

Preface

More than a decade ago, I began the study of kabbalah with Rabbi Yitzchok Tiechtel of Nashville, Tennessee. We began by learning the *Tanya* each Shabbat, each Saturday afternoon, that we were both in town. The *Tanya*, first published in 1796, by Rabbi Schneur Zalman, today remains the “Bible” of the Chabad-Lubavitch school of Chassidic thought, which descends from the teachings of the Bal Shem Tov. It is a compilation of Hebrew Scriptures, Talmud, and esoteric wisdom, or kabbalah. The *Tanya* is not a text that one can read in a few sittings, nor is it a work that one can ever say he has completed; rather than learning a chapter at a time, the reader is more likely to read a few pages or perhaps only a line or two. The layman who reads a translation will not only encounter a language barrier, but will find it necessary to span a stretch of thought extending more than 200 years, and then beyond. Yet, what is most difficult about the *Tanya* is that in relatively condensed wording, it speaks of spiritual concepts and metaphors, which because of their connection to G-d, possess an infinite nature and cannot easily be described in our physical and finite world. Indeed, learning *Tanya* is not a dispassionate intellectual exercise whereby at each sitting one carries away a simple concept or opinion. It is a personal journey, a crossing, and a true journey is one that takes a person to a place that he could never imagine before he started. It is more akin to working a personal holistic puzzle over a period of time, because the message of the text is spiritual and therefore individually tailored for each soul. Because it speaks eloquently of the truths of human nature and of the specific reasons for our souls incarnating on this earth, the reader must wrestle with the material. As the reader engages that material he metamorphoses,

so that his original perceptions of the text change, creating a continuing process that engenders more personal transformation. This is why the *Tanya* is best learned over a lengthy period of time. The reality of our existence is veiled and not easily accessible and there is no simple definition of truth. However, this must not dissuade a person from attaining an understanding of self that is essential to one's mission on this planet.

From the beginning, the *Tanya* spoke to me and its metaphors stirred my soul. I was returning to my spiritual home and I looked for a means to pass this gift to others. Initially, I was encouraged to write a text explaining the *Tanya* from a layman's point of view, as a way to introduce and distill its truths to those who could not take the time to fully read and understand it. I wrote a preface and first chapter and was encouraged to continue. But discussing intellectual concepts, by breaking them into more digestible pieces, could not convey the full feeling, the full understanding, of the *Tanya* journey. It would be necessary to tell a story, so that it could be better absorbed and comprehended by readers on emotional and spiritual levels. But what story should I tell that would impart the essential nature of such an important reference? Attending an ice hockey game one night, I glimpsed a small understanding of what a tzaddik might encounter in this world. So from the chochmah, or epiphany, of that hockey game, portrayed at the beginning of chapter three, I knew much of the message I wished to convey. The tzaddik, while perhaps a more interesting character on a macro scale for a tale, nevertheless, as any human soul, must confront the same issues and choices regarding his mission as all of us.

I cannot take credit for the creation of this novel, other than being a willing vessel to receive it. All creativity is G-d given. And as I wrote, usually in the middle of the night, when the reception from the universe is best, I was often surprised by what would appear in various scenes. Always wishing this novel to be completely realistic—and I believe it is—even though it is couched in the form of a tale—because I believe that we create our own tales in our lives just as the protagonist does—I was initially concerned about what I had transcribed. I consoled myself that it was indeed a work of fiction and that I certainly had the license as the author, but I was not totally at ease. Then while this work sat for a number of years and I had dozens of readers give me their reactions, my wife Linda and I began to do energy work and I learned that all that I had questioned was actually indeed “true”, with scientific evidence to support it. The energy work indeed paralleled kabbalah and merely connected dots from a slightly different perspective.

Actually, I have continued to learn much more. Seemingly accidental names or situations introduced into the book have turned out to be

significant to the story as more knowledge was revealed to me afterward. In that sense, this book, as are all projects for each of us in our lives, has been a journey for me. Its development has been a microcosm of what I set out to convey from the beginning in this novel: that of Divine providence—that nothing we do is accidental or insignificant. And these revelations for me have most often come about through the observations and assistance of others, in the same way that the characters in the novel reach their new understandings. In that sense, my readers are co-creators in this project; I have only helped to bring it to a certain stage, but they will elevate it to a higher understanding throughout the universe, which is the purpose of writing this book. We are a vast community of incredible human souls and when we unite, we break through our perceived limitations.

I am grateful to all of my teachers in this life. As words here remain inadequate to describe those who have aided me in my growth or supported me in bringing this project to fruition, I hope that I have thanked you all in person.

And I hope that you will find part of what you seek in this book. There is a **glossary** in the back to assist you with some of the concepts. Hopefully you will learn much of the vocabulary from the context of the story, as was intended.

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