

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** שתח'ל
Shagalov

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

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Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
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20:3

לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני
You shall have no other gods before Me

The ‘Intimidating’ Toy

*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch writes:*¹

In the summer of 5680² I was summoned to the *Tcheka* - the name GPU³ was not yet in use at the time - of Rostov-on-the-Don. The summons was carried out by the Judaism-hating ‘Jewish section’ of the Communist Party, the infamous *Yevsektzia*.

The summons was typical of the manner of the *Tcheka*. I had not yet concluded the morning prayers (I was leading the prayers myself, for it was within the year of mourning after my holy father’s passing) when the three emissaries from the ‘court of death’ entered the room. They were dressed in their uniforms of red and black, rifles in hand, their belts crammed with bullets, a pair of revolvers and a

1. From a letter to Rabbi Nissan Mindel: “Now I will copy a section of what is recorded in my memoirs concerning my experience in the summer of 5680 (1920), in the month of Tammuz, when I was summoned to the *Tcheka*...”

2. 1920.

3. The ‘*Tcheka*’ became the GPU and then the NKVD and finally the KGB.

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pair of cossack knives, with helmets of copper and faces aflame. They approached me and said: "You are summoned to immediately accompany us to the offices of the *Tcheka*."

Two of the messengers were from the *Yevsektzia* and the third a non-Jew. The two Jews wished to strip me of my *tallis* and *tefillin* on the spot. When I told them that I must first finish my prayers (we were at the Monday supplement '*V'hu Rachum*') and the study of *mishnayos* which follows, they let loose a barrage of curses and yelled at me to remove my *tallis* and *tefillin* immediately. (Incidentally, one of them was a refugee from the city of Shavel who had once come to me for assistance. I had arranged a position for him at a cigarette factory and later I had loaned him money to establish a business of his own. For the next three years - up until the revolution - he earned a respectable living.) Were it not for the intervention of their non-Jewish colleague, they would have forcefully interrupted my prayers.

When I finished reciting the final *kaddish* which follows the study of *mishnayos*, I removed my *tallis* and *tefillin* and went along with my armed guardians. One walked on my right, a second on my left and a third behind me, in the manner that those accused of treason against the regime are led.

When we arrived at the 'courtyard of death', they led me to a large chamber in which some fifteen people sat along both sides of a long table. At the head of the table sat another two, and I was seated opposite them at the foot of

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the table. My three guards sat behind me, left, right and center.

One of those seated at the head of the table addressed me: “We are the members of the Party’s Committee to Investigate Religions, now occupied in investigating the Jewish religion. We have various questions. We have already summoned Rabbi Berman and Rabbi Goldenberg - we asked what we asked and they answered what they answered. We have now summoned Rabbi Schneerson to resolve certain issues pertaining to kabbala and chasidism.”

All this was said in the Russian language.

I answered in Yiddish: “I have already made it clear on the two former occasions on which I was summoned to the Tcheka that I will not budge from my principles. There is yet to be born, and never will there be born, the man or demon who will move me in the slightest degree from my principles...”

Before I finished my words I was interrupted by a ‘committee member’ seated on the right side of the table. He lifted the revolver which lay on the table - in addition to the arms which they all wore on their belts, a revolver lay on the table before each of the assembled - and pointed it at me, saying: “This toy does away with ‘principles’. Fear of it has opened many a mouth; also the dumb have become talkative before it.”

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“You are utterly mistaken,” I replied. “This toy impresses only the cowardly atheist, who has but a single world and many gods (*ein velt un asach getter*) - every hedonist has his many gods. But as for us, who have but a single G-d and who believe in two worlds, the toy which you are brandishing not only fails to frighten, it makes no impression whatsoever.”

Source:

Igros Kodesh [Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn of Lubavitch], vol. VII, p. 59.

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The Announcement Of The Redemption

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"A great congregation will return here,"¹ to our holy land, "a land that the L-rd your G-d constantly observes; the eyes of the L-rd your G-d are on it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year."²

Therefore,³ also before the Redemption the children of Israel dwell in it **in security**, without fear from "the nations of the world [who] are in terror and turmoil" because "the kings of the nations of the world struggle with each other" since the Holy One, Blessed be He "says to them (to Israel), my children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... (and the subject is repeated in the Midrash) do not fear, the time of your Redemption has arrived,"⁴ "the King Moshiach stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash [Holy Temple] and he proclaims to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'"

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 18 Shvat, 5751)

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At this time, as we stand immediately preceding the true and complete Redemption... as mentioned frequently of late, that already all conditions have been met and now there only has to be the actual Redemption.

* * *

It has been mentioned many times that a possible acronym of

1. *Yirmiyahu* [Jeremiah] 31:7.

2. *Ekev* 11:12.

3. [*Because the land of Israel enjoys special Divine supervision. Translator's note.*]

4. *Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayahu, remez* 499.

