

# RETURN OF THE EXILED PRINCE

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## Introduction

This play is mainly based on a *ma'amer* (discourse) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, delivered on his birthday, *Yud Aleph Nissan*, in the year 5731 (1971).

The *Rebbe* describes and explains the unique and special relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people.

In the *ma'amer* the *Rebbe* refers to three *mosholim*:

The *moshol* of a country hosting a king and his dignitaries (*Aicha Rabba*)

The *moshol* of a visitor to a place diverted from reaching the presence of the king by the appeal of beautiful chambers en route (*Keser Shem Tov*).

The *moshol* of a king's banquet in which all the subjects (and even other creatures) get something to eat, but the place at the table next to the king is reserved for his son who wants only to be with the king. (*Siddur* of *Rabbi Shneur Zalman*)

Our play is structured around the above mentioned *mosholim* plus a *moshol* from *Tanya* of a king visiting a lowly subject in his hovel.

How is it possible for us to achieve the level of the servants who serve their master without the intent of receiving reward? We are taught that this is within our grasp because every Jew is imbued with a spark of G-dliness. When activated, this spark reminds him of his source, reconnects him with his inner being and nullifies self-centred, extraneous considerations.

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## PROLOGUE

NARRATOR 1: This play is about us, the Jewish people.

NARRATOR 2: We call Hashem "our Father" and "our King."

NARRATOR 3: Hashem calls us "His firstborn son, Yisroel."

NARRATOR 4: Since we are destined to reach a much higher level than our present rung, it is necessary for us to undergo a descent first.

NARRATOR 5: As Hashem said, we “will be a stranger in a strange land,” but we shall “come out with great wealth.”

NARRATOR 6: And to accompany us and guide us on our journey, the Torah came down, too.

## **SCENE ONE**

ATTENDANT: Mazel Tov! We have a new arrival. A baby boy for the King.

COURTIERS: Mazel Tov, your majesty.

KING: He’s a beautiful baby. Such fine features. I’m so proud of him. A true prince.

ATTENDANT: Your Majesty, your 2 ministers have arrived. Chesed, the minister of Kindness, and Gevura, minister of strict justice.

KING: Gentlemen, welcome. You are no doubt aware of the good news.

MINISTERS: Mazel Tov, Your Majesty.

CHESED: He will bring you great happiness.

GEVURA: With the right help and guidance.

KING: That is why I summoned you both. I want my son to become a great prince. Someone fitting to be by my side and to be known as the son of the king. I have seen how it is with other royal children, born, as they say, with a silver spoon in their mouths. They become spoiled. With servants rushing around them to take care of their every need, they learn to be arrogant, lazy, and self-centred. They start to behave badly.

Worst of all, they don't value their parents or their position. Some even rebel! What should I do to make my son a worthy prince?

CHESED: Surely your son will take after you, your majesty. As you are kind and merciful, so he will follow in your way.

GEVURA: These are words we can expect of the minister of kindness, but they're not enough.

Royal Highness, if your son dwells in the palace with everyone bowing before him, how can he avoid pride? And one only values that which one has to strive for. If you want your son to grow into a fine young man who will truly understand how glorious and how special it is to be next to the king, you must make a great sacrifice.

KING: Explain what you mean?

GEVURA: Send the boy away. Have him brought up by a poor family far from the palace. He may be given some knowledge of the king, but he will have only a faint and hidden memory of being your son. He will grow up in a place where nobody personally knows you, and those who know of you will neither care about you, nor ever believe that they can draw close to you.

In this place, he will face the challenge of coming to love the king and finding his way home.

KING: How can I do this-exile my own son?

GEVURA: it will be for his own good; from a distance he will come to value your greatness and, so doing, he too will become great.

CHESED: Your majesty, this is too harsh! And a huge risk! What chance can a poor boy brought up in a common family have of knowing the king? He would be lost forever.

KING: What do you say to this?

GEVURA: I stand strong in my belief. Squeeze the olive and you will get the rich oil.

CHESED: It's not fair! He should at least have some extra assistance. I have an idea. Send the sage, the wise one of your court, to help him find the way.

