

# ...AND SHABBOS FORGAVE HIM

From Olomeinu Magazine

Adapted by Avi Raphael

from a tale told in Rabbi S. Y. Zevin's "Sipurei Chassidim"

Illustrated by Mordechai Zeffren

Leibel Miller returned home with his four sons after welcoming the Shabbos in the village shul. The kitchen air was warm and friendly with tempting fragrances that came from the many pots that crowded the covered iron stove.

"Reizelle," he asked his loyal wife, "do I have five minutes to lie down on my bed before *kiddush*?"

"Of course, Leibel," she replied. "You work hard in the mill all week. You're entitled to a few minutes rest."

Leibel went into his bedroom, stretched out on his bed, put his head to the pillow, and promptly fell asleep. The five minutes he requested stretched into ten, then into one hour, two hours, and three.

Reizelle Miller and her children sat huddled around the festively-set table, not daring to taste of the Shabbos delicacies before hearing *kiddush*, not venturing to break the silence lest Leibel be disturbed in his sleep.

Finally hunger and wonderment got the best of Daniel, the youngest of the children.

"Soon the candles will go out, he whimpered. "When Father wakes up in the dark he'll be angry with us for letting him sleep so long. Don't you think you should wake him up, Mother?"

Reizelle bit her lips in silence, her face expressing doubt.

"I think it would be a good idea too" said Leah, her only daughter. "Maybe Father is sick. He's never done this before."

Reizelle left the room. Close to ten minutes passed before she returned alone with tears in her eyes.

"I don't understand," she said. "He seems to be sleeping comfortably, but there's nothing I can do to wake him up. He just continues to sleep."

"Gershon," she said, turning to her oldest son, "you know where Dr. Fensterheim lives. Go call him right away. Maybe something *is* wrong."

Only two of the seven candles on the Miller table were still burning when Dr. Fensterheim completed his examination. "It must be extreme fatigue from a hard week's work because I really find nothing wrong. I'm sure Leibel will wake up refreshed in the morning."

For the first time in the family's memory it was Gershon who recited the *kiddush* instead of their father. They nibbled at their food without appetite in the last flickering glow of the disappearing candles.

The next morning Leibel awoke, but instead of feeling refreshed as the doctor predicted, his spirits were heavy. He never missed Friday night *kiddush* before, and in addition, he did not work extra hard that past week. Why did he sleep so? . . . He made up his mind that this would not happen again.

On that next Thursday evening, Leibel went to bed earlier than usual. He took some drugs that Doctor Fensterheim prescribed before he went to shul on Friday afternoon. Yet when he returned home, he could not keep his eyes open to recite the *kiddush*. He just had to lie down, if only for five minutes, and he fell asleep... until the next morning.

When this occurred again, on the third Shabbos in a row, Leibel grew fearful, and he looked forward to the next Shabbos with dread rather than joy.

"Even the doctor agrees that this is not a normal thing," he told Reizelle. "I am going to Zichlin to see the Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Abba. Maybe he will tell me what is wrong."

The Rebbe listened to Leibel's sad story. He shook his head a few times, and then said: "There's nothing I can do for you. Once you betrayed the Shabbos. She is aking her revenge, and she is not letting you sanctify her with your *kiddush*. Because you once abandoned her, she has abandoned you."

Leibel was puzzled. When did he "betray the Shabbos?" He always kept Shabbos. Why was he being deprived of this weekly pleasure of making *kiddush* and enjoying the Shabbos meal? When he told his family of the Rebbe's diagnosis they all expressed surprise. In fact, they all confirmed his loyalty to the Shabbos — all, that is except little Daniel.

"Forgive me, Father, for talking now, and for keeping silent last month," Daniel said. "This is what happened on that Friday night. You were very thirsty. You must have forgotten that it was Shabbos, because you struck a match and lit a candle to find your way to the water barrel. I was too surprised to say anything. You took a drink and then blew out the candle and went back to bed.

"Could that be it? wondered Leibel. Something as un-intentional as that? I hardly remember it . . . I must return to Zichlin and ask the' Rebbe immediately.

"Yes," said the Rebbe, "that is why the Shabbos is angry with you. Don't you know that the commandment *shamor* (keep) and *zachor* (remember) were said at the same time in regard to Shabbos? As you are expected keep shabbos every second of the Holy Day, so must you constantly *remember* it. How could you forget that it was Shabbos for even one second? That minute you *forgot about* Shabbos was the minute you failed to *keep* Shabbos."

"But I am truly sorry for forgetting. What else can I do?" asked Leibel desperately.

"Being sorry is only part of your task," replied the Rebbe. "You still have more to do. You still must prove your loyalty to Shabbos with one act of *mesiras nefesh*— risking body and fortune — before the Shabbos accepts your repentance... When the occasion arises, Leibel, do your best to live up to it up.

