

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

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Once Upon A Chassid

23:4

ויקר אלקים אל בלעם

And G-d happened upon Bil'am...

The hallmark of evil and unholiness is an attitude of 'it just happened.' To the Jew, however, nothing is coincidental; every event is purposeful and significant.

In the words of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov: "From everything that a Jew sees or hears, he is to derive a lesson in his service of G-d."

Chassidic saying

Wagons and Souls

Rabbi Leib, the 'Grandfather' of Shpoli, was blessed with a brilliant mind, a burning desire to serve his Creator, and a heart suffused with love for his fellow Jew. Yet he shunned the role of chassidic master, preferring to conceal these qualities and find his place as one among the many disciples of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.

Once, when Rabbi Leib was making his way on foot to Mezeritch, he came upon a heavily laden wagon that had become stuck in the mud. The wagon driver called out to him for assistance, but Rabbi Leib said: "I'm sorry, I wish I

Balak / Wagons and Souls

could help you. But I am not capable of lifting such a heavy load.”

“You are capable, you are capable,” responded the wagon driver. “You just don’t want to!”

For the rest of his journey to Mezeritch Rabbi Leib knew no rest. He felt that the wagon driver’s words must be a message from above, and that they came to address his inner reluctance to assume the role which had been ordained for him. When he arrived in Mezeritch, Rabbi DovBer said to him: “My master, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, once said to me: ‘Reb Leib can drag a burdened soul out of its spiritual mud.’ You can and you must be a Rebbe.”

Source:

Igros Kodesh [The Letters of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch], vol. IX, p. 98.

23:23

כי לא נחש ביעקב ולא קסם בישראל
*For there is no enchantment in Jacob,
nor divination in Israel*

Charisma

On the occasion of his bar mitzvah, Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch was told by his father:

“Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch, bequeathed a smile to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. With this smile he could have won over the world.

“But the entire life’s work of Rabbi Schneur Zalman was to implant an inner integrity (*p’nimius*) within his chasidim. So he made his case with the ‘internal’ mediums of intellect and feeling, and shunned the use of anything associated with the ‘peripheral’ attributes of the soul.”

Source:

Likkutei Dibburim [Collected Talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch], vol. 1, p. 87.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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All the signs mentioned by our sages concerning the generation of "the heels of Moshiach" indicate that our generation is the last generation of exile and consequently the first generation of Redemption. This realization has been greatly increased through the enhancement of efforts to disseminate the Torah, Judaism and the wellsprings of Torah to the most remote reaches of the world, extending even to this "lower hemisphere," i.e. the Western Hemisphere, (as a result of the liberation of the 12th and 13th of Tammuz) over the course of the last 50 years

Consider this: If **at the beginning** of this epoch, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, issued a proclamation that "Teshuvah now, Redemption now!" and testified that we have already completed all of our Divine service, and all that remains for us to do is to "polish the buttons" and "All of you, stand ready to greet our righteous Moshiach." How much more so, **at the end** of this epoch, there is absolutely no shred of doubt that the time of Redemption has arrived. To borrow a Talmudic expression: "All of the deadlines have passed."¹ Even Teshuvah (which the Talmud there states is a prerequisite for Redemption ("Redemption depends solely on Teshuvah")) has already been fully realized.

...Within our generation itself, there is an added innovation this year:

Besides that we find ourselves in literal proximity to the true and complete Redemption, in this year of "It shall be a year of miracles I shall show him," when the prediction of "As in the days you have departed from Egypt, I shall show him wonders,"² will be realized.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.
2. *Michah* 7:15.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

And we have, in fact, witnessed "wonders" that testify that this is **"the year that the King Moshiach shall be revealed,"** and the **"time when the King Moshiach will come... and announce to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived.'"**³ Further, these wonders and the announcement that "Behold, he (the King Moshiach) is coming,"⁴ allowing for the translation that **"he has already come,"** mean that we already stand on the threshold of the beginning of the Messianic Era as well as on the threshold of the beginning of the Redemption, the continuation and culmination of which shall occur imminently.

