בס"ד

L'Chaim

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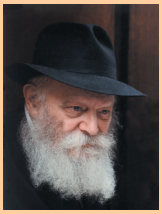
The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

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

This week's Torah portion, *Toldot*, describes Isaac's life after the passing of his father Abraham.

The portion begins with the details of Isaac's and Rebecca's childlessness and how after 20 years they were blessed with twin sons. The elder son was named Esau and the younger was named Jacob. Esau occupied himself with hunting while Jacob involved himself totally in the study of Torah.

Due to a famine, Isaac travels with his family to Egypt from their dwelling place in Canaan. When they pass through Philistine G-d commands them to remain there.

The Torah's description of life in Philistine places a big emphasis on the fact that Isaac was digging wells there. First he unearthed wells his father originally dug, but the locals had filled. Then he dug new wells. Finally it tells of how his servants, who were digging a well, came to him and said "we found water."

It seems that digging wells was central to who Isaac was and a defining feature in his service to G-d. While his father Abraham worked on getting people to recognize and follow G-d, Isaac dug wells.

What is the deeper meaning of digging a well?

To dig a well, you first need to know or have reason to believe that there is water. Then comes the hard work, digging deeper and deeper until you find the water.

On the surface a person may not be happy with who he/she is; he has to know that on the inside there is "water," there is a beautiful person. All he needs to do is "dig," to work on himself. If he keeps digging he will surely find water.

First came Abraham, who taught us to change the way we act externally – to act the way G-d would want us to.

But if we do this, we may feel fake; like we are putting on an act. However, in truth, that is a false perception. Deep within we are perfect.

Isaac teaches us the next step after we have assured external beauty. Now that you are beautiful on the outside, start digging, find the beauty within.

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.

Standard Time

Time. In the United States, times are changing. That is to say, the time on the clock, at least. "Spring ahead, Fall back" we mutter to ourselves, in an attempt to remember whether we're "losing" or "gaining" an hour and which way to adjust our clocks to "standard time."

How long is a standard hour? Perhaps that depends on whether it's an hour that has stretched on endlessly or has passed by in the blink of an eye. Is it an hour that has been "blessed" and in which we have accomplished so much or is it an hour when everything that could have gone wrong went wrong and it was totally wasted.

When it comes to time, many of us think not only in terms of hours, minutes and seconds, but of "quality time" as well. And quality time is anything but standard, because it's usually time that we set aside to be with family, good friends, or in worthwhile and meaningful pursuits.

Is there such a thing as a "Jewish standard hour" or "Jewish quality time"?

In Talmudic times, a Jew whose performance of mitzvot was typified by going above and beyond the letter of the law was referred to as "chasid." These (pre-modern) Chasidim used to spend tremendous amounts of time in prayer and only a few hours a day in Torah study. But, the amount of Torah knowledge they gained in those few hours of study was inordinately greater than what the average person would have gained in the same amount of time spent in intensive study. The reward for their intensive prayer schedule was that the time spent studying Torah became "quality time" and their studies were blessed.

The mitzva of Torah study is incumbent upon us at all times. In fact, according to the Talmud, if a person wastes even one minute that he could have spent studying, it's as if he belittled the entire Torah. Yet, the Talmud also states that someone who is involved in helping the community has fulfilled the commandment to study Torah by simply saying one verse from the Shema in the morning and in the evening. Quality time!

In the Mishna (Avot) Rabbi Yaakov is quoted as saying that one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is greater than the entire time one will live in the World to Come. What does this mean?

On the simplest level, Rabbi Yaakov is telling us that quality time counts. Through spending even just one hour in teshuva - returning to and reconnecting with G-d - and the performance of good deeds, we will appreciate awesome revelations of G-dliness in the Messianic Era. In fact, all the G-dliness we will experience in the times of Moshiach can be acquired through making every second and minute of a Jewish hour count here and now.

How do we accomplish this? The Hebrew word for hour, "sha-ah," also means bending. By bending ourselves in this world - not remaining rigid or stuck in our ways - and setting aside an hour regularly for teshuva and good deeds, we are adjusting our clocks to the ultimate standard time - the Messianic Era, may it commence now!

SLICE OF LIFE

Sourdough and a Lodge Pot

by Yehudis Cohen

One of my first batches of sourdough bread

I learned a lot about Jewish inspiration from sourdough starter and a Lodge cast iron pot. But let me start at the beginning.

