

Chassidic Honesty

Penniless as always, patient as always, **Reb Zusya of Hanipoli** knew no rest – and now his wife was nagging him for a new dress. In the end he had no option but to somehow put together the money needed; he bought the material, and handed it to his wife to give to the tailor. Now, surely, he would enjoy some peace and quiet. But when Friday came, he saw clouds gathering over the features of his *rebbetzin*.

“What is troubling you?” he asked. “After all, you now have a new dress, thank G-d, haven’t you?”

The *rebbetzin* told him that when the tailor had brought her the finished garment, he had let out a deep sigh. When she asked him what lay behind it, he had told her that when the young man who was to marry his daughter had seen him sewing a dress he had assumed that it was for his bride; when he had discovered that it was not, he was so angry that the poor tailor was sorely distressed.

“So,” concluded the *rebbetzin*, “I immediately took the dress and gave it to the tailor as a gift for the bride, poor thing.”

“But did you pay him for his work?” asked Reb Zusya.

“No,” answered his wife, “but I gave the whole dress as a gift!”

“How on earth could you ever consider cheating the man of his wages?” protested Reb Zusya. “The whole week long this pauper has been working for you, and for you alone, not for his daughter. He has been waiting anxiously, eagerly, to finish this job, so that he will be able to receive his payment and buy bread for his little ones. What is the poor man going to do now? Is it his fault that you decided to give the dress to his daughter?”

The *rebbetzin* set out at once, borrowed a little money, and paid the tailor his wages.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *A Treasury of Chassidic Tales* (Artscroll), as translated by R. **Uri Kaploun** from *Sipurei Chasidim* by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Meshulam-Zusya of Anapoli** [of blessed memory: ? - 2 Shvat 5560 (?-Jan. 1800 C.E.)], was also a major disciple of the *Maggid*. The seemingly unsophisticated but clearly inspired “Reb Zusha” is one of the best known and most beloved Chassidic personalities. He and his famous brother, the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk, spent many years wandering in exile, for esoteric reasons.

*Connection:* The Weekly Reading of *Pekudei* (and of previous week, Vayakel) feature the craftsmanship and output of the inspired Jewish workers to build the Sanctuary (Mishkan)