

The Power of Complacency

Horav Schwadron recounted this Chazal in the presence of **Horav Meier Chadash, z"l**. He added his own inferences stating that, as life goes on, complacency takes hold of an individual- causing him to forget his extraordinary experience. *Horav* Chadash took issue with this statement. In order to impress his contention with what seemed to be the logical explanation of *Chazal*, he cited an incident that occurred in his own experience. When he was a young man in Russia, just before the first World War, he was caught by Russian soldiers without his required papers. This was a period in which the gentiles did whatever they chose, treating the Jew as some type of lowly parasite. The desire for Jewish blood was unleashed. Quickly, the soldiers determined that this young, Jewish man was guilty of treason and should be executed. They set up the firing-squad in preparation for carrying out their decision. Sensing the hopelessness of the situation, *Horav* Chadash nervously began reciting *Vidui* and *Krias Shma*.

The soldier in charge of the squad demanded that *Horav* Chadash stand erect and not fidget, since he was making it very difficult for the soldiers to aim well. Overcome with fear, the *rav* trembled, shaking back and forth. Once again, the soldier called out to him harshly to stand straight. This time, the soldier's scream awakened the Russian general who was taking his afternoon nap. He took one look outside and immediately scolded the soldiers for the terrible thing they were about to do. The soldiers quickly dispersed, and the *rav* was saved.

"One would think," continued *Horav* Chadash, "that after such an incredible experience, life would not be the same. After a little while, however, I began to notice the captivating power of complacency, and I realized that I was falling prey to this 'affliction'. It was causing me to lose sight and forget the amazing miracle that had saved me from certain death. Immediately, I made up my mind to grasp hold of the 'past' and transform it into the 'future,' forcing myself to remember the miracle. I made every effort to concretize in my mind my belief in Hashem, recognizing that if He desires that I remain alive, then nothing whatsoever will be an obstacle. I reviewed this notion constantly, never forgetting the past, seeking every opportunity to translate what had happened in the past into the present and future."