

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion*

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayelech*, we have the commandment of *Hakhel*. "Assemble the nation, the men, the women, the children... In order that they hear and in order that they learn and revere G-d... and will be careful to do all the words of this Torah."

Hakhel took place on Sukkot in the year after the Sabbatical year. All the Jewish people would assemble in the Holy Temple. The king, standing on a podium built for the occasion, would read selections from the Torah for all to hear.

While most mitzvot connected to the Temple are not done today, Hakhel is unique in that at least parts of it can be done, and not just in a "Hakhel" year. Though we currently have no king and no Temple (may it speedily be rebuilt) but the reasons, "in order that they listen, learn, revere and do," can still be implemented.

The prerequisite is that you are "assembled," meaning all of you are in a state of togetherness, with brotherly love. "Togetherness" sets the mood and opens the heart to hear words of meaning and *chizuk* (strengthening), "in order that they hear..."

When I started to lose my ability to speak, it made me much more aware of the power of speech. I had to decide what is truly worth saying. Now, unable to speak, I dream of what I would tell my family with my own voice if I could.

Words are powerful, when used correctly they can lift up a spirit, when abused, they can destroy.

Our children, spouses, and other relatives ache for our recognition and love. Especially during the holidays, when we spend so much time together, we need to make sure to use words that uplift and bring others close with love and kindness.

Our families value our words and remember them. Your actions are equally, if not, more important. Create a loving atmosphere, focus your attention on them. Listen to what they have to share with you. They want you to know them, and to be proud of them.

When you have set a loving atmosphere, then you can discuss G-d, Torah and mitzvot. Their ears and their hearts will be open to hear and to learn, to revere G-d and to keep His Torah.

Consider making a get together with your family and friends. Create an atmosphere of togetherness, speak to their hearts with love and kindness, make them feel "most important."

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.

Prayers and Good Deeds

In the midst of the Yom Kippur services, the Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, interrupted his prayers and departed from the synagogue. Left behind was a room filled with stunned worshippers, who wondered what awesome and lofty mission had prompted the Rebbe to leave in these spiritually uplifted moments.

The Rebbe made his way to the nearby forest. There, he collected dry wood and branches. He carried them to a small house. He knocked on the door and then entered. Once inside, the Rebbe kindled a fire from the wood he had brought. He prepared a soup and he fed it, spoon by spoon, to the woman in the house who had just given birth.

It is easy, even comfortable, to read stories such as the one about Rabbi Shneur Zalman, and be inspired to enhance our fulfillment of the mitzvot between ourselves and each other. At the very beginning of Jewish history, we are told of our ancestor Abraham, who showed us the importance of tending to the needs of others. In the midst of a Divine "conversation," he asked G-d to "wait" while he greeted and provided for tired wayfarers who approached his tent.

If we look at the story of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, what distinguishes it from other examples of selflessness and caring? First, that the Rebbe chose to go himself although he could have sent his assistant, a son, or one of his Chasidim to tend to the new mother. But to fully appreciate the significance of the Rebbe's actions, we must take into account the magnitude and intensity of the Rebbe's Yom Kippur prayers which

were on behalf of all the Jewish people. Yet, he saw that caring for a new mother was more precious before G-d than his exalted prayers.

Society encourages and sometimes even takes the time to applaud humanitarian deeds, acts of goodness and kindness, volunteerism, etc. However, the Jew's compassion and caring is driven by the fact that these mitzvot are an integral part of his/her relationship with G-d.

In the words of Rabbi Shneur Zalman when asked which is the superior Divine service, love of G-d or love of the Jewish people, "Both love of G-d and love of the Jewish people are equally engraved in every Jew's soul. It follows that love of the Jewish people is superior, however, for you love whom your beloved loves."

Ultimately, then, these mitzvot are also an expression of our love of G-d. We are not enjoined to fulfill mitzvot between ourselves and our fellow humans because they "feel good" (or we "feel good" after doing them) or because they are politically correct. We are to perform them as a Divine imperative, a part of what our Creator demands of us.

Yom Kippur is the day when G-d gave the second set of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, after the Jews were forgiven for the sin of the golden calf. On one tablet were those mitzvot (commandments) between a person and G-d. On the other tablet were those between a person and his fellow. This teaches us that both types of mitzvot are parallel parts of our relationship with our Creator, to be approached, performed and carried out equally.

