

BESURAS HAGEULO

increase in “our actions and our service” in general that bring the Redemption, including and particularly - as talked about in the previous gathering - learning the Torah concerning Redemption, in the Written Torah (that “all¹⁴ the books are filled with this subject”) and the Oral Torah: Mishneh, Gemara, Midrashim, etc.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim, 13 Iyar 5751)

14. Rambam, *Laws of Kings*, chapter 11, halacha 2.

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Mrs. **Elka** bas **Raizel** שתחילי **Caplan**
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in health, happiness, Torah and mitzvot.

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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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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

actions and large, positive reforms that he would introduce to strengthen education in the country.

...And this is in addition to the many things that daily occur by Divine Providence, whether in general or in relation to each one in their personal matters. The purpose of all this is to reveal even more how the world is helping to make a dwelling place for G-d in this lowest world and bring the Redemption.

(This includes the discovery last week of precious stones and pearls in the farthest corner of the world, through the blessings of G-d. (This is analogous to “The princes brought the onyx stones and the stones for the ephod and breastplate.”¹¹ (These were used for the priestly garments, that were [miraculously] brought to them by the clouds.¹²) The intention is they should be used for adorning brides, increasing tzedekah, etc.)

The practical conclusion of what has been said is: the Redemption comes precisely through the service in exile, from revealing the master of the world in “exile,”¹³ so that this generation, the last generation of exile, will be the first generation of Redemption.

And G-d helps us see in the recent world events how the world itself is assisting and leading to the Redemption.

This simply means - as mentioned above - that every Jew must

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
ה. נ. צ. ב. 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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11. *Vayakhel* 35:27.

12. *Targum Yonasan* on the verse.

13. [There is a play on words in the Hebrew: exile is “golah” and redemption is “geulah.” The difference between them in Hebrew is the letter “Aleph.” The word “Alufo” means L-rd or master. The letter “Aleph” also has the numerical value of one. Thus, the “Master of the world” is the “Alufo of the world.” He is also the “Aleph” - the only One. By revealing the “Alufo,” the “Aleph” is also revealed, which transforms “golah” (without an alef) into “geulah” (with an alef). Translator’s note.]

Among the obvious things which occurred very recently, where we see how the world and the nations of the world are preparing and assisting the way to the Redemption, are the areas of tzedekah and education, two fundamental foundations for civilizing the world, “He formed it to be inhabited.”⁹

The recent events have become well-known and publicized (in all the newspapers). This country (founded on tzedekah and kindness, as is known) has used its great power to help and rescue people in a distant region of the world (far away from the country), even though the citizens of this country receive no direct benefit.

This country sent many people and soldiers from its army to assist the refugees in those places, together with food, clothing and medicine. Instead of using the planes for conquest, and instead of using the food and clothing for its own citizens, it used them to rescue unfortunate people, particularly small children, from the cold, and indeed, from the very opposite of life.¹⁰

One sees thereby the compassion of the citizens of this country: when they heard and saw the suffering of others, not their own relatives, and with whom they had no connection - the country was aroused to help them. According to the principles of this country regarding tzedekah, it helps people throughout the whole world, and it doesn't even wait to be asked to help.

Similarly, it's also known that recently the leader of this country came out with a declaration and detailed directive regarding children's education. This was consistent with a declaration the president made at the beginning of his tenure, concerning his ambition to be remembered as the “education president” for the

9. *Yeshayahu* 45:18.

10 [The Rebbe - in the spirit of the Talmudic dictum to employ clean and positive language - frequently employed the euphemism “the opposite of life.” Translator's note.]

16:3

בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקדש

This, Aaron shall enter into the Holy...

One on One

In the summer of 5653¹ the Chabad-Lubavitch community celebrated the bar mitzvah of their Rebbe's only son, Yosef Yitzchok². Among the many guests who came to Lubavitch for the occasion was the renowned chassid, Rabbi Avraham DovBer of Babroisk, known as Reb Ber Yermiah's. At one of the many joyous farbrengens which were held throughout the week, Reb Ber described his first trip to Lubavitch over sixty years earlier. The following account was transcribed by one of the students who was studying in Lubavitch and recorded Reb Ber's reminiscences at the farbrengen.

I shall never forget my first journey to Lubavitch. The weeks following Passover of 5592³ were filled with excitement and joyous anticipation. I was six years old at the time, and I had just been told that Father planned to take me along on his annual Shavuos trip to Lubavitch. I was scheduled to soon begin my studies at the cheder and Father

1. 1893.

