

# L'Chaim



During the times of the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism) a law was passed to forcibly relocate Jews from rural villages to larger towns. This particularly harsh decree left many Jews destitute, without a source of livelihood, and a great deal of money was needed to alleviate their plight.

Not only were many poor families without basic necessities, but officials had to be bribed to leave the Jews in peace. To this end, the Alter Rebbe began traveling extensively throughout the region asking for donations. One such mission took the Alter Rebbe to the district of Vohlin, not far from the city of Toltshin, where Reb Boruch, the Baal Shem Tov's grandson, resided. The Alter Rebbe decided to pay Reb Boruch a visit, and Reb Boruch was delighted by the honor.

"What brings you here?" Reb Boruch asked. "Well," the Alter Rebbe replied, "I am raising funds to bribe government officials to leave the Jews alone. The pitiful plight of my brethren is too much to bear." Reb Boruch was surprised. "But surely you could have averted the decree on the spiritual level!" he countered. "Why are you actually going around collecting money?" The Alter Rebbe elucidated: "I am only following a precedent. When our Patriarch Jacob was in danger, no doubt he could have alleviated the harsh decree in a spiritual way, without having to placate his brother Esau with gifts.

Yet we see that he declared, 'I am sending a present to my lord Esau...that he be appeased.'" Reb Boruch remained unconvinced. The Alter Rebbe was a great tzadik; why did he have to lower himself to act within the natural order? "But why didn't you just teach them the meaning of 'Echad' ('One') according to my grandfather's teachings? The decree would then have been automatically nullified!" "It was your grandfather's 'Echad' that caused this decree in the first place," the Alter Rebbe replied. He then revealed the following: After the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, there was not one country willing to take them in.

The reason for this (as with everything else that happens in the physical world) originated in the higher spheres. In heaven, the ministering angels representing the various nations were arguing among themselves. "We don't want the Jews to live in our land!" each angel cried. "The first thing they'll do is build synagogues and houses of study.

They'll learn Torah and they'll pray. We don't want them to declare 'Hashem Echad - G-d is One!'" The angels were afraid that this declaration of G-d's unity would nullify their very existence, much as darkness is dispelled in the presence of light. This spiritual reality was reflected down below, and the leaders of each nation refused to accept the Jews.

There was only one angel who was not afraid, the ministering angel of Poland. In fact, he saw this as a golden opportunity to increase his own impure powers. "They don't scare me," he declared. "I will take them in and it will be to my advantage. It is true that they'll build yeshivas and study Torah, and they will declare 'G-d is One.' But they will not have the proper intentions, and I will grow stronger." And so it came to pass. The king of Poland agreed to accept a bribe—a pile of money as high as a mounted Cossack holding a spear upright. Indeed, the Jews arrived in Poland in droves.

They built synagogues and houses of study, established businesses, learned

Torah and recited the "Shema" ("Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One"). And, as the ministering angel had predicted, they did not have the proper intentions. The angel was delighted that his plan was working. His own powers were increasing from day to day. Unfortunately for him, however, the Baal Shem Tov came along and taught the Jews a dimension of "Echad" that was entirely different. "That's not fair!" the angel of Poland cried. "The deal is off—the bargain is null and void! I only agreed to accept them under the terms of the old 'Echad,' not the new one!" Down on earth, the Jews would have to find another home. The noose was tightened around the throat of European Jewry, and many Jews were expelled from their villages. "Now do you understand?" the Alter Rebbe concluded. "The new law is a direct result of your grandfather's 'Echad,' and that is why money is once again needed to avert the harsh decree..."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

**Go out of your land... and I will make your name great (Gen. 12:1,2)**

Why did G-d find it necessary to promise Abraham that his name would be great? Did Abraham really care about personal fame? Our Sages taught that the mention of Abraham's name caused G-d's name to be sanctified. Abraham's whole life was spent spreading the knowledge of the one G-d. Wherever he went he caused people to think about their Creator. Thus, whenever Abraham's name was mentioned, G-d's name was sanctified, too. (*Likutei Sichot*)

