

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 Vayigash, 5783
"Year of Hakhel"
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5759 ♦ 1999

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** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
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No Questions, Please

In the early fifties the Lubavitcher Rebbe began a campaign to dispatch emissaries to every corner of the globe, to fight assimilation and promote Jewish values and observance. Straight out of Yeshiva and just married, the Rebbe sent his followers to remote places of the world where few if any observant Jews lived. At the time, the concept of outreach was quite revolutionary. Moreover, it was practically unheard of that a young religious couple should leave their insular community and all its conveniences – family and friends, readily available kosher food, Orthodox schools and synagogues – and instead reside in a spiritual wasteland of secular society. Nonetheless, the Rebbe expected his chassidim to make these sacrifices on behalf of their alienated brethren.

Initially this demand met with much hesitation. While many young people were eager and willing to stand up to the challenge, others demurred with a variety of considerations. One such couple, when solicited by the Rebbe to move to a far-off town, voiced their objections. The young man argued that he had intended to remain longer in *kolel*,¹ immersed in his studies. Furthermore, he continued, when

1. Academy for all-day Torah study, financially supported by the community.

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he mentioned the proposal to his parents and in-laws, they simply would not hear of it. The precept of “honoring thy parents” is a justified cause for concern, is it not? At a subsequent gathering the Rebbe addressed these issues, and prefaced with a story:

* * *

Every Friday evening, shortly before twilight, the saintly Arizal² had a unique ritual. During this most spiritual and serene time, he would walk outdoors, accompanied by his disciples, and “greet the Shabbat bride” in the field. On one such occasion, the Arizal was in an unusually elated mood. Out in the field he turned to his entourage and exclaimed: “Let us proceed to Jerusalem together and greet the holy Shabbat there!”

His followers were startled; traveling is forbidden on the Sabbath, and only several minutes remained before sundown. It was humanly impossible to arrive in the Holy City, a distance of hundreds of miles away, within these short moments. Now, the Arizal’s students were well familiar with their master’s wondrous ways – if he intended to greet the Sabbath in Jerusalem, he certainly would do so. The *tzaddik* was capable of instantly transporting them via supernatural means. Though enticed by their Rebbe’s proposal, some of them paused hesitantly. They did not relish the idea of spending the Shabbat away from home, aban-

2. Rabbi Yitzchok Luria, seventeenth century Kabbalist.

No Questions, Please

doning their families without prior notice. “Let us first go request our wives’ consent,” they replied.

Upon hearing their response, the Arizal became gravely serious. “You have just forfeited the opportunity to merit instant Redemption,” he declared with a solemn gaze.

“In that case,” the bewildered disciples rejoined, “we shall readily go with you!” Yet their pleas were all in vain, for it was too late. The gates of Heaven were only open at that auspicious moment, had they all heeded the Arizal’s words without any hesitation. Since they faltered, the Jewish people were to remain in exile for centuries to come.

* * *

Upon completing his story, the Rebbe commented:

This episode is somewhat puzzling. After all, what is so terrible about wanting to inform their spouses of their changed plans? Marital harmony is a Halachic obligation, especially with regard to the Sabbath! Indeed, for this very reason our Sages enjoined that a candle be kindled in every Jewish home on Friday before nightfall³ – to prevent the possible discord that could erupt in the household should anyone stumble in the dark.

3. Talmud, *Shabbos* 23b; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 263:3; *Magen Avraham* *ibid*.

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The answer is self-evident: when one receives an instruction from his Rebbe, there is no need for ambivalence. This is not the way to bring Moshiach. Rather one must obey, with unwavering certainty that his Rebbe's directive is perfectly consistent with the Code of Jewish Law. All the other concerns, albeit valid, are simply irrelevant. If the Arizal bid his disciples to proceed to Jerusalem, they ought to have complied at once.

These emissaries have been given the rare opportunity to set out and conquer the world with Torah and mitzvos. They are the fortunate individuals who will verily bring about the long-awaited Redemption. Accordingly, now is not the time to confer with one's parents or in-laws. Likewise all other considerations, however justified, must be disregarded. A soldier must follow his instructions despite all odds, and this is precisely how the war will be won. Indeed, as a result of such conduct, the emissaries and their families will be showered with abundant blessings, in both the material and spiritual sense.

Source:

Told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 1958.