2. Later to serve as Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch from 1920 to 1950.

3. 1832.

Once Upon A Chassid

wanted me to receive the Rebbe's⁴ blessing for success in my studies.

On the Sunday of the week of *Naso*⁵, Mother woke me early and told me to hurry and dress. With a special joy she packed the new suit which she had sewn for me, warning me to wear it only on Shabbos and on the evening that I would merit to enter into the Rebbe's room. We then set out for the home of Rabbi Eisel, the rabbi of my hometown Homel, from where we would depart on the holy journey to Lubavitch.

Despite the early hour, Rabbi Eisel's street is as crowded and noisy as on market day. The rabbi's courtyard is jammed with men, women and children, some excitedly talking in groups, others dancing. The wagons stand by at the ready.

To enter the rabbi's home is impossible - the house is crammed with people - and Mother cannot locate Father. We are told that Rabbi Eisel had delivered discourse after discourse of chassidic teaching throughout the night, and that at first light those present had recited the morning prayers. Now, the scholars and wealthy businessmen of Homel are arriving to see their Rabbi off on his journey.

4. The Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch was then Rabbi Menachem Mendel, author of the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

5. The week in which the Torah reading of *Naso* (Numbers 4:21-7:89) is read. In 1832, May 27th to June 2nd.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

And they will bring all your brethren, etc.).

And in this last year we see how this attitude towards the Jewish people has spread to other countries, even to that country,⁴ which (until recently) placed limitations on the freedom of the Jews in their observance of Torah and mitzvos, and also on their emigration from that country. Their attitude has now been reversed, for they permit Jews to observe Torah and mitzvos and allow Jews to leave there (without the previous restrictions). On the contrary - they are now helping the Jews to travel to the Holy Land. This is a prelude of the assistance the nations of the world will give the Jewish people to go out of exile and into the Holy Land, in the complete and true Redemption.

In addition to the direct assistance from the nations of the world to the Jews, we also see instances where the nations of the world themselves perform acts of goodness and kindness, which reveal even more that there is a Master to this palace.⁵ All of this is a preparation for "And the kingdom will be the L-rd's"⁶ in the complete and true Redemption.

It was not this way previously, when specifically the Jewish people (even though "You are the smallest of all the nations"⁷) accomplished the intention of making a dwelling place in the lower world,⁸ while several governments of the nations of the world behaved in a cruel fashion to each other. Their main occupation was their own benefit, either by conquering the other countries, etc.

4. [The Soviet Union. Translators note.]

5. See *Bereishis Rabba* beginning of chapter 39.

6. The end of *Ovadyah*.

7. *Va'eschanan* 7:7.

8. [The Previous Rebbe explains in his discourse *Basi L'gani* that G-d's intention behind creation was to make a dwelling place for G-dliness in even the lowest physical realm of existence, that is, this world. Translator's note.]

The Announcement Of The Redemption**23**

From what was said previously, one may discover several lessons regarding the service of the Jews to bring the Redemption, and what must be done to prepare for the Redemption, as we stand now at the end of exile, “golah,” with the Redemption coming momentarily.

...Worldly affairs themselves and the nations of the world themselves (even in the time of exile) are (in truth) assisting in the service of bringing the Redemption.

It may be suggested that at the end of the time of exile, close to the Redemption, this assistance appears in a more open fashion.

We see this especially in the recent generations and even more in recent times, specifically in the latest days:

In previous generations, (most) Jews lived among countries which in general were a hindrance and an obstacle, etc. ([the trouble] will not rise twice)¹ to the service of G-d.

However, in recent generations, (most) Jews live among benevolent governments, primarily this country² (in which the largest number of Jews and Jewish institutions are located). This enables the Jews to achieve an inner Redemption in their service, so that they should perform the service which will bring the actual Redemption. Then the benevolent government will also help the Jews to return to the land of Israel (in the language of Scriptures:³

1. The language of Scriptures - *Nachum* 1:9. And see *Likkutei Sichos* volume 23, page 306, note 55.

2. [*The United States. Translator's note.*]

3. *Yeshayahu* 66:20.

A short while later we hear the sound of singing. Suddenly, people begin to pour from the doorway and windows of the rabbi's house, their backs to the yard and facing the house, singing and dancing all the while. A wave of holy trepidation passes through those waiting in the yard. Soon Rabbi Eisel appears in the doorway. He blesses the crowd with words of parting and climbs onto the wagon.

