



א ציור פון א חסיד

Reb Avraham Shmuel

-Rabbi Yitzchak the Tailor's Father-

Reb Yitzchak the Tailor was one of the leading Chassidim in the village of Szventzian and appears in the biography of Rashbatz. From the day that Reb Yitzchak became a chassid, he declined to discuss his background. When people asked him about it, he would reply briefly that he was descended from a distinguished family; his paternal grandfather - Reb Meir - had been a prominent gaon in his day, whose mouth never ceased speaking words of Torah. His wife had earned the family income. Reb Meir had three sons, youngest of which was Reb Avraham Shmuel.

FAMILY DIGNITY

By the time Reb Avraham Shmuel reached marriageable age, he had earned a reputation as a young genius. He possessed outstanding intellectual abilities and studied Torah diligently day and night. People began to suggest to him matches with the daughters of contemporary geonim. His two older brothers, who had great aptitude and were giants of Torah, married into important families, the daughters of prominent geonim of the time. When the period of time that their fathers-in-law had agreed to support them elapsed, they were honored with positions as rabbis of various congregations. So it was no surprise that such auspicious matches were being suggested for him.

Reb Avraham Shmuel was the third son of the gaon and tzaddik Reb Meir, but he informed his father that he wished to marry the daughter of a villager who would obligate himself to support him for many years. Thus, he would be able to live in seclusion in a small village, and dedicate himself to Torah study with no distractions.

His relatives considered such a marriage beneath the dignity of their distinguished family, and a great quarrel ensued between them over this. But his father, the tzaddik Reb Meir, took his son's side in the matter, declaring that since his son's intentions were for the sake of Heaven, his actions were also approved.

BORUCH HU U'VORUCH SH'MO, AMEN

One of the estates about forty miles from his town was leased by a tenant named Reb Yosef. He was a sincere, honest, and Yorei Shomayim, but of the most undistinguished sort. He could read the Tefillos and Kapitlach of Tehillim only with difficulty, and had no idea at all of what the words meant. Hashem had blessed him with sons and daughters, and he had employed a capable melamed to teach them. He gave charity generously, and became famous throughout the vicinity for his philanthropy and hospitality. Nevertheless, everyone knew him as a born commoner.

People called him "Yossel Baruch Hu u'Voruch Sh'mo," because of his constant habit of dipping his hands in water, or wiping them on his clothes, and then reciting Baruch Hu u'Voruch Sh'mo. Whatever he heard, he responded to it with Amen! When asked why he had said Amen, he would reply that he had heard from a visiting traveler that the Creator (blessed be He) is everywhere, and is always present. Saying Amen implies recognition that Hashem is our Faithful King.

Reb Yossel heard that the renowned genius - the youngest son of the gaon and tzaddik Reb Meir - wished to marry

the daughter of a simple villager who would support him in his home. He quickly sent his children's melamed to inform Reb Meir that he was ready to undertake the obligation of building a house for his exceptional son, and to provide his sustenance for a period of fifteen years. Reb Meir consulted his son about this prospect, and he agreed to it.

LIFE IN THE SMALL VILLAGE

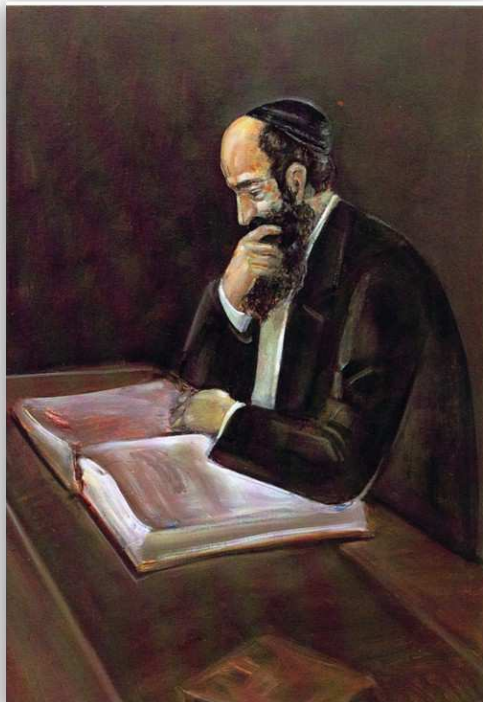
A few days later, Reb Yossel and his family came to Szventzian, and the engagement contract was drawn up amidst great joy. When the designated time arrived, a magnificent wedding was held.

Reb Avraham Shmuel left his father's home and became a villager, living in the house that his father-in-law built for him - as they had agreed.

