

Dance of a Lifetime

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In Teplik there lived a man named Feivel who was a sincere servant of God. Without fail, he would get up every night at midnight to recite the Tikkun Chatzot (Midnight Lament) and mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. The sad state of the world and the all discord and dismay that fill it are a direct consequence of the loss of the Temple and the deep connection with God that once gave it vitality.

After reciting Tikkun Chatzot, Feivel would feel so happy that he would immediately begin to dance with joy. He would sing with great passion, "*Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!* How fortunate are we, how pleasant our lot!" People thought he was strange for rejoicing so much in doing *mitzvot* and because he took such delight in the simple fact of his Jewishness. As a mark of their derision, they started to call him "Feivel Ashreinu."

When Reb Noson would visit Teplik, Feivel always greeted him joyously. One time, however, Feivel failed to meet Reb Noson when he arrived. When Reb Noson asked the locals, "Where is Feivel?" the townspeople wondered which Feivel he meant. When he made clear who he meant, they said in a dismissive tone, "Oh, him? Since you were here last, 'Feivel Ashreinu' passed away."

Taking note of their disrespectful attitude, Reb Noson spoke to them sharply. "One of the punishments of the Next World, the experience that is called *Olam HaTohu*, is that a person is forced to repeat the acts that he did in this world for a seemingly endless time. Generally, this is very humiliating, because after a person is no longer blinded by his this-worldly self-interest, the repetition brings home just how exceedingly foolish those actions really were. Most of us spend almost all of our time without having a sense of how privileged we are to be part of the Jewish people and be able to perform *mitzvot*.

"So why should you denigrate Reb Feivel? Do you really think that he will be ashamed in the Next World when he is dancing ecstatically and singing, '*Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!*'?"

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:786