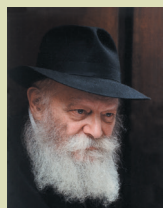


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

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

This week's Torah portion, Ki Teitzei, contains the commandment to pay a hired laborer on the same day he has worked:

"At his day you shall give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it."

The Jewish people are often compared to G-d's "hired workers." Our task is to observe the Torah and its mitzvot, and our payment is the reward G-d grants us for fulfilling His will.

A central principle in Judaism is that G-d observes the same mitzvot He commands us. Just as we may not delay paying wages, G-d too must "pay" a Jew immediately upon performing a mitzva. Yet, elsewhere the Torah teaches: "Today is for observance; tomorrow (the World to Come) is for receiving reward." How can these two teachings be reconciled?

One explanation is to view a Jew's entire lifetime as one long "workday." Only after a person completes it is he entitled to reward in Gan Eden, the spiritual afterlife. However, even this does not fully satisfy the requirement, for the true reward for mitzvot is not in Gan Eden at all, but in the Messianic Era, when the dead will be resurrected and live once again in physical bodies. Gan Eden is largely the reward for Torah study; mitzvot will receive their true recompense only after resurrection.

But if reward is delayed thousands of years, how is the mitzva of timely payment fulfilled?

The answer lies in the nature of our task. The Torah teaches that G-d created the world because He "desired a dwelling place down below." In this coarse, material world, where holiness is hidden, G-d wishes His presence to be revealed. Transforming the world into a proper dwelling place is not the work of one individual alone but a mission spanning generations.

Every mitzva performed refines both the person and the surrounding world, slowly infusing physical reality with G-dliness. Over centuries, this holiness accumulates, preparing the world for its ultimate state of perfection—the revelation of Moshiach and the Messianic Era.

Thus, our relationship with G-d is not a simple contract between an employer and a day laborer. Instead, the Jewish people, across all time, share the collective responsibility of preparing the world for Redemption. The full "wage" can only be paid when the mission is complete and Moshiach is revealed.

Still, even now, in the final moments of exile, G-d provides for His "workers," ensuring our needs are met so that we may continue our task with strength and hasten the coming of Moshiach—speedily in our days.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 24

Vinegar for the Soul

By Chaya Shuchat

Memory is a terrible thing to lose. But forgetting can have its uses. For one thing, it keeps the mind from being cluttered with irrelevant information. For survivors of trauma, the ability to let go of frightful memories is essential to the healing process.

One of the most traumatic events in early Jewish history was the ambush of Amalek on the newly liberated people, fresh out of Egypt. In this week's Torah portion, we find a curious mitzvah: Remember to forget Amalek.

You shall remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you went out of Egypt . . . You shall obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens. Do not forget!

The Midrash writes that the Jews said to Moses: "One Scripture text says, 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,' and it is written, 'Remember what Amalek did unto you.' How can both these texts be fulfilled?"

The question the Jews were asking was: how can we keep such opposite thoughts in mind at the same time? And to this, Moses answered, "The glass of spiced wine is not to be compared to the glass of vinegar! One 'Remember' is in order to observe and to sanctify the Sabbath day, and the other 'Remember' is in order to destroy."

Why does Moses compare the memory of Amalek to a glass of vinegar?

In the Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi describes two

types of delicacies: those that are sweet, and those that are sharp or sour, but when properly prepared can be tasty condiments.

When the evil man repents for his evil and returns to G-d, then the energy that he put into his wickedness becomes converted into holiness—the darkness of his past deeds becomes a greater light.

And this is how we can remember Shabbat and Amalek in the very same breath. On the one hand, celebrating Shabbat is a time to disconnect from worldliness for a short while. We might think that it would be best to let the memory of Amalek fade into the background for the time being. We want to enjoy our sweet wine with no taint of vinegar. Yet the power of Amalek is so great that it can disturb the tranquility of Shabbat—so even on Shabbat, we must be vigilant and protect ourselves against it.

