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## Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin: Double Gain

*The holy Rebbe Shlomo Halevi of Karlin, HY"D, was born to Rabbi Nachum in 5494 (1738). He was a preeminent student of the Maggid of Mezeritch and of Rebbe Aharon Hagadol of Karlin. After the passing of Rebbe Aharon, Rebbe Shlomo assumed his mantle in Karlin. He was known for his powerful devotion to God and became famous as a miracle worker motivated by genuine self-sacrifice. His prayers were fiery, he gave all his money to charity and his Torah learning was enthusiastic and stormy. The great sages of his generation admired him, and he had a particularly special relationship with the Alter Rebbe. His primary students included Rebbe Asher of Stolin, Rebbe Uri (the Saraf) of Sterlisk and Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitch.*

*In the year 5552 (1791) a Russian soldier shot Rebbe Shlomo while he stood devoutly in prayer. Rebbe Shlomo suffered for five days until his soul ascended to heaven on 22 Tamuz. Many considered him to be the Mashiach the son of Joseph. His teachings were compiled in the book 'Shema Shlomo.'*

**Once Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin was traveling in a wagon with his disciples. They reached the summit of a very steep mountain. The wagon-driver lost control of the horses and the wagon began to careen down the mountain at breakneck speed. The passengers were shouting and crying. Rebbe Shlomo was immersed in his service of clinging to God and was originally unaware of what was transpiring. Suddenly, the extreme situation penetrated his consciousness and he momentarily stopped his Divine service as he became aware of the life-threatening danger. Immediately he heard a voice from heaven that declared that he had just lost his entire portion in the world to come. This had been a trial from heaven, similar to trials that the Ba'al Shem Tov had experienced on his journey to the Land of Israel. Rebbe Shlomo was expected to fear nothing but God.**

**When he heard the voice from heaven, Rebbe Shlomo quickly announced that he does not accept the decree. The tzaddik claimed that this verdict came from the heavenly house of study. But he was not willing to accept their verdict, but rather insisted on a verdict from God Himself. When he said this, something happened in heaven. Rebbe Shlomo heard a different voice announcing that if so, we will return the tzaddik's world to come.**

**When Rebbe Shlomo related this to his disciples, he said that at that moment he gained two things: He merited to greet the Shechinah (God's Immanent Presence) and he also merited the world to come.**

This story reflects fear of falling into the abyss that was caused by the spiritual fall of the tzaddik, who momentarily stopped his service of clinging to God. In the end, it turned out to be a "descent for the sake of an ascent." **He** was told that due to his descent he had lost his connection to *Immah Ila'ah*, (the Higher Mother), but he insisted on hearing his verdict directly from God.

This story points us to the story of the breaking of the Tablets on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz. (On this day a few years later, Rebbe Shlomo was shot and eventually died *al kiddush Hashem* [in sanctification of God's Name] of his wounds). In the Lubavitcher Rebbe's "*Hayom Yom*" (a short Torah thought for each day of the year) he wrote about the difference between the first Tablets and the second Tablets. The second Tablets had a double advantage over the first – so much so that after Moses broke the first Tablets, God said to him, "More power to you for breaking them." In our story, Rebbe Shlomo loses his first level but then merits the attribute of Understanding *and* his world to come – a double advantage over his original state.