

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

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת.נ.צ.ב.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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Elul in the Air

Prior to the king's arrival in his capital city, all the townsmen march out to the surrounding field to welcome him. Everyone then has the privilege to personally greet the king, and he cordially acknowledges all his subjects with a smiling countenance. As the king enters the city, the people follow behind him in a procession. Subsequently, when he arrives at his royal castle, one must wait for permission before being granted an audience with the king. Moreover, only the elite and worthy individuals are admitted.

Likewise, Elul is the month in which we go out to greet the King in the field. G-d's radiance becomes manifest in our lives, as we then have the unique opportunity to greet Him face to face.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi

Elul in the Air

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch reminisces:

On the Shabbos preceding Elul, something felt different in the town of Lubavitch. It was a clear and sunny day, yet one could already smell Elul in the air. A gust of *teshuva*¹ wind had begun to blow...

1. Repentance; see *When Synonyms are really Antonyms*, p. 56.

Once Upon A Chassid

Upon arriving at the synagogue in the early morning hours, you would find quite a crowd already there. Some would be reciting Psalms, some studying *Chassidus* or reading *Tikunei Zohar*,² and others would be immersed in prayer.

As you entered the anteroom you would be awe-struck by the extraordinary sight that met your eyes. Everyone was in a state of profound concentration. Some were pouring their hearts in supplication to the Creator, while others were humming a meditative chassidic melody, oblivious to everything around them.

The way people recited Psalms was different from the manner in which it was recited throughout the year. From the very first blow of the *shofar*,³ the world was pervaded by the all-embracing atmosphere of Elul.

* * *

The Lubavitcher Rebbe comments:

It is interesting to note that the metaphors used in this picturesque description of Elul in Lubavitch all relate to air. The spirit of the month is said to pervade the world as an all-embracing atmosphere, something different in the air. Likewise, the main theme of Elul – teshuva – is depicted as

2. Foreword to *Zohar*, a Kabbalistic work by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, c. 120 C.E.

3. Ram's horn, customarily sounded throughout the month of Elul following the daily service.

Elul in the Air

a gust of wind. Surely my saintly father-in-law sought to impart some deeper lesson by means of this poetic symbolism.

A human being has five basic necessities in life: lodging, clothing, food, drink, and air to breathe; yet not all are equally necessary, nor are they equally attainable. Ironically, the greater the need, the lesser its market value and the easier to obtain. While clothing is needed more than lodging, a house is far more costly than the shirt on one's back. One could not survive very long without eating, yet food is considerably less expensive than clothing. Water must be consumed more regularly than food, though it is obtained with relatively greater ease. The single most essential of all requirements, of course, is oxygen, as the need to breathe exists for every individual at every moment. Unlike the first four necessities, air is freely available to all, and is inhaled with minimum effort.

Herein lies the significance of Elul's association with air, for there is no better way to aptly describe the penitent nature of the month. During this auspicious season, teshuva is a vital necessity for all, a need that is felt every moment of our day and in every fiber of our being. Moreover, due to its inherent importance, teshuva is within the reach of every individual, as accessible as a refreshing breath of air.

Source:

Likkutei Dibburim [Collected Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn of Lubavitch], vol. I, p. 230;
Likkutei Sichos [The Collected Talks of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe], vol. XIX, p. 158-161.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

1

Already the signs by which our Sages identified the end of exile and the time of Redemption have been fulfilled, including the (recently publicized) sign in *Yalkut Shimoni*:¹

"Rabbi Yitzchak said:

In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed, the kings of all the nations of the world will struggle with each other: the king of Persia will provoke the Arabian king; the Arabian king will go to Aram for advice. All the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror; they will fall on their faces, seized by pains like the pangs of childbirth. Israel will also be in turmoil and terror, saying, "Where shall we come and where shall we go, where shall we come and where shall we go?" [G-d] will say to them, "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done, I have done only for you sake. Why are you afraid? Do not fear, the time for your Redemption has arrived. It will not be like the earlier Redemptions, this final Redemption, because suffering and subjection to other nations followed the earlier Redemptions. But the final Redemption will not be followed by any suffering and subjection to other nations."

The *Yalkut* continues:

Our Sages taught that when the King Moshiach comes he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash [Holy Temple] and will proclaim to Israel, "Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived!"

So will it be for us. From the outset there is nothing to fear,

1. *Yeshayahu*, remez 499

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since we already have the promise, "Do not fear, the time of your Redemption has arrived." [The words "Do not fear" are an assurance that there is no reason to fear.]

