

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"... I have called out to the L-rd and He answered me" (Psalm 120:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, *Bo*, we read of the last of the ten plagues that were brought upon the Egyptians: locusts, darkness and death of the firstborn sons. Concerning the plague of darkness, there were three days of opaque darkness and three days where the darkness was tangible and rendered the Egyptians immobile. At the same time, for the Jewish people, there was light.

Everything that the Torah tells us is a lesson that every Jew can learn from. Even the plagues. What the Torah tells us about the exile and exodus is particularly a lesson on how to deal with our present exile and future exodus.

What lesson can we draw from the plague of darkness, especially from the fact that there was darkness and light at the same time?

The Hebrew word for Egypt is "Mitzrayim," which is related to the word *maytzarim*, which means boundaries, constraints or limitations. This is because it is symbolic of the limitations we experience in this physical world.

There are times in this exile, when you experience darkness, in the form of heartbreak, health problems, oppression, etc. Sometimes it seems there is no hope and that no amount of light can overcome this darkness. Other times it is worse, it can seem completely paralyzing. The struggle and pain we experience is very real and hard to get through.

G-d is telling you here that in this place of darkness, can be found a great light, greater than anything you ever experienced before. This light is transformative, it gives new perspective and brings out new abilities. The greater the darkness the greater the light that is to be found.

This doesn't mean that darkness is good, but if you experience darkness, search for the positive in it. Use the new light to brighten your surroundings and make a difference.

It is already several years since G-d chose to give me and my family tremendous hardships. But I am grateful to G-d for the positive that came from our experience. Dina and I have been blessed with an outpouring of love from so many and our writings and Dina's talks have been uplifting people all over. All this would not have been possible without the darkness we experienced, as it brought to the fore love and abilities we never knew we had. How can we not be grateful.

With all this said, we all have had enough darkness in our lives. Now it is time for Moshiach to come and for the darkness to end. Let the light shine uninterrupted in our lives.

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.

What A Cool World!

by Rabbi Eli Friedman

True story.

I was sitting with my kids when suddenly they all cried out in perfect unison: "What a cool world!" For the next few minutes they continued on in this vein, trying to outdo each other in expressing what a cool and beautiful world it is.

Inside I was glowing with pride, rich with the knowledge that my children were wide-eyed enough to observe the beauty around them.

Isn't that wonderful?

OK, so they were playing Subway Surfer and had discovered a new level (world!). But still, it was wonderful to hear.

And anyway, whatever it takes to make kids say "What a beautiful world!" is fine with me.

Because if there is anything the Rebbe strove to teach us it was that we need to train ourselves and our families to see a beautiful world. The world is G-d's personal, beloved garden and though years of neglect and some outright vandalism by the gardeners have duller her beauty, G-d's garden she continues to be and that beauty will never cease.

What are the telltale signs of a person who sees a beautiful world?

Chronic happiness. Irrepressible cheerfulness. Optimism and positivity. Undying hope and trust in the Owner. Favorable judgment. Endless appreciation of simple good deeds.

You get the idea. Someone like the Rebbe. And someone like who the Rebbe wants us to be.

(And lest a suffering cynic say, "Easy for him to say", let us not forget that the Nazis killed the Rebbe's brother, brother-in-law and sisters-in-law and many friends; the Soviets killed his father and even more of his friends and separated him from his mother for 20 years; the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin were never blessed with (biological) children (aside from the hundreds of thousands who considered the Rebbe their father.) The Rebbe never slept more than four hours a night and took not one day of vacation in over 40 years. A walk in the park it wasn't.)

The Rebbe had tolerance for a lot of shtick from a lot of people. People kissed his hand, his beard. People cried on his desk, pouring out their bitter and broken hearts into his seemingly endlessly huge heart. People petitioned him to endorse and partner with countless causes, some wise, some less-so. His opponents mocked his Mitzvah campaigns and brave opinions almost as tirelessly as he advocated them. The Rebbe had patience for ignorance, anger, disagreement, even heresy.

