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Empty of Beauty, Full of Joy

[Square brackets are my additions – y.t.]

One year before Sukkos, the chossid Reb Elye Gross asked me [the scribe (*sofer*) **Rabbi Yehuda Clapman** of Crown Heights, Brooklyn] if I already bought an *esrog*.

When I replied “not yet,” he suggested that I go to the house of a certain individual to purchase an *esrog* from him, because this Jew needs very much the income.

I obliged and went over there, and looked around in his stock for a nice *esrog*. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a single specimen that pleased me.

After I had already been searching for quite some time, another individual came in, someone I was acquainted with. He picked an *esrog* quickly, asked how much it cost, paid and turned to leave.

Empty handed, I followed the man to the door. As we exited the house I caught up to him and asked, “What nice *esrog* were you able to find here? I looked for a good while, but I couldn't find anything of reasonable quality.”

"For me, a *mehudar* [extra beautiful] *esrog* is to give a Jew needed income to help with all his *Sukkot* expenses!" he replied.

I was very impressed by his answer, to say the least.

On *Yomtov* [outside of Israel, the first two days of the festival], I saw the man again, in shul. Out of curiosity I decided to check to see what *esrog* he is really using. I figured that for sure he bought himself also a beauty of an *esrog* elsewhere (as I knew he had the means to do), and that this other *esrog* that I saw him buy was a spare [or for offering the non-religious public to bless upon!], bought just to support that merchant for *Sukkot*.

When I saw the *esrog* that he used to bless upon and for the shakings I was astonished; he actually used that somewhat inferior *esrog* that I had seen him buy.

I was so touched by what I witnessed, that I decided that I must write to the [Lubavitcher] Rebbe this beautiful story of pure *Ahavas Yisroel* and *chessed* [love for a fellow Jew, and kindness].

Somewhat hesitatingly I went to the Rebbe's office, and I asked the secretary on duty if it would be appropriate to write this story to the Rebbe?

This chasid who, like his colleagues, worked closely with the Rebbe on a daily basis, was not pleased with my question, He responded: “Every day the Rebbe gets letters full of negativity and sadness, and here you have a beautiful story of pure Love for a Fellow Jew that would give the Rebbe so much pleasure, and you are hesitating to write?”

I got the message. I exited the office and went to a certain Jew in Crown Heights who has a beautiful handwriting, as well as being a masterful writer. I told him the story, and he went ahead to write for the Rebbe the whole *Megilah* [‘scroll’ as in “Scroll of Esther” -- i.e. long and detailed], telling the story in poetic Yiddish and with charm. He used special paper and he wrote with gorgeous calligraphy lettering and style. As soon as he finished, I hurried back to the office to hand the letter in for it to be delivered to the Rebbe.

Next day the Rebbe's secretary phoned me. He said, “I have no answer from the Rebbe for you, but I can describe to you what happened with your letter.

"I put your letter on top of the pile of letters I brought into the Rebbe. I wanted your letter to be the first letter the Rebbe saw so that he likely would read it first. Sure enough, the Rebbe took your letter from the top of the pile and began reading. I stayed by the door and watched, and this is what I saw.

"The Rebbe started reading, and right away I noticed that he was not reading fast, as he usually did. Rather, I saw that he was concentrating and reading your letter word by word and line by line, and with each line, I saw the Rebbe's smile grow bigger and bigger and bigger!

“Your letter gave the Rebbe much *nachas* (pleasure and joy)!”

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the Sukkos 5777 website of //COLlive.com, from where it was picked up and shared internationally on social media. Submitted by Daniel Koren (“Shabbos Stories for the Parsha” - <keren18@juno.com>.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe** רבי: [11 Nissan 5662 - 3 Tammuz 5754 (April 1902 – June 1994 C.E.)], became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law’s passing on 10 Shvat 5710 (1950 C.E.). He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

