



The nineteenth of Kislev is the anniversary of the release from Czarist imprisonment of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy. It is also the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezritch, successor of the Baal Shem Tov and Rebbe of Rabbi Shneur Zalman. The following story, from the book Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, describes how Rabbi Shneur Zalman became involved in the fledgling Chasidic movement and a disciple of the Maggid.

At the age of twenty, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, decided to leave home for a period of time in search of a teacher and guide. Two centers of learning beckoned his attention. One was Vilna, the Lithuanian capital, the center of the Talmudic scholarship, with the famed “Vilna Gaon,” Rabbi Eliyahu at its head. The other was Mezritch, the seat of Rabbi Dov Ber, the “Maggid of Mezritch, heir to Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the leader of the still young Chasidic movement. For Rabbi Shneur Zalman, Mezritch was both geographically and intellectually the more distant place, but he had heard about the great scholarship of Rabbi Dov Ber, and the new way of Divine service which he was teaching. Rabbi Shneur Zalman had to make a momentous choice. He thought, “I have already been exposed to Talmudic discipline; I have yet to learn the discipline of prayer,” and he decided in favor of Mezritch. The decision was, of course, the turning point of his life.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s decision to go to Mezritch aroused his father-in-law’s vehement opposition, to the extent of depriving his daughter and son-in-law of any further financial support. But Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s wife stood by him, and agreed to his going there on condition that if he decided to stay, he would not extend his stay beyond 18 months.

His first impressions were not encouraging. Shneur Zalman closely observed the Maggid and his senior disciples. He discovered that they devoted considerable time to the daily prayers, and in preparation before the prayers, inevitably reducing the time left for Torah study. To the intellectual that he was, this emphasis on prayer seemed extravagant. He decided that Mezritch was not for him. The Maggid made no attempt to detain him.

As Shneur Zalman left Mezritch, he remembered that he had forgotten one of his belongings in the synagogue of the Maggid. Returning there, he found the Maggid engaged in the examination of a Jewish legal question. The brilliant analysis by the Maggid of all aspects of the question, which displayed his extraordinary erudition in the realm of Halacha, made a profound impression on Shneur Zalman, and he decided to stay a while longer in Mezritch. Thereupon, the Maggid told Shneur Zalman that his saintly master, the Baal Shem Tov, had revealed to him that one day the son of Rabbi Baruch would come to him, would leave him, and then return again. Then he – the Maggid – was to tell him about the great destiny that was linked to Shneur Zalman’s soul. The Baal Shem Tov further predicted that Shneur Zalman’s path in life would be hazardous, but that he, the Baal Shem Tov, would intercede in his behalf, and in behalf of his followers, so that “his end would be exceedingly great.

Shneur Zalman was deeply moved by what he heard, and he decided to cast in his lot with the new Chasidic movement. When Rabbi Shneur Zalman returned home after 18 months had elapsed, he was asked by his erstwhile colleagues in Vitebsk whether he had found it worth while to go so far away while Vilna was so much nearer. Rabbi Shneur Zalman answered, “In Vilna you are taught how to master the Torah, in Mezritch you are taught how to let the Torah master you.”

Excerpted from The Philosophy of Chabad, Kehot Publication Society.

Dedicated in honor of the Yahrzeit of
Sheina Bashe Batya bas Yosef Dov מ"ה Minsky
and in honor of her husband Reb Yakov Isser שיחי'
By dear friends of the L'Chaim Publication
Abi and Yonatiy Friedman
May they continue to have much Nachas from their children,
grandchildren and great-grandchildren

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion



Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people who were with him (Gen. 32:8)

What caused Jacob to be distressed? The fact that the people who were with him were “divided.” Jacob recognized that when the Jewish people are united, the forces of Esau can do them no harm. It’s only when there are internal divisions and strife that Jews should worry. (Maayanot HaNetzach)

I am not worthy of all the kindness (Gen. 32:11)

Every kindness G-d shows a person should only serve to increase his humility. The Tanya explains that “everything that exists is considered by G-d as nothing.” It follows then that the more a person can be said to “exist,” that is, the more he is truly worthy, the greater his perception of himself as “nothing.” Jacob, who was extremely humble due to all the acts of kindness G-d had already shown him, was therefore worried that he was not worthy of being saved from Esau. (The Rebbe, Igrot Kodesh Vol. 2)

