

I Give, You Give

written by Chaim Kramer

April 25, 2022



The legendary Polish Breslover chassid and tzaddik, R' Ben-Zion Apter, lost his entire family during the Holocaust. Somehow he survived and immigrated to Israel, where he was a favored guest in the courts of many great Chassidic rebbes.

In his later years, he would go to weddings and other celebrations to collect money for the poor, even though he lived in dire poverty himself. A skilled *badchan* (wedding entertainer), R' Ben-Zion would sing and dance, invent rhymes in Yiddish and pretend to play the violin, holding an invisible bow across his outstretched beard. He was truly “one who wants to give, and wants others to give” (Avot 5:13).

Once he entertained a wedding party that included David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion laughed at the old chassid's antics until tears came to his eyes.

"For me, a good laugh is a rare and precious thing," Ben-Gurion confessed. "How can I repay you for this?"

"Ich hob tzuris mit di tzeyner – I have troubles with my teeth," the *badchan* answered, gesturing comically at his poorly-fitting, false teeth to indicate the legitimacy of his request.

Ben-Gurion immediately gave R' Ben-Zion his dentist's business card and promised to make all the necessary arrangements right away.

Some time later, after receiving the finest dentures available, R' Ben-Zion also incorporated this into his routine. "Look!" he would tell everyone, pointing to his mouth. "These are Ben-Gurion's teeth!"

Heard from R' Akiva Greenberg, who, as a young yeshivah student, attended R' Ben-Zion Apter