

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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<http://www.torah4blind.org>

e-mail: sys@torah4blind.org

Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
Executive Director

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38:25

הכר נא למי

Recognize, please, to whom these belong...

The Theory And the Father

The arrival of a letter, adorned with official-looking stamps and seals, was quite an event at the small wayside tavern somewhere in the backwoods of White Russia. The simple tavern-keeper, who had never quite mastered the written word, ran to find the *melamed* he kept to teach his children.

As the teacher read the letter, the tavern-keeper turned white, uttered a small cry, and collapsed in a dead faint. For the letter contained most shocking and tragic news for this simple, good-hearted Jew: his beloved father had passed away.

The mashpiah Reb Michael of Opotzk would tell this story and say:

An outside observer witnessing the events described above may wonder: why does the tavern-keeper react so dramatically to the letter while the teacher is relatively

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unmoved? Which of the two better grasps and comprehends its contents if not the learned teacher? The other cannot even read and write!

Obviously, this is a ridiculous question. What if the teacher has a better appreciation of the vocabulary, sentence structure, and artful calligraphy with which the letter is composed? What if he better understands the background, the circumstances, the nuances of the event described? It is not his father who died!

“True”, Reb Michael would conclude, “it is important to learn, to study, to comprehend. And the more one understands, the deeper one delves into the nature of his own existence, the world about him and his relationship with his Creator, the better equipped he is to fulfill his mission in life. But objective knowledge alone is worthless. Unless one sees himself in the picture, the most profound of theories will yield no meaningful results. Unless one sees the subject matter as ‘his father’, a lifetime of study and discovery will have little bearing on life itself.”

Source:

Likkutei Sipurim ["Collected Stories"] by Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Perlov, p. 314.

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The Announcement Of The Redemption

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"These are the generations of Yaakov, Yoseph"¹ - The name Yoseph, which means "increase," alludes to the increase of the revelation and dissemination of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus by our Rebbes and leaders, successors of the Alter Rebbe, until my sainted father-in-law [Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak], the leader of our generation, the "Yoseph" of our generation. His primary focus was the realization of the deeper sense of the name "Yoseph": "may G-d increase another son,"² that is, to take the "other,"³ the "outsider," and transform him into an insider, a "son."⁴ This goal of transforming the "outsider" into an "insider" became even more pronounced when he arrived in this lower⁵ hemisphere (analogous to the descent of Joseph into Egypt). His arrival here facilitated the revelation of Chassidus (along with the dissemination of Torah and Judaism) to the entire world, even to the lowliest - the most spiritually remote - regions of the world.

In the forty years since his passing, we have experienced an increase in these efforts, an increase which finds expression in the verse, "paratzta alecha paretz," "you have broken through a

1. *Vayeishev* 37:2.

2. *Vayeitzei* 30:24.

3. [*Because of the construction of the Hebrew sentence and the double meaning of the word "Acher" (both "another," in the sense of extra, and "other," in the sense of stranger), the phrase may be read in two ways: 1) "May G-d add (increase)for me another son," meaning, give me another son; 2) "May G-d add (increase) for me a son - an other (stranger)," meaning, make the stranger my son. Translator's note.*]

4. *Or HaTorah* loc cit.

5. [*A reference to the Western Hemisphere which in relation to the Eastern Hemisphere, where the revelation at Mount Sinai occurred, is considered lower. Translator's note.*]

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breach."⁶ Our sages teach that after forty years one has the capacity to "fathom the mind of one's teacher,"⁷ that then one can acquire "a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear"⁸ the teachings learned forty years earlier. Similarly, the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus to the outside" followed the Biblical description of "and you shall spread forth to the west and east, north and south,"⁹ reaching even the most remote corners of the globe, breaking all the barriers. Therefore, as both the forty-year barrier to understanding and the barriers to the "dissemination of the fountains of Chassidus" have been breached, we are already prepared for the coming of our righteous Moshiach. Significantly, Moshiach is identified with Peretz,¹⁰ as our sages comment: "Peretz, this is Moshiach, as it says:¹¹ "The breacher [HaPoretz] had arisen before them."¹²

* * *

On Yud-Tes Kislev of this year, 192 years will have elapsed since the liberation of the first Yud-Tes Kislev (5559-5751).¹³ The significance of the number 192 is that:

a) Rearranged, the Hebrew letters for 192 (קצב) form the word (קבץ) (collecting or gathering). This suggests that we have now

6. *Vayeishev* 38:29.

7. *Avodah Zarah* 5, beginning of side b.

8. *Tavo* 29:3.

9. *Vayeitzei* 28:14.

10. [*Peretz was a son of Judah. His name means "breach." Translator's note.*]

11. *Micha* 2:13.

