

L'Chaim

1911

26 Shevat, 5786

February 13, 2026

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Our help is in the name of the L-rd, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

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

The Torah portion this week is Mishpatim - statutes. Included amongst the many mitzvot (commandments) found in the portion is one which discusses how to behave toward an enemy in distress. "When you see the donkey of your enemy lying under its burden, you might want to refrain from helping it, but you must make every effort to help him [unload it]." (23:5)

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, translated and explained this commandment in a unique way which makes it relevant to each one of us. It is important to note that the Hebrew word for donkey - chamor is similar to the word for materiality - chomer.

When you see a donkey - when you carefully examine your materiality, your body, you will see...

your enemy - for your materiality hates your Divine soul since it is the Divine soul which longs for G-dliness and spirituality. Furthermore, you will see that it is...

lying under its burden - it is overwhelmed and overloaded with the command placed upon it by G-d, namely, that it should become refined through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvot. But, the body, like a donkey, is lazy and stubborn to fulfill these commands. It may then occur to you that...

you might want to refrain from helping it - to enable it to fulfill its mission. And instead, you might follow the path of mortification of the flesh to break down the body's crass materiality.

Hundreds of years ago, it was indeed considered proper to subordinate the body through afflicting it with ascetic practices, but the Baal Shem Tov rejected this path. He saw the body not as an obstacle to the spirit, something intrinsically evil and ungodly, but as a potential vehicle for the spiritual, a means for the soul to attain heights otherwise inaccessible.

The light of Torah will not reside fully in this method. Rather...

You must make every effort to help it - purify the body, refine it, but not to break it.

Thus the "enemy" is transformed into an ally, an instrument through which to perform mitzvot. In great measure the mitzvot employ gross physical matter to fulfill G-d's will, e.g. leather for tefilin thongs, wool for tzitzit, etc. We must care for our physical selves in order to fulfill G-d's commandments. Indeed, it is a commandment to watch over the health of one's body.

Adapted from Hayom Yom, compiled by the Rebbe from teachings of the previous Rebbes

The Thin Margin

We like to think of ourselves as solid, immovable objects. We build routines, plan for next year, and move through the world with a sense of permanence. But every so often, the universe sends a reminder: we aren't solid at all. We are delicate. We are a collection of systems held in a balance so precise it's almost frightening. When we finally step back to reflect, we realize just how thin the margin for error actually is.

In the world of sports, this is true whether you're looking at a golf ball lipping the cup, a baseball landing just foul, or a tennis serve hitting the tape. We pay to watch athletes live on that razor's edge. We expect them to dramatize the significance of those critical, unforeseen moments because that's where the drama lives.

But we rarely think of our own "ordinary" lives that way. We acknowledge that certain professions - firefighters, surgeons, police officers - must master the decisive moment. Yet, we assume our roles are shielded from that kind of volatility. However, there are always events that alter the outcome and tip the balance. We just don't always notice them until the scale has already moved.

Most of the time, we indulge in the luxury of routine. We expect a predictable cycle of ups and downs to keep us motivated, but we treat time as if it's an infinite resource.

But then, the balance shifts.

Think about the physical reality

of a "sugar low." Maybe you're observing a fast day on the Jewish calendar, or maybe you just got caught in a nightmare airport layover with no kosher food in sight. You feel the symptoms creep in: lightheadedness, a touch of nausea, an edgy irritability that makes every minor inconvenience feel like a crisis. But then, you eat a few cookies or drink a cup of orange juice, and the transformation is instantaneous. Your body gets the nourishment it was screaming for, and suddenly, you're back.

It doesn't take a catastrophe to unbalance us. It can be a slight fever, an annoying blister on your heel, or even a passing whiff of smoke that triggers a cough. These tiny, "insignificant" things set us off. They tip the scales and remind us, once we've recovered our equilibrium, just how finely tuned and fragile we truly are.

