

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תר"י ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"My help comes from G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Bechukotai*, we read that the Jewish people will confess their sins after which G-d will bring them into the land of their enemies. But, after we admit our wrongdoings, shouldn't G-d take us to the Promised Land?

What is the purpose of taking us to the land of our enemies, especially? What good does admitting our mistakes do for us? And what lesson can we learn and apply to our lives?

These verses come towards the end of a section that is filled with the consequences for not observing the mitzvot (commandments). The Torah speaks of a time when we commit sins because we stubbornly refuse, of our own free-will, or due to our lack of desire to open our hearts to accept G-d's Torah and mitzvot wholeheartedly. It is only as a result of the suffering we endure that we admit our wrongdoing. It is like saying, "I realize that it wasn't worth doing those things." It is not a wholehearted confession, with the resolve to change. This kind of confession doesn't grant forgiveness. Yet the Torah calls it a confession, so it must have some value.

Speech is powerful, the words we say have an effect on the people who hear them and on the one speaking. In the case of confession, after repenting and making a commitment not to do it again, it helps to say it out loud, as your words will add strength to your commitment. Also, when one recognizes that he sinned, putting what he has done into words will cause him to regret what he did.

Even in the above-mentioned case, where the admission is half-hearted, it still has a positive effect. What it does is bring you to the next step.

G-d says, "... and I will bring them into the land of their enemies." The key words here are, "and I will bring them," meaning that now G-d will be more involved. It's good that G-d will be involved because G-d will send his prophets to bring us closer to Him. This will bring us to true remorse, and forgiveness.

This all came to pass during the times of the Babylonian Exile, when G-d brought us back to the land of Israel for the Second Temple Era. However, when Moshiach comes we will repent and immediately be redeemed. This is because, we will return to G-d of our own free will, and not because the pressure of the exile.

This is true in our relationships as well. When you do something wrong, the best thing is to admit your wrongdoing, commit to change your ways, and to ask for forgiveness. But for some, this pill may be too hard to swallow, either because of stubbornness or some other reason. This is when admitting that it wasn't worth it becomes a stepping stone, to rebuilding the relationship. Working on it together, with guidance, you will only get closer and earn forgiveness.

It is my hope, that soon we will experience returning to G-d of our own free will, and immediately be redeemed.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Movement

Did you ever do a double-take when you were in a store and you noticed a mannequin that looked alive? Or maybe you were in a wax museum and sat down next to a person only to find out that it was a wax figure.

In either case, what gives the mannequin or the wax figure away is the lack of even a small, slight, almost imperceptible movement. It could be the blink of an eye or the ever-so-faint rise and fall of the chest. Or maybe a nose twitch. But it is always some kind of movement all the same.

Movement is a dead giveaway for the existence of life. Which is one of the reasons why, according to Jewish teachings, people are called "movers" whereas angels are called "stationery."

A person moves, stretches, bends, reaches, climbs, falls.

A person moves both physically and hopefully – and more importantly – spiritually.

The noun "mover" when applied to people as compared to angels is specifically referring to spiritual matters. And it is in spiritual matters as well that a person stretches, bends, reaches, climbs and sometimes falls, but gets up again to climb once more.

Just as physical movement is a sure sign of life, spiritual movement is a true indication of the vitality of the soul.

How do you move your soul? Simply by making an even small, slight, almost imperceptible move.

By learning Torah concepts that stretch you. By reaching out to another

person with love and compassion. By bending your will to G-d's will. By climbing, one step at a time, through the *mitzvot* (commandments). By falling once in a while, but then by getting up again.

Torah study is limitless. It is full of joy and life and movement and excitement and mind-expanding concepts.

Mitzvot, as well, give us a chance to move. With mitzvot we cleave to G-d, we connect to another Jew, we help shoulder a friend's burden, we



laugh and sing and dance.

A *Midrash* relates that when the dove was created she complained to G-d, "It is not fair. I am so small and I have no way of outrunning my many pursuers who would like to capture me."

So G-d added wings to the delicate body of the dove. But once more the dove objected. "These wings are so heavy. Now I certainly have no way of escaping my predators." G-d taught the dove that the wings are not a burden but can be used to fly.

