

## The Rebbe Who Didn't See

A young Rebbe approached an older Rebbe, "Shalom Aleichem - 30 years ago I was a talmid in your cheder."

The older Rebbe replied, "Please remind me your name...oh yes I remember the name, and what do you do for a living?"

"I teach in a cheder, and this is all thanks to you!" the young Rebbe responded.

"You teach because of me, how is that so?"

The young Rebbe replied: "I will remind you of the story and then Rebbe will understand."

"When I was a young boy in cheder, one of my classmates, who was not yet bar mitzvah, received an expensive watch. In those days, no one had a watch before they turned bar mitzvah. Only if they came from a wealthy family, they would receive a watch as a gift. All of my classmates gathered around him to see the new watch. We were all jealous. During the break, the boy put the watch on his desk and when he returned, the watch had disappeared...Our Rebbe came to the classroom and told us that whoever took the watch must return it. Of course no one did. Then you told us to stand by the wall with our eyes closed and checked our pockets one by one until you came to me and found the watch in my pocket. I was sure you would get me in big trouble, but to my surprise, you took the watch without anyone noticing, sat back in his chair, and said to the other boys, 'I want you to know that the watch was not stolen; it was taken by one of the boys who was just struggling with his yetzer hara. We have to give him the opportunity to fix what he did. This boy is not a thief and he is not a bad boy.'"

"I was so relieved that you told everyone to close their eyes so they would not know it was me. I thought that later on you would take me to the side and reprimand me. I waited for you to confront me, but as the days went by, you had not mentioned anything to me. Slowly, the incident was forgotten. And I was so amazed that I thought to myself that if this is what it means to be a Rebbe, then I would also want to be a Rebbe in cheder. That is why I became a Melamed."

"Do you remember the incident? Do you remember that it was me who took the watch?"

The old Rebbe replied, "No, I do not remember."

"How come the Rebbe does not remember? The Rebbe saw it was me!"

**"I did not see," said the Rebbe, "because my eyes were also closed..."**

This is a melamed! Someone who can't see the bad in his talmid! Someone who genuinely respects and loves his talmid!