



IT HAPPENED ONCE

A prominent Jewish merchant, Reb Yaakov from Vilna, known to be an accomplished Torah scholar, once passed through Mezritch. Having heard of the greatness of the Mezritcher Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber, Reb Yaakov decided to visit him, although he was not an adherent of the Chasidic movement. Reb Yaakov was eager to engage the Maggid in a learned discussion, and he was not disappointed. But, as Reb Yaakov had no interest in Chasidic philosophy, the subject was not broached.

As Reb Yaakov was about to leave, the Maggid suddenly said: "Remember Yaakov, what our Sages of blessed memory said, that G-d sends His cure to a patient through a particular doctor and a particular medicine. Sometimes the One Above sends His cure not through the medication which the doctor prescribes, but through the doctor himself. As you know, a doctor receives his healing powers by authority of the Divine Torah, as it is written, 'And he shall surely cure him.' Therefore, the doctor has a healing angel at his side, and a very great doctor is accompanied by the chief healing angel, Rafael, himself."

As he traveled back to Vilna, Reb Yaakov thought about this strange parting remark, which seemed to come out of the blue. Reb Yaakov was, thank G-d, in very good health. He had never needed a doctor before, and he hoped he would not have to consult one in the future. He hadn't asked the Maggid for medical advice, so why had the Maggid mentioned doctors? Unable to solve this puzzle, he soon dismissed the entire episode from his mind.

Several weeks later Reb Yaakov returned home and soon fell into his normal routine. After a few days, he awoke feeling quite ill. His condition worsened rapidly and although all the best doctors were called in, each offering a different medication, nothing helped.

Word of his condition spread quickly. His friends and acquaintances were devastated, for Reb Yaakov was a kind and charitable man. Then a ray of hope appeared. The Jews of Vilna heard that the king would be arriving in town, and his personal physician, who was a wayward Jew, would be accompanying him. If only they could persuade the king's doctor to pay a call on their beloved friend, maybe this great doctor could save his life.

The community leaders dispatched a delegation to the king and petitioned him to allow his royal physician to visit Reb Yaakov. The king received them graciously and agreed to their request. The hopes of his family and friends soared when the famous doctor entered the sickroom, but were soon dashed. When the doctor looked at Reb Yaakov he said disdainfully, "Am I G-d that you have brought me here to revive a dead man?"

To everyone's horror, the doctor turned to leave. The distraught family begged him to prescribe some medication. "Nothing can help this man," he replied brusquely, casting a parting glance at the dying patient. But something caught his eye and he turned to look again. A slight bit of color had returned to the patient's pale face. The doctor quickly took his notepad and scribbled a prescription. "Run to the pharmacy and bring this medication at once!"

Hope sprang again into the hearts of the man's family and friends. The royal physician remained at the man's bedside, his eyes fixed on the sick man. He was amazed to see further signs of improvement. He pulled out his pad and prescribed another medication. But no sooner had he written it out than the patient's eyes began to flicker. The doctor had never seen such a thing in all his experience. Suddenly, the erstwhile dying man sat up in bed and addressed the physician, "I beg you, dear doctor, don't go yet. Stay a while longer, and I'll feel much better. The Angel Rafael must be at your side."

The physician was completely overwhelmed. He stared at the patient in utter disbelief, and although he didn't believe in angels, he could almost believe the patient's words. As if reading the doctor's thoughts, Reb Yaakov began to relate his visit to the Maggid of Mezritch and especially the Maggid's puzzling remark at the end of the visit.

"I can see now, that his remark was completely prophetic and true," Reb Yaakov remarked.

The king's doctor, who had listened intently to the whole episode, sat engrossed in thought. It occurred to him that, great healer though he was, he needed a lot of healing himself – healing of a spiritual nature.

"I would like to meet this saintly man," he finally said. "When you are fully recovered, I would like you to take me to meet him."

Not very long after, the two of them, Reb Yaakov and the king's physician, traveled to Mezritch – Reb Yaakov to become a Chasid and the physician to return to his Jewish roots.

