

excerpted from *The Sea of Tears Yom Kippur 5772 Temple Emanu-el Providence, Rhode Island*

The Hasidim center their stories around the *Tzaddik*, the truly righteous person who not only can serve as a conduit between the human being and God, but can indeed transcend this very world of ours and ascend to the world of the spirit. These stories, like all good stories, do not require your blind faith in their accuracy, but rather your attention to the lessons we can learn from their content.

... The Munkatcher Passport... is most famously told by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

Once a faithful but frightened *hasid* came to the Holy Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. He was in trouble with the government and he needed to leave the country in order to return to his family; but he knew the only way out of the country was to produce a valid passport, something he could only get by going to the authorities and therefore risking his life. He was terrified that he would surely perish at the hands of the Cossacks, so he came to the great Rabbi Levi Yitzhak and asked him for help in procuring a valid passport so that he could avoid a certain death. The Rebbe, who himself was not welcomed among the ruling class, knew that he could not fulfill the *hasid's* request. So instead he went into his private study for a few moments and he came out with a blank piece of paper. The *hasid* was understandably confused

and dismayed, but the Rebbe assured him that he had beseeched God for help in this matter, and that God promised him that all would be fine. It surely took a great deal of *emunah*, of faith, to walk up to the border and hand the Cossack guard a blank piece of paper, but that is exactly what the *hasid* did. And in accordance with Rebbe Levi Yitzhak's great level of holiness, all went well – the guard looked at the “passport” and treated the man like a king and helped him throughout his journey. The *hasid* returned home and lived a long and happy life.

Word of this great miracle spread and spread in the Hasidic world as an example of what wonders a great rebbe could perform. Finally, some 150 years later, in 1935, a Munkatcher *hasid* went to his rebbe, the Rebbe of Munkatch, Rabbi Chaim Eleazar Shapira, and asked him for help with an impossible task. He explained to the rebbe that he had to enter Nazi Germany in order to save his wife and children from the evil grasp of the impending Holocaust. He was certain he could save them, if only he had one thing. The *hasid* asked The Munkatcher Rebber for a passport, just like the one the holy Rebbe Levi Yitzhak had given his *hasid* so many years ago.

The Munkatcher Rebbe went into his private study and remained there for three hours. He eventually emerged, his face red, his cheeks wet, and his eyes filled with the pain of a thousand sorrows. He also handed his *hasid* a blank piece of paper but the paper was soaked through with

tears. The Rebbe explained that he was not on the same level of holiness of the great Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berditchiv. That he had prayed, and cried for advice from God as to how to help this *hasid*, and all that came in return were his tears. So he cried and he cried until this worthless, blank piece of paper was wet with his tears.

In another act of great faith, this *hasid* came to the Nazi border and when the guard asked for his passport, the *hasid* handed him the blank piece of paper that the Munkatcher rebbe had cried his tears upon. The guard began to shout in a great loud voice - that it was a supreme honor to have such an important individual come to town, and that he would surely personally escort such a distinguished person to his family so that he would be safe and protected; and he was. And this man and his family lived long and happy lives.

The Munkatcher Rebbe died the following year; but the story of the Munkatcher passport lives on.