

When Dov Ber (later to be known as The Maggid of Mezritch) was a small child of five around the turn of the 18th century, his parents' home was consumed by fire. The child was upset by his mother's display of grief and he asked her: "Mother, is it right to grieve so much for the loss of our house?" "G-d forbid," she replied, "I am not grieving because of the loss of the house, but over the loss of the document of our family tree burnt in the fire. That document traced our descent to Rabbi Yochanan Hasandler who was a direct descendant of King David."

"If so," replied the child, "I shall start for you a new dynasty." In his seventy-odd years of service in this world, Dov Ber fulfilled the promise he made to his mother, becoming a remarkable Torah scholar and later assuming from the Baal Shem Tov (BeShT) the mantle of leadership of the growing Chasidic Movement

Like many of the Baal Shem Tov's sixty outstanding disciples Rabbi Dov Ber was won over to his master's controversial teachings in a profound and uniquely personal way. Once Rabbi Mendel of Bar, a leading disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, was staying next door to Rabbi Dov Ber. He happened to overhear the teachings of the "Maggid" and was fascinated by the explanations he heard. Stepping in to meet the teacher, he was shocked by the sickly appearance of the man. "Don't you know that there is a Baal Shem Tov? Go to him and he will cure you!" said Rabbi Mendel. The Maggid replied curtly with a quote from the Psalms, "It is better to take refuge in G-d than to trust in man!"

When Rabbi Mendel returned to Medzibozh he praised the Maggid but the Besht replied that he was already aware of him, and in fact, greatly desired that the Maggid come to him.

Over the course of the next few years the Maggid vacillated in his desire to meet with the Besht, but finally decided to travel to Medzibozh. Upon his arrival he expected to hear profound and wondrous expositions on the Torah, but instead the Besht regaled him with seemingly meaningless stories about coachmen and horses and similar themes. These stories were parables alluding to abstruse topics in Torah. Dov Ber was put off and decided to leave at once.

Just as he was about to leave, the Besht sent for him and questioned him, saying: "Are you well versed in Torah study?" Having received a positive answer, he continued, "Yes, I know that you are a scholar. Do you also know Kabbalah?" The Maggid replied that he did. With that the Baal Shem Tov questioned him on a passage, asking him to explicate it. When the Maggid presented his interpretation the Besht told him, "You don't understand it at all!" The Maggid reviewed the passage once more, and with assurance replied that it was certainly correct, and if not, he would like to hear a better explanation.

To that the Besht said: "Rise and stand!" As the Maggid gazed around him, the Baal Shem Tov interpreted the passage which referred to various angels. As he spoke the house was ablaze with light and the angels described in the passage were actually visible.

Over the course of perhaps two extended visits in Medzibozh the Maggid was able to absorb all the teachings of the Besht and take his place as the foremost disciple of the master.

In the tempestuous years following, the two spiritual geniuses were bound together in an extraordinary relationship of master and disciple. In the year 1760 when the Baal Shem Tov passed away, the Chasidic Movement was at a crucial juncture, requiring strong, dynamic leadership. The matter of succession was in question, as the Baal Shem Tov had left no specific instructions for his followers. In a move of respect and honor for the Besht, his only son Rabbi Tzvi was appointed interim leader. He served in that capacity for one year.

The disciples had gathered for the first yearzeit of the Besht and were seated around a table with Rabbi Tzvi at their head. He had just concluded his Torah discourse

when he rose and said: "Today my father appeared to me and informed me that the Shechinah and Heavenly Assembly that used to be with him 'have gone over this day to Rabbi Dov Ber; therefore my son, transfer to him the leadership in the presence of the Chevraya Kadisha (Holy Society). Let him sit in my place at the head of the table and you, my son, sit in his place.'" When he finished speaking he removed the white robe symbolizing his office and placed it upon the shoulders of Rabbi Dov Ber.

Thus, leadership passed to the Maggid. In a short time he was able to consolidate his leadership, and although some of the older chasidim did not become his disciples, he was ultimately recognized as the official successor and spokesman for the entire Chasidic Movement. The yearzeit of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, is on the 19th of Kislev.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth (Gen. 28:14)

G-d promised Jacob that the Jewish nation will be like the humble dust: Everyone treads upon it, but in the end, the dust has the last word and covers all. The Jewish people, after suffering at the hands of the nations of the world, will eventually be victorious and prevail. (*Tzror Hamor*)

Surely G-d is present in this place and I did not know it (28:16)

When does man feel the presence of G-d? When "I did not know it"--when the I is ignored and the person works on negating his own ego. (*Panim Yafot*)

Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and wives upon the camels (31:17)

When Jacob finally left Charan to return to Israel, he was a rich man with many possessions, though he had arrived there with neither silver, gold, nor cattle. Although at first glance it appears that Jacob's living amongst the idolators of Charan was a step backward, it was in this merit that he acquired his great wealth and established his family. So too, is it with this final Exile. Although the trials and tribulations have been many, when Moshiach comes and brings the Final Redemption, we will first realize the great advantage and good that came from it. (*Lubavitcher Rebbe, shlita*)

And he lay down in that place (28:11)

