

# ONCE UPON A CHASSID

The Wisdom and the Whimsy  
The Fire and the Joy

Stories, Anecdotes & Sayings  
translated and adopted from the writings of the  
Rebbes and Chassidim of Chabad Lubavitch  
*Arranged in conjunction with the 54 sections of the Torah*

By Yanki Tauber

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## Bamidbar / Ungrammatically Correct

1:1

וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני

*G-d spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert*

The Torah was given to us in the barren, ownerless desert in order to emphasize that no man may claim any superior right to the word of G-d. It is equally the heritage of every Jew, man, woman, and child, equally accessible to the accomplished scholar and the most simple of Jews.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher  
Rebbe *shlita*

## *Ungrammatically Correct*

The Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, was forever reciting Psalms, but with many mispronunciations.

Once she commented to her son, Rabbi Yehudah Leib: “You know, it’s strange. By now, I should know the book of Psalms by heart. I’ve been reciting the Psalms every day for many years now.”

“True,” said Rabbi Yehudah Leib, “but each time you recite them with new mistakes.”

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The Rebbetzin related this exchange to her husband, adding that perhaps she had better stop her custom rather than distort the holy words. “No,” insisted Rabbi Menachem Mendel, “continue to recite as before.”

Later, Rabbi Menachem Mendel admonished his son and instructed him to ask his mother for forgiveness. “What do *you* know?” he told him. “My success in Petersburg<sup>1</sup> was in the merit of your mother’s Psalms.”

### Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ["Sayings and Stories"] by Rabbi Rephael Nachman Kahan, Vol. 11\*, p. 46.

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1. In 1843, the Russian Interior ministry called a ‘rabbinical conference’ in the czarist capitol of Petersburg. At the conference, the leaders of the ‘Enlightenment’ movement joined forces with the czarist government to use the forum for their program of forced assimilation of the Jews of Russia. In the course of the conference, Rabbi Menachem Mendel was arrested no less than twenty two (!) times for his defiant and unwavering stand in defense of traditional Jewish life, but in the end his efforts met with complete success.

\*. Correction: Vol. 2.

## Bamidbar / Worth the While

1:48-51

ובנסע המשכן יורידו אתו הלויים  
ובחנת המשכן יקימו אתו הלויים

*G-d spoke to Moses, saying.... Place the Levites in charge of the Sanctuary....when the Sanctuary is moved, the Levites shall take it down, and when the Sanctuary encamps, the Levites shall set it up....*

Not only the tribe of Levi, but also any man of all the inhabitants of the earth whose mind has enlightened him and whose spirit has moved him to set himself aside to stand before G-d to serve Him, to worship Him, to know G-d and to walk justly, and he cast from his neck the yoke of the many calculations that men seek - also he has become sanctified, a Holy of Holies, and G-d shall be his portion and his lot for all eternity... just as the priests and the Levites.

Maimonides

## *Worth the While*

In the summer of 1955 a young man wrote the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita of his plans to make a short trip to

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a certain city. In his reply, the Rebbe urged him to utilize the opportunity to exert a positive influence on the town's Jewish residents.

During their wanderings in the Sinai Desert, the Rebbe explained, the Jewish people constructed the Sanctuary, a portable house of worship which they set up at each of their encampments. The Sanctuary was a formidable structure, consisting of towering gold-plated wall sections, layers of embroidered tapestries, a large enclosed courtyard set up with posts, stakes, and hundreds of feet of fabric, and many other components and furnishings all described in minute detail in the Torah.<sup>1</sup> A work crew of several thousand Levites were involved in the unloading and assembling the Sanctuary at each camp and its dismantling and loading onto carts when the Divine command would come to move on.

A cloud, representing the presence of G-d, would hover over the Sanctuary. When the cloud would rise, this was Divine signal to break camp. As the Torah relates, *“By the word of G-d the children of Israel would journey, and by the word of G-d they would camp; as long as the cloud rested over the Sanctuary they would camp... when the cloud tarried long over the Sanctuary for many days, they kept the charge of G-d and would not journey. At times, the cloud would be for [only] a few days on the Sanctuary... at times,*

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1. Exodus chapters 18-20.

