בס"ד

L'Chaim

1948

3 Kislev, 5787

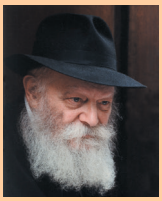
November 13, 2026

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך 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)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Toldot, we read of how Isaac wanted to bless Esau but was prevented from doing so by Rivka, his wife. It was through her intervention that the blessings were bestowed upon Jacob instead.

A fundamental question is raised by this incident. How could Isaac have possibly preferred Esau over Jacob? True, our sages tell us that Esau repeatedly tried to deceive his elderly father into thinking he was G-d-fearing and observant, by pointedly asking questions about religious law, but it is still hard to imagine Isaac being fooled by Esau's ruse. In fact, when Jacob presented himself to receive his father's blessings, Isaac declared that "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau," recognizing how unusual it was for Esau to address him in such a civil manner or even to bring G-d's name into the conversation. Isaac surely realized that something was amiss. But if Isaac was well aware of Esau's serious shortcomings, why did he nevertheless want to give the blessings only to him?

The truth is that Esau, the firstborn twin, possessed an extremely lofty soul capable of incredible spiritual accomplishments. In certain respects, Esau was on an even higher spiritual level than his brother Jacob. Jacob was born to be a "dweller in tents (of Torah)," protected from the outside world, enclosed within the four walls of the yeshiva. Esau, however, was "a man of the field," blessed with the spiritual strength to venture forth into the coarser material world to wage war against evil and impurity, bringing G-dliness and holiness down into the physical realm. It was Esau, therefore, who possessed the greater spiritual might.

This, then, explains Isaac's desire to bless Esau, despite his knowledge that his son was abusing these spiritual gifts: Isaac hoped his blessings would cause Esau's considerable talents to be brought out and revealed. Not only would Esau repent of his evil ways, but the entire world would benefit from his actions.

G-d, however, knew it was too late for Esau to repent and live up to his potential. Instead, the blessings were given to Jacob, and with them, the power to overcome evil and transform it into good, and to illuminate the world with the light of Torah.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

An Unexpected Lesson at the Scrap Yard

A scrap metal yard is hardly the place one would expect to discover an inspiring lesson about life.

At first glance, it looks like organized chaos. Mountains of broken appliances, discarded furniture, rusted pipes, and twisted metal rise in every direction. Giant cranes lift enormous loads, powerful magnets separate different materials, and heavy machinery transforms yesterday's useful possessions into tomorrow's recycled resources.

But behind all that noise and confusion lies a surprisingly fascinating system.

Consider how scrap metal is weighed.

When someone arrives with a vehicle filled with unwanted metal, the workers don't necessarily unload everything onto a scale and weigh each piece individually.

Instead, the entire vehicle, including all the junk inside, drives onto an enormous scale. Its total weight is recorded.

The driver then proceeds into the yard, unloads the scrap metal in its designated area, and returns to the scale with the now-empty vehicle.

The vehicle is weighed a second time.

By subtracting the second weight from the first, the workers know exactly how much scrap metal was delivered.

The difference between what came in and what went out determines the amount of metal being paid for.

It is a remarkably simple system. But it also offers a remarkable lesson.

Think about how we measure our own lives.

We tend to judge success by what we accumulate. How much money have we earned? How many accomplishments can we list? How much knowledge have we acquired? How many experiences have we enjoyed?

Yet perhaps the most important measurement is not how much we have collected, but how much we have changed.

Imagine two people attending the same lecture, reading the same book, or experiencing the same challenge.

One walks away virtually unchanged. The other gains a new perspective, becomes more understanding, develops greater patience, or discovers a deeper appreciation for life.

Both experienced exactly the same thing. But the impact was entirely different.

And that is what really matters.

A person can spend years accumulating knowledge without becoming wiser. Someone can experience tremendous success without becoming more generous. We can travel the world, meet extraordinary people, and encounter countless opportunities, yet remain essentially the same.