BC (Before Covid) our family used to buy – as a special treat in honor of Shabbat – a delicious loaf of artisan sourdough bread from a local kosher sourdough boutique baker – so boutique that if you didn't pre-order by Wednesday morning you didn't merit to have a loaf of his sourdough bread on your Shabbat table.

DC (During Covid – I say "during" because I like to think we are AC – After Covid, though I know that means I must be living in an alternate reality) we started buying the crusty, seeded boutique sourdough bread each week, two loaves in fact! I decided the money not spent on cleaning help (our cleaner didn't come in the early months of Covid, did yours?) was well spent on the delicious, still-novel sourdough bread and a well-deserved treat in those trying times.

And then, like hundreds of thousands of other people DC, my daughter Rivka decided to try her hand at sourdough bread. She was inspired by married siblings and in-laws who were making sourdough bread and posting photos on our family whatsapp chat. She got the "starter" from a family member and was soon baking tasty, earthy, fresh sourdough bread each week for Shabbat.

At the time, the only pots we had that were heavy and thick enough to be considered acceptable for authentic sourdough bread were designated for meat in our kosher kitchen. So while we often spoke of how delicious it must taste to put butter on fresh, hot sourdough bread straight from the oven, we sufficed with non-dairy Earth Balance and pretended it was the same as real butter.

And then I decided to splurge. I would buy a new pot for my daughter to use to bake the sourdough bread, a pot that would be designated only for bread. Hence, we could eat the steaming hot bread with real butter!

I bought a Lodge cast iron 5 quart dutch oven. These pots come preseasoned. According to most Jewish legal authorities, preseasoned pots need to be koshered before use; because the company does not have kosher certification, one can't be certain if the oil used is from a kosher source.

I brought the pot home and that evening I put it in my oven on self-clean as the temperature goes up high enough to kosher the pot.

The next day, I took the pot back to the local store in Crown Heights where I had bought it. I immersed it in the mikva there, making it fit to prepare food in a Jewish home. I took it home once again and began the process of re-seasoning it. I covered it inside and out with a coating of oil (not too thick, not too thin) and baked it in the oven at 450 degrees for one hour. I repeated this process numerous times until the pot was properly seasoned.

Finally, the pot was ready for my daughter to bake sourdough bread that we could enjoy with butter or cheese! And she did bake bread in that pot! For a few weeks. And then she stopped. :-(

And that is when I started baking sourdough bread.

Because, you see, I had spent good money on that pot! And I had put a lot of time in koshering it and re-seasoning it.

My first time making sourdough bread, the loaves came out fantastic! Using my daughter's sourdough starter, my son-in-law Didy's sister's recipe and with Didy guiding me every step of the way, it was a success. I proudly took photos and everyone on our family chat marveled at my sourdough bread.

As an experienced cook and baker, I found making sourdough bread much less complicated than it was touted to be. And for sure it was easier than those foodie gourmet recipes I see in cookbooks with glossy photos that I always stay away from. (My cooking/baking motto – tasty, simple, plentiful!)

I appreciated that I had to start the process at the very latest by early Thursday evening, feeding the "starter" so that before I went to bed I would make the dough and let it rise until early Friday morning when I would shape it into loaves and let it rise before putting it in the oven (and pots) preheated to between 450 - 500 degrees and bake for 20 minutes covered and 30 minutes uncovered.

(I appreciated starting the process Thursday night because I was known to sometimes begin making the dough for my regular yeast challahs Friday afternoon, just a few hours before Shabbat. I remember the shock of a guest who saw this and the surprise of friends when I said, "I have to get off the phone now to start making challah.")

For many months my sourdough bread was not only tasty, but rose nicely in the oven during baking, making it a perfect density. And then for some reason during the summer, it started coming out of the oven flatter and flatter. Temperature, humidity, temperament my fellow family sourdough bread bakers consoled me. But I was certain there was more to it.

For visiting day in summer overnight camp, I prepared for my youngest daughter her sole request: A loaf of fresh sourdough bread and fresh sourdough cinnamon buns.

