



חסידי הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

Reb Shmuel Munkis

This week's story is about Reb Shmuel Munkis. Reb Shmuel is a famous Chassid of the Alter Rebbe. He is known for his wit and humor. But really, Reb Shmuel was much more than this. He was a Chassid who was deeply attached to the ways of Chassidus, and was known for his extreme Ahavas Yisroel. He was very close with the Alter Rebbe and was a Chassid of the Rabbeim after him. He lived a very long life.

In his later years, Reb Shmuel settled in the city of Beshenkovitz. Amongst the Chassidim, he was highly respected, for it was known that he was one of the few people ever chosen by the Alter Rebbe to act as his personal representative (*shadar*).

Because of this, many younger chassidim often came to Beshenkovitz to observe and be inspired by Reb Shmuel, to seek his advice and to learn under his guidance.

Once, a fire broke out in town. The flames leaped from building to building until Reb Shmuel's house also caught fire.

Reb Shmuel was in the *Beis HaMidrash* at the time *farbrenging* with younger chassidim. Suddenly the door burst open and a young man breathlessly told him the unfortunate news. *Baruch Hashem* his family was safe, but his house was aflame and all of his possessions were destroyed.

Reb Shmuel rushed to the scene, followed by his students. When he arrived, he joined in the efforts of all the neighbors who were busily passing buckets of water from a nearby river and throwing them on the flames.

When the fire had at last been brought under control, Reb Shmuel gazed at what remained of his dwelling, which was engulfed in sheets of flames. With no trace of emotion or sign of distress, he watched as his entire house burned to the ground.

Finally he opened his mouth to speak. In a clear voice, filled with joy, he began to pronounce a blessing, "*Baruch Atoh Hashem...*"

"Oh," people thought, "he is going to accept his misfortune by praising Hashem."

"*...Elokeinu Melech HaOlam...*" Everyone expected him to say the concluding words, "*Dayan HaEmes — Blessed is Hashem, whose judgment is truth.*"

But to everyone's astonishment, he finished the blessing with the words, "*Shelo osani goyl — Thank you Hashem ... for not making me a goy!*"

Some people shook their heads. "Poor fellow," they thought. "He must have gone crazy."

Those who knew Reb Shmuel better, suspected that there was more to it; and so, one of the young chassidim boldly approached him and said, "Reb Shmuel, please tell me, why did you say that *brachah* just now?"

"Think for a moment," Reb Shmuel replied. "A religious goy decorates his walls and shutters with his *getchkes*. When his house burns down, his *getchkes* are also destroyed. So what does he have to hold on to? Nothing! How could a person bear such a terrible thing?"

"*Baruch Atah Hashem shelo osani goyl* Thank you Hashem, for not making me a goy. My personal belongings were all destroyed, but I did not lose everything. My Hashem is still here, even after the fire, and He will definitely not forsake me.

"Shouldn't I be extremely thankful?"

[Told by Chassidim, as printed in the book Reb Shmuel Munkis]