

The Baal Shem Tov loved the hours and days he spent wandering alone through the beautiful and isolated forests and hills of the Carpathian mountains. There, in solitude, he could think, learn and meditate on the greatness and the revealed wonders of the Creator.

This beautiful corner of the world was lush with the bounties of nature, but virtually empty of humanity. However, it was the haunt of a cruel and vicious band of robbers and murderers who attacked any hapless soul who happened to be passing through the countryside.

This robber band had been preying on travellers for many years, and they and their terrifying chief had become a frightening legend. The chief's name was Dabash -- and he was, strangely enough, a Jew, albeit one who had descended to the lowest levels of humanity. The very mention of his name struck fear into the hearts of the villagers who lived in the settlements dotting the mountains, for no one who had fallen into his clutches had ever escaped alive.

Dabash had gotten word of a strange individual who dared to wander the mountain passes of his private domain. Summoning his most loyal followers, Dabash cried, "Find this arrogant fool who dares invade my province, and bring him to me!"

The robbers quickly set out to capture the Baal Shem Tov. But try as they might, they could not find him. Whenever they were sure that he must be right around the next bend, he eluded their grasp. "It's downright spooky," remarked one of the robbers, and they all nodded in agreement. This man was definitely something out of the ordinary. Finally, after scouring the surroundings for miles around, they were forced to report back to Dabash that they had failed in their mission. He was furious, for never had his will been thwarted. "I'll have your heads for this!" he screamed at the shaking men.

Slowly they managed to calm the robber chief. Finally, at the end of their tale, Dabash was curious enough to set out himself to try to capture the elusive Jew. Dabash led the way scaling rocky precipices and bounding over swift running streams.

Suddenly, a man appeared before them emerging from the distant trees. "That's him," they said in awe.

Dabash was happy at the opportunity for confrontation at long last, but the Baal Shem Tov spoke first: "I have come to save you the trouble of looking for me."

"Do you know who I am?" queried Dabash boldly. "Of course. I see it written all over your face! And not only that, but I know that you have regrets very often for the terrible sins you have committed. Is it not true that after you drink you always cry?"

"That's true," Dabash answered, "but it's not unusual. Lots of people do the same, although I don't understand why I cry when I do."

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "I will explain it to you. When a person is drunk, his essence, his innermost feelings that are normally hidden, can be revealed. Even inside you, a man who has abandoned the most basic human rules of life, burns a tiny spark. That spark is called the 'pintele Yid,' and it is the cause of your regrets. Why, even now, you feel bad that you have approached me with violent intentions."

When Dabash heard this he felt a stab of recognition deep inside. "Whoever harms this holy man will feel my sword!" he barked at his men.

"Just one question," said Dabash. "I and my men roam these mountains in search of victims to rob, but you? Why are you wandering about in this hills?"

"Let me explain it to you in this way:

"Once a king announced that he would grant any request his subjects made. Two of the king's subjects wanted the same thing -- to visit the royal palace. The king granted them both their requests.

"They were allowed to enter the palace for only one hour. But the men had different reasons for desiring to enter the palace. One wanted to take as many treasures as he could

fit into his pockets. The other wanted only to be near his beloved king.

"G-d fills the entire world, but here, surrounded by the wonders and beauties of nature we can feel the closeness of G-d.

"You see, Dabash, you and I are both here in the 'royal palace,' but our reasons are quite different."

With those words, the Baal Shem Tov turned and disappeared among the dense trees. Dabash was confused. He felt a surge of shame, but at the same time, he cried to his men to pursue the Jew.

Again there was no trace of him. In his rage, Dabash massacred a score of his men. Legend has it that afterward Dabash fled far away and became a penitent. In any case, the people of the Carpathian mountains never heard of him or his robber band again.

