

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh

WAGON WHEELS FOR REAL

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Everyone knows of the Koznitzer Magid ztl, who was amongst the most outstanding Chasidic Rebbes of his time. He was known to be physically weak and was bedridden for many years. Witnesses attest that the only time the Rebbe rose from his bed was for davening, when he would cry out like a lion and actually run about in an ecstasy of prayer. In the town of Koznitz lived a widow and her only child, Avrohom, known affectionately as Avromele. The young fellow was a devoted scholar and a much-loved fixture of the Magid's circle. His mother doted on him, making certain that his every need was met with love and care. Their tranquillity was brutally shattered one early morning when merciless Russian soldiers marched into the town to enforce the government's compulsory conscription order. Word quickly spread that all eligible young men would be abducted, sending the frightened Jews scurrying indoors to hide. Avromele, however, was immersed in his studies and remained unaware of any danger. Deep in thought, he made his way to the mikvah, oblivious to the ominous silence around him. Suddenly, he was grabbed by two of the ruthless soldiers and thrown into a waiting wagon, which then left the town, taking him to serve in the Czar's army.

Upon learning of this disaster, Avromele's mother ran directly to the Rebbe's house and implored him with cries that shook the very walls of the room. The Rebbe reassured her that Avromele would soon return home safe and sound. The unfortunate woman was beside herself and could not accept the Rebbe's words. Her tears soaked the floor. "Rebbe, save my only child!" she cried. Just then, the Rebbe's gabbai entered, bringing the Magid a cup of steaming coffee. The Rebbe looked up at the mother and declared, "I promise you, I won't drink until Avromele returns!"

Time passed, the coffee turned cold, the Rebbe busied himself with his holy thoughts and everyone waited. The mother looked to the Rebbe once more, and he whispered that she need not be concerned; he would not drink until Avromele stepped into the room. After some time, there was an uproar heard in the street. Avromele had returned, and as he walked towards the Magid's home, a large crowd joined the returning hero. The youngster stepped into the Rebbe's room, the holy Magid looked up at the lad and with a twinkle in his eye said, "Because you are so obstinate, my coffee turned cold."



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The Rebbe's cryptic remarks aroused curiosity amidst the throng of chasidim and they begged the boy to tell them what had happened. He explained. "I was thrown into this filthy cart with another Yid and soon we were being driven into the countryside. I was so frightened, how would I last in the Russian army? What of my yiddishkeit? Who would make kiddush for my poor mother? Tears streamed down my face as the cart moved back and forth. Suddenly, I saw a tall, white-bearded man with a long silk coat running alongside the wagon. He ran with superhuman speed and no effort. I quickly realized that this must be Eliyahu HaNavi. He knocked on the window and called out to me to grab his hand and jump off! I told Eliyahu that there was another Yid in there with me and that I couldn't leave him behind. Eliyahu replied that he had been given permission only to save me. The wagon rattled on, with Eliyahu keeping pace. He rapped on the window once more. "Jump out, Avromele, save yourself! I told the Navi that I could never leave another Jew behind. After several more pleas and heartfelt persuasion, Eliyahu finally relented and saved us both."

Now the Chasidim understood the Rebbe's words, "Because you are so obstinate, my coffee turned cold!"

We are about to celebrate Purim, a time when many of our young go around houses collecting charity and making merry. How many of these sweet souls in the group are lacking close ones willing to argue even with angels to save them? Look into the eyes of these children and see if the illumination of our Torah dances within. Our obligation is to strive to save each youngster, every Avromele; jumping off and leaving them behind is not an option. Some of our sweetest children are being caught and thrown into the wagon of secular waste and folly. We are being called upon to help them escape and return to where they belong. May we all share in a true Simchas Purim, may everything dark be turned into light, and may that light permeate every Jewish neshomah.