

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <editor@ascentofsafed.com>
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The Final Word

It was with heavy hearts that a group of senior chasidim assembled in the home of their master, **Rabbi Zvi-Elimelech of Dinov, the “Bnei Yissaschar”**. Their rebbe had fallen ill, and it was understood that his moments were numbered. They joined his children and grandchildren to be with him in his closing hours of physical life, and perhaps hear some final instruction from their mentor and guide.

The rebbe’s eyes were closed, and a medley of awe and ecstasy played upon his holy face. “Our master is spending his last minutes in communion with his Maker,” they all thought; “how selfish of us to assume that he would have something to say to us at this time!”

Suddenly, the rebbe’s eyes opened and began to search the small crowd. Finally his glance rested on a man who was standing to one side. The chasidim made way for this man, and gently propelled him toward the rebbe’s bedside.

“Reb Shmuel,” the chasidim heard the rebbe inquire, “what is it that you wanted to ask?”

“Rebbe,” said the man, whom no one recalled ever having seen before, “the wool that I purchased . . . what shall I do?”

“Don’t worry, Reb Shmuel,” said Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech. “Wait until next winter. The price will rise, and you will make a handsome profit.”

The rebbe’s eyes closed. Soon after, his soul departed to its heavenly abode.

In the days that followed, the chassidim hotly debated the significance of their rebbe’s final words. The mysterious “wool merchant” had disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared; certainly, he must be one of the thirty-six “hidden *tzadikim*,” or perhaps Elijah the Prophet? Various theories were offered on the Kabbalistic meanings of “wool,” “winter” and “handsome profit.”

Word of these deliberations reached the ears of Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech's son, Rabbi Dovid. "You are mistaken," he said. "There is no mystery here, no hidden meaning, only a profound expression of my saintly father's love for every Jew.

"Reb Shmuel is a simple merchant, who would often come to seek Father's counsel and blessings regarding his business affairs. Recently he had bought a large quantity of wool, after which its price had dropped sharply; the poor man faced the loss of all his assets, as well as huge debts for the sums he had borrowed to make the purchase. He rushed to Dinov to seek my father's advice.

"Upon his arrival, he followed the crowd into Father's room, unaware of why we had assembled. Father, although in his final moments, sensed the presence of a Jew in need and considered it his highest priority to assure him that all would be well."

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Source: Lightly edited by Yerachmiel Tilles from the excellent-as-always rendition of R. Yanki Tauber, originally prepared for *Week in Review*, an innovative Chabad publication in the 90's, and now currently posted on [chabad.org](http://chabad.org).

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Zvi-Elimelech Shapira of Dinov** (1785 - 18 Teves, 1841) was the nephew of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk and disciple of the "Seer" of Lublin and of Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, and a renowned Torah scholar and Chasidic master in his own right. He is best known for his scholarly and mystical work, *Bnei Yissaschar*, which includes a chapter for each month of the year.

*Connection:* Seasonal -- 18 Tevet (Shabbat, Jan. 2) is the 180th *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Zvi-Elimelech Shapira, the "***Bnei Yissaschar***."