Torah and mitzvot are not something we have to *shlepp* along like lifeless weight. They can help us reach higher and higher. They can help us grow. They help us move in the most graceful, exhilarating way possible.

SLICE OF LIFE

Rags to Gowns

by Raizel Sora (Sonia) Pershin



I always wished that my parents, Abraham and Ruth Schwarz, would tell me more about their experiences in the concentration camps and how they survived. Like many survivors, they chose not to disclose the past to their children. Their motto was “*Ah Yid darf leben* – a Jew must live,” which to them meant, “Just keep on doing what you have to do.”

As a young girl, I once sneaked into my parents’ bedroom and found a newspaper article hidden in the back of a drawer. The article briefly described my mother’s life story. This is when I discovered that I had once had an older sibling, a newborn whom the Nazis had taken from my mother and murdered.

I never once questioned my parents about it or mentioned it to them. My siblings and I just accepted and respected their unspoken wish that these horrific experiences, the scars of their lives, should be kept to themselves.

It was Uncle David, my mother’s only brother (she also had two surviving sisters), who loved to tell us stories. At every family gathering, we would sit glued to our seats as Uncle David described those early years as if they were yesterday. He wanted to make sure that we, the children of Holocaust survivors, knew the family legacy so that we could pass it on to our children one day. “The children must know,” he would say.

Slowly, one carefully divulged story at a time, I began to put together the missing links in my

family’s history.

Occasionally, a guest visiting our home would see the numbers on their arms and ask about their experiences in the concentration camps. Quickly, as if we were strangers, we children would run to a nearby listening point, strain our ears to hear, and become privy to some more of our parents’ whispered secrets.

In the mid-to-late 1930s, as Hitler’s regime solidified its iron clasp on Germany, Jewish life in Poland began to change. The Nazi presence gradually became stronger and more threatening until World War II erupted. The Nazis occupied Poland and started to deport Jews to concentration camps. My parents, who were second cousins, quickly married with the hope that the Nazis might hesitate to deport a married couple. Pretty soon, they were forced into hiding to escape the Gestapo. Eventually, the Germans found their hiding place and my mother and father were sent to a concentration camp.

Men and women were separated as soon as they entered the camp. My mother stood in a line, waiting to be directed to the right or to the left – towards life or towards death. A German officer called out, “Does anyone know how to sew?” My mother jumped up and declared, “I am a professional seamstress.” In fact, she had never held a needle or used a sewing machine in her life. She learned quickly.

On another line, in a different section of the camp, where the newly arrived men were being held, my father waited for his fate. A Nazi called out if there were any barbers and my father immediately said he was one (he actually was). He spent the rest of the war keeping the Nazis clean-shaven.

Thanks to G-d’s protection, and their instincts for survival, my parents both escaped the gas chambers. Somehow they survived being separated, losing their baby, and the unimaginable horrors of the death camps – all without losing their faith. Quite unusually, ten of my aunts and uncles also escaped Hitler’s gas chambers.

My mother was transferred to different camps, including Bergen Belsen and Auschwitz, where she was eventually liberated in 1945. After the war, she was placed in a DP (Displaced Persons) camp. One day, she saw a Swedish Red Cross truck in the camp and jumped on, hoping it might be her chance at a new life. And it was. The Swedish Red Cross took her to Malmo, Sweden. For the rest of her life, my mother felt grateful to the beautiful and welcoming country of Sweden. While in Sweden, my mother sent a letter to her hometown, hoping a relative or loved one might receive it, saying that she was alive

and where she was.

My father survived the war and went back to his hometown to look for my mother. There the news reached him that my mother had survived and gone to Sweden. He traveled to Koping, Sweden, and the two were reunited.

