בס"ד
1950
17 Kislev, 5787
November 27, 2026
The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person
נוסד תחת ימי השלושים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)

IT HAPPENED ONCE

A very wealthy man, about 50 years-old, lived in St. Petersburg. He had been born into a family of Chabad Chasidim but was now not only far from the traditions of his family, but from all aspects of Jewish life. However, since his family had been prominent and devoted chasidim, when pictures of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, (known affectionately as the Alter Rebbe) the first Chabad Rebbe, and his grandson, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, became available, he commissioned an artist to make copies for him which he framed and placed in his study.

One day, he had urgent business that involved a Chabad Chasid and decided to visit the Chasid in his home. As he walked inside, he saw tables set for a festive meal and the whole house was alive with singing and rejoicing. When the Chasid saw his business associate arrive, he immediately welcomed him and ushered him into his office. There they discussed the business at hand.

When the business was concluded, the guest decided to ask his host the reason for the celebration. "Is it a family simcha (happy occasion), perhaps? If so, I would like to wish you mazel tov (congratulations)."

"It is indeed a family simcha," replied the host. "We are speaking, right now, with our fathers and grandfathers in the Garden of Eden. And we were so glad to hear regards from there that we decided to celebrate."

The guest was dumfounded. He, of course, had absolutely no idea what his host was talking about.

Seeing the guests confusion, the host explained, "Today is the nineteenth of Kislev. You might remember from your childhood that this is the anniversary of the liberation of the Alter Rebbe from the Tainy Soviet where he was imprisoned on false charges of anti-government activities. In the area of the Garden of Eden where the Alter Rebbe now resides, there is tremendous rejoicing. All of the righteous have assembled there to wish him mazel tov on his liberation and on the tens of thousands of people who have become Chasidim.

"Our fathers and grandfathers, who used to have to travel long distances to visit their Rebbe, are with the Alter Rebbe for the big celebration, too. We, their children, are rejoicing together with them."

The Chasid's words penetrated his guest's heart. He remembered his childhood, when Chasidic gatherings such as this one used to take place in his own father's home. He felt inspired to join in this gathering, if only for but a moment. But then he thought to himself, "How can I, coming from where I was and being where I am now, even consider joining in this spiritual celebration?"

The host, sensing the guest's feelings, invited him to join them. "While you're in there, you'll get regards from your father and grandfather, too!" The Chasid made the man feel right at home.

An hour passed, then two and three. The guest forgot that he had plans to meet some acquaintances at the theater that evening. He was drawn so deeply into the joy and excitement of the celebration that he even imagined himself a young boy, once more, back in his parents' home. He remembered the celebration that was held each year in his grandfather's shul. He recalled the festive meal that his grandfather held each time he came home from a visit with his rebbe in the far-off town of Lubavitch.

After many hours had passed, the businessman went home. He went into his study and took a long, hard look at the picture of the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Menachem Mendel which hung there. Then he took out a prayer book and prayed the evening service, sobbing from the deepest recesses of his heart.

Within a few days, he had bought himself new dishes and had made his entire kitchen kosher. He was taking the first steps in returning to his roots.

Dedicated in memory of
Sarah Sophia Bat Sulha
נפטרה ח"י כסלו, תשע"ג
18 Kislev, 5773
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה'
By Victor Braha

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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah portion

Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem... (Gen. 33:18)

The great sage Rashi explains that "in peace" - shalem - is to be interpreted as whole. Jacob came to Shechem whole: in body because he was healed of his limp; in wealth since, though he gave a large gift to appease Esau, he lacked nothing; and in his Torah [knowledge] because he did not forget any of his learning during his stay in Laban's house.

Rashi explains this to mean that Jacob was sound in body, his wealth was intact, and his Torah-observance was uncompromised. We learn from Jacob to always strive for excellence in all areas of our lives. Even a person whose primary path in the worship of G-d is through practical mitzvot - charity and good deeds - should also strive to be perfect in study. *(Likutei Sichot)*

Now, let my master go ahead before his servant, and I will move at my own slow pace, according to the pace of the work that is before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my master, to Seir. (Gen. 33:14)

Jacob promised to visit Esau at his home in Seir. However, he never went to Seir. Did Jacob lie? No. For he will go in the days of Moshiach, as it is says (Obadiah 1:21): "And saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Esau." *(Rashi)*

And You said, "I will surely do good with you" (Gen. 32:13)

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov used to say: "Master of the Universe! Everything You do is most assuredly good, but there is a good which is immediately apparent, and a good which does not seem to be so at first. May it be Your will to bestow upon us only that type of good which is immediately revealed!"