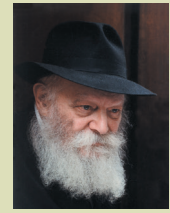
**Abram took Sarai his wife... and the souls they had made in Charan (Gen. 12:5)**

If all the scientists in the world attempted to create even a mosquito, they could not succeed in imbuing it with life. What then, is meant by "the souls they had made"? Rashi explains that this refers to those whom they "brought under the wings of the Divine Presence." Abram spread the belief in one G-d among the men, and Sarai among the women; they are therefore credited with having "created" the new believers. (*Midrash*)

**And Abram called there in the name of G-d (Gen. 13:4)**

Our Sages taught: Do not read vayikra—"and he called," but rather vayakri—"and he caused others to call." Abraham erected a way-station for travelers in the middle of the desert, and taught each person who partook of his hospitality about the oneness of G-d. Avraham was not content to be the only one to call on G-d's name—he caused others to come to appreciate and thank G-d for His goodness.

**4:26 Candle Lighting Time**  
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Torah Portion *Lech Lecha*  
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## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In the first verse of this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, G-d commanded Abraham, "Go out, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." G-d continues to tell Avraham that, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great." This is the first command to the first Jew, therefore, there must be a message here for every Jewish person, for all time. What is the message?

There are two approaches to understanding this verse. The first is that it is referring to the journey of the soul, a descent from above to below. The soul is asked to leave its home in the highest spiritual realms, and make the descent into the lowest possible realm, the physical world. But it is here that it affects the most change and accomplishes its purpose, and the effect is so powerful, that it brings G-d's blessing and becomes great. Meaning, that the soul is uplifted to higher spiritual realms, beyond where it was before its descent. In this way of understanding the verse, we are given a glimpse of our purpose, the goal of every Jew, to make this world into a better place, the way G-d wants it.

A place where G-d could call home. The second approach is more in line with the simple meaning of the verse. It refers to the ascent from below to above we must make every day from the lowly and mundane, from "your land, your birthplace, and your father's house," which in the context of the verse, refers to a place and an atmosphere of idol worship, "to the land that I will show you," the land of Israel, a place of holiness.

This is especially poignant now after the Tishrei holidays, when we are thrust into the mundane. After the holidays, every Jew "goes out," doing his mission to transform his part of the world into a dwelling place for G-d. It is through Torah, mitzvahs and living the life of a Jew that transforms this world, and we have the power to do it, we inherited it from our forefather Abraham. It is through this work that we complete Hashem's command to Abraham, "Lech Lecha."

Although these two explanations are opposites, the first a descent, and the second an ascent, they are both explanations of the same verse, and therefore simultaneously true. And we have to take both messages at the same time. That we have descended to effect this world, and we should try to change it from the bottom up. So "Lech Lecha," is a call to every Jewish person, to do all you can to complete the mission and make this world into a home for Hashem.

It is through both of these approaches working simultaneously that we create an environment that the highest levels of G-dliness, even the levels that are beyond the world, to enter the world and become part of our lives. This is the key to the blessings found in Lech Lecha and the path to the ultimate blessing, the coming of Moshiach.

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.

## Bar Mitzvah at the Amalfi Coast

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler

This past summer, my wife and I embarked on a quick three-day getaway to the breathtakingly beautiful island of Capri, in the south of Italy. We spent one day touring the incredible Amalfi Coast, setting out on a hike that would take us to the famed "Path of God"—an immensely popular mountain trail about 4.34 miles long, at the dizzying height of 2065ft above sea level. The views were indeed heavenly, but the heat was sweltering, with temperatures soaring to over 100 degrees.

As we hiked, I couldn't help but feel a sense of awe at Hashem's incredible creation. The scenery was like nothing I had ever seen before. Along the way, I met fellow hikers and asked them how much farther we had to go. Each person encouraged me, saying we still had hours to go, but the views would be well worth it. As we hiked, I started conversations with every passerby. We met tourists from every part of the world. Australians, Europeans, Americans, Africans, Asians—you name it, they were there. We had some great conversations, but alas, nobody was Jewish.

