

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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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ה"ע
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ז"ה
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb Dovid Asniel ben Reb **Eliyahu** ה"ע
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. Devora Rivka bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ה"ע
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb Yitzchok Moshe (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ה"ע
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
.ת.ב.צ.ב.ת.

AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** יתתנש
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחנוי
Shagalov

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1:1

וְאֶלְהֶ שְׁמוֹת

And these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt

Names. On the one hand, the name is but a superficial label attached to a person and hardly an integral part of his nature and character. Yet, more than anything else he possesses, a person's name is the handle to his very essence: when one calls him by name, the person himself - not just a certain aspect of his persona - is referred to and responds.

This is why the section of Torah which deals with the state of *golus* [exile]¹ is called 'Names' ('*Shemos*' in Hebrew). *Golus* is a most external condition for the Jew, a state of being which is utterly foreign to his true self. But, like the name, *golus* evokes his most quintessential powers. It calls forth the deepest reserves of his soul - reserves which would otherwise remain buried in the innermost part of his being.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher
Rebbe shlita

1. The Torah reading of Shemos is devoted entirely to the Egyptian Exile (2238-2448 (1523-1313 B.C.E.), the first and prototypic *golus* of the Jewish people.

Hide and Seek

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, who was orphaned from his mother at the age of three, was raised by his grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

One day, little Menachem Mendel was sitting on his grandfather's lap. The child was pulling on the Rebbe's beard and calling: *Zeideh! Zeideh!* ('Grandfather! Grandfather!'). "But this isn't the *zeideh*," protested Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "this is *zeideh's* beard!" So the child grabbed his grandfather's head. "This is *zeideh*," he tried. "Oh no," said Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "this is *zeideh's* head. Where is *zeideh*?"

And so it went. The child pointed in turn to his *zeideh's* eyes, hands, chest. "But where is *zeideh*?" Rabbi Schneur Zalman kept insisting.

Suddenly, the child was off his grandfather's lap and behind the door. From his hiding place, little Mendel cried out: *ZEI--DEH!!* "What is it?" called the Rebbe, turning towards his grandson. "Aha," exclaimed the child, "**there** is *zeideh*!"

Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ("Sayings and Stories") by Rabbi Raphael Nachman Kahan, vol. 1, p. 53.

2:14

הַלְהָרְגַנִּי אַתָּה אָמַר
“Do you say to kill me...?!”

Speaking negatively of another kills three:
the speaker, the one who listens, and the one
who is spoken of

Talmud, Erchin 15b.

Empty Threat?

Two Mezhebuzh citizens were involved in a bitter dispute. Once while they were angrily having it out in the local synagogue, one shouted at the other: “I will tear you apart like a fish!”

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, who was in the synagogue at the time, told his disciples to form a circle, each taking the hand of his neighbor, and to close their eyes. The Baal Shem Tov himself closed the circle by placing his holy hands upon the shoulders of the two disciples who stood nearest to him. Suddenly, the disciples cried out in fright: they had seen the angry man actually ripping his fellow apart, just as he had threatened!

Once Upon A Chassid

No potential ever remains unrealized. A person's every act, word, and even thought has an effect. At times, the effect is concrete and tangible; at times, it is more subtle and can be discerned only by a finer, more spiritual eye.

Source:

Hayom Yom [calendar with quotations from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, compiled in 1943 by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita], quotation for Tishrei 29th.

3:2-7

וירא מלאך ה אליו בלבת אש מתווך הסנה
ויאמר ה ראה ראיתי את עני עמי

The angel of G-d revealed Himself to him [Moses] in a flame of fire from within a thornbush...

And G-d said: I have seen the affliction of my people...

Why a thorn bush? For G-d says: “I am with him in his suffering” (Psalms 91:14).

Rashi's commentary.

Playing at “Rebbe-Chassid”

Once, when Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch and his brother Rabbi Zalman Aharon were children, they played “Rebbe and Chassid.” Young Shalom DovBer was close to five years of age at the time, his brother a year older. Little Sholom DovBer refused to play the ‘rebbe’, insisting that “there is only one rebbe” (the ‘real’ Rebbe, their grandfather Rabbi Menachem Mendel). So Zalman Aharon acted the role of ‘rebbe’ and Sholom DovBer played the ‘chassid’.

