

# L'Chaim



## IT HAPPENED ONCE

Even at a very tender age Yosef Yitzchok had a fixed daily schedule, and he had great satisfaction keeping his affairs in order. At eight o'clock in the morning, Yosef Yitzchok jumped out of bed, and half an hour later he was in the synagogue davening (praying) with the congregation. From 9:30 until 10:00 was breakfast. Then, for four hours Yosef Yitzchok studied in yeshiva. Then came lunch for an hour and another hour devoted to writing. From 4:00 until 8:00 there was yeshiva again, then supper and some free time to spend in his room, before retiring to bed. Quite a schedule for a little boy of five!

Shabbat, of course, was different. Most of the morning was spent in the synagogue in prayer. In addition, he had a special treat, a visit to his grandmother, Rebbetzin Rikva. There he would find the elder members of the Chasidic community, white-bearded chasidim who came to pay their respects to the "Grand Old Rebbetzin." They would stay for a while and relate stories about the lives of older chasidim or even of the Rebbe, Yosef Yitzchok's grandfather, himself.

When everybody went home to eat the Shabbat meal, Yosef Yitzchok went back to the synagogue. There all the worshippers had long since finished their prayers and gone home--all except his father. He sat with his head near the Holy Ark. He was still praying. Yosef Yitzchok approached his father quietly in order to listen to his prayers. His father davened very slowly, as if he were counting the words. Sometimes he paused and then would slowly continue.

Yosef Yitzchok wondered why it took his father so long to say prayers, which even he, a boy of five, knew so well and could read so fluently. But his heart throbbed as he listened to the soulful melody which his father hummed now and again, and the singsong of the words. Once, Yosef Yitzchok asked his uncle, Rabbi Zalman Aaron, his father's brother. "Why does Father daven so slowly?"

His uncle smiled as he answered with a twinkle in his eyes, "Your father finds it difficult to read the words from the prayer book very quickly. He has to say each word separately and can't daven very fast. That's why it takes him so long."

Yosef Yitzchok turned away without saying another word. But he felt a deep pain and a burning shame that his father couldn't daven more fluently.

The following Shabbat, Yosef Yitzchok silently approached his father and listened carefully. His father was saying the Shema. "Shema Yisroel..." His father said slowly, then he paused. Yosef Yitzchok was startled to hear his father sobbing. His father said another couple of words, and sobbed again, and when he said "Hashem Echad--G-d is One" the words seemed to burst from his heart, with a flood of tears.

Yosef Yitzchok couldn't listen any more. His heart was bursting with pity for his father. He went home, and with tears in his eyes, appealed to his mother, "Mother, Father is crying in the shul. Why does he daven so slowly, and why is he crying? Come, see for yourself. I can't bear it."

"There is nothing to be worried about," Yosef Yitzchok's mother consoled her little son. "Go to your grandmother and tell her about it. She is a very wise lady, maybe she will be able to explain it to you."

Yosef Yitzchok lost no time and went to his grandmother, certain that the wise, old Rebbetzin would find a remedy to help his father learn to read the prayers more quickly, perhaps even as quickly as all the other Jews in the synagogue.

When he came to his grandmother, Yosef Yitzchok told her about his poor father's difficulty saying the prayers. "Mother said that you could do something about it," he concluded hopefully.

Grandmother looked at him seriously and said, "Your father is a great chasid and a tzadik. Before he reads any word from the prayer book, he thinks about it carefully. What it means and to Whom he is saying it. And when he thinks about the holy words of the prayers, his heart is filled with love for G-d, just as a son loves his

dear father who is near and yet far away. So your father longs to be closer to Him and the tears just come. I cannot tell you more now, but when you grow older you will understand this better, and you will know how it feels."

With his grandmother's explanation, Yosef Yitzchok felt as if a tremendous weight came off his heart. So it wasn't that his father couldn't read the prayers quickly. It was because his father was such a great person that he davened differently. Yes, he realized that his father was different, in the way he spoke, the way he acted, the way he studied, the way he prayed. That very day, Yosef Yitzchok resolved that as the only child of such a great person, he too must act differently, to merit being his child.

Yosef Yitzchok's father, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, became the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe. Upon his passing, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok became the sixth and previous Rebbe.

### THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

**And in order that you may tell in the ears of your son... and you shall know that I am G-d (Ex. 10:2)**

How can a parent imbue his children with a sincere faith in G-d? "You shall know that I am G-d"--you yourselves must believe in G-d first, before you teach your offspring.

(Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach)

**They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place (10:23)**

The worst kind of darkness that can exist is when a person does not see his brother or extend his hand to help the needy. When one ignores his responsibilities and makes believe that the problems of others don't exist, the end result is that he himself will suffer and not be able to rise.

(Chidushei HaRim)

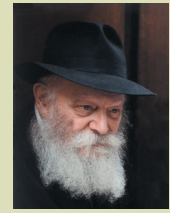
**And you shall eat it in haste (12:11)**

Why the big rush when the Children of Israel finally left Egypt? Didn't their extreme haste give the mistaken impression that they had to escape quickly? Pharaoh actually wanted them to leave at that point. They could have taken more time to pack and depart at a more leisurely pace. However, leaving Egypt was not a mere geographical move for the Jews; it was a moral step in the right direction. It was a step away from the world of spiritual degradation they had become accustomed to in Egypt. When a person desires to sever his connection to evil, it must be done all at once and not gradually. A person must grab the first opportunity that presents itself to escape from a negative influence. However, when Moshiach comes and reveals himself we will not be so hard pressed to leave the Exile immediately. G-d has promised to remove all impurity from the world, so there will be no reason to run away from evil.

(Tanya)



**4:55 Candle Lighting Time**  
NY Metro Area  
2 Shevat / January 31  
Torah Portion Bo  
Shabbat ends 5:57 PM



### LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Bo, speaks of the last three plagues visited on Egypt, and of the Jewish People's long-awaited departure from there. It begins with G-d's command to Moses that he go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to warn him of the impending plague of locusts. G-d, however, states that Pharaoh will not heed the warning: "For I have hardened his heart...in order that you tell in the ears of your son and your son's son that which I have wrought in Egypt."

We learn from this that the locusts did not come as a punishment for Pharaoh's refusal to heed the warning; G-d had hardened his heart so that he would be unable to agree to free the Jews. But if such is the case, isn't it unjust for G-d to punish Pharaoh with a plague, when G-d Himself prevented him from acceding to Moses' demand?

Our commentators explain that during the first five plagues Pharaoh had free will to decide his actions, and he could have permitted the Jews to leave. It was only after Pharaoh demonstrated his wickedness and rebelled against G-d--"Who is G-d that I should listen to His voice?"--that his free will was taken away. This punishment clearly fit the crime: Pharaoh questioned G-d's authority and boasted of his own might, so he was shown that he did not even have the power to make his own decisions. Pharaoh was thus fully subjugated to the will of G-d.

Furthermore, Pharaoh's behavior during the plague of locusts underscored his impotence. When even his servants begged him to free the Jews--"Let the people go so that they can serve their G-d. Do you not yet know that Egypt is lost?"--Pharaoh immediately agreed and declared to Moses and Aaron, "Go worship your G-d." But at that very instant G-d hardened his heart and Pharaoh was forced to renege on his promise.

Even with this explanation we are still left with a philosophical problem. Why did Moses and Aaron have to go through the motions of issuing a formal warning if they knew that there was no chance that Pharaoh would agree to their request?

It is explained in the book of Tanya, the central work of Chasidic philosophy, that even a person who is so sunken into evil ways and so deplorable that "he is not provided with a means to do teshuva (repent)," even he can overcome and find his way back to righteousness. Even the most corrupt and abominable sinner can return to G-d.

If Pharaoh, totally self-centered, wicked and deprived of his free will could have prevented the final plagues from befalling his nation by exerting supreme effort to overcome the hardening of his heart, how much more so is it possible for every Jew to overcome his negative character traits and do teshuva.

A Jew's G-dly soul is termed "an actual piece of G-d," and is in his possession always, for the Jewish soul remains faithful to G-d even if the body commits a sin. A Jew always has the power to do teshuva, to return to G-d and live in harmony with his true essence. G-d awaits the return of every single Jew, for he can only sin externally, as his internal nature is untouched and holy.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## The Call of the Hero

By Rabbi Shimon Posner

Have you ever heard of Reb Mendel? He smuggled Jews out of the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two. The Communists gave him fifteen years in the Siberian gulags.

Ever heard of Mumeh Sorah? She did the same, but they never bothered sending her away. For decades her family never knew her yahrtzeit; they still don't know where, if anywhere, the Communists buried her.