Adapted from Talks and Tales

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Which I took out of the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow (Gen. 48:22)

As Rashi notes, the sword and bow Jacob was referring to were his "wisdom" and "prayer," for allegorically, the Emorite is identified with the Evil Inclination. This battle takes place in every Jew's soul. The Emorite, from the Hebrew word meaning speech, becomes powerful when we speak inappropriately or entertain extraneous thoughts. The way to conquer him is with "wisdom" and "prayer," uttering words of Torah and praying to G-d. (*Torah Ohr*)

Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will befall you in the last days (Gen. 49:1)

As Rashi explains, "He desired to reveal the end [of Israel's exile], but the Divine Presence (Shechina) withdrew from him." Yet if the Divine Presence was no longer upon Jacob, how was he able to utter other prophecies about Israel's future? The answer is that the "Shechina" – Jacob's ability to cause G-dliness to be manifested in the physical world, from the Hebrew shin-chof-nun, (meaning to dwell) – was removed from him, but not his prophetic ability. Jacob knew when the "last days" would occur, but was unable to communicate this knowledge to others. (*The Rebbe*)

He washes his garments in wine (Gen. 49:11)

The Alter Rebbe explained that whenever a Jew does a mitzva, a "garment" for his soul is formed. Wine is symbolic of joy, as it states in Psalms (104:15), "And wine that gladdens man's heart." "Washing our garments in wine" thus means that we should always strive to observe the commandments out of a sense of joy. (*Torah Ohr*)

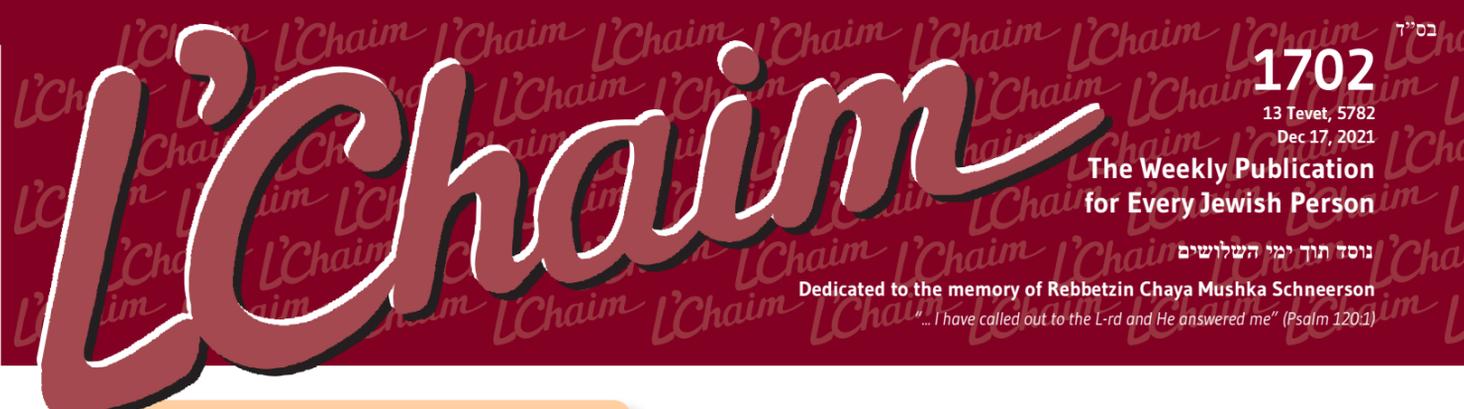
And when he saw that the resting place was good...he bent his shoulder to bear (Gen. 49:15)

Issachar recognized that although leisure is a good and pleasant thing, it can also be dangerous. In times of peace and tranquility the Evil Inclination intensifies its efforts to lead a person astray, which can lead to disaster. Issachar therefore "bent his shoulder to bear" the yoke of Torah, for Torah study is the antidote to this pitfall. (*Likutei Diburim*)



4:12 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
13 Tevet//Dec 17
Torah Portion Vayechi
Shabbat ends 5:16 PM



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week we read the Torah portion of *Vayechi*. The Haftora tells of King David's last words and instructions to his son and successor Solomon. The connection to our portion is that *Vayechi* records Jacob's last words to his children and Joseph's last words to his brothers.

The Haftora tells us that when the time of King David's passing was nearing, he instructed his son Solomon, "I am going the way of all the earth, and you should strengthen yourself and become a man."