As I always do when traveling, I carried my tefillin in my backpack, along with water and other essentials. It's a habit I've developed over the years, because what could be greater than meeting a fellow Jew and doing a mitzvah together?

As we climbed higher, we met a fellow hiker named Mike. He told me he was from Italy, and when I asked if he was Jewish, he said no. Further probing uncovered that his mother was in fact Jewish and Ukrainian, making Mike Jewish too!

I couldn't believe the coincidence. I whipped out my tefillin and asked Mike if he had ever put them on before. He said no, so I offered to perform a belated bar mitzvah

ceremony for him right there on the mountain! We recited the Shema together, and I wrapped the tefillin around his arm. He was so excited to perform this mitzvah in the sweltering heat amid stunning views! As we danced and took a selfie together, it was impossible to ignore the stunning Italian peninsula in the background.

Little did we know that this very place had a complex history. In 1541, the Jewish community was banished from the kingdom of Naples. Yet, here we were, two Jews, standing on the Path of God, performing a bar mitzvah ceremony, proudly and publicly celebrating our heritage in a place where Jews were once forbidden.

I found it ironic that the hike we were on was called the Path of God. Indeed it truly is the path of G-d—or rather, the path to G-d, where the spark of Judaism was ignited in Mike's neshama.

The encounter with Mike taught me a valuable lesson: As Jews, it does not matter where we are from. Whether we're Italian, French, Russian, Ukrainian, American, African or Asian, once we find the common connection of our souls we see that we are all brothers and sisters.

Our main focus needs to be on uncovering the common denominator that we all share, to realize that at our core we share a deep soul connection.

As I reflect on my unforgettable experience, I realize that our chance encounter on the Path of God was more than just a coincidence. It was a reminder that our traditions and beliefs can bring us together in the most beautiful and unexpected ways. So, let us embrace our differences, celebrate our shared humanity, and never miss an opportunity to connect with others and make a positive impact on the world around us.

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# SLICE OF LIFE

## Rising from the Ashes



Rabbi Chaim Oter being presented with the 'President's Award for Volunteering' by President Isaac Herzog

In the heart of Ramla, a city in central Israel, lives a man whose life story is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Rabbi Chaim Oter, at 70, has faced unimaginable loss, yet his response to tragedy has been to dedicate his life to serving others.

Born to a father from Yemen and a mother from Libya, Chaim's early life in Ramla was marked by diversity and tradition. After serving in various roles in the military, he settled into married life, looking forward to building a family. But fate had other plans.

"About two months after our wedding, my wife Yocheved crossed the road and was hit by a passing car," Chaim recalls, his voice steady despite the weight of the memory. "The injury left her completely disabled."

Despite this challenge, the couple went on to have four children. But here, too, tragedy struck repeatedly. "Our first child passed away at three months old,

the second at four months, and the third at two years," Chaim shares, his eyes reflecting a deep, abiding sorrow. "Our last daughter passed away eleven years ago from a malignant disease. She was 34 and left behind two daughters, aged 6.5 and 4. We're raising them now."

In the face of such overwhelming loss, many would have succumbed to despair. But Chaim found strength in his faith and the words of his rabbi. "My teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Hacoheh, encouraged and strengthened me," he says. "He told me: Everything we go through is from the Almighty."

Rather than turning inward, Chaim and Yocheved chose to channel their grief into helping others. "We managed to rise up and channel the difficult loss into volunteering," Chaim explains. Thirty-two years ago, they established a soup kitchen in Ramla, which they operate every day of the week. "We also mobilize for any matter of kindness, whether it's organizing a brit milah meal for a needy family or raising donations to buy tefillin for a boy whose parents have limited means."

Chaim's day starts at 4:30 AM with prayer and study, after which he heads straight to the soup kitchen, where he remains until 8 PM. "Throughout the hours, needy people come and take food, and we make every effort to respect them," he says.

But Chaim's service doesn't end there. Following in his father's footsteps, he volunteers with the Chevra Kadisha (burial society), ensuring that every deceased person in the city is treated with dignity. He's also joined Unit 360, Israel's national aid network.