SLICE OF LIFE

Yom Kippur Vignettes



by Rabbi Uriel Vigler

I realized that I hadn't seen Beth for a while. I whipped out my cell phone and texted her, "Come for Shabbat dinner tonight?" In less than a minute my phone dinged and her reply popped up: "Would love to but I am a Christian."

Huh?

Last I'd seen her, she was just as Jewish as I am. I tried to figure it out. Had Beth undergone a major life change? I knew I hadn't seen her in some time, but it hadn't been that long! What was going on? My confusion soon passed as I realized it was simply impossible for Beth to be Christian. There must have been some sort of mistake.

I wrote back, "Beth?" And just as quickly, she responded, "No. Wrong number." Whew. Deep breath. Look for Beth's new number.

The incident with Beth actually reminded me of my friend Simon. Shortly before Yom Kippur I asked him if he planned to come to *shul*.

His honest response? "Rabbi, I cannot lie. I will not be there. You know I'm an atheist. I do not believe in G-d in any way, shape or form! But I will fast."

Incredulous, I asked, "You'll fast? For 25 hours?"

"You bet, Rabbi!"

"Why?"

"In 2006 I was deeply in love. My girlfriend was

diagnosed with cancer and the doctors were not sure she'd pull through. We travelled together to the Western Wall to pray. Right there, I made a promise. I said, 'G-d, if you exist, and if you cure my girlfriend, I will fast every single year on Yom Kippur.' And my girlfriend vowed that if she was cured she would never eat pork again.

"Well, she got better and I've kept my promise. Every Yom Kippur since then I've fasted the full 25 hours, and I intend to continue doing so."

This is Simon.

I can't entice him to come to Shul for our delicious Shabbat cholent. He won't come for Simchat Torah dancing, the celebratory Purim feast or the exhilarating Passover seder. Even our speed dating event didn't draw him! And yet he fasts on Yom Kippur. Every year.

"You don't believe in G-d, and yet you fast? Why?" I asked.

But Simon insists, "A vow is a vow. A deal is a deal."

The only way Simon's explanation makes a shred of sense is if deep down he is a believer. Which he is. Like every Jew, Simon has a soul which is a part of G-d Himself. The soul believes, and although he may truly think otherwise, Simon's actions show that loud and clear.

It's an intrinsic connection which is engraved in our essence, in our soul. So connected are we, that every single Jew, whether s/he knows it or not, is a believer.

A Jew once told Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, "Rabbi, I don't believe in G-d." Rabbi Levi Yitzchak responded, "The G-d that you don't believe in, I don't believe in either!" When Jews think they don't believe in G-d, it simply means they are misunderstanding Who and What G-d is.

Each and every one of us, every Jew who has a soul, is absolutely and necessarily a believer.

And that is how I knew, with certainty, that Beth had not become a Christian.

Rabbi Vigler, with his wife Shevy, directs the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

by Rabbi Eli Friedman

Just before the end of Yom Kippur, not 20 minutes before the sounding of the Shofar, a man

with a dog walked straight through our outdoor Yom Kippur *shul*. Ten minutes later he returned, and walked straight through the *shul* again, in the opposite direction. He was a pleasant, quiet guy taking his dog for a walk, and as he retraced his steps, I went over to him and asked him if he was Jewish. He said he was and I invited him to take a seat, people gave him a *kippa* and a *Machzor*; and he stayed until the end of the service.

As he sat down, a memory appeared in my mind. Twenty years ago, the morning before Passover, I was helping my grandfather with his chaplaincy work in New Jersey. He was a chaplain in two hospitals, but an illness was making his job very challenging. That morning, in great pain, my Zaide pushed himself hard. It took everything he had to get in the car at home and out of the car at the hospital, and when we reached the lobby, he was out of breath, so we sat down for a breather.

