

ONCE UPON A CHASSID

FESTIVALS

Stories and Anecdotes
told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe,
his predecessors, and their chassidim.
Arranged in conjunction with the festivals of the year.

By **Michoel Green**

Reprinted for Parshat Mikeitz - Chanukah, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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Light Lover

In contrast to the candelabra of the Temple which stood indoors and was lit before dark, the Chanukah lights are to be kindled after nightfall and should be facing the street. Whereas the former had a fixed number of lights, the Chanukah menorah begins as one candle and increases from day to day. Herein lies the bright message of the Festival of Lights: we cannot suffice with the light of our own homes, but must seek to illuminate the darkness of the world around us with the ever-increasing light of Torah, thereby kindling the flame of every Jewish soul.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Light Lover

“The Baal Shem Tov loved light,” said Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch at an informal gathering with chasidim, “so his disciples made sure that the room was well-lit whenever they expected their Rebbe. On one occasion, he was due to arrive shortly, yet only a single candle could be found. Knowing how much their master appreciated light, they were aggrieved that they would not be able to provide the illumination he so enjoyed.

Once Upon A Chassid

“When the Baal Shem Tov finally entered the room, he remarked with a tinge of dissatisfaction: ‘A Jewish home ought to be suffused with light. This is my life’s calling – to shed some light into the lives of Jews.’

“The disciples sadly replied that they could not find more than one candle.

“Yet the chassidic founder was resolute. ‘Go outside and collect the icicles that hang from the roof,’ he instructed. ‘You may light them in place of the candles.’ The disciples obeyed and vertically arranged the icicles about the room. Once ignited, the ice miraculously burned like wax, flooding the house with a resplendent light.”

Rabbi Menachem Mendel fell silent. After humming a pensive melody, he said aloud: “For the Baal Shem Tov’s followers, ice burned and gave forth light. Today’s chassidim sit in well-lit and well-heated houses – they may even possess keen knowledge of Chassidism – yet it is cold and dark.”

Years later his grandson, Rabbi Shalom DovBer, related this narrative and commented: “My grandfather sought to enkindle the enduring flame within the souls of his chassidim, so that they too become self-galvanized bearers of light. For this is the task of the chassid, even if he finds himself in the darkest and remotest corners of the world – to illuminate his home and surroundings with the radiance of Torah.

* * *

Light Lover

On a different occasion, Rabbi Menachem Mendel said of his grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi:

“My grandfather’s Divine service was so radiant that his nights literally shined like days. If only our days would at least resemble his nights...”

Source:

Sefer Hasichos Kayitz 5700 (Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, summer of 1940), p. 174;
Sefer Hasichos 5705 (Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok, 1945), p. 118.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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When one is totally immersed in a certain subject, it's human nature when encountering another topic to immediately search for and find the connection with that subject in which he is immersed, even though this other topic has its own issues and critical features.

As Jews -- particularly in the end of the period of exile (after the passing of all the deadlines¹ and after my sainted father-in-law testified that we have already done *Teshuvah* and that all the necessary efforts have been completed) -- "we are totally immersed" in "awaiting for him every day that he will come."² Throughout each and every day we wait and yearn for the true and complete Redemption.

And, inasmuch as Jews are passionately involved with the coming of Moshiach, it is reasonable that in all matters we should search primarily for their association with our awaiting every day that he will come.

Applying this to a timely theme:

As we stand in the days of Chanukah -- though a multifaceted Holiday -- we ought to emphasize primarily its connection with Redemption.

This festival was instituted because of the miracle with the cruse of oil involved with the kindling of the menorah in the *Beis HaMikdosh* [Temple]. Afterwards, the Hasmoneans dedicated the Temple ("They cleared Your Sanctuary and purified Your Holy Temple"). Mention of the Temple is an immediate reminder of the Redemption, and serves

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. The text of "Ani Ma'amin - I believe" (Printed in several editions of the prayer book) based on the language of *Chabakuk* 2:3. *Commentary on the Mishneh* by Rambam, *Sanhedrin*, Introduction to chapter "Chelek," 12th Principle.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

to enhance our anticipation for his coming every day, the building and dedication of the third *Beis Hamikdosh* and the lighting of the Menorah by Aaron the High Priest, which will occur with the true and complete Redemption by our righteous Moshiach.

