that is the case,” the *Chasid* said, “I will immediately give ten thousand dollars toward the project.” The man wrote a check, and the *Rav* blessed him to soon hold his son in his arms.

Nine months later, the *Chasid's* wife gave birth to a healthy boy. The joy that permeated their home was palpable. Because the *Rav's* blessing had played such a pivotal role in realizing the birth of his son, the *Chasid* asked the *Rav* to serve as *sandek*, hold the baby, during the actual *Bris*, circumcision. The *Rav* agreed; the *Bris*, however, had to be held at the *Rav's* summer home in the Catskill Mountains. It was a long trip for such a young infant, but how often does one have an opportunity to have the *Pupa Rav* serve as *sandek*?

The infant's father had a brother who was very wealthy. His fortune was valued in the high millions. Sadly, one blessing eluded him: he was childless. He and his wife had been married for years and had exhausted every therapy. They had visited doctors and clinics all over the world, to no avail. He was incredulous that his brother would make such a long trip with a newborn infant, just so that the *Pupa Rav* would serve as *sandek*. When it was explained to him that it was the *Rav's* blessing that had generated this blessing, his attitude quickly changed. He immediately approached the *Rav* and asked how much he would have to give in order to obtain a blessing for a child. Name the amount, and he would write a check.

The *Pupa Rav* responded with his usual humility, “Am I a contractor who accepts to perform a service for a given price? When your brother came to me, it was an *eis ratzon*, a time when the Divine will was readily acquiescent. We were in dire need of funds to build the *yeshiva*, and anyone who would help us would have an incredible merit. As a result, Hashem looked kindly upon your brother, and he was blessed with a son. Our situation has, *Baruch Hashem*, changed for the better. I do not know if the merit of giving will have the same effect.”

The wealthy man did not give up hope. He turned to the *Rav's gabbai*, secretary, and said, “Please – anytime that the *Rav* is in need of funds, call me immediately. I will help! Do not hesitate to call – even if it is in the middle of the night. I will respond positively to your summons!”

A number of months passed, and the *Rav* intimated to his secretaries that it was necessary to build

apartments for the young married men in their growing *kollel*. Sadly, there was no money available for such a huge project. When the *gabbaim* heard this, they immediately summoned the wealthy brother and related to him the *Rav's* need. The man came running: "*Rebbe*, I will donate any amount of money that the *Rav* asks. However, I need a guarantee that I will be blessed with a child!"

The *Rav* replied, "Am I in place of Hashem? All I can say is to give whatever you can, and Hashem will do His." The man removed a blank check from his pocket and said, "*Rebbe* can write for any amount up to seven figures." The *Rav* took the check and filled it in for one hundred and eighty dollars. Incredulous, the man simply asked, "Is that all?" to which the *Rav* replied, "It is ten times *chai*. You want living children. Hashem should bless you." Nonetheless, the man would not accept the *Rav's* response, and he proceeded to write another check for ten million dollars, with the hope that he would be blessed with a child!

A number of months went by and nothing happened; his wife had yet to conceive. People do not just dole out ten million dollars, regardless of how wealthy they might be. Once again, the man visited the *Pupa Rav* and pleaded, "*Rebbe*, I still have not been answered. Please help me!" "I told you that it is not in my hands," the *Rav* said. "However, I pray for you constantly that you be blessed with a child." The man left in a somewhat ambivalent mood that went from hopelessness to hope. He would not give up on the *Rav's* prayers. Sadly, a short while later, the man's world came crashing down with the bitter news of the passing of the *Pupa Rav*. His world became bleak and dark. Now what was he going to do?

His depression did not last very long, when nine months after the *Rav's* passing, the man's wife gave birth to a healthy baby girl. What the *Rav* could not affect in this world, he had rectified in the next world.

A few weeks later, the *Rav's* son and successor summoned the leaders of his *Chassidic* court to his office and showed them a sealed envelope, signed by his holy father. The following words were written on the envelope: "On the day that Mr. So and So's wife has a child; you may open up this envelope and use its contents to complete our *Kollel* project." The *Pupa Rav* would not avail himself of the wealthy man's money until he had upheld his end of the deal. This is the meaning of greatness.