

Ani Ma'amin

The Rebbe of Modzitz, Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Elazar, had Chassidim throughout the major towns and cities of Poland. One of these was Reb Azriel David Fastag, who was noted for his exceptional voice throughout Warsaw. Many came to the shul where Reb Azriel David and his brothers, who were also blessed with lovely voices, would daven on the Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur. Reb Azriel David would lead the davening, while his brothers accompanied him as a choir. His crisp, clear and moving voice had a profound effect on all who heard him.

Reb Azriel David lived simply, earning his livelihood from a small clothing store, but his happiness and fulfillment came from another source — the world of Chassidic music. His moving tunes made their way to Otvoch (a suburb of Warsaw), where his Rebbe, Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Elazar appreciated them immensely. The day a new niggun (melody) by Reb Azriel David arrived was a festive day for the Rebbe.

Dark clouds began to cover the skies of Europe — the clouds of Nazism. In spite of the terrible decrees, the yellow patch and the ghettos, most Jews could not fathom what was about to befall them. Only a few managed to escape the clutches of the Nazi occupation to safe havens. One of them was the Modzitzer Rebbe, Rebbe Shaul Yedidya Elazar, whose Chassidim made a tremendous effort to save him. As the Nazis entered Poland, the Chassidim smuggled him out of Poland to Vilna, in Lithuania, and from there he made his way across Russia to Shanghai, China, eventually arriving in America in 1940.

Meanwhile in Poland tens of thousands of Jews were being shipped off daily to their death in cattle cars that were part of the railway system. Roused from their warm beds in Warsaw in the middle of the night, husbands were separated from their wives, children wrested from the arms of their parents. The elderly were often shot on the spot, in front of their loved ones. Then the Jews were gathered and sent off in those trains to a place where their existence would no longer trouble the Nazis — to Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek.

Inside the crowded cars, over the clatter of the cattle cars' wheels, rose the sounds of people gasping, sighing, weeping and dying. One could hear the stifled cries of children crushed together. But in one such car, headed toward the infamous death camp Treblinka, the sound of singing could be heard.

It seems that an elderly Jew, wrapped up in his ragged clothing, his face white as snow, had made his way over to his neighbor on the death train, begging him to remind him the tune of Ma'areh Kohen sung by Modzitzer Rebbe during the Yom Kippur service.

"Now? Now, what you want to hear is niggunim?" answered the other, with a hard look at the Chassid, thinking that maybe all the suffering had caused him to lose his mind.

But this Modzitzer Chassid, Reb Azriel David Fastag, was no longer paying attention to his friend, or to anyone else on the train. In his mind, he was at the prayer stand next to his Rebbe on Yom Kippur, and it is he who was leading the prayer before the Rebbe and all the Chassidim.

Suddenly, there appeared before his eyes the words of the twelfth of the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith: Ani ma'amin b'emuna sheleima, b'viat hamoshiach; v'af al pi she'yismamaya, im kol zeh, achakeh lo b'chol yom she'yavo — "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Moshiach; and even though he may tarry, nevertheless, I wait each day for his coming." Closing his eyes, he meditated on these words and thought, "Just now, when everything seems lost, is a Jew's faith put to the test."

It was not long before he began to hum a quiet tune to these words. There, amidst the death and despair on the train to Treblinka, the Chassid was transformed into a pillar of song, bringing forth out of his bloodied lungs the song of the eternity of the Jewish People. He was unaware of the silence in the cattle car, and of the hundreds of ears listening attentively in amazement. He also didn't hear the voices as they gradually joined his song, at first quietly, but soon growing louder and louder.

The song spread from car to car. Every mouth that could still draw a breath joined in Reb Azriel Dovid's Ani Ma'amin.

As if waking from a dream, Reb Azriel David opened his eyes to the sight of the singing train. His eyes were red from crying, his cheeks wet with tears. In a choked voice, he cried out: "I will give half of my portion in Olam Habbah (the World to Come) to whoever can take my song to the Modzitzer Rebbe!"

A hushed silence descended upon the train. Two young men appeared, promising to bring the song to the Rebbe at any cost. One of them climbed upon the other, and finding a small crack of the train's roof broke out a hole from which to escape. Poking his head out under the open sky, he said, "I see the blue heavens above us, the stars are twinkling and the moon, with a fatherly face, is looking at me."

"And what do you hear?" asked his companion.

"I hear," the young man answered, "the angels on high singing Ani Ma'amin, and it's ascending to the seven firmaments of heaven!"

Bidding farewell to their brothers and sisters on the train, the two proceeded to jump off, one after the other. One was killed instantly from the fall. The other survived, taking the memory of the song with him. He eventually found his way to the Land of Israel (perhaps to the Modzitzer Rebbe's son, the author of Imrei Aish, who was in Tel-Aviv), and the notes were sent by mail to Rebbe Shaul Yedidya Elazar in New York.

Upon receiving the notes and having the Reb Azriel Dovid's Ani Ma'amin sung before him, the Modzitzer Rebbe said: "When they sang Ani Ma'amin on the death train, the pillars of the world

were shaking. The Almighty said, 'Whenever the Jews will sing Ani Ma'amin, I will remember the six million victims and have mercy on the rest of My People.'

