

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Va'etchanan, speaks about the mitzva of learning Torah, and contains the verse "...and you shall teach them to your children, to speak in them." In general, the mitzva of learning Torah consists of two separate commandments: The obligation each person has to learn Torah himself, and the obligation to teach Torah to others, especially one's children.

Although a person might naturally think that the mitzva of learning Torah oneself takes precedence over that of teaching others, we find that the opposite is true. Both Maimonides' writings and the Shulchan Aruch begin the section on the laws covering the learning of Torah with the duty a parent has to teach his children. Why is this the case? And furthermore, how can a person teach others before he himself is well versed enough in the subject matter?

From the emphasis on teaching children, we learn the proper approach as to how we must be when we begin to learn Torah, G-d's Divine wisdom and blueprint for the world.

To understand this, let us examine the difference between Torah learning and the performance of mitzvot.

When a Jew does a mitzva he effects a change in the physical world, elevating and making holy the physical objects he uses in the mitzva's performance. The practical performance of the mitzva is therefore more important than the intentions for the action itself serves to bring spiritual illumination into the world.

Torah learning, on the other hand, serves to refine and elevate the individual. When a Jew studies Torah his intellect becomes united with the G-dly wisdom contained in the Torah and causes him to be a G-dly person whose thoughts are those of holiness.

To learn Torah properly one must have the sincere desire to understand G-d's wisdom without seeking self-aggrandizement or having other ulterior motives.

Before a Jew learns Torah, he must subjugate his own ego and ask, what does the Torah itself want from me? Without this prerequisite, say our Sages, Torah learning can even be detrimental and become a "poisonous drug."

Emphasizing the duty to teach our children before we ourselves learn the Torah stresses that our goal is to cultivate and emulate the child's purity and innocence regarding how he learns the Divinely written words.

We must likewise approach the Torah in the same way, and not try to "fit" what we have learned into the preconceived, jaded view of the world we sometimes acquire as we grow older. For all of us, no matter how old we are, are like young children to our Father in Heaven.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Why Envy is Ignorance

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

The tenth and final of the Ten Commandments recorded in this week's portion (Vaeschanan) reads: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, and anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Deuteronomy 5:17; Exodus 20:14).

The structure of the verse seems strange. In the beginning, the Bible specifies seven specific things we should not covet: But then, at the conclusion of the verse, the Bible states: "And anything that belongs to your neighbor." Why the unnecessary redundancy?

Why not just state at the onset "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor," which would include all the specifics? And if the Torah does not want to rely on generalizations and wishes to specify details, why does it specify only a few items and then anyhow revert to a generalization, by saying, "And anything that belongs to your neighbor?"

### A HOLISTIC STORY

In Hebrew, the word employed for "anything" and "everything" is identical, "Kol."

Hence, the above verse can also be translated as, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, and everything that belongs to your neighbor."

By concluding the verse with these words, the Torah is not just instructing us not to covet anything of our neighbor, but also helping us achieve this difficult state of consciousness.

How could you demand from a person not to be jealous? When I walk into a beautiful home and observe your living conditions, the cars, the wealth, and the general life style, how could I not become envious?

The answer is, "Do not covet everything that belongs to your neighbor." What the Torah is intimating is that it is indeed easy to envy the home and spouse of your neighbor, his servants, his ox and donkey; yet the question you have to ask yourself is, do you covet "everything that belongs to your neighbor?" Are you prepared to assume his or her life completely? To actually become him?

You cannot see life as myriads of disjointed events and experiences. You can't pluck out one aspect of somebody's life and state "I wish I could have had his (or her) or one specific thing." Life is a holistic and integrated experience.

Each life, with its blessings and challenges, with its obstacles and opportunities, constitutes a single story, a narrative that begins with birth and ends with death. Every experience in our life represents one chapter of our singular, unique story and we do not have the luxury to pluck out a chapter from someone's story without embracing their entire life-journey.

