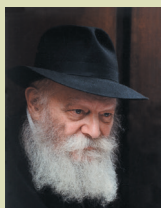


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion*

In the Torah portion of *Va'eira* we read about the first seven plagues inflicted on Egypt. The purpose of the plagues was not only to punish the Egyptians, but to deflate their egos and eradicate their false notions about G-dliness. The plagues also served as the blows that freed from the constraints and limitations of Egypt.

Every story in the Torah teaches us how to become better in our G-dly service. Let's see what we can learn from the first two plagues, blood and frogs.

In Egypt they worshiped the Nile River. So to break their pride in the Nile, the first plague hit the waters of the Nile, turning the water into blood. Water is by nature wet and cold. This was the way of the Egyptians to be cold or apathetic to G-dliness and holiness. The Nile was turned into blood, which is warm and full of life.

The opposite of holiness is coldness, apathy, because holiness is warm and full of life. When we are cold and apathetic to G-dliness and holiness, it opens the door to everything that is unholy, and we are stuck in an Egypt. How do we break out of apathy towards holiness?

Through understanding the second plague.

Egypt had a great fervor and passion for everything unholy. Meaning that there is also an unholy warmth, when someone has a passion for impermissible physical pleasures.

To cool off their passion, G-d sent the second plague, frogs. The frogs went everywhere, even in the ovens, and our Sages learn from them the idea of self-sacrifice.

What is the meaning of the frogs going into the ovens? Ovens, which are hot, symbolize the heat and passion for the physical. Frogs are from the water, cold and wet, but at the same time, they did G-d's will, to the extent that they went totally against their nature. The cold water creatures went into the fiery ovens and cooled them off. In other words, there is also a holy coldness, when one fosters a coldness towards the physical and the unholy.

The frogs came to deflate Pharaoh's ego. They went into the ovens cooling off the passion and the false importance of the unholy that existed in Egypt.

Holy fire breaks you free from unholy coldness, and holy coldness breaks you free from passion for the unholy.

To break free from a spiritual Egypt, one must first take a lesson from the blood and bring life and warmth into holy matters, because the beginning of all kinds of evil comes from coldness.

It is a mistake to think that just positive action is enough. If you don't bring warmth and passion into holiness, ultimately you will end up in the unholy.

Just as we need to bring a warmth and life into holiness - blood, so too we should foster coldness towards the unholy - frogs.

May we all be filled with warmth and holiness, breaking free from our personal Egypts and ultimately breaking free from this final exile with the coming of Moshiach. May he come now!

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

Waiting Room Distractions

by David YB Kaufmann a"h

You're sitting in the airport waiting for your flight. You got there early, so you wouldn't have an anxiety attack about missing your plane while being hassled by security. Not to mention the traffic and parking.

So you take out a book, or review your presentation, or start to call home when something grabs your attention.

It's the earnest tone of the anchorwoman, her voice suddenly elevated. You're hooked. Until the attendants announce it's time to board, you're watching, even though it's the same news every fifteen minutes and most of it you saw in the paper that morning, and what you didn't is sensational or just stupid.

Or you're in the doctor's office. Waiting. Of course. You get there early, hoping to be taken on time when your appointment's scheduled, rather than half an hour later. You look around for something to do and you find the magazine rack, such as it is: a couple of tattered women's magazines, obscure, old outdoor magazines and a pile of year-old news magazines. You pick up one of the women's magazines - maybe it has a good recipe - when your attention gets diverted.

There's an inane video playing. It doesn't matter. You're hooked.

When the mind becomes distracted, or, more accurately, when it is mesmerized, absorbed with trivial irrelevancies, are we not wasting that which distinguishes us?

Our Sages recommended

memorizing Jewish texts (chapters of Psalms or sections of the Mishne) and while walking in the street (the ancient equivalent of "waiting room time"), one could review them, thus making good use of one's brain time.

While we may not be able to memorize chapters or sections sufficient to occupy our minds during the "waiting room times" - although we should at least try - nowadays we have other tools at our disposal.

You can have the latest issue of L'Chaim lchaimweeklyprint.org, or the entire chabad.org magazine or www.meaningfullife.com essay or mystical Kabbalistic teachings (at www.inner.org) at your fingertips.

If you're technologically challenged, many Jewish texts today come in translated pocket-size versions that fit neatly in a briefcase, purse or (!) pocket.

It's hard to shut out the droning voice and the shifting images on a screen, but a good read absorbs all our attention; instead of being distracted by repetitive trivia, we become focused on learning new or reviewing essential concepts.