Once Upon A Chassid

A chassid's consultation with his rebbe in *yechidus* (private audience) usually concerns one of two things: a query of *haskalah*, an intellectual question or problem, or a request for guidance in the chassid's *avodah*, his personal relationship with G-d. In the children's game, the little 'chassid' entered into *yechidus* with a query in each of these areas.

In the *haskalah* portion of the audience, the exchange went as follows:

"Rebbe, what is a Jew?" asked the 'chassid.'

"A Jew is fire"

"So why am I not burned when I touch you?"

"Fire does not burn fire."

"The little 'chassid' then complained of a deficiency in his personal *avodah* and the 'rebbe' advised him on how to correct it. To this the young Sholom DovBer said: "You're not a rebbe."

"Why?" asked Zalman Aharon.

"A rebbe," said the child, "would emit a sigh before replying..."

Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, Sukot 1950.

4:31

וַיַּאֲמַן הַעַם

And the people believed

The people of Israel are believers, the sons of believers.

Talmud, Shabbos 97a

Positive Doubts

A chassid once complained to Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch* that he is plagued with doubts about his faith.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel asked him: “So what? Why do you care?”

“But Rebbe,” cried the chassid, “I am a Jew!!”

“Well,” said the Rebbe, “in that case, everything is fine...”

Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, April 18, 1950.

*. The third Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, known as the *Tzemach Tzedek*. *Editor.*

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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All of the signs mentioned by our sages indicate that we are currently situated **at the very end of the period of exile**. We have "passed all the deadlines."¹ We have also performed Teshuvah [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption]. Indeed, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, declared (several decades ago) that we have already concluded all the service [necessary for Redemption], including the "polishing of the buttons,"² and we now stand ready ("All of you stand ready") to greet our righteous Moshiach.³

* * *

Despite the difficult and protracted final exile, which has lasted more than 1,900 years (in stark contrast to the duration of the Egyptian bondage which lasted 210 years), the nature of "the Children of Israel" has essentially **transcended exile**. Thus, every additional moment we remain in exile is a form "having **now come** into Egypt,"⁴ "as if they had that very day entered into Egypt."⁵

The Jewish people, therefore, stand with firm faith and conviction that G-d will immediately fulfill his promise that "I have indeed remembered you"⁶ by bringing the genuine and complete Redemption, especially when hearing from the Moses of our generation,⁷ my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation,

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. Talk of Simchas Torah, 5689.

3. Cf. *Hayom Yom*, among others, 15 Teves.

4. *Shemos* 1:1.

5. *Shemos Rabbah*, beginning of our Parsha (8:14), *Tanchuma*, loc. cit. 3.

6. *Shemos* 3:16.

7. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7: "There is no generation in which there is none like Moses." See also *Zohar* 3:273a. *Tikkunei Zohar* 69 (112, beginning of side a. 114, beginning of side a). *Tanya* chapter 44. Ibid. *Iggeres HaKodesh*, elucidation of sec. 27, end.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

that we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and are presently standing ready to greet our righteous Redeemer [Moshiach]. This is particularly true now that we have reached the milestone of forty years⁸ concerning which the Torah says, "G-d gave you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁹ Additionally, we are now situated in the fifty first year [5751], which in Hebrew forms the acrostic (It shall be a year of) wonders which I will show him [נפלאות ארנו - Niflaos Arenu].

The Jewish people should, therefore, be encouraged and their spirits uplifted by declaring that G-d says daily, and literally, anew, that, "**I have indeed remembered you,**" and that your righteous Moshiach "stands behind the wall"¹⁰ and that "this one is coming."¹¹ Accordingly we should prepare ourselves to greet him by increasing our observance of Torah and Mitzvos, **in consonance with the ruling of the Rambam**¹² (whose anniversary of passing is the 20th of Teves, the night after this Sabbath), that through "one Mitzvah, one can favorably alter the balance for oneself and for the entire world, causing oneself and them salvation and deliverance."

