

A Chassidic Story (#17)

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The Baal HaTanya, the founder of Lubavitch Chassidus, once wrote a letter to the Rebbe, Reb Zushia of Anipoli. In the heading of the letter, he addressed the Rebbe, Reb Zushia as *sar haTorah*, “the prince of the Torah.” His chassidim questioned about that. “Rebbe, it’s true that the Rebbe, Reb Zushia is a great tzaddik and one of the most devout people on the face of the earth. But *sar haTorah* is reserved for those who are extremely well-versed in the revealed Torah, which the Rebbe, Reb Zushia is not.”

The Baal HaTanya replied, “I will tell you a story.”

One morning, we talmidim (disciples) of the Magid of Mezritch were discussing the meaning of a passage in the Zohar. The discussion became quite heated with people strongly stating their interpretations.

The Rebbe, Reb Zushia was there, but wasn’t involved in the discussion. He hadn’t yet davened Shachris (prayed the morning prayers). He was pacing in and out of the shul, involved in his preparations. Finally, he stopped and asked, “What’s all the commotion about?” We told him and he asked us to show him the piece of Zohar under discussion. We did and he said, “Be quiet for a bit and don’t disturb me.”

He sat down with his chin resting on his hand. After a few minutes he stood up and gave a beautifully sweet explanation that was immediately accepted by everybody. It was as if his interpretation had been given at Sinai. We asked him where he got it from.

“Listen. I’m trying to daven and you’re distracting me. So I made an aliyas neshamah (ascent of the soul) to ask Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai [author of the Zohar] the meaning, and he told me so that I would be able to daven.”

“So you see,” concluded the Baal HaTanya, “he really is a *sar haTorah!*”

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

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