Heard of the mother who backed out of the driveway and pinned her toddler under the rear wheel? She lifted the car by herself and saved her son.

When we ask heroes from where they got the strength to do incredible things, they give lousy answers. Inevitably, their answer is "I had to do it," or to put it differently, they couldn't not do it. It's not just modesty that makes them squirm when looking for answers, it is the almost-awkward simplicity. For, regardless of their level of articulation, they cannot come up with any good reason for why they did what they did.

Reasons are powerful motives for doing things. Logic is compelling. But logic is in the head, not the guts. So logic compels our minds to move. A mother's love is not in the head; therefore all of her moves. Even parts of her she never knew she had move to free her baby from danger. She can't put it into words, because there are no words in the gut. There is a place so profound that it cannot be

made shallow with talk.

And there, right there where the deepest (no, you can't really even subjugate them to the word) emotions reside, there the Jew has nothing but a visceral connection to G-d. Not a staid, progressive, links-in-a-chain connection, but a reflexive, instinctive, metal-to-magnet connection. You can't feel it, and you could live a life without ever knowing it was inside of you. Because like heroes, it doesn't look to present itself. But if the moment calls for it, the response is automatic and Jewish. (Think of sworn atheists who, when it came down to it gave their lives rather than surrender their identity, or the Jew-in-name-only who, when things were counting on him, came through.) Why? I just couldn't do anything else.

We have mitzvahs that we like. Family Seders with favorite recipes; Chanukah songs and latkes; Purim plays and Sukkah parties. A melody that lifts you to your feet, a Talmudic insight that dazzles in its elegant simplicity, a chassidic story that soothes with its empathy.

They each relate to a different aspect of our personality and strengthen it Jewishly. But all these precious experiences, for all the growth they give us, do not touch our kishkes. Only the aspect of a mitzvah which is beyond our intellectual grasp and not within our emotional embrace can resonate so deeply. These mitzvahs are called chukim, and it is with these mitzvahs that this week's Torah portion begins.

Dedicated in memory of a dear friend of the  
Lubavitch Youth Organization  
Mr. Eric Miller

# SLICE OF LIFE

## The Young Rabbis Choosing to Live on Ukraine's Frontlines

By Motti Wilhelm / Chabad.org



In battle-scarred Kharkiv, Rabbi Sholom Ber Moskovitz, a native of the city, joined the ranks of shluchim there six months ago alongside his wife, Chava, and their newborn

Rabbi Reuven Kaminezki is no stranger to Ukraine. Born and raised in Dnipro, Reuven has returned home many times since the war broke out in 2022 to support the Jewish community's critical humanitarian and spiritual missions.

So when, together with his wife Esther Hadassah, a native of Lyon, France, he made the bold decision to settle permanently in his hometown as the newest Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries in the city, he was fully aware of the risks and uncertainties of life in a war-torn nation.

"It wasn't a question of whether or not we would move, it was a matter of when," the young rabbi says. Today, he and his wife are an important part of the team at Chabad of Dnipro, which his parents Rabbi Shmuel and Chani Kaminezki established in 1990 at the behest of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Kaminezkis' story is extraordinary, but not without parallel. Across Ukraine, numerous native-born Chabad rabbis have returned home with their young families to strengthen the efforts of their parents and fellow emissaries in the face of the ongoing war.

In battle-scarred Kharkiv, Rabbi Sholom Ber Moskovitz, likewise born in the city, joined the ranks of shluchim there six months ago alongside his wife, Chava, and their newborn son, Menachem Mendel. Even before their marriage,

the couple had resolved to serve in Ukraine.

Halfway across the country, in Odessa, a city under near-constant shelling, Rabbi Itamar Wolff and his wife, Mussie, returned to serve alongside his father, Chief Rabbi Avrohom Wolff, who has remained in the city throughout the war to direct Chabad of Odessa.

### 'NO MATTER WHAT THE WORLD THROWS OUR WAY'

Initially, each offered support for their hometown communities from afar, coordinating evacuations and organizing shipments of essential supplies to Ukraine. As the war dragged on, each began making the challenging journey back for Jewish holidays and other occasions to assist their parents and communities directly.

In the nearly three years since, all three, together with their wives, made the independent decision to return to their hometowns and join their parents as emissaries.

What motivates a young couple to begin their life in a war-torn country, where sirens, missile strikes and danger are part of daily reality? For Rabbi Itamar Wolff, the answer is straightforward. "There are Jews here. Just as we're there for them in good times, we need to be there for them in hard times," he states.