THOUGHTS  
THAT COUNT  
on the weekly Torah portion

**And I appeared (va'eira) unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob...I have also heard the groaning of the Children of Israel (Ex 6:3-5)**

The word "va'eira" is in both the past and present tense, indicating that the revelation of G-dliness that existed in the times of our forefathers continues to exist today as well. Every Jew possesses the quality of Abraham (love of G-d), the quality of Isaac (awe of G-d), and the quality of Jacob (mercy); the revelation of these inner traits is akin to G-d's revelation to the Patriarchs. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

**But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs (Ex 7:12)**

From Aaron's staff we learn about the resurrection of the dead that will take place in Messianic times: If a lifeless staff, a dry piece of wood, can be transformed into a living entity, how much more so can a human being, consisting of a physical body and soul, be restored to life! (*Zohar*)

**But when Pharaoh saw that there was a relief, he hardened his heart (Ex 8:11)**

Such is the behavior of the wicked: In the midst of their punishment they cry out that they are vanquished, yet as soon as the agony has passed they return to their evil ways. (*Shemot Rabba*)

**I will put a distinction between My people and your people (Ex 8:19)**

The Hebrew word "pedut" ("distinction") appears three times in our Scripture. Twice it is spelled *pei, dalet, vav, tav*, but in this instance the vav is omitted. This signifies that the redemption in Egypt was less than perfect; the full and ultimate Redemption will only take place when Moshiach comes. (*Baal Haturim*)



### 4:20 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
27 Tevet/Dec 31  
Torah Portion Va'eira  
Shabbat ends 5:25pm



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion of *Va'eira*, G-d reveals Himself to Moses. G-d promises that He will redeem the Jewish people and bring them to the Land of Israel.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly demand of Pharaoh that he free the Jewish people to be able to serve G-d at Mount Sinai. We then read about the first seven of the 10 plagues.

The *Haftora* for our Torah portion has two prophecies from the prophet Ezekiel, as well as two verses from an earlier prophecy.

This Haftora begins with a mention of the ingathering of the exiles, echoing G-d's promise in our portion: "I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt." The prophet then goes on to discuss the decimation of Pharaoh and Egypt, reminiscent of the primary theme of the Torah portion - the devastation G-d wrought upon Egypt.

G-d says that He will lay waste to Egypt, it will be uninhabited for 40 years, and then they will return, but Egypt will never be a superpower again.

G-d gives a reason for the downfall of Egypt. Because Egypt didn't keep their word, and come to Israel's aid when they needed it most. They were a "prop of reeds," meaning, that when Israel needed to lean on Egypt, when they were being attacked by Sennacherib, and later by Nebuchadnezzar, Egypt folded as a prop made of weak reeds, and didn't come to Israel's aid.

But then, a few verses later G-d gives what seems to be a totally different reason for Egypt's punishment. Because of Pharaoh's arrogance and denial of G-d's providence, as he said, "The river is mine, and I made it."

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt fits in with the message of *Vaeira*, which tells of the devastating plagues that G-d brought on Egypt. It even was for similar reasons. First, for the suffering they wrought on the Jewish people. And second, so that Pharaoh would be humbled from arrogance and denial of G-d, as he said, "Who is G-d, that I should listen to his voice," and come to realize that G-d is G-d. This attitude was common by all the Egyptians, as we see from the reason G-d gave Moses for bringing the plagues, "And Egypt will know that I am G-d."

What connection is there between denial of G-d because of arrogance and treating the Jewish people badly?

The question here itself is the answer. When a person is arrogant, his ego is so great, that there is no room for G-d, let alone another person so he treats others badly.

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.

## We Are One

Jewish leaders, organizations, and assemblies continue to plead for the need for greater unity amongst the Jewish people.

But what exactly is Jewish unity in the traditional Jewish sense?

In Biblical times Jews were divided according to tribes as well as families. We were and still are further divided according to class: *Kohein* (the "priests"), Levi and Israel.

In Jewish teachings there is also a separation in that certain mitzvot are incumbent upon men and others upon women.

Business-people are obligated differently in specific areas of Jewish law than those who devote their lives to the study of Torah.

Children, below the age of Bar or Bat Mitzva, are not required to fulfill all of the mitzvot that an adult is obligated to fulfill. The distinctions imposed by the Torah are seemingly endless.