Reb Avraham Shmuel studied Torah with much diligence, and greatly enjoyed the total tranquility that living in a small village afforded. On the other hand, he was distressed by his inability to daven with a minyan. The Yidden who lived in the surrounding villages and estates would assemble in his father-in-law's home for public prayer only on Shabbos.

The Yidden of the neighboring villages were constantly occupied with their labors: some worked the soil, some raised cattle, some ran mills, some were fishermen, and the like. Their entire day was spent in the company of gentiles. Nevertheless, they were all Yidden, Yirei Shomayim, and most of them had once been knowledgeable in the Torah, having studied in cheder or in a yeshivah during their youth. It was only the pressures of making a living that had forced them to abandon their studies, but [due these pressures,] they had subsequently forgotten everything.

When Reb Avraham Shmuel moved into the village, he encouraged these Yidden to set aside Shabbos as a day of communal study. Within a few weeks, the spirit of Torah was apparent throughout the vicinity.



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"Yossel Baruch Hu
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A MINYAN IS FOUNDED

Among the inhabitants of the village and nearby settlement there were three very diligent bochurim with outstanding abilities, who had gone to the city to study. When Reb Avraham Shmuel moved to the village, and experienced his great longing to pray with a minyan, he proposed to the bochurim that they return to the village and daven with his minyan. In return, he would teach them Torah.

The bochurim returned home and became regular members of the minyan, which was convened three times a day. Reb Avraham Shmuel kept his promise, studying with them in great depth for several hours daily. After two years passed, the village began to grow. New families settled there, and they built a shul where two or three minyonim met three times a day to daven.

Reb Avraham Shmuel's father-in-law set up a turpentine distillery in the forest, about a mile from the village. There, he built a small house for his daughter and son-in-law, who preferred living away from the noise of the village. Reb Avraham Shmuel would walk to the shul three times a day to daven.

For fifteen years, Reb Avraham Shmuel sat studying Torah in holiness and purity. He avoided all unnecessary speech, except for extremely brief remarks in cases of great urgency.

During these years, numerous Torah students, Talmidei chachomim, and geonim passed through the village. All were astounded by Reb Avraham Shmuel's great stature, the breadth and depth of his knowledge, his righteousness, and his sincerity. His name became well known, and several congregations invited him to serve them as rabbi. But he would not hear of it.

SUPPORT BY THE LABOR OF HIS HANDS

Before the fifteen-year period during which his father-in-law had agreed to support him expired, Reb Avraham Shmuel informed him that he wished to learn a trade by which he might earn his living. For this purpose he had chosen the trade of stitching sacks.

Hearing this, the father-in-law became very upset, and begged him to allow him to continue supporting him. Hashem had blessed him with great wealth, and he would be delighted to continue supporting him in his home. But Reb Avraham Shmuel absolutely refused to accept this proposal, insisting that he wished to support himself by the labor of his own hands.

He taught himself to sew, and he and his wife sewed grain and flour sacks, earning an ample income from this trade. While he sewed, Reb Avraham Shmuel reviewed his study of Gemara-Rashi-Tosafos by heart. He did this as fluently as if he were reading it from the text.

When a year passed since he had begun to earn money, he made an exact accounting of his profit, after expenses were deducted. He then set aside one tenth of this amount [for Tzedokah] with great joy.

A NEW TAILOR

They continued living there for three years; in the fourth year they decided to move to Szventzian, the city of Reb Avraham Shmuel's birth. They purchased a small cottage with much surrounding land, where they planted vegetables; his wife had learned to do this as a little girl.

They quickly discovered that sack-stitching was not in great demand in Szventzian, and so Reb Avraham Shmuel learned to be a tailor.

During the twenty years that Reb Avraham Shmuel was away from his hometown, his relatives and friends forgot all about him. The older generation had passed away, and the younger ones had simply forgotten. Some of them had never even known that they had a relative or family acquaintance named Avraham Shmuel, who was the youngest son of the pride of their family, Reb Meir.

Reb Avraham Shmuel, of course, continued to pretend that he was a very simple person, as he

worked his trade. Nevertheless, as time passed, people became aware that - beyond his great righteousness and outstanding sincerity - he was an eminent Talmid Chochom, while his wife excelled in philanthropy and hospitality.

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In Szventzian there lived a man named Reb Moshe Gedaliah, who was versed in the Torah, and a Yorei Shomayim. He made his living by purchasing the produce of the fields from the noblemen who owned the estates surrounding Szventzian. Being very poor, he was compelled to sell what he bought immediately, thus operating at a very low profit margin.