In their respective cities, the three new rabbis quickly immersed themselves in the core work of Chabad emissaries worldwide—helping their fellow Jews connect with their heritage through mitzvot, synagogue visits, Torah classes, holiday programs and countless other initiatives.

In Ukraine, however, the role of shluchim has an added dimension. Alongside spiritual guidance, rabbis are increasingly relied on to provide vital humanitarian aid—distributing food, medicine and generators, and assisting community members with basic needs. While a part of Chabad work in the former Soviet Union since the 1990s, the war has made these efforts more urgent than ever.

Rabbi Simcha Levenharts of Chabad of Kyiv is the coordinator of the Jewish Relief Network Ukraine (JRNU), the largest boots-on-the-ground Jewish humanitarian aid organization in Ukraine while also working at Kyiv's Simcha Jewish Day School. He and his wife, Malka, who were married in 2020, are both second-generation emissaries in Ukraine.

### NOW THEY SHOW UP EVERY DAY'

One aspect all four of the young rabbis find remarkable is the number of "unaffiliated" Jews who have come closer to Judaism since the war began.

"We have full Torah classes that began after the war started, where every single participant had never set foot in a synagogue before," Wolff says. "Some came initially for humanitarian aid and only later developed an interest in Judaism. Others didn't need our material support but felt a deep need to connect to G-d during these difficult times. The common thread is that they had never come before and now they are active members of our community."

It's like that in Dnipro as well, where despite a significant portion of their established community leaving early on, they've seen an increase in overall numbers.

"There are people I knew, but who didn't come on a regular basis, and now they show up every day to don tefillin," Kaminezki says. "Others attend events in numbers we've never seen before. For example, this past Rosh Hashanah, we had several hundred people attend the holiday meal—far more than any time before the war."

Remarkably, despite the immense challenges they endure, Ukrainian Jews maintain a profound connection to their Jewish brothers and sisters worldwide, empathizing with their struggles. When asked about the message Ukrainian Jews wish to share with their brethren around the world, Levenharts reflects on the shifting dynamics since the war began. "When the war started, the world rallied to help, with significant funds sent to Ukraine," he says. "But naturally, as time passed and other crises arose, Ukraine has been somewhat forgotten."

This loss of attention has made their efforts increasingly difficult. "The situation hasn't improved since the war began; it's only gotten harder with new threats emerging," Levenharts explains.

Still, he offers a hopeful perspective. "Despite everything, we believe, with G-d's help, this war will end. We hope and pray that there will be no more casualties and that all can live in peace."

The other rabbis echo this sense of optimism.

"No matter what situation we're in, we are ready to face any challenge," Wolff says. "In the end, we are sure it will turn out for the good. As Chassidut teaches, it is specifically from the lowest points that one can reach the greatest heights."

# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## "BEST INTERESTS OF THE STUDENT"

By the Grace of G-d  
Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5732  
Brooklyn, NY

Dr. & Mrs. Avrohom Shmuel & Yehudis Luchins  
53 Fordham Court  
Albany, NY 12209

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letters of the 7th and 8th of June, in which you write about the question as to where your son Yosef should continue his studies for the next school term.

Needless to say, the suggestion that he should study in a yeshiva is the right one. It has always been the desire of Jewish parents to give their children the maximum Torah education. Certainly, in our day and age this is an urgent need, all the more so since your son himself has expressed his desire and request that he be sent to a yeshiva.

I can well understand, of course, your feelings at seeing all your children learning away from your home. Yet, to consider the other alternative, namely postponing his going to yeshiva for a year—I do not think it is necessary to impress upon you, who have had a great deal of experience with youth, that the alternative would entail the unknown and unforeseeable elements.

As you well know, children and teenagers in their formative years are very prone to be influenced by the atmosphere of the school which they attend and the students with whom they associate. And since such association involves many individuals, it is impossible to know what contacts a boy can make today or tomorrow. Nor does a contact necessarily produce an immediate effect, for the actual effects

may not come to the surface for weeks or months, especially when it is a daily contact, though sometimes a single encounter may have an impact.

Even in the present case where the postponement would mean attending the same class for another year, one should still consider the fact that there are usually newcomers every year, and even the previous students might have undergone changes as they grow older, and it is impossible to know in what direction the former schoolmates have changed.

