

# 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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## Tazriah / Wrong Address

12:8

ואם לא תמצא ידה די שיה

*And if she has not the means for a lamb, then she should bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons*

When I come to stand before the heavenly court, I do not fear the question: "Why weren't you Moses?" I was not equipped to be Moses. But I tremble for the day when it will be demanded of me: "Why weren't you Zusha?"

Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli

## *Wrong Address*

*Rebbetzin Devorah Leah, daughter of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, told.*

In the city of Vitebsk lived two tea merchants, both named Hosheia, known as 'Big Hoisha' and 'Little Hoisha'. Big Hoisha was a wealthy man, with a large, respectable establishment and a well-developed distribution network. 'Little Hoisha' was a small-time operator, running his business from hand to mouth, forever scrambling for loans to keep it afloat.

One day a message arrived that one of Little Hoisha's tea shipments had been confiscated at the border by customs

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officials. For the poor man, this spelled utter ruin. Not only would he lose everything, he would be left with crushing debts which he would never be able to repay.

“I was there,” the Rebbetzin told, “when they broke the news to Reb Hoisha, who was in Lubavitch at the time. The unfortunate man collapsed in a dead faint; time and again they revived him, but as soon as he remembered what had occurred, he would pass out once more.

“We ran to my father and told him of Reb Hoisha’s state. Father instructed that when Reb Hoisha is again revived, we should tell him that the messenger is mistaken. Shortly thereafter, the matter was indeed clarified. It turned out that the confiscated shipment belonged to the other Hoisha the tea merchant, Big Hoisha, who would hardly feel the loss.

“Father always maintained that he never performed miracles<sup>1</sup> Now the chassidim who had witnessed the incident claimed that they had caught him red-handed with a supernatural feat. ‘You are mistaken,’ replied father to this ‘accusation’, ‘there was nothing miraculous about my prediction. You see, our sages tell us that whenever the Almighty causes a person to undergo a challenge or trial in his life, He always provides him with the capacity and fortitude to bear it and to learn from the experience. So when I saw a calamity which Reb Hoisha was not equipped to deal with, I understood that it was not meant for him. Obviously, there must have been some misunderstanding...”

### Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ("Sayings and Stories") by  
Rabbi Rephael Nachman Kahan, vol. III, p. 175.

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1. See *How was I to Know?* on page 147.

## Tazriah / Skin Deep

13:2

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו

*A man to whom shall occur on the skin of his flesh a skin-lesion*

*"Shall occur"* implies happenstance, something out of character; *"on the skin of his flesh"* likewise indicates that the blemish is superficial, affecting only the most external 'layer' of the person.

Even in describing a seemingly defective individual, the Torah attests to the inherent goodness of man. Any perceptible 'blemish' which he may display is merely a matter of externalities, only a superficial, 'skin-deep' facet of his character.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher  
Rebbe shlita

## *Skin Deep*

Two market women had gotten into a dispute and were having it noisily out in the study of Rabbi Boruch Mordechai of Babroisk. The Rabbi finally deciphered enough of their arguments to hand down a ruling.

The losing party now attacked the Rabbi with a mouthful of vulgar curses. The Rebbetzin, drawn by the commotion, asked her husband why he didn't throw the vile woman from the house.

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“She doesn’t mean it,” said the rabbi.

The woman’s reaction was to let loose with a fresh torrent of abuse which made the first round seem mild indeed.

“Tell me,” Reb Boruch Mordechai asked the woman, “would you wish to have children like myself?” The woman gazed heavenward: “if only.. .”

“You see,” said Reb Boruch Mordechai to his wife, “she doesn’t mean it.”

### Source:

Shmu'os V'sipurim ("Sayings and Stories") by  
Rabbi Rephael Nachman Kahan, vol. 11,\* p. 60.

\*. Correction: Vol. 2.

# BESURAS HAGEULO

## The Announcement Of The Redemption

### 22

In recent times we have spoken about and emphasized strongly the necessity for each and every Jew to do everything that depends on him to actually bring our righteous Moshiach immediately.

