



In the year 1848, a war raged between Austria and Hungary. It so happened that a Chasid, Rabbi Yisrael of Skoli, was traveling through Hungary and was in the town of Deberzin on business. It was his misfortune that while he was still in the town, the Austrian army surrounded the town and lay in wait to besiege it. Rabbi Yisrael was trapped.

When he realized that he was unable to leave the town, he decided to prepare himself for the duration of the crisis, and he went to the market and bought food that would last him for a while. Then, he steeled himself to wait out the hostilities.

Every day Rabbi Yisrael went to the synagogue to pray, recite Psalms and pass the day studying Torah. He was very careful not to engage in business or do anything else that might raise suspicion, for the soldiers of the Hungarian army patrolled the streets day and night looking for trouble.

One morning as he walked down a quiet side street on his way to the synagogue, he was stopped by an army patrol.

"Who are you?" demanded the soldiers.

"I am a Jew and my name is Yisrael," was the straightforward reply.

"Where do you come from and what are you doing here?"

He couldn't help but answer the truth, that he was a merchant traveling from Austria. They immediately arrested him on suspicion, and in the tense atmosphere of war, they threw him into prison, although he was innocent.

Poor Rabbi Yisrael was put on trial before a wartime military tribunal and found guilty of spying for Austria. The shocking sentence was read and he was given the death penalty, to be carried out the following Shabbat.

Rabbi Yisrael sat in his dark cell for the next few days, desperately reciting Psalms and beseeching G-d to have mercy on him and rescue him from this terrible fate. Shabbat arrived. Rabbi Yisrael prayed as usual.

He had just completed his prayers when he heard the sound of marching in his direction. The sound stopped just outside his door which swung open to reveal armed soldiers.

"Prepare yourself, for we have come to bring you to the place of execution," the leader announced. They bound Rabbi Yisrael's arms and marched him toward the courtyard as he lifted his eyes towards Heaven.

As Rabbi Yisrael and his captors walked past a group of soldiers, one officer looked directly at the prisoner and called out, "Srulke, where are you going?"

Rabbi Yisrael turned and stared at the officer, but he didn't recognize his face at all. Reb Yisrael replied bitterly, "I am going to die."

"Why is that?" the officer asked, with a smile on his face.

Rabbi Yisrael went on to explain that he had been arrested as a spy and sentenced to death. The officer let out a loud laugh. "Ha! You, a spy! That's a good one! I know you're an honest fellow.

"Soldiers," the officer barked, "Take this man back to his cell!" But the soldiers replied that they had other orders.

"Wait here. I am going to get new orders."

In a few minutes the officer returned with the orders to return Rabbi Yisrael to his cell. Once there, the astonished man sat down and opened his book of psalms to resume his heartfelt prayers.

That very day the Austrian troops captured the town. When they went to the prison they found Rabbi Yisrael sitting over his book. "What are you doing here?" they asked.

He retold his tale, and the Austrian soldiers freed him and treated him like a hero. When

they asked what they could do for him, he only said, "I would like to get my fruit and wine back, please." But when they went to the place he specified, his provisions were gone.

Rabbi Yisrael returned to his home and went at once to visit his Rebbe, Reb Meir of Premishlan.

When Rabbi Yisrael entered the room the Rebbe turned to his shammes [attendant] and said, "Do you remember that Shabbat when we ate Reb Yisrael's dried pears?"

It happened to be the same Shabbat that Rabbi Yisrael was to be executed in Deberzin and had been miraculously rescued. And with that, the Rebbe asked that the pears be served. "If you only knew whom I was forced to trouble in order to rescue you!"