When you isolate one or a few aspects of someone else's life, it is natural to become envious. But when you become aware of "everything that belongs to your neighbor," your perception is altered. Do you really want to acquire everything that is going on in his or her life?

So the next time you feel yourself coveting the life of the other, ask yourself if you really want to become them.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Volunteers Vow to Memorialize October 7th Victims



Dror-David Amos and Eitan Meisels

In the wake of the tragic events that unfolded in Israel on Simchat Torah and the subsequent battles in Gaza and the north, well over a thousand Israeli lives have been lost. As the nation grapples with this immense loss, a pressing question arises: Who will say Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the deceased, for these fallen individuals?

One of the most sacred rituals observed by all Jews throughout the generations is the practice of reciting the Mourner's Kaddish prayer for the merit of the departed soul of one's father or mother. It is said at the funeral, during the week of mourning (shiva), for the following 11 months, and then every year on the anniversary of passing. When the child of the deceased is unable to recite Kaddish, or if they did not have a child, Kaddish will often be recited by another relative, or by an individual who was hired or volunteered to do so.

The immense scale of the tragedy in Israel meant that there were now many families who needed assistance in fulfilling this essential ritual. Some of the victims were parents of young children, too young to recite Kaddish. Others are unable to make it to a synagogue daily. And shockingly, in some cases, entire families were murdered, leaving no one

behind to say Kaddish.

Not honoring the memories of the victims, and the IDF soldiers who were killed in the months since, was not an option. A network of volunteers has stepped up to ensure that Kaddish is recited for every victim, memorializing and honoring them throughout the entire year of mourning.

At the forefront of this initiative is Dror-David Amos, a 43-year-old former IDF logistics officer from Neshet. Born into a traditional family, Amos served in the military for 25 years, during which he became closer to Jewish observance. Upon returning to Neshet after his military service, Amos became involved with prayer services and Torah classes at the local synagogue.

Amos says his journey was not marked by any dramatic religious awakening. "I have no special or unusual story of becoming religious," he explains. "No journeys to the East, no dramatic turnaround." Instead, his connection to faith developed gradually. During his military service, he would read Tehillim - Psalms, a practice he attributes to his grandmother's prayers. "She and my grandfather were tzadikim – truly righteous, and to me it seems that their spiritual effect is what awakened my soul," Amos reflects.

Amos's experiences in the military, particularly his close observation of how the military's casualty department works with bereaved families, led him to recognize a gap in civilian bereavement support.

"I realized that civilian bereaved families lack a comparable support system; after the funeral, they return home and must face their grief alone," he says.

So, to fill that gap, Amos, along with a group of non-commissioned and commissioned officers, established "Chesed Chaim V'Emet." This volunteer-based organization aims to support bereaved families, essentially adapting the IDF model for civilian use. "We simply copied the IDF model to civilian life," Amos explains.

In the aftermath of the October 7th massacre, the volunteer network experienced a significant expansion. In collaboration with other organizations, they managed to reach

out to more than 800 bereaved families, providing support, food baskets, and assistance in setting up mourning tents.

The Kaddish initiative emerged from this broader support system. The organization offers to recruit special volunteers to say Kaddish for fallen individuals whose families may not have someone to perform this ritual.

"We saw how important it was for families that someone would be reciting Kaddish on behalf of their loved ones," Amos notes.

One poignant example involves a widow in the north whose husband fell in battle. When a volunteer from Rechasim came to offer condolences, she pointed to her young children sitting in the corner of the living room and said, "They are still young, and it's important to me that someone says Kaddish for my husband." The organization promptly found a volunteer to fulfill this request.

The initiative has created unexpected connections between volunteers and bereaved families. Several months ago, the organization sent a representative to the shiva (seven-day mourning period) of Vadim Blich, who fell in the battle of Be'eri. His widow, Ortal, requested that someone say Kaddish for her husband. The same day, they informed her that a volunteer named Eitan Meisels had stepped up to do so.

