

Good Shabbos Everyone. In the Haftorah this week, we read a very inspirational line, "For Hashem will not abandon His people." (Shmuel I, 12:22). Even though we have suffered greatly at the hands of the Nations, Hashem will never forsake the Jewish People. The following Chassidic tale illustrates the great yearning that the Jewish people has had for the redemption, when we will be able finally to live in peace in the land that Hashem has promised us.

Before making the long voyage to Eretz Yisrael, Reb Wolf (Ze'ev) Kitzis called on the Baal Shem Tov to receive his farewell blessings. As they parted, the tzaddik told him: "Reb Wolff! Be careful with your words, and know what to answer!"

The chassid Reb Wolf set out, and on the way his ship dropped anchor near an island in order to have its provisions replenished. While the crew was thus occupied, he found himself a quiet spot on the island where he could commune alone with his Maker.

But so rapt was he in his holy thoughts that he quite forgot about his ship, and when he came out of his inspired trance he found that it was already quite out of sight. He was in very serious trouble.

As he turned around he stumbled upon a path and followed it, until he reached a house, where an old man greeted him, and asked: "Reb Wolff, why are you so worried?" "How should I not worry," he said, "when my ship has gone, and I am left alone?"

"Relax, Reb Wolff," the old man reassured him. "Stay with me for Shabbos, and then next week you can travel from here with one of the ships that pass by. We have a minyan here for prayer, and a mikveh for immersion." When the time came for him to board the ship a week later, the old man turned to him and asked: "Reb Wolff, I forgot to ask you something. How are the Jews making out where you come from?"

The chassid was preoccupied with his imminent departure, so he replied briefly: "The good G-d does not abandon them."

And he boarded ship, and sailed on his way. When he had time to think things over, the old man's question came to mind. He could not forgive himself, and tormented himself with accusations: "What did I answer him? Did the Baal Shem Tov not tell me that I should know what to answer? Why, then did I not tell the old man how wretched is the plight of our persecuted brothers?"

So overcome was he with remorse that he decided to change his direction at the first opportunity, return to Europe and go speak with the Baal Shem Tov. As soon as he walked into the Baal Shem Tov's room, the tzaddik greeted him and said:

"Day after day Avrohom Avinu presents himself before the Almighty and says, 'Master of the Universe! My children — how are they?' and the Almighty assures the Avrohom Avinu saying 'I do not forsake them.'

And look, Hashem tells Avrohom Avinu, "here you see Reb Wolf on his way to Eretz Yisroel. Now there is a fine Jew. Go down and ask Reb Wolf how the Jews are faring!"

The Baal Shem Tov concluded: "Now if you had told Avrohom Avinu how intense is the suffering of the Children of Israel throughout this long exile, then the Messianic Redeemer would have come! But you did not heed my warning!" (A Treasury of Chassidic Tales, p. 428, Reb S.Y. Zevin) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**