

Rabbi Zusya of Anipol

In the Hasidic world of Eastern Europe, in the late eighteenth century, there lived a sage by the name of Rabbi Zusya of Anipol. He was loved by all who knew him for his piety and his humility.

As he grew old and feeble, and realized that death was near, he became agitated. His disciples said to him, "Master, you have lived an exemplary life. Surely God will reward you for it. Why do you tremble at the prospect of death?"

He answered them: "When I stand before God, He may say to me, 'Zusya, why were you not another Moses?' And I will have an answer for Him. I will say to Him, 'Master of the Universe, You did not grant me the greatness of soul that You granted to Moses.'"

"Should God then ask me, 'Zusya, why were you not another King Solomon?' I will say to Him, 'Because You did not bless me with the great wisdom required to be another King Solomon.'"

Zusya hesitated, then whispered, "But alas, what do I say to Him if He asks me, 'Zusya, why were you not Zusya? Why were you not the person I gave you the ability to be?'"