Our rabbis teach that this was the first time Jacob lay his head down to sleep, having spent the previous 20 years working in Lavan's house, saying the entire book of Psalms each night. We learn from Jacob's behavior that even as we go about our daily lives and attend to our jobs and responsibilities, our "heads" should be concerned with Torah and our thoughts directed toward holy matters. (*Likutei Sichot*)

4:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
5 Kislev / December 6
 Torah Portion *Vayeitzei*
 Shabbat ends **5:13 pm**



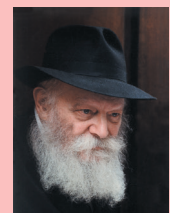
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בס"י
1851
 5 Kislev, 5785
 December 6, 2024

The Weekly Publication
 for Every Jewish Person
 תוסד תורה ומי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
 "To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
 on the Torah portion

The accounts of our ancestors found in the Torah are not merely chronicles of Jewish history. Every part of the Torah is included to teach us how to worship G-d and conduct our lives.

This week's Torah portion, *Vayeitzei*, speaks of Jacob's departure from Israel to Charan. In Charan he worked for his Uncle Lavan for 20 years, married Rachel and Leah, and established the Twelve Tribes. *Vayeitzei* also relates his return from Charan to the Holy Land.

Jewish mysticism explains the difference between Jacob's departure to Charan and his triumphant return. After setting out on his journey, Jacob merited a personal revelation from G-d ("And behold, the L-rd stood above him"). The Torah describes the circumstances: "And he reached a certain place"--Jacob had to be in a particular place in order to receive the revelation, and then it was only in the form of a dream. But we find 20 years later, when Jacob was returning from Charan, "angels of G-d met him there"--the angels, and G-d Himself (as explained in the Zohar), actively went out and sought him. Furthermore, this time Jacob was awake and not dreaming.

We learn from Jacob's 20-year sojourn in Charan how much can be accomplished by "descent"--by putting one's physical efforts into bringing holiness into the world. Every Jew must likewise "descend" into his own "Charan"--where he must wrestle with his own version of "Lavan the Aramean," and emerge victorious, having successfully elevated the sparks of holiness hidden in the physical world.

This is no easy task, and it requires much study and preparation. Before setting out into the world, a Jew must first ready himself in "the Holy Land," which symbolizes the highest level of holiness. Before a Jew can positively influence his surroundings, he must be sufficiently educated and knowledgeable in Torah. Before Jacob left Israel for Charan, he prepared himself by learning in the yeshiva of Eber for 14 years. Every Jew must likewise prepare himself by dedicating time to Torah study. This underscores the importance of a good Jewish education, and in particular, the necessity of beginning a child's Jewish education even before he is ready for formal schooling.

The theme of preparing oneself before embarking on life's journey is also expressed in a Jew's daily life. A Jew does not rely solely on his own power and talents, but rather, begins his day by praying and asking for G-d's help in carrying out his mission in this world.

By preparing ourselves properly before attending to our daily concerns, we are assured of success in both the spiritual and physical realms.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Well Therapy

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

THREE MATCHES

The Midrash relates that three of the greatest men of the Jewish faith encountered their future wives at wells of water: Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

Now, we could understand the site of a stream or a river as being uniquely conducive for romance.

But what was it about underground wells that brought about the union of our original fathers and mothers?

THE PATH TO MARRIAGE

Like all of the stories in the Torah, this one, too, contains psychological and spiritual symbolism that may assist us in our own efforts to find a spouse and maintain a meaningful relationship with that person.

A well, unlike other pools of water, contains opposite components.

On one hand, the well is of no value without human effort and toil. Unlike the readily exposed rain or ocean water, we must dig hard, and sometimes deep, to uncover the spring of water hidden below the crust of the earth.

On the other hand, we human beings do not create the flow of water of the well; our efforts merely expose that which already exists fully, prior to our labor.

This is the Torah approach to marriage as well. In the words of the Zohar, "A wife and her husband are two halves of the same soul." Each of our matches, just like a well, is made in heaven. The connection is there beforehand; the flow of water-energy from your soul to your future spouse's soul is already in existence. It may however be completely concealed

and the human job is to search, dig and expose that inner source of water.

WHEN CONFLICT EMERGES

And just as we cannot create a well, we can neither destroy it. We can stuff it, obstruct it or divert its flow, but we cannot annihilate it. When you experience a conflict with your spouse, do not conclude that the relationship is dead.

The bond between a wife and husband is an inherent condition, not an acquired one. It is sown into the very fabric of both of their souls. Your relationship is not subject to destruction.

Yet this may lay buried beneath lots of sand and gravel, and each of us needs to be committed to take a shovel in our hands and bring to the surface the inner wellspring of love that bond us to our partner in life.

Our fathers encountered their wives by wells to teach us that the relationship between spouses is etched into our very souls. Our labor is only to expose and enhance a preexisting bond and oneness.

HARD WORK

The marriages of Isaac, Jacob and Moses came about particularly through much sweat and toil. Jacob, as this week's portion tells the story, labored 14 years for Rachel.

The well symbolized their own attitude towards finding a spouse: The relationship, just like a well, is a preexisting reality. But since it is hidden beneath the surface of the earth, each person must dig in order to expose and maintain the inherent relationship between the husband and the wife.