In addition, all throughout our history, Jews have established their own classifications and denominations that have only served to divide and splinter the Jewish people.

And yet, interestingly enough, if you google the phrase "We Are One" you will most often find it used by various Jewish organizations!

Indeed, the Torah teaches us that all Jews are connected, we are all part of a great body that comprises the Jewish people. Some of us are the toes, some are the fingers, and some are the heads. Ultimately we are all part of one body.

If we don't perceive that which unites us, it is not totally our fault. Our inability to recognize the true, unified nature of the

Jewish people is due to our long, dark exile.

However, the exile is no excuse for not attempting to unite with other Jews in a considerate and cooperative relationship. Uniting doesn't mean agreeing, it means agreeing to disagree, respectfully.

United doesn't mean everyone has to be the same. United does not mean equal. It means recognizing our differences and using our differences to bind us together. It means knowing that everyone has his or her path, opinion, and way of doing things because of their different emotions, intellect and reality and then letting them do it!

And most of all, united means appreciating that we're all connected -- but because we are all Jews, and in the world in general, because we are all created by the Creator.

The Talmud teaches that one who pretends to be something he is not will ultimately become that way. Thus, one who pretends to be a pauper, though he isn't, and collects charity will eventually become impoverished. On a positive note, what can happen if we pretend that we are really united with another Jew? We will become united!

Let's focus on that which unites us. If we find the common ground, the meeting place, and let's concentrate on that.

The bottom line is that we are one. When the Redemption finally begins, the "earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean." Just as the waters of the ocean encompass everything in the ocean while everything in the ocean remains its own distinct entity, we also will see our unity more easily, while retaining our individuality.

לעילוי נשמת  
חרש בר יוסף ע"ה  
Dedicated in memory of  
Cheresh Ben Yosef OBM



# SLICE OF LIFE

Like Sponges  
by Estie Arnauve



A little-noticed allowance made by Public Schools was seen as a tremendous opportunity by the Rebbe who utilized the Released Time program to teach hundreds of thousands of children about their heritage and connect them to Judaism.

"I was so very grateful for your visit today. It was very inspiring and added so much joy to our holiday. My husband passed away 2 years ago – on his birthday, November 17th – and our lives have been in a disarray since. It feels good to know that all hope is not lost for me and my children.

Thank you so very much for all you have done for us. You have no idea what a blessing it is to know that you are here for us. May Hashem always bless you for your endeavors. Happy Chanukah from the bottom of my heart"

Rabbi Sadya Engel, the coordinator of Released Time, receives multiple messages like the one above, every single week.

The idea of releasing public school students for devotional religious study off school premises in the United States was first discussed in

1905. The first "Released Time" program took place in 1914. The program allows children to leave public school one hour early for one day each week for religious instruction. The Jewish Released Time program was established in 1941 by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe and is now in its 81st year under the auspices of the NCFJE (National Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education).

In recent years, much effort has gone into revamping the program and expanding it to much more than just the one hour a week on Wednesdays. The program now includes, amongst many other things, winter and summer camps, shabbatons, and house visits during holidays.

Students who attend Released Time absorb Judaism like sponges that they are lovingly taught and bring it into their lives and families in profoundly impactful ways.

Take Aiden, the family's "little rabbi" as they affectionately call him. Aiden has taught his family about the laws of Kosher and cautioned his sister that the pizza being served at a birthday party that they were at might not be Kosher. The entire family now keeps Kosher thanks to the hour per week that Aiden spends learning about, connecting with, and experiencing his Jewish roots. Or Eli, a 3rd grader who designed his own *kipa* during released time and who now, along with his younger brother, wears it proudly in his public school classroom.

Daniella\* is a young girl who is an active participant in Released Time. Her mother sent the following in response to a message from one of the teachers displaying a project that she had done in one of the classes:

"Wow, that looks amazing!

I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how much your class means to Daniella. At a time when our time and focus is so distracted you give Daniella so much to cling to. Daniella's dad Joe is battling 2 different types of unrelated cancer. Thank G-d, one seems to be under control. The constant running around takes

up so much of my valuable time along with the running of our businesses to try to offset the bills. Daniella, more than anyone else, is so devoted to learning and wants to know all the wonderful stories and traditions. It's so amazing to see how interested she is in your class.