But it is probably safe to say that the one thing the Rebbe did not preach patience for was pessimism or negativity.

So when a new day begins and the sun rises once again over G-d's beautiful world, remember the Rebbe's smile and unlock the wellsprings of hope and confidence in your heart. Start the day with joy, secure in the knowledge that this is going to be the best day of your life yet, for with G-d help and the Rebbe's inspiration, you are going to make sure it is.

Rabbi Friedman, together with his wife Shaini, directs Chabad of Calabasas, CA.

SLICE OF LIFE

The Seven-Year-Old Philanthropist

as told by Mr. Marty Jacobs



This story was taken from *Here's My Story* and is presented with permission from JEM's *My Encounter with the Rebbe* oral history project, which is dedicated to recording first-person testimonies documenting the life and guidance of the Rebbe. MyEncounterblog.com

My father-in-law, Reb Yankel Katz, was an exceptional person, who enjoyed an exceptional relationship with the Rebbe. This relationship actually started with the Previous Rebbe, back when my father-in-law was just a boy, living in turn-of-the-century Chicago.

He told me that when he was seven years old, he did not like going to synagogue with his father. His father had Lubavitch roots, wore a long black coat and had a beard, but did not consider himself an adherent. In fact, he didn't very much like chasidim, or more accurately, he didn't like the chasidic school of thought. The synagogue he attended was filled with people who were similarly opposed to it. Young Yankel Katz, however, was very attracted to Chasidism, and didn't feel comfortable there.

So, one day he walked into a shul that prayed with the Nusach Ari liturgy – in accordance with Chabad custom – and he liked it. It was at that shul that he first heard about the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok, who had not yet come to America. By the age of eight, he was sending letters to the Rebbe in Europe, along with some change as a charitable donation, and the Rebbe himself would respond. It was then, he said, that he started getting

very interested in Lubavitch.

It wasn't until 1929, however, that he finally had an opportunity to meet the Rebbe, who made a stop in Chicago while visiting the US that year. And after the Rebbe moved permanently to the US in 1940, his connection to him, and eventually to his successor Rabbi Menachem Mendel, grew even stronger.

Often, a Rebbe doesn't hear much good news; his followers turn to him when things are bad. The Rebbe himself once said as much to my father-in-law: "I am a *tzaros* Rebbe – a misfortune Rebbe. When someone has troubles, I hear about their troubles; when there is good news, sometimes I might hear about it." So one of the things my-father-in-law thought he needed to do was to cheer the Rebbe up with good things.

To him, they weren't just Rebbes; he saw them as his friends. The Previous Rebbe used to tell him the same: He had many Chasidim but very few friends, he said, and he viewed Yankel Katz as a friend – yedidi, in Hebrew.

He was also a very significant and early supporter of Lubavitch, not just as an eight-year-old boy sending change, but continuing throughout his life. After his passing, we learned that when the Previous Rebbe arrived in America, my father-in-law gave him a checkbook to use, with every check signed but with no amounts filled in. Even his family didn't know that he had done so – he simply would not talk about the charity he gave.

However, not long before his death, he revealed something that he wanted me to know. He said that in 1940, he received a call from the Previous Rebbe, asking him to donate a particular amount of money. Without even questioning what the money would be used for, he wired the entire sum.

The next Jewish holiday after that, he came to New York to spend the Yom Tov in the Rebbe's synagogue, which was in the newly purchased building at 770 Eastern Parkway. "This is your building," the Rebbe told him. "It's your donation!" I don't know what the amount was, but that wire funded at least part of the purchase of 770.

But other than that, my father-in-law did not discuss his charitable contributions. He wanted nothing in return for his donations. As he said, "No building names, no plaques, no dinners, no memorials." His *tzedaka* [charitable donations] needed no special recognition; it stood on its own.

I had some interesting experiences of my own with the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Schneerson, including one that also concerns *tzedaka*. I was in Japan on business and Reb Yankel must have mentioned to the Rebbe that I would be in Tokyo. Before Shabbat, I received a phone call at my hotel from Rabbi Berel Levy of OK, the kosher certification agency.

