

## Kaliver

*Ever since I recall my father Z”L used to sing a song “Szól a kakas már” (The Rooster is Crowing), which is well known by Jews from Hungary. Whereas even as an adult I also used to sing this song, only recently was I stimulated to discover its fascinating background.*

*That is what this note describes.*

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### ***How I discovered some Kaliver songs and legends***

It is interesting that suddenly, in a moment of enlightenment, one realizes that something one has been doing or seeing all of one’s life is not just another mundane part of one’s life, but is, indeed, “special”. Perhaps another “note” called “*Kachol*” illustrates this point. “Specialness”, like beauty, seems to be in the eyes of the beholder. Many things considered mundane become fascinating once someone looks at them the right way, in the appropriate context – that is with the “right eyes” or perhaps at least at that moment with “special eyes”.

In Fall 2002 for some reason I got the idea to suggest to a few friends that we get together to sing some Yiddish songs, mainly ballads, at our friend Ruthie Zakovics’ apartment in Jerusalem. Since most of us, including my wife and I, don’t speak Yiddish I prepared song sheets and decided to also include the Hungarian Jewish song my father used to sing: “*Szól a kakas már*”. About a year earlier I found a new orchestration of the song on Internet, sung by a very talented Hungarian singer: Márta Sebestyén, and felt that her rendition was really beautiful. It is interesting that Márta is not Jewish, yet her Jewish songs are truly moving. After subsequent research I was fascinated to find a number

of legends associated with “*Szól a kakas már*” and about the “Kaliver Rebbe”<sup>1</sup>, which put the song in a new perspective for me.

When we were singing Yiddish songs with friends there was an intelligent woman. Dr. Rose Bilbul, whose Yiddish is excellent, and I asked her where she is from. When she said she is originally from Mármaros in Hungary I asked if she knows the song: “*Szól a kakas már*”. She said that not only does she know it, but her grandfather’s grandfather, Yitzchak Eisik Taub<sup>2</sup>, was the “Kaliver Rabbi”, the Rabbi from of Nagykálló in Hungary, who found the song. Right then and there the two of us sang the song to Ruthie’s piano accompaniment<sup>3</sup>.

The mind seems to occasionally leap to a “next step”, which prepares it to leap to yet another next step. Putting this another way, the mind seems to become highly sensitized to a certain sequence of stimuli if it is “readied” for it. Without such “readiness” the mind may not notice certain things. Thus it happened that soon after I discovered the Kaliver Rebbe’s grand-daughter’s grand-daughter I met Mr. Joseph Márton in Jerusalem, originally from a part of Romania where Hungarian was spoken<sup>4</sup>. While standing in a building’s doorway I asked if he knows the song “*Szól a kakas már*”. He started singing it and I enthusiastically joined. It was quite a special event. In an inspired moment I asked if he knows of any other songs by the Kaliver Rebbe. He responded affirmatively, and beautifully sang a song: “*Erdö, Erdö*”<sup>5</sup> It was in Hungarian and Yiddish, and I never heard it before. He also

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<sup>1</sup> the Rabbi from Nagykálló (Rabbi Yitzchak Eisik Taub)

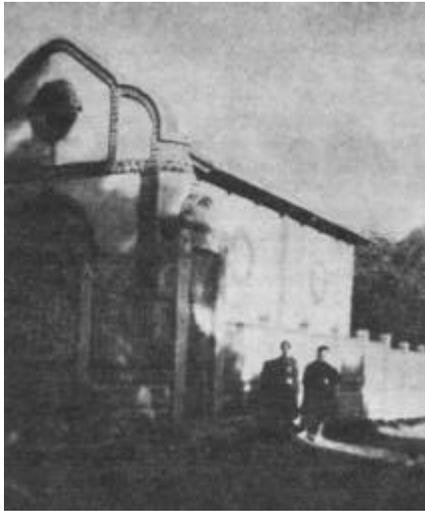
<sup>2</sup> born in Szerencz (Zemplén County, Northeastern Hungary), 1751 - 1821

