

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 Kedoshim, 5782
(Vol. 33)



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Vaad L'hafotzas Sichos

788 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
Tel. (718) 774-7200 - Fax. (718) 774-7494

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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Printed in the U.S.A.

Kedoshim / Too Good to be True

19:2

קדשים תהיו

Be holy. For I, Your G-d, am holy

"Be holy" - sanctify yourself also regarding that which is permitted.

Talmud, Yevamos 20b.

The first thing we heard from the Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi) upon our arrival in Li'ozna¹ was: "What is forbidden, one must not; and what is permitted, one need not." Three or four years we toiled with this, until we made this approach part of our lives. Only then would we be received in a private audience (yechidus) with the Rebbe to be guided in our individual paths in serving the Almighty.

Rabbi Mordechai of Horodok.

Too Good to be True

At a chassidic get-together (*farbrengen*) held in the early years of Chabad Chassidism, Reb Shmuel Munkes was doing the honors. The merry chassid danced about the participants, pouring the vodka and serving the '*farbeisen*' platters spread with bites of food to follow up the *L'chayim*.

1. See footnote 1 in vol. I, pg. 8.

Once Upon A Chassid

Among the dishes which had arrived from the kitchen of Reb Nosson the shochet² was a bowl of roasted lung, a most tasty delicacy. But for some reason, Reb Shmuel was reluctant to part with this particular dish. Throughout the evening he pranced about, pouring the *L'chayim* and serving the food, with the bowl of roasted lung snug and elusive under his arm, deftly side-stepping all attempts to free it from his grasp.

Soon the chassidim grew weary of Reb Shmuel's game and demanded outright that he hand over the bowl and its mouth-watering contents. But the waiting chassid ignored their angry demands and kept up his dodging dance. Finally a few of the younger chassidim decided that Reb Shmuel's prank had gone far enough. They rose from the table, and soon the bowl and its bearer were cornered. But with a final leap and twist, Reb Shmuel dumped the roasted lung into the spittoon, and broke out in a merry *kzatzkeh* dance.

The younger chassidim sat to consider the gravity of Reb Shmuel's crime and decreed that a few well placed stripes were in order. Without batting an eye, Reb Shmuel stretched himself out on the table and received his due. He then set out in search of more *farbeisen* to keep the *farbengen* going. But the hour was late, and the best he could come up with was a plate of pickled cabbage donated by one of the Li'ozna residents.

2. Ritual slaughterer.

Kedoshim / Too Good to be True

Upon seeing the replacement dish, the expressions on the faces of those who had already imagined the taste of roasted lung grew as sour as the kraut set before them. But soon a commotion was heard in the hallway. The town's butcher ran in, a most stricken look on his face: "Jews! Don't eat the lung!" he cried. "There has been a terrible mistake." It seems that the butcher was out of town and the butcher's wife mistakenly gave the shochet's wife a non-kosher lung to roast for the *farbrengen*.

Now it was the elder chassidim who sat in judgement upon Reb Shmuel. The audacity of a chassid to play the wonder-rabbi! By what rights had Reb Shmuel taken it upon himself to work miracles? Up onto the table with you Reb Shmuel, decreed the court.

After receiving his due for the second time that night, Reb Shmuel explained: "G-d forbid, I had no 'inside information' regarding the roasted lung. But when I entered into *yechidus* with the Rebbe for the first time, I resolved that no material desire would ever dictate to me. So I trained myself not to allow anything physical to overly attract me.

"When the bowl of roasted lung arrived, I found that my appetite was most powerfully roused. I also noticed that the same was true of many around the table. To be so strongly drawn by a mere piece of meat? I understood that something was not right."

* * *

Once Upon A Chassid

When the Czar's soldiers came to arrest Rabbi Schneur Zalman in 5559³, the Rebbe consulted with Rabbi Shmuel Munkes: should he go into hiding or allow himself to be taken to Petersburg? Reb Shmuel advised his Rebbe not to resist. "Why?" asked Rabbi Schneur Zalman. Answered Reb Shmuel: "One or the other. If you are truly a Rebbe, then no harm will befall you. And if you are not - you deserve it! How dare you deprive thousands of Jews of their pleasure in the material world?"

Source:

Sefer Hasichos 5703 (Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, 1942-43) p. 175; Likkutei Dibburim (Collected Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch), vol. IV, p. 1499.

3. 1798.

19:16

לא תלך רכיל בעמך

Do not gossip

A Tailor in a Stitch

The village tailor of Lubavitch had sewn a dress for Rebbetzin Rivkah Schneersohn, wife of Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch. The Rebbetzin's young child, Sholom DovBer, was present when the tailor brought the new garment to his mother. Displaying a child's natural curiosity, the four-year-old reached into the visitor's pocket and pulled out a sizable bolt of cloth - the remains of the Rebbetzin's dress.

The tailor reddened and stammered an explanation: he had simply forgotten about the leftover cloth, he certainly had no intention of withholding from the Rebbetzin what was rightfully hers, etc.