I do not wish to arouse any undue anxiety, G-d forbid, and will therefore not say anymore on the subject. I will only emphasize again, in summary, that insofar as the chinuch [education] of children is concerned, the sooner they are brought into a school of a better Torah education, the better it is, for the time element is highly important.

As far as the personal sacrifice involved in fulfilling the time-honored adage ve'yechigola l'mikvah Torah [may he be immersed in the well of Torah], may G-d grant that you should find it easier to accept, and easy to bear, knowing that since the Torah itself has recommended it, it is surely in the best interests of the student and, therefore, also of the parents, since parents desire the greatest happiness for their children.

Consider further that the principle of wandering out to a place of Torah was practiced even in the time of the Mishna, when Jewish children and adolescents were not exposed to adverse influences locally, and it was only a question of acquiring more knowledge of the Torah, which, unfortunately, is not the case in the present instance.

To conclude on an especially happy note, I extend herewith the blessing of mazel tov, mazel tov, to you and all the family on the occasion of the forthcoming marriage of your son Yirmiyahu Yeshayahu. May G-d grant that you should have much true nachas [joy], which is Yiddishe Torah nachas from him and his chosen partner in life, as from all your children.

With the blessing of  
Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov,

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

Moshiach will have the unique gift of

understanding and persuading each individual despite the wide diversity in people's minds and attitudes.

(Rambam and Yalkut Shimoni)

# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'chaim Publication.

## From the Archives

*It is on the Shabbat on which we read the Torah Portion of Bo, describing the Jewish people's redemption from Egypt.*

*In many places it is explained that the first exile of the Jewish people in Egypt, and their subsequent redemption, is the prototype of each future exile and the ultimate redemption which we avidly await, may it come now.*

*Just as in those days, we were brought out of Egypt with wonders and miracles, so too, when we merit to witness the Final Redemption, will we witness events and wondrous happenings that are miraculous beyond imagination.*

*But wait. Three times each day, in the special Amida prayer, we thank G-d for His miracles that occur every day and His wonders and kindnesses that occur each moment.*

*In truth, we don't need much of an imagination to realize that miracles and wonders do happen to each one of us, every moment of every day. The Rebbe stated that we live in a time where if we open our eyes, we can see "Wonders in Everything." Now more than ever, we need only open our eyes, open our hearts, open our minds, and we will see that everything around us is truly miraculous, especially that which we've come to take for granted.*

*A few cells are miraculously coded to grow into a baby. Scientific breakthroughs allow billions to live without the fear of diseases which only a century ago ravaged entire communities. Global Media connects millions of people around the world for the ultimate "publicizing the miracle" of Chanuka. We can fly anywhere in the world, in the comfort and relative safety of metal birds.*

*What seemed far-fetched and impossible, something which could only be termed miraculous a few generations ago, has become commonplace. But because many things have become mundane and routine, they are no less wondrous. Let's all open our eyes, recognize and give thanks for the miracles and wonders happening all around us. Perhaps through this very special kind of exercise we will merit to see the greatest miracle of all—the revelation of Moshiach.*

Shmuel Butman

# L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



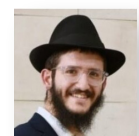
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## New Shluchim to Bring Vibrant Spirit to Chabad Uptown Houston



Bringing fresh energy to Uptown Houston, home to Texas's largest shopping mall and premier shopping district, Rabbi Yosef and Chanale Cohen, together with their daughter Mushka, have joined Chabad of Uptown Houston as the newest Shluchim.

The Cohens will work alongside Rabbi Chaim and Chanie Lazaroff, focusing on developing innovative programs to engage the local Jewish population. Their arrival marks an exciting new chapter for Chabad of Uptown, which serves as a vibrant hub for Jewish life in Houston.

Chabad of Uptown is one of fourteen branches under the umbrella of Chabad Lubavitch of Texas. Located in the heart of Houston's Uptown district, near the Galleria, River Oaks, and Memorial neighborhoods, the center offers a wide range of activities and programs, including Shabbos, educational classes, holiday events, and a popular young professionals group.

## ALL TOGETHER

The name YECHIEL is from the Hebrew meaning "G-d lives." In Chronicles I (15:18) Yechiel was one of the musical Levites who played the psaltery. Together with other Levites who played musical instruments or sang, he welcomed the Ark when King David brought it to Jerusalem. Yechiel is also the name of one of the children of Yehoshaphat, King of Judah.

TEHILLA is from the Hebrew meaning "Praise."