

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

Reprinted for Parshat Vayechi, 5783
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5759 ♦ 1999

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** 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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47:28

ויחי יעקב

And Jacob lived...

Living Conditions

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi wished to bless Rabbi Yekutiel Lefler with riches. But the chassid declined, explaining that the preoccupations of wealth would infringe upon his study of Torah and his service of the Almighty.

So the Rebbe offered to bless him with long life. Said Rabbi Yekutiel: “But not with a peasant’s years. Not with the years of those ‘*who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear*’ - not with a life in which one sees not G-dliness and one hears not G-dliness.”

Asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*: is it not presumptuous for one who is offered a gift to say, “Okay, I accept, but only on the condition that you throw in a few extras”? But to Rabbi Yekutiel, explained the Rebbe, ‘to see G-dliness and hear G-dliness’ is not a matter of raised consciousness or an enhancement of the, spiritual’ quality of his life, but the very definition of life itself.

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 Cheshvan 6th; On The Essence Of Chassidism by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*, p. 50.

1. Psalms 115:4-5.

Once Upon A Chassid

48:19

ואולם אחיו הקטן יגדל ממנו

*But his younger brother shall be
greater than he*

The wholesome simplicity of a simple Jew touches upon the utterly simple essence of G-d.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov

When Less is More

The two men were among the privileged few to be granted an audience with the king. At the appointed hour the first man arrived at the palace, but as soon as he entered the anteroom he froze, awestruck. A wealthy man himself, he was in a position to truly appreciate the grandeur which lay before him. For hours he stood, reveling in the finery and opulence which intoxicated his rich- man's soul. For hours he stood, and the king ... he never did quite see the king.

The second man also arrived at the same entrance hall, but he was a man unaccustomed to such riches. His impoverished taste failed to appreciate what so enthralled his more sophisticated fellow. Much to the wealthy man's dismay, the pauper made straight for the king's door.

* * *

Vayechi / When Less is More

Says the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*:

A great man¹ once said. "I pray with the mind of a child." A child's perception of G-d, he felt, is in a way truer and purer than the accomplished kabbalist's deepest comprehension of the Divine attributes and manifestations.

The spiritual connoisseur who approaches G-d with an eye to the 'experience' of this or that nuance of the Divine, can lose sight of the point of it all. Only by acknowledging our basic spiritual illiteracy can we truly relate to the all-transcendent essence of G-d.

Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*, Shavuot 1991.

1. Rabbi Yaakov bar Sheishes, the 'Rivos'.

Once Upon A Chassid

49:10

לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחקה מבין רגליו
עד כי יבא שילה

*The scepter shall not depart from
judah, nor the law-giver from his
descendants, until the Moshiach
comes...*

Every soul possesses a spark of the soul of
Moshiach.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov

Moshiach's in the Air

After the passing of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch in 5533¹, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok led a group of chassidim to settle in the Holy Land.

One day, a somewhat deluded individual climbed the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and sounded a *shofar*. Soon the rumor spread that Moshiach had arrived, setting off a great commotion in the street. Rabbi Mendel went to his window and sniffed the air. “No,” he said, “unfortunately, the redeemer has not yet arrived. On that day, ‘the world

1. 1772.

Vayechi / Moshiach's in the Air

shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea' and 'all flesh will perceive'² the reality of the Creator. I do not sense the Divine truth that will permeate the world in the era of Moshiach."

Said the renowned mashpiah, Rabbi Grunem Estherman: "Why did Rabbi Mendel need to go to the window to sniff for the presence of Moshiach? Because the all-pervading truth of G-d was already a tangible reality within the walls of Rabbi Mendel's room."

Source:

Likkutei Sipurim ("Collected Stories") by Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Perlov, p. 284.

2. Isaiah 11:9 and 40:5.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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With respect to Gideon, we find that: "In his days¹ the Jewish people were in distress. The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought a person who would find merit in them. When He found Gideon to be meritorious, because he found merit in them, an angel immediately appeared to him, as it says: "And the angel of G-d appeared to him and said to him, 'Go with this power, with **the power of the merit you have found in my children.**'" "Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, it is within your capacity to find a defense for Israel. **In your merit they shall be redeemed.**"²

...The merit which will hasten the Redemption is the following:

Even in the Talmudic era it has been said that "all the deadlines have passed."³ Certainly now that we have endured a lengthy and arduous exile, the duration of which has exceeded 1,900 years, **and he has still not arrived...** And in regard to Teshuvah ("It depends only on Teshuvah³) [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption], they have already done Teshuvah. Indeed, there is no Jewish person who has not entertained a thought of Teshuvah, (not just once, but) several times in the course of his lifetime. This [thought of Teshuvah] can transform "instantaneously"⁴ a perfectly wicked person into a perfectly righteous individual, in accordance with the Talmudic ruling⁵ that one who would betroth a woman "stipulating that I am a (perfectly⁶) righteous individual, even if he

1. *Tanchuma, Shoftim 4.*

2. *Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim 62.*

3. *Sanhedrin 97b.*

4. *Zohar I, 129, end side a.*

5. *Kiddushin 49b. Rambam, Hilchos Ishus, 8:5. Tur, Shulchan Aruch, Even HoEzer, 38:31.*

6. Based on the version cited on *Or Zarua 112.*

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

were previously a perfectly wicked person, she is betrothed, for perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah."