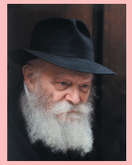
I am not worthy of all the mercy...that You have done (Gen. 32:11).

The Hebrew for "I am not worthy" can also be translated, "I have become small." Jacob our ancestor said: The great mercy which G-d has done for me has caused me to become more small and humble. The mercy which G-d shows toward a person brings him closer to G-d, and the closer one is to G-d, the more humble he becomes. *(Tanya)*



4:12 PM *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
17 Kislev / November 27
Torah Portion *Vayishlach*
Shabbat ends 5:14 PM

LIVING WITH THE REBBE



from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, relates Jacob's statement that, "I have sojourned - garti - with Laban." The great commentator Rashi notes that the word garti has the numerical equivalent of 613. Thus, by using the word garti, Jacob implied that, "Though I sojourned with the wicked Laban, I have observed the 613 mitzvot (commandments)."

"Sojourned" implies that Jacob lived as a stranger with his father-in-law. All aspects of Laban, all the physical objects of oxen, donkeys, flocks, menservants and handmaids, were to Jacob no more than garti - something alien, strange, transitory. They were not his true self.

Where was Jacob not a stranger? Where did he not merely sojourn, but live? His true home was his soul and its involvement in studying Torah and performing mitzvot.

Once, Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch (whose birthday we celebrate this coming week on the 19th of Kislev), was asked why his home was furnished so sparsely; it contained only a table and chairs which converted into a bed at night.

The Maggid explained, "At home, one needs everything. On a journey, though, it doesn't matter if the temporary dwelling and furniture are not so beautiful; and after all, it is just a journey." And for him, his life was just a transition, a journey to the eternal world of truth.

By keeping his material concerns in a state of "strangeness," Jacob assured not only that they would not interfere with his spiritual life, but also that a dimension of spirituality would be infused even into the material - transforming matter into something spiritual and holy.

The Torah and its instructions are everlasting, relevant to every Jew in all times and places. The lesson of the above is as follows:

Every Jew must realize that although his environment, the world, may hardly be perfect, each individual can prepare himself and everything related to him for the complete redemption.

This preparation is by means of "I have sojourned with Laban": the realization that all of this world is no more than garti - furnishings and baggage that one needs on a journey.

No matter what the duration of a person's life, whether seventy, eighty, or a hundred and twenty years, these years are no more than a stranger's temporary sojourn. From this perspective, the physical is not in conflict with the spiritual. In fact, this attitude will result in having prosperity even in the physical sense.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

More Than Just a Day Off

Statutory holidays, long weekends, and seasonal bank closures dominate our modern schedules. For most people, these familiar calendar landmarks immediately bring to mind automated out-of-office replies, major online sales events, and a welcome chance to step back, rest, and recharge from the demanding pace of daily life.

In Jewish tradition, however, special occasions, Yahrzeits, and key historical anniversaries offer a completely different dimension of purpose. Our Sages frequently highlight how the spiritual energy and vitality of the entire week flow directly from Shabbat. Dynamic Chasidic thought builds upon this profound insight, demonstrating how every meaningful date across the Jewish calendar carries its own unique potential to elevate our daily routines and shape the entire year ahead.

During Passover, for instance, we intentionally tap into the inner drive to break free from our personal limitations, emotional constraints, and rigid mental boundaries. Looking ahead to Chanukah, we draw enduring inspiration from the courageous Hasmonean Maccabees to reclaim our sense of sacred purpose and rededicate ourselves to vibrant spiritual values in everyday contemporary life.

This transformative process works because the core spiritual momentum of historic events resurfaces naturally on their annual anniversaries. Each repeating calendar cycle serves as an exceptionally powerful window of opportunity to actively harness those foundational energies for personal development.