<sup>3</sup> in a subsequent conversation Dr. Bilbul told me that the Kaliver Rebbe was born on May 18, 1751 (on secular calendar) and that her son was born on May 18, 1951

<sup>4</sup> Segesvár in Erdély

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Márton sang the song for a movie called “Chassidut” made by the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv. Since the song is about a forest, it was sung in a forest in Israel during a very special time of the day: just before sunset. (Information based on conversation with Mr. Márton.)

mentioned another Kaliver song, “*Sírnak, Rínak a Bárányok*”, which I eventually found and heard in the Hebrew University’s *Phonoteka* sound library. The brief conversation with Mr. Márton opened a new world for me, and in effect “generalized” a song I knew for such a long time. In retrospect it is puzzling that up to that moment I never asked my father or anyone else about the origin of a song I heard and sang so often since childhood. After some research I managed to find the lyrics to all three songs.



**The Kaliver Rebbe’s Grave in Nagykálló**

### ***The Kaliver Legend***

According to legend the Rebbe of Nagykálló had a special talent: he recognized those holy songs which were sung in the *Beith ha Mikdash*<sup>1</sup>. He used to roam the Hungarian countryside listening to the shepherds singing and learned many of their songs. One time he heard a shepherd sing “*Szól a*

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<sup>1</sup> The Temple in Jerusalem

*kakas már*” and immediately recognized it as a song from the Temple. He bought it from the shepherd who taught the Rabbi the song. After that, when the Rabbi asked him to sing the song again he couldn’t, because he had already sold it.

It is said that as the Sabbath approaches the angels’ chorus sings various songs in Hebrew for God, but sings one song, “*Szól a kakas már*”, in Hungarian, per God’s special request.

On the Rabbi’s death anniversary<sup>2</sup> hundreds of Kaliver chassidim arrive in Nagykálló<sup>3</sup> and sing the “*Szól a kakas már*”.

The center of the Kaliver chassidic movement is in Israel’s Bnei Beraq neighborhood<sup>4</sup>, and the Kaliver Rebbe’s songs are still sung in Hungarian although most of the chassidim probably don’t speak the language.



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<sup>2</sup> the *Yahrtzeit* (Anniversary of Death) is on *Zayin of Adar* on the Jewish calendar

<sup>3</sup> in the Eastern part of Hungary, near Debrecen

<sup>4</sup> part of greater Tel-Aviv

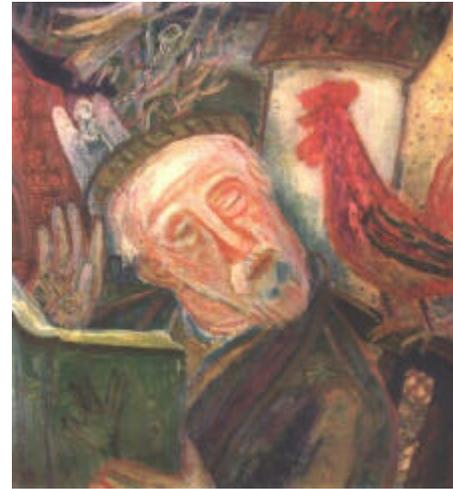
### ***Another Nagykálló Connection***

A number of years ago I met at an international bookfair in Jerusalem a Jewish publisher, Mr. János Kobányai, from Budapest who was studying in Jerusalem. During a subsequent conversation he introduced me to the works of a very talented Jewish Hungarian painter, Imre Ámos. In the 1930-s he met Chagall in Paris, which had considerable influence on his art. János showed me illustrations of many Ámos paintings and sketches, and during a subsequent twelve hour stopover in Budapest I went to his publishing office in Buda where I was shown images of many additional Ámos illustrations. I followed up with a Web search and discovered additional paintings which I really liked.

He was killed during the Shoah probably in a concentration camp in Saxony, Germany (1944/45). Prior to that, in 1940, he was sent to a concentration camp in Vojvodina, and then to a battle field to the east.