"This is Berel Levy," I heard as I picked up the phone. "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, I know," I replied. We had met very briefly years earlier.

"I'm in the Philippines on matters of kosher supervision, and will be here for Shabbat, but the Rebbe asked that I call you," he began, before getting straight to the point: "He is very concerned. The Tokyo Jewish community is planning on building a new synagogue and there is some disagreement among the members as to whether they will include a *mikveh* in the new building.

"The Rebbe knows you're in Tokyo and that you'll probably go to the synagogue for Shabbat. While you're there, you'll probably make a donation, and the Rebbe said he wants to partner with you in your *tzedaka*. He is asking you to make clear that your donation is for the new *mikveh*, and to write a letter to the community about the importance of mitzvah of *mikveh*, noting that your contribution is being made in partnership with the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

Of course, I did as he asked, and I wrote a letter about my donation for the Tokyo *mikveh*, in English. I asked that the letter be posted somewhere publicly in the building, and when I came back on Sunday or Monday, I saw that it was.

After I returned home, I didn't give much thought to the trip. A few months went by, and I got a call at my office in Washington, D.C., which was then located at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, just down the street from the White House, from someone who said he was in town. He explained that he had just attended a meeting in the White House and wanted to come see me. "The Rebbe owes you money," he said.

When he arrived at the office, the man gave me a hundred-dollar bill and an explanation: "The Rebbe said that you donated some *tzedaka* in Tokyo, and this is his share."

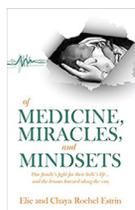
That was how I once gave *tzedaka* in partnership with the Rebbe. I don't know what kind of impact my letter had, but my understanding is that there is a *mikveh* in Tokyo today.

Mr. Marty Jacobs is an attorney residing in Bal Harbour, Florida.



Medicine, Miracles & Mindsets

When their sixth child was diagnosed in utero with complex congenital heart and gastrointestinal defects, Elie and Chaya Rochel Estrin knew they had a tough ride ahead. Their determined battle to save baby Nissi was waged in spite of doctors' predictions for a six-hour lifespan. It was a struggle inspired by the Jewish approach to life, deep Chasidic insights, and spurred on by overt miracles – resulting in the remarkable medical journey recounted here. *Of Medicine, Miracles, and Mindsets* is a candid journal of fear and determination, a passionately eloquent yet humorous chronicle of the beauty and the ugliness in hospitals, of patient advocacy, of unwavering parental love, and of optimism and trust in G-d. Rabbi Elie and Chaya Rochel Estrin co-directed Chabad at University of Washington in Seattle for 13 years. Currently Rabbi Estrin is the Military Personnel Liaison for the Aleph Institute, combining his Jewish outreach experience with his military position as a Chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve.



Today Is...

7 Shevat

When Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidim, was nine-years-old he studied geometry and astronomy. At age ten he composed a calendar for 15 years. When he was 12-years-old, he lectured publicly on Maimonides intricate laws of *kidush hachodesh* (the sanctification of the moon). The preeminent Torah-scholars who were present at that time in the study-hall were utterly overwhelmed.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

24th of Teveth, 5722 [1962]

To the Participants in the Annual Dinner of the Lubavitch Foundation, London,
Greeting and Blessing:

The Annual Event, taking place in such close proximity to Yud Shevat, the *Yahrzeit-Hilula* [anniversary of the passing] of my father-in-law of saintly memory, will, I trust, bear the imprint of his influence and inspiration.

In the course of his allotted life span on this earth my father-in-law had seen, and contended with, many different worlds. But whether it was under Czarist Russia or under Soviet Russia, during the two World Wars or during their aftermaths, in the Old World or in the New – he was always the indefatigable *Manhig Yisroel* [Jewish leader], dedicated heart and soul to the spiritual and material well-being of our people.

...My father-in-law was as vitally concerned with the *Aleph-Beis* ["beginner"] child as with the advanced *Yeshivah* students and his love for his disciples and followers to whom he expounded the inner secrets of the Torah was only matched by his love for his fellow Jew in some distant country, deprived of the most elementary educational facilities.