On the other hand, there are times when we are in a state when we are completely absorbed in the "Amalek" aspects of our lives—the pain, the turmoil and the trauma. In this situation, holding on to the memory of Shabbat will help us rise above our circumstances. It will even help us recognize that this period of evil that we are going through is temporary, and it, too, has a source in holiness. Life may have dealt us a glass of vinegar—but we can draw strength from it and turn that glass of vinegar into a life-sustaining brew.

(Based on an address of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, vol. 19, pp. 221–226.)

SLICE OF LIFE

The Free Loan Fund That Changed Everything

By Yudi Hercenberg



The Hercenberg Family

When my wife Simcha was pregnant with our twins, we celebrated her birthday together. That evening I had to fly out for work. Somewhere over the country, my phone buzzed with a message from her:

"It is a custom to give charity on your birthday before sunset. Can you help me with this?"

She sent me a link to Bonei Olam, an organization that helps couples pay for fertility treatments. Donors can choose a couple to support by code. I asked if she wanted to spread a donation across many couples or bring one fully to their goal. She said, help one.

I found a couple with only \$300 raised out of the \$25,000 needed for IVF. I donated the remainder so they could begin treatment immediately. I didn't know how much that moment would ripple back into our lives.

A month later I was at a charity dinner for Yaldei Shluchei HaRebbe. I met a rabbi who blessed me that I should soon receive another Rebbe dollar—a dollar the Lubavitcher Rebbe gave out to encourage charity.

Two hours later, driving home, I got a call from Simcha and a woman from our community. Because of our Bonei Olam donation, our names had been entered into 137 raffle tickets, and one had won. The prize was a Rebbe dollar.

We decided that this dollar would be present in the delivery room when our twins were born—a

symbol that helping others brings life in ways we cannot always see.

As Simcha's pregnancy neared the end, the doctors grew concerned. Twin A was small and not growing well. They decided to deliver early. Twin A arrived tiny but crying. The doctors took him to the NICU, but he was stable.

Then Twin B came breech. After several tense minutes, he was delivered feet first. He arrived in silence. No cry. No movement. No sign of life. 20+ medical staff rushed to revive him. They used breathing machines and finally stabilized him, but we couldn't hold him for the first 48 hours.

When he was taken off the machines, we thought the worst was over. Then we were told he had bradycardia. His heart would sometimes stop. Each alarm meant someone had to rush to him, shake him, and get his heart going again. The doctors said he couldn't leave the hospital until he went 5-7 days without an episode. He couldn't even make it through one day.

Three weeks in, with Twin A home and Twin B still in the NICU, we felt helpless. Every specialist we consulted gave the same answer: there was nothing more to do.

I told Simcha, "If we can't help him medically, we have to help him spiritually."

I placed that same Rebbe dollar in his crib. Then I did something I had never done before: I opened a volume of the Igros Kodesh, letters written by the Rebbe for guidance. I was skeptical, but desperate. The letter I opened read:

"To devote some additional time to Torah study—over and above your regular studies... To make a special effort in the matter of Tzedoko, one of the highest forms of which is Gemilus Chasodim—to help the community members who need a free loan. This means that every one of you... should join together to create a Gemilus Chesed (Free Loan) Fund—out of your pocket money. And if such a Fund is already in operation—to expand it by additional contributions and by making it available to a greater number of people that can benefit from it."

I sat there stunned. Years earlier I had started a gmach, a free loan fund. It had already lent out millions of dollars interest-free to help non-profits around the country and local South Florida families. And here I was, reading a letter that said, if such a fund is already in operation, expand it.

In that moment I made a promise to expand it; I didn't know practically how but I knew I needed to make a commitment to making it larger than I had ever imagined. I would widen the circle of people we help, raise more capital, and say yes more often. I would treat this not just as a side project but as a mission.

I also called my friend Rabbi Shuey Biston, who runs a local Jewish camp. Together, we went bunk to bunk with a charity box and a dollar for each child. Over 400 kids gave to tzedaka that day.

From that moment, something shifted. Twin B's bradycardia episodes stopped completely. Within a week, both boys, Binyamin Zev and Shmuel Peretz, had their bris together.