Mother sees Father climbing onto the wagon after the rabbi, and calls out: “Yermiah! Yermiah! Take Avraham Ber! Don't forget Avraham Berkeh!” But her voice is drowned out by the commotion. Seeing that Father has forgotten me I start to cry. The wagon in which Rabbi Eisel and father are sitting is already moving.

The entire crowd bursts into song and begins to follow the wagon out of town. In the meantime, Mother has located Reb Yisroel Aharon the melamed and has told him that Father has forgotten me, and that she has called out to him but was not heard. Reb Yisroel Aharon lifts me into his arms and, forcing a path through the crowd, brings me to Father's wagon.

The wagons are proceeding slowly and the crowd is growing - at each street crossing hundreds more are joining the parade. And before those accompanying us from Homel have turned back, already the delegation from Belitza is coming towards us to greet the Lubavitch-bound procession that is passing through their town.

Once Upon A Chassid

At Belitza everyone gets off the wagon and proceeds on foot. But, fearing that Father would again forget me, remain on the wagon.

We have set out from Homel in four wagons, a pair of horses harnessed to each, and each carrying some fifteen chassidim: several sit in two rows inside the wagon, others along its sides, two on its steps, and another two up on the bench alongside the wagon-driver. I sit in the first wagon with my father, a successful businessman who is financing the entire trip, opposite the great Rabbi Eisel.

All are joyous, merry, and with ebullient hearts. The wagons merely serve as a resting place for an occasional hour or two, for the chassidim make their way largely by foot, with a pleasure and joy that is simply indescribable.

For five days we journey from Homel to Lubavitch, from Sunday to Thursday. We pass through towns both small and large, villages, and settlements. Wherever we go, we are met with joy and festivity. In our journey we are joined by other wagons and groups of foot travelers headed to Lubavitch: chassidim from Babroisk, Shtzedrin, Smilain, Tuitshin, Minsk, Barisov, Zhlobin, Shklov, Ragatshov, and many other towns.

On Wednesday afternoon, we reach the settlement of Zalishkina where the chassid Rabbi Elya Moshe 'The Successful One' lives, some 15 or 16 versts before the city of Dubrovna. In Zalishkina we find some twenty or thirty wagons, and hundreds of people spread about the spacious

Once Upon A Chassid

For a long time we walked along the shore without a word. All who met or passed us noticed the look of his holy face, shining with a G-dly light. Suddenly, as one who awakes from sleep, he turned to me and said:

“Yosef Yitzchok! Listen! All the benefits of thinking chassidus in *tallis* and *tefillin* prior to prayer, both for the ordinary chassid and for the *tzaddik*, are utterly insignificant compared to a single privilege: if the Almighty grants a person an aptitude for and a delight in doing a Jew a favor. If the Almighty grants a person that his fellow should be more dear to him than himself.

“It is worth one’s while to toil five hours a day for five days, toil of the body and toil of the soul, to comprehend the Divine - if the result is that one truly desires to do a Jew a favor.”

Father concluded by quoting Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov: “*A soul descends to the world and lives seventy, eighty years in order to do a Jew a favor physically and particularly in a spiritual matter.*”

Source:

Igros Kodesh [Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn of Lubavitch], vol. 11 ¶*, p. 293.

*. Correction: Vol. 3.

It transforms the essence of one's natural character, and illuminates the five levels of one's 'G-dly soul', *nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya*, and *yechida*.

All this applies to any individual who is involved in 'the service of the heart' (i.e. prayer) and prepares properly for prayer; but how much more so to the perfectly righteous *tzaddik*. My father continued to describe at great length the heights attained by a *tzaddik*, concluding, "one attains an appreciation of G-dly delight, *ah Getleche ziskeit*, 'a G-dly sweetness'"

With G-d's help, I shall never forget that glorious moment, the sight of that holy face flaring in ecstasy as he enunciated the words "a G-dly sweetness." At that moment I truly understood Rabbi Schneur Zalman's definition of a *merkava* (chariot) to the Almighty: those who "*all their days... do not cease for a single moment to bind their minds and souls to the Master of the Universe.*"²

To stroll within the splendorous natural surroundings of the Menton shore, and to be so immersed in 'G-dly delight', to so relish 'G-dly sweetness' - this can only be an *atzmi*,³ a rebbe the son of a rebbe, a Jew of self-sacrifice, one for whom G-d is forever standing over him and the light of his soul is openly manifest within his being.