(Sage appears)

KING: Now we have it- the correct balance of chesed and gevura. It's not good for my son to begin his journey in this high place. Let him go down and learn to climb back up. His whole purpose will be to know the glory of the king and the splendour of his kingdom; to love and fear the king and to learn how much the king, his father, truly loves him. But he cannot do this alone. The Sage must be there to guide him. I only hope he listens.

Where should he go?

GEVURA: I suggest we send him to the home of Joe the farmer. Joe and his wife have no children. When they discover a little baby outside their front door they will be most happy to take him in as their own child.

CHESED: (To the Sage) Go along and stay close. At the right time, introduce yourself.

KING: Goodbye, my child. I'll think and care about you all the time. You'll live in a poor simple dwelling, but perhaps one day you'll make it fitting and comfortable for me to come and visit you there. And I yearn for the moment when you'll come back to the inner chamber of the palace.

## SCENE TWO

OUTSIDE JOE'S HOUSE A BABY IS CRYING

JOE: Who's there? Why...it's a little baby, all alone. Joanne, look what I've found!

JOANNE: Aw, so cute! Someone must have abandoned him. Silly man, don't let him get cold. Bring him in!

JOE: If nobody comes to find their lost child we'll bring him up as our own.

JOANNE: Let's call him Yisroel.

### SCENE THREE

SAGE: Years have passed since the boy, Yisroel, came to the house of the farmer. He has grown up loved and cared for by the farmer and his wife. He too has learned the skill of farming. Occasionally, other farmers mention the king. He can't say why, but the thought of this mighty, but distant ruler intrigues him.

I've waited patiently for the boy to grow into a strong young man. I've been nearby, but he's never met me before. Now it's time to introduce myself.

(Yisroel is working and singing)

SAGE: Hello, young man. How are you?

YISROEL: I'm well, thank you. Can I help you? Are you lost?

SAGE: Not me, I know exactly where I am. How about you?

YISROEL: (laughs) What do you mean? I live right here. How can I be lost?

SAGE: Your name is Yisroel.

YISROEL: Yes, it is. How do you know?

SAGE: Because I'm wise! (laughs) Modest too! Listen, Yisroel, you may think you're in the right place, but you don't know how to find the king, do you?

YISROEL: Of course not.

SAGE: In that case, you are lost.

YISROEL: Why should I need to find the king?

SAGE: Wouldn't you like to meet him?

YISROEL: Yes, I would love to meet the king, but I'm not worthy of such an honour.

SAGE: Let me tell you something: The king loves and cares about all his subjects.

YISROEL: It's funny. I've always felt that deep down inside. I don't know why.

SAGE: In time, the chance will come for you to learn more about our great king. Take that opportunity. This farm is where you are now, but it's not home. You'll see.

YISROEL: I don't understand riddles.

SAGE: I'm not speaking in riddles. This will become clear. Just remember if you ever have a chance to draw closer to the king, seize it with both hands. And you can always call on me to help.

## **SCENE FOUR**

### THE TOWN SQUARE

MAYOR: Hear ye, hear ye! Momentous news! The king has chosen to visit our very own country. He's coming with two special dignitaries- Duke Trumpet

and Count Putoff. Which rich and honourable people here wish to host our visitors?

ULYSSES: I want to host Duke Trumpet. I have a beautiful house, a swimming pool, and a tennis court. He'll be happy with food served on silver platters. I've wanted to get to know Duke Trumpet for some time. He'll stay at my house and we'll get on very well. He's bound to bring me nice gifts...he'll give me useful business contacts...and he can introduce me to his famous friends.

SOCRATES: I'm inviting Count Putoff. I'll play chess with him with my ivory antique chess set. We'll go horse riding and we'll talk. He's powerful and when he sees how clever I am I'm sure he'll invite me to visit him and raise me to a high position. I hear he brings lots of vodka to drink with his host.

SAGE: Yisroel, the Duke and the Count have places to stay. What about the king?

YISROEL: Strange. No one's invited him.

SAGE: It's easy for Ulysses and Socrates to entertain officers. And they *will* be rewarded with gifts that won't do them much good. But the king! They're afraid that *he'll* ask too much of them.

YISROEL: So where will the king stay?

SAGE: Why don't you invite him?

YISROEL: Me? A simple farmer? Don't joke.

