



חסידי הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

The Rashbatz - Reb Shmuel Betzalel Sheftil

The Rashbatz was a very famous Chassid of the Tzemach Tzedek, and later of the Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab. He was a Gaon in Nigleh and in Chassidus. When the Rebbe Rashab was ten years old, the Rashbatz learned Chassidus with him for two hours every morning before Davening. After the the Friediker Rebbe's Bar Mitzvah, the Rebbe Rashab asked Rashbatz to become his private tutor, and they learned together for six years. After that, the Rashbatz became a Mashpiya in the Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch, a position he kept until his passing in 5665.

In next week's HaYom Yom it says, Many Chassidim considered the day they came to Lubavitch as their birthday, and the Rebbe brings an example from the Rashbatz. Here is the story about it.

The Rashbatz was not born as a Chassid. When he was about fifteen years old, he got to know the Chassidim in his home town - Shvintzian, and he decided to join them and become a Chassid. *(The whole story how he became a Chassid is a long interesting story, which was printed in HaTamim, and translated into English in "Links in the Chassidic legacy").*

After a period of time learning with the local Chassidim, it was decided that Rashbatz should move on to learn in the Yeshiva in Lubavitch. (This was in the days of the Tzemach Tzedek).

However, before he could go to Lubavitch, he would have to spend some time with an older Chassid - a Mashpiya, who would train him in learning Chassidus, and in acting according to the way Chassidus teaches, in preparation for his first Yechidus with the Rebbe.

The Chassid that Rashbatz went to was Reb Michel Opotzker. Rashbatz stayed by him for about two years, and then Reb Michel told him that he had given him all he can, and now he is ready to go to Lubavitch, to the Rebbe. Reb Michel then gave him a letter in a sealed note to take to the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, and Rashbatz went on his way.

When he finally arrived in Lubavitch, it was early morning of Friday Parshas Mishpotim, several hours before morning. He went into the Rebbe's Shul, sat down next to the stove, and soon fell asleep (as he was exhausted from his long journey).

Suddenly, he woke up, hearing the name of his teacher Reb Michel. An elder Chassid was saying, "Where is the fellow who came here with a note from Reb Michel Opotzker?" Rashbatz went to the man and said, "It is I who brought the note."

The man rebuked Rashbatz saying, "Why didn't you answer me the first time? I've had to call you three times without a reply. Follow me! The Rebbe wants you to come to his room."

By then it was already morning and Rashbatz went into the Rebbe's room to deliver the note. This was the first time that the Rashbatz saw the Tzemach Tzedek.

From then on, Rashbatz considered this day as his Chassidishe Yom Huledes. Every year, he would stay up that night (Thursday night of Parshas Mishpatim) and he would make sure to put on Tefillin at exactly the same time that he entered the Tzemach Tzedek's room for the first time.

[Based on the Reshima in HaTamim and HaYom Yom of Lamed Shevat]