12. *Agadas Bereishis end of ch. 63. See also Bereishis Rabbah, end of ch. 85 (and Rashi there): "this one who is greater than all the leaders will arise from you (that is, Moshiach, concerning whom it is said:) "the breacher arose before them."*

13. [*The anniversary of the liberation of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad. Translator's note.*]

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concluded¹⁴ the service of the era of Exile, namely, the process of collecting and gathering the Divine sparks of the entire world (for which purpose G-d exiled Israel among the nations). (This includes collecting and gathering all the variations, represented by the phrase "kabetz-shanah" - for the word "shanah," (year) is cognate to the word "shinuy," (change) i.e., all the possible changes and variations of [divine sparks]).¹⁵

b) The Hebrew letters for the word 192, קצב, derive from the term "fixed time" or "cut off." This implies that the time for the dissemination of the fountains to the far reaches (as well as the spiritual achievements during this time), which commenced Yud-Tes Kislev 192 years ago, has finally reached the "cut off" period, at last been completed. Therefore we are ready for the realization of the promise that when the fountain [of Chassidus] will be disseminated to the farthest reaches, the master, the King Moshiach, will come.

This is one of the reasons for the publication of a special (and enlarged) edition of the Tanya (the "written Torah"¹⁶ of the teachings of Chabad Chassidus) and its distribution to everyone present, men, women and children, in conjunction with the "festival of Liberation of Yud-Tes Kislev - 192nd year"¹⁷ - to emphasize, in a concrete manner, one visible to even eyes of flesh, the completion of the service of disseminating the fountains to the farthest reaches

14. "kabetz" is in the past tense, and not "kovetz" (with an additional "vov" [the number six], which is in the present tense (implying that it could continue for another six months).

15. *Avodas HaKodesh vol. IV*, ch. 19. *Or HaTorah, Mikeitz*, 338, end of side b, and in other sources.

16. See *Igros Kodesh of Admor Maharayatz, vol. IV*, p. 261 ff. See there for cross references.

17. Text taken from title page of [this edition] of the *Tanya*.

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during these 192 years. This completion leads to the "end of days"¹⁸ (that is, the end of exile), which also implies the realization of another "end of days,"¹⁹ that is, the deadline for and the beginning of Redemption.²⁰

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 21 Kislev, 5751)

18. See *Zohar* 1:54, end of side a. Beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. *Eicha Rabba* 2:6 - cited and elucidated in *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*.

19. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either a "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 former, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. See the sources in note 14 for elaboration. Translator's note.]

20. [The first "end of days" refers to the "end of the negative forces identified with the left" and leads immediately and automatically to a second, positive "end of days," the Redemption itself. Translator's note.]

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It has been said many time of late, especially in the last few months, that according to all the signs our generation is the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption. Since all aspects of Divine service have already been completed, we stand now ready for the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, as an imminent and immediate reality.

...According to what was said above (and has been stated many times), that according to all the signs all necessary spiritual refinements have been accomplished, it's obvious why we are now ready for the Redemption.

* * *

Further, and this is essential: Recognition, acknowledgment and praising G-d for the miracles He performs, in addition to the concept of expressing gratitude, is relevant to **the coming of our righteous Moshiach in the true and complete Redemption.** For as the Gemara states:¹ G-d desired to make Chizkiyahu Moshiach... the attribute of Divine Justice said to G-d... Chizkiyahu for whom you did all these miracles (who was saved from Sancheriv and healed of his illness²) and didn't sing praises to You, You want to make him Moshiach?"

Obviously, in our context, publicizing the miracles which G-d has done in our times is relevant to bringing the true and complete Redemption in actual reality!

From this we can derive an essential lesson:

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1. *Sanhedrin* 94:a.
 2. Rashi's commentary there.

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Since we are already after all the requirements and the Redemption still has not yet come - it is most appropriate to be involved with "publicizing the miracle," to publicize to one's self and to others, and indeed everywhere, the miracles which G-d does for us, knowing this is connected with the true and complete Redemption!

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 23 Kislev,
Blessing of the Month Teves 5752)*

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What was said previously is of particular relevance for our period, in which the hope and the "I believe every day that he will come" should be with greater strength and greater vigor, until we can physically see the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

* * *

The mitzvah that possesses a unique merit to hasten the Redemption is the mitzvah of tzedekah - "great is tzedekah for it hastens the Redemption."¹

Therefore it's clear that one should increase in the mitzvah of tzedekah. It's preferable if the increase in tzedekah occurs immediately, so that the Redemption (which comes through the mitzvah of tzedekah) should also come immediately.

Especially since "there is none... among us who knows how long,"² it may be that the only thing lacking to bring the Redemption is nothing more than the giving of several coins to tzedekah!...

As the Rambam expresses³ it in the form of a final legal decision: "every individual must see himself... and also the whole world as half meritorious and half liable... by doing one mitzvah he and the whole world together will be inclined to the side of merit, and bring about for himself and everyone salvation and deliverance." That is, the action of a single individual, adult or child, that gives a single penny to tzedekah, brings for himself and

1. *Bava Basra* 10a. See *Tanya* Chapter 37.

2. *Tehillim* 74:9.

3. *Hilchos Teshuvah*, chapter 3, halacha 4.

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the whole world the "salvation and deliverance" of the true and complete Redemption.

(From the talk of the First Light of Chanukah 5752 - during the world-wide "publicizing the miracle")

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND
Reb Pesach Betzalel ben Reb Leib ״ה Fleischnan
Passed away on 3 Elul, 5784

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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