

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The Rabbis of the Talmud differed in opinion as to when a couple may divorce. According to Shammai, such a drastic step may be taken only "if he finds some unseemly thing in her," as it says in this week's Torah portion, Ki Tetzei—i.e., that the marital bonds were broken and adultery had been committed.

Hillel took a different approach. If marital life becomes so unpleasant that husband and wife are at cross purposes, divorce is permitted. Rabbi Akiva was even more lenient in his ruling, and permitted divorce on weaker grounds.

The relationship between the Jew and his world is often likened to that of husband and wife. Divine Providence places each Jew into precisely those circumstances where he can carry out his G-dly mission in life-transforming his corner of the world by allowing G-dliness to illuminate everything.

If a person is not at all satisfied with his lot in life and seeks to change his environment, that too can be considered a "divorce."

But if it is only through Divine Providence that each of us is given influence over a certain limited area, when are we permitted to "divorce" ourselves from the status quo and pursue another course of Divine service?

Shammai believed that only on the condition that these circumstances present an "unseemly thing," that is, become incompatible with a Torah way of life is it permissible to "divorce" oneself from the present situation.

Hillel taught that merely seeing that one's efforts are not bearing fruit is cause to change direction. If persisting in one's course of action drags the person down spiritually and only leads to a "burnt dish," why persist?

Rabbi Akiva taught that it is permissible to change track even if only because a more attractive one beckons. As soon as a person loses interest, it is permissible to make the change, for indeed we are supposed to serve G-d with love and joy.

The actual ruling was according to Hillel's opinion. If a person is truly successful in imbuing his surroundings with holiness, and his only complaint is that he finds his present environment unsatisfying, this is not enough reason to abandon his present course.

Only a total lack of a sense of purpose, a "burnt dish," is sufficient cause to change. This is the strict interpretation of the law.

But it is far preferable that we try to act according to its spirit as well. No matter where we find ourselves and no matter how difficult the challenges placed in our path may be, we must always seek to bring holiness into the world, for that is the mission of every Jew.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

A Month of Refuge

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

When a Jew killed another inadvertently, he was required to flee to a city of refuge, where he was given asylum from the victim's relatives. In fact, even those who committed murder deliberately fled to a city of refuge temporarily until trial.

The very Torah that extends asylum to the killer permits the victim's relatives to avenge the victim's blood. On the one hand, the Torah forfeits his life to the avengers, on the other hand, the Torah extends him protection. What is going on?

REHABILITATION

The answer is that the Torah is not interested in punishment. The Torah cares deeply, however, about justice and atonement. When the avengers take the killer's life, his sin is wiped clean. It is an act of atonement.

Nevertheless, the Torah, in its infinite wisdom and compassion, provides the relatives and the victim an alternative. The cities of refuge, which were filled with members of the tribe of Levi, pious people and paragons of virtue. By relocating to this city, the killer proclaimed his willingness to rehabilitate.

THE MONTH OF REFUGE

Just as the cities provided refuge, so does the last month of the Jewish calendar year, the month of Elul. Every Jew has a safe space to which they can retreat.

This safe space is your true self's natural space. No one is proud of their transgressions. We all want to change our hurtful and negative ways even if we don't know how.

This month is when G-d helps us access and enter our refuge. G-d doesn't lift us up out of our head-space and land us in our safe space just as G-d never lifted the killers and dropped them in the city of refuge. G-d provided the city but no one took the killer to the city. He had to get up and flee, often under hot pursuit.

We need to do the same. Come the month of Elul, we are expected to take inventory of our spiritual disposition and decide just how satisfied or dissatisfied we are with our condition. We then need to determine precisely which behaviors or tendencies we are ashamed of. After this, we enter our city of refuge—our safe space.

There are cities of refuge in space, and there are cities of refuge in time. The beauty of the refuge in time is that we can be rehabilitated even from our deliberate sins. Unlike the cities of refuge in Israel that could not provide permanent protection for deliberate killers, our safe space enables us to repent even from our deliberate sins. May our repentance be pure, our efforts successful, and may we be granted a year of life.

Based on *Likutei Sichos*:2, pp. 623–625.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Global Impact of Chabad's Gan Israel Summer Camps



Camp Gan Israel, in war torn Kharkov, Ukraine

From the scenic landscapes of Colorado to the vibrant streets of Tel Aviv, Chabad-Lubavitch's Gan Israel (CGI) summer camps create a vibrant tapestry of Jewish life across the globe. With hundreds of camps in operation and tens of thousands of young campers participating each year, CGI has become a cornerstone of Jewish education and identity.