Solomon was 12 years old at the time, he was not yet a Bar Mitzva. But these words are significant; they are a message from every parent to their child passing into adulthood.

"Strengthen yourself and become a man," King David said. What is the significance of strengthening himself to become a man?

In Hebrew, there are four terms for the word "man." The term used in this verse, "ish," refers to the emotional side of a person; his feelings, heart, etc.

In Judaism, a boy enters adulthood at 13 (and a girl at 12) because that is when he becomes a Bar Daat (thinking individual) which is the natural development of his intellectual properties. However, King David used the word "ish," which indicates emotions. Wouldn't it have made more sense for King David to have used the word "adam," which refers to the intellectual aspect of a person, his mind, brain, etc.?

The intellectual aspect of a person remains in his thoughts and can only be expressed through his emotional self, in speech and action. The development of a person's mind does not ensure that he will act correctly, which is why we find a lot of smart people doing stupid and destructive things. It takes effort to apply what you know, so that it affects how you act. So while a boy enters adulthood because of the natural development of his intellectual properties, it takes personal effort to apply what he knows to how he acts, because that is not natural.

Therefore David's instructions to Solomon are, as if to say - I know that you are smart, but that won't help you, unless you can apply it to the way you act. So "strengthen yourself," meaning, you will have to put your own effort and hard work in to become an "ish," an emotionally well-developed person. Only then will your great wisdom be useful and serve you well.

The same is true for every bar mitzva boy (and bat mitzva girl). If he wants to become an "ish," he will have to put in the effort.

May our efforts we put into our children be fruitful. May we watch them grow into "mentchen," and may they always be a source of pride to G-d, to the Jewish people, and especially to us.

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.

Global Home

Talk of the world as a global village is already passe. But discussing the world as a global home is a different twist altogether.

In truth, however, Judaism has been teaching for thousands of years that the world is in the process of becoming one, great big home. Home to G-d.

G-d created the world with a purpose: to make it into a "home" for Himself.

We all know what a home is. Home sweet home is a place where we feel totally comfortable, totally at ease. Where we can be ourselves without having to hide anything. With the coming of Moshiach the world will be G-d's home. No longer will G-dliness have to be hidden to a world that is unready or unable to appreciate it. The world and everything in it will be fitting receptors to this G-dliness and G-d will be able to "be Himself," so to speak, in the world of the Redemption.

We are the contractors, the builders, the electricians and the bricklayers of G-d's home. We are its plumbers, tilemen and woodworkers. But G-d is the owner and makes the final decisions.

The 613 mitzvot that G-d gave us are our tools, materials, supplies and instructions. Some are necessary for the foundation and others are for the finishing touches. Some are for the detail work and others are for the basics. But they are all in the original blueprint approved by the Owner.

After thousands of years of working on this great global home (and you thought you had the slowest contractor around!) it's finally complete.

We stand at the threshold of the Redemption and we need only open the door and enter.

But, some ask, how can we say that the home is complete as evil in all its forms and permutations still exists in the world? Maybe we have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go!

Chasidic philosophy explains that good is cumulative whereas evil has no permanent substance. Goodness and holiness are eternal. Hence, when one fulfills a mitzva, it is eternal.

Evil, by contrast, has no true existence: it is no more than a concealment of G-dliness, the same G-dliness that will be revealed in all its glory in the world of the Redemption. Hence, when a person has been punished for his evil, or when he repents, the evil ceases to exist.

Considering, once more, the home in the process of being built, makes it easier to understand the temporary nature of evil as compared to the permanence of good. If a brick is not laid level, a pipe is installed incorrectly, or a wall is painted with a mistaken color, the wrong is righted – the "evil" ceases to exist – and the correction remains.

Since good is eternal, all the accumulated good of all the past generations still exists. And this is why now, specifically, even though superficial appearances might indicate that our generation, or the world, is not worthy, we will soon be privileged to open the door and walk over the threshold of G-d's home into the Redemption.

SLICE OF LIFE

Chanuka Lights Shine Forth



The World's Largest Menora at Fifth Ave and 59th St.reet in New York City erected each year by the Lubavitch Youth Organization. LYO has five other menoras throughout the city.