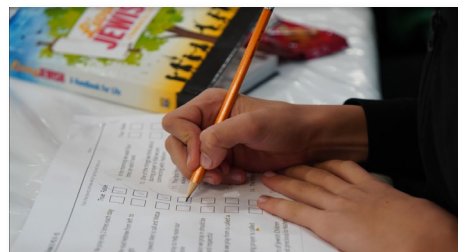
We observe many *mitzvot* (commandments) already but stories and time are so short and I hardly get to spend the time that I wish I could discuss her day with her. After your class she eagerly tells us everything that she has learned. She also tries to implement what she learns with you into her life. I have never really gotten a chance to thank you and explain all you mean to us. So please accept our thanks and know you have really moved my child in such a beautiful positive direction.

Thank you so very much."

Sara\* used to attend Released Time 3 years ago when she was a student in PS195. This year, on one of the nights of Chanuka, she was visited by volunteers and she told them that ever since she learned about the mitzva of lighting Shabbat candles in Released Time she has lit them every single week, even when her mother was not home.

An hour a week might seem too short to really make a difference. But the Rebbe saw the power that one hour contains, and grabbed ahold of this opportunity, implementing Jewish Released Time that continues to have a tremendous impact, dozens of decades after its founding.

\*name changed upon the request of Sara's parents.  
To find out more about Release Time/Jewish Hour call Rabbi Sadya Engel at 718.735.0215 or email [info.jewishhour.org](mailto:info.jewishhour.org) or visit [www.jewishhour.org](http://www.jewishhour.org)



## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

11th of Teveth, 5718 [1958]

Blessing and Greeting:

Having heard of you through mutual friends to the effect that you are seeking the true path which each and every Jew and Jewess should follow in life, though second-hand information it is always difficult to evaluate, I trust the following lines may be helpful to you.

The importance of heredity in transmitting physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics is well known and obvious, even in the case of several generations. How much more so where a trait is transmitted and intensified over the course of very many generations uninterrupted, when such a trait became part and parcel of the very essence and being of the individual, his very nature.

It is also clear that when a person — as in the case of all living things-wishes to change an inborn trait which is deeply rooted in him, not to mention something that touches his essential nature, it would demand tremendous efforts and the outcome is bound to be destructive rather than constructive, creating a terrible upheaval in him, with most unfortunate results.

I have in mind particularly the Jew, man and woman, who, belonging to one of the oldest nations in the world with a recorded history of over thirty-five hundred years, is naturally and innately bound up with the Jewish people with every fiber of his life and soul. Hence, such sects or groups which tried to depart from the true Jewish way of life of the Torah and *Mitzvot* [commandments], could not survive, as history has amply demonstrated. Such dissident groups uprooted themselves from their natural soil and far from being constructive, became the worst enemies of the Jewish people and their worst persecutors.

Only Jews who have faithfully adhered to the Torah and *Mitzvot*, as they were

revealed on Mount Sinai, have survived all their persecutors, for only through the Torah and *Mitzvot* can the Jewish people attach themselves to the Superior and Supreme Power, G-d, who has given us the Torah and our way of life.

2nd of Adar, 5739 [1979]

First of all, many thanks for the reprint of your article "Inequalities for Moments and Means." It was thoughtful of you to bring it along to the *farbrengen* [Chassidic gathering] of Yud Shevat. It pleased me very much, especially to note that you are continuing with your creative work in your field and are productively utilizing your capabilities which G-d has endowed you with. In the present day and age it is necessary to give such work all the publicity it deserves, both through publication and lectures, to reach capacity audiences and readers. Moreover, in your case, as I have pointed out more than once, this is particularly important, for the recognition that goes with it has a strong impact on the attitude towards religious conviction, and towards *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism] and Chassiduth in particular. People in the world of science, and young students especially, are impressed by the fact that one can be a scientist of the highest caliber and at the same time a strictly observant Jew and a chasid, and it makes them more responsive to the actual fulfillment of mitzvot when the subject comes up. There is no need to elaborate on this any further to either of you.