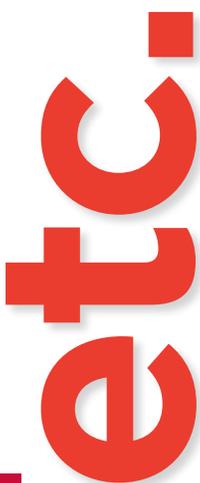
My parents settled in Koping and immediately began rebuilding their Jewish home and family. For the next 12 years, my parents lived, worked and raised their young children in Koping. The town had a close-knit Jewish community made up of Holocaust survivors like themselves, and the relationships they formed then would last for the rest of their lives. Soon after my parents had me, my father received a letter from his younger brother, Karl in America. Karl urged my parents to join him in the *Goldene Medinah*, where their children could grow up surrounded by Jews and eventually marry Jews. My parents were convinced. Their departure was bittersweet, full of fear of the unknown and hope for the future. Most of all, they were grateful to be leaving the blood-drenched land of Europe behind for a place where they could live freely and proudly as Jews.

They got off the boat at the harbor in New York City in 1957. When my mother saw the towering buildings and cement pavements, her first instinct was to turn around and run back to the lush greenery and mountains of Sweden. But “*Ah Yid darf leben*,” so she bravely plowed on. With the help of the Jewish Federation and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, our family settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where there was a large Jewish immigrant population. My father resumed his profession as a barber and my mother as a seamstress.

For my mother, the sewing machine was a testament to her survival and a symbol of hope. The same sound that had echoed in the death camps as she sewed in terror for the Nazis now clattered in her own home—only now it was a sound of life, as she sewed with love and passion for her customers. During the day, she worked in Cleveland’s high-end dress shops. At night, she would create clothes for her own children, dressing us like princes and princesses.

My parents’ legacy is one of constant forward-motion. “*Ah Yid darf leben*,” we must always look to the future. Hitler tried to erase the Jews from the world; my parents undid his plans and brought an entire new generation of Jews into the world. From the rags of Auschwitz to wedding dresses in America, their Jewish soul just couldn’t be destroyed.

Condensed with permission from the N’Shei Chabad Newsletter.



Thirty Countries at Convention

A convention for the Rebbe’s emissaries serving small Jewish communities and tourist destinations from throughout Europe and Africa took place recently in Lisbon – Cascais, Portugal. Their special outreach work leaves these emissaries largely isolated from broader Jewish communities; many are the only emissaries within thousands of miles. Among the countries represented were Banka, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Congo, Croatia, Cyprus and Czech.

Tanya Printed in Slovenia

A *Tanya* was recently printed in Slovenia by visiting American rabbinical students Mendel Bleich and Menachem Shapiro. The few hundred Jews who live in Slovenia are served by Rabbi and Mrs. Ariel Haddad, Chabad emissaries in Trieste, Italy, an hour from Ljubljana, Slovenia. Bleich and Shapiro had travelled to Kyiv to lead Passover Seders there, and after the holidays stopped in Slovenia to print the *Tanya*.

TODAY IS...

Iyar 26

The command “You shall rebuke” is preceded by the words “You shall not hate your brother,” for this is a precondition for the rebuke. The Torah continues, “...and you shall not ascribe sin to him,” for if the rebuke was ineffectual, you are certainly the one responsible, for yours were not words coming from the heart.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

25th of Iyar, 5712 [1952]

Recently you brought to my attention a letter addressed to you by -----, a student at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. In this letter the writer professes to be a true scientific thinker and an unbeliever in the supernatural; he also asserts that all facts seem to be in contradiction to the existence of G-d, professes to be a "liberal Jew," etc., etc.

Not knowing the background of this student, nor the field of science in which he specializes, I cannot deal with the subject in detail, especially in the course of a letter.

There are, however, several general observations that I can make, which the said student has apparently overlooked, and which he would do well to consider carefully:

Science does not come with foregone conclusions and beliefs with the idea of reconciling and adjusting facts to these beliefs. Rather the opposite, it deals with facts, then formulates opinions and conclusions. To approach a subject with one's mind made up beforehand is not true scientific thinking but a contradiction to it.

Science requires that no conclusion can be valid before a thorough study and research was made on the subject. The question therefore presents itself: How much time and effort had the above-mentioned writer devoted to the study of religion to justify his conclusions on the subject?