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Judges and officers shall you appoint for yourself in all your gates (Deut. 16:18)

"In each and every city," comments Rashi. The Talmud goes even further, explaining that "city" may also be understood to mean the individual person, who is called the "small city." In the homiletic explanation of this passage, "your gates" refers to our sensory orifices (our eyes, ears, nose and mouth) which are the gates between the person and all that surrounds him. You should "appoint judges" on "all your gates," that all one's senses should be led by the "judges" of his soul, the intellect of the G-dly soul with which he learns Torah. The Torah should control the functioning of one's sensory powers. (*Sichot Kodesh, parshat Shoftim, 5751*)

In order for a person's Good Inclination to be victorious and to rule, one must have the assistance of "judges and officers." The "judge" part of a person's spiritual make-up first looks into the Code of Jewish Law to see if a certain act is permissible or not according to the Torah. If the Evil Inclination afterwards rears its ugly head and balks at fulfilling G-d's command, the "officers" come to the rescue to force the individual into compliance. "Man's Good Inclination must always be in a state of anger against the Evil Inclination," states the Talmud. (*The Rebbe*)

Neither shall you set up for yourself any pillar (matzeiva), which the L-rd your G-d hates (Deut. 16:22)

The word "matzeiva" comes from the Hebrew root meaning constant, steady and permanent. Do not look at this world as an end unto itself, the Torah counsels. Regard it merely as a passageway to be navigated and a preparation for the World to Come. (*Kedushat Levi*)



7:08 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
6 Elul/Sept 2
Torah Portion *Shoftim*
Ethics Ch 6
Shabbat ends 8:06 PM

Dedicated in memory of a dear friend of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
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"My help comes from G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalms 121:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Shoftim*, is always read close to the beginning of the month of Elul. *Shoftim* speaks of appointing judges, appointing a king and cities of refuge.

As there are no coincidences, we must ask: What lesson can we learn from the proximity of reading *Shoftim* to Elul?

Elul is the time to get closer to G-d. Not physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This is the present.

Shoftim means judges. Elul is the time to take an account of the past year. To judge yourself and see if you have used your abilities to the fullest to fulfill G-d's Will and your mission in this world. Knowing where you stand is a great motivator. This is dealing with the past.

"Appoint a king over yourself." Accepting G-d as your King will move you to want to do His will, strengthening your commitment to Him. This is dealing with the future.

The month of Elul is a "sanctuary city" in time. The idea of a sanctuary city is a place to go for atonement. It's an open opportunity to get closer to G-d as His arms are open to forgive us.

G-d, our King, is in the field. He is smiling and He grants good to us all. All we need to do is go out and meet him. This is a great opportunity, don't waste it.

On a personal level. Many of us are in relationships that just seem to be on autopilot. We don't even realize that our spouse or close loved one is hurt by this. We think all is fine. If you think everything is fine then you need to follow the next steps.

Ask yourself: When was the last time you sat together and talked about what is important? Take an account of your relationship. This is dealing with the past.

Recognize the other in the relationship. Ask. What are his/her needs? If you can't figure it out on your own, ask him/her to tell you or to write it down. Strengthen your commitment to each other. This is dealing with the future.

Finally, don't be afraid to go down this road, because bettering your relationship is something you both want. Your significant other will be more than glad to work with you to better your relationship.

Just imagine coming to the synagogue this Rosh Hashana, knowing that you are one with G-d and one with the important people in your life! What a way to start the year.

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.

Extended Warranty

When purchasing a major appliance, it's not enough to shop around for the best price, to check it out in Consumer Reports, and to talk to people who already own the item in question.

We often want to know what kind of warranty the appliance has, what is covered and for how long. Once we've considered all the pros and cons and we've actually decided to buy the item, we have to decide whether to invest in an "extended warranty."

Extended warranties are offered by the manufacturers, private companies, and even credit card companies.

What you're getting for those extra dollars is more coverage and insurance.

Judaism has its own extended warranty policy; it's called a mezuza.

"Mezuza" is actually the Hebrew word for the doorpost in a doorway. But colloquially it refers to the small piece of parchment upon which a scribe writes by hand the "Shema" prayer found in the Torah and the verses immediately following it.

One of the functions of the mezuza, which is to be placed on every doorpost, is to actually guard our comings and goings.