Ortal expressed how touched and encouraged she was by the knowledge that someone who had never met Vadim volunteered to say Kaddish for him as if he were a close relative. A few weeks later, the story took an unexpected turn when Eitan's son, Nitai, a tank soldier, fell in the battles in Gaza. Eitan joined the ranks of bereaved parents, and his connection with Vadim's family transformed into a shared destiny. Now, Eitan says Kaddish for both Vadim and his own son.

As the list of fallen soldiers and civilians continues to grow, reaching over 1,450 at the time of writing, the need for volunteers also increases. Amos pledges to continue his efforts, ensuring the proper respect for every single victim of the horrific attack, who were killed for being Jews living on their homeland, and the IDF soldiers, who were killed protecting the Jewish nation and the Holy Land. May G-d avenge their blood.

## Pillar of Dutch Jewry Honored With Synagogue Naming



The Mayor of Amstelveen, Tjapko Poppens, was on hand to help unveil the plaque with the synagogue's new name.

with his family and sent first to the Westerbork transit camp, then Bergen-Belsen at the tender age of 5.

Rabbi Vorst, who passed away in September of last year at the age of 85, established Chabad in the Netherlands in 1964, becoming a driving force in rebuilding Judaism in a community decimated by the Holocaust.

In an evening of tribute held in Amstelveen in July, hundreds of those impacted by his life's work gathered to see the synagogue where he served for so many years renamed in his honor.

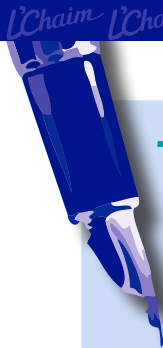
Jews from all parts of the Netherlands came together in Amstelveen last month to honor Rabbi Yitzchak Vorst, a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary who served in the country for more than 60 years. It was at the behest of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, that shortly after getting married in 1963, Vorst moved to Amstelveen, a suburb of Amsterdam, to serve the Jewish community there.

Born and raised in pre-Holocaust Rotterdam, Vorst had a tumultuous early childhood, being rounded up with his family and sent first to the Westerbork transit camp, then Bergen-Belsen at the tender age of 5.

## Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Four

Who is rich? One who is happy with his lot. As is stated (Psalms 128:2): "If you eat of toil of your hands, fortunate are you, and good is to you"; "fortunate are you" in this world, "and good is to you" in the World to Come.

Who is honorable? One who honors his fellows. As is stated (I Samuel 2:30): "For to those who honor me, I accord honor; those who scorn me shall be demeaned."



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d

2nd of Tammuz, 5716 [June 11, 1956]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter in which you ask the question "if a soul has come back to earth several times to complete its duty here, when Messiah comes in which form will the soul come back?"

I was pleased to note from your letter that you are taking an interest in your studies and follow the instructions of Torah as you are taught in the Yeshivah in New Haven.

As for your question, it was already asked a very long time ago by one of our great teachers of the Talmud, Rabbi Hizkiah, as mentioned in the holy book "Zohar" (Part 1, page 131a). The answer given there by another great teacher of the Mishnah, Rabbi Jose, is that the soul will come back to life in the body in which it has accomplished Torah and Mitzvoth during her lifetime on this earth, and that a body which did not practice Torah and Mitzvoth on earth will not come back to life.

This answer must be considered in the light of a further explanation by the great Rabbi Isaac Luria, who lived about 400 years ago, and is known as Ari (the "Lion"). (About his life and work you may have read in the "Talks and Tales.")

The saintly Ari explained that it is almost impossible for a Jew not to fulfill at least some Mitzvoth. Therefore, in accordance with the answer in Zohar, almost all bodies will come back to life. The question then is in which body will the soul return if it had been in more than one body.

The answer, strange as it may seem at first glance, is that it will return in all bodies it had inhabited. To understand how this is possible, let us remember that the souls of mankind started from two people, Adam and Eve.