Quite often, he earned no more than a broker's fee.

Reb Moshe Gedaliah had many sons and daughters to support, and his income was not sufficient to cover his many expenses and the tuition for his sons. He certainly could not afford to have new clothing sewn for him. Eventually, his clothes became completely worn out. The noblemen warned him that if he didn't get himself a new suit, they would not allow him on their property. He therefore tried to think of some plan to obtain new clothes. Hearing that a new, G-d-fearing, tailor had moved to Szventzian about three years earlier, he went to seek his advice.

When Reb Avraham Shmuel learned of Reb Moshe Gedaliah's situation, he offered to sew a new suit for him; he could pay for it a little at a time, as much as he could afford. However, it would be several months before he could complete his work on jobs he had previously accepted. He therefore offered to lend him a suit of his own until then, and to alter it to fit him.

Reb Moshe Gedaliah declined to wear a suit that was not his own. Instead, he proposed to Reb Avraham Shmuel that - since the suit was for business wear - he would accept Reb Avraham Shmuel as a partner [to share in the profits].

Reb Avraham



Shmuel declined this offer. But as Reb Moshe Gedaliah refused to accept the suit as a loan, he agreed to sell it to him.

The terms of the sale were that it could be paid out a little at a time, and that he would alter it to fit. Nevertheless, Reb Moshe Gedaliah insisted on paying at least a small amount in cash, and so he pawned the pillow under his head and gave Reb Avraham Shmuel a quarter of a silver ruble as a down payment. He then departed, and Reb Avraham Shmuel blessed him that Hashem should send him success in his business.

THE MIRACULOUS SUIT

Reb Moshe Gedaliah resumed his occupation, making the rounds of the noblemen's estates to buy the produce of their land. While traveling, he would fold his new suit and pack it in his knapsack. When he arrived at a nobleman's court, he would remove his torn suit and put on the new suit before entering to see the nobleman.

On the first day that he visited one of the noblemen, he made such a good impression that the nobleman immediately sold him the produce at the first price Reb Moshe Gedaliah offered. He also agreed to wait a full month for payment, so that he would have time to find a good customer, and thus earn a larger profit.

On the second day, when he approached another nobleman, he had similar success. Here too, he was offered goods at a low price and advantageous terms. Reb Moshe Gedaliah wondered at this, and concluded that the blessing of the G-d-fearing tailor must have been responsible for his success. When he got home, he found good customers, and earned a huge profit.

Little by little, Reb Moshe Gedaliah's income grew. Once, one of the noblemen even sent him to Vilna as his business agent, and he earned an immense sum all at once. After he grew wealthy, he obtained - for his two oldest daughters - sons-in-law who were Torah scholars.

Since he now traveled regularly to Vilna, he bought himself a brand new suit there.⁴

After a few months passed (Reb Moshe Gedaliah was now considered one of the wealthy citizens of Szventzian) he felt that his good fortune had left him,

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and this distressed him greatly. He told his wife that - although they were still well off - he was not having the same success in business as before. He also described what his financial situation had been when he originally bought the suit from the tailor Reb Avraham Shmuel, and the blessing he had received from him.

"How foolish of you!" exclaimed his wife. "Why did you exchange the G-d-fearing tailor's suit for one that you bought in Vilna? It must be that garment which brought you favor and success."

She then went to look for the suit, cleaned and pressed it, and gave it to her husband to put on when needed. Reb Moshe Gedaliah now discovered that it was true: the tailor's suit was responsible for his success in business.

THE NEWS SPREADS

Reb Moshe Gedaliah's wife was a chatterbox; she told the story to her married sisters, and her sisters told their husbands. One of them scoffed at the idea, but the other one took it seriously. He sought out the tailor Reb Avraham Shmuel, and went to see him and ask him to sew a new suit for him. Reb

Avraham Shmuel replied that he was leaving town, and would not have time to sew any new clothes.

Having no other choice, the man begged him at least to give him one of his own suits, and alter it to fit him. Reb Avraham Shmuel agreed to this, and showed him one of his old garments, which found favor in the man's eyes. Three days later, the man returned and took the garment that Reb Avraham Shmuel had altered, and he put it on. Reb Avraham Shmuel blessed him that Hashem grant him success in all his undertakings.

Reb Avraham Shmuel was greatly distressed by the fact that he had been married for many years but was still childless. In fact, his wife had miscarried a number of times.

