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# ONCE UPON A CHASSID

The Wisdom and the Whimsy  
The Fire and the Joy

Stories, Anecdotes & Sayings  
translated and adopted from the writings of the  
Rebbes and Chassidim of Chabad Lubavitch  
*Arranged in conjunction with the 54 sections of the Torah*

By Yanki Tauber

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## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

**the time** of the Sanctification of the Moon, since we find different customs about this: three days after the Molad<sup>11</sup> [New Moon], seven days after the Molad,<sup>12</sup> and the evening after Shabbos [Saturday night],<sup>13</sup> "If the night after Shabbos is before the tenth of the month... but if it is afterwards one should not wait until after Shabbos, because there might be two, three or four cloudy nights and the moon won't be seen and the time will pass."<sup>14</sup> This applies specifically in those countries where the sky is covered with clouds, particularly in winter time.<sup>15</sup> Each place should follow its custom and according to its situation. In places where there is a question or doubt, one should act according to the instructions of the rabbinic authority of that place.

Further, and this is the main point, the Sanctification of the Moon should be performed with the specific intention to speed and hasten and actualize the immediate arrival of Dovid King Moshiach, through an increased appeal and entreaty for the Redemption, as expressed in the conclusion of the Sanctification of the Moon: "**And they will seek** the L-rd their G-d and Dovid their King, Amen."

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Noach, 4 Mar-Cheshvan 5752)*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה  
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"ד  
**Shagalov**  
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766  
Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה  
**Ekman**  
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765  
Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה  
**Marenburg**  
Passed away on the second day  
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766  
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)  
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה  
**Ekman (Santiago, Chile)**  
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769  
ה. נ. צ. ב. ה.  
AND IN HONOR OF  
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל  
**Shagalov**  
DEDICATED BY  
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיי  
**Shagalov**

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**Executive Director**

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11. See *Turei Zahav* there, section 3.

12. *Shulchan Aruch* there, par. 4. And in the Prayer Book of the Alter Rebbe, "according to the Kabbalah the Sanctification of the Moon is not recited until seven days after the Molad" (and see at length the glosses of the Rebbe Rashab (in the Prayer Book Torah Or 242:1-2. And in the *Siddur im Dach* (Siddur with Chassidic discourses) 321:1-2). *Shaar HaKolel* chapter 33, section 2. And see there for further cross references.)

13. *Shulchan Aruch* there, par. 2.

14. *Remo* there.

15. See the glosses of the Rebbe Rashab and *Shaar HaKolel* there, that for this reason the Tzemach Tzedek was not particular (in winter time) to wait until after seven days. But obviously it's different for those dwelling in countries where (many of the) winter months are not cloudy.

Additionally, the letter Beis [meaning "in"] is a preposition that can be used in conjunction with everything. This applies primarily to the "wonders" of the true and final Redemption, "As in the days of your going forth from Egypt I will show them wonders."<sup>6</sup> Since with absolute certainty all of the appointed times have passed, and we've already done teshuvah, now **it all depends on our righteous Moshiach himself!**

\* \* \*

When we make a just accounting at the conclusion of the first week of Divine service in the world for the year Hey, Tuf, Shin, Nun, Beis, "a year of wonders in all," we come to the conclusion that **it all depends on our righteous Moshiach himself**. This awareness expresses itself in more conscientious and enhanced way of reciting the prayer for the sanctification of the moon, "for they are destined to be renewed like her,"<sup>7</sup> in the true and complete Redemption through Dovid, the King Moshiach, Dovid, the king of Israel, lives forever."<sup>8</sup>

More specifically:

One should be careful and make an effort to recite the Sanctification of the Moon while dressed in dignified and attractive garments, in the street and "in a multitude of people [wherein] is the glory of the King."<sup>9</sup> This applies also in those places where people have not been conscientious about this until now (because they lived among non-Jews ).<sup>10</sup> One should also be careful in regard to

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6. *Michah* 7:15.

7. The text of the blessing of the Sanctification of the Moon (*Sanhedrin* 42a).

8. *Rosh Hashanah* 25a.

