

The Magid of Dubno

Ed. note: This column usually has a story on the weekly sedra - written and organized by Rabbi Chanan Morrison. The entries for To-I'dot have appeared on PhiloTorah last year and the year before. So I took this opportunity to borrow from Wikipedia about the Maggid.

Yaakov ben Wolf Kranz of Dubno (1741–1804), the Dubner Maggid, was a Lithuanian (Belarus)-born preacher (maggid).

The Dubner Maggid is famous for his fables and parables designed to teach or illustrate an instructive lessons based on Jewish tradition. The most famous fable of the Dubner Maggid is about the way in which he was able to find such fitting fables. When asked about this the Maggid replied: Once I was walking in the forest, and saw tree after tree with a target drawn on it, and at the center of each target an arrow. I then came upon a little boy with a bow in his hand. "Are you the one who shot all these arrows?", I asked. "Yes!" he replied. "Then how did you always hit the center of the target?" I asked. "Simple", said the boy: "First I shoot the arrow, then I draw the target."

...He left Dubno for Vilnius at the request of the famous Vilna Gaon,

who, having recently recovered from a sickness and being unable to study, sought diversion in his conversation.

Kranz was considered to be unrivaled preacher. Possessed of great eloquence, he illustrated both his sermons and his homiletic commentaries with parables taken from human life. By such parables he explained the most difficult passages of the Tanach, and cleared up many perplexing questions in Halacha. He was also an eminent rabbinical scholar, and on many occasions was consulted as an authority.

Confronted with imposters there were several tests that Kranz would go through to prove he was the true Maggid, opening the Tanach at random, and inventing parables on the spot.

All of Kranz's works were published after his death...

Several parables never published till modern times, but passed on orally in the family, have been written down by Moshe Kranc, a descendant of the Dubner Maggid, in a book about business and Jewish tales: "The Hasidic Masters' Guide to Management".