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"MiYaD"¹ is **Moshe**, **Yisroel** (the Baal Shem Tov) and **Dovid**, the king Moshiach. This means that the first generation, that of the giving of the Torah (the generation of Moshe) is bound up with the last generation (that of the Redemption through Dovid, the king Moshiach) by means of the revelation of Chassidus from the Baal Shem Tov and our Rebbeim and leaders who succeeded him. Thus when your wellsprings overflow, "the master will come," the king Moshiach.²

One might say that, according to the meaning of the word "MiYaD" (immediately), the three letters are not connected with three different times (Moshe in his generation, Yisroel the Baal Shem Tov in his generation and Dovid the king Moshiach in his generation). Rather they all come together, actually simultaneous ("MiYaD" - immediately) in every generation and at all times. That the word "MiYaD" is also the acronym for "**Moshe**, **Yehoshua**, **Doram** [their generation]" all three in the same generation, alludes to this as well.

One can also apply this to our generation. For in this same generation one has the revelation of all three: Mem (the first letter of Moshiach³), Yud (the first letter of both names of my sainted father-in-law) and Daled (Doram). Combining [Mem] the Moshe of our generation (my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation) with the concept of [Yud] ten (tenth of Shvat), which also includes his revelation of the Torah of Chassidus (the wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov), one has as well the revelation of the aspect of eleven, "the first Redeemer is the final Redeemer,"⁴ Dovid King Moshiach.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 20 Shvat, 5752)

1. [The Hebrew word "miyad" means immediately. It consists of three letters: Mem, Yud and Daled. Translator's note.]

2. The well known holy letter of the Baal Shem Tov - *Keser Shem Tov* at the beginning and several places.

3. It should be noted that "**Menachem** is his name" (Sanhedrin 98b).

4. See *Shmos Rabba* Chapter 2:4, 2:6. *Zohar*, vol. 1 253a. *Sha'ar HaPesukim*, the verses, *Parshas Vayechi. Torah Or Mishpatim* 75b.

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Our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of the Redemption. As my sainted father-in-law, the one whose yahrtzeit we commemorate, announced and publicized many times, all requirements have already been completed and all that is necessary is to actually greet our righteous Moshiach. Obviously then, if in the meantime there was a physical removal, as was the case on the twenty-second of Shvat four years ago (5748)¹, this is surely only to bring the only elevation that still remains - the elevation of the true and immediate Redemption.

...The amazing innovation and advantage of this generation - the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption - has been mentioned frequently, that it completes and concludes "our work and our Divine service"² of the Jews of all previous generations. It completes the last purification of exile, as expressed by my sainted father-in-law,³ "polishing the buttons." Our Divine service consists of bringing the Redemption into reality, for this generation and for all generations preceding it! This means, that this generation concludes the work and Divine service of all preceding generations of Jews.

...The generation of the leader of our generation itself comprises several stages and periods. In general, there are three stages:) the tenth day of the eleventh month (10th of Shvat, 5710), the conclusion of the period of my sainted father-in-law's Divine service during his life in this world; 2) the day after - the eleventh day of the eleventh month (the first complete day after his passing), particularly commencing with the eleventh year (5711)⁴, when the

1. *[Passing of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Translator's note.]*

2. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

3. Talk of Simchas Torah, 5689.

4. See *Sefer HaSichos*, 5750, vol. 1, p. 255, note 99.

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progression and innovation of a new period began, and "the lights were hung" of the seventh generation from the Alter Rebbe (or the ninth generation from the Baal Shem Tov); 3) the period after the passing of the daughter of my sainted father-in-law on the twenty-second of the eleventh month (22 Shvat 5748).

...The tenth day of the eleventh month is connected with and completes the Divine service of purifying the last "remnants" of exile, "polishing the buttons."

...The day afterwards, the eleventh day of the eleventh month, signifies that in addition to and after the Divine service of the tenth day of the eleventh month, one has achieved and been elevated (according to the principle, "elevate in holiness"⁵) to the revelation of the eleventh (day) as well.

...One comes afterward to yet a higher level. After the Divine service of all the purifications has already been completed, and we have already also "polished the buttons," etc., we need only stand ready to receive our righteous Moshiach. This is the perfection of eleven (completely incomparable to ten)... as alluded to in **22** Shvat - eleven doubled.

...After the 22nd of Shvat (the day of passing of his daughter), the last stage in preparing the world (as a dwelling place for G-d here below) for the Redemption has been accomplished. The completion of this matter comes through and in the merit of the wives and daughters of Israel.

Therefore, the lesson for the wives and daughters of Israel in general, and in particular for the *shluchos* [emissaries], may they live and be well, of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, who have gathered from all corners of the world for the

5. *Brochos* 28a. See cross references there.

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"International Convention of Shluchos" At this time, the last moments before Redemption one must raise one's own awareness and that of all the wives and daughters of Israel concerning the great merit of the wives and daughters of Israel to actually bring the true and complete Redemption, imminently and immediately. This comes "in the merit of the righteous women of the generation,"⁶ as mentioned above.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 20 Shvat, and Sunday night and Monday, 22 Shvat, 5752)

6. *Yalkut Shimoni Rus, remez 606 at the end (from Midrash Zuta Rus).*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND

Reb **Yosef Yisroel** ben Reb **Sholom** ע"ה **Rosner**

Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIENDS

Mr. & Mrs. **Gershon** and **Leah** שיחי **Wolf**

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

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Mrs. **Esther** bas Reb **Volf** ע"ה

Passed away on 23 Shevat, 5759

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF HER SON

Mr. **Zev** שיחי **Oster**

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

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIEND

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

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** שתח"י **Caplan**
On the occasion of her birthday,
18 Shevat, 5783 - "Year of Hakhel"
May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

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