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Do Not Disturb...Unless...

1) The Gold Fifteen-Ruble Coin

Reb Avrohom Yitzchok, the regular *shamash* (attendant), of the Sochatchov Rebbe, was once called to Warsaw for an important matter. Reb Moshe David ("Duvid'l") temporarily served in his place and tended to the Rebbe's needs.

Early one morning, the Rebbe approached Reb Moshe Duvid'l and told him, "Quick! Bring me some water to wash. But hurry, the air is now pristine and clean of all sins and crimes and from all worldly desires. It is an opportune time to learn *Torah*. Take care that no one disturbs me at all. No one! Even if a person should come with a golden crown, do not bring him before me."

And so the *tzadik* sat himself down to learn, aflame with the fire of Torah.

Soon after, a person arrived in modern dress, clean-shaven and wearing a short jacket, and asked to see the Rebbe.

Moshe Duvid'l laughed. "Right now you want to see the *Rebbe*? The Rebbe expressly forbid me to admit anyone this morning."

But then, the guest offered him fifteen gold rubles for his trouble, a vast sum. Moshe Duvid'l was awestruck. He took the gold fifteen-ruble coin, entered the Rebbe's study and told him what had transpired, showing him the coin he stood to earn.

The Rebbe wondered aloud, "What? You can really earn such a vast sum through me? Bring him in! Just remember: three minutes and no more."

Moshe Duvid'l pocketed the coin and brought the guest before the Rebbe. He waited. After about ten minutes, he could no longer hold back and came in to extricate the man from the *Rebbe's* room. What he heard was the Rebbe telling him, "Remember to fulfill these three things that I said, and she will have a salvation!"

The man left. The Rebbe, of course, did not disclose to Moshe Duvid'l what they had spoken about.

One day in the following year, Moshe Duvid'l happened to be in Kalisch. A Chasidic-looking, bearded Jewish stranger in a long frock-coat approached him and asked, "Do you come from Sochatchov?" When he applied in the

affirmative, the stranger asked further, "And do you sometimes attend to the *Rebbe*?"

"Yes," answered the bewildered Moshe Duvid'l, whose astonishment only grew when the Jew grasped him warmly and said, "If so, you must come to my house to celebrate with us and enjoy a fancy meal."

So saying, he steered Moshe Duvid'l to his home. When the stranger entered, he ordered his wife to quickly prepare a lavish feast. "For the man who saved your life – here he is!"

And so it happened that the bearded, long-froked host was none other than the formerly beardless, short-jacketed stranger, who had once paid Moshe Duvid'l handsomely to get in to see the *Rebbe*. He explained that his wife had been very sick, almost at death's door, and he had traveled to Sochatchov to seek the *Rebbe's* blessing and advice.

Among the three things that the *tzadik* had told them to do to save his wife's life was to transfer his sons from the modern schools into the traditional *cheder* (Torah-based elementary school). At first, his wife had resisted, but eventually she agreed, and as soon as she did, she got better and better. "And now she is as fit as a fiddle and healthy as can be!"

They gifted Moshe Duvid'l handsomely and sent him off in style.

Such was the love for his fellow Jews of Rabbi Avraham Bornstein the Sochatchov *Rebbe*. In order that Moshe Duvid'l earn a nice tidy sum, the *tzadik* gave up a precious ten minutes of his holy morning learning.

2) Not Even the Rain

Just how precious that time was can best be illustrated by two brief stories:

Once, RebGronim, the Shabbat Torah-reader for his rebbe, the *Sefas Emes* of Gur, told of how he had visited the Sochatchover for *Sukkos* when he still lived in Kroshnivitz. He was the *Rebbe's* guest and he slept in the *Rebbe's* *sukka*.

"The *Rebbe* himself made the bed and patted down the sheets and blankets to guarantee a comfortable and warm repose. I lay down to sleep and the *Rebbe* sat down to learn, aflame with excitement and devotion.

The *Rebbe* kept checking to see I was asleep, so I made myself as if I were sleeping. Just then torrential rain began to fall. It was so strong and buffeted the *sukka* so hard that the floor was already full of water. I peeked out and saw the *Rebbe* approach the window in the *sukka*. He opened it and called out, "What *chutzpa* (disrespect) these clouds have, that they dare disturb me and interfere with my learning!"

No sooner had the *tzadik* uttered this admonishment, than the rain stopped and the clouds discontinued their downpour!" See how precious the Sochatchover's *Torah* study was in the Heavens!

3) Better Than a Blessing

It is a well-known fact among all who came to Sochatchov that the Rebbe would often say, "If people only knew and realized what good favors I could accomplish for them through my *Torah* study, no one would ever dare cross my threshold again [to ask for a blessing]."

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*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the translation of ??? (embarrassed apologies – my records are incomplete) from *Abir HaRo'im*, Volume II, pp. 283, 288, 291–292.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Avraham Bornstein of Sochatchov** [5600 - **11 Adar A**, 5670 (Oct. 1839 – Feb. 1910 C.E.)] was a descendant of the *Ramah* and the *Shach*. Years before his bar mitzvah he was recognized as a Torah genius. At age 13, he married a daughter of the Kotzker Rebbe, with whom he learned almost daily for nearly 7 years, until the latter's death, whereupon he became a follower first of his uncle, R. Yitzchak-Meir of Ger, and then of R. Chanoch-Henech of Alexander. Already a leading authority in Jewish law, in 1883 he became the rebbe of thousands of chasidim and the founder of the Sochatchover dynasty. His writings include the classic, *Avnei Nezer* (seven volumes of posthumously-published responsa), and *Eglei Tal* (on the laws of Shabbat). He was succeeded by his only son, R. Shmuel (1856-1926), author of *Shem MiShmuel*.

*Connection:* Seasonal—109<sup>th</sup> yearzeit of the *Avnei Nezer* rebbe.