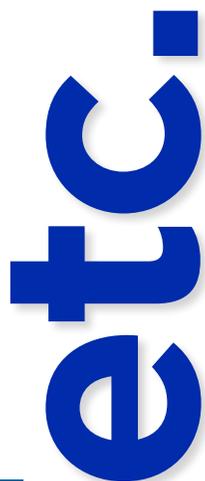
As we sat there, the mailman walked in. He gave my grandfather a big smile and called out cheerfully, "Good morning Rabbi Gordon, I am going to do my rounds and then I'll come to your office to put on *Tefilin!*"

My Zaide nodded in agreement and then said the following to me. "Thank G-d, I'm so happy. I really wasn't sure what G-d thought about my dragging myself around like this; maybe G-d doesn't approve. But now, this Jewish man walks in and announces that he is coming to put on Tefilin! Now I know G-d is proud of me, that's why He sent the mailman to come at this moment. Thank Hashem!"

So when the dog-walker took a kippa and a Machzor and sat down to observe the culmination of the Yom Kippur service, I remembered this incident. Apparently, my illustrious Zaide had himself a little system by which he measured G-d's approval, and it went like this: if G-d sends you someone you can help, that means G-d is proud of you. Well, we were wrapping up a long Yom Kippur service at Chabad of Calabasas. It would be nice to know that G-d enjoyed our services; that He was proud of us.

And there it was. Moments before the end, G-d Himself sent one more Jew our way, one more person to include, one more soul. Thank you Hashem!

Rabbi Eli and Shaina Friedman direct Chabad of Calabasas, California. From Rabbi Friedman's weekly email to his community.



New Facility

The Colergét Conference Center, 1.5 acres of tranquil gardens, gazebos, and trails, is the new home of Chabad of Kenosha, Wisconsin/Congregation Bnei Tzedek Chabad. When completed, the new center will include a synagogue, Hebrew School classrooms, social hall, kosher kitchen, library, mikva, guest suites and indoor and outdoor play area.

Shofar Ceremony

The "mitzva of the day" on Rosh Hashana is to hear the shofar blown. In addition to High Holiday services, your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center will have a special Shofar Ceremony to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to fulfill this important commandment. Call your local Chabad Center to find out what special programs they are having for Rosh Hashana. While you're at it, ask them about all their events for the flurry of festivals in the upcoming weeks – Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah.

Today Is...

6 Tishrei

V'ahavta... "Love your fellow as yourself." Rabbi Shneur Zalman taught that this love is an instrument, a means to "Love the Eternal your G-d." This is explained in the statement, "Whoever is pleasing to man is pleasing to G-d." This service of return stems from goodness of heart.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated

6th of Tishrei, 5750 [1989]

To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere, G-d Bless You All!

Greeting and blessing:
It is customary to "open with a blessing," in this instance, a blessing for a *chasima* (sealing) and *g'mar chasima* (final sealing) for a good and sweet year.

It is after Rosh Hashana and we have already entered the new year. At all times, even when a person's knowledge and actual conduct are satisfactory, he should constantly strive to invest his time in further study, and thus to improve his conduct (his thought, speech, and action). Surely this applies at the threshold of a new year, which reminds us that it is necessary to strive toward a new and more elevated level of perfection in our daily life.

...Both miracles and nature are expressions of G-dliness. Nature too emanates from G-d. He created and fixed the laws of nature and uses them as a means to control the world. What distinguishes miracles from nature is that miracles are out of the ordinary, a higher order of existence than G-d usually reveals. The Hebrew word for miracle, "*nes*," also means "uplifted," raised above and exalted. Thus, a miracle is an occurrence which introduces a higher frame of reference into creation, elevating the world beyond its natural limitations.

These two approaches, the natural and the miraculous, must be reflected in the behavior of every Jew. We must exhibit both a natural pattern of behavior and a miraculous pattern of behavior.

Even a Jew's natural pattern of behavior involves absolute adherence to the directives of the Torah. However, inasmuch as it is his ordinary conduct, it is limited by the bounds of his human potential.

G-d, however, grants a Jew an additional potential to serve Him through a miraculous pattern of behavior, allowing him to transcend his natural limits. This does not mean that a person merely improves himself slightly or even greatly, in the spirit of the directive that "in holy matters, one should always ascend higher," by increasing his commitment to sessions of Torah study, undertaking a new *hiddur* in the performance of

a *mitzvah* (commandment), or the like. Rather, it means that he changes entirely, adopting a total new and more elevated pattern of behavior.

"All Jews are presumed to act in an upstanding manner." Thus, we can assume that each Jew utilized the month of Elul, the month of stock-taking, to correct all his deeds of the previous year and to elevate them to the level of completion and perfection.