The 19th of Kislev, which falls on Sunday November 29 this year, stands out as one of these remarkable dates. It honors the revered legacy of Rabbi Dov Ber (the Maggid of Mezritch), successor to the Baal Shem Tov, while simultaneously celebrating the liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi—the Maggid's leading disciple and the visionary founder of Chabad-Lubavitch.

While these pivotal milestones hold deep historical resonance for Chasidism, their universal message speaks directly to every individual and continues to ripple meaningfully across our global community today.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman famously faced imprisonment under Tsarist rule due to opposition against the movement's expansive, accessible teachings. His full exoneration cleared the path to significantly broaden his educational outreach, ensuring these deeply transformative ideas could reach everyone regardless of background.

"Every single person is inherently connected... Every individual story truly matters... Each soul carries an essential spark of the Divine that no external circumstance can ever diminish." These powerful insights, pioneered by the Baal Shem Tov and methodically developed by the Maggid and Rabbi Shneur Zalman, remain profoundly relevant in our modern world.

Ultimately, the 19th of Kislev invites all of us to re-engage with these timeless, invigorating perspectives. Whether fostering genuine communal unity or diving into the deeper, contemplative aspects of Torah philosophy, this special day provides an extraordinary moment for ongoing personal growth and rich spiritual mindfulness.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Torah Scroll Fragment's Remarkable Journey Home

By Motti Wilhelm / Chabad.org



Rabbi Yochonon Gordon presented the Torah scroll fragment desecrated with a portrait painted during the war years to Rabbi Shaul Hababo during this past weekend's International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries, returning it to the Babruysk community after 80 years.

As a Chabad representative in Munich, Germany, Rabbi Yochanan Gordon is accustomed to receiving all sorts of inquiries. But when his father-in-law, Rabbi Yisroel Diskin, director of Chabad of Munich, forwarded him an email, it piqued his curiosity.

The email came from a German doctor who had contacted the Chabad House through its website. He wrote about a painting he had inherited after his parents' passing, on the back of which he had discovered mysterious writing.

"These texts are on the back of a portrait of my mother," the doctor wrote. "I only recently discovered that the writing was Hebrew. My father brought the portrait home from Babruysk, where he worked as a clerk at Field Command 581 from August 1941 until August 1943. He once told us that a Russian prisoner had painted the portrait."

Intrigued, Rabbi Gordon contacted the doctor and arranged to examine the painting the following morning. When he saw the writing, he was stunned.

The text was unmistakably from a Torah scroll, handwritten in traditional script on parchment. The parchment had been cut from the scroll and repurposed as the canvas for the portrait.

The doctor explained that his father had served in the Nazi army during World War II and had been stationed in Babruysk, in present-day Belarus. He emphasized that his father had not participated in the murder of Jews but had served as a clerk.

Alongside their systematic murder of millions of Jews, the Nazis sought to destroy Jewish religious and cultural life. They burned and desecrated synagogues, holy books and ritual objects, often deliberately defiling Torah scrolls, Judaism's most sacred objects.

One method was to cut up Torah parchment and repurpose it for everyday use. It was made into shoes, wallets and other items. Some were recovered after the war and displayed in Holocaust museums, while others were buried according to Jewish law. Countless fragments remain scattered throughout Europe, often in unexpected places.

While stationed in Babruysk, the German soldier encountered a Russian prisoner who was a professional painter and commissioned him to paint a portrait of his wife back home. The exact circumstances remain unknown, including whether the parchment was deliberately removed from a Torah scroll for this purpose or was already among discarded fragments. Either way, a piece of a Sefer Torah became the canvas.

When the doctor inherited the portrait, he noticed what appeared to be calligraphy on the back but did not recognize it. Only recently, after photographing it and conducting an online search, did he discover that it was Hebrew and realize what he possessed.

Determined to right the wrong, the doctor wanted to return the Torah fragment to the Jewish community in Babruysk. He was advised to contact his local Chabad center, which led him to Chabad of Munich.

When he met Rabbi Gordon and recounted the story, the doctor broke down in tears, expressing his sorrow over what had happened. Rabbi Gordon reassured him that he would help return the fragment to its rightful place.