Judaism takes this observation and scales it up to a cosmic level. It informs us that this fragility isn't limited to our physical bodies. Our minds, our souls, and even the environment—the very earth itself—exist in a state of delicate stasis. Further, Judaism teaches us that there is no "off-season." Every single moment is the critical moment. The game is always on, the inches are always in play, and the margin for error remains razor-thin. Everything in existence is suspended in the balance, waiting for our next move, our next plan, or our next signal.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Voice of Faith in the Medical World



Dr. Amos Sabo is 69 years old, a surgeon who lives in Atlit and until recently worked at the Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya. He previously

served as an officer in the Paratroopers. In the past, he was distant from Torah. Today, he is a man of faith who wears tzitzit and prays regularly. In recent years, he has become one of the most prominent voices of faith within Israel's medical system.

"I grew up in Nahariya to a father who survived Auschwitz and a mother who was born in Israel," he says. "My father was the most remarkable and brilliant person I ever met. He was a pharmacist with immense knowledge. He saved the lives of many children who were rushed to the emergency room after ingesting poisonous plants. He was kind-hearted and emotionally healthy, despite the horrors of the Holocaust and the death marches."

"My father ran a pharmacy in Budapest until he was taken to the camps," Dr. Sabo continues. "When he arrived on the platform at Auschwitz, he made a

firm decision that he would leave there alive."

"My father's optimism passed on to me," he adds, "and to this day I calm friends who worry about dire predictions."

"I was drafted after the Yom Kippur War," he recalls. "We arrived at the Morag outpost in the Gaza Strip. One day, we were assigned a new mission, to establish a new outpost called Kochav HaShachar near Ramallah. I was thrilled and told my friends, 'This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.' We built the settlement from nothing. It was an extraordinary period in my life, to establish a new community."

"In the past, I was not particularly interested in Judaism, quite the opposite," he says. "My views on security issues were on the left side of the political map. Deep inside, I understood that the Arabs wanted to destroy us, but I had undergone a kind of brainwashing. I was active in the Scouts, and everyone around me thought the same way."

"The emotional shift began during Operation Protective Edge," he explains. "My son was a team commander in Gaza, and I began to understand what was truly happening."

"Both of my sons became religious," Dr. Sabo says. "When one of them began to grow stronger in his observance, I worried and even pushed back." He smiles slightly. "Today, I look back on those days and laugh, with some pain mixed in."

"Today, I am a firm believer in G-d," he says. "Every morning I say Modeh Ani, wash my hands, and make sure to wear tzitzit when I am on reserve duty, believing that they protect me."

"Each week, I write a short reflection on the weekly Torah portion," he adds, "and I am moved by the depth of Judaism. For me, the categories of 'religious' and 'secular' do not exist. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught, 'All Jews are Jews.'"

"For more than four hundred days, I have been serving in reserve duty," he says. "I began volunteering two years ago, at the age of sixty-seven, an age when most people no longer serve in the reserves. I chose to return when I saw doctors abandoning the soldiers."

"In my view, the horrific disaster of October 7 was meant to shake us," Dr. Sabo says, "so that we would understand that there are dangerous malignancies within and around us."

"More than once during my medical career, I treated patients who were injured in car accidents," he continues, "and during CT scans we discovered malignant diseases. In retrospect, the accident saved their lives. This is a perfect analogy for the disaster."

"Everything comes from Heaven," he says simply. "That is what I believe."

"From my familiarity with the field," Dr. Sabo concludes, "I know that more than ninety percent of the combat soldiers I served with in Gaza, Lebanon, and Judea and Samaria deeply love Israel. But the leadership must change."

"Among the younger generation, we are seeing a great awakening," he adds. "Teenagers are putting on tefillin and wearing tzitzit. We must all be optimistic. The Jewish people are more alive than ever."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine

New Chabad Center in the Land of a Million Elephants



Nestled between rivers and jungles, Laos has become a beloved destination for Israeli post-army travelers seeking nature, in the heart of Southeast Asia.

Now, Rabbi Moshe Zeev and Chaya Mushka Belinow, the newest Chabad emissaries to Luang Prabang, Laos, are there to provide for their physical and spiritual needs.

Through warm Shabbat dinners and an open home, the Belinows bring meaning and mitzvahs to those far from familiar shores. Offering a sense of home and belonging in one of the world's most remote corners.