It is told that on the first Yom Kippur that the Modzitzer Rebbe sang the Ani Ma'amin, there were thousands of Jews in the shul. The entire congregation burst into tears, which fell like water into the pool of tears and blood of the Jewish people. The tune soon spread throughout world Jewry.

"With this niggun," said Rebbe Shaul Yedidya Elazar, "the Jewish people went to the gas chambers. And with this niggun, the Jews will march to greet Moshiach."

Nejeritche Chlopshis

This niggun is from the time of the Mittlerer Rebbe. One year on Acharon Shel Pesach (last day of Pesach) - the Lubavitcher Rebbe said when having the Moshiach Seudah (Meal of Moshiach.)

"I'm going to sing the niggun of Moshiach, you can sing with Moshiach or to bring Moshiach; but I will sing with Moshiach & then sang this song.

Arba Bavos

This Niggun is a very holy niggun and only allowed to sing on special days. We play it by the Chuppah. It is composed by the Baal Hatanya with four parts. Corresponding to the four spiritual worlds Atzilus, Beriyah, Yetzira

h & Asiya. Asiya is the lowest spiritual world. It has no end & the end of the niggun goes back to the first part of the song, corresponding to Asiya. Being that the purpose of elevation is to make a dwelling place for Hashem, each part is intended to elevate the singer and listener to the next spiritual world.

The fifth Chabad Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab paints a picture of the inner fire burning in our soul when singing this melody. As we draw a connection between the four parts of the song, the four spiritual worlds, the letters of Hashem's holy name & the five levels of our neshama. The niggun gives voice to the human soul & strives to the divine. He concludes saying the Baal Hatanya includes the entirety of Chassidus is within this song.

The first part brings you to a state of detachment, and then into deep thought. The beginning of the niggun shakes you up. It shifts you from your place, so that you break away from the mundane environment, from worries and concerns, from all the things you need. Then it continues, taking you into a yet deeper state of thought. You begin to wonder why are you needed, what is the purpose of being in this world.

The second part of the niggun is connected to the first. At its opening you can sense a taste of bitterness. But immediately it moves on upward, toward hopefulness.

The bitter nuances and the hopeful, uplifting nuances both come out of the shaking up and the introspection of the first part. When you are shaken up and detached from your place, there's an element of bitterness—the discomfort and embitterment over your spiritual situation. When you

meditate deeply on the divine purpose of why you are here in this world, that brings a ray of hope, and a movement upwards.

The bitterness and the upward movement are two opposites.

Bitterness is feeling broken. It causes a low spirit that breaks your entire being and tears it into tiny pieces. The uplifting movement, however, emerges from a sense of your self-worth—from the sense that after all, regardless of your lowly spiritual state, you are a human being, the chosen of all creations, and you can always return [teshuvah] and set yourself back in the place where you belong.

These two opposite themes, bitterness and ascent, are fused together through the theme of hope. When you contemplate the divine intent that brought you into the world, hope emerges. The very introspection into your failings—the very sense of deficiency, the feeling that you are lacking in some way—that itself is the beginning of the healing.

There is a well-known saying: All sicknesses will be healed by Moshiach. Except those that don't know they're sick. The very awareness, that you know you have some fault that already know that you have some fault—that already starts the process of healing.

The third part of this niggun, although connected to the fourth follows after the second. The second contains that upward movement, and functions like the koreich-sandwich of Pesach. The sense of hope that unites the maror—bitterness—with the matzah—uplifting faith. It is then that you come to the third part of the niggun.

The third part lifts the neshamah above and beyond. Yes, it follows after the second part and in the second you feel a powerful bitterness. Nevertheless, in the third part the emphasis is on the sense of transcendent elevation along with an outpouring of the soul.

In the progression upward, the fourth part comes after the third part. But in truth, the fourth is in its essence entirely removed from the third part. You can see what a qualitative leap lies between the third and fourth parts.

The fourth brings out the deep joy of the soul, not mere elevation but deep pleasure & ecstasy of the soul.

To go in detail of the third part where we mention it's the elevation of the soul - is produced by a cause. That cause is lower quality than its effect. Just like bitterness, hope & ascent of the second part are a result of the detachment, shake-up & introspection of the first. Similarly the elevation of the soul expressed in the third - is a result of the bitterness, hope & ascent of the second.

The first reason why the 4th part has a connection with the 1st - is because the higher something is the greater its potential to descend downward when it needs to be drawn down. The second reason why the first is connected to the fourth - in sefer yetzirah it says: The

beginning is wedged in the end. The planting of the beginning is in the end. Since Hashem desires for Himself a dwelling place in the lower worlds, thus through the service of man.

We Want Moshiach Now!

“Want” means that we need it desperately and that we are lacking something without it. We don’t just think about this yearning, we talk about it. What’s more, we sing about it with passion! The joy and energy in our song is what brings the Geulah.

“Now” in Hebrew is spelled “נא”, which shares the gematria of 57) “י-ה-ו-ה” + “א-ל”). Those two names represent Hashem’s unbounded kindness being drawn into world. That is the state the world will be when Moshiach comes. Singing and imploring while yet in Golus rouses Hashem to make it happen immediately!