

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 Chukat-Balak, 5786
(Vols. 62-63)



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Vaad L'hafotzas Sichos

788 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
Tel. (718) 774-7200 - Fax. (718) 774-7494

5759 ♦ 1999

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
 ה. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** תח"ל
Shagalov

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

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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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All the signs mentioned by our sages concerning the generation of "the heels of Moshiach" indicate that our generation is the last generation of exile and consequently the first generation of Redemption. This realization has been greatly increased through the enhancement of efforts to disseminate the Torah, Judaism and the wellsprings of Torah to the most remote reaches of the world, extending even to this "lower hemisphere," i.e. the Western Hemisphere, (as a result of the liberation of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz) over the course of the last 50 years

Consider this: If **at the beginning** of this epoch, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, issued a proclamation that "Teshuvah now, Redemption now!" and testified that we have already completed all of our Divine service, and all that remains for us to do is to "polish the buttons" and "All of you, stand ready to greet our righteous Moshiach." How much more so, **at the end** of this epoch, there is absolutely no shred of doubt that the time of Redemption has arrived. To borrow a Talmudic expression: "All of the deadlines have passed."¹ Even Teshuvah (which the Talmud there states is a prerequisite for Redemption ("Redemption depends solely on Teshuvah")) has already been fully realized.

...Within our generation itself, there is an added innovation this year:

Besides that we find ourselves in literal proximity to the true and complete Redemption, in this year of "It shall be a year of miracles I shall show him," when the prediction of "As in the days you have departed from Egypt, I shall show him wonders,"² will be realized.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.
2. *Michah* 7:15.

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And we have, in fact, witnessed "wonders" that testify that this is **"the year that the King Moshiach shall be revealed,"** and the **"time when the King Moshiach will come..."** and announce to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'³ Further, these wonders and the announcement that "Behold, he (the King Moshiach) is coming,"⁴ allowing for the translation that **"he has already come,"** mean that we already stand on the threshold of the beginning of the Messianic Era as well as on the threshold of the beginning of the Redemption, the continuation and culmination of which shall occur imminently.

Since we are standing on the threshold of Redemption which will arrive imminently, it follows that the study of the Laws of building the Temple this year must be **of an entirely different order.** First and foremost, this study must be permeated with the certain awareness and full recognition that this study is not merely an "academic exercise," but it is **relevant for practical use for the very next moment.** For indeed, the "Future Sanctuary that we are anticipating has already been built and is fully developed (above and will thus imminently) be revealed and arrive from Heaven"⁵ **instantaneously!**

The attitude towards the study of these laws should be analogous to what was discussed in the recent past,⁶ that the special increase in the study of the teachings of Torah concerning Redemption and Moshiach should not simply serve as a catalyst to hasten the coming of Moshiach and the Redemption. Rather this study should enable us to live with and thrive on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. We should "live with the time" of the Messianic Era.

3. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

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

5. *Rashi* and *Tosphos* commentaries to *Sukkah*, 41, end side a and in other sources.

6. Above, p. 49 and in other places.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

This can be attained when one's intellect is filled with the comprehension of the Torah concepts of Moshiach and Redemption. This intellectual awareness then extends to and permeates one's emotions, and then translates into thought, speech and action consistent with this very auspicious period of time when we stand on the threshold of Redemption and we are able to point with our finger "Behold he (he King Moshiach) has come."

One might suggest an additional rationale for the need and the virtue of studying the Torah's teachings concerning Moshiach, Redemption and the building of the third Temple; as an entrance into the Messianic Era:

Although our Sages⁷ have declared that Moshiach will come "when we are distracted from his coming," this does not contradict, G-d forbid, **the need for thought and reflection of the most powerful order**⁸ on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. This means primarily thought and reflection that we are now standing at the very entrance of the Messianic Era, that "Behold he is coming," since all the deadlines have since passed, teshuvah has been done and all of the different aspects of our Divine service have been completed in accordance with the details mentioned above. The resolution of this apparent contradiction is that the term for distraction, "Hesech HaDa'as" (literally "removing one's knowledge") actually means "**transcending** one's knowledge."⁹ This implies that after one has allowed this matter of Moshiach to permeate one's intellect (by applying one's thought and constant reflection, etc.) one then reaches the level where this then transcends one's knowledge.

7. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

8. *Da'as*, the type of knowledge where "one binds his mind with an extremely powerful and strong bond; firmly attaching one's thought." - Tanya, end of ch. 3.

9. Tanya, *Igeres HaKodesh* (105b).

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Translating the above into practical terms.

Despite the "uproar" associated with this matter in recent times within this year, the year of "I shall show him wonders," and after witnessing the wonders which testify that this is "The year that the King Moshiach will be revealed," we see how difficult it is to inculcate the awareness and the feeling that we are literally standing on the threshold of the Messianic Era, to the point that one begins to "thrive" on matters of Moshiach and Redemption...

The solution to this dilemma is **Torah study** concerning Moshiach and Redemption. For Torah - which is G-d's wisdom, and thus transcends the natural order of the universe - has the capacity **to alter** the nature of man.¹⁰ Even when one's emotions are still **outside** the parameters of Redemption - G-d forbid - (because he has not yet emerged from his internal exile), he can nevertheless learn the Torah's teachings concerning Redemption, and thereby be one elevated to the state of Redemption. One then begins to thrive on matters of Redemption, borne of the knowledge, awareness and feeling that "Behold he is coming."

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Balak,
17 (numerically equivalent to "tov-good") Tammuz, 5751)*

10. See the comments of our sages on the verse "*Lo'keil gomer oh'lye*" (*Talmud Yerushlami, Kesubos, 1:2*. See there for cross references. Cited in Halacha by the *Shach* (and *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe*), *Yoreh Deah*, sec. 189:13(23)).

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.

*

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

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER

Mrs. Zlata Zelda (Lucille) bas Reb Yaakov ע"ה Hazan

Passed away on 18 Tamuz, 5768

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

DEDICATED BY HER CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN שיחי

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