SAGE: The king can stay anywhere he wants and he's not interested in castles and palaces. He's just looking for a subject who cares about him and will follow his ways. He won't bring any gifts straight away and his host will have to work hard to satisfy him. But the special thing about him is that

he doesn't change. Duke Trumpet and Count Putoff will come and go- but the king will always be king.

YISROEL: Ulysses and Socrates don't know what their missing.

SAGE: You're a hard, honest worker. And what do you care about business contacts or famous people or fancy presents? Go ahead, invite the king. He might just be interested!

YISROEL: (approaching the Mayor) Excuse me.

MAYOR: Yes?

YISROEL: I'd like to host the king.

MAYOR: What did you say?

YISROEL: Er...I'd like the king to stay with me. How would I go about making the arrangements?

MAYOR: I don't believe what I just heard! Ha ha ha! You?! Invite the king?! Who wants to hear the funniest joke? Yisroel the farmer just offered to host the king!

ULYSSES: Did he now? Duke Trumpet is coming to my villa. Do you think the king himself would want to stay in your measly, broken-down hut?

SOCRATES: What a fool!

(They all laugh)

YISROEL: No, really- I want to try. How would I send him an invitation?

MAYOR: I wouldn't have the faintest idea. The king will make his own arrangements and we'll have to do whatever he demands. Don't you get it? He's THE KING! You just go back to your little farm and forget about it.



(They go off)

SAGE: They don't understand. Ignore them. Why don't you write the king a letter? A personal invitation.

YISROEL: Why not?

(Takes a pen and paper)

"To his Royal Majesty: Dear King, I gather you're coming to this country. I want to invite you to stay in my house. I'll do whatever you want to make you comfortable. Please come and be my special guest. Yours sincerely, Yisroel the Farmer."

How do I send it?

SAGE: Just leave it by this rock. I'm sure the king has emissaries that pick up these messages.

## SCENE FIVE

MAYOR: Citizens! The king is approaching. But first. Let's greet his noble officers. Welcome Duke Trumpet!

ULYSSES: My personal guest! Move aside! Noble Duke- I am Ulysses, your host. A feast is being prepared for you at my villa.

DUKE: Splendid! As I expected. Here is a gift for you: one thousand bars of chocolate with my face on the wrapper.

ULYSSES: Ah! Too kind, Your Lordship.

MAYOR: Next, Count Putoff.

SOCRATES: Honoured Count- you shall be well taken care of. I can assure you.

COUNT: Thank you (in Russian). When a host looks after me I repay him with vodka. My servant is bringing 1,000 bottles of Smirnov.

SOCRATES: My favourite drink.

COUNT: Aha, we'll have a good time, no?

YISROEL: No one seems to be bothered about the king.

SAGE: That's because they're so impressed with the officers they've forgotten about him.

YISROEL: I wonder if he's seen my invite. Probably not; and if he has seen it he probably wouldn't accept it.

(To the Mayor)

Do you know when the king is arriving?

MAYOR: Very soon- but I told you to forget about it. The king, no doubt, will have chosen the finest mansion to reside in.

CROWD: Look! He's coming now! The king himself!

MAYOR: (Bowing)

Royal king, mighty ruler of empires, glorious monarch, exalted one- how can we honour you? Every palace is at your disposal.

KING: Where is Yisroel?

MAYOR: Yisroel?

KING: Yes, Yisroel the farmer. I have chosen to visit him and rest in his house.

MAYOR: Y...Y...Yisroel...the farmer...Are you sure? It can't be the same Yisroel who I am thinking of.

KING: Yes, it is. Absolutely! Where can he be found?

YISROEL: Your Majesty, I am Yisroel the farmer.

KING: Ah, the one I've been waiting for. Thanks for your letter. I accept the invitation. Where is your house?

YISROEL: Please follow me.

## SCENE SIX

### IN YISROEL'S HOUSE

YISROEL: Your majesty, can I offer you a hot drink?

KING: A cup of tea would be nice.

(Yisroel gives the tea to the king, then begins to cry.)

KING: What's wrong?

