

Good Shabbos Everyone. More than 100 years ago, a rabbi from Jerusalem Reb Lipa Kalashefsky (not his real name) traveled abroad to collect money for a mitzvah cause. Reb Lipa arrived in Milan, Italy on erev Shabbos in the morning. Knowing nobody in Milan, Reb Lipa began walking through town hoping he would find a Jewish neighborhood and a place to stay for Shabbos. Suddenly, a horse drawn carriage drew up alongside of Reb Lipa. The carriage stopped and the passenger called out to Reb Lipa "Shalom Aleichem! What is a Jew like you doing in Milan?"

Reb Lipa looked up with surprise and said "I am here from Jerusalem and I am looking for the Jewish neighborhood." "You are in luck" said the wealthy carriage rider as he climbed down the steps of the coach and greeted Reb Lipa with a firm handshake. Mr. Hilvicht then invited Reb Lipa to spend Shabbos with the Hilvicht family. Having nowhere to stay, Reb Lipa quickly accepted the invitation.

Several hours later, Reb Lipa was sitting at the lavish Shabbos table of the Hilvicht family, enjoying a sumptuous Shabbos meal. The Hilvicht home was full of beautiful crystal bowls, flasks and silverware. However, among the expensive items in the china cabinet, Reb Lipa noticed a broken glass flask. The broken flask looked out-of-place among the china and silverware. Reb Lipa was very curious about the broken flask, and he asked Mr. Hilvicht what the story was behind it. Mr. Hilvicht then told Reb Lipa the following amazing story:

Mr. Hilvicht was born and raised in a Torah observant home in Amsterdam. When he was 18 years old, young Mr. Hilvicht traveled to Italy to help his ailing grandfather run his business. Soon after Mr. Hilvicht arrived, his grandfather passed away. His parents wanted him to sell the business and return home. However, young Mr. Hilvicht had already gotten a taste for business and therefore the young man decided to stay in Italy and run the business his grandfather left behind. Soon, business was booming and Mr. Hilvicht opened up a second store.

One day, Mr. Hilvicht was so busy with his work that he did not pray mincha. That was the beginning of his slide away from Yiddishkeit. Soon, he missed shacharis too. One by one, Mr. Hilvicht dropped all of his mitzvah observance. Eventually Mr. Hilvicht married and had children. He became very wealthy although his practice of mitzvahs was almost non-existent.

One winter afternoon, Mr. Hilvicht was walking down a street where some Jewish children were playing. All the kids seemed to be happy except for one boy who was crying "What will I tell my father?... What will I tell my father?" the crying boy kept repeating. Mr. Hilvicht stopped to see what was the matter. The crying boy told Mr. Hilvicht that his father had given him money to buy a flask of oil for lighting Chanukah lights. On the way back home, the boy with the flask of oil joined his friends and played with them. Somehow, the boy managed to drop the flask of oil, breaking it and losing the expensive oil. Mr. Hilvicht felt bad for the child and went back to the store and bought for the boy a much larger flask of oil. The boy headed home once again, this time more carefully.

As Mr. Hilvicht walked home, the words of the little boy rang in his ears. "What will I tell my father? What will I tell my father?" Indeed, thought Mr. Hilvicht, "what will I tell my Father in Heaven?" Mr. Hilvicht had almost forgotten about Chanukah. What excuse would he have before his Father in Heaven on Judgment day?

Mr. Hilvicht walked back to where the children were playing and gathered up the pieces of glass from the broken oil flask. That night, to the surprise of his wife and children, Mr. Hilvicht lit a Chanukah candle. The next night he lit two and with each passing night he increased the number of candles he lit. He stared at the flickering candles, thinking back to the home of his parents in Amsterdam. He suddenly felt how far he had fallen. That Chanukah was the beginning of his return to Yiddishkeit. With the understanding of his family, Mr. Hilvicht and his wife began to educate their children in the way of the Torah.

The Shechina does not rest within 10 handbreadths of the ground. However, it is mitzvah to place the Chanukah Menorah within 10 handbreadths of the ground. Why is this? Because the Chanukah lights have a tremendous power to bring holiness where holiness is not found. **Good Shabbos and Happy Chanukah Everyone.**