

# L'Chaim



Rabbi Chanina bar Chama was one of the first generation of great Talmudic Sages who followed the redaction of the Mishna by Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi [Rabbi Judah the Prince]. By the time he came from his native Babylonia, to study under Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, Rabbi Chanina was already a very accomplished scholar and was received with great warmth and friendship. He developed strong ties with his teacher and many of his fellow disciples, particularly with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

During those turbulent and dangerous times, it was often necessary to send Jewish dignitaries to plead with the Roman government on behalf of the Jewish people. Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Chanina were often chosen to appear before the Roman emperor. When one of the emperor's advisors asked him why he would rise in honor of these Jews, he replied, "They have the appearance of angels."

Rabbi Yehuda passed away and was succeeded by his son, Rabban Gamliel, who, according to his father's instructions, seated Rabbi Chanina in the place of greatest honor at the academy. However, Rabbi Chanina's tremendous modesty prevented him from taking that place. Only when the elderly sage, Rabbi Efes passed away did Rabbi Chanina occupy it.

According to the teaching of our Sages that we should not make the Torah "an ax with which to dig," Rabbi Chanina went into business dealing in honey. When he succeeded, he opened and supported a Torah academy in his town of Tzipori. He never ceased trying to bring the people closer to G-d and would often reprimand them; this, of course, caused some resentment.

Once, there was a severe drought in the northern part of Israel where Tzipori was situated. At the same time, in the southern part, where Rabbi Yehoshua lived, ample rain fell as soon as Rabbi Yehoshua prayed. The people of Tzipori complained, saying that the drought continued only because Rabbi Chanina didn't pray for them enough.

In response, Rabbi Chanina sent for Rabbi Yehoshua. When he arrived, a public fast was declared and prayers were said for rain. When no rain fell, the people finally understood that the fault was not Rabbi Chanina's, but their own, and they resolved to correct their behavior.

Rabbi Chanina was known as a gifted healer who was well-versed in the use of various kinds of herbs and also the antidotes to snake poisons. He frequently advised people to be careful not to catch colds and to take care of themselves and not neglect treating any disorder.

His Torah teachings and the example of his mitzva observance had a profound influence on his generation. He observed the Sabbath in a manner which showed his love and devotion to the mitzva (commandment) and when the Shabbat departed he marked it with a Melave Malka – a feast for the departing of the Sabbath Queen.

Although he lived through very difficult and trying times, he accepted all his suffering – losing a son and a daughter – with love of G-d and an abiding faith. He lived a long life and even when he was very old he was unusually fit. It is said that at the age of eighty, he was able to put on his shoes while standing on one foot. When asked to what he ascribed his good health, he replied that he was always careful to show respect to Torah scholars as well as for the elderly, even if they were not learned.

Before Rabbi Chanina passed away, Rabbi Yochanan, his disciple, (who compiled the *Jerusalem Talmud*) went to visit him. On the way, word reached him that his master had died and he tore his clothes in mourning. Rabbi Chanina was so loved and respected among the Jews of his time that he was given the honorary title, "Rabbi Chanina the Great."

Adapted from Talks and Tales

In Loving Memory Of  
**Rabbi Yisroel Meir Vogel OBM**  
who dedicated his life to teaching and inspiring others with the value of Torah and Mitzvos, in an extraordinarily exciting and dynamic way

לעילוי נשמת אבי ומורי הרב ישראל מאיר בן יחזקאל ע"ה  
נפטר ח' שבט, הובא למנוחות  
ל' שבט תשפ"ב בארץ ישראל  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

**For six years he shall serve and in the seventh year he shall be set free. (Ex. 21:2)**

These six years hint to the six kingdoms in which the Jewish people "served," i.e. were enslaved: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Media, Greece and Rome (the "exile" in which we presently find ourselves). Soon we will be "set free" by Moshiach, who will redeem us from our present exile. (*Sefer HaParshiot*)

**If you lend money to My people, to the poor (Ex 22:24)**

Our Sages commented that not only is one obligated to lend money to someone who is poor, it is also a mitzva to lend money to one who is wealthy! Sometimes, for whatever reason, a rich person is in need of money for a particular purpose; at that moment, it is considered as if he is poor. Furthermore, no matter how wealthy a person may be, he can always become richer. Thus, in comparison to his later financial status, he may be considered poor in his present state. The same holds true of the various periods in world history. Compared to the Messianic Era, even the golden age of the Jewish people under King Solomon, when the Holy Temple existed in all its glory, will be considered impoverished. Therefore, no matter how secure we may be in exile, we look forward to the Era of Redemption in the same way a poor man anticipates becoming rich. (The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Acharei, 5746)

