

Return To Sender

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Once, a young Jewish man from Tulchin became enamored of the new works of the secular *Haskalah* (Enlightenment movement) and decided to pursue their worldview. Unfortunately, soon after the advent of the *Haskalah*, it became clear that such an immersion nearly always led to the abandonment of Jewish observance in any form. After a period of time, this young man dropped mitzvah observance entirely and was far from Torah. Not surprisingly, he decided to go to Berlin, the birthplace of the *Haskalah*, to learn under its masters who lived there.

The cheapest way to get to Berlin from Tulchin was by post-chaise (the mail coach). Travelers purchased tickets in the post office and waited for the appointed time to depart, much like those who wished to take a train.

The postmaster in Tulchin was Reb Yitzchak, son of Reb Noson. As the young man was about to pay for his ticket, he spotted Reb Noson, who had just arrived to visit his son. The young man was very impressed with Reb Noson's appearance. He asked Reb Yitzchak, "Who is he?"

"That's my father," Reb Yitzchak answered.

"Can I speak to him?"

"Of course."

The young man approached Reb Noson and the two began talking. It was not long before the young man began to have second thoughts about what he had felt was the path of his truth. He decided to forgo his trip to Berlin and stay with Reb Noson instead. This young man did complete *teshuvah* and, over time, grew into an exemplary Jew.

Reb Noson was always thankful for this encounter. Even though he had acquired so many merits from his Torah learning and devotion to God, he said that this life-changing meeting – as well as the patience he had showed the scribe known as "*der Deutschel*" (described in *Pathways, Parashat Vayeira*), easing his return to Torah – were a never-ending source of joy and comfort to him.

He said, "I will yet stand proud before the Throne of Glory because I brought back two people who were so severed from their roots: the Berliner and *der Deutschel*!"

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh II:618b