Their souls included all the souls of the future generations, in a way a single seed includes in it future generations of trees, fruits, and seeds. In the same way the souls of parents are not just two souls, but they can split up into soul sparks, each of which is in turn a complete soul.

Therefore, when a Jew performs a Mitzvah, the body takes part in it and it is no longer "dry wood" that rots away, but it will come back to life with a soul which is a Divine spark, and which was included in the original soul. Thus at the Time of Resurrection (after Messiah will come) all "parts" of a "general" soul will each have a separate body, just as parents will come back to life with all their children.

If you find the above a little difficult to understand, you can ask your teacher to explain to you more fully, or leave the question until you grow older. But you may be sure that no good deed, no Mitzvah, not even a single minute spent in the study of the Torah, is ever lost.

With blessing,

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

On the eve of Tisha B'Av each year Reb Avraham of Chechanov would have to buy a new copy of Kinot--Lamentations. For every year, as soon as the mournful service was over, he would stow away his

copy in the place where old and battered sacred books were lodged until they were buried. And each time he did this he would say: "I am sure that Moshiach will come this year, and then we won't have any further need for books of Lamentations."

(A Treasury of Chasidic Tales)

## 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

*Sabbath of rejoicing. We are hopeful that G-d will console us for the destruction of the Holy Temple and Jerusalem. The Haftorah portion for this week and the next six weeks reflects this theme of consolation.*

*This Shabbat is known by the special name of "Shabbat Nachamu" because we read the Haftorah portion which begins, "Nachamu, nachamu ami--Console, console My people."*

*Our Sages have taught that it is significant that there are seven Haftorah portions of consolation. The first consolers are the tzadikim trying to comfort Jerusalem upon her loss. But she will not be comforted. The second, is the patriarch Abraham. Again, the city will not be consoled. Next is Isaac, then Jacob and then Moses. Each time the city will not be consoled. The sixth Haftorah is Jerusalem's plea for consolation and finally, G-d Himself, consoles the Holy City.*

*According to the Midrash, the reason why the word "console" is repeated twice is that G-d is comforting us for the destruction of the first Holy Temple and also for the second Holy Temple. G-d's consolation and our comfort lies in the fact that G-d has promised us that there will be a third Holy Temple, greater than the first two. This will take place through Moshiach in the Messianic Era as the Rambam writes: "In the future time, the King Moshiach will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will rebuild the Beit HaMikdash and gather in the dispersed remnant of Israel."*

*This year may we merit to have the true consolation which G-d has promised us all these years with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple.*

Shmuel Butman

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה'ה י מושקה

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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# IT HAPPENED ONCE

Many years ago in the village of Aziz in Israel there lived a poor family with a daughter named Rachel. The girlish happiness of a new dress was far out of Rachel's reach, but she had a fine character and a sharp mind which she used to help her beleaguered family.

One day Rachel and her siblings were outside when Rachel reached up to get a pot down from the top of the roof. Suddenly she lost her footing and slipped from the shaky wooden ladder. She came toppling down onto the stone pavement and struck her mouth on a rock. Her little siblings fluttered around her, but she calmly brushed them away and went into the house. Her mother heard the commotion and approached her daughter in alarm. After wiping away the blood, they found to their horror, that one of Rachel's front teeth had been knocked out.

This seemingly insignificant event caused her life to take an unhappy turn. Always a sensitive girl, Rachel suffered terribly from the teasing of her friends who giggled at the wide gap in her mouth. She no longer wanted to join with the other girls in their activities. Her despair deepened as time went on, and her distraught parents were at a loss of what to do.

Although they had barely enough money for food, Rachel's parents managed to gather enough money to make a false tooth. But the craftsman they hired was not very skilled, and the tooth didn't fit properly and was a dark color. Instead of improving her appearance, it made her look much worse. In her attempt to hide the tooth, she kept her mouth closed most of the time. She soon looked like a bitter, dejected old woman.

