



The Mysterious Guests

“Where can I take you gentlemen,” asked the simple, G-d fearing wagon driver of the two distinguished looking Yidden he found standing at the wagon stop in the Baranovitz train station.

Unbeknownst to him, the pair was the Rebbe Rashab and his son the Friediker Rebbe, on their journey back from Vilna where they had been attending a meeting of leading rabbis.

This was late Thursday night. It was clear that they wouldn’t make it back

to Lubavitch in time for Shabbos and so they would be spending the holy day in a local hotel.

There were many choices of wagons, each more luxurious than the other, yet the Rebbe and his son opted for a simple looking one without blankets and material to avoid any concern of *shatnez*.

“Please take us to a hotel,” replied the Rebbe Rashab.

Baranovitz was a transit town for many businessmen so this request was common, however, he

discerned something special about them and offered to host them.

“Please join me for Shabbos,” he insisted. “I have a clean empty room that you can use all for yourselves.”

The Rebbe kindly rejected the offer and insisted that they will stay in the hotel. Upon arrival, the Rebbe paid the man handsomely and wished him well. Before departing, the wagon driver again invited them over. “Please come by on Shabbos morning for a hot drink.

I have a cow that gives us milk. Please join us.” He pointed in the direction of his home and indicated that it was not far from where they were staying.

“My son,” said the Rebbe Rashab on Shabbos morning, “We should go over to the wagon driver’s home and take him up on his offer for a hot drink.”

As they approached the house, they overheard the man reciting Tehillim in a sweet voice. Hearing footsteps approaching, the wagon driver glanced up

לזכות
הרה"ת הרב שלום דוב בער
וזוגתו מרת חיה מושקא שיחיו
לרגל יום נישואיהם -
יום הבהיר ראש חודש כסלו
ולזכות בנותיהם ברכה ליפשא, עליזה
ושיינדל, ובנם מנחם מענדל שיחיו
שוחאט

from his *sefer* and warmly greeted his guests.

He prepared a hot drink of “cholent milk,” milk that had been warming all night on the stove and they spoke together until it was time to leave for shul.

In shul, the Rebbe and his son were greeted warmly and their persona made a considerable impression on the townsfolk, yet no one knew the identities of their guests.

As is customary, the Rebbe and his son were honored with an *aliyah*

and they made a generous pledge to the shul.

The *shamash* of the shul, seasoned in his trade, knew that the many businessmen who came through town would leave quickly after Shabbos so he would make sure to receive any donations that had been pledged before they were gone. As soon as Maariv was over, he went over to the Rebbe Rashab to collect the money that he had committed to giving.

At the same time, another traveler who had frequented the city

of Lubavitch, recognized who these guests were and quickly went over to greet them.

In a loud voice he called out, “This is the Lubavitcher Rebbe and his son!”

A big tumult ensued as the news traveled like wildfire. People quickly gathered around to ask for forgiveness for not having accorded the Rebbe the respect he deserved. They also begged him to stay a few extra days in town and promised to take care of his lodgings with great generosity.

“I can’t stay here any longer,” replied the Rebbe Rashab.

The train pulled into the station and they were on their way.

The Rebbe Rashab did not want to be recognized for the duration of that Shabbos. The train station was large with many travelers coming through and Baranovitz is situated near other large towns. Yet despite all of this, the Rebbe’s will was carried out and his identity was hidden. ❶

(Likkutei Sippurim, Perlow, p. 271)