It is unexplainable. When we push ourselves to give beyond what is easy, when we take responsibility for someone else's crisis, we open a door we cannot see.

I used to think the free loan fund was already successful. It had a track record, grateful families, and proof we were helping. The Igros letter challenged me to do more. If this is your unique way of serving, do not settle. Expand it. Reach more people. Give faster. Trust that helping others creates room for blessing.

So I am expanding the fund. I am inviting more partners, increasing what we can do for families in crisis, simplifying the process, and saying yes whenever possible. That commitment is what helped bring god's blessing to heal my son. It certainly healed something in me.

The Rebbe dollar still sits in our home as a reminder that giving is not just about money. It is about presence. It is about showing up when someone else is scared and alone, and saying, I will help carry this with you. That is what a free loan fund really is. Community translated into action.

I watch my boys play, chase each other, laugh, and spill cereal, and I think about that night in the NICU, the quiet that felt like the end of the world. Then I think about the letter that would not let me go. If such a fund is already in operation, expand it.

That is my promise. To keep expanding. To keep saying yes. To keep turning generosity into something practical and steady that changes lives.

Because sometimes, helping someone else take a breath is what brings life back to your own home.

Chabad Sets Up Shop in Neighborhood Once Closed to Jews



Now the third-largest city in Maryland, Bowie (population estimated at 58,000 people) was once highly exclusive, however today, it is home to a diverse and welcoming population.

Recently, Rabbi Eli and Mushky Baron opened a new Chabad center in Bowie, serving the entire area, including Greenbelt and Beltsville.

There, they host monthly Shabbat morning services, biweekly Torah classes, holiday events, women's events and neighborhood BBQs.

The Barons look forward to growing and expanding their reach to touch even more people, including through the upcoming launch of a Hebrew school.

ETHICS OF THE FATHERS:

Rabbi Shimon would say: Be meticulous with the reading of the Shma and with prayer. When you pray, do not make your prayers routine, but [an entreaty of] mercy and a supplication before the Almighty, as is stated "For He is benevolent and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, and relenting of the evil decree" (Joel 2:13). And do not be wicked in your own eyes.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d

In the Month of Elul - Chodesh
Horachamim, 5733 [September, 1973]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Boys and to the Girls

Participants in the Tzedoko Campaign

G-d Bless you!

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed that you fulfilled my request to act as my agents in the Mitzvah of Tzedoko connecting it with a word of Torah, and adding to it your own Tzedoko.

Needless to say, in every case of doing a Mitzvah there is no place for a "Thank you" from a human being, since doing the Mitzvah in fulfillment of G-d's will is itself the greatest reward and truest happiness, and as our Sages of blessed memory declared: "The Reward of a Mitzvah is the Mitzvah itself."

However, it is in order to express thanks for acting as my agents in this joint effort and for this I say: Thank you very much to each and every one of you.

I also take this opportunity, as we have entered the month of Elul, to remind you of the special significance of the month, the Month of Divine Grace in preparation for Rosh Hashonoh and for the entire coming year, may it be a good one for all of us.

The Alter Rebbe explains the special significance of this month by means of the well-known parable of a "King in the field,"

"When a King approaches the city of his royal residence the people of the city go out to welcome the king in the field. Then everyone who wishes is permitted to come and greet the king and he receives everybody graciously and with a smiling face. But after he enters his Royal Palace special permission is required to see the king and this also is the privilege of a chosen few."

This, then, is the significance of the whole month of Elul, when the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed be He, makes known that He is "in the field" and everyone - man, woman, boy and girl can come to Him without difficulties, or special introductions.

But - one may ask - what is the meaning of approaching the King in the field, since G-d has no likeness of a body, nor a body and as the Torah warns; "You have not seen any image (of G-d)?"

Therefore the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that this approach has to do with prayer, for prayer in general and in the days of Elul in particular is an occasion concerning which is written, "May G-d cause His face to shine upon thee" - face to face - the person praying standing directly in the presence of the King, as in the parable above.