Because G-d has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything (Gen. 33:11)

This is a fundamental characteristic of the Jew, who is always content with his lot in life. Whatever he is given by G-d is exactly what he needs, no more and no less. This is why Jacob said, “I have all,” whereas Esau declared, “I have enough.” (Chasidic Sages)

These are the generations of Esau, who is Edom...these are the names of Esau’s chieftains...chieftain Magdiel, chieftain Iram (Gen. 36:1, 40, 43)

The present exile is referred to as the Exile of Edom because the Romans, who brought about the exile with their destruction of the Holy Temple, were mostly descendants of Edom. This exile is generally divided into two eras, governed by the above two kinds of leaders: Chieftain Magdiel (lit., “he magnifies himself above every god”):

In this first era, the Roman empire expanded throughout the world, seeking to overpower Judaism and make it difficult for Jews to observe Torah and mitzvot. Chieftain Iram (from the Hebrew “to amass [treasures for the royal Moshiach]”: This second era is the one close to the Messianic Era, when Rome will cease to subdue Israel, submitting to holiness and even assisting Moshiach. Rome will then realize the literal and sacred meaning of its name, which is related to the word “hitromemut” (exaltation). (The Rebbe, Parshat Vayishlach, 5751)



4:11 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
15 Kislev/Dec 9
Torah Portion Vayishlach
Shabbat ends 5:14 PM



בס"ד

1751

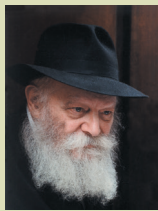
15 Kislev, 5783
Dec 9, 2022

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



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In this week’s Torah portion, Vayishlach, Jacob sends angels to his brother Esau. Part of the message they were to tell Esau was, “I sojourned (garti) with Laban.” The most famous Torah commentator Rashi gives two explanations for the word “garti.” First, that it is like the word “ger,” which means stranger. The entire time Jacob lived with Laban he was like a stranger. Second, that Jacob was hinting to Esau that during his sojourn with Laban, he kept the 613 commandments, for the numerical value of the Hebrew word “garti” is 613.

What is the inner meaning of these two explanations and what life-lesson can we learn from them?

Jacob’s descent to Laban’s house in Haran is the descent of the soul into the world. In a broader sense, it is also the descent of the Jewish people into exile. Your soul descends to accomplish the mission of refining your body and the world around you, making it into a dwelling for G-d. When we complete our missions collectively, G-d will dwell openly in this world and the peace, health, prosperity and knowledge of the Messianic Era will have commenced.

Jacob is teaching us the correct approach to succeed in our mission. Rashi’s first explanation is that we should see ourselves as strangers, travelers, in this world. When traveling, we don’t expect to have all of the conveniences that we have at home; we expect to “make due” with what is available.

Jacob was saying that he was like a stranger traveling through Laban’s place. The physical was not so important to him, his focus was on the spiritual – the 613 commandments. Therefore, he was successful in his mission.

To prove that he was successful, Jacob says, “I acquired cattle, donkeys, sheep...” This seems to contradict what was said before, that the physical was not important to Jacob. Was it important or not?

There are different approaches you can have to the world. One approach is that the physical is all that is important, and success is measured by how many things you have. This is Laban and Esau’s approach.

A second approach is that only the spiritual is important. In this approach all physical gains are shunned.

Then there is Jacob’s approach. When you make the spiritual most important, but you recognize that everything in this physical world has a holy purpose. In other words, the physical becomes important for the G-dly reason that it exists. So the physical isn’t to be shunned but to be harnessed and used for its G-dly purpose.

A Jew must do his best to refine himself and his part of the world, making it into a home for G-d, and readying it for the redemption. Perhaps it is your effort that will tip the scale and usher in the redemption. This is the power of a single individual.

May our efforts to make this world into a home for G-d succeed, and usher in the coming of Moshiach.

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.

You are Here. Or Are You?

During the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a question was asked of parents each night on American television: “It’s ten p.m., do you know where your children are?”

That question even made it to Time Magazine’s “Top Ten” list of Public Service Announcements. Airing such a PSA today would probably bring looks of amusement from parents and disgust from their children.

If someone directed that question to you personally, at 10 p.m. or at any other time, you would likely suspect that the questioner was a bit strange.

Aside from visits to malls, zoos, airports or amusement parks when we often have to refer to maps to find out where we are, we generally know where we are.

