

✦ **Siach Sarfei Kodesh.** A Hasidic book published in the early 20th century. It is a chaotic collection of teachings, stories, riddles, treatises and poems assembled by R Yoetz Kim Kadish Rakatz, without a clear structure or unified voice. As such, it has been referred to as a "tshulnt book" (a "stew book").¹

The title, which translates to "the conversation of the holy seraphs," comes from the Kedushah prayer.

I myself. The speaker may be Israel ben Avraham, the Maggid of Bohopol.

Avraham of Porisov. Grandson of "the Yehudi," who was the founder of the Peshischa movement.

Toldos Yaakov Yosef. Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, a principal disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. Toldos Yaakov Yosef is the title of his first book (and the first published Hasidic book). It is not uncommon for traditional Jewish authors to be referred to by the names of their books.

beis medresh. The "home of midrash/asking/seeking/demanding/studying," it is a gathering place for learning.

Baal Shem Tov. Israel ben Eliezer, the founder of Hasidism. His appellation, which means "master of the good name," is an expansion of the term baal shem, "master of the name," which refers to a Jewish miracle maker or healer. The name Baal Shem Tov is abbreviated to the acronym Besht.

Where are you from? Apparently an attempt to engage in conversation.

Hashem yisboroch... The Hebrew account includes a Yiddish translation of the verse from Psalms.

torah. From the root for "teach," it refers to the holy five books of Moses and to Jewish learning broadly, and it is the term used for a unit of wisdom in a Hasidic context. ☺

✦ **I myself.** What is your reaction to this story? **heard.** Who would you like to tell this story to? How will you tell it? **Toldos Yaakov Yosef.** What have you learned about Rebbe Yaakov Yosef from this story? How would you have acted in his place? **seated on the praise.** What praises do you sit on? What praises of yours does God sit on? **Elijah the Prophet.** How is his personality represented in his behavior in this story? **in the heavens.** Imagine the scene when Elijah shares the Toldos's torah. Who is listening? What are their reactions? **through this.** What do you do in your life in order to draw praise out of yourself? **will come praise.** How do you express your love of, your joy from, and your gratitude for your friends? **praise to the Almighty.** Where are you from? ☺

✦ **Toldos Yaakov Yosef.** Elie Wiesel describes Yaakov Yosef's special relationship to the Baal Shem Tov, and then says "Why then wasn't Yaakov-Yosseph chosen [to succeed the Besht]? It isn't clear. Perhaps because he was too rigid and not sociable enough. His relationships with people, especially leaders, were awkward.... And then, of course, he was too intellectual for the majority..."²

ספר שיח שרפי קודש חלק ד דף 142/עא ע"ב

שמעתי בעצמי מהרב הקדוש הרבי ר"א מפאריסאב זצלה"ה שפ"א בא התולדות יעקב יוסף זי"ע להבהמ"ד דהבעש"ט הקדוש וראה אברך אחד שהי' הולך והזור בתוך הבית המדרש במוחות גדולות ולא הי' מכירו אז קרב אליו התולדות אל האברך הנ"ל ושאל אותו מאיזה מקום אתם, והשיבו האברך. תיכף. כי כן דרך מי שאין להם פנאי להשיב. תיכף. כן הי' הרבה פעמים עד לבסוף הי' שואל להתולדות אם שני לכם מאיזה מקום אני, ענה אותו התולדות אם שני אנשים ממרחק באים יחד ומתוך דיבורם אשר ביניהם שואלים זה לזה בשלומם, מתוך זה באים לידי אהבה ויכירו זה את זה ולומן מרובה אם פגעו אינש באינש ורואין זה את זה שמה כל אחד עם חבירו ויתן כל אר"א שבה להשי"ת שזכה לראות א"ע עם חבירו עוד הפעם ונצמח מזה שבה להשי"ת וכתב (תהלים כ"ב) ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל שהשי"ת ממתין ומצפה מתי יגיע לו שבה והודאה מישראל כי מאד מאד חביב לפני השי"ת תהלות ישראל (השי"ת זיצט אוריף א פאזיציע פון תהלות ישראל) וכאשר גמר וסיים התולדות את התורה הנ"ל התעייף עיניו והאברך איננו וראה שהוא מעשה פלא. נכנס התולדות להבעש"ט הק' זי"ע וסיפר לו את כל המאורע ענה לו הבעש"ט הק' זי"ע שזה הי' אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב ובא לכאן לשמוע ממך את פי' התורה של ואתה קדוש וכו' הנ"ל ועתה אומר אליהו הנביא ז"ל התורה הזו בשמים משמך ואתה ראה נא כמה גדול אהבת חברים לש"ש אפי' שאין אתה מכירו אם אתה רואה שהוא יר"ש ומאנשי מדות טובות צריך אתה להתחבר אליו ועי"ז מגיע שבה להשי"ת:

blinked his eyes...was gone. Proverbs 23:5 reads "You blink your eyes on it and it is gone; it grows wings; like an eagle, it flies into the sky."

Elijah the Prophet said "I have been zealous for the Lord, God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant..."³ Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman interpreted God's response as: "[may your] mouth shatter, who informed against My children!"⁴ And God's response in another midrash is "You are always being so zealous!... by your life, Israel won't enact the covenant of circumcision without you seeing it with your own eyes."⁵

the love of friends. Grace Aguilar prayed:

"Oh, Gracious and Almighty God, be pleased to pour Thy blessing on the friends I have chosen; those whom Thou in Thy great mercy hast vouchsafed me, to sweeten the daily tasks and troubles, pleasures and enjoyments, of this life: Oh pour Thy blessing on them and accept their prayers; and grant, Oh Eternal, that we may soon meet again, with that friendship which is now my happiness, shining pure and holy, untarnished by distance, unsullied by absence.

"Oh, grant that we may still love each other apart, as we did when we were together, and that affection may last through joy and gladness, through sorrow and suffering, till death divide us. Hear me, Oh gracious God! hear me from Thy throne of mercy and of love. Oh, look down with benignity on a repentant child of Israel, and if my prayer be deemed acceptable in Thy sight, oh my God, for the sake of Thy great and holy Name, oh answer me! Blessed be Thy name for evermore."⁶ ☺

סוד SOD

¹ coinage by one Reb Joshua

² Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire*, p. 63

³ I Kings 19:14

⁴ Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:6

⁵ Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 29:17

⁶ Grace Aguilar, *Essays and Miscellanies*, p. 168-9