After the tailor had shamefacedly left, Rebbetzin Rivkah said to her son: "See what you did! See how you embarrassed the poor man..."

Later, the child came to his father in tears and asked him how he can rectify the fact that he had shamed someone. But when the Rebbe asked his son to tell him what exactly happened, the child refused. "Is it not enough that I embarrassed a fellow Jew?" exclaimed little Sholom DovBer. "Must I also commit the sin of gossiping and speaking ill of one's fellow?"

Source:

Told by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita, November 13, 1976.

19:18

ואהבת לרעך כמוך

Love your fellow as yourself

An Aptitude, a Delight

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch writes:

In the winter of 5673¹ I went to visit my father, who was staying in Menton, France. Every day we would walk for hours along the sea shore and I was privileged to hear of things which had never been told to anyone: practices, stories, visions and ideas of my holy ancestors, transmitted through the generations from rebbe to rebbe.

Father spoke much about ‘thinking *chassidus*’ - meditating upon concepts of chassidic teaching - before prayer, while wrapped in *tallis* and *tefillin*. He discussed the topic continuously over the walks of several days and enumerated its many virtues. Thinking *chassidus*, he said, refines the body, making the mind and heart receptive to G-dliness. It repels the ‘animal soul’, cleanses the natural soul’, subdues the ‘intellectual soul’, and illuminates the world (“When a Jew thinks *chassidus* in *tallis* and *tefillin* before prayer, the world becomes brighter”). It draws down a revelation of light in all worlds, from the highest to the lowest of levels.

1. 1913.

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It transforms the essence of one's natural character, and illuminates the five levels of one's 'G-dly soul', *nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya*, and *yechida*.

All this applies to any individual who is involved in 'the service of the heart' (i.e. prayer) and prepares properly for prayer; but how much more so to the perfectly righteous *tzaddik*. My father continued to describe at great length the heights attained by a *tzaddik*, concluding, "one attains an appreciation of G-dly delight, *ah Getleche ziskeit*, 'a G-dly sweetness'"

With G-d's help, I shall never forget that glorious moment, the sight of that holy face flaring in ecstasy as he enunciated the words "a G-dly sweetness." At that moment I truly understood Rabbi Schneur Zalman's definition of a *merkava* (chariot) to the Almighty: those who "*all their days... do not cease for a single moment to bind their minds and souls to the Master of the Universe.*"²

To stroll within the splendorous natural surroundings of the Menton shore, and to be so immersed in 'G-dly delight', to so relish 'G-dly sweetness' - this can only be an *atzmi*,³ a rebbe the son of a rebbe, a Jew of self-sacrifice, one for whom G-d is forever standing over him and the light of his soul is openly manifest within his being.

2. Tanya Chapter 34.

3. 'A quintessential one.' One who's every act, thought, and character trait is utterly in line with and permeated by the very essence of his soul.

Once Upon A Chassid

For a long time we walked along the shore without a word. All who met or passed us noticed the look of his holy face, shining with a G-dly light. Suddenly, as one who awakes from sleep, he turned to me and said:

“Yosef Yitzchok! Listen! All the benefits of thinking chassidus in *tallis* and *tefillin* prior to prayer, both for the ordinary chassid and for the *tzaddik*, are utterly insignificant compared to a single privilege: if the Almighty grants a person an aptitude for and a delight in doing a Jew a favor. If the Almighty grants a person that his fellow should be more dear to him than himself.

“It is worth one’s while to toil five hours a day for five days, toil of the body and toil of the soul, to comprehend the Divine - if the result is that one truly desires to do a Jew a favor.”

Father concluded by quoting Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov: “*A soul descends to the world and lives seventy, eighty years in order to do a Jew a favor physically and particularly in a spiritual matter.*”

Source:

Igros Kodesh [Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn of Lubavitch], vol. 11 ↑*, p. 293.

*. Correction: Vol. 3.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

19

"As in the days of your going forth from Egypt I will show him miracles."¹

Everyone can clearly see how the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt are reflected now in the victory of these days - both in the substance of the victory and in the time when it came, specifically - in the auspicious days of the month of Nissan.

...Still before the holiday of Pesach - was the "striking of Egypt through their firstborn."² That is, the "first born" of the nations of the world³ (including the country of Egypt and her neighboring Arab countries) - according to the resolution of their representatives in the "United Nations" - waged war and struck "Mitzrayim" [Egypt], an enemy of the Jews. The name "Mitzrayim" comes from the word for⁴ an "oppressor" of Israel, G-d forbid.

And on the day of Purim this year - "a year when I will show him wonders" - was the victory (as the nations of the world announced) and his downfall, in a manner of "to strike," etc., (not "to kill") and specifically through non-Jews ("their first born") who reprimanded and humiliated him, forcing him to regret his actions until then.

He was forced to acknowledge and accept and fulfill all the

1. *Michah* 7:15

2. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 136:10. And see *Midrash Tehillim* there. *Rashi and Metzudos Dovid* there.

