

Gift of the Magi

by Shedrick Pittman-Hassett

"You have brought me a progress report, yes Moishe?"

"I have, *Rebbe*."

The old man motioned for the young scientist to come forward. Moishe swallowed hard and presented the rabbi his datapad to inspect while he gave his verbal summary. Rabbi Golnitz was infamously impatient with electronic reports; he found that they were unwilling to engage in spirited debate, an activity which the old man enjoyed even more than watching air-chariot races on the holovid.

"As you can see, *Rebbe*, we have reached the final stage of the project. The Anointed Seed has been prepared and merely awaits implantation."

The rabbi pursed his lips as he touched the slides on the datapad. Moishe continued.

"We have already sent a *tzal* to prepare the way. The subject should be ready for a...ah...singular experience."

Rabbi Golnitz uttered a skeptical grunt. "Yes, the 'shadow'. It was programmed to explain to her what is to happen?"

"Yes, *Rebbe*. The subject..."

The rabbi waved his hand and shook his head. "No. She. This is a young woman we are dealing with, not a rat. Never forget this, Moishe."

The young scientist nodded. "Yes, *Rebbe*. She understands the process to be a holy blessing. Which, in all truth, it is."

The rabbi shrugged and bobbed his head in a gesture which Moishe had come to understand as grudging acceptance of the point.

"Further, while the Seed was being prepared, our scholars poured over all the pertinent documents available in the libraries of the *Chasidim*--including the ancient physical texts. We were also successful in our effort to hack into the Imperial archives." Moishe smiled with pride at this last accomplishment; his precious Devorah had been part of that team.

"And the conclusion of that research?"

“That the period we have selected would be the most fortuitous for enacting a radical shift in the temporal stream.”

The *rebbe*'s smile was barely visible from behind his long, gray beard. “You mean that if we strike, that's when the proverbial iron will be hot, no?”

Moishe smiled. “Yes, *Rebbe*.”

The old man sighed in satisfaction. “Think of it, Moishe. If we succeed, we can eliminate over two thousand years of suffering for our people. It has been my dream these long years of my life. I almost wish I could go myself to see it through.”

Moishe shook his head. “Such a journey would be too dangerous, *Rebbe*. Your mass is too great...” The young scientist paused as he realized the implied insult of his admonition.

The rabbi chuckled. “Yes, yes, I know. *Only projections and objects of little mass can survive the journey through the slipstream.*” The old man quoted Moishe's initial project proposal. Rabbi Golnitz frowned. “I witnessed the testing that day, you'll remember. Teitelbaum rests well with God. I'm sure he smiles upon your success, yes?”

Moishe nodded and looked at the floor, remembering his late lab partner and former college roommate.

The *rebbe* returned Moishe's datapad and clapped his hands, rubbing them together. “So. We have selected a historically significant place and time to sow our seed and we have a willing recipient for our sample of prime Semitic manhood.” The old man winked jovially at the younger man, knowing it made him uncomfortable to treat the project so lightly. He sighed and took the young scientist by the elbow.

“We have waited so long for freedom, eh Moishe? We have waited for the coming of the Messiah, and he has indeed tarried.” He paused before entering his access code into the sealed doors of the test chamber and clasped the young man by the shoulders.

“Perhaps our waiting is done, my son. Perhaps, in Nazareth, our savior will be born.”

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