2. Tanya Chapter 34.

3. 'A quintessential one.' One who's every act, thought, and character trait is utterly in line with and permeated by the very essence of his soul.

lawn across the road from Reb Eliya's homestead. They are clustered in groups, talking, sleeping, eating, discussing chassidus, or dancing. I hold on to Father's coat lest he forget me.

Reb Elya Moshe 'The Successful One', his sons, sons-in-law, wife, daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and their families, all have their hands full serving the chassidim traveling to Lubavitch, providing them with food and drink - all free of charge. And Reb Elya always says: "Of all that the Rebbe accomplished for me up above, ninety nine percent belongs to the chassidim, one percent to myself. Eat, my brothers, and drink, for it is the blessing of the Rebbe and the generosity of the Almighty that you are enjoying. Eat, drink, and gladden your hearts, so that you may be healthy and vigorous chassidim, with the strength to serve (G-d in Torah study, the Mitzvos, and the service of the heart."

At Zalishkina we meet with the famed chassidim Rabbi Hillel of Paritch and Rabbi Betzalel of Zaritz. The tremendous joy of their meeting with Rabbi Eisel defies description. The three eat together at the home of Reb Elya Moshe.

We leave Zalishkina with forty wagons and armies of foot travelers, each with a bundle on his shoulders and a walking staff in hand. They sing as they walk, and those in the wagons answer in song. Our road now passes through a forest, winding its way between the tall trees; so long does the line of singers stretch, that one hears those at the forest's edge repeating the stanzas already sung by those walking ahead.

Far ahead I see the end of the forest. There the sun is shining, but here the leaves block the light of day as if the sun has already set. Soon we emerge from under the forest thicket into a broad, sunlit field. Before us rises a large hill. At this point the riders all climb down from the wagons and proceed on foot, except for Rabbi Eisel, the elderly chassid Rabbi Yechiel ‘The Tearful One’, and Rabbi Zalman Dov ‘The Milky One.’ When we reach the top of the hill, the homes and gardens of Dubrovna come into view, although the city is still more than two versts away. Along the down-slope of the hill a large crowd lines both sides of the road, and we are told that the chassidim of Dubrovna, headed by the renowned Rabbi Nechemia, are coming to greet the journeyers to Lubavitch.

When we reach the point where the delegation of Dubrovna’s chassidim await us, Rabbi Eisel climbs down from the wagon to greet Rabbi Nechemia. Father accompanies Rabbi Eisel, and entrusts me to Reb Avraham Meir the coachman, commanding me to obey his instructions. The next thing I know, it is Thursday morning in Dubrovna: the trip had finally exhausted me, and I was fast asleep by the time we arrived in Dubrovna the evening before. Reb Avraham Meir has already breakfasted, and he informs me that in an hour or two we set off to Lubavitch. That evening, we arrive in Lubavitch.

On Friday, an hour before sunset, the large synagogue in Lubavitch is already filled to capacity with chassidim. On the pulpit in the center of the synagogue stand the Rebbe’s sons and several chassidic elders, including Rabbi Eisel.

19:18 | ואהבת לרעך כמוך
Love your fellow as yourself

An Aptitude, a Delight

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch writes:

In the winter of 5673¹ I went to visit my father, who was staying in Menton, France. Every day we would walk for hours along the sea shore and I was privileged to hear of things which had never been told to anyone: practices, stories, visions and ideas of my holy ancestors, transmitted through the generations from rebbe to rebbe.

Father spoke much about ‘thinking *chassidus*’ - meditating upon concepts of chassidic teaching - before prayer, while wrapped in *tallis* and *tefillin*. He discussed the topic continuously over the walks of several days and enumerated its many virtues. Thinking *chassidus*, he said, refines the body, making the mind and heart receptive to G-dliness. It repels the ‘animal soul’, cleanses the natural soul’, subdues the ‘intellectual soul’, and illuminates the world (“When a Jew thinks *chassidus* in *tallis* and *tefillin* before prayer, the world becomes brighter”). It draws down a revelation of light in all worlds, from the highest to the lowest of levels.

1. 1913.