During a recent conversation with János I mentioned the Kaliver songs, including “*Szól a kakas már*”, which metaphorically speaks about a rooster. János then explained that Ámos is from Nagykálló (1907) and was deeply influenced by the Kaliver rebbe’s songs and legends, and in fact, many of his paintings include a rooster. In a flash these two worlds which I was interested in were connected, which was an awakening for me.

Small images of a few Ámos paintings which include a rooster are on the next page.



The Rooster Crows



The Burning Synagogue



Awaiting Daybreak

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## **Szól a Kakas Már**

Szól a kakas már

Majd meg virad már

||: Zöld erdőben

Sik mezőben

Sétál egy madár :||

||: De kicsoda madár? :||

||: Sárga lába

Kék a szárnya

Engem oda vár :||

Várj madár várj

Te csak mindég várj

||: Ha az Isten néked rendelt

Tied leszek már :||

||: De mikor lesz az már? :||

||: ***Jibonei hamikdos***

***Ir Zion tema'ale***

**Akkor lesz az már :||**

||: De miért nincs az már? :||

||: **Mipnei chatueni gulini mi artzéni**

**Azért nincs az már :||**

English translation:

The rooster is crowing, soon it will be daylight.

||: In a green forest, in a smooth meadow, strolls a bird. :||

||: What kind of bird is this? :||

Its feet are yellow, its wings are green, it's waiting for me. :||

Wait, bird, wait! If God wills it, I will be yours soon!"

God destined me for you, I will be yours :||

||: But when will that be? :||

||: When the Holy Temple rises again and Zion is restored -  
That's when it will be.:||

||: But why isn't it yet? :||

||: Because of our sins we were banished from our land,  
That's why it isn't :||

## **Sírnak, Rínak a Bárányok**

Sírnak, rínak a bárányok,

||: Panaszkodnak a juhásznak :||

De mondja meg

A gazdájának

||: Adjon szénát a juhának :||

De a gazda azt feleli:

||: Van a bokorban kiszedheti :||

De a juhász azt feleli:

Ha a nyáját itt teleli

||: Jövő nyárra meg nem feji :||

Van két hete vagyis három

||: Hogy a szamaradat ide várom :||

De amott jön a szamár háton

Talán az lesz akit várom

Jo napot kedves kis bojtárom

||: Juhajimban van e károm? :||

De a juhász azt feleli:

Míg én leszek kend bojtárja

||: Juhajiban nem lesz kárja :||

The sheep are weeping,

The herders are moaning,

Go, tell the master

The flock needs hay.

Greetings, dear shepherd,

How are my sheep?

Your flock will be well tended

So long as I am their shepherd.

### **Erdő, Erdő**

Erdő, erdő, milyen nagy vagy,  
Rózsa, rózsá, mi mesze vagy,  
Ha az erdő oly nagy nem lenne,  
Akkor a rózsá közelebb lenne.  
(Kihoználak az erdőből,  
Együtt lennénk mindörökre.)

### Variant:

Gulesz, gulesz jaj de nagy vagy,  
Isten, Isten de mesze vagy,  
Ha a gulesz kisebb lenne,  
Isten is közelebb lenne.  
(Ha kivinnél a góleszből,  
Veled lennénk mind mi, akkor.)

Gulesz, Gulesz vie grajsz biszt de,  
Schine, Schine vie veit biszt de,  
Ven der Gulesz volt nit a zai grajsz gevehn,  
Vol di Schine nenter geveyn.

### Original Hungarian lyrics:

Forest, O forest, how vast are you!  
Rose, O rose, how distant you are!  
Were the forest not so vast,  
My rose wouldn't be so far.  
Who will guide me out of the forest,  
And unite me with my rose?

### Kaliver text:

Exile, O exile, how vast are you!  
Shechinah, Shechinah, how distant you are!  
Were the exile not so vast,  
The Shechinah wouldn't be so far.  
Who will guide me out of the exile,  
And unite me with the Shechinah?