As the sun reaches its peak in cities and towns across the world, CGI camps ignite the spirit of the next generation, infusing them with joy, pride, and a deep connection to their Jewish heritage. These camps, which stretch from the snowy peaks of Alaska to the sunny beaches of Australia, may differ in culture, language, and scenery, but they all share the same contagious enthusiasm and commitment to fostering Jewish values.

The inception of Gan Israel dates back to 1956, when the Rebbe envisioned a revolutionary approach to Jewish education. At a time when summer camps were often a luxury for the privileged few, the Rebbe established CGI with a vision that every Jewish child, regardless of background or means, should have access to an enriching and joyous camp experience. This was not just about having

fun; it was about cultivating a lifelong love for Jewish traditions and community.

Today, Gan Israel stands as the largest network of Jewish camps worldwide, a testament to the enduring relevance of the Rebbe's vision. Campers engage in a diverse range of activities that blend traditional camp fun with immersive Jewish learning. Whether they're swimming, playing sports, or taking part in specialized workshops like science, tennis, or martial arts, the core of the CGI experience remains the same: nurturing a strong Jewish identity.

The spiritual essence of Gan Israel is woven into every aspect of camp life. Campers sing Jewish songs, celebrate vibrant Shabbat gatherings, and participate in creative arts and crafts projects that reflect their heritage. Through these activities, they discover the joy of mitzvot and the beauty of Jewish life, all within an environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and community.



Boston Gan Israel



Calgary, AB



Central Long Island



Sderot, Israel



Brazil Teen Travel Camp



Leeds England



Flagstaff, AZ

Alaska's State Fair Has Something No Other Fair Has



As a quarter-million people descend on the annual Alaska State Fair, Chabad is on hand, providing Jewish experiences for the fairgoers for 14 hours every day. Held every year in Palmer, Alaska, the fair features thousands of exhibits in categories including art, fiber and fleece, home brew, honey and bee products, livestock, photography, woodworking and many more.

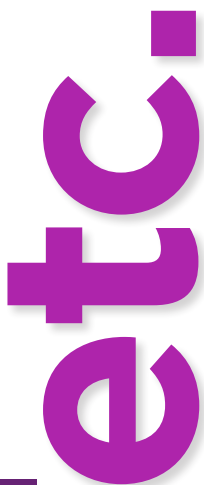
Local shlichim Rabbi Mendy and Chaya Greenberg, together with a group of Chabad students manned a Chabad pavilion at the fair from 10:00 AM to 12:00 AM every day, offering a chance to put on tefillin, participate in Jewish crafts, buy Jewish books, or just inquire about Yiddishkeit.

Each visitor, and especially children, are invited to drop a coin in a "Kindness generator", where they watch how the coin spins its way down and "generates kindness". They then each received a tzedaka box called 'ARK', an acronym for Acts of Routine Kindness.

Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Two

Rabbi Tarfon would say: The day is short, the work is much, the workers are lazy, the reward is great, and the Master is pressing.

He would also say: It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it. If you have learned much Torah, you will be greatly rewarded, and your employer is trustworthy to pay you the reward of your labors. And know, that the reward of the righteous is in the World to Come.





The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

“TRULY A HOLY PEOPLE”

5734
Mrs.
Detroit, Michigan

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter.

It is surely unnecessary to point out to you that events in the Holy Land, and those concerning the Holy Land, are moving with such swiftness and mutability that it makes it difficult to express and opinion on the situation in reply to a letter which was written a few days earlier, and which will reach its destination a few days later. For, even in the course of a week, there are certain to be changes in the situation—possibly important changes.

One observation may be made, however, on a matter not subject to change, and it is surprising and regrettable that it does not receive the emphasis that it merits. I refer to the fact that the Jewish claim to, and connection with, the land which is universally recognized as the Holy Land—the holiness of which is derived from the Torah—is based on the Torah and dates back to the Covenant which G-d made with our Father Abraham in which He promised “Unto your children I have given this land” (Genesis 15:18). It follows immediately that, for this claim to be recognized by the nations of the world, it is necessary that the Jews themselves live up to that Covenant by showing that they are truly a holy people.

Furthermore, in the present situation, when the whole world has involved itself in the future of the Holy Land, when every nation has its own ideas about it and external pressures are mounting daily, it is well to bear in mind that in the area referred to, namely, in fulfilling the Covenant with G-d, the Jewish people are completely independent and not subject to outside pressures and the good will of the nations, nor subject to international consultations and negotiations.