When tragedy struck Israel on Simchat Torah, Chaim was among the first to

respond. "We engaged in the sacred work of receiving bodies, identification efforts under terrible conditions, and preparation for burial," he recounts. "Some of the missions in the Gaza envelope were also under fire. Among other things, we entered Zikim Beach with security forces to treat the wounded and evacuate the dead."

The horrors he witnessed tested even his resilient spirit. "It's hard to describe what we saw and what we did," he admits. "In the first weeks, I worked almost eighteen hours every day. More than once, I found myself crying out: How long! We saw unbearable things, but we knew we were dealing with holy Jews, and that gave us the strength to take a breath and overcome."

Recently, Chaim's lifelong dedication to others was recognized when he received the President's Award for Volunteering. "Tears flowed from my eyes," he recalls of the moment he heard the news. "I said to myself: Who am I and what am I, everything is for the people of Israel."

Despite all he's been through, Chaim's message is one of hope and unity. "Every Jew needs to help his fellow," he insists. "If you see someone in distress, find out how you can help them, what they need. Don't leave your friend broken and ignore them. Our solution to the social crisis will start with us, with practical help from one person to another."

Through unimaginable loss and countless acts of kindness, Rabbi Chaim Oter's life serves as a powerful reminder of the strength found in faith, community, and service to others. His journey from tragedy to triumph is not just a personal story, but a beacon of hope for all who face adversity.

Translated from *Sichat Hashavua*

# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## LIKE ONE BODY

7 Marcheshvan, 5737

We have concluded the month of Tishrei, which is designated in our sacred texts as a "comprehensive month" for the entire year, and which is filled with a variety of festive days and experiences embracing all areas of a Jew's spiritual life throughout the whole year.

The month begins with awe and submission to the Heavenly Reign, the main point of Rosh Hashana: teshuva [repentance], the essence of the Ten Days of Return, and Yom Kippur; the performance of mitzvot with diligence and joy, culminating with the highest expression of joy with the Torah -- the essential aspects of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah.

It is time to recall the custom that was prevalent in many communities to announce at the termination of Simchat Torah: "And Jacob went on his way."

The point of this custom was to call attention to the fact that, inasmuch as the time has come to return to the routine of the daily life ("his way"), it behooves a Jew to know that he is Jacob, a Jew, and that he has his own way, a way that originates in Simchat Torah and is guided by the joy of Torah and mitzvot.

This means that whatever a Jew undertakes, even his ordinary day to day affairs, must always be conducted in the spirit of "All your actions should be for the sake of Heaven" and "Know Him (and serve Him) in all your ways."

The month of Tishrei is a "comprehensive month" also in the sense that in this month the Jew acquires "goods" for the whole year.

Immediately afterwards one must begin to "unpack" and draw from one's stock according to the needs of each day in all details.

One cannot consider himself free from further obligation on the basis of the accomplishments of the comprehensive month.

Similarly, there are also "comprehensive mitzvot," although each and all mitzvot have to be fulfilled with the fullest measure of diligence and excellence. A comprehensive mitzva should be performed with still greater excellence and still greater diligence, for its performance is of greater concern to all Jews and the Jewish people as a whole.

One of the main comprehensive mitzvot is the mitzva of ahavat Yisrael (love of a fellow-Jew). Of this mitzva it has been said that it is a "great principle of the Torah," and the "basis of the entire Torah."

The basis of this mitzva is the fact that all Jews constitute one entity, like one body, so much so that every Jew sees every other Jew as "his own flesh and blood."

Herein is also the explanation why the fulfillment of a mitzva by every individual Jew affects the whole Jewish people; how much more so the fulfillment of comprehensive mitzvot...

May G-d grant that all the good wishes which Jews wished one another for the new year should be fulfilled, that it be a good and sweet year in every respect, with the realization of the above-mentioned pattern of Jewish conduct:

"And Jacob" -- an appellation that includes all Jews, not only those who have already attained the higher status of "Israel" and "Jeshurun";

"Went" -- in accordance with the true concept of motion, namely, moving away from the previous state to a higher state; (for however satisfactory a state is, one should always strive to advance to an every higher state in all matters of Holiness);

"On his way" -- that "his way," even in non-obligatory matters, becomes a G-dly way, as stated immediately after:

"And G-d's angels met him" -- in keeping with every Jew's purpose in life to be an "angel" messenger -- of G-d, to make for Him an "abode" in this earthly world.