19:16

לא תלך רכיל בעמך
Do not gossip

A Tailor in a Stitch

The village tailor of Lubavitch had sewn a dress for Rebbetzin Rivkah Schneersohn, wife of Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch. The Rebbetzin's young child, Sholom DovBer, was present when the tailor brought the new garment to his mother. Displaying a child's natural curiosity, the four-year-old reached into the visitor's pocket and pulled out a sizable bolt of cloth - the remains of the Rebbetzin's dress.

The tailor reddened and stammered an explanation: he had simply forgotten about the leftover cloth, he certainly had no intention of withholding from the Rebbetzin what was rightfully hers, etc.

After the tailor had shamefacedly left, Rebbetzin Rivkah said to her son: "See what you did! See how you embarrassed the poor man..."

Later, the child came to his father in tears and asked him how he can rectify the fact that he had shamed someone. But when the Rebbe asked his son to tell him what exactly happened, the child refused. "Is it not enough that I embarrassed a fellow Jew?" exclaimed little Sholom DovBer. "Must I also commit the sin of gossiping and speaking ill of one's fellow?"

Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, November 13, 1976.

Soon word arrives that the Rebbe is coming. Silence falls, and all eyes are raised to the place where the Rebbe will appear. From my vantage point atop one of the heating ovens, holding tightly onto Reb Avraham Meir's hand, I see a man dressed in white with a fur hat on his head, making his way to the chair that has been prepared for him on the pulpit. In a powerful voice he begins to speak: "*And G-d spoke... Uplift also the heads of the sons of Gershon...*"⁶

I remember how Father and I entered into yechidus with the Rebbe. Father waited many hours in the anteroom; me, he placed on the window sill. When the fortunate moment came to be received by the Rebbe, Father called to those who stood with him in the crowded room to fetch me; over the heads of the chassidim I sailed, passed from hand to hand, until I reached Father. Father then entered the Rebbe's room, myself following, clutching tightly at the tail of Father's coat.

The Rebbe's room was large, with book-filled cabinets lining its walls. He sat at a large table covered with books, notes, letters, several containers filled with coins, and two lighted candles.

When Father entered, the Rebbe lifted his eyes from the book which lay open before him and gazed into Father's face and then into mine. Father's entire body began to

6. The opening words of the discourse delivered by Rabbi Menachem Mendel that Shabbos. The Discourse is printed in *Likkutei Torah*, Bamidbar pg. 46.

Once Upon A Chassid

tremble; I too, was overwhelmed and began to silently weep. The Rebbe reached out his hand to receive the note held by father, who in his terror stood frozen in his place, at a total loss as to what to do.

Father stood silently, his head bowed, and teardrops fell from his eyes onto the floor. At first he managed to control himself and weep in silence, but soon he burst out in sobs. Father's sobbing crushed my heart, and I wept silently, gazing at the Rebbe's face. The Rebbe read Father's note twice and then a third time, all the while looking at our faces. Then he spoke to father for a long while.

When the Rebbe began to speak, Father stopped crying. Father's lips moved all the while as he silently repeated the Rebbe's words so that he would remember them. When the Rebbe finished, Father asked him several questions, which the Rebbe answered. Then Father said to the Rebbe: "My son is beginning cheder, with the help of the Almighty. I ask the Rebbe to bless him." He drew me close to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe closed his eyes and sank into deep thought. When he opened them, he looked at me and said: "Be studious and do not waste your time. May G-d help you to be a scholar and a chassid." "Amen," answered Father, and I after him.

As soon as we left the Rebbe's room, Father lifted me in his arms and joined the dancing chassidim in the small adjoining synagogue. For so was the practice in those days: anyone who had been privileged to be with the Rebbe in

Once Upon A Chassid

When the Czar's soldiers came to arrest Rabbi Schneur Zalman in 5559³, the Rebbe consulted with Rabbi Shmuel Munkes: should he go into hiding or allow himself to be taken to Petersburg? Reb Shmuel advised his Rebbe not to resist. "Why?" asked Rabbi Schneur Zalman. Answered Reb Shmuel: "One or the other. If you are truly a Rebbe, then no harm will befall you. And if you are not - you deserve it! How dare you deprive thousands of Jews of their pleasure in the material world?"

Source:

Sefer Hasichos 5703 (Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, 1942-43) p. 175; Likkutei Dibburim (Collected Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch), vol. IV, p. 1499.

3. 1798.