Since in these days (with the conclusion of the month of Nissan of the year "it will be a year in which I will show him wonders") **"all the appointed times have passed"** ("the end of Yamim (days)" and "the end of Yamin (days)"<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup> **in the simplest sense**,<sup>3</sup> certainly our righteous Moshiach will come immediately. And [then] each and every one will point with his finger and say, **"Here he (King Moshiach) has come."**<sup>4</sup> This means that actually he already came in the moment before this one, for the past tense is used.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

**Moshiach is found in the world in the time and place of exile,** and in the situation of exile, for he bears the afflictions of the exile.

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1. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. And further references there.

2. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either the letter "mem" or a "nun": "Yamim" or "Yamin". The former, "Yamim," is connected to the left, the end of exile and removal of the negative. The latter, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. Translator's note]

3. In addition to the fact that already, in the time of the Gemara "all the appointed times have passed" (Sanhedrin 97b).

4. *Shir HaShirm* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on the verse (chapter 2:8(2)).

5. [In Hebrew, vowels are not usually written; rather they are understood either from the structure of the word, the grammar of the sentence or the context of the idea. Thus, in this case, the written form of the word for "come" can be read as present tense or past tense, depending on the pronunciation. Translator's note]

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(As the Gemara states,<sup>6</sup> "Rav said, if he is from the living, he is like our holy Rebbe [Yehudah HaNasi]."<sup>7</sup> [And then it states,] "**If Moshiach is from those that are living now** he is certainly **our holy Rebbe**,<sup>8</sup> who bears the afflictions and is a complete Chasid."<sup>9</sup>) And he waits impatiently and longingly<sup>10</sup> to reveal himself (from the concealment of the time and situation of exile), for the King Moshiach redeems Israel with the complete and true Redemption, after which there will be no exile, according to the halachic ruling of Rambam,<sup>11</sup> "If there arises a king from the house of David, etc."

...And there<sup>12</sup> (at the beginning of the discussion): "the School of Rabbi Shilah said, Shiloh is his name, as it is written, "until Shiloh comes"; the School of Rabbi Yannai said, Yinun is his name (similar to Yannai, [thus] each one explained the name of Moshiach after his name<sup>13</sup>), as it is written, "May his name endure forever, as

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6. *Sanhedrin* 98b.

7. According to the legal decision of the Rambam (Laws of Kings end of chapter 11), "If a king from the House of David arises, etc." - means that he is already a king.

8. *[In the Gemara, Rav is referring to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, compiler of the Mishneh and known simply as "Rebbe." Translator's note.]*

9. The explanation of Rashi there. This is why Moshiach is referred to as "the leper of the house of **Rebbe**," "because of our holy Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi] who is called **Rebbe**... because he bore the afflictions and sufferings like him" (*Chidushei Agadah* of the *Maharsha* there). *[The term "Chasid" here refers to one who is pious and kindly. Translator's note.]*

10. Therefore "he loosens one and binds one (he loosens the bandage on one wound, cleans it and rebinds it, then loosens the next bandage, and proceeds thus; he does not loosen two wounds together (as do the others afflicted with illness among whom he sits). He says, if I am called, I won't be detained (If I am asked to go and redeem Israel, I won't detain myself in order to bind two wounds)" *Sanhedrin* there and *Rashi's* explanation.

11. As in note 5.

12. *Sanhedrin* there.

13. Rashi's explanation there. - And the wording of Rashi is precise: "each one explained [the name of Moshiach] after his



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long as the sun, may his name be perpetuated (Yinun)"; the School of Rabbi Chaninah said, Chaninah is his name, as it is written, "I will show you no favor;"<sup>14</sup> others say Menachem ben Chizkiyahu<sup>15</sup> is his name, as it is written, "for far from me is a comforter to revive my spirit."<sup>16</sup>

And we (Chassidim) follow their example<sup>17</sup> (in regard to our Rebbeim, our leaders, in particular My sainted father-in-law, leader of our generation): Yosef is his name, as it is written<sup>18</sup> "The L-rd will continue [Yosif] to apply His hand a second time, etc., and He shall gather the lost of Israel, etc." Yitzchak is his name, as it is written,<sup>19</sup> "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [s'chok]".

