

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Shmuel Michel Treinin

Chossid of: The Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab



KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY

REB SHMUEL MICHEL TREININ.

Reb Shmuel Michel Treinin was a wealthy Chossid of the Rebbe Maharash and later, the Rebbe Rashab. He lived in Petersburg, Russia's capital city and was an activist, dealing with government officials.¹ He owned a foundry which produced railroad ties, and employed many thousands of people. The government had granted him permission to build his factory in the environs of Petersburg, and he became one of three noted activists—the others were Reb Menachem Manis Mozheson and Reb Chaim Mashiaev—who used their time, money and influence on behalf of Russia's Yidden.²

He was wise, insightful and determined. Being called a Chossid meant a lot to him: even when among the secular Jewish elite he would unabashedly identify himself as a Chossid, the son of a Chossid. Among non-Jewish officials as well, he was a proud Yid, always ready with a quick-witted reply about anything regarding the Jewish people.³

He was a supporter of all of the Rebbeim's projects, such as the *yeshivos* Tomchei Temimim and Toras Emes. Reb Zalman Havlin asked that a letter be sent to him detailing the positive effect his support had in Yeshivas Toras Emes.⁴

The Frierdiker Rebbe related that Reb Shmuel was very put-together, and had a serious disposition. As a result, he would always ensure that all of his clothing was perfectly buttoned.

Reb Michoel "Der Alter" Bliner once traveled to Petersburg to lobby for a deferral on behalf of a *bochur* who had been conscripted to the Russian army, so that the *bochur* would be able to learn instead. As a polished and well-connected activist, Reb Shmuel Michel accompanied him to his meeting with an official who held sway in this matter.

Their route led them down Petersburg's main thoroughfare, and Reb Michoel's appearance in Petersburg was exactly the same as in Lubavitch—he had just completed one of the preparations for davening mentioned

in Shulchan Aruch, and some of his buttons were undone. Reb Shmuel Michel turned to him and—trying to maintain the other's dignity—said, "Reb Michoel, we're going down the main road—Nevsky Prospect—perhaps you should button your clothing." Reb Michoel turned his gaze to him and said, "Gevald, Reb Shmuel Michel, what are you focused on?" ("עוואָלד ר' שמואל מיכל, אין וואָס איר ליגט")⁵

The Rebbe Rashab once asked Reb Michoel Der Alter, "What are the needs of a Yid?" Reb Michoel replied, "A plate of soup and some vegetables." The Rebbe then went to Reb Shmuel Michel and asked the same question. Reb Shmuel Michel took out a list and began reading, "A house with ten rooms, a granary, a hay barn, six horses, a winter carriage, a summer carriage," and on and on. The Rebbe Rashab then said to Reb Michoel, "*Petach petach* (fool), listen to what the needs of a Yid are."⁶

During the famous rabbinical conference of 5670* called by the Czarist government in Petersburg, the Rebbe Rashab took a principled stand, calling for *mesiras nefesh* to uphold Torah, mitzvos and *Yiddishe minhagim*, and would not back down. This was despite the fact that the conference had been convened by the government with the intent of weakening traditional Jewish life. For this, the Czarist government immediately arrested the Rebbe Rashab. The efforts of several Chassidim brought about the Rebbe's freedom: Reb Shmuel Gourarie and Reb Shmuel Michel Treinin posted bail, and a certain Mr. Levin, a man of means, pledged his wealth and household as guarantees.⁷

On one of the Rebbe Rashab's visits to Petersburg, Reb Shmuel Michel requested that the Rebbe visit his factory, which the Rebbe agreed to do. They toured the entire factory together, and the Rebbe paid careful attention to every detail. When they had concluded the tour, and the

Rebbe was about to enter the carriage to travel back to the hotel where he was staying, Reb Shmuel Michel asked the Rebbe, "What did you think of the factory and all of its facilities?" The Rebbe answered, "What do you think—why does all of this belong to you? Because I think about you during davening on Rosh Hashanah in Lubavitch."

