



## REMEMBERED MOMENTS

*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

Yieden live with stories. Starting with the Torah Hakodosha itself, and reaching into our daily lives. It is thru stories that we can grasp the deepest of concepts and find comfort in troubled times. All my Rebbe's were master story tellers, and their greatest lessons came clothed in these cherished oft told tales. Stories never stop being born, it is the stuff of life, and here I want to share a few Purim incidents from the 60s that I myself witnessed. You may remember one or two of them, but then again, my Rebbe's would often repeat their holy stories time after time, with the warmth never going stale. So enjoy.....

The shtiebel was small and narrow, on a side street of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It was Purim at night, the year was 1969 and in the dimly lit Beis Medrash something other worldly was taking place. There was a long table, sitting at which were a family, each one of which would later go on to become a rabbinical leader in their own right. These blossoming Chasidic rebbes were celebrating the Yom Tov, sitting with the patriarch of the family, a long white bearded tzaddik dressed in a colourful Chasidic robe and shtrielmel. His sons and sons in law were speaking Torah, wondrous thoughts that were sprouting from a place far beyond the everyday. Stories of great tzaddikim, the participants' ancestors, were shared, and yes, the wine flowed.

The nigunim were haunting, touching one's inner being, I sat at the table, the youngest, invited because of a slender family relationship, soaking up every minute. These Yieden were real, some born in Siberia, others in DP camps. They knew of a past that still haunted them, yet they sang of an existence that had the hair on the back of your neck standing up. The atmosphere was rich with a sense of Hashem's presence; the older Rebbe smiled with a far off look in his dark eyes. All was kissed with a glimpse of yesteryear. At that moment I felt I was in a world of spiritual perfection; nothing could ever come that would bring us any closer to our holy roots. Ah, then the tears started,

בס"ד



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Ribono Shel Olam, if only I could have gathered those tears, they slid down everyone's face, and I still feel with certainty the Angels gathered them together. Tears of yearning, words half sighed of wanting to be closer to Hashem, of feeling unworthy, of seeking ever more Torah, of brotherly love, all this and so much more.

The memory moves me to another realm whenever it replays itself in my mind. I feel humbled that I witnessed these great sweet Yieden, before the years of tishen, before gaboim and shtiping. It was just an old table, sitting on benches, singing and crying.....

The Rebbe Rav Naftali Ztl of Bobov Ztl never asked for the responsibilities that comprised his every day. He was a peace-loving soul that sought to live a life given over to serving Hashem as his holy ancestors had. After the fires of the Churban one would have thought such an ambition would be granted. Yet, his role was deemed to be different, and he did what the klal needed, not what he may have sought for himself. Many a time I witnessed the gut-wrenching aggravation that visited his daily existence. His was a daily fight to cover the expenses of the rapidly growing Torah Mosdos of Bobov; he did this alone, with a smile and a sigh.

Purim, the time of half shekels, was his special time as well. On Purim everything can change; through focusing on Hashem we can break down all the walls that stand in our way. On this day I would make it my business to watch Rav Naftali closely. He always hid his fire, but on Purim he opened up. As the Olam danced he would clutch his father's hand, look up to the heavens and dance the dance of angels. His eyes looked beyond his woes; he was attached to a greater force, a heavenly atonement made up of a half shekel of powerful oneness.....

And finally, just one more example — Perhaps the most moving of them all.

The Bobover Rebbe Rav Shlomo Ztl was the most elegant and graceful of humans I have ever seen. The Rebbe danced in a manner that only one who is totally imbued with Hashem can. It was like watching the whole of the Shemoneh Esrei expressed in a physical form — its highs, its lows, everything was there together with the heartfelt beseeching. Purim was special in this way. I will never forget how, after the entire night of the tisch, the Rebbe would dance, clearing away any thought of Haman and his like. At the last moments, he would stand at the door of the shul, his hand on the mezuzah, his voice raised in song. We would all be dancing, and he would drive us on with the words, "Tzama lecha nafshi, My soul thirsts for You" (Tehillim 63:2). One total unit of devotion to shivisi Hashem L'nagdi Tamud....Hashem is always in our hearts and thoughts.

At that Eis rotzon, Divine Time of Favour, nothing was held back, no wall could hinder our holy path. The Rebbe stood at the door of our hopes, guiding us to realms never thought possible. Tears slipped down his silver beard, this was what it was all about. The thirst, the want, the holy finding.

I wish you all a very special Purim, with true simcha and ahavas Hashem.

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