It offers us an "extended warranty," not simply guarding the home itself, but also providing coverage for the people living in the home and is not in effect only when they're at home, but even when they go out. And the "guarantee" never expires! Now that's what you call extended coverage!

In fact, the mezuza's job is actually hinted to in the Hebrew letter "shin" found on most mezuza covers.

Shin is the first letter of one of G-d's names "*Sha-dai*," an acronym for "Guardian of the Doors of Israel."

The great Torah commentator Onkelos once explained G-d's coverage

of His people via the mezuza:

"In the world of men the king sits inside his palace, while his servants stand on guard outside. With G-d, however, the opposite is true. His servants sit inside, and He alone protects them year round."

A similar sentiment was expressed by Rabbi Judah the Prince.

The King of Persia once sent a valuable jewel to honor the great Rabbi Judah. As was the custom in those days, a suitable gift of worth was expected to be sent in return. After much thought, Rabbi Judah sent a mezuza to the king.

The king was offended by the small gift, to his eye nothing more than a piece of parchment covered with strange writing.

Rabbi Judah, however, explained to the king: "The jewel you gave me has to be guarded night and day from being stolen. But the mezuza itself guards its owner, even while he sleeps, for G-d never sleeps, as it says, "The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

The Jewish extended warranty policy does, however, have some stipulations and small print.

One clause is that the mezuza parchments need to be checked twice every seven years.

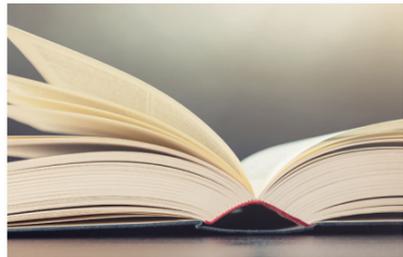
Another specification is that particularly in the month of Elul, our current month we show our interest in being more conscientious with mitzvot by having our mezuzot checked by a reliable scribe.

(This inspection is necessary as a mezuza can become invalid if even one of the letters is faded or cracked.)

Extend your Jewish extended warranty by having your mezuzot inspected by a knowledgeable scribe and by affixing mezuzot to doorposts in your home which require them.

SLICE OF LIFE

We Finished!
by Yehudis Cohen



"We finished!" I said to Esther excitedly.

Esther and I had just read the words, "Mordechai the Jew was second to King Achashverosh, a leader to the Jews, and loved by his many brethren. He sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace for all their descendants." These are the last words of the *Megila* (Scroll) of Esther. Although we had been studying the *Megila* verse by verse with commentaries for about six months and knew that we would soon be finished, completing the entire *Megila* seemed to catch me by surprise. Was it surprise? Excitement? Euphoria? What exactly was I feeling?

Esther and I had been studying together as JNet partners since October, 2020.

JNet, short for Jewish Learning Network, enables participants to study with a volunteer partner any Torah topic, on the phone (or zoom), at a time that is convenient for them.

Esther had initially signed up to study about prayer and I was happy to prepare materials and teach her. After a short while, we moved on to study Jewish women of the Bible, a subject that I teach and am very passionate about. When we finished women of the Bible

and started discussing what we would study next, I felt the need to make our study sessions more of a partnership.

As it was about six or eight weeks before Purim, I asked Esther if we could study the *Megila* together. Each year on Purim I listen to the *Megila* being read. I know the simple meaning of the words and the story inside out, as well as Chassidic insights and commentaries. But I had never studied the *Megila* in depth verse by verse.

Thankfully, Esther agreed and we began our study the following Monday evening. I was using the Kehot Publications *Megila* and Esther was using the Mesorah Publications *Megila*. The plan was that Esther would read a verse, and all of the commentaries that her *Megila* offered on that verse, after which I would read all of the commentaries in my *Megila*. I would then read the next verse with commentaries, she would read her commentaries, and we would switch back and forth.

This plan worked out well and we often had interesting discussions or shared our thoughts on how a commentary related to our own lives or the world today.

And now, back to reading that last verse of the *Megila*. What had I felt when we had read those final words?

