

The Weekly Publication  
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"My help comes from G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2) Year of Unity - Hakhel

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

This week we read two Torah portions *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. In *Pekudei* we read that both men and women donated for the construction of the Mishkan, the travelling sanctuary in the desert. Both men and women participated in its construction. It didn't matter if they were rich or poor. It didn't matter which tribe they were from. Each gave according to their ability and each participated with their talents that G-d gave them.

They were careful to do everything the way G-d wanted them to, down to the smallest detail. When it was completed, G-d's presence filled the Mishkan, dwelling amongst them once again.

After 210 years of exile in Egypt, 87 of which were fraught with terrible suffering and slavery, it must have been so satisfying and so exciting to see G-d's Divine Presence fill the Mishkan.

What lessons can we learn from this?

We are here for a reason, to fashion the entire world into a dwelling place for G-d. Each one of us is necessary to ensure success. We are all different. We have different means, different talents and different circumstances.

Yet, we know we can be successful because we've done it once before. The main thing is that we work together and that we do it right. Small details matter. As in every project, it is not complete until each person does his or her part and until the finishing touches have been completed.

How about us, the Jewish people as a whole and individual Jews? Haven't we done enough? Haven't we suffered enough? Hasn't the time come for all of the bad news and anguish to end?

Chassidic teachings explain that the level of G-d's presence that we will experience in the Messianic Era will be based on our exile experience and our effort in accomplishing G-d's will.

Perhaps G-d is holding out for just a bit longer because He wants something more, something deeper that He knows we can attain. Imagine how amazing it will be when Moshiach will come. Nevertheless we need Moshiach to come already.

Until then, we can be there for each other. As we proclaim out loud when we finish reading this week's Torah portion in the synagogue on Shabbat, thereby completing reading the book of Exodus: "Chazak chazak v'nitchazeik. Be strong! Be strong! And let us strengthen each other!"

*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.*

## Happy Birthday

Happy birthday!

With estimates that around 385,000 babies are born each day around the world, it's likely that at least a few of our readers are celebrating their birthdays today.

Conventionally, birthdays are for parties! When we're very young (and very old) we mark the day we were born with a celebration. Cake, ice cream, gifts, games, we gather family and friends to celebrate our birthdays.

Ostensibly, birthdays are quite secular affairs. Every person (Jew or gentile) has one once a year. In fact, in the Torah, the only birthday singled out for any mention is that of Pharaoh! Yet, the Talmud teaches that one's birthday is the day on which one's "fortune rises."

Is there a special "Jewish" way to celebrate a birthday? And is there such a thing as a Jewish birthday? And once we find out when our Jewish birthday is, how do we go about celebrating it?

A birthday is a time for reflection, a time to review the year gone by and to think about those aspects of our lives that need improvement and correcting.

We can use the day to study a Jewish thought and share it with others, take (extra) time to pray, as well as making sure to give charity and do some other special *mitzvot* (commandments).

The birthday party is transformed into a joyous gathering of family and friends and the power of the birthday will guarantee that the good resolutions made in such

a setting will be fulfilled in the future.

Ancient Jewish sources teach the value of celebrating a birthday. For example there is a Midrash that relates: Most people cherish the day on which they were born and make a party on that day.

After her passing, the Rebbe chose her birthday as a time to launch a new campaign to reinvigorate the custom of celebrating Jewish birthdays.

The Rebbe asked that even the youngest children should be taught the spiritual importance of a birthday and that they should be encouraged to celebrate their birthdays with their friends in a way that will increase Jewish observance and good resolutions.

For each of us, our birthday is a day to rejoice in the knowledge that on this day our soul descended to this world for a special, unique purpose that is only ours to fulfill.

On the anniversary of our birth, we embark on a new year, a new stage in our development, and a new chapter in the fulfillment of our life's mission.

There is no other you in the world and there is no other person who can accomplish the purpose for which you specifically were born.

Take advantage of this occasion. Be introspective, explore the state of your spiritual life, set your Jewish house more in order. Start fulfilling some good resolutions on the spot and use your birthday as a time to increase goodness and holiness in the world!







# IT HAPPENED ONCE

When the stranger entered the little shul, the regulars were curious -- who was he and why had he come to their town. But he was in a great hurry and so, he was relieved to see a quorum of men already assembled, ready to begin the morning prayers. There was no rabbi there, and not wanting to wait, the stranger ascended the bima. The "regulars" were surprised and offended that this unknown man presumed to lead the prayers. After all, who was this fellow, who didn't even have the courtesy to wait a few minutes for the rabbi or the president of the congregation?