For over four decades, the presence of large menoras at public locations has been bringing the Rebbe's message of the power of light over darkness to all people. This message is the driving force behind Chabad-Lubavitch's activities and will continue until all darkness has been transformed into light with the coming of Moshiach! Thousands of public menoras put up by Chabad-Lubavitch Centers world-wide, with the number increasing from year to year.



On the seventh night of Chanuka an even larger group gathered at the public menorah lighting in the central square in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. A few days earlier the massive menorah had been toppled by anti-semitic vandals.



Undoubtedly the world's largest Chanuka celebration was the South Florida Chanuka Festival with an overflow crowd of over 20,000 people participating car-side by filling all four massive parking lots of the Big Easy Casino.



Throughout the eight days of the Chanuka, 40 yeshiva students on bicycles, led by a "Mitzvah Tank," biked between the different events in the Buenos Aires, Argentina, spreading Jewish pride and the light of Chanuka.



In 1942 the Nazis gathered all of Rostov's Jews at Zmiyovskaya Balka – the Valley of Death – which became the site of the worst massacre by the Nazis in Russia. This year a menorah was lit there after Rabbi Chaim Danzinger, the Rebbe's emissary in Rostov, Russia, heard a story from 95-year-old Isaac Abramovich. As a child Isaac was at his grandfather Shlomo's menorah lighting each year until his grandfather was murdered by the Nazis together with 27,000 other Jews of Rostov.



The menorah being lit in Bouquete, Panama.



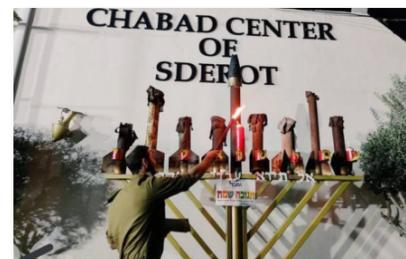
Finally after 32 years of petitioning the local government in Aubervilliers, France to allow a public menorah lighting in front of the City Hall, the petition was accepted this year and 500 people attended the historic menorah lighting.



A public Chanuka menorah was lit at the famous Grace Bay Beach in Turks and Caicos with the governor's participation.



Throughout the eight days and nights of Chanuka dozens of MitzvahTanks traveled throughout Israel bringing the joy of Chanuka to people in cities and villages, as well as soliders at their outposts. Pictures here the Mitzva Tanks are parading around the walls of Jerusalem.



A menorah made out of rockets that were fired from Gaza into Israel was lit in front of the Chabad Center in the southern Israeli city of Sederot. This year alone, nearly 5,000 rockets were fired from Gaza into Southern Israel.

Today Is...

14 Tevet

The Shpola Zeideh ("Grandfather of Shpola"), a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, was a man of intense fervor, far more than any of the Maggid's other disciples. When he visited Rabbi Shneur Zalman in Liadi he related that when he was a child of three he saw the Baal Shem Tov. "He placed his holy hand on my heart and ever since I have felt warm." A gesture of a tzadik, certainly seeing him and hearing his voice, must make an impression never to be forgotten.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

27th of Shevat, 5723 [1963]

Your letter of January 14th reached me with considerable delay. You posed a number of questions regarding our Torah and mitzvot, faith and traditions, etc.

Needless to say, it is difficult to discuss adequately in a letter such questions as you raise. Since you write that you had occasion to spend time with Lubavitcher students, I trust you discussed with them some of these questions, and perhaps may have another opportunity to discuss them further. However, inasmuch as you have raised these questions, I will attempt to answer them briefly.

How can one be certain of the authority of the Tanach [Five Books of Moses, Prophets and Writings] in all its particulars? The answer to this is based on common sense, and if one approaches the question open-mindedly and without prejudice, one must come to this conclusion.

To put it very briefly, going back from our present generation to preceding generations, we have before us the text of the Tanach as it was transmitted from one generation to the other by hundreds and thousands of parents of different backgrounds to their children.

Even during the times of the greatest persecutions, and even after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash [Holy Temple], there always survived hundreds and thousands of Jews who preserved the text of the Tanach and the traditions, so that the chain has never been broken.

Now, assume that someone would come today and wish to add a new chapter or a new section to the Tanach, declaring this new addition to be of the same antiquity and validity as the other parts of the Tanach.