Gordon was familiar with Babruysk; his great-grandfather, Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson, had been born there. He searched Chabad.org's Chabad Locator and contacted Rabbi Shaul Hababo, who has served the Jewish community of Babruysk since 2010.

As it happened, both rabbis were planning to travel to New York that week for the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries, the Kinus HaShluchim.

"Chabad emissaries around the world are on a mission to uncover hidden sparks of holiness," Gordon told Chabad.org. "More often, those sparks are found in Jewish souls. This time, it was a spark of holiness in the words of the Torah, hidden ignominiously behind a painting for more than 80 years, until finally finding its way back home."

While in New York, Gordon consulted a rabbinic authority about the proper treatment of the fragment.

A STARK CONTRAST

According to Jewish law, a Torah scroll possesses tremendous sanctity and must be treated with the utmost respect. Even when no longer fit for use, it cannot simply be discarded; it must be buried in an earthenware container in a Jewish cemetery. Even a desecrated fragment retains its sanctity.

The rabbinic authority directed Gordon to a responsum by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the foremost halachic authorities of the past generation, who had addressed a similar question.

Rabbi Feinstein had been asked whether fragments of Torah scrolls desecrated by the Nazis could be displayed in Holocaust museums rather than buried. He ruled that when the purpose is to demonstrate Nazi atrocities and highlight the contrast between their treatment of Torah scrolls and the reverence with which Jews regard them, displaying the fragments can itself be considered an expression of respect for the Torah and is therefore permitted.

With this ruling in hand, it was decided that the fragment would be displayed at the Jewish Spiritual Center of Belarus, a museum housed in the historic Babruysk Synagogue and directed by Rabbi Hababo.

It would be placed alongside a complete Torah scroll rescued from the Nazis and already on display. Thousands of visitors would be able to see the two side by side, witnessing the contrast between the Nazis' desecration of the Torah and the Jewish people's enduring reverence for it.

With the arrangements in place, Gordon and Hababo met at the Kinus in New York. There, Rabbi Gordon handed over the sacred parchment for its return to Babruysk, the city from which it had been taken more than 80 years earlier.

"It seems that Heaven had decided the time had come for this holy object to return home," said Hababo. "G-d willing, in its new home at the museum, it will inspire visitors and awaken Jewish hearts, once again fulfilling its sacred purpose."

etc.

Albania, a Holocaust Haven, Welcomes Its First Permanent Chabad Emissaries



Tirana refuses to be gray. After communism fell, Albania's capital repainted its apartment blocks and government buildings in bold colors, marking a break with the past. But when Rabbi Yossi Fridman first walked its streets in August, it was the language, that caught his attention. "I couldn't go two minutes without hearing Hebrew on the street," he says. "It was a very pleasant surprise."

Fridman, his wife, Etka, and their baby son, Meir, will lead Albania's first permanent Chabad-Lubavitch center. Their appointment was announced Sunday at the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries.

Although Albania's Jewish population is unknown, Fridman estimates several hundred. "We know it may start small, but we've already seen tremendous interest. The local community is a real family, and we're looking forward to joining it." "Even if one Jew needs help," Fridman says, "we will be there."

A Call to Action

GET TOGETHER!

Get together in honor of 19 Kislev, the "New Year" of Chasidut and anniversary of the liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe. Start by gathering yourself (i.e. gathering your own strengths and powers for good). Use these gatherings as an opportunity to inspire others or to be inspired to add in Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness.

(From a talk of the Rebbe, 16 Kislev, 5752-1991)

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

13 Kislev, 5723 [1962]

I was pleased to receive the news of your forthcoming Dinner on the 20th of Kislev, the day after the historic Day of Liberation of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch and founder of Chabad.

It is both timely and meaningful to recall the following episode from his life and teachings:

The Alter Rebbe shared his house with his oldest married son, Rabbi Dov Ber (who later succeeded him as the Mitteler Rebbe). Rabbi Dov Ber was known for his unusual power of concentration. Once, when Rabbi Dov Ber was engrossed in learning, his baby, sleeping in its cradle nearby, fell out and began to cry. The infant's father did not hear the baby's cries. But the infant's grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, also engrossed in his studies in his room on the upper floor at the time, most certainly did. He interrupted his studies, went downstairs, picked the baby up, soothed it and replaced it in its cradle. Through all this Rabbi Dov Ber remained quite oblivious.