Upon seeing the replacement dish, the expressions on the faces of those who had already imagined the taste of roasted lung grew as sour as the kraut set before them. But soon a commotion was heard in the hallway. The town's butcher ran in, a most stricken look on his face: "Jews! Don't eat the lung!" he cried. "There has been a terrible mistake." It seems that the butcher was out of town and the butcher's wife mistakenly gave the shochet's wife a non-kosher lung to roast for the *farbrengen*.

Now it was the elder chassidim who sat in judgement upon Reb Shmuel. The audacity of a chassid to play the wonder-rabbi! By what rights had Reb Shmuel taken it upon himself to work miracles? Up onto the table with you Reb Shmuel, decreed the court.

After receiving his due for the second time that night, Reb Shmuel explained: "G-d forbid, I had no 'inside information' regarding the roasted lung. But when I entered into *yechidus* with the Rebbe for the first time, I resolved that no material desire would ever dictate to me. So I trained myself not to allow anything physical to overly attract me.

"When the bowl of roasted lung arrived, I found that my appetite was most powerfully roused. I also noticed that the same was true of many around the table. To be so strongly drawn by a mere piece of meat? I understood that something was not right."

* * *

yechidus would join the dancing as soon as he emerged from the Rebbe's holy presence.

For a long while Father danced, until his clothes were soaked in sweat, as if they were just pulled from a basin of water. Finally, he sat down on a bench in the corner of the synagogue to rest for a while. I saw that Father is in an elated mood: although he is exhausted, still he claps his hands and stamps his feet in time with the dancers; every so often, he snaps his fingers and lets out a thin, powerful whistle from his lips, a whistle which encourages those tired by the dancing, propelling them even faster in the dance's circles and whorls.

The dancing of chassidim was familiar to me from the many *farbrengens* that were held at our home, during which Reb Shlomo Peshe's would lift me onto his shoulders. Still, I wondered: why do chassidim dance after coming out of the Rebbe's room? Another question also troubled my mind: why is the audience with the Rebbe called *yechidus*? For so I heard the chassidim talking, "Have you been in *yechidus*?" "Thank G-d, I've been in *yechidus*," or, "So and so is waiting for a *yechidus*." Seeing that my father was in a good mood, I asked him the two questions which were giving me no rest.

Said father: "Do you know about the Sanctuary built in the desert by Moses at G-d's command? Do you know about the special room in the Sanctuary which housed the Ark containing the two tablets upon which were inscribed the Ten Commandments? And do you know that once a

Once Upon A Chassid

year, Aaron the High Priest would enter this holy chamber to offer the *ketores* incense and to pray for the Jewish people?

I was eager to show Father how much I knew: I explained also about the Holy Temple built by King Solomon in Jerusalem, which also housed a Holy of Holies, the Ark, and the two tablets. I described the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, his entry into the Holy of Holies, and how when the High Priest uttered the Holy Name of G-d the entire crowd in the Temple courtyard would kneel, bow, and prostrate themselves.

With my mouth I explained. And with my entire body I demonstrated exactly how the people would bow on Yom Kippur. Twice already I had been to the synagogue on the holy day, and when everyone bowed I did just as the grownups did, and then ran to tell my mother who gave me a slice of white bread without butter, explaining that it is a holy fast day.

“Who entered into the Holy of Holies with the High Priest?” Father asked me.

“No one,” I said. “He went in alone.”

“What did the High Priest do,” asked Father, “when he finished performing the services of the holy day?”

“Our teacher Rabbi Elimelech told us,” I replied, “that the High Priest was very rich and that he had clothes of

Once Upon A Chassid

Among the dishes which had arrived from the kitchen of Reb Nosson the shochet² was a bowl of roasted lung, a most tasty delicacy. But for some reason, Reb Shmuel was reluctant to part with this particular dish. Throughout the evening he pranced about, pouring the *L'chayim* and serving the food, with the bowl of roasted lung snug and elusive under his arm, deftly side-stepping all attempts to free it from his grasp.

Soon the chassidim grew weary of Reb Shmuel's game and demanded outright that he hand over the bowl and its mouth-watering contents. But the waiting chassid ignored their angry demands and kept up his dodging dance. Finally a few of the younger chassidim decided that Reb Shmuel's prank had gone far enough. They rose from the table, and soon the bowl and its bearer were cornered. But with a final leap and twist, Reb Shmuel dumped the roasted lung into the spittoon, and broke out in a merry *kzatzkeh* dance.

