

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In the parsha this week we find the famous Torah injunction: "צדק צדק תרדף" "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue." (Devorim 16:20) There are many interpretations of this verse. One inspirational meaning of the verse is that a Jew must always seek out and pursue opportunities for Tzedaka - charity.

The following story illustrates the power of Tzedaka. Once a great Chasidic leader, Rabbi Mordechi of Nadvorna, was on a long train trip with many of his followers. The train made a stop in the city of Niridihous where they had to change trains for their intended destination. They had been waiting for several minutes when suddenly a young non-Jewish woman began screaming and wailing, attracting the attention of both passengers and police. It seems that someone had stolen her wallet containing her money and train ticket. It was usually best for Jews to keep out of the affairs of non-Jews, especially in this situation when the police were looking for a suspect.

So it was a bit strange when Rabbi Mordechai turned to one of his younger Chasidim and ordered him to run to the ticket office to buy a ticket for the woman. He told the Chasid to give her some traveling money as well and not to say a word about where it came from. The Chasid did as he was told and gave it to the bewildered woman who was literally speechless with gratitude. Fifteen years passed...

The Chasid married had children, the holy Rebbe had passed away and the incident was completely forgotten. The Chasid had since become a successful businessman and even had non-Jewish friends in high places.

Early one morning he received a subpoena to appear in court; he was charged with cheating the government. The charges were transparently false, the witnesses had obviously been paid, but it didn't help. Suddenly he realized that he didn't have any real friends after all and no one was willing to help him. He ran from office to office and got the same empty sympathetic statements and excuses.

Finally he hired a lawyer, prayed to Hashem for a miracle, and went to court. The pre-trial hearing took less than an hour. His pre-trial motions to dismiss the charges were denied. He was to be incarcerated until the trial. The Chasid was desperate. He posted bail for himself and began searching for a better lawyer, but now no lawyer wanted to take his case.

He had no choice but to travel to Budapest where the judge, who was to preside over his trial lived, and try to see him. Maybe he could convince the judge of his innocence. Hastily he packed a bag, took a large sum of money and caught the next train out. In Budapest the Chasid was in for another bitter surprise. He found out that the judge was a rabid anti-Semite. There was no chance that he would even look at, no less talk to, and certainly not have mercy on a Jew. But the Chasid did not lose heart, for "everything G-d does is for the best" he reminded himself. So he went around the city talking to people until he formulated a plan of action.

The Chasid found out that the judge's wife loved fine embroidered linens, especially tablecloths. He would buy the most expensive tablecloth he could find and appear at her doorstep as a salesman. Then, if he could get her interested, he would offer it to her as a gift and beg her to try to influence her husband for him.

It was a dangerous plan, even a bit foolish; she could easily report him to the police. But he had no other solution. The Chasid spent the entire next morning looking for the most exquisite embroidery in Budapest and finally spent a small fortune on a truly elegant masterpiece of a tablecloth with matching napkins.

He went quickly to the judge's home trying to keep as calm as possible. He walked up the stairs to the door, closed his eyes, said a prayer and knocked. The judge's wife herself opened the door. She looked at him strangely. He tried to begin his sales pitch but the words simply didn't come out. He was trembling, frozen with fear. Suddenly, the woman let out a scream and fainted!

The Chasid's first impulse was to run. If he just stood there they would certainly accuse him of something. But then if he ran and they caught him it would certainly be worse!

Meanwhile, the judge heard the commotion and came running. When he got there and saw the Chasid it was hard to tell who was more astounded. He bent down to his wife, who had regained consciousness, and asked her, "Are you all right Greta, what happened?"

She opened one eye, looked around and finally pointed at the Jew. "Yorik, Yorik!" she said, as she rose to her feet. "Do you remember that I told you once, that about fifteen years ago at the train station in Niridihous when I lost my tickets and money an angel came and saved me? Well, this Jew...he has the face just like that angel! It's him! When the Judge realized that this was the man who saved his wife his countenance changed completely. He invited the bewildered Jew into his home and offered him a reward. When he heard the reason for his visit, he promised him a fair trial. Needless to say the Chasid was acquitted of all charges. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**