We can also assume that he was granted a full measure of pardon, forgiveness, and atonement, and was inscribed – and that inscription was sealed – for a good year in all matters....

It is now demanded of each Jew – man, woman, and child – that he work with himself and elevate himself to a plane so new and so high that his conduct in this year will be miraculous when compared to his conduct in the previous year.

This miraculous pattern of behavior – serving G-d (through Torah, prayer, and mitzvos) in an unlimited manner – must pervade every aspect of our conduct, including the mitzvos between man and G-d, the mitzvos between man and his fellowman, beginning with the mitzvah to "love your neighbor as yourself," and also the mitzvos that are connected with non-Jews and with the world at large.

G-d relates to the Jewish people "measure for measure." Accordingly, it is understood that a miraculous pattern of behavior on the part of a Jew arouses a miraculous pattern of Divine behavior and draws down unlimited Divine blessings upon himself, both as an individual and as a part of the Jewish people as a whole, and upon the world at large.

May each individual's acceptance of firm and powerful resolutions regarding all the above be considered by G-d as if these resolutions have already been carried out. In particular, this is true, since we have already experienced several days of the new year and one can assume that the above has already begun to be carried out. And may the meaning of the acronym resulting from the name of this year be fulfilled quite literally, so that "this will be a year of miracles."

May it also include the most vital miracle, the miracle of the true and complete redemption led by our righteous Moshiach, when there will be even greater miracles than those which occurred during the exodus from Egypt. Thus our Sages interpret the verse, "As in the days of your exodus from Egypt will I show you wonders" – the miracles of the Messianic age will be "wonders" when compared to the "days of your exodus from Egypt."

May G-d fulfill the heartfelt prayer of each Jew and of the Jewish people as a whole – and bring the true and complete redemption in the immediate future.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"But I will assuredly hide My face on that day" (Deut. 31:18) A person can only hide if the other person is unaware of his presence. It's not hid-

ing if we know beforehand that someone is concealing himself in a certain spot, even if he is well hidden from view. This knowledge gives us a better grasp of the exile in which the Jews find themselves. We, having been forewarned, can better deal with the darkness because we know that G-d can be found even as He hides His face. (Baal Shem Tov)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of the unique points about Yom Kippur is the special service of the Kohein Gadol – the High Priest, who performed the Yom Kippur service on that day by himself.

For the part of the High Priest's service which was performed in the two outer halls of the Holy Temple, he wore gold clothing. The part of the service performed inside the Holy of Holies, however, was performed in plain white clothing.

Although the physical Holy Temple was destroyed – and we eagerly await its rebuilding – the spiritual Sanctuary within every Jew – his Holy of Holies – remains totally intact. Thus, each individual Jew is personally responsible to perform the special service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur.

The High Priest wore gold clothing for a large part of his special service to remind us that we should use the most precious and beautiful materials available in serving G-d; we should perform mitzvot in a beautiful and enhanced manner.

The white clothing of the High Priest, worn in the Holy of Holies, is a reminder though, that it is not enough to only do those mitzvot that involve us in material matters. Those mitzvot that are purely spiritual in nature, such as prayer and Torah study, must also be performed.

At the end of his service, the High Priest said a short prayer that the year should be a good year materially for himself, his tribe and all the Jewish people throughout the entire world.

This, too, is part of the service of every single Jew on the holiest day of the year and in the Holy of Holies of his heart. Each Jew on Yom Kippur should also pray for a good year not only for himself and his family, but for the entire Jewish people.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה 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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The following is excerpted and translated from the memoirs of Rabbi Moshe Segal (1904-1985), a Lubavitcher chasid who was active in the struggle to free the Holy Land from British rule.

In the years that Jerusalem was under British rule, the area in front of the Western Wall did not look as it does today. Only a narrow alley separated the Kotel and the Arab houses on its other side. The British forbade us to place an ark for the Torah scroll, tables or benches in the alley; not even a single chair or stool could be brought to the Kotel. We were also forbidden to pray out loud, to read from the Torah, or to sound the shofar on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Policemen were stationed at the Kotel to enforce these decrees.

