

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Shneur Zalman Fradkin - Baal HaToras Chessed

Born: Adar 5590*

Passed away: 5 Nissan 5662*

Chossid of: The Tzemach
Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash

Reb Shneur Zalman was born in Liadi to Reb Shlomo and Aidel, through a *bracha* the Alter Rebbe gave his maternal grandfather, Reb Dovber. After one of his sons passed away, the Alter Rebbe told Reb Dovber, "I will console you with the fact that a son will be born to your daughter, who will illuminate the eyes of the Yidden."

Young Shneur Zalman turned out to be a wonderchild. At age 11, he had already attained a broad *geonus*, to the point that the Tzemach Tzedek would consult with him with questions about *agunos*. Later, the Tzemach Tzedek instructed his son, the Rebbe Maharash, to receive *semicha* from him. Following the Tzemach Tzedek's *histalkus*, he became *mekushar* to the Rebbe Maharash, and was one of the three *geonim* who crowned him as Rebbe.

In the year 5615*, Reb Shneur Zalman was appointed *rav* and *av beis din* of Polotzk, and in 5628* he moved to become *rav* and *av beis din* in Lublin. During his tenure there, he authored thousands of *teshuvos* and *piskei din* that were sent to people around the world. Some of these were printed in his *sefarim*, Toras Chessed. Reb Shneur Zalman was greatly respected by all. In fact, government ministers would often visit him, due to his reputation and wholesome character. On 19 Tammuz 5652*, the *gaon* moved to Eretz Yisroel and settled in Yerushalayim. While there, he continued to serve the local Yidden.

Child Prodigy

As a young child, Shneur Zalman exhibited phenomenal genius. At the age of six years old he was already well versed in geometry and astronomy. His Torah knowledge grew by leaps and bounds, to the point that the Tzemach Tzedek would sometimes visit him just to witness his exceptional

brilliance. One of his fellow townspeople recalled that at age 10, he was asked how many bricks were in a certain wall. He immediately produced a number, which turned out to be exactly correct.

No Bittul Torah

A Chossid was once traversing the towns and villages with a handwritten letter from the Tzemach Tzedek instructing people to assist him in marrying off his daughters. One of his stops was Polotzk. As soon as Reb Shneur Zalman, the city's *rav*, read the letter, he sprang into action. The *gaon* went from house to house, collecting donations from all the townspeople. When this Chossid returned to Lubavitch and reported to the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe scolded him: What have you done, being *mevateil* Reb Shneur Zalman from *Torah lishmah*!?

Another time, Reb Shneur Zalman's teacher, the *gaon* Reb Eliyahu Yosef of Dribin, wanted to visit Polotzk. The Tzemach Tzedek forbade him from doing so, explaining that his student would surely come out to greet him, and what a shame it would be to take him away from his Torah, which was very important on high.

Photographic Memory

The Frierdiker Rebbe related that Rashbatz (Reb Shmuel Betzalel Sheptel, the Frierdiker Rebbe's teacher) used to sell *sefarim*, yet when Reb Shneur Zalman would ask to look through a *sefer*, he wouldn't allow it. This was because, with his phenomenal memory, Reb Shneur Zalman would memorize the entire *sefer* in a matter of minutes, and he would no longer be interested in buying it. Rashbatz did however rent *sefarim* to Reb Shneur Zalman for five kopeks each.

Torah Lishmah

Rashbatz once entered the *gaon's* room to find him pacing back and forth restlessly, deeply engrossed in his thoughts. After witnessing this for quite a while,

לזכות חבר מערכת
'א חסידישער דערהער'
החתן הרה"ת ר' לוי והכלה המהוללה
מרת מנוחה מינדל שיחיו לברטוב
לרגל נישואיהם כ"ג שבט ה'תשע"ט
נדפס ע"י
משפחת פעלדמאן
פלארידא. טעקסטאס.



Rashbatz asked Reb Shneur Zalman what was going on. He responded with a question: "Do you think that I'm *baki* in *Mishnayos*?" Being quite familiar with the gaon's *bekius*, Rashbatz was taken aback. Reb Shneur Zalman explained that it was his custom to visit the Tzemach Tzedek twice a year. During these visits, he would present the Rebbe with an *inyan* in Torah that he had toiled on for the past half-year. On this occasion, not long after he began relaying his *pilpul*, he heard the Rebbe saying, "Nu nu nu..." At the *pilpul's* end, the Tzemach Tzedek said, "It's a nice Torah, with great logic and all, but its foundation is untrue, as there is a Mishnah that clearly negates the entire concept."

"I was obviously totally baffled hearing this," continued the gaon. "I asked the Rebbe which *seder* the Mishnah is in. The Rebbe answered 'Kadshim.' I thought for a bit, and then admitted that I wasn't sure what the Rebbe was referring to, and perhaps he could tell me the *mesechta*. The Rebbe replied 'Bechoros.' I went through the entire *mesechta* in my mind and could not pinpoint the Mishnah. Only once the Rebbe began reciting and explaining the Mishnah did I realize my error."

The gaon concluded: "I then understood the meaning of *Torah lishmah*."

Hiskashrus through Learning the Rebbe's Torah

Despite his phenomenal memory, Reb Shneur Zalman would spend three hours a day learning the Tzemach Tzedek's Torah. About this he would say that one can't be *mekushar* to a *tzaddik* without a set *limmud* of his Torah.

Yerushalayim

After serving for some 20 years as *rav* in Lublin, Reb Shneur Zalman decided to be *oleh* to Eretz Yisrael and settle in Yerushalayim. Upon his arrival there, he re-established the *beis din* for the local community of Chassidim. He also instituted a separate *shechita* for the Chassidim, who were

careful to only eat *shechita* of those who observed *tevilas Ezra*. He also established a *rabbanus* and *shechita* for the Chassidim in Yafo.

In 5656*, several years after being *oleh* to Eretz Yisrael, Reb Shneur Zalman established *Vaad Mishmeres Hakodesh* in Yerushalayim. This *vaad* dealt with building *mikvaos*, maintaining *eiruvim*, and the like. With the *vaad*, he left his mark on the city.

Erev Yom Kippur Giluyim

The elder Chassidim of Yerushalayim would relate that every Erev Yom Kippur, the Tzemach Tzemach would reveal himself to Reb Shneur Zalman. One Erev Yom Kippur, his wife heard him conversing with someone in his room, despite the fact that he had no visitors at the time. When she entered a few minutes later, her husband, exuding a fiery expression on his face, divulged "My Rebbe was just here..."

His Last Days

In his later years, Reb Shneur Zalman suffered from pains and illness. At the end of Adar 5662*, the gaon surprised his family by stating his opinion about the doctors, which of them was an expert and which wasn't. He then told them, "I can no longer handle this *alma deshikra*." He also shared with them a directive he had received from the Tzemach Tzedek many years earlier: to study 18 *perakim* of *Mishnayos* daily. This way, if he passes away on Erev Shabbos, with the *kevurah* not happening until after Shabbos, he'll have what to review by heart. The following day, the gaon fell deathly ill, suffering for eight days. On Erev Shabbos Kodesh, 5 Nissan, he returned his *neshama* to its Creator. **1**

This article is based on excerpts from Likkutei Diburim, Sefer Hasichos 5691, and Hagaon M'Lublin.