And the Alter Rebbe adds, that in order that such closeness be truly meaningful in a lasting and tangible way, it must be followed by actual study of Torah, by Tzedoko and Good Deeds.

May G-d grant that each and every one of you should go from strength to strength in all matters of Goodness and Holiness, Torah and Mitzvos, and be a source of pride and true Nachas to your parents and teachers, and may you make fullest use of the auspicious days of this month and be inscribed for a good and sweet year materially and spiritually.

With the blessing of kesivo vechasima tovah,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Zev of Brisk, wrote:

"It is not enough to believe in the concept of Moshiach but we must look forward to his coming every day, as Maimonides writes that

whoever does not look forward to his coming is a heretic.

"It is not enough to believe that he will come but as we say in our prayers, 'We hope for Your salvation all day,'-- we must yearn for Moshiach's coming every moment of every single day."

(Hagadah Beit HaLevi)

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

The Jewish people have a unique relationship with G-d, a relationship described in Song of Songs as that of a marriage between G-d (the groom) and the Jewish people (the bride).

During Elul a special dimension is added to this relationship as alluded to in the verse from Song of Songs which serves as an acronym for the word Elul, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."

This verse actually contains two different types of G-dly service. We can enhance our relationship with G-d by focusing on these two services, the advantages of each and on the interrelation between them.

"I am my Beloved's" refers to a relationship with G-d that is initiated by man. It possesses an advantage over the service of "my Beloved is mine," specifically because it is accomplished on man's own initiative.

It contains, however, a limitation.

For, since man is limited, such service can reach only those levels of G-dliness which relate to the limitations of man and not to the infinite dimensions of G-dliness.

In contrast, the service of "my Beloved is mine," which refers to our relationship with G-d initiated by G-d, reflects a revelation of G-d as He is, unlimited and unbounded, to man.

However, since this comes about as a revelation from Above, it is not appreciated by man. Quite the contrary, it is regarded as "bread of shame," as our Sages refer to it. For a person appreciates and cherishes more that which he, himself has worked for and accomplished.

Since both services contain advantages and disadvantages, there is a need for the fusion of both these services and this is reflected in the name "Elul."

In this manner, even prayer, mitzvot and acts of kindness, carried out by man on his own initiative will have an unlimited dimension especially during this month.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לְזִכְרוֹן חַיָּה י מוֹשְׁקָא

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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There was once in Poland, a Jewish timber merchant named Reb Dov Ber who traded for many years with the gentry. One day he was walking through the dense forests as was his custom before entering a bid on any timber. Suddenly he was accosted by a huge brown bear, two heads taller than himself. Dov Ber was himself a burly, muscular man, but he had no desire to fight the huge monster, and so, he quietly and calmly moved away from its line of vision. The hungry bear pursued him and he hid behind a thick tree, hoping the bear would continue moving on.

The bear, however, caught up to him and they began a frantic chase, running in circles around the trees, both becoming increasingly exhausted. Finally, the weary bear, reached out trying to grab the man, but instead encircled the tree trunk with its massive paws.

Dov Ber grabbed both paws with his hands and desperately stuck them into the wood of the trunk. As the bear tried to disengage his paws, Dov Ber removed his belt and with his last strength, he tied the helpless bear to the tree.

He hurried to the closest village and related his harrowing experience to the villagers. They listened skeptically to his tale, and although it seemed far-fetched to them, they armed themselves and followed him to the spot. Sure enough, the bear was still belted to the tree, tired from its struggle to extricate itself. One of the men ran to get the local poretz, who finished the bear off with one well-placed shot.

Reb Dov, suffering from the terrible trauma, appeared home the next day a changed man. His hair and beard were now snow-white, and from that day on he was called "White Bear." Reb Dov prospered in his business, earning a reputation being an honest, G-d fearing man.

From his contract with the great Count Potocki he made a large annual profit, for although the timber was available to the highest bidder, White Bear had established his claim.