While praying at the Kotel on Yom Kippur of that year (1930), I overheard people whispering to each other: “Where will we go to hear the shofar? It’ll be impossible to blow it here. There are as many policemen as people praying!” The Chief of Police himself was there to make sure that the Jews would not, G-d forbid, sound the single blast that traditionally closes the fast.

I listened to the whisperings and thought to myself: Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar that accompanies our proclamation of the sovereignty of G-d? Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar, which symbolizes the redemption of Israel? True, the sounding of the shofar at the close of Yom Kippur is only a custom, but “a Jewish custom is Torah”!

I approached Rabbi Yitzchak Horenstein, who served as the rabbi of our “congregation,” and asked him for a shofar. The rabbi abruptly turned away from me, but not before he cast a glance at the prayer stand at the left end of the alley. I understood: the shofar was in the stand. When the hour of blowing approached, I walked over to the stand and leaned against it.

I opened the door and slipped the shofar into my shirt. I had the shofar, but what if they saw me before I had a chance to blow it? I was still unmarried at the time, and following the Ashkenazi custom, did not wear a tallit [prayer shawl]. I turned to the person praying at my side and asked him for his tallit.

I wrapped myself in the tallit. At that moment, I felt that I had created my own private domain. Outside my tallit a foreign government prevailed, ruling over the people of Israel even on their holiest day and at their holiest place, and we are not free to serve our G-d. But under the tallit is another domain. Here I am under no dominion other than that of my Father in Heaven; here I shall do as He commands me, and no force on earth will stop me.

When the closing verses of the Neilah prayer were proclaimed, I took the shofar and blew a long, resounding blast. Everything happened very quickly. Many hands grabbed me. I removed the tallit from over my head, and before me stood the Chief of Police, who ordered my arrest.

I was taken to the Kishle, the prison in the Tower of David in the Old City, and an Arab policeman was stationed there to watch over me. Many hours passed; I was given no food or water to break my fast. At midnight the policeman received an order to release me, and he let me out without a word.

I then learned that when the Chief rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, heard of my arrest, he immediately contacted the secretary of the High Commissioner of Palestine and asked that I be released. When his request was refused, he stated that he would not break his fast until I was freed. The High Commissioner resisted for many hours, but finally, out of respect for the rabbi, he had no choice but to set me free.

For the next eighteen years, the shofar was sounded at the Kotel every Yom Kippur.

The British well understood the significance of this blast – they knew it would ultimately demolish their reign over our land as the walls of Jericho crumbled before the shofar of Joshua, and they did everything in their power to prevent it. But every Yom Kippur, the shofar was sounded by men who knew they would be arrested for their part in staking our claim to the holiest of our possessions.

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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT
on the weekly Torah portion

And they will say on that day, “Is it not because my G-d is not in the midst of me, that these evils have overtaken me” (Deut. 31:17)

This verse does not refer to one who denies that there is a Creator in the world; rather, it refers to one who believes that G-d exists, but that “G-d is not in the midst of me.” He imagines that G-d exists on so high a plane that He does not deign to intervene in our puny concerns. G-d is an active participant in our lives and oversees every detail of our daily lives. Our behavior should reflect our awareness of this. (*Otzarenu Hayashan*)

The Baal Shem Tov used to say that if one sees something bad in someone else, it is a sure sign that an element of the same negative trait exists in the person finding fault. It is as if one is looking into a mirror, and will see only that which is reflected. Rabbi Dov Ber, the second Lubavitcher Rebbe, added his interpretation on this verse: “Because my G-d is not in the midst of me – because my own face is dirty and my own connection to G-d and holiness is flawed, have these evils overtaken me – that is why I find fault in others.

Assemble the people together (Deut. 31:12)

Even a newborn was obligated in the commandment of hakhel, the once-in-seven-year assemblage of all Jews to hear the reading of the Torah. We learn from this that a Jewish child’s education begins right after his birth, even before he learns to speak or go to school. (*The Rebbe*)

Now therefore write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel (Deut. 31:19)

While this is referring to the song of *Haazinu* in this week’s portion, the *Talmud (Nedarim 38a)* has taken this to refer to the last commandment in the Torah – for every Jew to write his/her own Torah scroll. In 1981 the Rebbe encouraged the writing of unity Torah scrolls so that all Jews could fulfill this mitzva by purchasing a letter in a Torah scroll being written.

Dedicated in Memory of
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