## **Bamidbar / Worth the While**

*[only] from evening to morning... whenever it would rise, they journeyed.”<sup>2</sup>*

Yet even at their shortest encampment, the entire Sanctuary was set up, down to its every last component and fixture - to serve as their ‘meeting point’ with the Almighty, if only for a single day. “You too,” concluded the Rebbe, “when you arrive at your destination, should utilize every free moment to reach out to our fellow Jews and to bring to them the wellsprings of Torah, regardless of the length of time that you plan to stay.”

### **Source:**

Igros Kodesh [Letters of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, The Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita], vol. XI, p. 190.

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2. Numbers 9:17-22.

# BESURAS HAGEULO

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 70

It may be suggested that the Temple of the future ("it will be revealed and come from heaven already built and perfected"<sup>1</sup>) will first be revealed in the place "That the Temple traveled and settled there"<sup>2</sup> in the time of exile ("The House of our Rebbe in Bavel"<sup>3</sup>); from there it will be transported to its place in Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that this is alluded to in the Rambam's choice of words (in *Hilchos Melech HaMoshiach*<sup>4</sup>) "And build the Temple **in its place**." For apparently [there is a question]: what is the need to inform us here that the building of the Temple will be **in its place**? On the other hand, why isn't the place specified: "And build the Temple in **Yerushalayim**?" [It must be] that "in its place" alludes as well to the place of the king Moshiach in the time of exile (**before** [the status of] "behold he is certainly Moshiach"). Therefore, while he is still **in exile** (for there he sits<sup>5</sup> and waits and anxiously looks forward to redeeming the Jewish people, and the Divine Presence with them in exile) the king Moshiach builds a Temple (in microcosm). This is an illustration and example of the Temple in Yerushalayim (like "the synagogue of He slipped and settled,"<sup>6</sup> "that the Temple traveled and settled there."). [This

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1. Rashi's commentary and Tosfos on Sukkah 41, end of side a and in other sources.

2. *Aruch*, entry Shaf (brought in the *Chiddushei Aggada MaHaRaSHA*, on *Megillah* 29a).

3. *Megillah* 29a. [In Hebrew, "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel". Translator's note.]

4. End of chapter 11.

5. See *Sanhedrin* 98a: "He is dwelling at the gate of Rome." [In the referenced passage, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asks Eliyahu HaNavi where Moshiach can be found. The quotation actually combines the end of the question ("Where is Moshiach dwelling?") and the answer ("At the gate of Rome"). Translator's note.]

6. *Megillah* 29a. [The phrase is a reference to the Divine Presence going into exile with the Jewish people: G-d's Presence slipped away from Jerusalem and



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settling serves] as a preparation for the future Temple, which will be revealed there first, and from there return (with G-d and the Jewish people) to Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that the statement in the Midrash,<sup>7</sup> that "at the time when the king Moshiach comes, **he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash** [Temple] and announce to the Jewish people, saying, Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived," refers to the roof of the Beis HaMikdash which is **the Temple in microcosm** outside the land,<sup>8</sup> which takes the place of the Temple in Yerushalayim ("The Temple traveled and settled there"). [This may be said] because after the future Temple is revealed and descends to the earth below, there is no need **to announce** to the Jewish people that "the time for your Redemption has arrived."

...The above can be applied to "The House of our Rebbe in Bavel" **of our generation**, the house (the synagogue and study hall) of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation:

...In this generation, the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, "our actions and Divine service during the time of exile"<sup>9</sup> to make the lands of the nations into the land of Israel even in **the lowest possible place**, that is, **the lower hemisphere** (where the Torah was not given<sup>10</sup>) has been concluded

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*settled in Bavel. Translator's note.]*

7. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez 499.*

8. Accordingly, the expression "He stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash" becomes clarified; that "roofs... do not become sanctified" (Rambam, Hilchos Beis HaBechirah, chapter 6, halacha 7). Hence this alludes to the lands outside of Israel in comparison to the holiness of the land of Israel.

9. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

10. See *Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe RaYaTZ*, vol. 2, p. 492 ff. See there for

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and completed. Through the elevation of the lowest possible place all the other lands of the nations are also elevated.<sup>11</sup> This [objective] is achieved through "**Beis Rabbeinu**" [Our Rebbe's House] in the lower hemisphere, from which light goes out to all the world, to make the whole world (until the furthestmost corner of the world) into the land of Israel. This is the concept that "In the future the land of Israel will extend into all the lands,"<sup>12</sup> and "In the future, Yerushalayim will extend over all the land of Israel."<sup>12</sup> For then there will be established a connection between all the synagogues and study halls throughout the entire world and the Beis HaMikdash. [This will occur] in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, the leader of the generation, who is the Moshiach (the Redeemer of Israel) of the generation. Further, and this is also essential, he is the leader of the Torah of Chassidus,<sup>13</sup> since through the spreading outward ("when your wellsprings spread forth," until there is nothing beyond, to all corners of the world) is achieved the coming of the king Moshiach.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore the greatness of "Beis Rabbeinu" can be understood. It is the essential "Temple in microcosm" of the final exile, "that the Temple traveled and settled there." Therefore, it is the actual place of the Temple of the future; not only that, but the future Temple will be revealed there, and from there return to Yerushalayim (as

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cross-references.

11. "As in raising the walls of a house, it is necessary to raise the lower beam and then the upper beams will be raised automatically; this is not the case if one begins in the middle of the wall, one does not raise the lower beams" (*Torah Or Bereishis* 4, beginning of side a).

12. See *Sifrei Devarim* at the beginning, *Pesikta Rabbasi*, *Parshas Shabbos v'Rosh Chodesh*. *Yalkus Shimoni*, *Yeshayahu*, *remez* 503.

13. One should note that the Torah of Chassidus is the aspect of the Yechida in Torah (See the pamphlet concerning "On the essence of Chassidus), which is connected with the aspect of Yechida in Israel - the soul of our righteous Moshiach (*RaMaZ on Zohar* vol. 2, 40b and other sources).

14. *Igros Kodesh* of the *Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov* at the beginning.

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mentioned above).

It may be added, that this concept is also alluded to in the name<sup>15</sup> of "Beis Rabbeinu" in our generation:

**"Rabbeinu"** [our Rebbe] - His two names alluded to the Redemption: His first name - Yosef - "And it shall come to pass that on that day, the L-rd shall **continue to apply** [yoseef] His hand a second time to acquire the rest of His people that will remain from Assyria and Egypt, etc. and from the islands of the sea, etc, and He shall **gather** [Asaf] the lost of Israel and the scattered ones of Judah He shall gather from the four corners of the earth."<sup>16</sup> His second name - Yitzchak - refers to the laughter and rejoicing that will be complete in the future Redemption, and which will be completed through our righteous Moshiach. Thus it is written,<sup>17</sup> "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [S'chok]. It specifies "then," in the future,<sup>18</sup> when they will say to Yitzchak (specifically), "Because you are our father."<sup>19</sup>

And **Beis** (Rabbeinu) [**The House** of our Rebbe] - its number is seven hundred seventy.<sup>20</sup> The name by which "Beis Rabbeinu" is called by all Jews has been universally accepted to be this number,

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15. As is well-known, the name indicates the content and nature of the thing called with that name (*Tanya*, "*Shaar HaYichud v'HaEmunah*," end of chapter 1. See at length *Teshuvos u'Be'urim* (Kehos, 5734), section 1 and the cross references there).

16. *Yeshayahu* 11:11-12.

17. *Tehillim* 126:2.

18. Which is not the case during the time of exile, when "it is forbidden for an individual to be completely joyful [literally, fill his mouth with laughter] in this world, since it is written that "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [we will be completely joyful]" (*Brochos* 31a).

19. *Yeshayahu* 63:16. Shabbos 89b.

20. One should note the customs of the leaders of the Jewish people, who learned allusions and lessons in Divine service from secular matters as well (for example, the number of wagons in the train, which is incidental, and all the more

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"770."<sup>21</sup> This number in Gematria is "**Paratzta**," derived from "You shall spread out [U'Faratzta] west and east and north and south."<sup>22</sup> This indicates that from this house light will go forth to all four corners of the world, in a manner of **breaking through barriers**, so that all four corners of the world will be elevated to the status of the land of Israel. (In the future the land of Israel will extend to all the lands.) This means in particular that all the synagogues and study halls throughout the world will be established in the land of Israel and connected to the Beis HaMikdash in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. For about him it says,<sup>23</sup> "**You have broken barriers for yourself**," which our Sages of blessed memory explain<sup>24</sup> as follows: "This is Moshiach, about whom it is said,<sup>25</sup> "**The breaker** is come up before them."<sup>26</sup>

...In the completeness of the number seven (seven hundred and seventy) can also be found an allusion to the completeness of the Divine service of our Rebbe during his complete lifetime of **seven** decades, **seventy** years (5640-5710). His Divine service was concluded and completed in the lower hemisphere in the **seventh** decade (from the house whose number is seven hundred seventy). [This completeness] includes as well the extension of his Divine service in the years afterwards, through the **seventh** generation -

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so in regard to an established dwelling). This is particularly true in our case, when the number becomes **the name of** the house, as discussed below.

