

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"... I have called out to the L-rd and He answered me" (Psalm 120:1)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Noach* (Noah), we read that after the flood, Noah sent a dove out of the ark. It returned, "and behold, it had plucked an olive leaf with its beak," and Noah knew that the water had subsided from the earth.

Why does the verse tell us what kind of leaf it was? And why does it say that it was plucked? What about this olive leaf told Noah that the water had subsided from the earth? And where in the world was the leaf from?

Why an olive leaf? Rashi explains that olives are bitter and the dove was hinting that he would rather have bitter food from the hand of G-d, than sweet food from the hand of man.

Even more. Olive trees are very hardy trees, and we see that Noah knew this, as Rashi tells us, that Noah took on to the ark a "(grape) vine and a fig sapling." However, he didn't take an olive plant, because he was certain that being a very strong tree, some would survive. Therefore, it makes sense that the dove would have found an olive tree.

Why does it say that it was plucked? This means that Noah was able to tell that it was a fresh leaf and not one that was found floating on the water. It was a new leaf that grew after the flood.

This was also what indicated to Noah that the water had subsided from the earth. Because even if the tree was on a mountain, the fact that it had enough time to grow new foliage indicated that there had been enough time for the water to subside.

According to a number of our Sages, the olive tree was in Israel, which was also purified by the flood. But why would Israel, the Holy Land, need to be purified by the flood?

While the flood purified the earth from the evils of the generations that preceded the flood, it also added a new level of holiness to the earth. For, what point would there be to send the whole flood, just to have the earth return to its prior state. (We also see this from the fact that our *Haftora* calls the flood, the "Waters of Noah." Noah also means, "it is good," that is that the flood had a positive side, it raised the status of the earth.) This is what the Holy Land gained by having the flood, it was raised to an even higher level of holiness.

The flood is symbolic of all our troubles. Just as the flood's ultimate purpose was to raise the status of the earth, so too, every difficulty in life is really a positive in disguise. It is a necessary hardship, which is there for your benefit, to bring you to a higher place, spiritually and physically. And if you can see it this way, life will start to become easier and happier.

Soon all the floods will end. There will be healing, livelihood, children, all our desires for good with the coming of Moshiach. Then, we will not be the same as before the struggles, we will have been elevated to a higher state, both physically and spiritually. May it happen soon.

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.

Me and My Shadow

Shadows are awesome. As children, we chased our shadows or played shadow games where the point was to step on the other kids' shadows while making sure that they didn't step on ours.

As adults we learned that shadows can help us get our bearings even without a compass. Whether we're lost or simply trying to figure out which way is east (the direction toward which Jews to the west of Jerusalem traditionally stand in prayer), shadows can point us in the proper position.

Spiritual shadows are also awesome.

King David, in Psalms, taught that "G-d is your shadow at your right hand." The Baal Shem Tov explains this to mean that G-d has implanted a spiritual dynamic into the universe: Just as the movement of a person's body is reflected and magnified by the shadow, every step of our conduct in this world likewise arouses spiritual forces of incomparable power.

If we're outside on a sunny day, it's clear to us that every movement we make is accompanied by the movement of our shadow. Similarly, every positive action we take, every negative action we resist, every *mitzva* (commandment) we do, creates spiritual energy which we could best imagine as "shadows."

Like "regular" shadows, spiritual shadows have no corporeality. Although we may see the reflection of a *mitzva* (light from a Shabbat candle, a charity box filling up

with coins and eventually used to purchase food for a poor person, a smile on the face of an ill person we've visited), we don't see, nor can we touch, the spiritual reflection and energy created by that act.

Spiritual shadows are also greatly magnified in comparison with the energy or effort expended in performing the *mitzva*. What better example of this assertion can there be than Maimonides' statement that a small deed can tip one's personal "scale" and the global scale, bringing redemption to the entire world.

A distinction, however, between ordinary shadows and spiritual shadows is that our conduct is always producing spiritual shadows, even in the dark of night or the absence of light. For, ultimately, the *mitzvot* we do create their own spiritual light which generates the shadow.

Every Jew can not only magnify his shadow but can even cast a giant shadow through bringing more Jewish learning and living into his life. In the 60s movie "Cast a Giant Shadow," American-born West Point graduate David "Micky" Marcus (who was one of the first generals of the fledgling Israeli army) asserts, "Life isn't a spectator sport, you've got to get involved."

You don't create shadows, ordinary or spiritual, by sitting around and talking about it. "Action is the main thing" Judaism teaches. Get involved. Don't be afraid of your own shadow!



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

15 Cheshvan, 5733 [1972]

This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence.

You write that you would love to learn what it means to walk in the presence of G-d, etc. I trust that you know of the so-called Seven Commandments given by G-d to Noah and his children.