Reb Avraham Shmuel blamed this on his own Aveiros, and decided to go into exile for one year as Teshuvah. Perhaps Hashem would then take pity upon him and grant him living children. He informed his wife of this plan, and she consented to it. That was why he had told Reb Moshe Gedaliah's brother-in-law that he was leaving town.

From the first day that Reb Moshe Gedaliah's brother-in-law (his name was Reb Baruch Shlomo) put on Reb Avraham Shmuel's garment, he began to have success in business, and he realized that the story he had been told was true.

THE TAILOR DISAPPEARS

Little by little, the story became public knowledge, and multitudes flocked to the tailor's doorstep. To their great disappointment, they discovered that he was gone. This now became the talk of the town: Reb Avraham Shmuel the tailor, the son of the gaon and tzaddik Reb Meir, was himself a hidden tzaddik. People awaited his return with much anticipation.

Meanwhile, Reb Avraham Shmuel went into exile. He fasted constantly, and afflicted his body with severe forms of

self-torment. Since he insisted on supporting himself solely by the labor of his own hands, he would mend clothes in the towns through which he passed.

Once, Reb Avraham Shmuel met a poor man named Reb Mordechai, who was an outstanding Torah Talmid Chochom. Reb Avraham Shmuel was delighted to listen to his Torah discussions and his profound Chiddusim, and he developed a great love for him. But when Reb Avraham Shmuel observed Reb Mordechai's conduct, he discovered that his ways were quite eccentric.

Reb Mordechai refused to accept donations, and made do with whatever he had. Therefore, he concluded that Reb Mordechai was not a wandering beggar, but must be in exile like himself. Thus, he found it strange that he never saw Reb Mordechai afflict himself with self-torments or fasting.

Before each Tefillah, Reb Mordechai would disappear for quite some time. Although Reb Avraham Shmuel articulated each word audibly as he

prayed, Reb Mordechai's prayer took much longer than own. He also spent several hours a day studying by heart: his lips moved, but no sound escaped them.

One day, as they were traveling alone through the countryside, Reb Mordechai told Reb Avraham Shmuel that he wished to prepare himself to daven Minchah. He put down his knapsack and began to walk through the field. When Reb Avraham Shmuel asked where he was going, he replied that he was going to look for a river or stream in which to immerse himself, for it was his habit always to immerse himself before davening, summer or winter. Reb Avraham Shmuel said that he would go along with him, for he wished to take a swim to relieve the heat of the day.

After they had gone some distance, Reb Mordechai saw a brook bubbling a short distance away; he stopped walking and removed his clothes. Reb Avraham Shmuel saw nothing, and looked at Reb Mordechai as if he had lost his mind. Reb Mordechai instructed him to walk back ten paces, and to wait for him there.

When Reb Mordechai returned a short while later, his face and hair were dripping wet, as though he had just emerged from a bath. Reb Avraham Shmuel found this quite amazing, but Reb Mordechai said, "Why are you so astonished? Didn't the Chachamim tell us⁶ that 'If one wishes to purify himself, Heaven comes to his aid'? Now it is known in Heaven that for many years I purify myself before each prayer. Therefore, Hahshem (blessed be He), caused the water to bubble up from the depths of the earth, just so I would be able to immerse myself."

(to be continued...)

1) By Rashbatz. From Links in the Chassidic Legacy. Translated from HaTamim, Issue No. 8, pp. 92-95; 19 Kislev 5698, and from material prepared for Issue No. 9 (which never appeared).

2) This Reb Mordechai may very well have been the great scholar, tzaddik, and kabbalist Reb Mordechai Bayever. See The Making of Chassidim, Sichos In English.

וואס איז שייך אריינטראכטן זיך אין זיין מעמד ומצב, אויף דרויף זיינען פאראן זמנים מיוחדים ווען מ'דארף עס טאן, אבער די איבעריקע צייט איז גלייכער צו טראכטן וועגן רבין, ווי אזוי ער איז תמיד מיט זיינע מקושרים און ווי ער פירט זיי עלכל צעד ושעל. (אג"ק ח"ג ע' תיט)



פירער
מורה

Rambam

יום	ג' פרקים ליום	פרק א' ליום
ו' ג' שבת	הל' טוען ונטען פרק א-ג	הל' עדות פרק כ
ש"ק ד' שבת	פרק ד-ו	פרק כא
א' ה' שבת	פרק ז-ט	פרק כב
ב' ו' שבת	פרק י-יב	הל' ממרים פרק א
ג' ז' שבת	פרק יג-טו	פרק ב
ד' ח' שבת	פרק טז. הל' נחלות פרק א-ב	פרק ג
ה' ט' שבת	פרק יז-יח	פרק ד