\* \* \*

"Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi] said, which is the straightforward path that a man should choose for himself? That which is honorable to

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name" (and not that the students introduced the idea that his [Moshiach's] name is like that of their Rabbi).

14. [Literally, "I will not give you Chaninah." Translator's note.]

15. This is how it's written ("ben Chizkiyahu") in our editions, but in the *Yerushalmi* and *Eicha Rabbah*: just "Menachem. - Note that Rashi quotes the word "Menachem," and adds "ben Chizkiyah." It seems that Rashi's words should be amended thus: "The correct version is "ben Chizkiyahu, but the typesetter 'fixed' it and removed the words: "The correct version is..." This requires further study.

16. See also the *Yerushalmi Brochos* chapter 2, halacha 4. *Eichah Rabbah* 1:51. See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Ma'amarei Razal*, p. 106, that "all the opinions are true and these and those are the words of the Living G-d." Note there. [The verse quoted literally reads: "Menachem the comforter of my soul is far from me." Translator's note.]

17. [The Rebbe here refers to the tradition of Chassidim to interpret the names of their Rebbe as a reference to Moshiach. This is in the tradition of the Talmudic sages. Translator's note]

18. *Yeshayhu* 11:11-12.

19. *Tehillim* 126:2. See *Brochos* 31a.

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himself and brings honor from man." ...<sup>20</sup> This can be explained in light of what was previously said regarding the revelation and coming of Moshiach:

..."Rabbi said, which is the straightforward path that a man<sup>21</sup> should choose for himself:"

"The man" - refers to "this man<sup>22</sup> (who is 'at a high level... complete in everything') when his actions are proper and all things corrected... only the residue hasn't yet been cleaned from the edge of his clothes, etc." because of the exile - as was the case with Rebbe. In our generation - the last generation of exile, the footsteps of Moshiach, when we have concluded and completed all aspects of the service we had to do during the time of exile - it can be said that every Jew is at this level.

The question is: Since we've already completed "our actions and service throughout the duration of exile"<sup>23</sup> - what is the "**straightforward path**" (the easiest and fastest among all the paths of Torah) that all the Jewish people, who have concluded their service, should choose **to realize the revelation and coming of Moshiach?**<sup>24</sup>

...The explanation of "the straightforward path" to reveal and

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20. *Avos* chapter 2, *mishneh* 1.

21. [Literally, "the man," implying the ideal man. Translator's note.]

22. *Likkutei Torah* on our parsha, 22:2.

23. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

24. Beginning with the revelation and coming of **Moshiach within each and every Jew**, for it is known the verse, "A star will go forth from Yaakov, etc." that refers to *Melech HaMoshiach* (*Yerushalmi Taanis*, chapter 4, Halacha 5) also refers to each and every Jew (*Yerushalmi Ma'aser Sheni* chapter 4, Halacha 6), since in every Jew there is a spark of the soul of Moshiach (Me'or Aynaim, end of Parshas Pinchas).

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bring Moshiach through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes**"<sup>25</sup>- can be understood in practical terms:

As a preface, since our righteous Moshiach is ready to come immediately, but he hasn't actually come, therefore the final effort required ("the edge of his clothes") of every Jew to bring Moshiach must be (not through Kingship in its purity, the concern of king Moshiach himself, but) through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes.**" That means, the subject of Moshiach (Kingship) as it is found in **Torah** (Harmony).

...Simply put: "Tiferes" refers to learning Torah, and "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes**" refers to **learning the Torah concerning King Moshiach and Redemption** that are explained in many places.<sup>26</sup>

These places are: the Written Torah (particularly "the words of the prophets... for all their books are filled with this matter"<sup>27</sup>); the Oral Torah, in the Gemara (particularly the tractate Sanhedrin and the end of tractate Sotah) and in Midrashim; and especially the Inner Teachings of the Torah, beginning with the Zohar ("with this book of yours, the book of the Zohar, they will leave their exile in mercy"<sup>28</sup>), through Toras Chassidus (that through the spreading of the wellsprings outward the master, king Moshiach, will come<sup>29</sup>), to

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25. [Literally, "*Kingship in Harmony.*" There are seven "emotional" Sefiros (emanations of G-dliness). These "character traits" such as kindness, severity or discipline, harmony, etc. are reflected in the individual's personality. Each of these also includes all the others. (There is a kindness within kindness, a discipline within kindness, etc.). Translator's note.]