The younger chassidim sat to consider the gravity of Reb Shmuel's crime and decreed that a few well placed stripes were in order. Without batting an eye, Reb Shmuel stretched himself out on the table and received his due. He then set out in search of more *farbeisen* to keep the *farbengen* going. But the hour was late, and the best he could come up with was a plate of pickled cabbage donated by one of the Li'ozna residents.

2. Ritual slaughterer.

19:2

קדשים תהיו

Be holy. For I, Your G-d, am holy

"Be holy" - sanctify yourself also regarding that which is permitted.

Talmud, Yevamos 20b.

The first thing we heard from the Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi) upon our arrival in Li'ozna¹ was: "What is forbidden, one must not; and what is permitted, one need not." Three or four years we toiled with this, until we made this approach part of our lives. Only then would we be received in a private audience (yechidus) with the Rebbe to be guided in our individual paths in serving the Almighty.

Rabbi Mordechai of Horodok.

Too Good to be True

At a chassidic get-together (*farbrengen*) held in the early years of Chabad Chassidism, Reb Shmuel Munkes was doing the honors. The merry chassid danced about the participants, pouring the vodka and serving the '*farbeisen*' platters spread with bites of food to follow up the *L'chayim*.

1. See footnote 1 in vol. I, pg. 8.

gold. He would make them out of the gold in his house. When he finished performing the services in the Holy Temple on Yom Kippur he would go home, and all the Jews would accompany him, singing all the way. When they arrived, they found his courtyard set with tables covered with all kinds of food and drink, and they would celebrate with great joy because their sins had been forgiven."

"And today," continued Father, "do we now have a Temple with a Holy of Holies?"

"Today we have no Temple and no Holy of Holies," I replied with a heavy sigh, my eyes anxiously uplifted to father's, awaiting his response.

But before I could swallow, a group of chassidim burst into the small synagogue, singing and dancing. Father, upon seeing that they were mostly from Homel, jumped up from his seat, arms outstretched and feet advance, and joined their whirling circle.

I was completely bewildered and overwhelmed; I wanted to rush after Father but, fearing that I might be trampled, I drew back and climbed onto a bench. I spotted Reb Avraham Meir the coachman among the dancers; when he passed me I called out to him, but he didn't hear me.

From my bench, I watched the chassidim dance. Each danced with his eyes tightly shut, his right hand on his fellow's shoulder and his left moving in time with the rhythm of the song that issued from his lips in holy trepida-

Once Upon A Chassid

tion. Father danced in the center of the circle with several of the chassidim from Homel, including Reb Avraham Meir and Reb Shlomo Peshe's.

I have no words to convey the sacred emotions which bathed the faces of the dancers; the love and the brotherhood, the joy and the ecstasy, defy categorization and definition. The dancing chassidim were held and fused together in fellowship and harmony, and my heart dissolved in yearning to join them.

I kept calling out to Reb Avraham Meir as he passed, but he did not notice me. Then, I felt someone grabbing me from behind; suddenly, I was sailing through the air and, a moment later, riding on the shoulders of one of the dancers. I peered down and saw that Reb Shlomo Peshe's was carrying me on his shoulders, and my joy knew no bounds.

A voice like thunder rang out: ***“End of first round: time for mincha!”*** This from Reb Zalman Yaakov Esther Dishe's, one of the wealthy and influential householders of Homel. The dancing broke off for the afternoon prayers.

Father's earlier words about the Holy Temple and the Holy of Holies and his last question - “And today, do we have a Temple, a Holy of Holies?” - left a trail of distress in my heart. I now remembered the stories which our teacher

7. The Ninth of Av. A day of fasting and mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple.

From “Tackling Life’s Tasks, Every Day Energized with HaYom Yom...” (2012: Sichos in English)

☞ A Story with an Echo ☞

Several distinguished chassidim once visited the Rebbe Rayatz for the Tishrei holidays. One Sukkos morning, as they were waiting for the lengthy *Shacharis* prayers to begin, his younger son-in-law — our Rebbe — entered the *sukkah* to eat something before the morning prayers. One of the chassidim politely suggested that since the *Shulchan Aruch* does not clearly permit eating before the morning prayers,²³⁴ it would be more fitting for the Rebbe's son-in-law not to be seen eating at that time.

The Rebbe replied: “This is the custom of chassidim, and there's no need to be bashful about a chassidic custom.”