We can choose to watch an interview intruding into the lives of "next of kin" of the latest crime victim or we can share in King David's wonder at the majesty of nature. We can wonder about a lost cat a thousand miles away or get lost in truths a thousand years old.

We can turn "waiting room time" into "extra learning time," snatching seconds of Jewish knowledge while our lives are in idle.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Pair of Slippers

by Miriam Paltiel-Nevel



Miriam Paltiel-Gordon d'h with some of her many descendants

Small things make a big difference in a child's life.

I was an orphan. And I was shoeless. If my mother had been alive, she would have managed to see to it that I had shoes and clothing. I remember Mama cutting our old, worn clothing, picking out pieces of material that were still usable, and sewing new things for me and my brothers and, of course, for our father. But Mama had passed away when I was I was an orphan, and I was shoeless 5 years old, leaving three orphans in the hands of an already overworked and overburdened father. Father didn't have the headspace to consider that the clothes that Mama had sewn for me when I was 4 or 5 might not fit me when I was 7 or 8.

In Moscow, in our large yard, which is shared by a compound of several buildings, two girls – one with long blonde braids and the other with short red hair – are holding a rope. Each girl is holding one end of the rope and turning it, making it fly up high and then return to earth, while girls line up to take turns jumping over the rope at the precise moment when it lands on the ground. I get in line and wait for my turn. Finally, my turn comes. I approach the rope and try to jump. Ah! But I am partially flat-footed. I can't jump. The other children shoo me away.

Next, I try to join the children who are playing hide-and-seek. This doesn't work out either, as I am "it" all the time, and I can't run fast and catch anyone. So the boys whistle me out of this game. Even at the

sandbox, that refuge for those who are too small and clumsy to join more sophisticated games, I am persona non grata. It happened when, by accident, I broke a little red-headed boy's beautiful sand mold, and he chased me, yelling, "Orphan, there is no one to take care of you," and stuck his tongue out at me. That hurt me deeply. Somehow, I still hoped that my mother would show up in my life.

I climb the five dark flights of stairs back home. Our building has six flights altogether. I do not know how to count the flights, but I know that if I put my foot out in the darkness, and the foot feels that there are no more steps, then I have reached the last flight and I have to go back down one flight of stairs, and then I will be home.

Once at home in my family's room, I occupy myself either by sitting under the table and sucking my thumb, or by doing something that my mother used to do, so that I can be like my Mama. I take a rag from a pile in the corner, go to the kitchen, climb up on a chair to reach the water faucet and wet the rag. I go back to our room and begin to wash the floor. It almost feels as though she is here, ready to come in and tell me not to wet the floor.

I happily swish, swash and swoosh the wet rag all over the blond wood parquet. I am just about to crawl under the couch, wet rag in hand, when I hear the door hinges screech. The door opens, and there, standing on the threshold, is our Aunt Mania, my father's sister, who lives many tramway stops away at the other end of Moscow.

My aunt closes the door behind her, walks I happily swish the wet rag all over the wood in, and leaning against a wall, she sighs loudly, "Uuhchh." Then she takes two steps back to the door, leans on the doorpost and speaks to my mother's soul. "A heavy burden you left me, Risa. It is hard for Berl, and it is hard for me."

Next, Aunt Mania walks over to the couch where I am crouching, wet rag in hand, my face turned up to her. She sighs again, "Uuhchh," puts her hands on my shoulders and pulls me up to my feet. The rag falls to the floor, abandoned.

Aunt Mania sits me down on a chair, and then sits herself down on a chair facing me, lifting her legs onto another chair. (As her legs are apt to swell when she is tired, she needs to rest them by putting them up on a chair.)

Aunt Mania sighs again, "Uuhchh," and begins to tear the newspaper wrapping off the package that she has brought. I am all eyes. I see one piece of newspaper pulled off the package and laid neatly

on her lap, then another, and yet another. Finally, the thing that is wrapped inside the newspaper appears. (I was not accustomed to express my feelings or to talk about how I felt. But I can tell you now that I was beside myself with surprise and joy.) It is a pair of hand-knitted slippers that she had worked long and hard to crochet. The slippers are gray, and they have a beautiful blue trim all around the edges. A little blue bow decorates the front; an elastic hidden inside the blue trim makes the slippers easy to pull on and keep on.

My aunt hands her beautiful present to me. I pull the slippers on carefully. Oh, how wonderful they feel! How graceful they look!

