



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The physician was completely overwhelmed. He stared at the patient in utter disbelief, and although he didn’t believe in angels, he could almost believe the patient’s words. As if reading the doctor’s thoughts, Reb Yaakov began to relate

his visit to the Maggid of Mezritch and especially the Maggid’s puzzling remark at the end of the visit.

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

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

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

Not very long after, the two of them, Reb Yaakov and the king’s physician, traveled to Mezritch -- Reb Yaakov to become a Chasid and the physician to return to his faith.

Adapted from Talks and Tales

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And there was a thick darkness in all of Egypt for three days (Exod. 10:22)
The plague of darkness lasted for six days, three days of darkness when no one was able to see anyone else, and “a thick darkness... for three days” which was so dense that the Egyptians were unable to move. All of the other plagues (aside from the death of the first-born which lasted only one day) were seven days long. G-d saved the last day of darkness for when the Egyptians chased after the Jews in the desert. When the Jews travelled at night they were guided by a pillar of fire, but when the Egyptians chased them, G-d punished the Egyptians by causing them to travel in darkness. (*Midrash Raba*)
And G-d said to Moses and Aaron...“This month shall be for you the head of the months.” (Exod. 12:1-2)
The Jewish calendar follows the lunar system. The solar calendar is 365 days, and the lunar calendar is approximately 354 days. To make up for the deficiency, seven years in every 19 year cycle are leap years. Thus, in some years, the lunar year is actually a few days ahead of the solar year. The leap year serves as a reminder that everyone has an opportunity to make up for what he has failed to accomplish in the past. Furthermore, just as the leap year not only makes up for the deficiency, but provides an “advance” on the future, a Jew must also intensify his efforts in his service of G-d and store up additional merits. (*Likutei Sichot*)
And he called for Moses and Aaron at night and he said, “Rise up, go out from among my people.” (Exod. 12:31)
When Moses approached Pharaoh after the plague of darkness, Pharaoh angrily said to him, “I am warning you not to see my face anymore, because on the day when you will see my face you will die.” Thereafter Moses didn’t return to Pharaoh. After the plague of the firstborn Pharaoh summoned Moses but Moses refused to come because Pharaoh had said Moses would die if he saw his face again. Pharaoh, knowing that he needed to see Moses, began to plead, “Now it is night. Since it is dark and hard to see my face, please come speak to me and take the Jewish people out of my country.” (*Or Hachaim*)

Adapted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky



4:45 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
5 Shevat / January 23
Torah Portion Bo
Shabbat ends 5:47 PM

L'Chaim

בס"ד
1908
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יוסף תורה השלושים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"Our help is in the name of the L-rd, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week’s Torah portion, Bo, enumerates the details of the Passover offering. The lamb had to be selected, watched for four days, slaughtered, and then eaten roasted with matzot and bitter herbs.

In his Sefer Hamitzvot, Maimonides counts the mitzva of the Passover offering as two separate commandments: 1) slaughtering the lamb at dusk on the 14th of Nisan, and 2) eating it on the night of the 15th.

These two mitzvot are connected to each other and interdependent. Thus, at first glance, it is not clear why Maimonides counts them as two separate commandments.

The exodus from Egypt was a pivotal event for the Jewish people, as it was then that they were born as a nation. No longer were they slaves to Pharaoh; instead, they were transformed into the servants of G-d.

The purpose of the Passover offering was to prepare the Jews for the exodus. Every detail was significant, for each one readied them in a different way for the great event.

Precisely because it is so fundamental, the mitzva of the Passover offering is reckoned as two separate commandments: the sacrifice itself, and the eating of it. Both particulars were required to prepare for the departure from Egypt and the Jews’ transformation into servants of G-d.

In ancient Egypt the lamb was worshipped as a deity. By offering it as a sacrifice, the Jewish people shook off their yoke of subjugation. It took a great deal of mesirat nefesh (self-sacrifice) for the Jews to publicly take that lamb and kill it in front of their horrified neighbors. But in order to be a true servant of G-d, self-sacrifice is necessary. This was the mitzva of slaughtering the Pesach offering.

The second mitzva was to actually eat the lamb. When a Jew ate the Passover offering, which had been sacrificed with mesirat nefesh, its flesh was transformed into his own. The substance of the offering was digested and became one with his physical body. Self-sacrifice has to be the central theme in the life of the Jew; it must surround him, permeate his being and fill him completely, spilling over into the physical plane of his existence. In this manner, mesirat nefesh became part and parcel of the Jew’s being, preparing him for the exodus from Egypt and enabling him to become a “servant of G-d.”

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Vol. 16

Yud Shevat: A Day of Deep Connection

“The sun rises, and the sun sets” (Ecclesiastes 1:5). Our sages teach that this verse hints at the passing of leadership from one generation’s Nossi (spiritual leader) to the next. Just as Moshe passed his role to Yehoshua, so in every generation, one Nossi hands over the leadership to the next one—ensuring the Jewish people are never without a “faithful shepherd,” even for a moment.

From Moshe Rabbeinu through the Baal Shem Tov—founder of the Chassidic movement in the 1700s—and the seven Chabad Rebbeim, this chain of leadership has remained unbroken. (Before the Baal Shem Tov, while each generation had its leader, they weren’t always publicly known. With Chassidism’s emergence, these leaders became revealed for all to recognize.)

Each Rebbe embodies the qualities of a Melech (king) and Nossi, serving as the mind and heart of the Jewish people. Like the mind that gives direction and the heart that gives life, the Rebbe channels divine wisdom and warmth to every Jew. His leadership is not limited to his own followers—it extends to every Jew, caring for both their physical and spiritual well-being.

At times, a Rebbe did not immediately accept his role publicly, yet the connection between the Nossi and the Jewish people begins instantly. The moment one Nossi departs,

the next is already spiritually in place.

The day this bond becomes revealed is one of deep joy—both for the Rebbe and for every Jew connected to him. And on this day, every Jew receives new spiritual vitality through the Nossi.

The Rebbe often emphasized that Beis Nissan, the day the Rebbe Rashab—the fifth Chabad Rebbe—passed away, is also the day the Previous Rebbe became Nossi. In our times, Yud Shevat—the tenth of Shevat—marks not only the yearzeit of the Previous Rebbe but also the day our Rebbe assumed leadership.

From that day onward, the Rebbe’s influence began transforming world Jewry. The Rebbe’s teachings, care, and leadership inspire Jews everywhere, sparking a global blossoming of Yiddishkeit and Chassidus and preparing the world for the coming of Moshiach.

When we reflect on the meaning of Yud Shevat, it fills us with gratitude and joy. How fortunate we are to be guided and uplifted by the Rebbe’s love! Yud Shevat is a personal Yom Tov—a day to gather with fellow Jews, to farbreng, to learn the Rebbe’s teachings, and to strengthen our connection to his mission.

May our heartfelt efforts on this day hasten the complete redemption, may it be speedily in our days.