3. And all the kingdoms are designated by the name *Mitzrayim* (*Bereishis Rabba* chapter 16:4).

4. *Bereishis Rabba* there.

BESURAS HAGEULO

commands, instructions and requirements that were given to him by "their first born": to free some of the prisoners of war and also to comply with the other things they demanded of him.

And afterwards, the continuation was - in the month of Nissan, and within it - in the days of Pesach, "the time of our freedom" - that their "first born" in the United Nations prolonged his censure and disgrace.

During the days of Purim and immediately afterwards it still wasn't known what the continuation would be, how far he would be shamed and penalized, how strong he would remain, how much he would have to acknowledge and repay, and if he would accept all this or if it would be done through others. Afterwards, in the days of the month of Nissan, in the days of Pesach - their "first born" came out with a strong reprimand, a conclusive resolution and strong demands (in addition to the previous instructions) how Saddam should conduct himself, and also, to show and assure he would fulfill them: he should free the captives, return what he took, and pay for the losses and damages that he had caused until now (and also for what he did earlier).

And in the course of the month, through the last days of the month, the miracle increased even further - that he agreed to everything without any resistance or war, until he revealed money and property which he had hidden (and until now it wasn't known he had).

...Another example of the events of these final times in which we see wonders and miracles - is the exodus of many Jews from that country,⁵ which is like the Exodus from Egypt:

After many years of a completely opposite manner of conduct,

5. *[That is, Russia. Translator's note.]*

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

in which Jews were not allowed to leave - specifically in this year and in the previous year did the country open its gates to let out the Jews [so that] they should go to the Holy Land (and even if, for whatever reason there may be, some of them are detained in another country for a short while (in the United States or Australia, etc.) soon they will move (with a complete desire and with joy and a glad heart) to the Holy Land, together with their families).

And the miracle has increased until the country itself assists them to leave, as was the case in the Exodus from Egypt, whose goal was to go to the Holy Land (And I shall bring you to the land, etc.⁶). This miracle also includes assistance from the treasures of "Egypt" (as mentioned above); these treasures have been used to such an extent that a portion of them - and also money from other nations - comes to the Jewish people, our brothers the children of Israel who just went out (and are going out now), in the "exodus from Mitzrayim." Their departure from "Mitzrayim" (a name derived from the word for distress and confinement⁷), from that country is similar to how it was in the Exodus from Egypt the first time, for then "they despoiled Egypt,"⁸ until even what they didn't ask for they gave them,⁹ including treasured items.¹⁰

...And may it be His will that G-d should help every Jew that he should have "eyes to see and (automatically) ears to hear," and "a heart to know,"¹¹ to see "the great trials that **your eyes** saw, the signs and those great wonders,"¹² the revealed miracles that occur every day.

6. *Vaeira* 6:8.

7. See *Torah Or*, *Vaeira* 57:2 and further. *Beshallah* 64:1-2. *Yisro* 71:3 and further. And in many places.

8. *Bo* 12:36.

9. The explanation of *Rashi* there, from the *Mechilta* on the verse.

10. See *Shmos Rabba* chapter 14:3. And other sources.

11. *Tavo* 29:3.

12. *Ibid*, 2.

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Particularly since we have already been more than "forty years,"¹³ in the desert of the nations (of exile), in a situation of "(forty years) I quarreled with the generation,"¹⁴ and we are ready to come to "they shall enter my resting place,"¹⁵ in the Holy Land and Jerusalem,¹⁶ to the extent of Shalem, a complete rest - with the true and complete Redemption.

It is understood that the Jewish people are already prepared and already have "a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear" (just as it was in the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt, and that as in the days of your going forth from the land of Egypt I will show him miracles).

(From the talk of Tuesday evening, Parshas Shimini, 26 Nissan 5751)

13. It should be noted that forty years have passed since the departure of His Honored Holiness, My sainted father-in-law, the Rebbe, in the year 5710, as mentioned many times.

14. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 95:10.

15. *Ibid*, 11.

16. The explanation of *Rashi* there.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER
Mrs. **Golda Perl** bas Reb **Moshe** ע"ה **Golbart**
Passed away on 12 Iyar, 5780

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HER CHILDREN
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yitzchak Dovid** and **Leah Rus** שיחיו **Golbart**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER
Mrs. **Sarah** bas Reb **Binyomin** ע"ה **Sarto**
Passed away on 3 Kislev, 5781

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HER CHILDREN שיחיו

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Zivar** bat **Rachamim Zecharia** ע"ה **Kesherim**
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** שתי' **Caplan**
May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.
* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Chana** (Carrie) bas Reb **Meir** ע"ה **Greenberg**
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*

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CHABAD OF OAK PARK, CALIFORNIA
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yisroel** and **Leah** שיחי **Levine**
* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FRIEND
Reb **Yoram Yechiel** ben Reb **Shalom Zelig** ע"ה **Michel**
Passed away on Achron Shel Pesach, 22 Nissan, 5781
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIENDS
Rabbi & Mrs. **Tal HaLevi** and **Shterna Sara**
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