Aunt Mania lifts her feet off the chair, lowers them to the floor and stands up. I put my feet on the floor and stand up as well, the lovely slippers on my feet. She draws me into her arms. "Tzurais gezunterheit," she says in Yiddish. And suddenly, I have an overwhelming urge to smile, something I haven't done for a long, long time. I beam a big happy Cheshire-cat grin that spreads from ear to ear, from top to bottom, lighting up my whole face.

Aunt Mania has to hurry to go to work, so she leaves. And I run down the five dark flights of stairs. Suddenly, my slippery slippers give way, and I begin to slide down the stairs, but I save myself by holding on to the banister.

Once outside, I feel something magical happening. So what if I can't jump or outrun anyone, or if I don't have flowery molds to build sand castles. I am not barefoot anymore; I have wonderful slippers that Aunt Mania knitted especially for me.

"Are they Cinderella shoes?" I ask I feel something magical happening myself. "Or perhaps these are the magic slippers of a dancing princess from a story that my mother told me a long time ago, when she was alive?" The wind blows through my short cropped hair as I run. I fly, all over the big yard. It feels so good!

I don't remember how long the slippers lasted. Maybe a day, maybe two days, or maybe many days after Aunt Mania gave them to me. All I remember is how I came home one day, pulled the wonderful slippers off my happy feet and saw that the bottoms of these magical slippers now had big holes.

The hand-knitted slippers had a brief physical life in my child's world. But spiritually and emotionally, Aunt Mania's slippers were a magical crossing for me. On that day, I crossed over from thinking that I would never be able to run to believing that I could fly like the wind.

Jewish Burial in Shklov, Belarus

Chief Rabbi of Mogilev, Belarus and emissary of the Rebbe, Rabbi Mendel Alperowitz presided over the burial of the bones of Jewish children murdered during the Nazi invasion to Belarus. A mass grave had been reopened a few months ago. The Belasuian government has determined that the remains were mainly of Jewish children murdered during the holocaust. The remains were brought to rest in a special ceremony at the Shklov Jewish mass grave site.

Tbilisi Or Avner & University Cooperate

The Grigol Robakidze University of Georgia has signed a cooperation agreement with the Or Avner Jewish school of Tbilisi enabling its high school students to take university courses while in high school. Courses include public administration and politics, forensic science, criminology, journalism, medicine, and psychology.

Hakhel—Unite

Although the commandment of Hakhel, in its concrete and plain form, is connected with the time of the Holy Temple, there is the well known principle that all matters that are connected with the Holy Temple – such as sacrifices and the like – are in their spiritual content relative at all times. This is why the daily prayers, which have been enacted in the place of the sacrifices, substitute for them. (*Letter of the Rebbe, 19 Kislev, 1988*). To learn more visit hakhelnation.com



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Chanukah, 5732 [1971]

Greeting and Blessing:

...I was particularly gratified to read in your letter about your progress not only to enrich your knowledge of Yiddishkeit but, in accordance with the teaching of our Sages that the essential thing is the deed—translating this knowledge and inspiration into the daily experience of Torah and Mitzvoh. Needless to say, since the Torah is “Our life and the length of our days,” and the Mitzvoh are the things Jews live by—the experience of Torah and Mitzvoh must be a continuous process, and cannot be relegated to certain days in the year, such as Shabbos and Yom Tov.

With regard to various points and questions raised in your letter, it is, of course, difficult to explain such things adequately by correspondence. However, I will mention several salient points, after a brief introduction:

If one considers the world in which we live, the world at large, as well as the small world, namely man, it becomes evident that there is no uniformity, but many differences, both external as well as internal. Moreover, everything and every person has its own purpose or task, and this does not make anyone any more or less important, for all are important in the totality of things, just as every limb or organ of a body is important. Indeed, if one member would wish to change his function, it would not only disturb his own personal harmony, but would also disturb the total harmony. Imagine, for a moment, what would happen if the brain would wish to do the work of the heart to pump blood; it certainly would be disastrous, for even an extra tiny drop of blood in the brain would be dangerous, whereas the heart must always have an ample supply of blood. Similarly, if the heart would wish to do the work of the digestive organs, where even a tiny speck of food would be dangerous in the heart, and so on.

The same is true in regard to the Torah and Mitzvoh, as well as in regard to the destiny of the Jewish people, and its place in the family of nations. For reasons best known to G-d Himself, He wished that there should be many nations in the world, but only one Jewish people, a people who should be separated and different from all the other nations, with a destiny and function of its own. Even in the future Messianic era, as has been prophesied by our Prophets, there will be

a distinction between the Jewish people and non-Jews, where the Jews will retain the 613 Mitzvoh, whereas the gentiles have to observe only seven commandments with all their ramifications, which is also no small thing, as explained in various sources.