It is clear that no one would accept it on the grounds of the simple question: If this is truly a part of the Tanach, how is it that we have not had it before? The same would apply to any questions as to the dating of any particular section of the Tanach, which itself contains a record of the prophecies beginning

from Moshe Rabbeinu to the latest prophets Zecharia, Haggi and Malachi.

You mention, in passing, certain theories by certain Bible critics. But, as you know, it is not a case where these people have a different tradition from ours, going back to all those ancient generations, but it is rather a case where this one or that one has come up with theories or hypotheses which are not only speculative, but have been shown to be unscientific as well as illogical. For, according to them, it would be a case where thousands upon thousands of Jews have at one point or another suddenly changed their views and attitudes toward the Tanach in radical ways.

With all the arguments about superstitions or hypnosis, etc., such radical changes by hundreds of thousands of people of different backgrounds in different parts of the world, etc. are simply very farfetched and most illogical.

Furthermore, there is a basic difference between our Jewish tradition and those of other faiths, such as Christianity or Islam. For, whereas in the latter cases, the traditions go back to one individual or a limited number of individuals, our traditions go back to a revelation which was experienced by a whole people at once, so that at no time did we have to place our trust in the veracity of one, or a few, individuals.

You mention the existence of other ancient codes among other ancient peoples, which are in many respects similar to the laws of our Torah.

I do not see what difference or contradiction this can have to the authenticity of the Torah. The point is that when a similarity of ideas is found between two peoples, it is necessary to ascertain which one derives from the other.

More important still is not so much the similarity as the difference. Thus, you mention Mesopotamia, and presumably you have in mind the Code of Hammurabi.

A careful comparison will show at once that the similarities are only superficial, but the differences are basic.

For, the Code of Hammurabi is permeated with a spirit of extraordinary cruelty, as for example, in regard to the penalties for theft, etc., and the same is true of other similar codes, whereas the underlying principles of the laws of the Torah are merciful. However, the essential thing is, as mentioned earlier, that there is no proof whatever that the laws of the Torah have been derived from other ancient codes.

continued in next issue

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Although we each have our unique roles in our Divine mission to make this world into G-d's

home, we are all involved to some extent in the roles played by others, as well. Participating in each other's endeavors fosters Jewish unity, making us worthy of G-d's blessings, including – and especially – the ultimate blessing, the Messianic Redemption. (Daily Wisdom by Moshe Wisniefsky from Likutei Sichot, vol. 25)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This week's Torah portion begins, "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years." Commenting on this verse, the Talmud states: "Jacob, our ancestor, did not die."

The Talmud explains that the concept that Jacob did not die is derived from commentaries on the verse in Jeremiah "Do not fear; My servant Jacob, says G-d, 'Do not become dismayed, O Israel. I will save you from afar and your descendants from the land of their captivity.'"

The Talmud concludes, "An equation is established between Jacob and his descendants."

To this discussion in the Talmud, Rashi adds, "Jacob lives forever."

A comprehensive discussion on the subject of Jacob's eternal life is beyond the scope of one column. However, here, we will delve into the interdependency of Jacob's eternal life with that of his descendants – each and every Jew.

The Talmud brings as its proof that Jacob is still alive the above verse from Jeremiah and explains that "it only appears that he died: he is alive."

Therefore, Jacob's vitality, even today, is connected to his descendants – the Jewish people – and their "lives."

What is life? Life for a Jew is Torah and mitzvot. And Jacob's vitality is connected to every Jew's study of Torah and observance of mitzvot.

But what if a Jew does not study so much Torah, or does not observe so many mitzvot? Concerning this question, the Rebbe responds that "an emphasis on the failure of other Jews to conduct themselves according to the Torah and its mitzvot represents a superficial appreciation of their being. Furthermore, saying that there is a lack of life in any of Jacob's descendants detracts from the life of Jacob himself, for his 'life' is dependent on theirs, as it were."

Therefore, to enhance Jacob's eternal life we should continue to upgrade our performance of mitzvot and study of Torah. But, at the same time, we should not judge other people's level of observance or Jewish education. For this in itself detracts from Jacob's life.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חי'ה 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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