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The Announcement Of The Redemption

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"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt"¹ alludes to the time of exile. Even then, a Jew can be the master of the world, "the lord of the land."² We thus receive governmental assistance in the manner depicted in the Torah: "The best of the land of Egypt is yours."³ Among the explanations why this paradoxical phenomenon is most pronounced in **this generation**, one can offer the following:

Since our generation is the last generation of exile and the first of Redemption, preparing for the transformation of the exile into Redemption is emphasized through a "taste" of what is to come, now in the days of exile. Thus, as we stand at the very **end** of exile, we can experience the state of "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt." The closer we get to the transformation of the exile - with the advent of the true and complete Redemption - this condition increasingly intensifies.

...This is particularly true in the "Year of Miracles" (5750) and the Year of "I Will Show Him Wonders" (5751). And, indeed, we have vividly beheld miracles and wonders in the most recent period. This includes - and relates specifically - to the change in attitude of a "super power," the former Soviet Union,⁴ inducing it to aid and facilitate the emergence of the Jewish people from distress to freedom, so that even in the Land of Egypt (in the last moments of exile) they should experience the state of "And Jacob lived."

And all this is happening because we are now situated, literally, so close to the true and complete redemption, through our righteous

1. *VaYechi*, 47:28.

2. *Miketz*, 42:30,33.

3. *VaYigash*, 45:20.

4. [*"That country" in the original. Translator's note.*]

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Redeemer. In the words of David, the Anointed King, "The sweetener of the songs of Israel," in Psalm 89: "I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to My servant David,⁵ I have anointed him with My holy oil,"⁶ through the conclusion of the Psalm, "Blessed is G-d forever, Amen v'Amen." [And as commentators explains the reason for King David's gratitude:] "He saw... the coming of Moshiach, he therefore gave thanks to Hashem."⁷

* * *

One of the essential components of the future true and complete Redemption is the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash (the Third Temple which will supersede the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle], as well as the first and second Temples), the "Sanctuary⁸ of G-d, the workings of Your hands." One should thus intensify those "actions and deeds" which are **analogous** to and a **preparation** for the building of the Holy Temple, by building new **homes** (or, by adding on to and strengthening existing) - **homes** for all three modes of Divine service: Torah, Tefillah (prayer) and acts of loving kindness.

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas VaYigash, 5 Teves, 5751)

5. Verse 4.

6. Verse 21.

7. *Even Ezra*, loc. cit.

8. *Beshalach*, 15:17.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

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As mentioned many times recently, according to the announcement of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, all the preparations for the Redemption have already been completed, and now the Redemption just requires to be drawn into the material and coarseness of the world (a coarseness that is converted into the material), and revealed to the physical eye.

...Now one need only open the eyes, to see that the whole world demands that every Jew stand in the condition and situation of the true and complete Redemption.

It may be said that this is the reason why we see today that Jews can maintain their Judaism with great strength and mastery also over the nations of the world - for it all depends on their will. We are immediately prior to the Redemption, when it will become actually revealed that "And Dovid my servant will be the leader over them forever,"¹ "And the nations will know that I am the L-rd."² This is reflected in the actual situation of our generation, which is a preparation for the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

Further, this is also indicated in "And Yehuda approached him." Together with the assistance from the power of the Divine service of the Yosef of our generation (my sainted father-in-law , the leader of our generation) we also possess the power of "And Yehuda approached him," i.e., Moshiach, who will actually come imminently, when "And Dovid my servant will be the leader over them forever." This comes through the support of and infusion of

1. *Yechezkel* 37:25.

2. *Ibid*, 28.

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strength from Yosef (of our generation), "you are like Pharaoh,"³ (the pharaoh of holiness), that "through him all the lights are uncovered and revealed."⁴

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayigash, 7 Teves 5752)

3. Our Parsha 44:18.

4. *Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 210a. [The word *Pharaoh* can be translated as "revealed." *Translator's note.*]

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

Reb Yitzchok (Isadore) ben Reb Nochum Tzvi ע"ה Plotkin

Passed away on 19 Shevat, 5765

Mrs. Yenta (Yetta) bas Reb Nochum ע"ה Plotkin

Passed away on 11 Tevet, 5764

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN שיחיו

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND

Reb Yosef Yisroel ben Reb Sholom ע"ה Rosner

Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIENDS

Mr. & Mrs. Gershon and Leah שיחיו Wolf

Rabbi & Mrs. Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel שיחיו Shagalov

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb Reuvein ben Reb Mordechai Yaakov HaKohen ע"ה
Caplan

Passed away on 11 Tishrei, 5778

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF HIS WIFE - שתבלחט"א

Mrs. Elka bas Raizel שתחי' Caplan

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. Roneete Mona Mina bas Reb Zev ע"ה Kurtzman
Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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