



A Hat, a Tailor and a Promise.

“Let’s make a deal,” said one Chossid to his fellow. “From here on I won’t say *lchaim* without you and you won’t say *lchaim* without me!”

And so it became their practice; Reb Tuvya the *melamed* and Reb Shmuel the businessman would never say *lchaim* one without the other.

It was Purim and the *lchaim* was flowing freely in the city of Vietka, and indeed at homes of Jews all over, which meant that the Chassidisher pair Reb Tuvya and Reb Shmuel were in close proximity of each other. As the hard liquid took its effects, Reb Tuvya began toying with his friend’s hat; pulling and turning it, twisting and schlepping.

“What do you have with my hat?” Reb Shmuel exclaimed.

There, in the depth of a Purim *seuda*, Reb Shmuel

received a history about hats.

“At first,” Reb Tuvya began, “Yidden would wear round hats without a brim so that it would be easy for them to raise their eyes to our father in heaven.

“After a while, our cursed enemies decreed that we have to only wear hats with a brim in the front (*“kasket”*) so that we wouldn’t be able to turn our eyes heavenward. As terrible as this was, at least there was some comfort in the fact that throughout the day, as Yidden were busy with their daily activities, the hat got pushed around and the brim wasn’t covering their eyes.

“Following this, however, the *satan* grew even more clever and brought about hats with a brim all the way around (the *“shlyapah”* in Russian). And that’s what we have today. He wants to stop up us from looking up to our source of life,” he concluded.

“WHAT DO YOU HAVE WITH MY HAT?” REB SHMUEL EXCLAIMED

The Russian government’s eyes were always open, searching for a new opportunity to complicate the lives of its Jewish citizens, even if it meant taking simple things and turning them into big problems. For this reason, in their war against religion and Yiddishkeit in particular, Czar Nicholai instituted laws even about which hats were legal ware and which were treated as contraband.

Of course there were Chassidim who weren’t influenced or frightened and that is precisely the reason why Reb Hillel Paritcher found himself in a filthy Russian prison cell.

For refusing to wear the designated hat, he was thrown into jail and his acquaintances and fellow

Chassidim began searching for ways to free him.

“The tailor!”

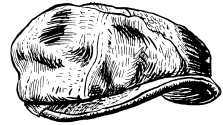
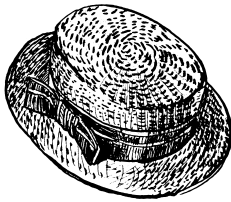
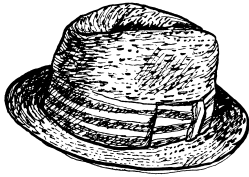
That was the answer.

The tailor of the local governor was very well connected in high places and he agreed, with the aid of a bottle of alcohol, to see that Reb Hillel would be released. The tailor quickly made his way over to the governor’s house and gave his wife the bottle, while convincing her to accompany him to the jail to free the prisoner.

When the tailor stood before Reb Hillel and related to him that he was now a free man, Reb Hillel asked with emotion, “With what can I repay you for this act of kindness?”

The tailor had one but simple request: “I would like to be buried next you,” he said. Reb Hillel assured him

לע"נ
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נלב"ע י"ב אדר ה'תשס"ב
ת'נ' צ' ב' ה'
נדפס ע"י משפחת לענט



that he would be granted this honor.

Throughout the year Reb Hillel would travel through the farmlands and visit the Jewish farmers and their families to encourage them and bring some Yiddishkeit to their busy lives.

These farming colonies had been set up by the Mittlerer Rebbe to help many Jewish families with a livelihood. They served to refute the baseless claims of the Russian anti-semites that the Jews didn't do anything for the country and instead, like leeches, sucked out the money from the hard working peasants.

The Mittlerer Rebbe felt responsible for these farmers and therefore sent shluchim to inspire and infuse them with a spiritual *chayus*.

On one of these journeys to the village of Kherson, in the summer of 5624, on the 11th of Av, the *tzaddik* Reb Hillel was *niftar* and laid to rest in the local cemetery.

Years later, in a way that only the Creator of the world can orchestrate, an elderly man who helped in the shul of Kherson and lived by his daughter, passed away. Even though it was in the middle of the night, members of the Chevrah Kadisha were immediately

summoned to arrange a burial, because it was the custom to never leave a body overnight.

The night was cold and the snow covered most of the landscape, so the first place that didn't have much accumulation of snow was quickly turned into a burial plot for this deceased elderly gentleman.

As the winter months faded and the snow turned into puddles and flowed away, the Jewish community realized that someone had been buried next to the *tzaddik* Reb Hillel; but who was he?

An investigation was immediately on its way and they soon discovered the identity of the man who was interred there and the events of that cold winter night.

They looked into this further and questioned the

daughter about her father's roots. They learnt that he had been a tailor in the city of Paritch and when his wife died he moved to Kherson to be with his daughter so not to live alone.

Still not convinced that this tailor deserved to be buried next to such a *tzaddik*, they sent the details of the story to the rav of Paritch so he could make a decision and verify the facts.

With great amazement to the wondrous ways of Hashem, the rav let them know about the promise of Reb Hillel in return for the bravery that the tailor had shown towards him.

It was clear before one and all how the words of a *tzaddik* were fulfilled. **1**

(Based on the memoirs of
Reb Yisroel Jacobson,
Zikaron Livnei Yisroel
chapter 30)

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