**And He will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove sickness from your midst (Ex. 23:25)**

Most illnesses are caused either by food that is ingested, or from an intensification of internal forces within the body. G-d therefore promised to send His blessing in both of these areas, blessing the food one eats - "your bread and water" - and "removing sickness from your midst" - making sure that illness does not come from within. (*Kli Yakar*)

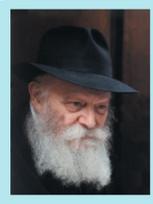
**He that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution (Ex 22:5)**

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said: "I, too, must make restitution for having kindled the fire in Zion, as it states, 'He has kindled a fire in Zion and it has devoured its foundations.' Indeed, Zion will be rebuilt with fire, for 'I will be to her a wall of fire round about.'" (*Zachariah 2:9*)

**5:15 Candle Lighting Time**  
NY Metro Area  
**26 Shevat/Feb 17**  
Torah Portion *Mishpatim*  
Parshat *Shekalim*  
Blessing of the new month *Adar*  
Shabbat ends 6:15 PM

## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion



This week we read the Torah portion of *Mishpatim* as well as the first of the four additional Torah portions read in the weeks leading up to Passover.

This week's additional reading is *Shekalim*. Every Jewish male was required to give a coin whose value is described in the Torah as being "half a shekel of the holy shekel." This coin was given as an annual contribution for the communal offerings.

The Torah uses the term "holy shekel" to distinguish from the ordinary shekel. The ordinary shekel had a value of 10 smaller coins called "gera," whereas the value of the "holy shekel" was 20 gera.

Since the gift's value was 10 gera, why would the Torah command us to give half of a "holy shekel" rather than just a whole ordinary shekel?

The answer is to be found in a commentary of the Maggid of Mezritch about the silver trumpets (*chatzotzrot*) that were blown on festive occasions in Temple times.

G-d commanded Moses, "Make for yourself two silver trumpets – *chatzotzrot*." The word *chatzotzrot* can be divided into two words, *chatza-ai tzurot*, which means "half forms." Each trumpet is a complete form but is not whole without its partner.

"Two *chatzotzrot*," means that G-d and the Jewish people, are so to speak, two half forms, which together complete each other. Similarly, each of us is only complete when we connect with other Jews – other half-shekels.

When a Jew connects with G-d, you have both halves of the form, each half is complete on its own, each is 10, a whole ordinary shekel, but a Jew together with G-d becomes a holy shekel.

The same is true for Jewish people. Each one of us are complete on our own, but we are only half of a holy shekel. We need another person to become a holy shekel. The mitzva of loving your fellow, makes you whole. G-d likes to be where there is love and unity amongst friends.

This, of course, is also the case for couples. When you are together in a loving relationship, you are two complete half-shekels that become one holy shekel. In order for that to happen, you have to see your partner, not as a half, but as a whole. And then the two ordinary shekels, become one holy shekel. When this happens, G-d wants to take part in your relationship, if you bring G-d in, you take your relationship to a whole new level.

G-d wants us to connect with Him, however, He wants us to love one another first.

May G-d bless us with good relationships, with our friends, spouses, and ultimately with Him. Our unity will bring us the ultimate relationship with G-d that we yearn for, with the coming of Moshiach. The time has come.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, [yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com](http://yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com). Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

## Diamonds Are Forever

There's a story of a man who hears about a faraway land where diamonds litter the streets and he decides to travel to this distant spot. Upon arrival, he sees diamonds scattered everywhere. He begins loading his suitcases until, after hours of work, they are full.

The *nouveau riche* traveler deposits his suitcases in a magnificent suite in a luxury hotel. He then goes to the dining room and orders a sumptuous meal.

The bill arrives and the diamond magnate magnanimously gives a huge diamond to the waiter, saying "Keep the change!"

"What is this stone doing here?" the waiter asks with a sour face. "These pebbles are valueless. In this land chicken fat is our currency! If you can't pay for your meal, you'll wash dishes."

The man thinks this is a joke. But, as he is dragged to the kitchen, he realizes that here diamonds are worthless.

The man works off his meal. But then he has other expenses to pay. Weeks pass. As he rises in the hotel ranks, he puts aside a little cold fat. Time passes and the man is quite phat.

It is now time to return home.