A Call To Action

The month of Adar (which we bless this Shabbat), containing Purim and the mitzva of giving gifts to the poor, stresses charity, as does the special Torah portion, called Shekalim, which is read this Shabbat.

Every individual must therefore add in charity. This applies in the physical sense, through the giving of money, food and drink. It also applies in the spiritual sense, through helping another person, giving advice, learning with him, etc.

(The Rebbe, 25 Shevat, 5751-1991)





The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5740 [1979]

Greeting and Blessing,

I am in receipt of your letter of Nov. 14th, in which you register a complaint against two persons in your community.

I trust it is unnecessary to point out to you the rule of the Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law], which is also an accepted principle in any civilized society, and is also a matter of common sense, that one must not pronounce judgment in a dispute, without hearing first both sides. Besides, in the present case, I am confident that both parties involved will readily submit to the judgment of a Rov [rabbi] before whom the dispute can be submitted, and he will pronounce the proper judgment in accordance with our Torah.

I will take the liberty to make a further remark, namely, that the above ruling refers not only to a third party who must not make a judgment without hearing both sides, but also to the involved parties themselves, who must not prejudice their positions. For a person cannot be objective in a situation in which he is personally involved, and, therefore, cannot make an objective judgment, not to mention an accusation, until he has heard the objective opinion of a person not involved in the situation who is fully knowledgeable of all facts from the viewpoint of both parties to the dispute. And among Jews, a knowledgeable person in such a situation is one who is not only aware of all the facts, but also is knowledgeable in the Torah, which is called "Torah Or," [Torah of Light] because it illuminates all things in their true light.

I trust you will not take amiss the above remarks, inasmuch as the purpose is not to find fault or defend, but since by

Hashgocho Protis [Divine Providence] you brought the matter to my attention, I must state to you what I think is the proper approach in such a situation.

May G-d grant that, together with your wife, you should bring up each and all of your children to a life of Torah, Chuppah [wedding canopy] and Good Deeds, and have real Torah Nachas [pride] from each and all of them, in good health and happy circumstances.

With blessing,

17 Adar Rishon, 5744 [1984]

Greeting:

After reading your letter, my first reaction was to instruct my secretary not to answer it. But then I remembered the exhortation of our Sages of the Mishnah to judge everyone "in the scale of merit"; though, frankly, I have difficulty in finding this in your letter - perhaps because I am not accustomed to read letters of this kind of (pardon the vulgar expression) "name - calling."

What would you think of a person (even not a Rabbi Emeritus) who had "just read a report" of something happening thousands of miles away, in a place and country equally far away in terms of the socio-spiritual climate and mores prevailing there, accepts the report on its face value, without appropriately taking the trouble to verify whether it is perhaps biased, or a "slight" distortion of the actual facts, and immediately comes to the conclusion to condemn the alleged "culprits" and, by association, a host of other people, in a vehement and unrestrained manner, using expressions and epithets such as in the above mentioned letter.

What actually took place and the circumstances surrounding it, made me wonder how many apologetic letters you would have to write to those whom you've "misjudged", etc. in your "outburst."

In light of the above I trust you will understand my not signing this letter. Though I dictated and read it.

With due respect,

servant David; I have anointed him with My holy oil." All that is needed is for the people to accept him as king and for the actualization of the total unity between the king and the people -- with the complete and total redemption.

(The Rebbe, 25 Shevat, 5751-1991)

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

There are four special Torah readings read on the Sabbaths before the month of Nisan -- Shekalim, Zachor, Para and Ha-Chodesh.

This week we read the additional portion of Shekalim. Since Shekalim is the first of the four, it has special significance over the other three. Its lesson is of general significance and conveys the fundamental and primary principles which should guide our G-dly service.

The half-shekel was a donation by every Jew to help pay for the communal sacrifice. Regardless of one's financial status, whether rich or poor, each person gave no more and no less than a half-shekel toward this sacrifice. Thus, the basic idea of giving half-shekels is that of tzedaka (charity).