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Shemos, 19 Teves 5751)

8. [I.e., forty years since the passing of the Previous Rebbe, a milestone which enables us to fully realize the intention and depth of the teachings that were said forty years earlier. - Translator's note.]

9. Tavo 29:3 [Moses said this to the Jewish people who were about to enter into the Promised Land, explaining that they were now capable of realizing that which they were taught by G-d forty years earlier. Translator's note.]

10. *Shir HaShirim* 2:9.

11. Ibid 8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (ch. 2:8(b)).

12. *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

We have already mentioned many times the words of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that aside from the fact that already "all the appointed times have passed,"¹ the Jewish people have already done teshuvah and already everything is completed, even including "polishing the buttons." We only need G-d to open the eyes of the Jewish people so that they should see that the true and complete Redemption already exists, and we are sitting already by the prepared table at the festive meal of Livyosan, Shor HaBor,² etc.

Therefore it's understood... in this generation and at this time, after every requirement has been accomplished (as mentioned above), one has the complete assurance in the Torah that there will certainly be "(You will remember the day of your exodus from the land of Egypt) all the days of your life... to bring about the days of Moshiach."³

There is no need for any interruption, G-d Forbid, between "all the days of your life" and "the days of Moshiach" (which has been the situation for the Jewish people in all the generations **before** our generation). Rather, "all the days of your life" for every Jew, living physically as a soul in a body, includes in the simple sense (also) "the days of Moshiach." This is without an interruption, since the Redemption is actually coming imminently and immediately at this instant and in this place (even if the condition is one of night, "coming to Egypt"). Thus the last moment of exile and the very last instant of exile become the first moment and the very first instant of Redemption.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. See *Bava Basra* 74b ff. *Pesachim* 119b and in other places.

3. *Brochos* 12b.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

And from "the days of your life" at this time and in this place, without any interruption whatsoever, G-d Forbid, (even if he is already older than seventy years, etc.) every Jew will go immediately - totally and completely, "Reuven and Shimon descended, Reuven and Shimon arose,"⁴ - into the continuation of "all the days of your life," into the days of Moshiach and the eternal life that then will be.

Practically, this means that the Divine service of the Jewish people now must be "to bring about the days of Moshiach." We must reveal that the situation of "coming to Egypt" in exile is in truth a situation of the "Redemption of Israel." [This is achieved] through his preparation of himself and others for the situation of "the days of Moshiach."

The above includes (particularly in conjunction with the day of passing of the Rambam⁵) strengthening and increasing the study of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, especially the Laws of King Moshiach,⁶ in the last two chapters of the "Laws of Kings" which conclude the *Mishneh Torah*.

In addition to one's own study of this, one should also influence other Jews around him (men, women and children) in a manner of "raising many disciples,"⁷ and many more will see and emulate them.

May it be G-d's Will, that through the resolution itself will come imminently and immediately the reward, the actual fulfillment of the Rambam's words at the conclusion of his work,⁸ that after there

4. *Vayikra Rabba*, chapter 32:5. See there for cross references.

5. [The Rambam passed away on 20 Teves. *Translator's note.*]

6. This is how it is titled in the Venice edition of 5284 and 5310.

7. *Avos*, chapter 1, Mishneh 1.

8. *Laws of Kings*, end of chapter 11.

BESURAS HAGEULO

already exists "a king from the House of Dovid, expert in the Torah and involved in mitzvos like Dovid his father... and he will compel all Israel to walk in [the ways of Torah], strengthen its breeches and fight the wars of G-d" - who is the "presumed Moshiach" [b'chezkas Moshiach] - there will already be immediately the "confirmed Moshiach" [Moshiach vadai], who "does all the above and succeeds, builds the Temple in its place and gathers the dispersed of Israel... He will then improve the whole world so that it serves G-d in unity,..."

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Shmos, 21 Teves 5752)

לעילוי נשמת
מרת גאולה ב"ר מיכלוף ע"ה סבאג
נפטרה ביום ט"ז אלול ה'תש"פ
ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.
*
נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

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Passed away on 24 Tamuz, 5783

.ה. ז. ב. ג.

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