Jewish education was his primary concern, and the same spirit of dedication permeated his emissaries who pioneered in many an educational field under his inspiring initiative and guidance. This work truly expressed the unity of our people through the Torah which, on every level from *Aleph-Beis* to *Raze-dirazin* (Innermost secrets), is the unifying forces uniting the one people by means of the one Torah to the One G-d.

...The preservation of the Jewish way of life, according to the Law of Life (*Toras Chaim*) is surely the responsibility not only of the leaders of the community but also of every Jewish individual, man and woman. I prayerfully hope that everyone whom this

MOSHIACH MATTERS

With a mighty hand G-d brought us forth out of Egypt (*Ex. 13:14*) G-d's "mighty hand" was

message reaches will want to have a share in this most worthy endeavor, and thus bring G-d's blessings to the community at large, and to themselves and their families in particular, materially and spiritually.

With blessing,
8th of Shevat, 5725 [1965]

Dr. -
Greeting and Blessing:

I duly received your letter of December 30th, in which I read with interest about your new position. This is undoubtedly a true promotion, both professionally as well as in the opening up of new horizons in your work for the spiritual benefit of the many, and when the two are coupled it is indeed a true and complete promotion.

Ambition grows with success, and having advanced, one is not satisfied with the previous increment. The same, at least, should be true in the spiritual sense.

May G-d grant that this be the forerunner of further advancement in the same direction; which is indeed a natural aspiration, as our Sages declared, "He who possesses 100, desires to possess 200, and he who possesses 200, desires 400." This indicates that the ambition grows with success, and having advanced, one is not satisfied with the previous increment. The same, at least, should be true in the spiritual sense.

We are now in particularly auspicious days, as we are about to observe the *Yahrzeit-Hilula* of my father-in-law of saintly memory, on the 10th of Shevat. Inasmuch as *Tzadikim* [the righteous], the faithful shepherds that they are, continue to take care of those whom they had taken care of in their lifetime on this earth, it is certain that my father-in-law of saintly memory is a faithful intercessor in behalf of the institutions which are carried on in this spirit, and those who are actively engaged in their support and expansion.

With blessing,

directed not only toward Pharaoh and the Egyptians but toward the Children of Israel, as some Jews preferred to remain in slavery and were redeemed by G-d against their will. Likewise, G-d will redeem us from our present exile with a "mighty hand," taking with Him even those Jews who might prefer to remain in exile. (*The Rebbe*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

"You ask how you can be bound to me when I do not know you personally... the true bond is created by studying Torah. When you study my discourses, read the talks and associate with those dear to me... and you fulfill my request... in this is the bond."

*This coming Wednesday, on 10 Shevat, we commemorate the *yahrzeit* of the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn. The above lines were written by the Previous Rebbe in response to the question of how to become bound with him.*

The tenth of Shevat is also the anniversary of the Rebbe's acceptance of leadership. How do we maintain and enhance our connection with the leader of our generation? By studying his talks and by following his directives.

In a talk in 5746 (1986) the Rebbe said: "Every single Jew must perform his Divine service in a manner similar to and befitting the days of Moshiach and the subsequent era of the Resurrection of the Dead. This is exhibited first and foremost through faith, anticipation and knowledge that supernatural events will occur in the days of Moshiach, namely, the Resurrection of the Dead..."

"Belief in these concepts must be with certainty, and must be as unshakably firm as the belief in the Ten Commandments. Obviously the belief in the Resurrection of the Dead requires that same degree of certainty and anticipation. This must be emphasized so much more in our present generation, when many Messianic signs are unfolding."

In these last moments before the true and complete Redemption, may we fill our time with only good – the good of Torah and mitzvot; with study of the Rebbe's teachings (especially those relating to Moshiach and the Redemption as the Rebbe emphasized numerous times the importance of such study in preparing ourselves for the Messianic Era); and with fulfilling all of the Rebbe's directives, until the time that we are reunited with the Rebbe once again – "and he will redeem us."