May all the above be done with joy, derived from Simchat Torah, and Jacob "will sing (and praise) the G-d of Jacob," and merit the speedy fulfillment of the continuation of the verse, "The glory and strength of the tzadik will be uplifted," the coming of our righteous Moshiach.

and of Moshiach -- is revealed by an uncompromising self-sacrifice for a single Jewish soul, even the most distant one. Further, because the essence and being of Moses -- and Moshiach -- is one with the essence and being of every Jewish soul, the self-sacrifice of Moses--and therefore Moshiach -- reveals the quintessential unity and oneness of the Jewish people with G-d.

(From *Reflections of Redemption*, based on *Likutei Sichos*, by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann o.b.m.)

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

The essential attribute of Moses is self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is the essential attribute of a true leader of the generation, of Moshiach himself. Although Moses is willing to give up everything for Torah, he is willing to give up even Torah itself for any Jew.

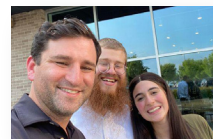
The true, inner essence of Moses --

## CUSTOMS

Why is Shalom Aleichem--"Peace unto you, angels" sung before kiddush on Friday night?

Since in the hustle and bustle of Shabbat preparations, members of the household might irritate one another, the angels are called upon to restore peace. Also, according to the Midrash, when returning home from the synagogue, we are escorted by two angels, one good and one evil. When they enter the home and see everything beautiful and serene, the good angel blesses the family, and the evil one must answer "amen."

## New Shluchim To Williamson County, Tennessee



With a fledgling Jewish population, Williamson County, located in the suburbs of Nashville, Tennessee, has officially welcomed its own Chabad shluchim.

Rabbi Mendel and Chana Baron have begun their work in the community, offering Jewish services, programs, and community events.

As Amazon and Oracle--among others--have brought jobs to the area, the community has grown. Where once the Jewish community numbered some 200 families, today Rabbi Yitzchok Tiechtel, director of Chanad of Nashville, estimates that the number has grown to 800 or 900 families.

The Barons will host a litany of programs to serve the area's Jewish community, with an eye toward serving the many young families that call Williamson County home.

# 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

We are now in the month of Marcheshvan, the name of which has many interesting interpretations. One meaning of the word "mar" is "bitter," because this month, which has no holy days or festivals, lacks the sweetness that is derived from the holidays. Another translation of the word "mar" is "a drop [of water]," because Marcheshvan marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel.

According to linguists, "Cheshvan" is etymologically related to "chashrat mayim," meaning an abundance of water. In Hebrew, however, "mar" also means "sir" or "master." The Midrash relates that King Solomon finished building the First Holy Temple during the month of Marcheshvan, but it was not inaugurated for 11 months, until the following Tishrei. G-d rewarded the month of Marcheshvan by promising that the Third and Eternal Holy Temple, which will be revealed with the coming of Moshiach, will descend from heaven and be dedicated during Marcheshvan.

We therefore refer to this period with the respectful title of "master" or "sir" to honor an event that will signify our greatest joy. Chasidut explains that the Hebrew language - the "holy tongue" - is unlike all other languages, in which the words that are used to describe things are arbitrary. In Hebrew, the word for an object is that object, the holy letters being the channel for its life-force and very existence. Aramaic, a related Semitic language that was the lingua franca of Jews in ancient times (and in which most of the Talmud is written), is described as the intermediary or bridge between the holy tongue and all other languages.

In Tractate Sanhedrin of the Talmud, it is explained that Marcheshvan means "the movement of the lips." During the month of Tishrei, when a Jew is consumed with praying and intense study of the Torah, his mouth becomes a conduit for G-dliness. The impact of these holy vibrations of the lips are still felt in the month of Marcheshvan, and G-d willing, throughout the year to come.

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.



Published by Lubavitch Youth Organization  
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