Surprisingly, for the first time in weeks, the bread and buns rose to pre-summer heights! On Friday my bread hadn't risen but on Tuesday morning it had? What was the reason? It was then that it occurred to me that my starter had gotten tired. I was only feeding it once a week on Thursday night, in preparation for making sourdough bread for Shabbat. Feeding the starter midweek had rejuvenated it and enabled my bread and buns to grow better, higher and stronger.

And that was when I realized that my sourdough experience is an analogy for my Jewish living. Like my sourdough starter, if my soul goes for long stretches in between feedings, even if I'm feeding her regularly, she gets tired. She loses her ability to grow in the best way possible. I have to feed her often, the more the better, in order to keep her active and healthy.

And the more I invest in my soul, the more I will want to keep my soul active and healthy. The more I will want to be involved in Jewish learning and experiences, in connecting with G-d and my fellow creatures. This second lesson I learned from the Lodge pot. For my entire foray into sourdough bread-baking commenced because I had invested time and energy (and money) into the Lodge pot and I didn't want all of that effort to go to waste.

etc.

Stunning Mikva

Mikva Toras Imecha has been spoken of as one of the most beautiful mikvas in the world. The newly dedicated mikva is in the Chabad Columbus' Wellness Center for Mind, Body and Soul in New Albany, Ohio. The Wellness Center when complete will also house STEM education programs for LifeTown, which serves children with disabilities.

Ultimate Destination Wedding

A Jewish wedding took place recently in the heart of the Great Desert of Dubai, with the participation of over 600 young Jews from across the former Soviet Union. The bride and groom, and the guests, were all participants in the Yahad Jewish educational program under the auspices of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS. Rabbi Berel Lazar, the Rebbe's emissary and Chief Rabbi of Russia, officiated at the wedding. Yahad is the largest Jewish organization for university-age Jews in the FSU. This group trip to the United Arab Emirate was also the largest Jewish group ever to visit Dubai.

Today Is...

2 Kislev

Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch once explained: "Rabbi Elazar first gave a coin to a pauper and then prayed: "Prayer must be with life. By giving, before praying, charity to a pauper – thereby giving him life – one's prayers are suffused with a great increase of 'aliveness'." So saying he motioned with his hand in an upwards gesture to indicate that the increase is beyond imagination. Indeed my father would often seek out a pauper before davening to give him food.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

18th of Cheshvan, 5724 [1963]

I received your letter of the 14th of Cheshvan with the enclosure.

You are, of course, quite right in writing that the purpose of education is not merely the increase of knowledge but the actual training and upbringing to live the Jewish way of life. This is especially true in our day and age, in view of the adverse influence of the environment, etc., which makes it all the more imperative to instill a goodly measure of *Yirat Hashem* [fear of G-d] into the children. Indeed, this is the purpose of the Torah and mitzvot, as it is written, "G-d commanded us to do all these decrees – to fear the L-rd, our G-d, to return all the days," etc.

There can be no difference of opinion as far as the purpose of Jewish education is concerned, which applies everywhere. There can only be a difference of approach and method as to how to attain this goal, and this may vary from generation to generation, from city to city and sometimes even from classroom to classroom.

Another point to remember is that inasmuch as parents are not always permeated with the idea that true Jewish education is truly vital for their children, it is necessary to follow the approach suggested by our Sages, of blessed memory, "A person should always say, *shemotoch lo lishma bo lishma* [from doing something not for its own sake one comes to do the thing for its own sake]." This is why it is often useful to emphasize the good side effects of Jewish education, until they will eventually understand also the essential aspects involved.

With regard to the question which you write towards the end of your letter, namely, about your present job and your difficulty with *parnasa* [livelihood], etc., an improvement would depend on those who must be approached and who have the final say. Therefore, it would be well for you to consult fully with such persons that know them personally, and who can judge their reaction to any particular approach.

May G-d, who feeds and sustains the whole world out of His generous and ample Hand, also give you your parnasa with kashrut [in a permissible manner] and peace of mind, so that you should be able to concentrate on your efforts to strengthen a nd spread true Yiddishkeit to the utmost of your capacity.

20th of Cheshvan, 5732 [1971]

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Dedication Dinner of the Lubavitch House – the Merkos Center of the Twin Cities [S. Paul and Minneapolis] and surrounding region.

Jewish education in the spirit of our Torah and Tradition has always been the life-line of our people, and it is more than ever so in the present day of confusion, drifting and alienation. It is therefore surely unnecessary to emphasize at length the vital importance of the educational work of the Merkos Center.