Conversely, a single conversation, a small act of kindness, or one difficult experience can transform the way we think and live.

Judaism teaches that life is a continuous journey of growth. Every day presents another opportunity to refine our character, strengthen our relationships, and bring more goodness into the world.

Perhaps that is the greatest lesson from an ordinary junkyard.

Life's true value is not measured simply by everything we carry along the way. It is measured by the difference between the person who began the journey and the person who emerges from it.

And that is a difference worth making.

SLICE OF LIFE

Teaching Good Character



Rabbi Yitzhak Amrani

Rabbi Yitzhak Amrani is 76 years old and lives in Kiryat Arba-Hebron. Born in Yemen, he immigrated to Israel as an infant and grew up in a religious home. He studied in kollel and taught Tanach for nearly forty years. Over the years, he has written two books on character development and created a website that helps readers uncover character traits embedded in the weekly Torah portions.

After arriving in Israel, Amrani's family was sent to an immigrant and refugee absorption camp, where they lived under harsh conditions. "The Yemenite Children Affair almost touched us as well," he says quietly. "I was hospitalized for a medical issue, and the moment my father suspected the possibility of a kidnapping, he insisted that family members guard me around the clock. It is still difficult for me to speak about it."

After his marriage, Amrani spent several years studying in kollel and later worked in education across the northern Negev. Eventually, he moved to Kiryat Arba in order to provide a strong Torah environment for his children. "I joined professional training programs in education," he explains, "programs that return to the methods of the sages in educating Jewish children. For almost forty years, I taught Tanach and trained teachers throughout the country."

His work on character traits grew directly out of his years in the classroom. "I began discovering these treasures within the plain meaning of the verses, even before turning to the sages' explanations," he says. "When I reached the book of Leviticus, I assumed I would find fewer character traits. I was pleasantly surprised."

What began as a small booklet on character traits in the weekly Torah portions eventually became a full book. About a year and a half ago, he published a second edition. Soon after, he launched a website offering extensive material on the subject, all available free of charge. He also wrote a book on Ethics of Our Fathers, presenting the teachings of the sages as a guide to understanding the human soul, personal growth, communication, and daily challenges.

Today, the website includes about two hundred articles for adults and more than two hundred fifty illustrated stories for children. "The goal is simple," Amrani says. "To instill good character traits in every person." The content was developed after studying four full cycles of the Torah. Hundreds of users visit the site each week, including educators who use the materials in their classrooms. "Parents often tell me, 'It's a shame we didn't know about this earlier.'"

Amrani has authored two books. The first, What Is My Character?, presents more than five hundred character traits drawn from the Torah, the Prophets, and early commentators. The second focuses on Ethics of Our Fathers, with an accessible commentary written in the spirit of personal guidance. He has also developed a card game designed to teach character traits in an engaging way. "When I studied Ethics of Our Fathers with my son," he recalls, "I saw how deeply the sages were concerned with daily life and behavior. That realization pushed me to share these teachings with the wider public."

For Amrani, character refinement is the foundation of Torah observance. "Without proper character traits, there is no Torah," he says. He highlights three qualities in particular: unconditional love, the pursuit of truth, and judging others favorably. "The sages teach us to look at what is inside the jug, not at what distracts us on the outside. Judging favorably means searching for the good, even when it is not immediately visible."

He believes this message is especially urgent today. "Character development is essential for our generation. It can heal the divisions tearing us apart. This is the remedy we need: teaching good character. When we look at one another with generosity, we create love and unity."

For Amrani, this work is a life mission. "When I see a family using my materials to educate their children, I feel that Torah is alive and breathing in their home," he says. "There is nothing more beautiful than that."

He concludes with a quiet call. "Character development is the key to redemption. I call on the younger generation and on the entire public: study character traits, see the good in yourselves and in others, and reconnect with our roots. Through unconditional love, may we merit the rebuilding of the Temple speedily in our days."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine

etc.