In the present situation, the plain words of the Torah: “If you walk in My statutes...you will dwell in your land safely, and I will give peace in the land...and none shall make you afraid...and I will be your G-d, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:3-12), become even more crucial. The sooner and more fully Jews will live up to this situation, the sooner G-d’s promise will be fulfilled.

It is indeed remarkable that precisely many of our young people now defending the frontiers of the Land of Israel, who have not been brought up in the true Jewish tradition, yet, after seeing the miracles which G-d wrought on all fronts, began to put on tefillin and openly declared themselves to be dati, believing in G-d, the Creator of the world, Who alone determines the outcome of events.

One can only hope and pray that those who are behind the lines, as well as our brethren in the Diaspora, will not put to shame the tremendous spiritual revival and inspiration of these young people. For, unfortunately, too many seek refuge in the excuse that living among the nations of the world and under economic pressures, etc., makes it difficult to retain full Jewish identity and independence, or to observe the mitzvot in the fullest measure in the daily life.

It obviously militates against common sense to say that G-d, Who created the whole universe, including the Jewish people, has placed Jews in a position where they cannot fulfill His precepts. Even your typical manager of a small business or industry would not expect his employees to accomplish something that is beyond that capacity. Certainly G-d does not act so capriciously, or despotically, as to expect Jews to do the impossible.

Needless to say, the above is not meant to imply that Jews should not do everything in their power in the natural order of things to cope with the present situation. However, it should be understood that in order to make the proper decisions, and in order to have hatzlacha [success] in these efforts which concern the Holy Land and the holy people, there must be definitive and substantial change pointing in the direction of faith and trust in G-d and His Torah—a change that should immediately be evident in the daily life which is conducted in accordance with the will of G-d, as embodied in the Torah and clearly set forth and codified in the Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law].

With blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The ultimate state of fulfillment that will be manifest in the Era of the Redemption

and in the Era of the Resurrection, i.e., the revelation of [G-d's] Infinite Light... in this material world, is dependent on our deeds and service throughout the era of exile.

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

During the month of Elul we blow the shofar in preparation for the High Holidays. The Baal Shem Tov, whose birthday we celebrate on the 18th day of this month, told the following parable about the Jewish people and the shofar:

A mighty king had an only child, a beloved son. Though the prince grew to be a well-educated young man, he and the king decided that by traveling to other countries he would further enhance his knowledge.

And so, the prince set out, laden with wealth and accompanied by nobles and servants. The prince travelled for years and years, studying the people and countries he encountered and acquiring a great taste for luxuries. At first slowly, and then more quickly, the prince spent his money until he was finally left penniless, without servants or friends, far from his father's palace and comfortable life. Slowly, the prince made his way back to his homeland. He arrived at his father's palace, bedraggled and exhausted. He had been away so long, though, that he had even forgotten his mother-tongue. Through signs and gestures, he tried to convince the palace guards that he was the prince, but the guards just laughed and beat him. Finally, the prince cried out in anguish and grief, a wordless cry full of desperation and agony. And his father, the king, heard and recognized the prince's cry and ran out to greet his son.

The king is, of course, G-d, the King of Kings. The Jewish people are the prince. G-d caused the soul to descend into and wander in the body to perform mitzvot and do good deeds. However, the person often gets distracted and wanders far away. Eventually, however, when he notices the poverty of his life, he returns to his "Father's palace" though he no longer even knows the language or how to communicate with G-d, the King. So, he utters an incoherent cry, but a cry from his very depths -- the cry of the shofar. And the cry of the shofar is recognized by the King, who lovingly accepts him and all His returning children. May we merit, even before Rosh Hashana, to hear the cry of the Great shofar which will be sounded at the commencement of the Messianic Era.

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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IT HAPPENED ONCE

One of the Alter Rebbe's chasidim suddenly fell ill while sailing down the Dnieper on a business trip. He decided to leave the ship at the next port, Shklov, and seek medical attention. He went to a well-known doctor who answered him in grave tones, "I'm afraid you have contracted a rare disease for which, as of yet, no cure has been found. I suggest you return home immediately." The chasid, however, decided to go see his Rebbe before going home. "If my days are numbered, at least I will have seen the Rebbe before I die," he thought, and set out for Liozna.

When he related the doctor's words to the Rebbe, he was surprised to hear the Rebbe's reaction, "Rubbish! You are only suffering from malaria!"