Since we are standing on the threshold of Redemption which will arrive imminently, it follows that the study of the Laws of building the Temple this year must be **of an entirely different order.** First and foremost, this study must be permeated with the certain awareness and full recognition that this study is not merely an "academic exercise," but it is **relevant for practical use for the very next moment.** For indeed, the "Future Sanctuary that we are anticipating has already been built and is fully developed (above and will thus imminently) be revealed and arrive from Heaven"⁵ **instantaneously!**

The attitude towards the study of these laws should be analogous to what was discussed in the recent past,⁶ that the special increase in the study of the teachings of Torah concerning Redemption and Moshiach should not simply serve as a catalyst to hasten the coming of Moshiach and the Redemption. Rather this study should enable us to live with and thrive on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. We should "live with the time" of the Messianic Era.

3. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

4. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse.

5. *Rashi* and *Tosphos* commentaries to *Sukkah*, 41, end side a and in other sources.

6. Above, p. 49 and in other places.

BESURAS HAGEULO

This can be attained when one's intellect is filled with the comprehension of the Torah concepts of Moshiach and Redemption. This intellectual awareness then extends to and permeates one's emotions, and then translates into thought, speech and action consistent with this very auspicious period of time when we stand on the threshold of Redemption and we are able to point with our finger "Behold he (he King Moshiach) has come."

One might suggest an additional rationale for the need and the virtue of studying the Torah's teachings concerning Moshiach, Redemption and the building of the third Temple; as an entrance into the Messianic Era:

Although our Sages⁷ have declared that Moshiach will come "when we are distracted from his coming," this does not contradict, G-d forbid, **the need for thought and reflection of the most powerful order**⁸ on matters of Moshiach and Redemption. This means primarily thought and reflection that we are now standing at the very entrance of the Messianic Era, that "Behold he is coming," since all the deadlines have since passed, teshuvah has been done and all of the different aspects of our Divine service have been completed in accordance with the details mentioned above. The resolution of this apparent contradiction is that the term for distraction, "Hesech HaDa'as" (literally "removing one's knowledge") actually means "**transcending** one's knowledge."⁹ This implies that after one has allowed this matter of Moshiach to permeate one's intellect (by applying one's thought and constant reflection, etc.) one then reaches the level where this then transcends one's knowledge.

7. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

8. *Da'as*, the type of knowledge where "one binds his mind with an extremely powerful and strong bond; firmly attaching one's thought." - Tanya, end of ch. 3.

9. Tanya, *Igeres HaKodesh* (105b).

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Translating the above into practical terms.

Despite the "uproar" associated with this matter in recent times within this year, the year of "I shall show him wonders," and after witnessing the wonders which testify that this is "The year that the King Moshiach will be revealed," we see how difficult it is to inculcate the awareness and the feeling that we are literally standing on the threshold of the Messianic Era, to the point that one begins to "thrive" on matters of Moshiach and Redemption...

The solution to this dilemma is **Torah study** concerning Moshiach and Redemption. For Torah - which is G-d's wisdom, and thus transcends the natural order of the universe - has the capacity **to alter** the nature of man.¹⁰ Even when one's emotions are still **outside** the parameters of Redemption - G-d forbid - (because he has not yet emerged from his internal exile), he can nevertheless learn the Torah's teachings concerning Redemption, and thereby be one elevated to the state of Redemption. One then begins to thrive on matters of Redemption, borne of the knowledge, awareness and feeling that "Behold he is coming."

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Balak,
17 (numerically equivalent to "tov-good") Tammuz, 5751)*

10. See the comments of our sages on the verse "*Lo'keil gomer oh'lye*" (*Talmud Yerushlami, Kesubos, 1:2*. See there for cross references. Cited in Halacha by the *Shach* (and *Shulchan Aruch* of the *Alter Rebbe*), *Yoreh Deah, sec. 189:13(23)*).

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
Reb Elon Menachem ben Reb Zev Kurtzman
Passed away on 12 Tamuz, 5778
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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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 HONOR OF

Rabbi **Yehoshua Levi** ben **Devorah** שיחי **Levin**

On the occasion of his birthday,
on the auspicious day - 12 Tamuz

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

*

DEDICATED BY HIS WIFE

Mrs. **Davina Rochel** שתחי **Levin**

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