

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Shmuel Gurary

Born: Unknown

Passed away: Adar I, 5681*

Chossid of: The Rebbe
Maharash, the Rebbe Rashab
and the Frierdiker Rebbe

Reb Shmuel Gurary was born to his father Reb Shneur Zalman.

He was a Chossid of the Rebbe Maharash, by whom he was a *yoshev* (one of the newly married *yungeleit* who would sit and learn) for some time, after which he was instructed by the Rebbe Maharash to turn to business. He was later a Chossid of the Rebbe Rashab and of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Once, during a trade fair, a number of rich merchants gathered in an inn. They were all Chassidim of various courts, and of course, each of them told stories of the wonders and miracles done by their particular Rebbe. Reb Shmuel Gurary was present, and when it was his turn to tell a story, he said:

“Once, a business proposition came up for me in the field of timber harvesting and sale. It would require an enormous investment, but could generate a tremendous return if all went well. The risk was great, but so was the potential reward. Of course, I sought the advice of the Rebbe [Maharash]. The Rebbe told me to invest, and that’s what I did. Not long afterwards, the investment fell through and I lost everything I had put into the venture.”

Waiting for a miraculous punchline, the others were surprised that with these words, Reb Shmuel concluded his tale and fell silent.

“What was the miracle?” they asked.”

The miracle is that even after this story I remained a Chossid of the Rebbe, trusting the Rebbe exactly as I did before,” Reb Shmuel explained. “The Rebbe certainly knew I would lose on that investment, and yet the Rebbe told me to invest. Certainly, it was for my benefit. Perhaps a terrible decree faced me or my family, and the Rebbe lightened it by way of me losing money. Perhaps it was for another reason. Either way, it is clear to me that this was a miracle.”¹

In Lubavitch, it didn’t matter who you were in your hometown; here, everyone was equal. Reb Shmuel Gurary was a tremendously learned man, in both *nigleh* and Chassidus. He was wealthy and well-connected with the government. It happened many times that in the midst of meeting with a government official, he would ask their pardon to daven Mincha, the officials acquiescing with respect. Reb Shmuel had a guard at his door who would only allow people in with an appointment, as was customary among the local elite. This very same Reb Shmuel would leave his honor and prestige behind when he came to Lubavitch. In the *zal* in Lubavitch, he would be among the people pushing to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe. There was no trace of Reb Shmuel the well connected magnate, the sage. He was replaced by Reb Shmuel the Chossid, an equal amongst equals. He would stand before the Rebbe with complete *bittul*, like a servant before his master.²

The Rebbe Rashab once needed a large sum of money, in the neighborhood of tens of thousands of rubles. It is likely that this was needed to purchase a house in Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe called in a number of wealthy Chassidim,

לזכות
החייל בצבאות ה'
יעקב יהודה בן הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק
וזוגתו מרת **דבורה לאה** שיחיו
אלוליאן
לרגל הולדתו יום
ב' דר"ח אייר ה'תשע"ט
נדפס ע"י זקיניו
הרה"ת ר' **משה גדול**
וזוגתו מרת **שושנה** שיחיו
טרקסלר



including Reb Shmuel, and told them the amount needed, asking them to work out among themselves how much each would be able to contribute, and to return the next day with a reply.

The *gvirim* began to negotiate among themselves, but could not reach a satisfactory decision. Reb Shmuel, who was troubled by this situation, met the Rebbe during the night and gave him a check for the entire sum. The following morning, when the *gvirim* finally came to an agreement and came to the Rebbe, the Rebbe told them that he no longer required their assistance.³

When World War I broke out, millions of people were displaced from their homes and took to the roads. Reb Shmuel welcomed countless refugees into his home in Kremenchug.

As Sukkos 5679* approached, esrogim were practically impossible to procure throughout Russia. The war was raging and borders were sealed, making the import of esrogim from warmer climes unachievable. There was an exception, however. The Rebbe Rashab, in Rostov, had a single esrog, obtained by Reb Shmuel Gurary, who had been to the port of Odessa, and asked an officer that was travelling to Italy to bring back an esrog. All the Jews of Rostov—whether or not they were members of *anash—bentched* on that esrog.



BICHOL BEISINEMON HU SEFER

When Tomchei Temimim moved to Rostov in the summer of 5679*, Reb Shmuel, who by that time was quite well-to-do, followed the yeshiva there. He was a key financial supporter during this difficult time, making enormous contributions without thought to repayment, even selling personal possessions to raise capital, which he then donated to the yeshiva.⁴

After Tishrei 5680, as the Bolsheviks approached Rostov, Reb Shmuel recommended that the Rebbe leave the country. After initially turning down the offer, the Rebbe eventually agreed, and Reb Shmuel purchased tickets for the Rebbe and for himself to Istanbul, Turkey, across the Black Sea from the port of Rostov. The next day, however, the Rebbe told Reb Shmuel, “At this point, I am not going to travel, and if I’m not going, you’re not going either, because wherever I will be, you will be.”

When the Rebbe Rashab fell ill and Chassidim formed a *beis din* to give years of their lives to the Rebbe, Reb Shmuel joined them. After the Rebbe Rashab’s *histalkus*, Reb Shmuel encouraged Chassidim to be *mekushar* to the new Rebbe, the Frieddiker Rebbe.

Reb Shmuel passed away in Adar I, 5681*, and merited to be buried in the *ohel* of the Rebbe Rashab in Rostov, four *amos* away from the Rebbe’s holy resting place.

“Wherever I will be, you will be.” **📌**

1. Reb Mendel, p. 104
2. From *Shabbos in Lubavitch*, Derher Cheshvan 5779.
3. Eileh Toldos Peretz, p. 675.
4. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 175.