On Atlanta's BeltLine, a Kosher Coffeehouse Is Brewing Jewish Connection

On a busy weekend afternoon, thousands of people pass along Atlanta's BeltLine, a popular walking and biking trail. Just 20 steps from the trail is Milk & Maple Coffeehouse, a welcoming café where everything on the menu is kosher.

Located on the ground floor of Chabad Intown's 21,000-square-foot center, Milk & Maple serves food that meets high standards of kosher observance, including chalav Yisrael dairy products and pat Yisrael baked goods. Founded by Rabbi Eliyahu Schusterman and his wife, Dena, Chabad Intown opened its center along the trail in 2018.

Milk & Maple brings Jewish tradition into everyday city life, welcoming Jews and curious passersby alike. Whether stopping in for a coffee or a bite to eat, visitors are greeted with a warm taste of Jewish tradition. Its mission echoes the Rebbe's 1975 campaign encouraging Jews to keep kosher homes and eat kosher food.

Divine Providence

The concept of Divine Providence is this: Not only are all particular movements of the various creatures directed by Providence, and not only is that Providence itself the life-force and maintained existence of every creature - but even more, the particular movement of any creature is in general terms related to the grand design of Creation... The aggregate of all individual acts brings to completion G-d's grand design in the mystery of all Creation. Ponder this: If the swaying of a blade of grass is brought about by Divine Providence and is crucial to the fulfillment of the purpose of Creation, how much more so with regard to mankind in general, and Israel (the people close to him) in particular!

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

13 Menachem Av, 5712 [1952]

Greetings and Blessings!

It pained me to be told that you are still downhearted, and I understand that this is also the spirit in your home.

I have no desire to become involved in a lengthy discussion as to whether the claims that have been made are justified or not. Obviously it takes no great effort to understand why your spirits are as they are, after the calamity that took place (May no one know of such things!).

Nevertheless, Jews in general, being believers, and chassidim in particular, should cleave to G-d, our L-rd, steadfastly and overtly - as it is written, "And you who cleave to G-d, your L-rd, are all alive today."

Now, being truly alive means not merely pushing through one day after another. Being truly alive means that one's life should lack nothing of whatever you and your wife need materially and spiritually. However, it can happen (G-d forbid) that perhaps one does not deserve to receive such blessings from the Holy One, blessed be He. Concerning such a situation it is written in the holy Zohar: "If, from down here below, a person shows a luminous countenance, in the same way does a luminous Countenance shine upon him from Above [...]. In this spirit it is written, 'Serve G-d with joy': the joy of a mortal elicits upon himself another, Supernal joy. Similarly the world below, being thus crowned, draws down [blessings upon itself] from Above."

In brief: When one fortifies his trust that G-d will provide reasons to make him happy, in good spirits, and cheerful, and when one is so strong in this trust that it influences his daily life, he thereby draws down [these reasons for being happy] from Above. Moreover, even one's fleshly eyes can then see that the trust was vindicated.

May G-d grant that you and your wife and all your family should witness this, palpably, as soon as possible.

3 Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]

Greetings and Blessings!

This letter is a response to the undated letter in which you write that though you are pleased that you moved to [...], at the moment your salary does not quite suffice to meet your needs, and this is affecting your mood.

This is most surprising. After having palpably witnessed G-d's kindness toward you, do you really not have enough faith in His absolutely certain ability to guide you with His acts of lovingkindness in the future, too, and to free you from your straits? And even if, for reasons not understood by us, this is delayed, it is only the Creator of the universe, Who knows the future and Who knows what is truly good, that is able to decide in what manner - the manner that is best for a man and his household - He should bring them to their true happiness both materially and spiritually.

If the above applies even with regard to people whose present situation is less positive than it was previously, and also less positive by comparison with their environment and their acquaintances, how much more obviously does it apply with regard to people whose situation has improved from what it was. And in these difficult months, your situation is certainly better than that of quite a number of people around you, who nevertheless are not despairing, G-d forbid. Most certainly, therefore, neither you nor your wife ought to be dispirited or saddened, G-d forbid. We have seen it proved in practice that the greater a man's trust, and the more he looks toward his future with joy, the faster do these things materialize on a practical level.