YISROEL: Nothing bad, your majesty. I just can't get over it! I live in this little house, more like a rubbish dump, with a dirt floor, broken chairs, and cracked cups. Yet you, the highest of the high, with thousands upon thousands of soldiers, have come to visit me. You have a palace with hundreds of chambers, but you sit here in my hovel. It's too much for me... too great an honour. I don't deserve this.

KING: Yisroel, do you want to know something? The only reason I came to visit this country was to visit you. Ulysses and Socrates are interested in chocolate and vodka. They want gifts and the chance to have lots of fun. If that's what they want, they can have it from my officers. It won't last. But Yisroel, you chose me. Not what you could get from me, but me. That's why I'm here.

YISROEL: How can I serve you?

KING: For now, the cup of tea is fine. But for the future you need to go on a journey. You're very important to me. You don't realise how important. I want you to leave this region and find your way to my palace. When you get there make sure you find me. That's not so easy. There are, as you say, many chambers there, each one containing treasures, delights and objects of beauty. Don't be drawn by such things. Keep it in mind that your place is with the king himself and that's where you want to be.

YISROEL: Forgive me for asking, but why don't you simply take me with you now?

KING: (Laughs) Oh no, that would be far too easy and no good for you-*Yogaiti U'motzosi*- the gain must match the effort. Consult the Sage. He'll help you understand. I must go.

(Gives the cup to Yisroel)

Thanks. It was a cup of tea fit for a king.

(Exits)

YISROEL: This must have been a dream... that's all!

SAGE: Not true, my friend. The king was here. He visited you in person. But what should you do now? Do you still want to be a farmer? In which case, you'll just be left with a memory of what happened. Then it will have been like a dream. Or do you want to fulfill the king's wishes.?

YISROEL: It's time to make a move.

## SCENE SEVEN

(Yisroel enters wearing a backpack)

YISROEL: What's wrong?

ULYSSES: I ate too much chocolate. I feel sick and my teeth are in agony. I'll probably need eight fillings, at least. I thought Duke Trumpet's present would be special. All he's left me with is a tummy ache and several trips to the dentist. I'm sorry I invited him in the first place.

SOCRATES: Ow, my head! Count Putoff kept on filling my glass with vodka. It's like poison! The world's still spinning around. He gets me drunk and then leaves. Guests like that I can do without.

ULY. & SOC.: Where are you going?

YISROEL: I'm off to the palace. I'm going to find the king in his inner chamber.

ULYSSES: Here you go again with all your nonsense. When will you come to realise the king couldn't care less about you? The so called "monarch" who was looking for you was probably a fake. Nobody reaches the king.

YISROEL: You settled for the officers- look what it did for you. I'm aiming higher. Why don't you come too?

SOCRATES: Never! Soon, other officers will come for us to host. They'll have better gifts.

SAGE: And when the sparkle wears off, you'll be left again in the dark, probably with an even worse headache.

YISROEL: But the king doesn't change.

## **SCENE EIGHT**

(Yisroel is walking from one point to another, and another. The Sage accompanies him)

SAGE: Yisroel, we've travelled a long way together. Finally, we've arrived at the palace.

YISROEL: The sweet scent of flowers in the royal garden. The beautiful statues. Soldiers in red uniforms and bearskin hats. It really feels like I made it. I have! This is the palace!

SAGE: But have you forgotten what the king said? Getting to the palace is not enough. You've still got to find him.

YISROEL: True. Thanks for the reminder. But let me enjoy myself a little first. The guards are letting me through.

(Guard stops someone else)

Others don't get so far. What's this elegant room?

PICASSO: Come in. Here is the king's art gallery. We have, in this room, some of the world's most famous paintings. Each one worth millions. Feast your eyes!

SAGE: Yisroel, you don't need to visit this room.

YISROEL: Why not? I respect your wisdom, but these paintings are stunning. It's not like I'm eating chocolate or getting drunk. This is art. It's beautiful.

SAGE: But the paintings are making you forget why you are here.

PICASSO: Why don't you let him enjoy himself? Go ahead, look around.

YISROEL: Actually, the sage is right. These are wonderful exhibits but I have to move on. I'll go this way.

BEETHOVEN: Oh yes, you've come to the home of melody, the king's music room. Listen to our singers... they're the best

(Singers sing)

YISROEL: I love it! It makes me want to tap my feet and dance.

