

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
 ה. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

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

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Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
Executive Director

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11:5

אשר נאכל במצרים חנם

The fish which we ate in Egypt for free

"For free" - free of the mitzvos.

Sifri

Many ask: Why did G-d command us to observe the mitzvos? He is infinite and all transcendent in His existence - nothing can detract from Him nor add to His perfection. Can He possibly care what we do?

Yet, our deeds *are* significant to Him. Not because of anything they inherently possess, but because He *chose* to imbue them with significance, for our sake. Life as a free lunch may be appealing at first, but soon turns tedious and threadbare. If life were not a struggle between right and wrong, if we did not have to sacrifice, toil, and accomplish in order to earn sustenance and happiness, it would be a joyless and meaningless exercise.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher
Rebbe shlita

A Weightless Life

A wealthy nobleman was once touring his estate and came upon a peasant pitching hay. The nobleman was fas-

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cinated by the flowing motions of the peasant's arms and shoulders, by the graceful sweep of the pitchfork through the air. He so greatly enjoyed the spectacle that he struck a deal with the peasant: for ten rubles a day, the peasant agreed to come to the mansion and re-enact his hay-pitching technique in the nobleman's drawing room.

The next day, the peasant arrived at the mansion, hardly concealing his glee at his new line of 'work.' After swinging his empty pitchfork for over an hour, he collected his ten rubles - many times over his usual take for a week of backbreaking labor. But by the following day, his enthusiasm had somewhat abated. Several days later he announced to his master that he is quitting his new commission.

"But I don't understand," puzzled the nobleman. "Why choose to swing heavy loads outdoors, in the bitter winter cold and sweltering summer heat, when you can perform such an effortless task in the comfort of my home and earn many times your usual pay?"

"But master," said the peasant, "I don't see the work."

Source:

Likkutei Sichos [Collected Talks of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita] vol. III, p. 1010.

B'ha'aloscha / Hey...

11:13

מאין לי בשר

From where should I have meat to give to this entire nation....?

Moses was unable to lower himself to the task of providing Israel with meat, his soul was far too lofty to deal with so mundane a need.

Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch

Hey...

The surging crowd pressed close to the table at which Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch was seated. It was *Simchat Torah* of 5679¹, the Rebbe was *farbrenging*, and everyone wished to hear the Rebbe's words. Soon the table, no longer able to bear the mounting pressure, collapsed.

Not wishing to disrupt the Rebbe's talk, the chassidim carefully lifted the splintered table piece by piece, and passed it hand over hand out of the room. Only when he concluded his talk did the Rebbe notice what had happened and exclaimed in surprise: "Where is the table?"

1. 1919.

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“I will tell you a story,” he said. “Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Barditchov had concluded his study of shchita and was preparing to slaughter his first hen. He took the bird in his left hand, and diligently prepared it for *shechting*. In his right he held the chalef.² With great concentration and ecstasy, he recited the blessing over the *mitzvah* which he was to observe for the very first time. In the meantime, the hen decided that, under the circumstances, it was high time she ran for her life...

“The Barditchover concluded the blessing and exclaimed (the Rebbe quoted in Polish-accented Yiddish): ‘*Vi is di hin? Where is the hen...?*’”

Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ("Sayings and Stories") by Rabbi Rephael Nachman Kahan, vol, 1, p. 157.

2. Slaughtering knife.

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12:4-8

לא כן עבדי משה

And G-d spoke suddenly to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.... If there be a prophet among you, I G-d make Myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream, Not so is it with Moses my servant.... Face to face I speak with him.

G-d appeared to them suddenly. Aaron and Miriam began to call "Water! Water!" for they needed to purify themselves and were caught unprepared. G-d wished to demonstrate to them the difference between their prophesy and the prophesy of Moses: with Moses, there was no set time to speak, for the Divine presence was to be found with him at all times.

Rashi's commentary

What a M'chuton!

For several days in 5564¹ the small town of Zhlobin hosted an encounter of two great chassidic groups. The

1. 1804.

B'ha'aloscha / What a M'chuton!

occasion was the famous “Zhlobener Wedding” in which a granddaughter of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi wed a grandson of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Barditchov. During the festivities, chassidim of both Rebbes hopped from event to event, comparing notes as to what was happening in ‘Chabad’ or ‘Barditchov.’

At one point, Rabbi Schneur Zalman asked: “What’s going on’ at the *m’chuton’s*?”² The chassidim informed him that Rabbi Levi Yitzchok had already finished with the morning prayers. “What a *m’chuton!*” remarked the Rebbe. “He runs a hand over his eyes, and his soul is ready to soar in prayer. I could never manage such a feat - I cannot even begin to pray without several hours of preparation.”

Later in the day, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok inquired after Rabbi Schneur Zalman and was told that the latter had not yet started his morning prayers. “What a *m’chuton!*” said the Barditchover. “Whenever he arrives, he is accepted with open arms. As for myself, if I wish to enter the heavenly gates of prayer I must come at the appointed hour, when the door is open for all...”

Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ["Sayings and Stories"] by Rabbi Rephael Nachman Kahan, vol. 111*, p. 159.

2. Yiddish term for a relative by marriage.

*. Correction: Vol. 3.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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All this receives greater emphasis in recent generations, described as, "in the heels of," and as, "the heels of the heels of Moshiach," particularly in this generation, the last generation of exile... Only the heel of the foot, i.e., the absolute last generation has the ability to "rise on its own"¹ and elevate all previous generations, because the last generation of exile will be the first generation of Redemption - the Redemption for all Jews throughout all generations!

In particular, the shepherd Aharon HaCohen² of our generation - my sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, the leader of our generation... has emphasized this through his "invocation" of "Immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption,"³ and the announcement⁴ that we only have to "polish the buttons," and afterwards - the declaration that this too has already ended, and it only requires us to "stand prepared all of you"⁵ to greet our righteous Moshiach in the true and complete Redemption.

(From the talk of Shabbos Beha'aloscha, 19 Sivan 5751)

1. *[The term "ability to rise on its own" is applied to the kindling of the menorah in the Temple, where the law requires that the branches be lit in such a manner that the flames can rise by themselves without any further assistance of the one who kindles them. See Rashi beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha, cited by the Rebbe in this Sich. Translator's note.]*

2. Thus Aharon is called in an explicit Scriptural text "the three shepherds" (Zecharyah 11:8. And see Taanis 9, end of side a).

3. Published in his *Igros Kodesh*, volume 5, page 361 and further. 377 and further. 408 and further. Volume 6, page 430 and further. *[The phrase literally means, "Immediately to Return (or Repentance), immediately to Redemption. Translator's note.]*

4. See the talks of Simchas Torah of 5689.

5. See *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, volume 4, page 279. *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves. And in several other places.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND
Reb Pesach Betzalel ben Reb Leib ע"ה Fleischman
Passed away on 3 Elul, 5784

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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