As his personal yacht nears the dock in his city, he sees his family waiting. His wife forces a smile and inquires about the horrible odor. Sniffing, she asks, "Do I smell chicken fat?"

"Yes," her husband says. "The yacht is full of chicken fat! We are rich!"

"Where are the diamonds that you were to bring after all these years away?" asks the wife in confusion.

"What value are diamonds? They are like pebbles," the husband intones. "Chicken fat is precious!"

Shocked, the wife says, "You forgot the reason for your trip. You were

supposed to collect diamonds, not chicken fat! Perhaps you have even one diamond? One little souvenir of all your labor in that strange land?"

He digs through his bags and finds one diamond. With that one small diamond, he manages to pay the debts his family has incurred during his absence and to start all over again.

This story is a parable for the descent of the soul into the body. When the soul comes into this world it is told, "Be righteous and do not be wicked" – follow G-d's commandments, for they are as precious as diamonds. Collect them, cherish them. Garner as many as you can during your short sojourn.

But often, the soul gets confused. It forgets its mission and its promise. The soul begins to collect "chicken fat," to get involved in all the material and egotistical pursuits of this world, all the while thinking that this is what has true and lasting value.

Ultimately, the day comes when the soul returns from its journey. Joyously, the soul begins showing off its "chicken fat," unmindful that it has forgotten the reason for coming into this world.

Gently, in the Heavenly Court, it is asked, "Have you not a few precious diamonds, some *mitzvot* (commandments) to show for your years on earth?"

Regretfully, the soul searches here and there until it finds a few things: a kind word; a prayer offered for someone's speedy recovery; charity to support a yeshiva; a blessing recited on challah; a Jewish class attended; a Shabbat candle lit; *tefilin* put on. And oh, how the soul wishes that it would have remembered its purpose and the reason for its descent.

# SLICE OF LIFE

What Comes First?  
by Rabbi Yisroel Uzan



My wife Haya and I moved to Lagos, Nigeria in 2011. We came at the behest of Rabbi Shlomo Bentolila, the Rebbe's emissary to Central Africa. Mr. Nissim Gaon, an elderly philanthropist from Switzerland had offered us use of his large villa in Lagos that was suitable for our living needs and for Chabad programming.

Unfortunately, four months later, our benefactor became very ill and remaining in the villa was no longer an option, so we returned to France to reconsider how to continue.

We concluded that Abuja, with its larger and considerably younger Jewish population, was the logical place to reopen Chabad in Nigeria. A year later, an Israeli company in Abuja offered us an apartment in their compound. We immediately started classes, services, children's programs with the dozens of Jewish families living in that compound. Jews from town started to participate as well.

Very soon we outgrew our space. But finding a place to live and for our Chabad House in an African country that is on par with Western standards, with dependable electricity, indoor plumbing and security was difficult. However, the greatest challenge was that to lease any space we would need to sign a two year contract and pay the entire fee up-front.

Life went on and we continued our programming but due to financial constraints we had no way of growing our activities by renting a larger space.

We started wondering if perhaps our decision to

come to Nigeria was a mistake and we were in way over our heads. Perhaps a different couple would be more successful. We were at a critical and painful juncture. After several weeks we decided it was time to travel to the Rebbe to ask for a blessing and a clear sign that Rebbe's work in Nigeria was for us.

We flew to New York and at the Rebbe's Ohel we wrote all the details of our work until now as the Rebbe's emissaries in Nigeria. We also wrote that we saw no path forward. We asked the Rebbe for a clear sign if we were to remain in Nigeria or search for a new place to be his emissaries.

That week I heard about a wealthy businessman, Mr. David Khazanski from Toronto, who has several investments in Nigeria. I reached out to him, introduced myself and requested a meeting with him since I was in the area. He invited me for a meeting at his office at 6:00 p.m.

I searched online for flights, found a 3:00 p.m. departure from JFK arriving in Toronto at 4:00 p.m., leaving enough time to make it to his office, meet with him and catch the return flight to New York later that evening.

At 6:00 p.m. I arrived at the office to be told by the secretary that Mr. Khazanski is extremely busy and would like to reschedule for the next morning.

"I just flew in from New York to meet Mr. Khazanski and I need to return tonight," I explained.

The secretary relayed the message. Mr. Khazanski came out of his office and apologized, "I thought you said you were in the area?"

"Coming from Nigeria, New York City is in the area of Toronto."

We had an animated conversation about Chabad activities in Nigeria. I shared that we were now at a critical moment and perhaps he would consider making the worthy investment in establishing our Chabad House in Nigeria in the proper way.