BEETHOVEN: Cool! You can dance all night and day too.

YISROEL: Wow!

SAGE: Careful! You're dancing in the wrong direction. You're going to lose yourself in the music.

YISROEL: Can't you hear what fine music it is?

SAGE: Even the finest music is no good if it makes you forget why you're here.

YISROEL: It's true. I must remember why I'm here. This isn't the inner chamber.

ROCKEFELLER: You don't want to pass this room. In here are the crown jewels. Fist-sized diamonds, perfect pearls, gold bars and silver cups and trays.

YISROEL: Gleaming gold and shining silver. I never saw such treasures. Magnificent!

SAGE: Okay Yisroel, go further in if you wish. In the end you have to decide for yourself what is more precious.

YISROEL: I adore these treasures. They're worth millions, but will they last forever? No! Over the years they lose their sparkle. If I sit here and spend all my days gazing at gold and silver (even the king's gold and silver) am I any different from Ulysses and Socrates who got sick on chocolate and vodka? I'll get sick of these things too. What do you think?

SAGE: You know what I think.

YISROEL: Enough. These are the king's art collection and the king's musicians and the king's finery- but they're not the king. I want to find the king alone.

ATTENDANT: In that case, we've reserved a special place for you at the king's banquet.

YISROEL: The king's banquet?

SAGE: A feast with the king himself. The table has already been set and the guests have arrived.

## SCENE NINE

### THE KING'S BANQUET ROOM

ATTENDANT: The king spares no cost for his banquet. Everyone can taste the cuisine and enjoy his delicious food.

(Yisroel enters. A dog runs out and barks.)

DOG: Woof woof!

(Someone throws the dog scraps)

ATTENDANT: See, even the dogs get scraps

SERVANT: (To Yisroel) S'cuse me. You're in the way.

ATTENDANT: These are the servants. They have little idea of the greatness of the king. They just get on with their jobs because they know they're getting paid and their main concern is that they can pick up their wages at the end of the day. Whilst they go about their work they can also help themselves to leftovers.

OFFICER 1: Where is my seat? There!

OFFICER 2: Where is mine? There! It's not yours you know- it's mine.



ATTENDANT: Now at the table sit the higher servants and officers. Some of them see the might of the king. They see how he controls a huge army and how he is the highest judge.

OFFICER 1: I fear the king; his power makes me tremble. I would not dare disobey him.

ATTENDANT: This officer sits at the far end of the table. The food is good, but not so warm by the time it gets to him. Then there is the other officer.

OFFICER 2: How glorious and brilliant the king is!

ATTENDANT: He dances to the king's music and adores the king's paintings. His eyes boggle at his majesty's jewels.

OFFICER 2: I serve the king out of love and admiration for the things that he does and I take great pleasure from his treasures and his art.

ATTENDANT: He sits a bit nearer to the centre of the table.

YISROEL: But who is meant to sit in the seat right next to the king?

SAGE: (Laughs) Who indeed!

KING: (Enters) Yisroel! You came all this way! You made it!

YISROEL: Your majesty, it was your command.

KING: You wouldn't have been the first one to disobey me. That's down to free will. What kept you going? You didn't get lost on the way?

YISROEL: I very nearly did. The sage helped me each time.

KING: How?

YISROEL: He kept reminding me to think about what I was really doing in the palace and why I was there in the first place.

KING: And what were your thoughts?

YISROEL: I remembered that I wanted to be in the palace for one reason only: to find you.

KING: Yisroel- as they said- the king is mighty and glorious. I reward those who fulfill my wishes. I punish those who break the law. The food at this table is exquisite. There are favours to be had. Tell me truly- what would you like from me?

YISROEL: Royal Majesty, truly, I don't want anything from you. I just want you alone.

KING: My dear son.

YISROEL: I...I... don't understand.

KING: Come to your father's warm embrace.

(Hugs Yisroel)

Exiled from the palace, you thought you were a simple farmer. Now you're here and all can see that you are the king's own son. Come, Yisroel, sit in your rightful place.

EVERYBODY: Home at last. And that's where we all want to be, too. We want Moshiach now!

