

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

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5:23

ומחה אל מי המרים

*The kohen shall dissolve [the writing]
in the bitter waters*

G-d says: Let my name be erased in the water, if only to bring peace between man and wife.

Sifri

"...and he skips over me with love" (Song of Songs 2:4) -Great is G-d's love for Israel; He lovingly tolerates the schoolchildren, who trample over the pages of the holy writings....

Midrash

Supernal Priorities

A chassid once wrote to the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson:

At the synagogue in which I pray, there are individuals who are completely out of line with the spirit of Chassidism, I have therefore stopped my practice of reviewing discourses of Chassidic teaching there. For such people, must I squander the sacred teachings of Chassidism to no purpose...?!

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The Rebbe replied in a letter dated 2 Iyar 5695 [May 5, 1935]:

Rabbi Pinchas of Noritz was among the most distinguished of Rabbi Israel Ball Shem Tov's disciples and a close companion of his successor, Rabbi Dovber of Mezeritch. Rabbi Pinchas was of the opinion that the distinction and exclusivity of the teachings of chassidism should be safeguarded. He believed that these teachings should not be publicized, and only shared with a select few. He was particularly opposed to those who transcribed Rabbi DovBer's teachings and allowed copies to be made.

Once, while Rabbi Pinchas was in Mezeritch, he found one such transcription languishing in a mound of garbage. The sight of this caused him great pain. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was also in Mezeritch at the time and knew of Rabbi Pinchas's intolerance of the indiscriminate publicizing of *chassidus*. Wishing to appease his holy feelings, he began to speak in metaphor:

“Once upon a time there was a mighty king who had an only son. Wishing his son to grow in wisdom and might, he sent him off to explore faraway lands and far-flung islands. There the prince was to learn the nature of foreign plants and animals and brave dangerous terrain to capture exotic beasts and birds.

“One day, the news reached the king that his son, who was then on a faraway island, had fallen gravely ill, and that the doctors were unable to find a cure for his illness. The king commanded that a call be issued throughout his kingdom: any man who has knowledge of medicine or who can propose a cure for the illness of the prince should come

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to the royal palace.

“All the great doctors and all the famed scholars were silenced; for they knew not remedy nor cure for the illness of the prince.

“One day, there arrived a man who told the king that he knew of a proven remedy for the illness of the prince. However, this remedy was to be found only in an extremely rare and precious stone. Should they find this gem, grind it to the finest of powders, mix it with a superb wine, and give it to the prince to drink, he would be cured.

“The king commanded all the great gemologists of the land to assemble and make a thorough search of the royal treasure stores for the gem which the man had described. After inspecting all the king’s gems, the experts finally discovered a stone that matched the man’s description. However, the gem they found was the centerpiece of the royal crown of the king!

“At first, they were overjoyed to discover the gem, but as soon as they realized that by removing the stone from the crown - the very crown with which their king was coronated -all its glory would fade, they were extremely distressed. Nonetheless, they were forced to inform the king that the gem had been found.

“The king was overjoyed. He commanded that the gem be extracted, ground to a fine powder, and that the potion for his son be quickly prepared.

“But at that moment, terrible news reached the royal palace: the prince’s condition had so deteriorated that his

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lips were sealed. So ill was the prince that he could take nothing, not even liquids, into his mouth. The experts and scholars assembled at the palace were certain that, under the circumstances, the king would surely direct that the stone not be ground so that the splendor of the royal crown could be preserved.

“How astounded they were to hear the king instructing them to hurry and crush the gem and to prepare the potion as swiftly as possible, and pour it into the mouth of the prince. ‘Grind, pour, squander the entire gemstone,’ said the king, ‘who knows, perhaps a single drop will enter the mouth of my son and he will be healed.’

“The king’s ministers were amazed at the king’s decision and pleaded with him: as long as the prince was able to take the cure, it was worthwhile to destroy the gem; but now, when his condition is so hopeless that his ability to swallow even a single drop is in question, why ruin the glorious crown of the king, the crown by which he assumed his throne?

“The king replied to his ministers: ‘If, G-d forbid, my son will not live, who needs the crown? And should he recover, the ruined crown will be my greatest glory. It will attest to the loyalty of my only son, who risked his life to fulfill my will and ascend in wisdom and bravery...’”

Source:

Igros Kodesh [Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn of Lubavitch], vol. III, p. 324.

7:6-9

כי עבדת הקדש עליהם בכתף ישאו

Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites.... according to their workload.... But to the Kehos family he did not give any; for theirs was [the most] holy work, they bore it [the ark] on their shoulders....

“My Lubavitch”

Every year, Reb Shlomo ‘the Yellow’, a *melamed* from Nevel, would walk to Lubavitch to spend the Simchat Torah festival with his rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer. Even in his later years when his strength had failed him, he refused to climb onto a wagon for even a minute; every step of the way was taken on his own two feet. “In my Lubavitch,” Reb Shlomo maintained, “no horse will take part.”

“There will come a time,” Reb Shlomo would explain, “when I shall stand before the Supernal Judge. What will I have to show for myself? What have I done with the years which have been granted me? We both know that the life of Reb Shlomo the *melamed* leaves much to be desired.

“But there is one thing that no one can take from me: My Lubavitch. Every year I came to the Rebbe. But imagine that when I present my Lubavitch before the heavenly

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court, along comes a horse, claiming partnership; it was he, after all, who *schlepped* me to Lubavitch. The truth is, I would probably win my case against the horse. But I have no desire to have it out with a horse over my trips to the Rebbe. No horse will be involved in my Lubavitch!”

