

# THE SHABBOS OF REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV

*Fate... Fate... Fate*

**There** was once a poor man who devoted his life to learning Torah in the study hall. One time, an astrologer visited his town. Everyone ran to see him, but the poor man continued studying and did not go. His wife came into the study hall and found no one there except for her husband. Everyone else had all gone to the astrologer. She shouted at him, “You worthless, lazy bum! Why don’t you go the astrologer!?”

**He** did not want to go, but his wife continued nagging him until he had no choice but to go. So he went to the astrologer who told him that it was his fate to be a thief. Then he returned to his studies in the study hall.

**His** wife came running and asked him, “Nu, what did he tell you?”

“He told me, ‘A beggar will always be a beggar.’”

**That** night he returned home and ate his main meal—a slice of bread. While eating, he began to chuckle and his wife asked him, “Why are you laughing? You must know something that you don’t want to tell me.”

“Not so,” he said. “He didn’t tell me anything. I’m not laughing over anything special.” And he continued eating.

**But** again he began to laugh and again she asked him as above, and he answered as above. Then he burst out in roaring laughter, in such a belly laugh that his breath smelled. “You see!” she said. “You certainly know something!”

**So** he told her, “The astrologer told me that my fate is to be a thief.”

“I don’t want you to be a thief,” she said. “I’d rather we be poor. We will manage somehow with what God gives us. But don’t become a thief!”

**Shabbat** soon came along and, of course, they had their Shabbat meals all laid out—black bread for challah and whatever else they had—from which they sat down to eat. And they must have had four or five daughters who grabbed pieces of bread from each other, for even the bread that they had was not enough to go around.



*Na Na'h Na'hma Na'hman Neuman*

“Gott in himmel! (God in Heaven!)” his wife said. “I’ve had enough of this! I’d prefer you become a thief so that we don’t have to suffer this destitution any longer!” And he had no choice but to do as she wished. (He wanted to and he did not want to, but in the end, he went. The Rebbe repeated this several times.)

**So** he went out to steal. But from whom should he steal? He decided on the richest man in town. Arriving at the mansion, he found the guards asleep. There was no one around to interrogate him. So he went to the warehouse and found the lock open. This was his fate. He continued over to the safe and found its lock open as well. He took four or five rubles, just enough to support his family, and he brought them to his wife.

“See,” he said to her. “I have done as you wish. Use this for the family, because I will not steal again!”

“Of course not!” she replied. “Neither do I want this. You only had to do this on account of your impoverishment.”

**But** some time later she began to shout at him, “You worthless bum! You were in the warehouse! Why didn’t you take enough for me to buy a nice coat?”

**So** he had no choice but to go out again to steal. (He wanted to and he didn’t want to, but in the end, he went.) He returned to the warehouse and found another thief there who asked him, “Who are you?”

“I’m a thief. And who are you?”

“I’m also a thief.”

“Let’s get together and steal,” the pauper said to him. “It’s my fate.” And the other thief agreed. Then the pauper thought to himself, “If we steal from this man, we will make him into a pauper. On my own, I would only take what I need for a nice coat, but now this other fellow will want to take a lot and the owner will be left penniless.” So he told the other thief, “Why should we take from a Jew? Better, let’s go and steal from a gentile.”

**The** other agreed. They decided to go and steal from the king (who happened to live in that town). The pauper was confident he would succeed in stealing from the king, since this was his fate.

**The** thief suggested, “Let’s steal the king’s special two piece suit that he wore on his coronation day. It will certainly be enough for us for many generations! I know where it is kept.” The pauper agreed, for he was confident he would succeed in stealing them, since this was his fate.

**They** went there, entering room after room. Eventually they found the suit. The pockets of the suit alone were priceless. After they took them, they began to argue over the suit, since one piece was larger than the other. The thief claimed that he deserved the larger piece because he knew about them, but the pauper claimed that he deserved the larger share because he has the luck, and it was through his luck that they succeeded. So the pauper suggested that he go ask the king.

“How can you do that?!” said the thief.

“Nevertheless,” answered the pauper. “I will go and ask him.”

“If you are able to go and ask the king, then of my own accord I will give you the larger garment,” said the thief. So he accompanied him to the king.