...Similarly with respect to the Torah reading of the Shabbos of Chanukah. During the Torah reading, as soon as a Jew hears and comprehends the word "*Mikeitz* - the End," he exclaims, "Aha! This is an allusion to the end of exile, referred to as the "end of days - *Kaitz Hayamim*" [spelled with a final mem which connotes the end of exile], as well as "the end of days - *Kaitz Hayamin*" [spelled as it is in the end of the book of Daniel, with a final nun³ which connotes] the deadline for the Redemption!

And afterwards, when one reads or hears the Haftorah (the selection of the prophets read weekly after the Torah reading) which states, "I beheld the Menorah, entirely of gold,"⁴ one senses immediately a reference to the future Redemption!⁵

Likewise, upon reading about the *Nesi'im* [princes] and the *Nasi* [prince] of the tribe of Reuvein [Jacob's first born son] in particular, a Jew is reminded forthwith of the true and complete Redemption, at which time all the *Nesi'im* will be present, and the status of the Jewish People as the "first born child" of the whole world will be manifest.

Moreover, the fourth light of Chanukah, is an immediate reminder of the "fourth [and final] Redemption," when the most complete G-dly manifestations will extend to all four directions of the world.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz,
Shabbos Chanukkah, 5751)*

3. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of our Parsha. See also above p. 20 for further references.

4. *Zecharya* 4:2.

5. *Midrash* cited in *Likkutei Torah, Be'ha'aloscha* 34, end side b.

The revelation of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus began with the Alter Rebbe on the 19th of Kislev and continued and increased with greater strength and greater vigor through all seven generations of its leaders. This includes in particular the founding of the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim, the soldiers of the House of Dovid who go out to the wars of the House of Dovid to be victorious over those "who revile the footsteps of your Moshiach"¹ and to bring into reality the revelation of Dovid King Moshiach.² The revelation comes to its fulfillment in our generation, which has already completed all the requirements, and the only thing necessary is "to open the eyes" and to see that "Behold he (the King Moshiach) comes."³

* * *

From this we can derive a practical lesson:

In addition to this generation being the last generation of exile, the end of the exile, it is also the first generation of Redemption, the beginning of Redemption. We therefore find ourselves at an auspicious time connected to the Redemption. There should be a daily increase (connected to the lesson of Chanukah,⁴ that "from here on continuously increase"⁵) in matters that bring the Redemption into reality and into the open.

1. *Tehillim* 89:52.

2. See *Sichos Simchas Torah* 5661 - *Likkutei Dibburim* vol. 4, 787b and ff. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, end of p. 141 ff.

3. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

4. And in a continuing manner also after Chanukah, since "increase in holiness and (certainly) don't decrease" (*Shabbos* 21b).

5. *Shabbos* 21b. *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* Section 671, section 2. [*This is a reference to the increase in light during the days of Chanukah, lighting one candle the first night, two candles the second, etc. Translator's note.*]

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

Among them:

One must strengthen one's belief in, longing for and anticipation of the coming of Moshiach, to such an extent that as long as our righteous Moshiach has not yet come in reality and openly, one feels his life is lacking. As Yaakov said, even one hundred and thirty seven years were "few"⁶ because the Redemption had not yet actually come.

Further and fundamental:

One must increase in learning and spreading the inner teachings of the Torah (and Torah in general is Yaakov's function), oil (secrets of the secrets) of the Torah, in a way that they light "from the opening of the house on the outside,"⁷ "your wellsprings will spread outward,"⁸ "until the Tarmudites leave the market."⁹

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, Shabbos (6th of) Chanukah, Evening Rosh Chodesh Teves 5752)

6. *Vayigash* 47:9.

7. *Shabbos*, *ibid.*

8. *Mishlei* 5:16.

9. *Shabbos*, *ibid.* [This is a reference to the passage in the Talmud that discusses the latest time for kindling the Chanukah lights; the rabbis declare this to be when the Tarmudite merchants would leave the market and no one else would remain outside. Chassidus explains that the word "Tarmud" (the name of a nation) rearranged spells "Moreds," rebel. Metaphorically this means that we will bring light to the outside to the extent of removing all resistance to the Divine. Translator's note.]

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(מנוסח המצבה)

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Plotkin

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ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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