



EACH THEIR OWN

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

The room was small, yet we all found space. The atmosphere touched an inner sense of warmth that reached way beyond the mere grimy walls of a Brooklyn side street. We are talking about another time, in fact it must over sixty years ago. The Yidden in that room had gathered to replenish their souls with the life-giving waters of a Yiddishkeit born in fountains created centuries ago.

The Bobov of then was a small chassidus, mostly populated by holocaust survivors and their youngsters. It was a Friday night tish, and we all waited with gentle anticipation for the Rebbe HaRav Shlomo Zt"l to enter. The gathering was held in the Rebbe's house, the number in attendance may have been small, yet, the neshomahs of those holy Yidden filled entire worlds. The Rav would enter from the side door that led from his study, wearing a colourful Shabbos robe with a long tallis, his eyes alight with love for every single inch of kedusha that is Shabbos. He would turn at the head of the table, take off his shtriemel and place the silver edged tallis over his head, "Sholom Alechem," ah that nigun that we sang welcoming the very angels that had accompanied these Jews through all manner of challenges, "Sholom aleichem, Malechia Hashoras." The Rav's son Rav Naftulcha Zt"l stood next to his holy father, his hands rubbing against one another as if washing away all the woes of the material world that spoke of the many needs his impoverished community was living with. It was no simple task that he carried on his slim shoulders, etching out a place in this new world that would find a space where Yiddishkeit could flower. "Sholom Aleichem," the nigun invited and coaxed the Angels to share with us in this small space in Brooklyn the wonder of our eternal Shabbos serenity. The Rav sang from an ethereal place, his majestic face shown with an illumination that touched each one in the room. There is a prayer chanted

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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
כ"ק מרן אדמו"ר מפיאסצנה
הרב קלונימוס קלמן שפירא
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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
הרבנית הצדקנית
חיה שרה בת הרב שלמה
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after the opening invitational stanzas, it is a tefilla that speaks of the ages of Yiddishe pain, care, devotion and vulnerability. There is one sentence, few of words yet every time the Rav chanted it, you felt swept up into the Rebbe's realm of hope. "Sheterachmeini ode begulisie, begolanie....." "You should further show me mercy in my exile, to redeem me...." "Sheterachmanie ode" ... gevalt, these words would open up everyone's heart, the Rav would sob, the words were so heartening and loving. "You should further show me mercy ...in my golus," yes dear reader, we all have our own exile our own unique golus that is tailored to our unique tikun in the world. The Rebbe was beseeching the Eibishter that He should have rachmonus and take us out of the pain of our own inner conflict and anguish. Those words, that plea for personal mercy, chanted by the tzadik seared into the neshomos of all of us. It lives with me today, often wafting up into my consciousness, pleading after all these years for illumination in whatever golus I find myself in.

With the reading of Parshas Shemos we enter a unique period of the year named Shovivim. The weeks from Shemos through till Mishpatim (and in a leap year such as this, there is another 2 weeks added) are a propitious period for teshuvah,, spiritual growth especially in terms of matters people find particularly spiritually challenging on a personal level. The sefer the Sheloh Hakodosh explains that these weeks teach us of the journey the Jewish nation underwent from the beginnings of their slavery in Mitzrayim through to our being gifted to stand at Har Sinai and receiving the Torah. This is the eternal growth pattern of each and every Yied. The Yismach Yisroel Zt"l explains that these vibrant lessons are relived in our torah readings especially at this time of the year. These weeks are considered difficult, and according to the Zohar there is a great influence from the forces of Esav during this time. The Eibishter is with us and will fulfil His promise to 'uplift 'us and take us to our total Redemption.

So yes, I often relive the memory of the Tzadik as he stood in that small room in Brooklyn. His holy sigh whilst pleading for his flock's personal redemption stirs in my soul whenever I feel the need for chizuk. We are living in dark and dreary times, and the fearfulness taunts us. Yet we have faith, and we know, that Hashem will answer our plea not only for our nation but for our own selves as well.

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