I am particularly gratified to note that this most essential and indispensable work is recognized and appreciated by prominent businessmen and industrialists in the community.

Indeed, it is to be expected that good businessmen would recognize a good "investment," and there is none better and more profitable than investing in our children and adolescents. For this is the kind of investment where the original capital not only yields the highest dividends, but the dividends themselves become investment capital of the highest yield. Thus the children and youths who benefit from the Merkos Center today, will later become active investors in Torah-true education, in a cumulative and continuous process, yielding "fruits and the fruit of fruits" for the community and for our people at large.

I am confident that all friends and supporters of the Lubavitch House will continue to give it their unstinting support, not only financially, but also with personal dedication, and in a growing measure. Thus, the Dedication Dinner will indeed be a fitting occasion to celebrate not only the dedication of the Stillman Building, but also the dedication of its sponsors, supporters, and friends.

With prayerful wishes of the utmost success of the event and for the growing expansion of the activities of the Merkos Center, and may G-d bestow His generous blessings upon all participants and their families, materially and spiritually,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our generation is called *ikveta deMeshichah*, the generation that is the "heel" of Moshiach, i.e., the "heel" (lowest and last part) of the stature of all the generations preceding Moshiach. Indeed, in relation to our predecessors, we are the "heel." This may cause one to wonder why it is precisely our generation that shall merit the coming of Moshiach. However, it is precisely our service of G-d, the very end in the process of preparing the world, that will complete the necessary steps to bring about the redemption. *(Living with Moshiach, Rabbi J. I Schochet)*

"A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

On the holiday of Shemini Atzeret in 1977, the Rebbe suffered a serious heart attack. For the next five weeks, the Rebbe remained at Lubavitch World Headquarters, 770 Eastern Parkway, where he received top medical care for his condition. On the first day of the Jewish month of Kislev, the Rebbe returned to his home on President Street in Brooklyn for the first time since his heart attack.

Kislev 1 is celebrated amongst the Rebbe's Chasidim as a day when the Rebbe returned to full health and it is thus, an opportune time to share a few thoughts of the Rebbe on this topic.

The day after the Rebbe's heart attack, the Rebbe insisted on teaching at a public gathering (farbrengen) as he had done on that particular day for the previous 38 years.

The doctor warned the Rebbe not to exert himself thus, saying, "You must take care of your health. If not, there is a 25% chance of a relapse." The doctor then asked if the Rebbe understood what he had said.

The Rebbe smiled and nodded his head, "You said that even if I don't take care of my health – which, I assure you, I will – there is a 75% chance that there won't be a relapse."

A positive outlook can do wonders! So can increasing in mitzvot observance when we are in need of Divine assistance. The Rebbe advised a person who was not well: "As you may know, in order to receive G-d's blessings it is necessary to prepare receptacles. It would have been impossible for us to know the receptacles, but for G-d's mercy and infinite kindness, having given us the Torah and having revealed to us that Torah and mitzvos are the proper receptacles for us to receive His blessings... The important thing is to do better then at present in the religious observances, which will surely bring an improvement in your condition."

May we all merit in this month of Kislev to return to full health, with the coming of Moshiach and the end to all illness, NOW!"

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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In the ancient city of Aleppo, Syria there lived a Jew named Shimshon. He was well known as a bully and half-drunk most of the time.

In the marketplace he walked from stall to stall, placing groceries in his basket, and leaving without paying. If anyone dared ask for payment he glared at them or made menacing comments. If he really got angry, he would overturn the produce or grocery cart and even give the stall keeper a big wallop.

Word eventually got to the rabbi of the town, who called Shimshon in and severely rebuked him. Shimshon, feigning innocence, asked, "Did anyone complain to you about me?"

The rabbi had to admit that no specific complaint had yet been brought. But, of course, the people were too frightened to accuse him and start up with Shimshon.

One day an older woman brought beautiful fruits and vegetables to the market. Shimshon came up to her stall, chose several items and walked away.

"Stop, come back. You haven't paid me," shouted the woman.

Shimshon turned around, looked at her threateningly and shouted, "You'll keep quiet if you know what's good for you." Then he continued on his way.

The stall keepers nearby encouraged her to go to the rabbi, who was relieved that there was finally a charge against Shimshon. The rabbi immediately sent for the culprit.