And so it will be for us, that our righteous Moshiach should have actually already come and already stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash, announcing and proclaiming that Moshiach has already arrived!

Amen, may this be His will.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Re'eh,
Mevorchim HaChodesh Elul, 5750)*

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The relationship of our time to Redemption is based not only on the fact that "I await his coming every day"¹ and especially after "all the deadlines have passed"² and all the efforts have been completed (as was discussed several times), but also on the fact that we are now in a special year whose initials represent: "It will be a year of wonders I shall show him," for "as in the days of your departure from Egypt, I will show him wonders."

Indeed, we have actually **seen** many "wonders." The most notable among them has been the liberation of our brethren from that regime [the former Soviet Union], where many of them have emerged from distress to freedom, in both the literal sense of the word as well as (and primarily) with respect to the freedom granted them to live a Jewish life based on Torah and Mitzvos. In the last

1. Text of "Ani Ma'amin" (published in several prayer books) - Based on the expression used in *Chabakuk* 2:3. *Commentary on the Mishneh of the Rambam*, Introduction to Chapter Chelek, 12th principle.

2. Talmudic expression - *Sanhedrin* 97b.

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few days the convention of Chabad emissaries from many countries convened in that country, and its effects are continuing through these days. The convention took place in the country where the city of Lubavitch is situated, as well as other cities where the Chabad Rebbes were active for many generations, such as Liadi, Liozna, Rostov and Petersburg. The emissaries of the leader of Chabad of our generation, my sainted father-in-law, gathered in the capital, Moscow, with the intention of increasing - with more vigor - the dissemination of Torah and the wellsprings of Torah (Chabad Chassidic teaching) to the farthest reaches. It is this process that will bring the King Moshiach.³

It is already Rosh Chodesh Elul, the month of reckoning for the entire year. The sum total of this accounting is: **"How much longer!?!..."**

How can it be that at the conclusion of eleven months of the year "I will show him wonders," our righteous Moshiach has still not come?!...

* * *

Translating the above in practical terms:

In every place, one should publicize and draw people's attention to the specific efforts which are associated with the month of Elul and are alluded to in the initials of five verses which form the word Elul. These verses are references to: Torah, prayer, acts of loving kindness, Teshuvah (repentance or return) and Redemption. Special emphasis should be placed on the fifth acronym, the theme of Redemption, as it permeates all other areas of Divine service, so that everything is done in the spirit of Redemption. This includes particularly Torah studies in matters concerning Redemption and

3. The well know epistle of the Ba'al Shem Tov - Published in *Keser Shem Tov* (Kehot edition), in the beginning, and in several other sources.

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the Holy Temple. All of this should be permeated with the eager anticipation and the certain conviction that imminently we will see with eyes of flesh that "Behold he (the King Moshiach) is coming."⁴

In simple terms:

It should be announced and publicized in all places - with heartfelt words - that G-d says through His servants, the prophets, to each and every Jew: "Behold I am placing before you today a blessing," so much so, that literally today we will see with eyes of flesh the blessing of the true and complete Redemption.

[This announcement must be made even by those who argue that they have not completely absorbed its full meaning. Since their faith is intact, they are able to (and consequently, required to) publicize these matters to others, first and foremost their own family members. (Certainly they don't need to "suffer" from his lack of comprehension of this matter.) They should also spread the word to all those within their environment and ultimately to each and every Jew. Undoubtedly, the appropriate effort will be well received and it will have its intended effect on others, as well as inspiring the one making the announcement and doing the publicity, that he too should internalize the message.]

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas R'eh,
first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5751)*

4. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR BROTHER
R'foel Mordechai ben Reb Yitzchok ע"ה Plotkin
On the occasion of his 23rd yahrtzeit, 1 Elul, 5785

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY שיחיו

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.

שתבלחט"א - AND IN HONOR OF HIS WIFE
Mrs. **Elka** bas **Raizel** שתחי' **Caplan**
May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR GRANDFATHER

Reb Aryeh ben Reb Tzvi HaLevi ע"ה Lang

Passed away on 24 Menachem-Av, 5736

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS GRANDCHILDREN

Rabbi & Mrs. Aryeh HaLevi and Leah שיחי Lang

Shluchim of the Rebbe in Camarillo, California

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND

Reb Pesach Betzalel ben Reb Leib ע"ה Fleischman

Passed away on 3 Elul, 5784

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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