I hope that you will soon gladden me with good news concerning all of the above, both in relation to yourself and in relation to your wife.

With blessings,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

On the verse, "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it," Rashi writes: "Take heed to remember the Sabbath day constantly, so that if you encounter something special [such as a delicacy, in the course of the week], set it aside for Shabbat." The same applies to the future Redemption. Even when we are still in the weekdays of the exile, we should constantly keep in mind and prepare for the Redemption, for the day which is described as "entirely Shabbat and repose for life everlasting."

(The Rebbe, 11 Sivan, 5744-1984, From Exile to Redemption)

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

On Rosh Chodesh Kislev of the year 5752 and the following Shabbat, the Rebbe spoke about how "All the days of your life should be directed toward bringing the era of Moshiach." Every waking moment of a person's life, the Rebbe stated - indeed, even during the time he sleeps, for he is alive then as well - must be devoted to this goal. This should include not only his conscious activities (thought, speech and deed), but also his every essence. In other words, the very core of a Jew's being must be focused on bringing about the Final Redemption.

In this context, the Rebbe explained what it means to "breathe the air of Moshiach." The essence of a person's life is reflected in his breathing processes. In fact, the Hebrew word for breath, "neshima," shares the same letters with the Hebrew word for soul, "neshama." The service that is necessary at present, the Rebbe explained, is to connect the core of our being to the core of Moshiach. This will ultimately awaken a pattern of conduct that will permeate every dimension of our being.

In practical terms, this means having a concern for the fundamental existence of every Jew, and providing our fellow Jews with the required necessities to celebrate the holidays of the month of Kislev with happiness and joy. Additionally, every Jew should also have the means to fulfill the custom of giving Chanuka gelt (money) to the members of his household.

As the Rebbe concluded, these activities will bring about the advent of the ultimate Redemption in this month, which is also called "the month of redemption." At that time, we will merit to see not only the essence of Moshiach, but also the revelation of Moshiach in the world at large, when Moshiach will "perfect the entire world, [motivating all the nations] to serve G-d together, as it is written, 'I will make the peoples pure of speech, so that they will all call upon the name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose.' "

May it happen immediately.

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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Rabbi Gershon, the brother-in-law of the Baal Shem Tov, had finalized his plans to travel to the Holy Land. A disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, he conferred with him before his departure and was told: "When you arrive in the Holy Land make sure to attend the yeshiva of Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, known as the holy Ohr Hachaim in Jerusalem. He has two separate yeshivas there - one in which they study the revealed Torah, and another, known to only a very few people, where he teaches the esoteric secrets of the Kabbala. Do everything you can to be admitted to the second yeshiva short of divulging your identity, unless you have no choice."

Rabbi Gershon's journey was successful and he arrived in Jerusalem and proceeded directly to the Ohr Hachaim's yeshiva. Anxious to see how they learned there, he attempted to join the students as they reviewed their study. But each time he approached them, he was told that it was permissible to attend the yeshiva only with the explicit permission of the Ohr Hachaim himself. When the Ohr Hachaim would enter the study hall to deliver his daily lesson, all strangers would be asked to leave.

Rabbi Gershon decided to approach the Ohr Hachaim personally and request his permission to learn. "Who are you?" inquired the Ohr Hachaim.

"I am a Jew who has come from Poland and I desire very much to study in your yeshiva," answered Reb Gershon.

The Ohr Hachaim gave him a penetrating, critical look and asked, "Are you fluent in the study of the Five Books of Moses and the Talmud?"

"Yes, I am," replied Reb Gershon.

"Then I give you my permission to remain here, and I will instruct my staff to accommodate you," the Ohr Hachaim said.