Mr. Khazanski was very receptive and enthusiastic about everything I said but explained that his assets were currently tied to many projects and investments and he was not in a position to give such a significant amount. "When my pending deals in Nigeria pull through you will certainly hear from me." He then requested that when I return to New York I should write to the Rebbe to request a blessing on his behalf for success in his business dealing in Nigeria.

That evening, Haya and I went to the Ohel and wrote a long letter to the Rebbe including a detailed plan. We would return to Nigeria and remain until Lag B'omer. If the situation didn't change, we would

take it as a sign that we should move elsewhere. We reported to the Rebbe the details of my meeting with Mr. Khazanski and asked for a special blessing on his behalf for success in his business.

After reading our letter at the Ohel, Haya walked into the Chabad House and saw on the video screen that plays videos of the Rebbe's public gatherings the following scene: Rabbi Avraham Parshan presented Mr. Tanenbaum, a philanthropist from Toronto, to the Rebbe.

Rabbi Parshan told the Rebbe, "He pledged half a million dollars to build in Kfar Chabad."

Mr. Tanenbaum clarified, "I meant a quarter million dollars."

The Rebbe responded, "Why are you scared to commit to half a million dollars if G-d can make you wealthier? A Jew says you can give half a million..."

Mr. Tanenbaum, "I say a quarter, he says a half..."

The Rebbe, "If you'll be able to give half a million, that's even better. Now you have a certain amount of capital which you calculate allows you to give a quarter million. Comes along Parshan here, and says you're giving twice as much. So you can indeed have twice as much capital!"

Mr. Tanenbaum, "May it only be!"

The Rebbe, "May G-d help you... If Parshan comes along in a few weeks, saying you can give a million, don't get scared... and then see to it that he also gives a million!"

Needless to say, my wife was astounded to watch this clip, concerning a philanthropist from Toronto and she repeated the exchange to me. I found the link to the video and right away sent it to Mr. Khazanski. I informed him that this was the Rebbe's response to his request for a blessing. "Surely, committing to opening the Chabad House in Nigeria before the deals pull through will be the conduit for G-d's blessing for your success." He responded that we can go ahead with planning the new location for the Chabad House!

Three months later, Mr. Khazanski came to Nigeria to settle the deal he had been working on. He closed his original deal with much success, and unexpectedly landed an amazing deal in an entirely different industry! During this wondrous business trip, we signed a contract and opened a beautiful Chabad House. And on a personal level, we received the clearest sign from the Rebbe that Nigeria is our place. We feel that we received a direct instruction from the Rebbe to remain in Nigeria as his emissaries to prepare the world for Moshiach!

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# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated

12 Kislev, 5725 (1964)

I received your letter in which you describe the state of your [physical] health, as well as your [sad and despairing] state of mind.

From what I can ascertain from your letter, I must emphasize that there are various aspects of your life for which you can be truly grateful to G-d.

Understandably, this does not mean that the tormented state in which you now find yourself is completely without basis. Nevertheless, a person must be able to see the complete picture [including all the good that has transpired in his life, and] not only the negative part.

It should not be difficult for a woman with a background like yours and possessing faith such as you do to contemplate G-d's benevolent providence, which He provides to each and every one individually. Moreover, G-d is the Essence of Goodness, and "It is in the nature of he who is good to do good."

When one ponders these thoughts, one must inevitably come to the same conclusion as did King David, the author of the Psalms, who declared: "G-d is with me; I shall not fear."

To the contrary, you have all the reasons to be joyous and glad of heart, particularly since a joyous attitude on your part will have a beneficial effect on your entire family. Merely, it is important for you to bear in mind, as mentioned above, that you indeed possess many things for which you should be grateful and which should cause you joy.

It happens quite often that an individual whose mood is similar to yours seeks to discover the basis for his [unhappy] frame of mind, thinking that the answer he comes up with is the true cause for all his problems [and unhappiness], when in truth the root cause may be something else entirely.

This is particularly true of a Jewish man or woman whose true joy is entrenched in living a full Jewish life, i.e., a life that is in complete harmony with the path of Torah and *mitzvos* [commandments] given to us on Sinai and that made us into a holy nation. The particulars of how to live a Jewish life are meticulously detailed in the *Shulchan Aruch* [Code of Jewish Law], a book that spells out Jewish law and daily conduct.

If for one reason or another one's daily life is not in complete accord with the Jewish way of life as commanded by G-d, it is impossible for a Jew to be completely happy and content, inasmuch as something vital is missing from his life. It is possible that the person is unaware of this, for which reason he will search for the cause of his discontent and unhappiness in other areas.