Once, a new timber merchant named Meir Pinsker came to the area and decided that he would take Count Potocki's business away from Reb Dov. When Reb Dov was informed that this new-comer had decided to try to take away his accustomed account he was deeply disturbed. How could a fellow Jew disregard the Torah law of not encroaching on the livelihood of another? He decided to visit his Rebbe, the Shpoler Zeide, who was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Shpoler Zeide listened to Reb Dov's problem and told him, "G-d hates injustice. Don't worry. Go home and continue your business as usual. The L-rd who provided for you up to now will not abandon you." When the time arrived for the bids to be considered, his new competitor won the contract to the timber.

Pinsker hurried to the forest and was marking his trees when two horsemen appeared and angrily asked his name, demanding to see his contract. They studied the document and said, "If your name is Pinsker, then you are a thief, for there is another name written here. And they beat Reb Meir unmercifully.

Meanwhile, Reb Dov followed the advice of his Rebbe and went about marking his trees as if this year was no different than all the preceding ones. The same two horsemen stopped him in the forest and in a friendly tone one remarked, "Can you imagine that! Just a couple of days ago another man claimed these trees as his own. And with your name clearly on the contract!" They handed him the contract, and there was his own name clearly written and stamped.

When Meir Pinsker recovered from his beating, he went to make a complaint to the count. But when all the forest-keepers were summoned, Reb Meir was unable to identify the two who had beaten him. The count scoffed. "Perhaps they were devils, paying you in kind for your bit of devilry with the "White Bear," he chided. But he promised to look into the matter.

Reb Dov was summoned to appear before the count. They concluded that due to the custom of many years, Reb Dov's name was filled in as a matter of habit. "What

would you like to do, White Bear?" asked the count.

"Let Meir Pinsker and I go before my rabbi and he will decide." The count was agreeable and the two men stood before the Shpoler Zeide.

"Your lust for money caused you to transgress the commandment not to diminish your brother's livelihood!" the Rebbe said to the repentant Pinsker, and he gave him an appropriate penitence to atone for his sin.

Reb Dov was told to make a monetary settlement with Reb Meir, so that the latter would not suffer unduly. In the end both men left the Rebbe feeling happy with his verdicts with peace established between them.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

When you go forth to war against your enemies, and the L-rd your G-d has delivered them into your hand, and you have taken them captive (Deut. 21:10)

Not only does G-d assure us victory over our enemies; we are promised that the spoils plundered by the nations will be fully restored to the Jewish people. According to Maimonides, one of the first things Moshiach will do is "wage the wars of G-d and prevail." Everything that was wrongfully stolen from the Jews during the exile will be returned to our hands. Most significantly this includes the ultimate target of their hatred, the Holy Temple, which was twice destroyed. When Moshiach comes and rebuilds the Temple, it will finally be redeemed from the captivity of the nations where it has been for almost two thousand years (*The Rebbe, Parshat Teitzei 5750*)

When you go forth to war...

These words refer to the descent of the soul, "a veritable part of G-d Above," into the physical world. Its mission, enclotted within a physical body, is to wage war and conquer the material world by infusing it with holiness, learning Torah and observing its commandments. This conflict will reach its successful conclusion with the coming of Moshiach, when G-dliness will reign triumphant." (*Peninei Hageula*)

You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together (Deut. 22:10)

G-d has mercy on all His creations, big and small. The smaller donkey is unequal in strength to the mighty ox, and is unable to pull a plow with the same force. Yoking them together would cause the donkey to exert itself beyond its natural capacity, and is therefore forbidden. (*Ibn Ezra*)

You shall not give interest to your brother...anything that is lent upon interest (literally, "anything that bites") (Deut. 23:20)

Usury is likened to the bite of a serpent. Just as it takes the body a few minutes to react to a snake's poison, so too does it take time for the full effect of the compounding of interest to be felt by the borrower. (*Baal Haturim*)



7:02 Candle Lighting Time

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12 Elul / September 5
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Ethics Ch 1 & 2
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for your friendship and assistance to the L'chaim Publication

Wishing you a Ksivah V'chasimah Tovah

A sweet and good year