The above, I trust, will answer your question why should a Jew separate himself, and not be involved in the world at large. Indeed, if a Jew should completely separate himself from the world, it would be contrary to the Torah, since among the Mitzvoh which a Jew is duty-bound to fulfill there is also the Mitzvo that he should try to do all he can to encourage the environment in which he lives that it will be permeated with the awareness of the above-mentioned seven commandments given to the children of Noah, that these Divine commandments with all their ramifications should be implemented in daily life. However, this does not mean that a Jew should take over functions which are not his, for the results would be as disastrous as in the analogy of the human body mentioned above. It is due to the failure to realize this, with the resulting confusion, that there is such a great incidence of intermarriage, etc., but it is difficult to dwell at length on such painful matters.

I will only emphasize the point that one’s personal convenience, desire or gratification is no justification to involve oneself in something which is wrong, especially to involve another person, least of all a loved one, into such a situation, even if the other party is agreeable, and sincerely so, for no person has a right to harm a second person, even if the latter desires to be harmed.

I trust you will not take amiss my writing on something which appears to be at first glance a personal and intimate matter, but since you wrote to me and brought the matter to my attention, I have no right to pass over it in silence. I would strongly urge you to consult an orthodox Rabbi, whose guidance would be in accordance with the Will of G-d as is clearly spelled out in the Shulchan Aruch, and to inform him of all the aspects and details of the matter, with a view to rectifying it. No doubt the Rabbi would also wish to later discuss the matter with your wife. You may rest assured that acting in accordance with our Torah, called Toras Chaim, the Law of life and the true guide in life, will be of real benefit to all concerned.

In conclusion, I hope that you will accept the above in the spirit that it is offered, stemming from a deep concern which has to permeate one person for another, especially as the commandment of V’Ohavto L’Reacho Komocho is one of the great principles of our Torah. I would have been greatly remiss if I had not written to you the above, although it necessarily had to be conveyed in very brief terms, all too brief in relation to the importance of it.

Hoping to hear good news from you...

“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)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat we bless the month of Shevat. The first day of Shevat is on Monday of this coming week, coinciding with January 23 this year.

Shevat is the eleventh month of the Jewish year, counting from the month of Nisan (the first month for numbering the months). The number eleven is a very special number. For, while the number ten represents fulfillment and completion, eleven transcends all levels. It is even higher than completion.

Jewish mysticism explains that the number eleven refers to Keter – the Divine crown. Ten is connected with intellect and emotions. Just as a crown is placed on top of the king’s head, the crown symbolizes the will and pleasure of G-d which transcends all limitations.

On the first day of Shevat, Moses began speaking to the Jewish people the words which are contained in the book of Deuteronomy, known as the repetition of the Torah. Moses spoke to the Jewish people for 37 days, admonishing them for their past behavior, inspiring them for the future, blessing. At the conclusion of these 37 days, on the seventh of Adar, Moses, the faithful shepherd of the Jewish people, passed away.

Other special days in the month of Shevat are: the tenth of Shevat, which is the anniversary of the passing of the Previous Rebbe and the ascent to leadership of the Rebbe; Tu B'Shevat or the 15th of Shevat which is the New Year for Trees; the 22nd of Shevat which is the anniversary of the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson.

May we very soon see the actualization of the lofty concept of Shevat, eleven – completion, with the complete Redemption, NOW.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חיה 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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MOSHIACH MATTERS

I will put a distinction between My people and your people (Ex. 8:19) he Hebrew word



Yankel the innkeeper lived in an isolated hamlet for so long that he hardly remembered that he was a Jew. Shabbat was a word he hardly recalled. Day and night he served the Polish peasants who bought drinks in his little inn. Nothing new ever happened and one year slipped unnoticed into the next.

One day, however, a stately-looking Jew entered Yankel's inn and disturbed Yankel's quiet existence. This visitor was none other than the famous tzadik, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, who had leased a hut in the middle of a forest in order to meditate and pray in the stillness of the woods. At times, however, he came to the inn to purchase food, and that is how he came to know Yankel.

When the tzadik had first entered his inn, something deep inside Yankel stirred and prompted him to say to the rabbi, "You know, Sir, I too, am a Jew."

