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חסידי הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

Reb Yekusiel, the Melamed

Reb Yekusiel of Dokshitz was a Chassid of the Tzemach Tzedek, and later of the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab. He was a very Chassidische Yid. He was a Melamed of small children. He was the first teacher of the Frierdiker Rebbe, and he taught him Alef Bais. The Frierdiker Rebbe speaks a lot about him, and praised the way he taught.

At the end of the lesson, he used to tell the boys stories, from, the Torah, the Midrashim and of Chassidim, and they would listen, looking at his mouth, and catching every word. He was such a good teacher, that years later, the Frierdiker Rebbe still loved him and would go to him to hear stories. He writes that it was from Reb Yekusiel that he got the love and appreciation of Chassidische stories.

Before his Chasunah, Reb Yekusiel went into Yechidus to the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek. From the words of the Rebbe, he understood that the purpose of his Neshama coming down to this world, is to teach Yiddishe children Torah and instill in them Yiras Shomayim. So he decided that he will be a Melamed.

However, his father-in-law, who was also a respected Chassid, and quite rich, thought he would be better off going into business. Then he will make a lot of money, be able to give a lot of Tzedaka, and also he will be able to spend time Davening and learning like a Chassid should. But what could he do? The Rebbe said to be a Melamed?

So the father-in-law went to the Rebbe, and told him all his reasons why he thought that it was not fitting for his son-in-law to become a Melamed.

The Rebbe told him that he was just giving good advice to his son-in-law, but even if he doesn't follow this advice, it will not be considered going against the Rebbe, and he will still be able to be a respected and great Chassid.

The father-in-law returned home happily, and gave Reb Yekusiel money to go to the market in Leipzig, buy a lot of merchandise, and then come back and sell them for a profit, and this will be his start in the business world.

So, Reb Yekusiel went, bought a lot of merchandise and started on his way home. On the way home, with a wagon full of merchandise, suddenly the horse went wild, and the driver lost control. The horse started to race down a hill, and it was going so fast that the wagon tipped from side to side, until the wagon toppled over, and all the merchandise fell on top of Reb Yekusiel, till he was hardly able to move.

Reb Yekusiel was lying there, full of pain, and screaming for help, when he thought about the Rebbe. He realized that the Rebbe was not happy with his decision. True the Rebbe had agreed that he could do this, but from someone like him, the Rebbe expected better. The Rebbe wanted him to be a Melamed.

So as he was lying there, he screamed out "רבי, איך פאלג", Rebbe I will listen to you. רבי "Rebbe, save me." After a little while, help came, and Reb Yekusiel was able to get out from under the wagon, and return home.

Needless to say, Reb Yekusiel did not try to continue in business, but started keeping what the Rebbe had told him personally, and he became a Melamed of little children. He was very successful, as can be seen from what the Frierdiker Rebbe says about him. Even when he was in his seventies, he was able to relate to 4 or 5 year old children, and teach them.

[Heard from Reb Mendel Futerfas. Printed in Chassidim Horishonim]