

The RYS Daily 8/10/06 The Guter Yid: Another Version

There is another version of the story that I sent out earlier today. It is found on page 100 of *The Making of a Godol*, Improved edition, Volume I.

11 My father (Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, ZT"L) used the term "Guter Yid" (good Jew)" where others might have used tzaddiq or rebbe. The term connotes an individual who leads a spiritual life and is dedicated to the service of G-d. A Jew of this caliber was considered saintly enough to intercede with the One Above in times of trouble and to offer advice sacrosanct - as in this case. (In regard to the guter-Yid terminology, a story is told about R' Yisrael Salanter [Lipkin] in the Jerusalem-based periodical *Shaarei Tzion* that a wealthy hasid visited him and at the end of their conversation the visitor put down a 100-ruble note before him. When R' Yisrael questioned what the money was for, he replied, "We are accustomed to give a Guter Yid a 'pidyon [redemption money]' so that he pray on our behalf." R' Yisrael retorted in surprise, "Is that so? Among you, a 'good Jew' is one who puts out his hand and takes. With us, a Guter Yid is one who opens his hand and gives, so you are the Guter Yid, and I ask you to pray for me." He, of course, did not take the money.)

From *The Mussar Movement*, Volume 1, Part 2 pages 181 - 182.

One small episode deserves mention. A wealthy Chasid came to visit him. Taking his leave, the Chasid placed on the table the sum of 100 roubles as *pidyon nefesh* (lit. "ransom of the soul") - a common custom observed by Chasidim towards their Rebbe, and asked R. Israel to pray and seek D-vine mercy for him. R. Israel categorically refused to accept the money. Quite astonished, he handed the money back to the Chasid. The Chasid inferred that the sum was too small, beneath the dignity of someone as great as R. Israel. He added another 100 roubles. R. Israel again refused to accept. Finally the Chasid took out a bill of 500 roubles, an extraordinary sum for those days, and placed it on the table before R. Israel. R. Israel smiled at him and said: "If you, sir, are prepared to allocate so large a sum out of your capital as a gift, then you are the Guter Yid (lit. "good Jew" - a title usually applied to Chasidic Rebbes). So I ask you to be so kind as to

pray for me and to ask mercy for me." If R. Israel saw anyone else perform a noble deed, he held that person to be greater than himself.