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.



Published by
Lubavitch Youth Organization
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213
phone 718 778 6000

Chairman
Director
Program director
Secretary
Administrator
Editor
Associate Editor
Chairman Editorial Comm.
Rebbe photo

Rabbi Dovid Raskin ז"ל
Rabbi Shmuel Butman
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
Yehudis Cohen
David Y. B. Kaufmann ז"ל
Rabbi Nissen Mangel
S. Roumani

L'Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard.

All contents © 2022 by L.Y.O. ISSN 1050 0480
L'Chaim Subscriptions
For a one year subscription send \$47, payable to LYO (\$60 outside of U.S.A.) to:
L'Chaim, 1408 President St, Bklyn, NY, 11213
L'Chaim on the Internet
Current issues and archives: lchaimweekly.org
Learn about Moshiach
Visit www.moshiach.com or call (718) 953 6100

IT HAPPENED ONCE



by Cochava Gajer as told to Musia Kaplan, condensed from the *N'Shei Chabad Newsletter*

I was born in the suburbs of Paris to Leah and Moishe Malca, *obm*. My three siblings and I had a traditional Jewish upbringing. When I was in my early teens, my family took a trip to Israel. I immediately fell in love with the Holy Land. I felt a sense of belonging that I had never felt before and decided that as soon as I graduated high school I would move there.

After graduation, I turned down an acceptance to a nursing program in Paris and flew to Israel. My name changed from Brigitte Etoile to its Hebrew equivalent, Cochava, but that was only the beginning of many changes. My brother moved to Israel that same year to study and my two sisters soon moved as well. My parents followed, so we were all together again.

In June of 1982, the first war with Lebanon broke out. Still in my 20s, I volunteered as a soldier for the IDF. After basic training I was transferred near the Israeli-Lebanon border. Because I was fluent in French, Spanish, Hebrew and English, I was put in a unit called Kishur LaUm. We were the IDF liaison in charge of coordinating with the U.N. forces stationed in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Every day, we dealt with government officials and officers on a wide range of international affairs. We organized rescue operations for our wounded soldiers, and negotiated returns for our kidnapped soldiers.

Throughout my service, I was stationed in different army bases around the country. One time, I was stationed near my parents' in Tel Aviv. My sister Miriam and her husband had become close to Rabbi Motty Gal, the Chabad emissary in Ramat Gan. Rabbi Gal invited my sister to a class but she was too shy to go by herself. When she tried to convince me to join her, I staunchly refused. Eventually, I agreed to go on the condition that I wouldn't change my clothing.

Rabbi Gal was giving a class on the beauty and holiness of Shabbat. The more he talked about the serenity of Shabbat, the more I felt my body actually relax. All the stress and anxiety I was carrying faded away. I was especially confused because my parents had observed Shabbat all my life, but I had never felt that sense of calm before. A voice in my head said perhaps I should explore this Judaism thing further. But the fear of having to adjust my lifestyle pushed it away.

That intense feeling from the class didn't leave me. Finally, I could no longer ignore it. I decided to go home for a weekend and try to fully observe Shabbat with my parents. I had no idea what to do, so I just imitated. On Friday night, I lit the Shabbat candles with my mother. In the morning, I got up with my father at 6:00 a.m. to go to shul. After the meal, my father went for a nap, so I took one too.

While napping I had a deep dream. I was sitting on the roots of an enormous tree. In front of me sat a man. He had a white beard and mesmerizing blue eyes. I was speaking to him like I would speak to a good friend. Although I didn't know him, I felt totally safe to express myself and I spoke for what seemed like hours. So many different thoughts bubbled out of me. After a long time, he nodded his head and told me that there was no need to bring up so many different points, because it was all coming from one deep place.

"The only thing you have to do," the man told me, "is continue walking straight down the path. Don't look right, don't look left. No matter what happens, just keep walking."

Suddenly, the scenery shifted and I was standing in a desert facing a long, straight path. It was scorching hot and the glare of the sun burned my eyes. I turned around to say something to the man, but he said, "No. Just keep walking."