On the other hand, when a Jew is steadfast in his outlook that he will live in complete harmony with the Jewish way of life, then he is capable of being completely happy and content.

The above is something that can be achieved by every Jew, although for some it may be easier than for others. This capacity surely exists since G-d, the Creator and Conductor of the world and the Commander of these commandments, also provides the person with the capacity to fulfill His commands.

Of course I am aware of the question of how it is that there are many individuals who are seemingly detached from the path of Torah and mitzvos and nevertheless seem to be completely happy, and so on.

The answer is simple. No one really knows what is transpiring in the heart and mind of another individual. Additionally, a person can conceal his inner dissatisfaction and unhappiness, although sooner or later this must come to the fore.

It would be worthwhile for your husband to check his *tefillin*, and before he puts them on each weekday morning he should give a small coin to *tzedakah* (charity). It would also be worthwhile that the *mezuzos* in your home be checked to assure that they are kosher according to Jewish law. You as well should give a small coin to *tzedakah* prior to lighting candles.

I hope to hear from you good news.

From *Healthy in Body, Mind and Soul*, compiled by Rabbi Shalom B. Wineberg, published by *Sichos in English*

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

In the week's Torah portion we read: "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan" (Ex

22:21) Whenever Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev reached this verse he would cry out. "Master of the Universe! You instructed us in Your holy Torah to be kind to widows and orphans, and yet we are like orphans in this bitter exile! You must therefore take us out of this exile at once!" (*Ohr Hatorah*)

# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Statutes, contains many precepts essential for living harmoniously with others. One of these statutes is "Keep yourself far from a lie."*

*An interesting anecdote relating to the mitzva of not lying is told about a wealthy chasid from Janowitz. In the course of introspection during the bedtime prayers, the chasid decided that whenever he said anything that resembled a lie he would donate 25 rubles to charity.*

*The chasid mentioned this undertaking to his children's private tutor:*

*"Then lie!" advised the tutor. "You will be providing money for needy Jews."*

*We do not know whether the tutor gave this advice in jest or earnestly. But we do know that when this very same tutor—himself a chasid—visited Reb Shmuel, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe reprimanded him for his advice.*

*In the Mishna, our Sages tell us, "A mitzva brings about a mitzva and a transgression brings about a transgression." According to one commentator, this teaching can be rephrased and shortened to read, "A mitzva brings about a mitzva and a transgression." How can this be possible?*

*At times we might do things which we know are not right. But we think that the "end justifies the means": If the store stays open on Shabbat, more money can be given to charity; if it is too far to walk to shul on Shabbat and we drive, well, at least we're going to shul. We begin to convince ourselves that what we're doing is actually a mitzva that will bring about another mitzva. But actually, it is a "mitzva" that brings a transgression.*

*The Torah in general, and this week's Torah portion in particular, is very clear about what are mitzvos and what are transgressions. And never does a mitzva come from a transgression.*

*May we only fill our lives with deeds that are truly mitzvos, bringing more and more mitzvos after them.*

*Shmuel Butman*

# L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה'י מושקה

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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## LivingLinks

This year's **Chabad on Campus** International **LivingLinks** trip to Poland was the largest trip to date. Eighty university students from across North America spent seven days exploring one thousand years of Jewish history, a hub of Chassidic life, and the devastation of the Holocaust. Students bring back with them a palpable urgency to make their Judaism personal and enduring, as well as arming them with the necessary Jewish pride to wear their Judaism without hesitation.

## Olympia Washington

**Chabad of Olympia, Washington**, under the direction of **Rabbi Yosef and Rivky Schtroks**, recently purchased a new facility. The 10,000 sq ft. building sitting on 3.79 acres of land in the heart of Olympia is being transformed into a magnificent Campus of Jewish Life. Shabbat Meal, holiday celebrations, Hebrew School, prayer services, Torah classes, are amongst the many programs that will take place there.

## Hakhel – Unite!

Picture the scene: Millions of Jews – men, women, infants – assembled in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount. A hush falls over the crowd as the king of Israel ascends to a platform and reads sections of the holy Torah. The nation is inspired and invigorated. A display of unity and a statement of purpose converge to revitalize and refocus a multifarious people. This scene repeated itself in ancient Jerusalem on a septennial basis. And when the Temple will soon be rebuilt, the practice will be renewed, with Moshiah himself reading from the Torah scroll. (*chabad.org*)