Time went by. All of her old friends married one by one; only Rachel was left without a suitor, for no one was interested in the sad, withdrawn, unsmiling girl. Her heartbroken parents knew that they must do something, but a dowry was far beyond their means and besides, no one wanted her.

Finally they came up with an idea. The girl's mother had a younger brother who lived in a village outside of Jerusalem. He was also poor and worked hard for a living, but he was a fine man and would make a good husband for his niece. Pleased with their idea, the parents sent a messenger to their relative, and he agreed to the suggestion. Although he hadn't seen his niece in many years he remembered her as a sunny, cheerful little girl.

He travelled to their home and stood expectantly at the door as he waited for someone to answer his knock. The door opened and a dishevelled, worn-looking woman stood on the other side. He was shocked to learn that this was his betrothed, and he flatly refused to honor his promise and left the town at once.

Finally word of the debacle came to the ears of Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha. This tzadik loved his fellow Jews, and was especially attached to the mitzva of helping poor Jewish girls get married. And when poverty was an obstacle he expended tremendous effort in helping them. His warm heart was touched by the tragic story and he summoned the girl's parents, offering to take Rachel into his home. "Bring your daughter to us, and my wife will take good care of her. I promise you that before long that young man will sorely regret having refused her."

So, Rachel went to live with this kind family who spared no effort to make her comfortable. For the first time in her life she ate nourishing meals each day, and was pampered with fine soaps and ointments. Her hair was groomed and festooned with stylish ribbons. Soon, her cheeks glowed with health and her newfound happiness radiated outward. Still, there was the problem of the tooth. Rabbi Yishmael ordered an expert craftsman to make her a new tooth, this time of gold. Rachel was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. In those days gold teeth were a mark of beauty as well as high station. Rachel couldn't help but stare at her reflection in the

mirror, but it was hard to recognize the beautiful young woman who stared back at her.

The following week Rabbi Yishmael sent for the young man who recently had refused to marry her, saying, "There is a lovely young woman I would like you to meet. I think she would be a fine wife for you. Why don't you come and meet her and see what you think."

He was pleased to accept the proposal and lost no time in showing up at Rabbi Yishmael's house. When he entered the room and saw the attractive woman who sat next to Rabbi Yishmael's wife, a smile crept across his face, for he immediately recognized his niece, but she was completely changed. How could it be that the girl who had seemed so ugly and repulsive had now become so beautiful? His thoughts were interrupted by Rabbi Yishmael's voice saying, "Isn't this the same young woman you vowed not to marry?"

The man was caught off guard and protested, "I, I made a mistake. I would really like very much to marry her."

Rabbi Yishmael felt a sudden pang of sorrow, sorrow for all the other Rachels he was unable to help, and he responded softly, "I absolve you of the vow which you made by mistake. You may marry, and G-d grant that your years be filled with happiness and peace." And so it was.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

---

**Lest you corrupt yourselves and make a graven image (Deut. 4:16)**

Why did Moses have to remind the Jewish people not to make graven images, considering the fact that they had just spent forty years in the desert and had seen all sorts of open miracles and wonders? Were they not already on such a high spiritual level that making a graven image would be unthinkable? From this we learn that an individual must never think that his worship of G-d is perfect and he is beyond temptation. One must be ever on guard, even against those sins which appear to have no attraction whatsoever. (*Sifrei Musar*)

**Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One (Deut. 6:4)**

Our Rabbis said: "Hear--in every language." One can accept the yoke of heaven in any language, not just in the Hebrew tongue. Likewise, in every object that a person sees and every sound which reaches his ears he must strive to see that "the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One." We can find G-d's greatness and absolute unity reflected in every single thing which occurs in the world. (*Sefat Emet*)

**And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart (Deut. 6:6)**

"These words" of Torah should be always at the ready; all one must do is open up one's heart for a second and they will enter. (*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk*)

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