The next few weeks passed uneventfully, except that as soon as Leibel Miller returned home from shul on Friday nights, he would uncontrollably fall asleep until the next morning.

Then, late one Thursday afternoon, as he was preparing to close the mill for the day, a messenger came to him from Count Powalski, who owned the mill he operated.

"The Count wants to see you immediately" panted the breathless messenger. "Come now, even before you go home to tell your family that you will be detained."

Leibel Miller locked the gate to the mill grounds, mounted his horse, and followed the messenger to Count Powalski's estate.

The Count received Leibel in an immense dining hall, where he sat alone awaiting his arrival. "My dear Miller," he said joyfully, "I have devised a plan to increase my income from my mill, and your share for operating it will also be greater – I am going to purchase a larger set of millstones to increase the mill's capacity, and we will soon be grinding all the grains in the entire area. Can you handle this for me?"

"Why not?" replied Leibel, excited by the prospect of an increase of activity at the mill.

"Oh, yes," added the count. "There is just one condition that we will have to work out. The mill will have to run on Saturdays, too. You do realize that a new set of stones is quite an investment, and I must earn it back as soon as possible."

"Saturday?" asked Leibel. "Why, you know I observe Saturday as a day of rest. That would be impossible for me!"

"Come now, Miller," said the count, somewhat impatiently. "You Jews know how to get around your Sabbath restrictions. You could have someone else run it for you on Saturdays, or lease it to a non-Jew. I don't have to tell you how to handle your religion. So what do you say, Miller? This is your chance of a lifetime."

Of course there are ways to get around Shabbos, thought Leibel Miller, but maybe this is my opportunity to show how dear Shabbos is to me.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I cannot accept your offer," Leibel finally said. "My day of rest is too valuable to me to tamper with in this way."

"Very well," said the count. "Then I shall have to find someone else to run my mill – all week long. You may finish this week, and let me know if you change your mind"

"That won't happen," replied Leibel. "My decision is final."

Leibel returned home to his family with a confusion of feelings. He was deeply worried because he was about to lose his way of earning a living, but he was happy and relieved that he had finally proved his loyalty to the Shabbos. At last he would again taste the joy of making Kiddush on Friday night.... But when Friday night did arrive, Leibel dozed off as he had been doing, and he did not awake until the morning.

On Sunday morning, Leibel Miller wasted no time in traveling to Zichlin to consult with the Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Abba.

"What more can I do?" he asked tearfully. "I've lost *my* job as miller - for the sake of Shabbos, and I'm still not cured from my Shabbos sleeping-sickness. How will I be helped? When will I be cured?"

"Don't worry," said the Rebbe reassuringly. "I am certain that Hashem is pleased with your repentance, and the Shaboos will soon bestow her blessings on you in return for the devotion you have shown her. Your help and your cure will both come soon."

Leibe Miller returned home with hope that his "help and cure" would indeed soon be with him. In the meantime, the mill was being operated by a man on a Monday through Saturday schedule and Leibel Miller had no job.

But there was trouble at the mill. First, the new stones slipped, next the water-wheel broke, and then some customers' bundles interchanged. Finally, on Friday morning, one of Count Powalski's servants came riding up the road to Leibel Miller's house. "the count desires your presents... can you come now?"

"Of course" said Leibel, and he quickly mounted his horse and rode off to the count's estate again.

This time the count was pacing to and fro outside his huge, stone, castle-like home.

"So you have come," he said impatiently to Leibel. "Are you willing to take the mill back, my Jewish friend?"

"I would indeed, but I already told you that I would not work on Saturday."

"Never mind Saturday!" he snorted. "I need a reliable miller to guard my investment – my mill – five days a week, not someone to lose my money on six days. When can you begin?"

"Monday," replied Leible hopefully.

"Fine," said the count, He shook Leibel's hand. "and we will arrange for a bonus if all goes well," he added.

"At last my "help" has come, thought Leibel as he returned home. Is my "cure" far off?

As soon as he reached his house he began to prepare for Shabbos. He selected his finest garments, and he told Reizelle to cook his favorite foods. In shul that evening he sang "Lecha Dodi" in greeting to the Shabbos bride with great joy excited by even greater hope.

Then Leibel Miller returned home with his four sons. The kitchen air was warm and friendly with tempting fragrances that came from the many pots that crowded the covered iron stove.

"Reizelle," he asked his loyal wife – after he welcomed the Shabbos angels, "can I have the wine for Kiddush?"

He filled his silver cup with the red wine, and began: "Yom hashish – the sixth day..."

Yes, indeed, thought Leibel as he continued, Hashem did bless the seventh day, and He did make it holy.

Never before did Leibel Miller and his family enjoy the blessings and the holiness of the Seventh day as they did on that Shabbos