Subsequently, the Alter Rebbe admonished his son: "No matter how engrossed one may be in the most lofty occupation, one must never remain insensitive to the cry of a child."

This story has been transmitted to us from generation to generation; I heard it from my father-in-law of saintly memory. It was handed down because of the lasting message it conveys, one which is particularly pertinent to our time. It characterizes one of the basic tenets of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement - to hearken to the cry of our distressed Jewish children.

The "child" may be an infant in years, a Jewish boy or girl of school age, fallen from the "cradle" of Torah-true Jewish education, or it may be someone who is chronologically an adult yet an "infant" insofar as Jewish life is concerned, an infant in knowledge and experience of the Jewish religion, heritage and way of life.

The souls of these Jewish "children" cry out in anguish, for they live in a spiritual void, whether they are conscious of this or feel it only subconsciously. Every Jew, no matter how preoccupied he may be with any lofty cause, must hear the cries of these Jewish children. Bringing these Jewish children back to their Jewish cradle has priority over all else.

The Eve of Yud Tes Kislev, 5724 [1963]

...In one of his well-known letters, the Alter Rebbe declares that the happy tidings of his liberation reached him when he was reading the verse (Psalms 55:19): "[G-d] has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle against me, for many were with me."

This Providential coincidence surely carries a message for every one of us. Indeed, every individual is in need of a personal liberation from all the difficulties and hindrances encountered in daily life which hamper the attainment of the goals which should be achieved every day, in both material and spiritual endeavors.

Thus, our Sages make the following meaningful commentary on the verse: "Said the Holy One, Blessed Be He: He who engages in Torah, and in acts of loving-kindness, and prays with the congregation, is regarded by Me as if he redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world" (Talmud, Berachot 8a).

In this way, our Sages emphasize that the personal redemption of every Jew, as well as of the entire Jewish people, together with G-d (so to speak), is directly linked with the dissemination of Torah, acts of benevolence ("duties toward fellow-Jews"), and prayer ("duties toward G-d").

Thus, every man or woman who is involved in these three things brings liberation and redemption to himself as well as to our people as a whole.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Jacob went to meet with his brother Esau even though he knew that his life might be endangered by the encounter. But he didn't discuss the matter with anyone, or think twice about it. He just did it. From this we learn how important it is to DO things, because DOING is what will bring Moshiach.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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

This Sunday, Jews the world over will celebrate Yud Tet (the 19th of) Kislev, the Chasidic "New Year." On this date over 200 years ago the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, was liberated from the infamous Spalerno prison in Russia.

Not merely a personal event, his redemption was an ideological victory for the revelation of the inner aspect of Torah, and a significant milestone in preparing the world for Moshiach.

Before 19 Kislev, the inner, esoteric part of the Torah - the Torah's "soul," as it were - was in a concealed state. Only its outer aspect - the "body" - was revealed to the majority of the Jewish people.

Human beings are also composed of a physical body and a spiritual soul. Unlike the body, however, the soul cannot be perceived by the senses, nor can the human intellect fully comprehend its essence. The soul's existence can only be determined by deduction - i.e., if the body is alive, there must a soul that is animating it.

With the redemption of Yud Tet Kislev, the Torah's "soul" became revealed and apparent. Anyone can now learn its inner wisdom, and understand it on an intellectual level.

Furthermore, as the Jewish people and the Torah are one entity, the innovation of 19 Kislev affected all Jewish individuals on a personal level as well. The advent of Chabad Chasidut enabled the Jewish soul to illuminate the body to an unprecedented degree, making it easier for every Jew to serve as a dwelling place for G-d's Divine Presence and fulfill his mission in the world.

On such an auspicious day, when the same spiritual energy that was originally present comes down into the world, it is appropriate to rededicate ourselves to ensuring that all our deeds and actions help hasten Moshiach's revelation - the underlying purpose of the dissemination of Chasidut.

May everyone be inscribed and sealed for a good year in the study and ways of Chasidut.

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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