This is particularly true today after the Holy Temple has been destroyed, and the mitzva of giving shekalim in its original form is no longer possible. Today this mitzva is commemorated through giving a coin worth half of the standard currency to charity on the Fast of Esther -- the day preceding Purim.

Tzedaka represents all the mitzvot -- "outweighs" them all -- and is called THE mitzva by the Jerusalem Talmud.

In addition, tzedaka must be done constantly, for two reasons:

G-d created a world order in which there is giving and receiving. This is the reason that 'need' and 'want' are present in the world -- in order that there be the possibility of performing tzedaka and kindness. Tzedaka, therefore, is an intrinsic part of creation. Since tzedaka is an essential feature of the nature of the world, it is present as long as the world exists, i.e. constantly.

Everything G-d gives to the world is similar to His "tzedaka." His gracious endowment of our very life and sustenance is clear proof of His great kindness. Nevertheless, this kindness is granted midda k'neged midda (measure for measure) -- commensurate to our actions. We must therefore involve ourselves in charitable acts in order to merit G-d's "tzedaka."

And since we are constantly dependent upon His tzedaka, our charitable acts must also be constant.

This explains the fundamental importance of the portion of Shekalim over the other three special portions. It is connected with charity, which is constant, and applies in all places and situations.

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
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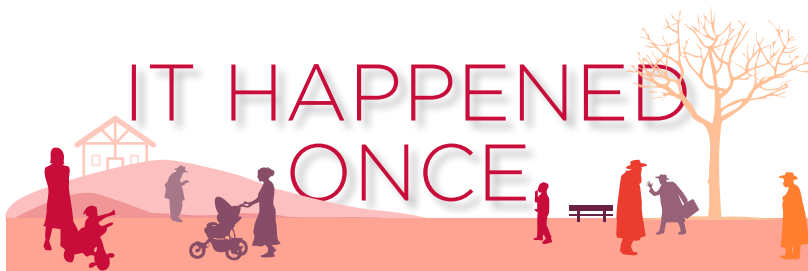
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MOSHIACH MATTERS

The appointment of Melech HaMoshiach has in reality already occurred, as we say in the verse (Psalms 89:21), "I have found My



Reb Moshe looked around his barren house, but his search was in vain, for there was nothing of value left to pawn. His formerly elegant surroundings were bereft of their fine furniture, crystal chandeliers and French tapestries.

It was almost impossible to believe, but Reb Moshe and family were now paupers. Even their fine tailored clothing had been sold, and each remained with only one suit of clothes. Reb Moshe and his family took one last look at their beloved house, then turned to go out the door for the last time. The only possession they took was a small bundle of personal items of no special monetary value. They stood on their front steps with no particular place to go.

Reb Moshe was a Chasid of the great Tzadik, Reb Yitzchak Meir of Ger, and so he went to the Rebbe for advice. Although he was now penniless, Reb Moshe still had a plan in mind. In a distant country he had very wealthy relatives who would certainly help him out of his difficult straits. They would surely lend him enough money to begin his business again.

When Reb Moshe entered the Rebbe's room, he poured out his broken heart, and then offered his solution. "I will travel to my relatives and ask them to help me. With a loan, which I will certainly be able to repay, I will be able to start my business again and save my family from this unbearable situation."

But, to his great surprise, the Rebbe shook his head, no. Reb Moshe thought that perhaps the Rebbe didn't agree with the idea of his traveling, so he suggested an alternate plan: "Maybe I should just write to them and explain my situation. After all, they are close relatives, and they are easily able to send me enough money to get started." But the Rebbe nodded again, "No, I am not in agreement with that suggestion."

There was nothing to do but leave, and Reb Moshe departed with a heavy heart. He had no idea where to find his salvation. Still, he took his Rebbe's advice to heart and sought any kind of work to sustain his family, all to no avail.

At his wits' end, Reb Moshe returned to Ger, hoping the Rebbe would perhaps see things differently. But, no, the Rebbe still didn't countenance approaching the wealthy relatives. Now, things had become even more difficult. Even bread was a luxury he could not afford. His wife berated him, saying, "How can you watch your own flesh and blood suffer? Go to your relatives and get help for us!"

