



A Story for the Shabbos Table

סיפורי הבעל שם טוב

THE BAAL SHEM TOV WARNED, AND THE SEFORIM WERE SAVED

A few weeks ago we printed the story of how the Baal Shem Tov saved Aleinu Leshabeiach through a potter by the name of Reb Chaim Yisroel. We mentioned there that the Deputy Archbishop Mikolski remembered seeing Reb Chaim Yisroel another time, and how his warning came true. This is the story of that time.

It happens to be that Reb Chaim Yisrael the Potter was one of the hidden tzaddikim of the time. No one knew of his comings and goings and no one took particular notice of him. After all, didn't Lvov have hundreds of good simple craftsmen who — to all outward appearances — looked just like him?

Archbishop Demboski in Kamenitz-Podolsk made a decree against the Yidden that all the books of *Talmud* and other holy books have to be burned and that the Yidden have to pay a tax so that the Goyim could fix their place of worship.

The Baal Shem Tov sent Reb Chayim Yisroel as his Shliach to warn the Archbishop Demboski that if he did not take away these decrees, then he would die a sudden death.

Demboski answered with Chutzpah: "Go and tell your master that I don't care about him and his threats."

Demboski had then instructed the head priest to encourage all the other *galochim* to hurry and collect all the holy books of the Yidden and to build a platform in the city square for the public burning.

Furthermore, they were to send out messengers to all the villages around Kamenitz-Podolsk, to tell the people there to come and see and celebrate the burning of the Torah of the Jews, who they hated.

In addition, Demboski said that if by Tuesday, the appointed day, the Yidden did not deliver the tax (to renovate the Goyim's place of worship), Demboski gave permission to all the Goyim to break into the Yidden's houses and stores and to rob and steal to their hearts' desire.

His orders were immediately obeyed. Dozens of willing workers robbed the Shuls and Houses of Study and the Yidische homes of their libraries; others built a grand platform in the city square; and yet others galloped off to spread their joyful news in the surrounding villages. The Yidden of Kamenitz, terrified, held public fasts and davened to Hashem to be saved.

For the next two days, thousands of Goyishe men and women, young and old, streamed into town, excited by the idea of a public burning and being able to rob and steal.

On Tuesday morning Demboski gave orders for the preparation of the woodpile, and with a great ceremony and excitement, he led the official procession that headed towards the public square.

Halfway there, the warning of the Baal Shem Tov came to be, and Demboski suddenly dropped dead.

His colleagues, suddenly worried, realized that it must be that the Hashem of the Yidden had stepped in to protect His Torah from being burned.

[Source: Likutei Diburim Vol 4 Chapter 32 part 3]