

# When the Rebbe Encouraged Sending Chain Letters

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Two weeks after Simchas Torah 5746 (1985), the Rebbe conducted a *farbrengen* on the night of Zayin Cheshvan. Among the many topics discussed, the Rebbe specifically addressed the question of why it is so critical to long for and actively anticipate Moshiach. In response, the Rebbe noted that a smart individual drew his attention to an exceptional teaching of the Chida.

Who was the Chida?

His full name was Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai. He was a famous *tzadik*, *mekubal*, and author, who lived at the same time as the Alter Rebbe. He was born in Yerushalayim, and traveled the world extensively to raise funds to support the *Yidden of Eretz Yisrael*, before living his last years in Livorno, Italy.

He was a foremost *posek* of Halachah, authored over seventy *sefarim*, and is an original source for several concepts in *penimiyus haTorah*.

During the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe presented the following quote from the Chida's *Midbar Kedeimos* (found under its section that addresses *kivi*, "longing anticipation" for the *Geulah*):

It is stated in *Yalkut Tehillim, remez 736*, that even if the *Yidden* have no merit other than their longing anticipation [for the *Geulah*], they are worthy of experiencing the *Geulah* as a reward for their longing. . . . With this, the great Rav [the Chida], Rabbi Yosef David of saintly memory, explained . . . the wording of the *berachah: Es tzemach David avdecha . . . ki lishuas'cha kivinu kol hayom*—"Cause the descendant of David, Your servant, to flourish, and increase his power with Your salvation, for we long for Your salvation all day." At first, it seems strange to say *ki lishuas'cha* ("Because we long . . .").

What sort of reason is that? If we have truly earned the *Geulah*, then we will merit the *Geulah* without longing for it. And if not, then how can longing for it help? However, according to our earlier statement, it makes perfect sense: We ask Hashem, "Please cause the descendant of David to flourish and be empowered by the *Geulah*. But if You will say that we have no merit, then cause him to flourish nevertheless—*because we long for Your salvation*, because we have that anticipation, and the merit of our yearning is enough to earn us Your *Geulah*."

The Rebbe then presented a second quote, this time from the commentary of the Radak, who expressed a similar idea to that of the Chida. Following these two quotes, the Rebbe clarified his intentions:

"I mention all this for a very practical purpose:

Based on the wave of inquiries and complaints in response to [my urging everyone to] long and actively anticipate the true and complete *Geulah* through Moshiach *tzidkeinu*, it seems that some people are unfamiliar with these statements of the Chida and Radak.

It is therefore highly appropriate that someone publish these statements [publicly,] in a newspaper. I emphasize, however, that it should not be done in my name. Aside for the reality that there are individuals who, when they hear a statement in the name of a particular person, will argue for the exact opposite approach (as has happened in several past scenarios that we will not address at this point), there is another reason: we are focused on the theme of *Geulah*, and it is therefore all the more important to attribute the teachings to their original authors, for *Chazal* state



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that “all who repeat a teaching and attribute it to its author bring **Geulah** to the world.”

For that reason, we must publicize these teachings **in the name of their authors**, both the **Radak** and the **Chida**, through providing a highly precise quotation from their works, as well as providing the sources for these statements, as a service to those *Yidden* who do not own copies of these books.

The Rebbe then shared with the Chasidim the content of a very unusual letter that was delivered to 770:

Among the correspondence I received of late, I received a letter from a frightened and confused woman. What had happened? The lady wrote that she received a letter that concluded with a demand from its author that the recipient should make ten copies of the letter and send them to ten further individuals. If the recipient complied, the author continued, she would receive a particular reward, etc., but if the recipient failed to comply, I do not care to repeat what he said would befall her as a result. The author further advised that there were already cases of people who failed to comply and experienced specific negative results. The actual letter content was filled with nonsense. The author failed even to sign his name. And the woman has no idea how the sender acquired her address. Nevertheless, she asked me whether, having received such a dire threat, it was worth her while to send a copy to ten people, so that she would be left with no doubt that the threat will not materialize.

Naturally, I responded by directing her to tear up the letter and to forget about it completely! Furthermore, I added that “So says Hashem: You should not learn of the way of the nations, and not be frightened by the signs of the heavens, for the nations are frightened by them. [*Yirmiyahu* 10:2].” In other

words, even when discussing **signs of the heavens**, the *Yidden* have nothing to fear. For such apprehension is “the way of the nations . . . for the nations are frightened by them.”

Afterwards, I began thinking to myself: I am not familiar with the woman who sent me this letter, nor is she familiar with me. At most, she has heard of me, and decided to request advice. If so, for what purpose was this entire episode brought to my attention? I eventually understood that the purpose was to use it for *kedushah* [as follows]:

... When we notice that there is such a concept in the world—of dispatching a letter to ten people and asking each recipient to send a copy to a further ten people, and on and on—in what people in this country like to call a “chain reaction”—then we must use the same concept for *kedushah*: to publicize something positive among our fellow *Yidden*, as long as there is a concern, however distant and remote it may be, that perhaps one *Yid* somewhere has not yet heard about this positive development.

In our case, this means publicizing the call for yearning, actively anticipating, and demanding the coming of Moshiach *tzidkeinu*. Let each person send a letter with the quotes from the above teachings to ten *Yidden*, and to suggest and request that each recipient send a copy to a further ten *Yidden*, and on and on, in a manner of a continuously increasing light.

Over the course of the six classes of the *Tut Altz* curriculum, we have learned a great deal regarding the way to view ourselves, the world, and each other with a *Geulah* lens. Now it is time to pass it forward: to share these ideas, lessons, and directives with our family and friends.

If we could achieve that just one more *Yid* lives *Geulah* and will *daven* sincerely for *Geulah* in the way the Rebbe described, we will hopefully tip the scale and usher in the era of true and complete *Geulah* for all. *Amein!*