Source:

Igros Kodesh (Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch), vol. VI, p. 270; see also the address delivered by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, on January 12, 1957.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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We have already mentioned many times that according to all the signs of our Sages regarding the end of days (in addition to the general statement in the times of the Gemara that "all the appointed times have passed"¹), this generation is the last of exile and the first generation of Redemption. My sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation, testified accordingly - in connection with his well-known announcement "immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption"² - that in his days, (decades ago) all the aspects of service were completed, the only requirement being to "polish the buttons"³ and to stand ready to greet our righteous Moshiach.⁴ How much more must this be the case after the increased efforts to spread Torah and Judaism and the wellsprings of Chassidus outward from then until now; especially since after forty years (from his elevation⁵) "a person reaches the level of understanding of his teacher,"⁶ "A heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁷ Thus it is absolutely certain that the service of "polishing the buttons" has also been concluded, and we are standing ready to

1. *Sanhedrin* 97:2

2. "Kol Koray" in the *HaKriah VeHaKedusha* [Reading and Holiness] of the years 5701-03 [1940-1943] (his *Igros Kodesh* volume 5, page 361 and following. 377 and following. 408 and following. Volume 6, page 430 and following). And elsewhere. [*The phrase literally means, "Immediately to Return (or Repentance), immediately to Redemption. Translator's note.*]

3. See the talks of Simchas Torah 5689 [1929].

4. See *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves, And in several places.

5. [*The Rebbe is writing in the fortieth year after the passing of the Previous Rebbe. Traditionally, the departure of a tzadik from this world is referred to as an "elevation," meaning that he has reached a higher level of spirituality and inferring that his physical life in this world was also essentially spiritual. Translator's note.*]

6. *Avodah Zarah* 5, beginning of side b.

7. *Tavo* 29:3.

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greet our righteous Moshiach.

This matter receives the utmost emphasis in this year - 5751, whose mnemonic⁸ is hinted at in the verse⁹ "his kingship **will be exalted**" (referring to Dovid and Shlomo,¹⁰ since King Moshiach will be from their offspring¹¹) over the entire world. The importance of this year is also alluded to in the year's acronym, "It will be a year in which **I will show him wonders**,"¹² as in the verse "as in the days of your going forth from the land of Egypt I will show him wonders."¹³ The year began with the "wonders" which were actually seen (in addition to those which will be seen in the future, "I will show you") and revealed to the eyes of the whole world. These wonders **fulfilled** the words of the *Yalkut Shimoni*:¹⁴ "In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed, the kings of all the nations of the world will struggle with each other... the king of Persia etc., the Arabian king, etc.; And (G-d) will say to them (Israel), "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... The time for your Redemption has arrived!" From that time on (particularly in the month of Nissan,

8. *[As every Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent, the alphabetic designation of a year may yield abbreviations or words that have special significance. The process of discovering these numerical meanings and correspondences between words is called "gematria." Here, for instance, the Hebrew letters א, ש, ג, ת numerically equal 5751 (א = 1, ש = 300, ג = 50, ת = 400; 5000, sometimes designated with a preceding ה, is often omitted, it being understood we are in the sixth millennia (5000-5999) of Creation). The word תנשא, formed from the letters means "will be exalted." Translator's note.]*

9. Balak 24:7.

10. The explanation of Rashi on the verse.

11. *Sefer HaMitzvos* of the Rambam, negative commandment 362. *Perush HaMishnayos*, beginning of chapter Chelek, principle 12. *Igeres Teiman*.

12. *[See 6a. תנשא שנת אראנו נפלאות is the translated phrase in Hebrew. Translator's note.]*

13. Micah 7:15.

14. Yeshayahu, remez 499.

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the month of Redemption) we are already standing at the time "When the King Moshiach comes ("behold he comes")... and will proclaim to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived!'"

...But action is the main thing:¹⁵

Since this is the Shabbos after the giving of the Torah, Parshas Naso, in the year of I will show him wonders, it is a time particularly ready and appropriate for the revelation of "a new Torah will proceed from me."¹⁶ This means that the practical lesson is that this is the set time **to prepare** (a sample and example of) the new dimensions of Torah to be revealed that will ultimately lead to the actual fulfillment of the promise "a new Torah will proceed from me."

Simply put, there should be a renewal and increase in learning Torah with vigor and delight, until one originates new insights, whether for one's self or to have an effect on others, "Raise up many disciples."¹⁷ For it is known that "Every one of Israel is able to reveal secrets of wisdom and to discover a new insight in Torah, whether in homiletics or in the revealed or in the esoteric parts of Torah, according to the level of his soul's root. **Indeed, one is obligated to do so.**"¹⁸ This includes particularly a renewal and intensification in learning and spreading the inner teachings of the Torah that are revealed in Toras Chassidus, a sample, example and

15. Avos, Chapter 1, Mishneh 17 (in gematria, "good") - that is learned on this Shabbos. [The number 17 in Hebrew can be formed from the letters of the word "good." See also note 6a. Translator's note.]

16. See Yeshayahu 51:4: "For Torah will proceed from me." And in Vayikra Rabba 13:3: "A new Torah will proceed from me, a renewal of Torah from me will proceed." This is explained at length in the talk of the second day of Shavuot (Sefer HaSichos 5751, p. 566 and following).

17. Avos Chapter 1, Mishneh 1.

18. *Tanya, Igeres HaKodesh*, section 26 (p. 145a).

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"taste" of the Torah of Moshiach ("those who taste it shall merit life"¹⁹). Through this we will quicken, hasten and achieve the coming of Dovid, the King Moshiach.²⁰

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Naso, 12 Sivan 5751)

19. See *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 20, page 173. And see there for cross references.

20. *Igeres HaKodesh of the Baal Shem Tov* - section 309 at the beginning.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Yisroel ben Reb Yaakov ע"ה Shaul
Passed away on 17 Sivan, 5775

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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