21. Whether in Hebrew, Yiddish or English - "Seven Seventy."

22. *VaYeitze* 28:14.

23. *VaYeshev* 38:29.

24. *Aggados Bereishis*, end of chapter 63. See *Bereishis Rabba*, end of chapter 85 and Rashi's commentary on it.

25. *Micha* 2:13.

26. One should note that "Beis Moshiach" in gematria is "Paratzta" (770). Consider this carefully. [*Gematria is the numerical analysis of words. Translator's note.*]

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"all sevenths are beloved."<sup>27</sup> Through this [extension] is accomplished the completion of our actions and Divine service during the time of exile in all seven continents of the world. Immediately and imminently "the L-rd shall **continue to apply [yoseef]** His hand a second time, etc., and He shall **gather [Asaf]** the lost of Israel, etc." In this way, "**You have broken** (in Gematria, seven hundred and seventy<sup>28</sup>) barriers for yourself," "The breaker is come up before them."

All this receives added emphasis in this last period:

The Divine service of spreading Torah and Judaism and the wellsprings outward from "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") has continued and expanded with greater vigor and greater strength, even after (the last ten years of) his life in this world, for more than forty years (5710-5750). It has done so in a way that "G-d has given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."<sup>29</sup> Thus we find that "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") is a "fortress," "the mount that all mouths turn to,"<sup>30</sup> for more than a Yovel of years (5700-5750) - "Forever."<sup>31</sup>

[That Beis Rabbeinu is a "fortress"] receives further emphasis when we see with our own eyes the many Jewish people, and the increasing numbers of them, that come to "Beis Rabbeinu," with greater vigor and greater strength, - "in the multitude of people is the splendor of the king"<sup>32</sup> (which includes also "Who are the

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27. *Vayikra Rabba*, ch. 29:11. See the discourse *Basi L'Gani* of the year 5750 at the beginning. Also at length, the same-named discourse of 5751.

28. [*The letters of the word "Paratzta" have the numerical value of 770: Peh=80; Reish=200; Tzadik=90; Tuv=400. Translator's note.*]

29. *Tavo* 29:3.

30. *Brochos* 30a.

31. *Shmuel I* 1:22 and Rashi's commentary. *Yerushalmi Brochos*, chapter 4, halacha 1. See *Kiddushin* 15a. *Mechilta* and Rashi's commentary on *Mishpatim* 21:6.

32. *Mishlei* 14:28.

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kings? the rabbis,"<sup>33</sup> and specifically the leader (king) of the generation). [The increase] has made it necessary to enlarge and expand "Beis Rabbeinu" further. The enlargement and expansion must be in a way that breaks through barriers, "Paratzta" (770 in Gematria), as if constructing **a new building**.<sup>34</sup>

According to what was said previously concerning the pre-eminence of "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" - that "the Temple traveled and settled there," and "this is the place of the actual Temple in the future," so that there the future Temple will be revealed and from there return to Yerushalayim - the great merit each and every Jew has in becoming a partner, physically and monetarily<sup>35</sup> (and all who increase are praiseworthy) in building "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" is obvious. And this is like a preparation for the actual descent and revelation of the future Temple, imminently and immediately.

*(Pamphlet concerning "Mikdash M'at Zeh Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel" - Sefer HaSichos 5752, p. 465)*

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33. See *Gittin* 62, end of first side. *Zohar*, vol. 3, 253b in *Raya Mehemna*.

34. Including the laying of the corner stone. [*On the eve of 18 Elul 5748 was arranged the laying of the cornerstone for (increasing and expanding) the synagogue and study hall of Lubavitch in Lubavitch. The Rebbe placed the cornerstone with his holy hands. Publisher's note.*]

35. Following the example of the Beis HaMikdash, that "everyone is obligated to build and support it themselves and with their money, etc." (*Rambam, Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*, chapter 1, halacha 12).

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

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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