Considering the above, it is with utmost certainty that our righteous Moshiach must arrive **here and now, immediately, [mamosh] in the most literal sense.**

Now, this exercise of finding merit⁷ in and of itself should suffice to bring about the Redemption. Moreover, in addition to the finding of merit, the imminence of Moshiach's arrival constitutes a **definitive ruling issued by many rabbis and halachic authorities.** Further, since Torah "is not in heaven,"⁸ this ruling issued by the earthly courts "obligates," so to speak, and affords a unique privilege to, the heavenly courts. **And so it will be confirmed!**

* * *

In our day and age, after G-d has vented His rage with the destruction of the Holy Temple, and after all of "our deeds and actions throughout the duration of exile,"⁹ and after all the decrees of oppression and persecution - may Hashem, indeed, shield us and protect us from them - the Jewish people have endured throughout the protracted and arduous final exile, particularly the Holocaust of the very last generation, the process of refinement and purification has, without any doubt, been achieved in full, "enough and even too much." Consequently, the [current¹⁰] "siege of the Babylonian

7. [i.e., that we have already passed all the deadlines as well as satisfying the condition of Teshuvah. Translator's note.]

8. Netzavim, 30:12. See Bava Metzia 59b.

9. Tanya, beginning of chapter 37.

10. [The Hebrew term Samach, which means "besieged," can also be rendered "supported." This talk was delivered on the fast day Asara b'Teves (the Tenth of the month of Teves), the anniversary of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king. The Rebbe here is alluding to the threats of the modern day Babylonian dictator, which are actually the events which serve as preludes to the Redemption. Translator's note.]

BESURAS HAGEULO

king"¹¹ has acquired an exclusively **positive** connotation, one that is **visibly and manifestly good, even to eyes of flesh**. In the words of our sages:¹² The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, "My children have no fear. All that I have done¹³ I have done exclusively for you... the time of your Redemption has arrived."

The emphasis of this generation - particularly this year, the year designated as "It shall be a year of wonders I will show him" - should be placed on the concept of G-d's support of those who have fallen,¹⁴ to strengthen and encourage the Jewish people, emphasizing particularly the support and encouragement acquired through faith in the coming of Moshiach and the implicit trust that "behold he (our righteous Moshiach) is coming."¹⁵ This should be accompanied with enhanced preparation for his arrival by way of teshuvah [repentance, return] and observance of Torah and mitzvos. In the words of the pronouncement of my sainted father-in-law - the leader of our generation: "immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption."¹⁶ "Return, O, Israel, unto G-d your G-d; prepare yourselves and your family to greet our righteous Moshiach, who shall arrive soon, in the most literal sense."¹⁷

*(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vayechi
(and Asara b'Teves, may it be transformed into joy) 5751)*

11. *Yechezkal* 24:2.

12. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

13. This includes the efforts of the Babylonian King, who is merely an ax in the hands of the one who chops with it. [i.e. He is G-d's instrument.]

14. [The phrase *סומך נפלים* - "supports the falling" - is similar to the expression mentioned before - *בבל מלך מלך* - the Babylonian King besieged," which the Rebbe interpreted in a positive vein to mean that "he supported." Translator's note.]

15. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (2:8(b)).

16. In his *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, end of p. 361 ff., 377 ff., 408 ff. and in other places.

17. *Hayom Yom* - 15 Teves.

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Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, as proclaimed and announced by my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, the Yosef of our generation (named after the first Yosef who proclaimed and announced that "G-d will surely remember you and bring you up from this land to the land that was sworn to Avraham, to Yitzchak and the Yaakov"¹). For all our deeds and Divine service have already been completed, all appointed times have already passed, teshuvah has already been done, and all the preparations have already been finished In a manner of "great preparation," all is ready for the festive meal² of the time to come, Livyosan, Shor Habor³ and Yayin Meshumar.⁴

(From the talk of the 10th of Teves (may it be transformed into rejoicing), and Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 14 Teves 5752)

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1. Our Parsha 50:24.
 2. Based on the expression of our Sages, of blessed memory - Avos, chapter 3, Mishneh 16. Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi's commentary.
 3. See *Bava Basra* 75a. And *Vayikra Rabba* chapter 13:3.
 4. *Brochos* 34:b. See there for cross references.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Zivar** bat **Rachamim Zecharia** ע"ה
Keshirim
Passed away on 13 Menachem-Av, 5780

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY שיחיו

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb **Reuvein** ben Reb **Mordechai Yaakov HaKohen** ע"ה
Caplan

Passed away on 11 Tishrei, 5778

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF HIS WIFE - שתבלחט"א

Mrs. **Elka** bas **Raizel** שתחי' **Caplan**

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Roneete Mona Mina** bas Reb **Zev** ע"ה **Kurtzman**

Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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