Then I woke up. After Shabbat, when I went to sleep for the night, I had the dream again! I sat on the roots of the giant tree and spoke to the man. Again, I felt comfortable to talk but this time it didn't seem like hours. After a short time, the man motioned with his hand for me to stop.

"There's no need for all of this," he told me. "The only thing you have to do is continue walking straight down the path. Don't look right, don't look left. No matter what happens, just keep walking straight."

Who was this man and what was he trying to tell me? I went to my mother and tried to describe the man in my dream, thinking maybe it was a relative or ancestor I had never met. My mother couldn't figure out who the man was, but she told me not to worry about it.

I didn't know where to turn next. I told my sister I would like to go with her to the next Torah class. We went together to the next class, and as soon as we opened the door of the Chabad House I saw a big picture hanging in the foyer. My heart jumped out of my chest.

"Who is that?" I pointed to the picture and asked the secretary.

"That's the Rebbe," she responded.

Dedicated to the Rebbe on 72 Years of Leadership

whose teachings and example are a never-ending source of life for all mankind. May we continue in his path and complete the mission with which he has charged us: to make the world conscious of the imminent Redemption and to prepare the environment where this ideal can be realized.

to dedicate an issue
call (718) 776 6000

"Who is the Rebbe?" I asked. The secretary told me that the Rebbe was leading the Jewish world from his headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. I knew instantly that I had to meet him. Over the next few months, I welcomed Jewish practice into my life, and was surprised by how much I loved it. After completing my service in the IDF, I decided to go to New York. I was excited to take my Jewish studies further.

I applied for a visa to America three times, and was rejected three times. After the third time, the official in the American Embassy asked me why I kept trying. I told him that as a religious Jew, I desperately wanted to observe the High Holidays with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The man was surprised.

"What better place could there be for a religious Jew to observe the holidays than in Israel?" he asked me.

I tried to explain to him how special and holy Tishrei with the Lubavitcher Rebbe was. Finally, in September of 1986, he gave me a visa that I still have attached to my passport today. It says: "TO VISIT LUBAVITCHER RABBI." To the best of my knowledge, no other visa was ever granted with those words.

I went straight from the airport to 770 Eastern Parkway. I was very dejected when I realized that I couldn't just show up and talk to the Rebbe. The next morning, I joined a throng of people outside 770 waiting for the Rebbe to pass by on his way to morning prayers. I am a petite person, and could barely see a thing through the shoulders of the people around me. My heart was broken. I had no way to talk to the Rebbe or even let him know I was there. To my surprise, as the Rebbe walked past where I was standing, he turned and stared directly at me through the shoulders of the people around me. His eyes locked with mine, and he gave me a gentle salute with the tip of his hat. I felt his eyes piercing the depths of my soul. I realized that not only did the Rebbe know I was there, but he knew exactly what was going on in my mind and heart. I was seen. I was home.



For I have hardened his heart. (Ex. 10:1)

Pharaoh's evil decrees and the trials and tribulations of the Jews during the Egyptian exile did not come about because Pharaoh had so decided of his own accord. Rather, G-d hardened Pharaoh's heart, eventually causing all of His wonders and miracles to be revealed. We can learn from this that everything comes from G-d; when a Jew encounters something that prevents him from properly serving G-d, this is meant only as a test, whose purpose is to awaken the powers hidden within the soul. When he or she overcomes this test, and perseveres in his holy mission in life, he is then rescued from all difficulties. (*The Rebbe*)

They emptied out – vayinatzu – Egypt. (Ex. 12:36)

The purpose of the descent of the Children of Israel to the land of Egypt was to elevate the sparks of holiness-nitzutzot (from the same root as vayinatzu) that were in the land. Indeed, the Jews succeeded to such an extent that when they left Egypt, they "emptied it out" and left it bare of all the holiness it had contained. (*Torah Ohr*)



4:27 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
5 Shevat/Jan 7
Torah Portion
Shabbat ends 5:31 PM