9. The details of the laws of the Sanctification of the Moon - see *Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, section 427, and in the commentaries there.

10. See *Magen Avraham* there, 14.

1:3

יהי אור

*Let there be light*

## *What is a Chassid?*

When Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch was staying at the health spa in Wirtzburg, Germany in 5667<sup>1</sup> a group of his chassidim came to spend a Shabbos with their Rebbe. Among them was Reb Yosef Yuzik Horowitz, his son-in-law Reb Feivel Zalmanov, and Reb Elimelech Stoptzer.

The Rebbe prayed for many hours that Shabbos morning, as was his manner. Meanwhile, the chassidim made kiddush and consumed a respectable quantity of *l'chayim's*. Later, when the Rebbe had finished and they sat with him to the Shabbos meal, Reb Yosef Yuzik asked:

“Rebbe, what is a chassid?”

Replied the Rebbe: “A chassid is a lamplighter. The lamplighter walks the streets carrying a flame at the end of a stick. He knows that the flame is not his. And he goes from lamp to lamp to set them alight.”

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1. 1907.

## Once Upon A Chassid

Asked Reb Yosef Yuzik: “What if the lamp is in a desert?”

“Then one must go and light it,” said the Rebbe. “And when one lights a lamp in a desert, the desolation of the desert becomes visible. The barren wilderness will then be ashamed before the burning lamp.”

Continued the chassid: “What if the lamp is at sea?”

“Then one must undress, dive into the sea, and go light the lamp.”

“And this is a chassid?” Reb Yosef Yuzik asked.

For a long while the Rebbe thought. Then he said: “Yes, this is a chassid.”

“But Rebbe, I do not see the lamps!”

Answered the Rebbe: “Because you are not a lamp-lighter.”

“How does one become a lamplighter?”

“First, you must reject the evil within you. Start with yourself: cleanse yourself, refine yourself, and you will see the lamp within your fellow. When a person is himself coarse, G-d forbid, he sees coarseness; when a person is himself refined, he sees the refinement in others.”

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

righteous Moshiach This is because **the Jewish people's collective** Divine Service over the course of the generations, required during the time of exile to bring the complete Redemption (which depends on our deeds and service during the entire period of exile<sup>2</sup>) **has been concluded and perfected**. There is absolutely no explanation or reason for the delay of the Redemption. Therefore, even if an individual's Divine service is lacking over the course of time that the Redemption has been delayed, this is a **personal matter** that certainly needs to be corrected and completed. But this does not diminish, G-d Forbid, the completion and perfection of "our actions and service" of the Jewish people as a whole, which stands ready for the Redemption. The very fact that the collective has been perfected allows the individual to correct himself easier and with joy, knowing that the true and complete Redemption is coming imminently.

And if the words said during the lifetime of my sainted father-in-law , the leader of our generation, all the more so after many decades have passed, more than forty years when "G-d gives you a heart to understand and eyes to see and ears to hear."<sup>3</sup>

This is even more true in this year - Hey, Tuf, Shin, Nun, Beis<sup>4</sup> - which is an acronym for (and follows and adds to that of the previous year, Hey, Tuf, Shin, Nun, Aleph, a year in which I will show them wonders) "it will be a year of wonders within it," and "miracles in everything," "inclusive of everything".<sup>5</sup> This [acronym] includes all aspects [of the year will be wondrous].

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2. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

3. *Tavo*, 29:3.

4. [Each Hebrew letter has a numeric equivalent, which can be used to designate the years. The year 5752, in which this talk was delivered, can be rendered alphabetically with the letters enumerated above. Translator's note.]

5. "In all, for all, all" - see *Bava Basra* 15b at the end and ff. [The three phrases have the numerical value of the word *kabetz* - gather. See *Chiddushe Chasam Sofer* there. Translator's note.]