"But Rebbe," the chasid protested, "one of the symptoms of malaria is recurring shivers and chills, neither of which I have."

"Nu, so you will shiver!" the Rebbe said. No sooner had the Rebbe uttered those words when the chasid began trembling and remained there until he fully recovered. Once he regained his strength, he set out back home, passing through Shklov to see the doctor whom he had previously consulted.

"How could you have frightened me so, telling me that I had some incurable disease? You see, thank G-d, all I had was case of malaria and now I am alive and well."

"Indeed," replied the doctor, "you had malaria. However, there are two variants of this disease. One is a serious, but uncomplicated illness characterized by chills and shivers for which treatment is available. The other, more severe case is typified by a gradual loss of energy. For this, there is no cure. You most certainly had the more severe type of malaria. I am amazed at your recovery. What happened?"

The chasid told the doctor of his visit to the Alter Rebbe. "The only explanation I have," the doctor responded, "is that his blessing transformed the disease from one type to the other."

The Alter Rebbe explained the verse, "You know the secrets of this world" as follows: The "secrets of the world," the explanations for the events that transpire over the course of our lives, are known only to G-d himself.

He then told the following story: A Jew earned his livelihood as an agent of local shop owners. His job was to buy merchandise in a distant city and transport it back to his town.

Once, on his way back to town, his carriage, loaded with merchandise, got stuck on a muddy road. Despite the combined efforts of the wagon driver and himself, the carriage would not budge.

The Jew was devastated. "What shall I do? All the merchandise will become ruined by the mud! How will I ever be able to pay back this loss?" he wailed.

Just then a wealthy man happened to pass by. He readily lent a hand to the two struggling men, but try as they could, they couldn't budge the wagon. In his concern for the agent, the rich man lifted his hands helplessly.

"Dear G-d," he sighed. "I would gladly help this man with my money. However, what is really needed here is pure physical strength, and that I do not have."

At the same time, a short distance away, another incident took place. A hefty, muscular man, who earned a meager livelihood by doing heavy physical labor, was on his way home from work. Suddenly, he heard a commotion and sounds of wailing down the road.

"Somebody is in trouble, I must go help," was his natural reaction. He followed the sounds and came across a heartbreaking scene. A poor family was being led off to prison, surrounded by guards. Without hesitation, the strong man began pulling the guards away.

The guards protested, "Hey, what are you doing? We have nothing against these

poor people. The local poritz has instructed us to place them in prison because of years of unpaid rent. If you prevent us from carrying out the sentence, he will send more soldiers."

"How much do they owe?" inquired the man.

The guards stated an enormous sum. The man juggled the few coins he had in his pocket and heaved a sigh. "Dear G-d, You know that if any measure of physical effort could help, I would offer it without question. However, it seems that only money can save this family, and that I do not have."

The Alter Rebbe concluded the story saying: "Many of us would have preferred for G-d to have reversed the circumstances and thus, allowed both individuals to be helped. However, this is precisely the meaning of the verse: 'You know the secrets of the world'--only G-d knows."

Reprinted with permission from My Father's Shabbos Table, Rabbi Y. Chitrick.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

When you go forth to war against (literally "above") your enemies (Deut. 21:10)
 When you go forth into battle with complete trust in the G-d of Israel, secure in the knowledge that G-d stands by your side to assist, you are automatically "above" your enemies as soon as you embark on your mission. (*Likutei Sichot*)

That which comes out of your lips shall you keep and perform (23:24)
 The sentiment of the modeh ani prayer thanking G-d for restoring the soul to the body and recited immediately upon awakening in the morning, should carry through the rest of the day as well. One should always conduct oneself with this fundamental fact in mind. (*Likutei Sichot*)

And he may write her a bill of divorcement (Deut. 24:1)
 Why is the Biblical "bill of divorcement" ("sefer k'ritut" called a "get"? Because the letters of the word "get," gimel and tet, are never found next to each other in any word of the entire Torah--the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, or the Writings!

Remember what Amalek did to you (Deut. 25:17)
 Why does the Torah use the singular form of the word "you" instead of the plural?
 The early chasidim explained: Amalek, or the Evil Inclination, gains a stronghold only in an individual who is stand-offish and reclusive from the rest of the Jewish People. He who considers himself part of the larger whole and stands in unity with his brethren cannot be harmed by Amalek. (*Maayanei Hachasidut*)

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend of the
 Lubavitch Youth Organization
Mr. Victor Braha
 Wishing you a Ksivah Vchasimah Tovah
 A sweet and good year



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