

A Chassidic Story (#16)

written by Ozer Bergman
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With God's help I hope—and pray—to visit the *kever* (grave site) of the Rebbe, Reb Zushia of Anipoli this week. So here's a story, fairly well-known in chassidic circles, about the Rebbe, Reb Zushia and the *parshah* (weekly portion) we read this morning, Bereishis.

The Rebbe, Reb Zushia once asked his brother the Rebbe, Reb Elimelekh of Lizhensk, "Dear brother. It's written in the holy books [i.e., Kabbalistic works] that all the souls of Israel were part of Adam, the first human being. That means you and I were among them, and that we were with him when he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 3:6). Why didn't we stop him?!"

The Rebbe, Reb Elimelekh answered, "Dear brother. We were forced to allow him to eat. The Serpent's lie and slander were lodged in Adam's heart. The serpent said (Genesis 3:5):

' "Your eyes will be opened and you will be like Go, knowing good and evil"—you will be able to create worlds, just as He did after eating from this tree.'

"If we had stopped him, Adam would always have had in his

heart the nagging suspicion that the Serpent was right. We let Adam eat so that he would see for himself that it was all lies and bluff. Even after eating from it, he was just a human being and nothing more."

May the merit of the tzaddikim protect us and all Yisrael.
Amen.

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