However, on the basis of the saying of our Sages, "Encourage the energetic," I reiterate my profound hope — and if necessary, my request — that you make very effort to utilize fully your capacities through all possible avenues: teaching position, lectures, courses, visiting professorships, etc. If this requires to deal with administrative people in addition to those who are directly involved in science, it should also be exploited. For, as I see, it is not only a matter of personal satisfaction, but one of the most effective means of spreading *Yiddishkeit*, as is surely self evident.

And since G-d's reward is in kind, but in a most generous measure, it will also widen the channels for G-d's blessings to have much true nachas from your children, and enjoy it in good health and in a happy frame of mind....

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

*This coming Shabbat is the birthday of Rebbetzin Chana, the illustrious mother of the Rebbe.*

*Two stories recounted by the Rebbe at gatherings in honor of his mother's yahrzeit illustrate a fundamental concept.*

*The first anecdote took place when the Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, was in exile. (He had been exiled by the Russian Bolshevik government to the remote, desolate village of Tzili for his "revolutionary" activities of teaching Judaism.) Rebbetzin Chana ingeniously managed to produce different color inks from wild plants for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak to use in writing his Torah innovations, as he was not even afforded ink with which to write.*

*The second incident took place after Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's passing. Rebbetzin Chana miraculously succeeded in smuggling Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's writings out of Communist Russia.*

*The Rebbe explained that these two incidents teach us that when, by Divine Providence, a mission is given to an individual - even if that mission seems utterly futile or impossible - one's efforts will ultimately be crowned with success.*

*Though one must work within the confines of nature, one must not be constricted by nature, for it is the infinite and supra-natural G-d who has presented one with this mission.*

*As our Divinely appointed mission in these last moments of exile is to hasten the Redemption's arrival and prepare ourselves for the long-awaited Messianic Era, we can look to Rebbetzin Chana, for inspiration.*

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA  
לזכרון ח'יה 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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Chairman  
Director  
Program director  
Secretary  
Administrator  
Editor  
Associate Editor  
Chairman Editorial Comm.  
Rebbe photo

Rabbi David Raskin ז"ל  
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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Moses was concerned that after 210 years of slavery in Egypt the Jewish people would have grown too accustomed to the exile to fully absorb the message that their redemption was imminent. But G-d

answered Moses that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can never accustom themselves to exile, for to them it is an unnatural state. Every day that passes is as bitter as the very first. The same is true for us today. Despite the fact that this present exile has lasted more than 1900 years, the Jewish people is more than ready to accept the message that the Final Redemption is indeed imminent. (The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Shemot, 5751)

## New Chabad Houses

**Beit Chabad LeYisraelim** — a Chabad House that specifically caters to Israelis, opened over Chanuka in **Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine**. Chabad programming commenced five years ago and the Hebrew-speaking community, uniting Israeli businessmen, students, and tourists living in the Ukrainian metropolis, finally have a home. **Chabad of Quad Cities** — a six-county bi-state region in **Iowa and Illinois**, has a new home. Under the leadership of the Rebbe's emissaries Rabbi Shneur and Chana Cadaner, Chabad of Quad Cities has secured a full strip mall that will serve all the communities' needs: a shul, events hall, Hebrew school, and a desperately-needed mikva.

## New Emissaries

Rabbi Mendel and Rivkah Chein have arrived in Trafford, England, UK to serve the Jewish community as emissaries of the Rebbe. Trafford is a metropolitan borough of Greater Manchester.

## TODAY IS...

4 Shevat

*Mitzrayim* (Egypt) expresses constriction, limitation. The spiritual Egyptian exile is the animal soul's restricting and concealing the G-dly soul so severely that the G-dly soul is compressed to the degree that it is diminished and obscured. "Exodus from Egypt" is the removal of the constrictions; i.e. the intellect in the brain illuminates the heart, bringing about fine character traits translated into actual practice.