"How can you live in a place where there are no other Jews?" the tzadik queried him. "Why, it seems you have even forgotten our holy traditions. My poor brother, why, even the animals of Jews refrain from work on the Shabbat. Can you do even less than that?"

Yankel blushed at Rabbi Moshe Leib's words. "But, Rabbi," he continued, "I have to stay open on Shabbat or the peasants buy their drinks elsewhere, and I will be destitute!"

"Nevertheless," Rabbi Moshe Leib insisted, "you must close on Shabbat. How can a holy Jewish soul do less than the donkey of a Jew who is kept from working on the Sabbath day?"

When Yankel saw that the tzadik was adamant, he began to think and he resolved to close the inn on Shabbat.

Yankel's announcement provoked a bitter reaction from his customers. "If you refuse to sell us liquor, we'll...we'll...complain to the landlord! He'll throw you out! You can't do this to us!"

Yankel knew they were as good as their words – particularly when it touched the issue of vodka. He walked deep into the forest until he found the hut of the tzadik. "The peasants are threatening to ruin me," Yankel cried.

"Don't worry. Bolt the doors. If the landlord questions you, do not hesitate to tell him that your G-d commanded Jews to keep the Sabbath day holy," replied Rabbi Moshe Leib.

The innkeeper was very frightened, but he resolved to do as the tzadik said. Shabbat arrived and Yankel bolted the door of his inn. The peasants arrived and began to pound on the door and windows trying to get in. Finally, the voice of the landlord could be heard outside, demanding that Yankel open up the inn.

Yankel had no choice but to open, and it was a very angry poritz who entered the inn crying, "Who do you think you are, denying vodka to your customers!? Why else did I lease this inn, except to make a profit?"

"Sire," began a frightened Yankel, "surely you know I am a Jew. Just recently I was told by a holy Jew that our Torah forbids us to work on the Sabbath day. That is why I have closed the inn today."

The directness of the reply intrigued the landowner. "Where is this person? Bring him to me!"

Soon, Rabbi Moshe Leib was standing before the landlord. "Tell me, Jew, does this prohibition against working apply to a Jew who is in danger of losing his livelihood?" he asked, in a cutting tone.

"Sire, it applies even in such a case," was the tzadik's reply.

"Why do you torment this man? I doubt your answer would be the same if it applied to you. I will find out, and if you are really sincere, I will permit the inn to close on the Sabbath." The landlord left, a plan hatching in his mind.

The following Shabbat, the landowner rode into the forest with a bag of gold coins. When he saw Rabbi Moshe Leib leaving his hut, he scattered the coins on the floor of the forest and waited to see what would transpire. At first the tzadik passed right by the coins, but then he returned and examined them closely. The landlord waited gleefully for the fatal moment when the Jew would eagerly scoop them into his hands. But no, he continued walking.

The landowner then rushed out of his hiding place. "I am very impressed, and I will keep my end of the deal. But tell me, why did you first ignore the money and then bend down to examine it?"

"I will explain," began Rabbi Moshe Leib. "At first, I ignored the money, for it was Shabbat. But then, I began to think how I needed the money to rescue many imprisoned Jews. Perhaps

that mitzva overrides the prohibitions of the Shabbat.

I became confused, and then I prayed to G-d to give me direction.

Suddenly I understood. G-d could certainly provide me with the money in a permissible way. Sire, if I had taken or hidden the money, you would not have understood my motives. You would have assumed that I was taking it for my own desires. I have always scrupulously observed the Shabbat, and now Heaven has protected me from coming to any harm. Surely, now you can see the importance of keeping the holiness of the Sabbath."



And I appeared (va'eira) (Ex 6:3)

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*)

Why does Rashi comment that G-d appeared "to the Patriarchs"? To teach us that G-d revealed Himself to them not because of their great virtue, but solely because they were the fathers of the Jewish people, and would thus pass on everything they received to their descendants forever. (*Likutei Sichot*)

You shall speak (tedaber) all that I command you (Ex.7:2)

The word "tedaber" is related to "tadber" -- "and you shall rule over." The defeat of Pharaoh, the epitome of arrogance and pride, could only be brought about by an individual such as Moses, the epitome of humility and nullification before G-d. (*Torat Chaim*)

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*)



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27 Tevet/Jan 20

Torah Portion Va'eira

Blessing of the new month Shevat

Shabbat ends 5:44 PM

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בן הרב"ח ר' דוד אריה לייב מרזוב ז"ל
והקיצו ורגנו שוכני עפר והוא בתוכם תיכף ומיד ממש