

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's parsha, we read about the great flood which Hashem sent to destroy the inhabitants of the world. One of the reasons Hashem decided to flush out the evil people in the world is that they were practicing idol worship. Although the Sages were subsequently successful in effectively eliminating the desire to serve idols, there still exists today idol worship. Unfortunately, many Jewish young men and women are drawn to cults. Many of these poor souls grew up without a strong connection to Judaism. The following true story illustrates one young Jew's journey in life, which took him the depths of darkness to the heights of spiritual light.

Rabbi Glukowski, of blessed memory, was a rebbe - a Torah teacher in Toronto. It was his job to teach Torah to the Jewish children in the school, but he also had a hobby: Teaching Torah to yet more Jews. In fact he was so good at it that he was often offered payment for special speaking arraignments. But he always refused, saying that he wanted to do it for the mitzvah.

One day he received a telephone call from a man that he had never met in his life and who he had no idea where he got his phone number. The fellow was frantic. He was Jewish and his son, who we will call Sheldon, somehow got involved with a cult called Hari Kishka (name changed to avoid mentioned the name of an idol worship) and no one had heard from him for months. The man was going out of his mind and was about to call the police when someone gave him the Rabbi's number.

Rabbi Glukowski expressed sympathies at the tragic news but didn't understand what it had to do with him. After all, he was a normal religious Jew with no experience with cults or such things. True he was an venturesome sort of person with a tremendous love for all mankind, especially his fellow Jews, but he didn't understand anything about cults and certainly didn't have the time to go searching in India or somewhere else to find about this cult.

But the man on the other end of the phone wouldn't take no for an answer. He didn't care if the Rabbi knew about cults or not, he had heard his name from friends and was convinced that if anyone could get his son out it was him. Not only that but he had tried a lot of other things and called a lot of other people and nothing else worked. And as far as locating his son, that was no problem. It so happened that he knew the exact location of his son, or at least where he was when he was last heard from several months ago; in an Ashram in Toronto, not far from where the Rabbi worked.

Something told Rabbi Glukowski to do it. It was crazy! But this could be another of his 'special projects'. He took the challenge. With no plan, strategy or inside information whatsoever he woke early the next morning, erev Shabbos, located the Ashram, said a short prayer, put on a smile and began knocking on the massive front door (there was no door bell).

At first no one answered. They probably peeked out, saw a religious Jew and figured they should ignore him till he went away. But after he knocked for ten minutes without stopping a gruff voice from the other side of the closed door answered, "Who is it?! What do you want?!"

"Hello!" he replied brightly, "My name is Glukowski, Rabbi Glukowski, and I want to talk to Sheldon Greenbaum. Anyone called Sheldon Greenbaum in there? His parents are worried about him."

There were a few moments of silence and he almost considered to give them another ten minute knocking session when a different voice came from behind the closed door. "Yes, this is the one who is called Sheldon."

"Sheldon? Sheldon Greenbaum?" yelled the Rabbi. A faint grunt signifying 'yes' was heard from the other side. "Hey! Hi Sheldon! Your father called me and he's worried. He might just call the police." "I'm okay!" he answered. "Listen Sheldon. Do me a favor. Your father called me and asked me to contact you because he's worried and he said he might call the police because he's worried."

"So what do you want me to do?"

The Rabbi had to think fast and suddenly it came to him. "Listen, if you call him he won't believe you. He'll think you are brainwashed. I mean, three months is a long time not to call. And if I call him, what will I say? I can't lie and say you're all right, I haven't even seen you. So I have an idea.."

Rabbi Glukowski knew he was really crossing the line here but he went through with it. "Come to my house this Shabbos and then I can tell him I saw you for a full day and he won't worry. What do

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you say?"

"One minute." Was the reply. After a few minutes of silence the door opened and out stepped a thin fellow, shaved head except for a clump of hair on the top with some sort of ornament dangling between his eyes. He was dressed in an orange robe wearing loose sandals and was carrying some sort of shapeless leather briefcase that looked like it was made in Tibet. He declared, "I am ready."

Rabbi Glukowski took him to his house, which was only a few streets away, showed him to a room in the basement asked him if he wanted anything to eat or drink, or if he possibly wanted to take a shower. But Sheldon just gave a close-mouthed smile, sat as straight-backed as possible and shook his head serenely 'no'.

That evening, as the Rabbi expected, Sheldon declined his offer to go with him and his sons to Synagogue. When they returned an hour or so later from the prayers they all sat down, Sheldon included, to the Shabbos meal. Luckily there were enough potatoes, salad and bread to keep their vegetarian guest satisfied. Rabbi Glukowski had no problem talking Torah at the dinner table but he soon realized that none of it was really pertinent to spaced-out Sheldon. So he tried a joke. no reaction, a story... shabbos zemiros, no reaction, something about family, life, sports, hobbies, animals. no luck;

Sheldon just smiled, sat straight backed and nodded his head and finally said a few words before he retired to his basement room. That night Rabbi Glukowski was awaked from his sleep by a low groaning noise that filtered up into his bedroom from the basement. He put on his slippers and night-robe and went down to have a look.

The moaning became louder as he descended and realized he was witnessing some sort of ritual. Sheldon had a picture or some sort of statue propped up on a chair before him and he was actually bowing to it while chanting some monotonous mantra. It was too weird for the Rabbi to bear: he had never seen a Jew actually worshiping an idol - certainly not right here in his house!!

He didn't know what to do. It was out of the question to let it continue, but on the other hand he couldn't get angry or evict him... poor Sheldon thought he was doing a big "mitzvah!"

So Rabbi Glukowski sat up the entire night and talked to him. Occasionally he went to get a cup of coffee to keep him up but he just kept talking. Not one word about idolatry, because he didn't know what to say, and also not too much about Judaism, because it turned Sheldon off, but about everything else under the sun; especially stories.

The next day Sheldon was so exhausted that he slept the entire day, waking only for the Shabbos meal and, needless to say, Rabbi Glukowski was a wreck. He would have liked to also catch a few hours of sleep but Shabbos was one of his busiest days, praying, being with his family and teaching several classes.

Years later (only a few years ago) Rabbi Glukowski passed away and his children, all of whom had already married and had children of their own, spent the seven-day mourning period in his home in Toronto. In that time hundreds, of people came to comfort the mourners and to praise the deceased. Among them was a thin, middle aged, religious fellow with sparkling eyes that no one seemed to recognize. He sat opposite the mourners and said; "When I heard your father passed away I had to come. Remember me, Sheldon? I was by your house about fifteen years ago for one Shabbos. You were all younger then, so was I but I had a shaved head and was wearing an orange robe."

He told them of how that Shabbos got him to begin to think about his Jewish soul seriously for the first time in his life until finally he went to a yeshiva a year or so later and liked it. "You know what did it?" He concluded his story, " You know what really impressed me about your father? It wasn't anything he said; in fact even the next day I didn't remember any of it, not a word. It was his love. I never saw such unconditional love in my life. That is what changed my mind."

If we know Jews who have been enchanted into cults and other non-Jewish practices, it is big mitzvah to help them get out there and get into the real thing! **Good Shabbos Everyone.**