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חסידים הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

Reb Meir Simcha Chein of Nevel

Reb Meir Simcha Chein was the grandson of the famous Chossid, Reb Peretz Chein. He was orphaned at a young age, and after his father passed away, he went to live with his grandfather, from whom he learnt a lot in Torah and how to be a Chossid. After his Chasunah, upon the advice of the Rebbe Rashab, he went into business and was very successful. This did not take him away from his learning and davening. In fact he would get up in the morning, learn Chassidus and daven Baarichus and would only get to work at 4:00 in the afternoon. He gave a lot of Tzedaka and supported the Yeshiva that was in his city. His house was a house where there were always Chassidische Farbrengens. He was very Mekushar to the Frierdiker Rebbe and after the Rebbe left Russia, he told him that he must stay and strengthen the Chassidim in his town – Nevel.

THE “FROZEN” A GUTE VOCH

Reb Meir Simcha was raised in his grandfather's house. During the long winter nights, he used to sit for hours and learn Torah. One Motzei Shabbos during the winter, he sat down to learn after Havdalah. After a few hours of learning, he had to look something up in another Sefer. This sefer was in his grandfather's study, so that is where he went. He opened the door, and went straight to the bookshelf to get the sefer he needed. He was still thinking about his learning, and he did not greet his grandfather, who was in the room, with “A Gute Voch”. His grandfather realized this, and was upset that he did not have the proper Derech Eretz. So his grandfather told him, “It seems like it is so cold and freezing outside that your “Gute Voch” got frozen too and was not able to come out of your mouth.”

Reb Meir Simcha realized that he had done wrong for not greeting his Zeide when he went in to his room, and from then on, was very careful about this.

Years later, he would tell this story to the Bochorim in Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim.

THE REBBE DOES NOT FORGET

Reb Meir Simcha was very Mekushar to the Frierdiker Rebbe. He used to go to him three times a year, for פורים, תשרי, and תמוז. When the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia, Reb Meir Simcha was very broken that he would not be able to be with the Rebbe physically. Even when the Rebbe was still in Russia, he used to write and receive letters from the Rebbe, and this continued also later, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was in Riga and Poland.

The Rebbe used to end each letter with a Bracha for אריכות ימים ושנים טובות – long and good days and years. In one of the last letters he got from the Rebbe, the word שנים (years) was missing. Reb Meir Simcha realized this, and told his family that it seems that this is the last year of his life. They tried to calm him down, and said that it just so happened that the Rebbe did not write שנים, but it does not mean anything. He answered them, “The Rebbe does not forget.” And in fact, that year was the last year of his life.

[Taken from Chassidim Horishonim]