- These are:
- the establishment of courts of justice;
- the prohibition of blasphemy;
- of idolatry;
- of incest;
- of bloodshed;
- of robbery;
- of eating flesh cut from a living animal.

These Seven Commandments which G-d gave to the children of Noah, i.e. to all mankind, are the basic laws, with far-reaching ramifications, which embrace the whole life of society as well as of the individual, to ensure that the human race will be guided by these Divine laws of morality and ethics, and that human society will indeed be human, and not a jungle.

To be sure, Jews, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were later given many more Divine commandments which obligate them, but not the rest of mankind.

However, this in no way diminishes the fact that gentiles can and must attain complete fulfillment through the observance of the above-mentioned Seven Commandments of man, with all their ramifications, for, inasmuch as they are G-d-given, they provide the vehicle whereby to attain communion with G-d, and thus "walk ever in the presence of G-d," as you write in your letter.

I would like to make an additional essential point.

If there was a time when some intellectuals thought that there was no need to connect the laws of ethics and morality with Divine authority, inasmuch as these are rational principles, the fallacy of this thinking is now abundantly clear.

For we have seen, in our own day and age, a whole nation which had boasted of great philosophic advancement and ethical systems sink to the lowest depth of inhuman depravity

and unprecedented barbarism. And the reason for this was that they thought that they could establish a morality and ethics based on human reason, not subject to the authority of a Supreme Being, having themselves become a super race, as they thought. There is surely no need to elaborate on the obvious.

From what has been said above, it is clear that no individual can rest content with his own observance of the Divine Commandments, but it is his responsibility to his friends and neighbors, and society at large, to involve them in the observance of the Divine Commandments in daily life and conduct.

19th of Elul, 5745 [1985]

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt now of your letter of the first of Iyar, in which you write about your desire to learn Torah, though you are not Jewish.

I trust you know that the Torah itself has instructions as to the approach in such a situation. This is that the Torah -- and in a broader sense it not only includes the Written Torah, but also the Oral Torah (Talmud, etc.) -- contains parts which are in order to be studied by gentiles, namely, those that deal with the so-called Seven Noahide Laws, in all their ramifications and details, which are incumbent upon all human beings, both Jew and gentile. On the other hand, there are parts of the Torah which are of no relevance to gentiles, and for various reasons, gentiles should not be encouraged to take time out to study them, time that they can use to better and practical advantage by studying, practicing and promoting the said Seven Noahide Laws.

In light of the above, I suggest that you personally discuss the matter with a competent Orthodox rabbi, who orally could explain the above more fully, and at the same time provide you with guidance as to how to go about your study of Torah.

I would like to add a further point, which I trust you know, that from the Torah viewpoint, there is no need whatever for a gentile to convert to Judaism, in order to achieve fulfillment in accordance with the design of the Creator. On the contrary, Jews are required to discourage a would-be convert from the idea of conversion, which could also be further explained to you by the rabbi you will consult with.

I take this opportunity -- inasmuch as Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, is a day of Divine Judgement pertaining to all peoples and nations -- to extend to you prayerful wishes for success in the new year.

With blessing,

"plowman" here refers to the Moshiach, the scion of David. Moshiach is the one who will plow the earth. In spiritual terms this means he will uplift the entire world, including its lowliest levels, on both the macro and micro level. His efforts will truly bring complete comfort to the world. Instead of the not-quite-good-enough Noah, with his risk of relapsing, there will be the permanent version of Menachem-eternal comfort. (Rabbi Y. Fried, Torah Times)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

We have now begun the Jewish month of Cheshvan, referred to as Mar-Cheshvan, "bitter Cheshvan," as it is a month bereft of holidays.

With the arrival of the month of Cheshvan we enter a new phase in the Jewish year, representing a transition from a month of festivals to the ordinary service of the year. In the month of Elul we prepared ourselves for the Days of Awe. During Tishrei we welcomed the new year and stood before G-d in judgement, which was followed by the joyous days of Sukkot. But now Cheshvan has arrived and our mission is to carry the holiness of the month of Tishrei with us as we reenter the "real world."

Chasidic thought describes this mission as "V'Yaakov halach l'darko - and Yaakov went on his way."

The name Yaakov [Jacob] represents the entire Jewish nation. Just as Jacob had to leave the house of his father, his source of spirituality, so too do we have to leave the spiritual and festive month of Tishrei. And just as Jacob was able to not only take with him the lessons of his father's house, but utilize his travels to further his spiritual growth, we too have to take with us all that we have gained during the holidays. And as the year progresses, we should continue to attain higher goals of spiritual growth.

May we travel through the year 5773 always reaching higher, striving further, until we have achieved our ultimate goal, the coming of Moshiach.

Shmuel Beiman

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

A verse in Amos (9:13) in its prediction of the future Messianic Era states: "Behold, the days come, said the L-rd, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper..." The Midrash comments that the