234. See the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 89:5.

18:5

אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם
*You shall keep My decrees and laws,
 which man shall do, and live in them...*

First or Foremost

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch wrote:

When my grandmother, the Rebbetzin Rivkah, was eighteen years old she fell ill. The doctor ordered that she must eat immediately upon waking. But grandmother, who did not wish to eat before prayer, would pray at an early hour and only afterwards have her breakfast.

When her father-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, heard of this, he said to her: "A Jew must be healthy and strong. Concerning the precepts of the Torah it is written *'live in them'* - one is to infuse life into the *mitzvos*. And in order to infuse life into the *mitzvos*, one must be fit and joyful."

Concluded Rabbi Menachem Mendel: "Better to eat in order to pray, than to pray in order to eat."

Source:

Hayom Yom [calendar with quotations from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, compiled in 1943 by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita], quotation for Shvat 10th.

Rabbi Elimelech had told us last *Tish'ah B'av*,⁷ and a new question began to race through my mind: Why are they happy? Why this joy, if the Holy Temple lies desolate, and on the site of the Holy of Holies demons dance? I decided to ask father as soon as he finished praying *mincha*.

After *mincha*, as Reb Zalman Yaakov Esther Dishe's was announcing the arrival of vodka and cakes, I posed my question to father, Father replied: "You ask well, my child. Indeed, nowadays we do not have a Holy Temple nor a Holy of Holies.

"From the day the Temple was destroyed," continued Father, "we await the day when we shall return to G-d and He will have mercy upon us and send us Moshiach, our righteous redeemer. Moshiach will gather us from the four corners of the earth and take us, together with our homes and furniture, to the Land of Israel. He will rebuild Jerusalem and the Holy Temple with the Holy of Holies.

"However, until that day, we are not alone. Lubavitch is our Jerusalem, the Rebbe's synagogue is our Holy Temple, the Rebbe's room is our Holy of Holies, and the Rebbe is the Ark which houses G-d's Holy Torah."

The sight of Father's face as he spoke and the earnestness of his tone made an awesome impression on me. I thought: Just now, Father and I were in the Holy of Holies! And now we are in the Holy Temple! How awesome and frightening it is.

Father's voice broke into my thoughts: "Did you know, my son, that when G-d would speak to Moses, Moses would hear the Divine voice emanating from the Ark in the Holy of Holies"

"Yes, I know," said. "I once heard Mother read this from a book to my aunt."

"When the Rebbe speaks to those who enter his room for *yechidus*," said father, "he conveys the words of the Almighty. And just as the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies alone, so too, everyone who enters the Rebbe's room - our Holy of Holies - enters alone. This is why an audience with the Rebbe is called *yechidus*, 'oneness.'

"And just as when the High Priest would emerge from the Holy of Holies, he and all of Israel would celebrate and be joyful, so too we celebrate and are joyous over the great kindness which the Almighty has shown us by granting us the privilege to enter into the Holy of Holies and hear the Rebbe's blessing.

"Remember well," warned Father, "the blessing which you received from the Rebbe, and when we arrive home, G-d willing, tell your Mother everything." But before I had the chance to demonstrate to Father that I remembered every word of the Rebbe's blessing to me, Reb Zalman Yaakov Esther Dishe's approached and steered Father to the table, forcing him to partake of the vodka and cake. I also received a honey-glazed cake from Father, upon which I recited the blessing, borei minei mezonos, out loud.

Reb Abba Dovid the cantor said to Father: "You are wise to bring your Avraham Berl to Lubavitch. These days, children must be exposed to *chassidus* from their very earliest years."

"In my opinion," said Reb Boruch Shimon the book-binder "the wisdom is hers, not his. She - meaning my mother - is truly a wise one, a true chassid."

"I was with Father in the Holy of Holies and the Rebbe blessed me," I told them, looking at Father to see if I was allowed to relate the Rebbe's blessing to them. But Father was deep in conversation with those who sat across the table from him. At this point Reb Shlomo Peshe's, drenched in sweat, ran in with the news that all the Homel chassidim had, thank G-d, already been in *yechidus*. The final group was now praying mincha and would arrive shortly.

"For bearing such good news," said Reb Zalman Yaakov to Reb Shlomo Peshe's, "you deserve a glass of vodka and a cake. Here, make a *bracha* and say *L'chayim*."

Source:

Hatomim journal vol. 11* [winter 1936], p. 120.

*. Correction: Vol. 2.