



חסידי הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

Reb Shneur Zalman of Lublin, the Toras Chessed

The Chossid, Reb Shneur Zalman of Lublin, known also as the Lubliner Gaon, is called the Toras Chessed after the name of his Sefer, He was a world-renowned Gaon. And the Rebbeim praised his learning. The Tzemach Tzedek used to invite him to judge his Dinei Torah with him, and also gave him Shaylos to look at (this started when he was only 11 years old). Every day he used to spend three hours learning the Torah of his Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek and he said that you can not have hiskashrus to Tzadikim without learning their Torah. He also used to review 18 Perakim of Mishnayos Baal Peh every day, according to a Horaah the Tzemach Tzedek gave him.

He was a rav in Polotsk, and then in Lublin. In his later years he moved to Yerusholayim, and became famous there. People used to come to him for Brachos, Besides for his greatness in learning, he was a big Chassid, totally Botul to the Rebbeim.

Twice a year, the Toras Chessed used to go to the Tzemach Tzedek. He knew that the Rebbe has great Nachas when he presents a Pilpul in learning with Chidushim in Torah that he had thought of. So each time he entered the Rebbe's room for Yechidus, he would say a new Pilpul.

One time, he started saying his Pilpul as usual, bringing down different Gemoros and explaining new ideas. When he finished the Rebbe told him, "This was a nice pilpul. The Sevoros (Ideas) you said were very good. There is only one problem. Your Pilpul is based on something that is against a clear Mishna."

The Toras Chessed knew the entire Mishnayos by heart, but he did not know what the Rebe was referring to, so he asked the Rebbe which Seder of Mishnayos it is in. The Tzemach Tzedek answered, Seder Kodashim. The Toras Chessed thought a bit, and then said, "I still don't know which Mishna the Rebbe is referring to. Can the Rebbe please tell me which Masechta it is in?"

The Rebbe answered: Masechta Bechoros. The Toras Chessed reviewed the entire Masechta in his mind but still did not know which Mishna. So, the Tzemach Tzedek started to say the Mishna and explain it. Then, the Toras Chessed realized what his mistake was, and the proper way of learning that Mishna.

He said afterwards: At That time I saw and felt what Torah Lishma (just for the sake of connecting with Hashem) is.

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Another time, when the Toras Chessed was in Lubavitch, a very complicated Shayla was brought to his house in Polotsk. This shayla was already brought before 2 great Poskim of the time, and no one could answer it. Since he was in Lubavitch at that time, his family sent the Shayla to him in Lubavitch. Upon receiving this difficult Shayla, the Toras Chessed brought it to the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Tzemach Tzedek told him to come back the next morning. When he came back, the Tzemach Tzedek showed him a Gemoro Yerushalmi, from which you could work out the answer to this Shayla.

The Toras Chessed was so shocked (that he forgot about this clear Gemoro) that he fell and fainted. The Tzemach Tzedek revived him and told him, "It's Okay, Even a Gaon can forget a Yerushalmi." But in order to make him feel better, the Rebbe promised him that from now on, he will not have to search through Seforim, but rather he will be able to find what he is looking for right away.

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