The stranger had already begun the morning service when the president arrived. Seeing a stranger at the bima, he rushed up to him and said, "What a chutzpa! Who do you think you are to begin the prayers before the rabbi or I have arrived!" And he continued berating the man in this fashion.

The stranger, however, just kept silent. But his refusal to respond infuriated the president even more and he blurted out, "Don't you see who's speaking to you?"

Finally the stranger replied in a quiet voice, "You also do not see to whom you are speaking."

No sooner had those words been uttered than everything went dark before the president's eyes. He rushed to a doctor, then to a specialist -- to several specialists -- but no one could find a cause for his sudden blindness. He tried every treatment that was suggested to him, but nothing proved a cure.

Then, it dawned upon him: when had his blindness begun? After he had angry words with the stranger in the shul. Undoubtedly he had offended a hidden tzadik with his words, and this was the consequence of his anger.

In despair, he decided to travel to the Baal Shem Tov. He had heard about this great tzadik; maybe he could help.

"Rebbe, I have heard that you can perform miracles. I have been blind since I angered a certain hidden tzadik. My problem is that I don't know who he is or where I can find him."

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "The man is my disciple, Reb Yaakov Koppel, and you sinned against him with your angry speech. Go to him and beg his forgiveness. If he forgives you, your blindness will be cured."

The man indeed traveled to Reb Yaakov, who accepted his apology. His sight returned as quickly as it had vanished.

The morning prayers had just ended. The Baal Shem Tov, who was an esteemed visitor in the town, was about to wash his hands before partaking of a meal, when a distraught woman approached him. She had waited throughout the whole service and could contain herself no longer.

"Rebbe! My husband has been missing for a very long time. I have done everything I can think of to try to find him, but I have no idea where he went. What will happen to me? Please, Rebbe, help me find him," the woman wept.

The Baal Shem Tov stood there, his washing cup poised to pour water on his hands in preparation for the blessing on bread, but instead of continuing, he stopped and responded to the woman.

"You will find your husband in the city of M."

Infused with new hope, the woman departed. But the rabbi of the city, who had heard a great deal about the Baal Shem Tov, had been watching the exchange. Now he had what seemed to him to be a serious question of Jewish law.

"I beg your pardon," began the rabbi, "I was watching your exchange with the woman, and it seems to me that you were saying words of prophecy to her. If that was true, I think you were required to have washed your hands before speaking."

The Baal Shem Tov responded to the rabbi with a question: "If you saw chickens suddenly fluttering about your table set with expensive glassware, what would your reaction be?"

I think you would automatically reach out to chase them away." The rabbi acquiesced, but he clearly was not following the Baal Shem Tov's logic. "I did what came naturally to me," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "I saw standing before me a woman who was in utter despair almost to the breaking point. I knew where her husband was. Do you imagine that I should have continued washing my hands while she stood suffering before my eyes?"

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

### Moses called Betzalel and Oholiav, and every wise-hearted man (Ex. 36:2)

Why didn't the "wise-hearted men" come on their own to Moses, and waited until he approached each of them individually? Because a person who is truly wise-hearted doesn't consider himself wise; when Moses issued his call, none of them thought he was talking to them. (*Ketoret Samim*)

### Of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the Sanctuary (Ex. 38:27)

The Hebrew root of the word for socket, "eden," has two meanings: 1) a base or doorsill, and 2) lord and master. Both meanings, however, are interconnected. This is alluded to in Rabbi Meir's statement in the Zohar: "He who is small is great; he who is great is small." A person who is as humble as a "doorsill" is truly noble, while one who lords himself over others and feels superior is truly lowly. (*Peninei HaTorah*)

### And the Children of Israel did according to all that G-d commanded Moses, and they brought the Tabernacle to Moses (Ex. 39:32-33)

This contains an important lesson in how to build the individual "Sanctuary" that exists in every Jewish home: The first thing is to establish it according to "all that G-d commands," observing mitzvot carefully and scrupulously. The next step is to bring it to "Moses," the singular Jewish leader of a given generation, to allow the Divine Presence to rest in it. (*Likutei Sichot*)

### And Moses blessed them (Ex. 39:43)

What was his blessing? "May it be G-d's will that the Divine Presence rest on the work of your hands." Every blessing, of any type, needs a proper "vessel" on which to rest. A person cannot sit back and wait for G-d to shower him with blessings; he must take practical action and expend the required effort in forming the vessel. (*Imrei Shefer*)



### 6:46 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
**24 Adar/March 17**  
 Torah Portions Vayakhel-Pekudei  
 Shabbat HaChodesh  
 Blessing of the new month Nissan  
 Shabbat ends 7:46 PM

to dedicate an issue call (718) 776 6000

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**Rebbetzin Chava Gurary OBM**