It was joy - a new, heretofore unexperienced joy - that overwhelmed me when we finished studying the Book of Esther. It was a unique joy that I had never before come across.

I don't know exactly when it was that I came to understand that joy is not uniform. Depending on the occasion or situation, joy can feel entirely different than anything previously felt.

I am blessed to have personally experienced many life-cycle events that are known to be joyous such as getting married, giving birth, marrying off children, welcoming grandchildren into the world, children's and grandchildren's Bar and Bat Mitzvas. At each of these, and other smaller yet no less significant occasions, I remember feeling a unique joy that was utterly new.

But to have such a joyous feeling after

completing a book of the Torah? I wasn't expecting that! And I wanted to savor and prolong this new feeling!

"Esther, let's go back to the first verses of the *Megila* and find one of the commentaries that we found inspiring or meaningful and share it again," I suggested. We stayed on the phone a bit longer than the time we usually allot for our study sessions.

We had already decided that we would study the renown *Gate of Trust* by the eleventh century sage Rabbi Bahya Ibn Paquda after completing the *Megila*. But I asked Esther if we could push it off and study verse by verse the Book of Jonah. Jonah is read as the *Haftorah* on Yom Kippur; it was timely and could be a good preparation for the upcoming holidays. And I wanted to experience again, and as soon as possible, this new type of joy that I had discovered.

Esther, gracious as always and perhaps buoyed by my enthusiasm, agreed.

I pointed out to Esther how providential it was that we had completed this study during the "Nine Days" in which we intensify our mourning the destruction of both the first and second Holy Temples in Jerusalem. Many have the custom to make a *Siyum*, to complete a section of Torah study, usually a tractate of the Talmud, as a *Siyum* this is a joyous event permissible during the Nine Days.

Until that Monday evening, I could not relate at all to the connection between a *Siyum* and joy. But now I totally "got it" because I had experienced it first-hand.

Although initially when I signed up for JNet, I was more in the role of the teacher and Esther was more in the role of the student, studying together the *Megila* made us true partners which also tremendously added to the experience. I urge everyone to find a half hour in their week and to sign up at JNet. Whether you prefer to be a teacher or a student, or to be or become partners, the half an hour each week will be well spent and rewarding. And may you experience the unique joy of completing a section of Torah study!

Sign up for JNet at JNet.org or call (347) 770-5638 or email info@JNet.org

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Free Translation

Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5735 [1975]

To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere, G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

The month of Elul, bringing the current year to a close, is - as is well known - the Month of Divine Mercy and Grace. It is also the time for every Jew to make a soul-searching self-evaluation (*cheshbon hanefesh*) in regard to the outgoing year - of all the achievements and failures and missed opportunities; it is the month of *Teshuva* (Repentance) - regret for the past and good resolutions for the future, by way of preparation for the coming year, with a view to making certain that the new year will be a better one in every respect.

The auspicious nature of the month of Elul is explained by the *Alter Rebbe* [Rabbi Shneur Zalman], author of the *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch*, by means of the parable of the 'King in the Field':

When a king is about to return to his royal city, the inhabitants of the city go out to meet the king and to welcome him in the field. Then everyone who so wishes may come out to greet the king, and the king receives everyone graciously and shows a friendly face to everyone. Later on, when the king proceeds to the city, they follow... So in the month of Elul, G-d makes His countenance to shine on you, which refers to the emanation of the Thirteen Attributes, that it be in a manner of face to face.

Thus, the month of Elul is a time of (great responsibility as well as of) great opportunity, since this is the time of the year when G-d causes His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy to shine forth, making it possible for every Jew - regardless of how the situation was in the past - to attach oneself to G-d with heart and soul, in a way that induces action, expressed in a substantial increase (in quantity and quality) in the study of the Torah and in the fulfillment of its mitzvot.