# BESURAS HAGEULO

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

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Special emphasis should be placed this year in all that was said previously in relation to the "just accounting"<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Noach:

The reason for a special emphasis this year can be understood from the following. My sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, has testified that all aspects of our Divine Service have already been completed, including the polishing of the buttons, and we stand ready ("stand all of you ready") to receive our righteous Moshiach. Therefore, the goal of the "just accounting" (emphasizing that a just accounting must be a true one) performed in these days is the immediate need for the true and final Redemption to come in actual reality!

More specifically:

Even though a person recognizes his own personal deficiencies that need correction, this doesn't contradict, G-d Forbid, the testimony of the leader of our generation that we have already completed the Divine Service and stand ready to greet our

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1. [The term "Cheshbon Tzedek," here translated at "just accounting," refers to the process of self-analysis and self-judgment incumbent upon every Jew (indeed, every human being). It is the "taking stock" of where one stands spiritually and honestly assessing one's faults and deficiencies, with the intent of improving and correcting them. This analysis takes place, on different levels, at regular intervals, i.e., once a day (before retiring), once a week (Shabbos), once a month (Rosh Chodesh), once a year (Yom Kippur). In the full text of the sicha, the Rebbe discusses the significance of Parshas Noach as the first full week of the post-Holiday season. Accordingly, this is the time for an honest self-appraisal and correction of all that needs correction in a manner that is consistent with the rest and joy that is characterized by Noach. In this excerpt, the Rebbe speaks of the special self-appraisal that has to be made because of the uniqueness of this year. Translator's note.]

## Breishis / What is a Chassid?

Reb Yosef Yuzik then asked: "Is one to grab the other by the throat?"

Replied the Rebbe: "By the throat, no; by the lapels, yes."

### Source:

Sefer Hasichos 5701 (The Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, 1940-41) p. 136. See Ohr Hachassidus ("The Light of Chassidism") pp. 215-224 for an in-depth treatment and analysis of this dialogue by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita.

3:9 ויקרא ה' אלקים אל האדם ויאמר לו איכה  
*G-d called out to the man<sup>1</sup> and said to  
 him: Where are you...?!*

## *Is Anybody Home?*

In 5559,<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was imprisoned on the charge that his teachings undermined the imperial authority of the czar. For 52 days he was held in the Peter-Paul Fortress in Petersburg.

Among the Rebbe's interrogators was a government minister who possessed broad knowledge of the Bible and of Jewish studies. On one occasion, he asked the Rebbe to explain the verse: "*G-d called out to the man and said to him: Where are you?*" Did G-d not know where Adam was?

Rabbi Schneur Zalman presented the classic explanation offered by the commentaries: the question "where are you?" was merely a conversation opener on the part of G-d, who did not wish to unnerve Adam by immediately confronting him with his wrong- doing,

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1. *HaAdam* in the Hebrew. The name of the first human being appears in the Torah's account of creation as *HaAdam*, 'The Man', or as *Adam*, 'man'.

2. 1798.

"What Rashi<sup>3</sup> says, I already know," said the minister. "I wish to hear how the Rebbe understands the verse."

"Do you believe that the Torah is eternal?" asked the Rebbe. "That its every word applies to every individual, under all conditions, at all times?"

"Yes," replied the minister.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was extremely gratified to hear this, The czar's minister had affirmed a principle which lies at the basis of the teachings of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov<sup>4</sup> - the very teachings and ideology for which he was standing trial!

"*Where are you?*" explained the Rebbe, "is G-d's perpetual call to every man. Where are you in the world? What have you accomplished? You have been allotted a certain number of days, hours and minutes in which to fulfill your mission in life. You have lived so many years and so many days - Rabbi Schneur Zalman spelled out the exact age of the minister - where are you? What have you attained?"

### Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, on December 12, 1957, on the occasion of the 159th anniversary of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's release from prison in Petersburg (Kislev 19th on the Jewish calendar).

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3. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchoki, 4800-1105 (1040-1105) whose commentary is the most basic aid to understanding the literal meaning of the Torah's words.

4. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, 5458-5520 (1698-1760) was the founder of the chassidic movement, Rabbi Israel's successor, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch, and considered himself his 'spiritual grandson.'