Rabbi Gershon was pleased with the outcome and settled down for the week to learn in the yeshiva of revealed Torah. All the while he was inquiring as to how to gain admittance to the yeshiva of Kabbala. He discreetly asked various students about the secret yeshiva, but none of them had the slightest idea what he was talking about. Those few who were the privileged students, refused to answer his repeated questions. So, Rabbi Gershon was forced to approach the Ohr Hachaim again and ask for permission to attend the yeshiva of esoteric study.

The Ohr Hachaim was surprised by the request. "How do you know about the other yeshiva?" he asked, as he stared into Reb Gershon's eyes, plumbing the depths of his soul.

Reb Gershon, wanting to avoid a detailed response, just looked down and said, "I was told by my brother-in-law." He hoped that his answer would pass without further comment.

"What is his name?"

"Oh, his name is Yisrael," was the matter-of-fact reply.

"I don't know him, but you may come to my lecture tonight," was the reply.

For the next three nights Reb Gershon learned Torah with the select group of students, but on the fourth night when he presented himself to the doorkeeper, he was refused admittance. He was astonished and turned to the doorkeeper crying, "Why have I been refused admittance, when I have the permission of the Head of the Yeshiva to attend?"

"I'm sorry, but I am following the instructions of the holy rabbi. He said that you are unworthy of learning the secrets of the Torah , since you have not attended to the needs of the Sages."

Reb Gershon turned away, puzzled, but resolved to do whatever was necessary to rescind the decree of the Ohr Hachaim. He noticed that the Ohr Hachaim donned a special pair of shoes and head covering before entering the bathroom. The next time he saw the Ohr Hachaim put on the special hat, he ran quickly and brought him the shoes. The Ohr Hachaim noted Reb Gershon's actions, but said nothing.

From that time forth, Rabbi Gershon was allowed to resume his midnight studies. He remained happily drinking in the learning at the Ohr Hachaim's yeshiva for the next few months. One day, he told the Ohr Hachaim that his own brother-in-law was a holy man.

"What is his name?" inquired the Ohr Hachaim.

"His name is Reb Israel Baal Shem Tov," Reb Gershon said.

"Oh," cried the Ohr Hachaim, "Of course I know him well. I see him very often in the supernal worlds. He is a holy man of unsurpassed greatness."

"Now I understand what happened to me in the Heavenly Court," continued the Ohr Hachaim. I had been sentenced to have some terrible calamity occur to me because of using a respected student of the Baal Shem Tov to perform a menial task for me. It was only through the intercession of the Baal Shem Tov that I was saved. If you had told me your true identity at once, I would have been saved the entire incident."

After this conversation, the Ohr Hachaim no longer permitted Reb Gershon to study in his yeshiva for, as he said, "You do not need me to teach you, if you have the Baal Shem Tov as a rebbe."

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend
of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
Mr. Stephen Bokser

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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

A ladder was standing on the ground and the top of it reached to heaven (Gen. 28:12).
Prayer is the ladder that connects our souls with G-d. Although it stands "on the ground," beginning with no more than acknowledgment of G-d's greatness, its top (the Amida, or silent prayer) reaches this level through the prior attainment of understanding inherent in the Shema itself. *(Hayom Yom, from the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

And Isaac loved Esau...but Rebecca loved Jacob (Gen. 25:25)
Isaac was a "perfect offering," whose "style" of Divine service was somewhat removed from the material world and its concealments. Rebecca, by contrast, had grown up in household surrounded by devious people. When Esau asked his father how to "tithe salt" (Esau knew that it is not required to tithe salt, he was just trying to show his father how "pious" he was) it was beyond Isaac's imagination that his son was being deceitful. Rebecca, however, with her experience in the ways of the world, recognized that it was only a scheme to impress his father, and "loved Jacob" for his quality of truthfulness. *(Der Torah Kval)*

Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother (Gen. 27:6)
Although Isaac had carried on his conversation with Esau in a whisper, Rivka had heard it as loudly as if he were speaking in a normal tone. She thus interpreted it as a sign from Above to intervene. *(The Rebbe of Dinov)*



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3 Kislev / November 13
Torah Portion *Toldos*
Shabbat ends **5:22 PM**