**THE END**

## Return of the Exiled Prince: Notes and Explanations

### Scenes 1 / 2 / 3

<i>Moshol</i>	<i>Nimshol</i>
<p>The king decides to send his son away. The son is left by the house of Joe the farmer. The king sends the sage to help his son know about him.</p>	<p><i>Hashem</i> sends the Jewish people into exile. He gives the Torah and sends <i>tzadikim</i> to guide the Jewish people and reconnect them with Him.</p>

### Scenes 4 / 5

<i>Moshol</i>	<i>Nimshol</i>
<p>Ulysses, Socrates, and the Mayor want to host the King's officers (the Duke and Count), but don't even consider hosting the King.</p> <p><i>Yisroel</i>, guided by the sage, wants to host the King. The others mock him. He writes to the King. The King has no interest in Ulysses and Socrates, but he accepts <i>Yisroel's</i> invitation.</p>	<p>The nations of the world are excited by false gods. They think that these idols will make them happy. They have no interest in <i>Hashem</i> and His commandments which are hard to follow and don't give rewards so easily. The <i>Yid</i> is often looked down upon by the nations because he chooses a different path. But he knows that only <i>Hashem</i> is unchanging and reliable. He tries to connect to <i>Hashem</i> by <i>davening</i>. <i>Hashem</i> hears our prayer and the <i>shechina</i> dwells</p>

	amongst us.
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### Scene 6

<i>Moshol</i>	<i>Nimshol</i>
<p>The King leaves his palace to spend time with <i>Yisroel</i> in his very humble home. He tells <i>Yisroel</i> this is where he wants to be because <i>Yisroel</i> has welcomed him.</p>	<p><i>Hashem</i> comes down to this low world because <i>Yidden</i>, by following <i>Torah</i> and <i>mitzvos</i>, show that they wish to make a dwelling place (‘<i>Dirabetachtonim</i>’) for Him here.</p>

### Scene 7

<i>Moshol</i>	<i>Nimshol</i>
<p>Ulysses and Socrates both feel sick after using the “gifts” of The Duke and Count which are only bad for them. Yet, they still believe they can find other officers who will give them better gifts than the previous ones.</p> <p><i>Yisroel</i> wants to go on a journey to the palace to be even closer to the King</p>	<p>The nations desire to worship false gods, even when these gods fail them and lead them to suffering.</p> <p><i>Yidden</i> increase their desire to draw close to <i>Hashem</i> and serve Him by reaching higher levels in <i>Torah</i> and <i>mitzvos</i>.</p>

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<b>Scene 8</b>	
<i>Moshol</i>	<i>Nimshol</i>
<p><i>Yisroel</i> reaches the palace of the King. He finds it very attractive. The sage warns him not to be distracted by the beautiful objects in the palace, but to keep on heading to the inner chamber where he can find the King himself.</p>	<p>A <i>Yid</i> can reach a high level in <i>Yiddishkeit</i>. He can be very frum. But is he doing this because he wants to serve <i>Hashem</i>? Or because he wants the pleasures that it brings-the beauty of <i>Torah</i> (like the paintings), the joy that comes from Jewish life (like the music) or the rewards (like the treasure) from doing <i>mitzvos</i>? Is he doing it to serve <i>Hashem</i> or to help himself? The <i>Torah</i> says that really we should serve <i>Hashem</i> for His sake only. That's how we really draw close to Him.</p>

## Scene 9

### *Moshol*

*Yisroel* has decided that all the treasures in the palace are not the object of his desire. He only wants to be next to the King. He finds himself invited to a great feast. Anyone and anything gains something from the King's banquet: from the dogs who get scraps to the officers who are closer to the King and sit at his table. However, the special place is reserved for *Yisroel*, the King's own son, who wants only to be with his father. The exiled son has returned.

### *Nimshol*

The world and all in it is represented by the banquet. Hashem satisfies the needs of all creation, even of those who have no interest in following Him (or those who do the opposite). But the reason He creates the world and all in it is to give His people (the *Yidden*) the task of earning their place next to Him, by showing their love and loyalty to Him. The ultimate return to our rightful place, when we will feel the true revealed closeness of Hashem (our father and our King), will be with the coming of *Moshiach*, speedily in our days.