"Did you take produce from this woman without paying?" the rabbi asked Shimshon.

"Who says I'm not going to pay her?" was Shimshon's insolent reply.

"Pay her immediately or return her goods," was the rabbi's stern response. "If this ever happens again you will also have to pay a heavy fine," the rabbi added.

Shimshon took out his money and silently paid the woman. But as he was leaving, the rabbi's attendant, Levi, overheard him muttering, "I'll get even with the rabbi!"

A few days later the rabbi was invited to a circumcision in a nearby village. Along the way, Levi kept a sharp look out. When he noticed a man hiding behind some shrubs in the distance he was certain it was Shimshon. He now told the rabbi of Shimshon's threat and urged him to turn back. Instead, the rabbi noted the time and told Levi to stop the carriage so they could say the afternoon prayers. He prayed intensely and longer than usual, then climbed back into the carriage and told Levi to drive full speed ahead.

In a matter of moments, Shimshon appeared in the middle of the road and stopped the carriage. Rushing over to the rabbi, Shimshon grabbed his hands, and with tears in his eyes begged forgiveness. The rabbi forgave him on the condition that he change his ways. Shimshon promised he would and they parted like best of friends.

Levi was amazed and puzzled. The rabbi explained what had just happened with a commentary from the Torah. "When Esau threatened Jacob's life, Rivkah, their mother, instructed Jacob, "When your heart is free from any anger that you harbor against your brother for the trouble he has caused you, then you will be sure that his anger has turned away from you."

"You see," the rabbi concluded, "I was very angry with Shimshon, but I prayed to G-d to help me free my heart from any anger against him, and to help him free his heart from anger and evil. When I felt I no longer had ill feelings toward him, but rather compassion and a strong desire to help him mend his ways, I was certain that his heart, too, was pure. That is what actually happened. Thus, our sages teach us: As water reflects a face, so does one heart respond to another!

Dedicated in memory of
Rabbi Velvel Marasow OBM
לע"נ הרה"ח ר' פנחס זאב וואלף
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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

The man [Isaac] became great, and grew more and more... (Gen. 23:13)
It is common that as a person becomes richer, the person within him becomes smaller and smaller. The greatness of Isaac was that even though he became more and more wealthy, he increased and expanded in his qualities as a person. *(Rabbi Yitzchak of Torchow)*

And Isaac prayed to G-d ("vaye'tar") for his wife, because she was barren (Gen. 25:21)
As Rashi explains, the Hebrew word "vaye'tar" implies a tremendous amount of prayer: "He engaged [in prayer] much and urgently." Why did Isaac have to pray so much? Because not only was Rivka childless, she had been born without a uterus (as described by the Midrash). In order for her to give birth, the G-dly influence would of necessity have to come from a higher spiritual source; thus "he engaged [in prayer] much and urgently." *(Ohr HaTorah)*

Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge (Gen. 26:5)
Why did G-d bless Isaac in Abraham's merit rather than in his own, as He did with the other Patriarchs? Isaac is associated with the attribute of "gevura" (severity), the nature of which is to withhold. Thus the Divine blessing and influence had to come through Abraham, who is associated with "chesed" (loving-kindness), the attribute that bestows an abundance of blessing. *(Likutei Levi Yitzchak)*

Isaac was old and his eyesight was failing (Gen. 27:1)
Rashi explained that Isaac's eyesight was failing him so that Jacob could receive the blessing. In order to assure that Jacob would receive the blessing was it necessary for Isaac's eyesight to fail him? Wouldn't it have been "easier" for G-d to have revealed to Isaac that Esau was wicked and thus undeserving of the blessing? However, G-d didn't want to speak badly about Esau. If this is true concerning the wicked Esau, all the more must we be extremely careful not to gossip about or slander any Jew. *(The Rebbe)*

A ladder was standing on the ground and the top of it reached to heaven. (Gen 28:12)
The Hebrew word for ladder *(sulam)* has the same numerical value as money *(mamon)*. This teachers us that money is like a ladder – it can be used to ascend and come closer to the heavens, or with it one can descend to the depths. Everything depends on how we use it and for what purpose. *(The Baal Shem Tov)*

5:29 *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
1 Kislev//Nov 5
Torah Portion *Toldot*
Shabbat ends 6:29 PM