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## ***The Most Mysterious & Extraordinary Wedding Present***

In the city of Lizhensk, where the Rebbe Elimelech led his chasidim, there is a steep rocky hill with a cliff known as "Rebbe Elimelech's Table". Yaakov-Yitzchak Horowitz, later to become the famous Seer of Lublin, used to climb up there in his younger years in the Rebbe's Beit Midrash. He would sit alone and meditate for hours on the meaning of true humility, and how the nullification of the ego could be achieved.

One day, while he was deep in his meditations, he came to the conclusion that the only way to give himself completely to G-d was to literally offer up his own life. So he went to the very brink of the ledge and looked down, intending to throw himself onto the rocks below.

But a friend named Zalke had secretly followed him up the trail from the village and was hiding in the bushes, watching. When he realized that Reb Yaakov was about to commit suicide, Zalke ran toward him, grabbed him by the belt, and pulled him back from the ledge to safety. Then Zalke remained there with his friend for a long time, comforting and encouraging him to remain in this world, until he had finally talked his soul out of its grim purpose.

Years later, after Reb Yaakov had become known as the Seer of Lublin, his old friend Zalke - now Rabbi Zalke - went to visit him. As he entered the room, the Seer went up to him, took both of his hands in his, and gazed deeply into his eyes. Then the Seer said "My dear, dear Zalke, my friend, my life - I truly love you like a brother. This is because, in my soul's first incarnation on this earth, you were my father. But when I think back to what you did to me in Lizhensk - how you talked me into remaining in this sorrowful world - then I find I cannot love you as much."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the Seer of Lublin did remain in this world, until his tragic death<sup>2</sup> at age 70. At the wedding of his grand-daughter, Hinda,<sup>3</sup> when the time came for the gifts to be announced, the Seer, then in his late sixties, was sitting at the table with his head in his hands. He appeared to be asleep. Over and over the

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<sup>1</sup> Until here based on "*Niflaot HaRabbi: Life and stories of R. Jacob Isaac ha-Hozeh (the Seer) of Lublin*" (1911?) by Moses Menahem-Mendel (ben Aharon) Walden.

<sup>2</sup> See #302 in the Ascent Stories archive (or story #31 in my "Festivals of the FullMoon" for a revised, expanded version.)

<sup>3</sup> To Shimon-Leib Horowitz

master of ceremonies kept announcing "And now for the wedding gifts from the bride's family...." and waited for the Seer to answer. But the Seer remained motionless and did not seem to hear. Then everyone became silent, and waited respectfully for him to wake up.

A half hour passed and the crowd was getting restless. So one of his four sons (father of the bride) leaned over and whispered in his ear "Father, wake up - they are calling for you to announce the gifts from the bride's family." The Seer looked up with a start and replied "Then I give myself. After thirteen years, the gift will be brought."

The wedding guests were puzzled by this strange announcement. What on earth could it mean? Of course, there were other generous gifts from the bride's side, and the Seer's family hastened to announce them. But the strange incident remained in the minds of the people. A few years later, the Seer of Lublin passed away (on **Tisha b'Av** 5575 / 1815).

Thirteen years after the wedding announcement, Hinda bore a son, whom she named Yaakov Yitzchak after her deceased grandfather. When the boy grew up, he looked exactly like his famous great-grandfather, right down to the fact that his right eye was a little bigger than his left. It is said that he was the very same soul, come back to fulfill the Seer's promise to "give himself" for a wedding present.

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Source: Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from "*Jewish Tales of Reincarnation*" by Yonassan Gershom, posted on [shiratdevorah.blogspot.co.il](http://shiratdevorah.blogspot.co.il).

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Horowitz** [of blessed memory: 5505 - 9 Av 5575 (1745 – Aug. 1815 C.E.)], known as '**the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin**', was the main successor to the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk, and leader of the spread of chassidism in Poland. Many of his insights were published posthumously in *Divrei Emmes*, *Zichron Zos*, and *Zos Zichron*.

*Connection:* Seasonal – **Tisha b'Av** is also the (209th) *yahrzeit* of the **Seer of Lublin**.