**Someone** was lying down next to the king telling him stories to help him fall asleep. The two thieves picked up the bed on which the king was sleeping and carried it with the king into a different room. Then the king awoke, assuming that he was in the same place. The thief began telling him the story of two thieves and asked the king which one of the two deserves the larger garment? The king was outraged at the question and said, “Why are you asking me such a question? Obviously the pauper deserves it since it was his fate. Now tell me another story.” The thief told him another story and the king fell asleep. Then they carried him back into the first room.

**In** the morning, it was discovered that the king’s garments had been stolen. The king remembered that the one who had been lying down next



to him telling stories had told him the story of the theft and asked him which one deserves the larger garment, so he assumed that [the storyteller] must know about the theft. But despite being beaten, he said that he knew nothing. They continued to beat him soundly and torture him, but he stood by his claim that he knew nothing.

**The** king then sent for the archbishop to ask him if indeed, this man was perhaps not the thief. The archbishop said that it was indeed possible that he knew nothing, and added that the king was a fool for ruling that the pauper deserves the larger garment. The king was outraged at the archbishop for considering him a fool and wanted to punish him, but his hands were tied.

**Meanwhile**, a major search for the thief was underway, but nothing was found. The king then decreed that if whoever stole the garments should come forth and acknowledge it, nothing would be done to him. The king just wanted to know how it had been possible to steal those garments.

**All** over, crowds of people were talking about this incident. The pauper approached one of these groups and asked them what they were talking about. Upon telling him, he said, “What’s the ruckus about? Whoever stole it will bring it back.” This caused an uproar.

**He** approached another group and asked them as well, and they shouted at him, “You bum! You’re going to get the death penalty for everyone is saying that you know about the theft!”

“Yes,” he said, “I do know about the theft.”

“If you know, you must go and tell,” they said.

“Alright, I will go and tell,” he responded.

**The** pauper came in front of the king and told him, “I know about the theft.” The king said that he very much would like to meet the thief. “It is I,” said the pauper, and with that, the king kissed him.

“How did you do it?” asked the king, and the pauper told him the whole story. The other thief was sought and the second piece of the suit that was in his possession was also returned.

**The** king then said to the pauper, “I want you to do something to the archbishop. I am very angry with him.” And the pauper said that he would.

**The** pauper instructed to have a suit made for him identical to that which the archbishop wears when he leads services. He also had them catch many turtles and bring many candles. He dressed himself in the bishoply garments, glued a candle to each of the turtles and allowed them to crawl about throughout the chapel, stood near the altar and began shouting. Everyone gathered, including the archbishop, who was terrified upon seeing the flames moving about and hearing screams for no apparent reason.

**The** pauper then said to the archbishop, “I have revealed myself to you in order to bring you straight into paradise.” With that, the archbishop fell to his face. “But before you can enter paradise,” the pauper continued, “you must first go through hell for a short while. Then I will bring you to paradise.”

**The** pauper then instructed the archbishop to get into a sack, and when he had, he went over and tied him in. He then had the sack carried to the king and tied hanging in the royal courtyard. A proclamation was given out and everyone gathered and saw that there was someone hanging in this sack, but knew no reason for it. They began throwing stones at the sack. They threw many stones until the archbishop was badly hurt and all his teeth were broken. All the while, the archbishop did not know what was happening: was this the hell he had been told he would have to endure, or was this some prank?

**After** a while, the king ordered to have the sack thrown down. They threw down the sack, opened it, and the archbishop emerged in great disgrace.

(In an alternate version of the story, the pauper was eventually hanged, since “every criminal gets his due.” While he was being led to the gallows, the devil followed him carrying a sack of shoes and told him, “How much effort did I invest until I caught you! Look at all the shoes I wore out!”) {This is the way of the devil—first it seduces and then it torments, as in the Story of the Rabbi’s Son.}



**SHABBOS SHALOM**

השבת של רבי נחמן מברסלב – תרומות בישראל, בנק הדואר 7-2255-89

תרומות בעולם, [PAYPAL Shabat.Breslev@gmail.com](mailto:PAYPAL Shabat.Breslev@gmail.com)