One of Reb Shmuel Michel's grandchildren once fell ill, and Reb Shmuel Michel wrote a *pan* to the Rebbe Rashab, sending it by post to Lubavitch. He soon received a telegram from the Rebbe asking that he immediately come to Lubavitch for a certain reason. When he arrived and met with the Rebbe, he told the Rebbe about his grandchild's illness, calculating that the letter hadn't yet arrived. The Rebbe answered, "When one sends a *pan*, one is immediately helped."⁸

During one of his *yechidusen* with the Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Michel mentioned that he was spending a lot of money on Lubavitch. The Rebbe replied, "Because of this, I have you in mind."

In general, Reb Shmuel was always punctual in his travels, to the point that instead of waiting for the coach from Lubavitch to fill with passengers, he would pay the coachman for the entire coach so that it would leave on time. Despite this, he once arrived at the train station to find that the train had departed moments before. Trains would only come twice a day, and this meant a considerable delay at the station. Reb Shmuel Michel was quite perturbed, until he later found out that the train he had missed was in a terrible accident, in which there were numerous fatalities. He then understood the Rebbe's words.⁹

During the difficult years of World War I, Reb Shmuel Michel headed a committee that was formed to help the many Jewish refugees, and he was often involved in obtaining draft deferrals for *rabbonim* and *shochtim*.¹⁰ He was one of five Chassidim that Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah consulted with as to whether the Rebbe Rashab should leave Lubavitch during the war.¹¹

Reb Shmuel Michel was very wealthy during the rule of the Czar. When the Communist revolution broke out and

the government nationalized everybody's property, they seized his factories and businesses and he was left poverty-stricken and alone, as his children had fled to France. It was only thanks to Reb Shmuel Nimoytin that he managed to save a large quantity of gold, hidden in the Nimoytins' home.

He was old, broken, and alone, and he asked Reb Shmuel for a corner of the house where he could rest his head. Thus, he lived with them until the end of his life. When the Frieddiker Rebbe would travel to Petersburg for matters relevant to the Jewish community at large, at first as his father's emissary and then as the acting *menahel* of Tomchei Tmimim and as Rebbe, he would go to the Nimoytins' to visit Reb Shmuel Michel. He would say, "I came to visit my grandfather's Chossid."

One time, when the Frieddiker Rebbe visited Reb Shmuel Michel, the children took all the chairs in the house and lined them up and played "train." Some children took pots and banged on them to indicate that the train was leaving. The children had a wonderful time and the noise increased by the minute. Reb Shmuel Michel was an old man and he couldn't bear the racket. He yelled at the children to stop the noise, but the children, being typical children, continued to play noisily. When the Rebbe visited him, Reb Shmuel Michel couldn't concentrate and he got up, went over to the children, and said angrily, "You *shkatzim!* Calm down! The Rebbe is here, have some respect!"

When the Rebbe heard this, he said to Reb Shmuel Michel, "You are my grandfather's Chossid and it is not befitting for you to call Jewish children "*shkatzim*." The Rebbe took candies out of his pocket for each child."¹² **T**

1. Toras Menachem vol. 14 p. 193.
2. Toldos Chabad B'Peterburg p. 33.
3. Otzar Sippurei Chabad vol. 7 p. 308.
4. Hamashpia Havlin p. 76.
5. Toras Menachem vol. 14 p. 193.
6. Teshurah of the Bar Mitzvah of Yehudah Prus p. 50.
7. Otzar Sippurei Chabad vol. 9 p. 302.
8. Shmuos Vesippurim vol. 1 p. 116.
9. Likkutei Sippurim - Chaim Mordechai Perlow p. 283.
10. Toldos Chabad B'Peterburg pp. 91-92.
11. Reshimos Devarim (New Edition) p. 366.
12. Toldos Chabad B'Peterburg p.106.