May G-d grant that each and all of us should take the fullest advantage of this auspicious period in all that has been said above,

And reflect with a soulful reflection, to the extent of it permeating and guiding the daily conduct, on the words of David, the Sweet Singer of the Songs of our People Israel, in the Psalm that we begin to recite on Rosh Chodesh Elul,

twice daily:

'G-d is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?... my oppressors and enemies have stumbled and fallen; if an army besiege me, my heart shall not fear... now my head is raised... teach me, O G-d, Your way... hope unto G-d, be strong and let your heart be fortified and hope unto G-d.'

And G-d our King since the days of old will work salvation in the midst of the earth, including that in the radiance of the countenance of the King the Source of Life everyone will be blessed with a good and sweet year, both materially and spiritually,

With esteem and blessing for being 'written and sealed for good, for a good and sweet year.'

12 Elul, 5724 (1964)

To the Campers of Camp Gan Israel

G-d bless you all-

I have, of course, followed with particular interest, the reports of your camp life and camp activities. I am pleased to know that you are doing well, and are benefiting physically and spiritually.

As the time approaches when you will soon take leave of your beloved camp and return to your homes and educational institutions, I want to express my hope that the benefit and inspiration which you have received from your camp will be a source of lasting strength to you in the coming year, and that you will share these benefits with others who were not as fortunate as you to spend weeks and months in Camp Gan Israel.

We are now in the significant month of Elul, the month of preparation for the new year. This is the month of opportunity, the month of special Divine grace and mercy. Of this month the *Alter Rebbe* [Rabbi Shneur Zalman - founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy] said that this is the time when, as it were, the King is in the Field. Instead of having to seek an audience with the King in His Palace, the King comes out to meet His subjects in the field. At such a time everyone can easily approach the King and present to Him a petition, and the King receives everyone with a gracious smile and fulfills the petition.

I firmly trust that every one of you will take the fullest advantage of this propitious time, to rededicate yourselves to the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the mitzvot with a growing measure of devotion and diligence.

May you always strive to be a living example to others of what it is to be a son of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, a son of our people Israel and a member of the tribe of Gan Israel.

May G-d bless you with *hatzlacha* to carry out your good resolutions, in good health and with gladness of heart, and may He bless you and all your near and dear ones with a *kesiva vachasima tova*.

the revelations of the Era of the Redemption, we must experience through prophecy a foretaste of the "advice" that will be communicated in that era. G-d sends His prophecies through people; the verse, "I will set up a prophet... like you (Moses)" applies in every generation. Every prophet is a continuation of the prophecy of Moses and his Torah. (*The Rebbe, Shabbat Shoftim, 7 Elul, 5751 - 1991*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Numerous customs are associated with our current month of Elul.

As Elul is a month of preparation for the High Holidays we increase, to the greatest extent possible, our repertoire of mitzvot and good deeds, in the hope that G-d will judge us favorably and seal us for a good and sweet year.

Among the traditional customs of this month are:

Listening to the shofar being sounded daily. This aids our preparation and helps us in our repentance.

Saying three extra chapters of Psalms each day (beginning with chapters 1-3 on the first of Elul, 4-6 on the second of Elul, etc.)

Having our mezuzot and Tefilin checked during this month by a reliable scribe.

Sending out Rosh Hashana cards to family and friends and wishing a "good and sweet year" when corresponding with or speaking to people.

Spending time in self-reflection and stock-taking for the previous year.

Enhancing our interpersonal relationships

Asking forgiveness from those whom we might have wronged or hurt in the past year.

Making good resolutions for the coming year.

Our involvement in these traditional actions will keep us sufficiently busy doing only good as we prepare for the coming year. And may we experience the complete revelation of Mashiach even before the new year commences.

Shmuel Beilman

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.



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Today Is...

6 Elul

The Baal Shem Tov was very fond of light, and said, "Or ('light') is the numerical equivalent of *raz* ('secret'). Whoever knows the 'secret' contained in every thing can bring illumination."

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Maimonides writes that "as a preparatory step for Mashiach's coming... prophecy will return to Israel." To prepare us to be able to receive