26. They are easy to find - through indexes (which have proliferated in this generation), arranged alphabetically, in the appropriate entries: Redemption, Moshiach, etc.

27. Rambam, *Laws of Kings* chapter 11, halacha 2.

28. *Zohar* volume 3 124:2 - in *Raya Mehemna*. It is quoted and explained in *Igeres HaTeshuva* beginning of section 26.

29. *Igeres HaKodesh* of the Baal Shem Tov - *Keser Shem Tov* at the

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the Torah of our Rebbeim, our Leaders, and principally in the Torah (Ma'amarim and Likkutei Sichos<sup>30</sup>) of the Leader of our generation. Learning this material is a sample of and preparation for learning the Torah of Moshiach, "For a new Torah shall go forth from Me,"<sup>31</sup> meaning he will teach to all the people the Inner Teachings of the Torah (the reasons of the Torah) and knowledge of G-dliness ("know the G-d of your fathers"<sup>32</sup>). This accords with the halachic ruling of the Rambam<sup>33</sup> that "in that time... the Jews will be great sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of their Creator, etc."

This increase in learning the Torah concerned with Moshiach and Redemption ("Malchus sh'b'Tiferes") is the "straightforward path" to actually cause the revelation and coming of Moshiach and Redemption.

My intention here is action<sup>34</sup> - and certainly the following will be publicized everywhere:

In order to realize the immediate revelation and coming of Moshiach - each and every Jew (the men, whether they are dwellers in the tent (Yisachar) or men of business (Zevulun), and the women and children, each one according to his ability) should increase their learning of Torah, particularly the subjects of Moshiach and Redemption.

It would be even better if they would learn (in public) with ten others because, in addition to the advantage that "ten who sit and

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beginning.

30. *[Ma'amarim are discourses of Chassidic philosophy; Likkutei Sichos are collections of talks on the Torah and holidays. Translator's note.]*

31. *Yeshayahu 51:4. Vayikra Rabba chapter 13:3.*

32. *Divrei HaYamim 1 28:9.*

33. The conclusion and completion of his work, the *Mishneh Torah*.

34. *[Literally: "I have come for action." Translator's note.]*

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occupy themselves with Torah, the Divine Presence dwells among them,"<sup>35</sup> there is a particular advantage when learning about Moshiach and the Redemption in public. Such public learning affects the excitement and the heart-felt joy through which comes an increasing desire and anticipation for the coming of Moshiach.<sup>36</sup>

In addition -- and this is obviously most essential - one should increase the quality of one's observance of mitzvos; in particular one should enhance one's fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzedekah (comprehensive of all the mitzvos<sup>37</sup>) with distinction, for it "draws near the Redemption."<sup>38</sup>

It is proper and correct to connect the increase **in tzedekah** with an increase **in the Torah** concerning Moshiach and Redemption; by giving tzedekah with the **intention** to bring close and hasten the Redemption. This intention itself constitutes **learning Torah in matters of Redemption**. When one thinks of from time to time the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, "great is tzedekah for it brings near the Redemption," it constitutes learning matters of Moshiach and Redemption.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 6 Iyar 5751)*

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35. *Avos* chapter 3, mishneh 6. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, section 23.

36. Therefore, those who want to learn in depth, and in the give and take fashion of scholarly discourse (and to even contribute original Torah ideas about Moshiach and Redemption) in a quiet and peaceful setting, and therefore prefer to learn by themselves or with a partner, should still try (from time to time) to also join the learning of ten; this way they will also have the advantage of learning with ten (as mentioned in the text).

37. See *Tanya*, chapter 27.

38. *Bava Basra* 10a.

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