A fact is considered any event or phenomenon testified to by witnesses, especially where the evidence is identical and comes from witnesses of varied interests, education, social background, age, etc. Where there is such evidence, it is accepted as a fact which is undeniable even if it does not agree with a scientific theory. This is the accepted practice in science even where there are several reliable witnesses and certainly

scores of them, hundreds and thousands. The Divine Revelation at Mount Sinai was a fact witnessed by millions of people, all of whom reported it to its minutest detail, accurately, for the whole people of Israel stood at Mount Sinai and witnessed it.

We know that this is a fact because millions of Jews in our day accept it as such, because they received it as such from their own parents, and these millions in turn received the evidence from the previous generation, and so on, in an uninterrupted chain of transmitted evidence from millions to millions of witnesses, generation after generation, back to the original millions of witnesses who saw the event with their own eyes.

Among these original witnesses there were many who were initiated in the sciences of those days (viz. Egypt), many achievements of which are still baffling nowadays; among them were philosophers and thinkers, as well as ignorant and uneducated persons, women and children of all ages. Yet all of them reported the event and phenomena connected with it without contradiction to one another.

Such a fact is certainly indisputable. I do not believe that there is another fact which can match it for evidence and accuracy.

To deny such a fact is anything but scientific; it is the very opposite of science.

Parenthetically, it is unfortunate that this basic difference between the Jewish religion and those of others is so little known, for the Jewish religion is the only one that is not based on a single founder or a few, but is based on the Divine Revelation witnessed by all the people, numbering several millions.

This answers also -----'s statement that "the acceptance of the Torah as being the only truth is dangerous" since "its authors were only men... and as men they could not have been infallible."

Jews accept the Torah precisely because it was given by G-d, not by man, and it was given in the presence of millions of people who had seen it and heard it with their own eyes and ears. That is why the Torah is the absolute truth, for G-d is absolute.

I am enclosing an extra copy, should you wish to forward it to your correspondent.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat we bless the new month of Sivan and the first day of Sivan is on Tuesday. The first of Sivan is the day, 3,334 years ago, the Jewish people came to the wilderness of the Sinai desert and encamped there ready to receive the Torah.

The Torah tells us, "In the third month after the departure of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day they came to the wilderness of Sinai... And Israel camped there opposite the mountain."

Interestingly, the use of the word "camp" the second time here is in singular form in Hebrew, though still speaking about all of the Jewish people.

The singular form of the verb is used because the Jewish people were united as one – "like one person with one heart" our Sages tell us. And it was precisely this unity that prepared and allowed the Jewish people to receive the Torah and experience the revelation of G-dliness on Mount Sinai.

The unity of the Jewish people preceded the revelation of the Torah. Uniting and unifying our people today can and should be a preparation for the Final Redemption when we will have the ultimate revelation of the goodness and holiness of every single Jew.

The Rebbe expressed this concept as follows: "The Redemption will unify all of Israel, from the greatest to the smallest. For not a single Jew will remain in exile: 'You, the Children of Israel, will be gathered in one by one.' Moreover, the multitudes who will then be gathered in are referred to in the singular: 'A great congregation will return – in the singular – here.'

"In preparation for this state, therefore, one should make every endeavor to unify all Jews, in a spirit of the love of a fellow Jew, and of the unity of all Israel."

There are times when arguments are waged for the sake of Heaven and many great things are thereby attained. But for the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai there had to be unity of the Jewish people. And as a preparation for the imminent Messianic Era – we would do well to heed the Rebbe's words and work towards unity and love of all Jews.

Shmuel Beilman

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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MOSHIACH MATTERS

"...If you keep My commandments...I will give you rains in their season, and the earth will yield its produce, and the tree of the field its fruit." (Lev. 26:3-4) Why does the Torah devote so many detail to the material reward for observing commandments? Isn't the spiritual benefit far more important? Most

of us have not yet reached a state in which the promise of spiritual reward is greater motivation than the material reward. The Torah therefore goes to great lengths to describe the material blessings to which all can relate. For the same reason, our Sages detailed the material wonders that will take place in the Days of Moshiach. Although the ultimate good will be the open revelation of G-dliness, our appreciation of this will not be immediate. Rather, the world will have to first "mature" over a period of time in order to recognize this fact. (Sichot Kodesh, 5751)

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