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Running-Walking-Waiting to See the King

Whenever **Reb Menachem-Mendel of Liska**¹ – the father of Reb Naftali of Ropshitz – signed a letter he always added the words *Ohev Yisrael* (“one who loves his fellow Jew”).

Once, when he was about to append these two words, the pen fell from his hand. He picked it up and tried again. But when once more some such mishap occurred, he gathered that it was not heaven’s will that he should now sign this, and he wept sorely: “One good trait I had of which I could be proud – *ahavas Yisrael*, loving one’s fellow Jew- and now that too has been taken from me.”

He scrutinized his actions carefully lest he had offended someone, but found nothing. He called his family and asked them to do likewise. It transpired that the same morning there had been a caller – some coarse and unspiritual fellow who wore the kind of hat that was favored by the vulgar yokels of those provinces. He had asked to be admitted to the *tzadik*, but the family had not allowed him this.

Reb Menachem Mendel at once instructed his attendants to find the man and to bring him to his study. They hunted about in vain from one corner of the town to the next, from one inn to the next tavern. Finally someone gave them a lead: he had seen such a man, but he had been seen entering a place of unsavory reputation.

They headed straight there and found him, and told him that the *tzadik* wanted to see him and talk to him, but he refused. So they took hold of him and brought him bodily to their rebbe, mentioning meanwhile where they had found him.

The *tzadik* took no notice of their comment. Instead, he received the stranger with a smiling countenance and requested his forgiveness for the incident that

¹ or Linsk – then Hungry, now Poland and called Lesko.

had taken place that morning. He honored him in every possible way, seeing to it that the members of his family who had not admitted him in the morning should now serve him vodka and cake.

As for the stranger, when he saw with what affection and respect the *tzadik* related to him, he found room in his heart for some second thoughts about his lifestyle, and with time became a penitent in all his ways.

When he had left, and the *tzadik* observed how his family and his chasidim were amazed that he should give this kind of treatment to a hardened sinner, he said:

“Think for a moment on a prophecy of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] that speaks of the days of *Moshiach*. It is written: ‘*They shall bring your brethren from among all the nations as an offering to G-d, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon camels, to My holy mountain in Jerusalem.*’² So the question arises: Who are those Jews who will wait until the *Moshiach* brings them?

“As far as chasidim are concerned, as soon as they hear that the *Mashiach* is here they will run of their own accord to greet him. Those who are not chasidim, - well, if they won’t run, at least they will walk; and without any doubt even they will not wait until the *goyim* bring them to greet the King *Moshiach*. So to whom must our verse be referring?

“It must be the sinners who are sunk deep in iniquity. Concerning *them* the verse tells us, that when the *goyim* hear that the *Moshiach* has arrived, they will go and bring them to Jerusalem ‘as an offering to G-d’.

“Now today we insulted an ‘offering’ such as this. Shall I then not be grieved over it? And now that this offering has returned to my hands, shall I not love him?”

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Source: Supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from “A Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Festivals” by Rabbi S.Y. Zevin, as translated by **R. Uri Kaploun**.

*Biographical note:* **Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Rubin of Liska** (1740-1803) was the father of well-known and highly popular chasidic Rebbe, R. Nafatali of Ropshitz. A posthumous collection of his writings is called *Likkutei Maharam*.

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 66:20 -- this passage is also part of the *Haftorah* that is read when *Rosh Hodesh* (‘New Moon Day’) falls on Shabbat, as will happen at the end of this week, on Shabbat *Rosh Hodesh Menachem-Av*.

*Connection*-Weekly Reading: Bilaam's final prophecy contains much about Moshiach.