The man traveled to Ger one more time and stood before the Rebbe, pleading, but the Rebbe answered him, "I cannot change my opinion, regardless of how you ask and what you say."

Finally Reb Moshe could no longer restrain himself; he wrote a lengthy letter to his relatives. As he expected, he soon received a reply from them and a generous sum of money to help him get back on his feet. Little by little he rebuilt his business connections. He bought new merchandise, he leased a new property, and his life began to resemble his former life of prosperity.

But just when he thought things were going on an even keel, Reb Moshe fell ill. What began as a simple cold progressed to the point that he was bedridden and doctors pronounced his situation very dangerous. His one desire was to travel to Ger. But that was impossible: he was too weak to be moved. Instead he dispatched a close friend to go to Rebbe and speak for him.

The friend was ushered into the Rebbe's study, where he informed the Rebbe of Reb Moshe's precarious state. The Rebbe was very pensive, but then spoke.

"Sometimes a person will find himself in a situation which he feels is unbearable. He may be ill, he may lose his fortune, any of the hundreds of calamities large or small that afflict the human race. But know that everything G-d does is ultimately only for his good. Every soul must have its correction in this world to enable it to proceed to its higher level in the World of Truth. And so, even when things seem bad to the eyes of man, they are contrived Above only for his benefit.

"There are times when, for a particular reason, the Heavenly Court decrees a sentence of death upon someone. But when an advocate intervenes on his behalf, the Heavenly

Court is moved to lighten its verdict and to make the tikun (correction) to the person's soul in another way, through a different type of atonement. Since, 'a pauper is considered [in some respects] as one who is dead,' poverty is sometimes substituted for death by the Heavenly Court.

"This is what happened to Reb Moshe. When he came to me for advice as to whether to accept help from his relatives, I could not agree, for I felt that it was not 'bashert' for him to do so. When he asked me repeatedly for my agreement, I kept refusing, for my strong inner vision told me that he should not accept this help. But in the end, he was unable to restrain himself from accepting the money from his relatives. When he cast off from himself the burden of poverty, he removed from him self the substitute sentence, and his vital force was cut off."

The friend left Ger quickly, hoping to return to Reb Moshe while the Rebbe's words could still be of help. But when he arrived home, his friend had departed from this world.



And these are the ordinances which you shall set before them (Exodus 21:1)

"Before them" in every sense of the word: the Jewish people must be made to realize that My commandments are of primary concern and importance. (Rabbi Bunim of Pshischa)

His master shall bore his ear through with an awl (martze'a) (Exodus 21:6)

Why a "martze'a?" Because its numerical equivalent is 400 -- the same number of years the Jewish people were originally supposed to be enslaved in Egypt. When G-d took the Jews out of Egypt, He declared, "The Children of Israel shall be servants unto Me." Subsequently, anyone who willingly chooses to serve a human master rather than G-d deserves to have his ear bored through... (Daat Chachamim)

Keep far away from falsehood (Exodus 23:7)

A liar is more despicable than either a robber or a thief. The robber steals only at night, for he worries about being discovered. The thief steals by night and by day, but only from individuals, as he is afraid to confront a larger group. The liar, however, lies by night and by day, and spreads his falsehoods and gossip about everyone. (The Magid of Kelem)

And you shall serve the L-rd your G-d (Exodus 23:25)

According to Maimonides, we learn the positive mitzva of praying to G-d from this verse; "service" refers to "the service of the heart," i.e., prayer. As is known, during the exile our prayers must take the place of the sacrifices that were offered in the Holy Temple. However, when the Temple stood, only kohanim (priests) were allowed to actually bring the sacrifices; Levites and Israelites were prohibited from doing so. Thus the exile has a certain advantage over the time when the Holy Temple was in existence, for nowadays, every Jew can fulfill the role of the greatest kohen just by calling upon his Father in heaven. (Peninei Geula)



5:10 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

26 Shevat / February 13

Torah Portion Mishpatim

Blessing of the new month of Adar

Shabbat ends 6:11 PM

Dedicated in honor of dear friends of the
L'chaim Publication
Lidia and Jimmy Resnick