Or do we?

The first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, was imprisoned on trumped up charges of anti-government activities. His release from prison is celebrated on the 19th of Kislev (Dec. 13 this year). During his imprisonment, one of the Czar’s officers – having heard of Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s keen intellect and outstanding genius in all areas of life – engaged him in a conversation.

The officer had an unsolved question concerning a passage in the Bible. “It says that after he sinned by eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam ‘hid.’ When G-d wanted to speak with Adam, He asked him, ‘Where are you?’ Didn’t G-d know where Adam was?” asked the officer.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman replied, “The Bible is eternal and its message is

for all times. G-d was inquiring of Adam, and of all his descendants for all time, “Where are you? Where do you stand in the fulfillment of your life’s mission? How much have you accomplished today and what do you intend to accomplish tomorrow that will help you fulfill the special task with which you have been entrusted?”

The question “Where are you?” is asked every day of each one of us. Like the question, “Who are you?” the answer must come from a place that goes beyond names and titles and positions and affiliations and job descriptions. To be able to properly respond, our answer has to come from our very essence. For G-d does not direct the question to Adam or Eve, to Michael or Jennifer. He directs it to you: “Where are you?”

An important start in being able to answer this question is to understand who “you” are. The Chasidic teachings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman – the dissemination of which was the true cause for his imprisonment – explain that you are comprised of a G-dly soul and a body. Torah, primarily as elucidated by Chasidic teachings, can help us fully understand these two components of ourselves. Together with that understanding comes the ability to begin to answer the age-old and ageless question, “Where are you?”

The New Year of Chasidut commences on the 19th of Kislev. Make a New Year’s resolution that you will never regret. Join a Torah class illuminated by Chasidic teachings.

Then you’ll find out where you really are.

SLICE OF LIFE

Western Wall Vignettes

by Gutman Locks



Special Friends

Once a year, my friend Avi brings his students from his yeshiva to visit me during their trip to Israel. They are a group of loving boys, each with his individual special need.

Every year, after being with them for the hour or two, I come to the same conclusion; all of us are special, each in his or her own unique way. This year Avi asked me to welcome them at the *Kotel* (Western Wall).

The main thing I spoke about was that Israel is the Holy Land... Jerusalem is even called G-d's City... but the awareness of this holiness comes only if we pay attention. I gave an example of the way most people walk into the prayer area ... just like they walk into a store! Then I showed them a better way to come in. I stopped, looked up over the Kotel, bowed my head slowly, and then walked in.

The Holiness is here whether we pay attention to it or not, but to begin to become aware of it, we have to pay attention. We have to look for it.

Yikes!

Ishmael, Abraham our Father's son with Sarah's servant Hagar, said to Isaac, "My circumcision is greater than yours. You were eight days old when

you were circumcised. You had no choice. When I was circumcised, I was 13 years old. I could have run away, but I didn't!"

Isaac didn't know how to answer him.

Many years ago, I was at the Kotel helping with *tefilin* when a 60-year-old Russian man came walking in. He was walking very slowly... taking very tiny steps. It took him a long time to get to me.

He was calling out, "Tefilin! Tefilin!"

He really wanted to put on tefilin. The guy was beaming as if he had been standing in a bright light for a long time. I helped him with tefilin... gave him the *Shema* in Russian to read... and told him to also pray for his family.

He took a long time. When he finished, I asked him, "Why are you walking so funny?"

He said, "I'm coming from my *brit mila*." His circumcision! Yikes! A 60-year-old new immigrant from Russia just had his circumcision and then dearly wanted to come put on tefilin at the Kotel!

Maybe Isaac our Father didn't know how to answer Ishmael, but this Jew from Russia sure did.

Good Time

He is 76 years old, a retired medical doctor from Baltimore. This was the first time he had ever put on tefilin. He told me that he had a bar mitzva when he was 13 years old, but they didn't put on tefilin. He brought with him an old *tallit* bag (prayer shawl) with an old *yarmulke* (skull cap) in it. He treated it as if he had it since his bar mitzva... kept all these years, and most likely not used since then.

I asked him, why, in all these years, he had never put on tefillin.

He answered, "I didn't grow up with it."

I assume he meant that it was not his family's tradition.

He read the Shema in English then I told him that it was a most special time in his life... the first time at the Kotel... the first time ever putting on tefilin... that G-d would pay particular attention to his prayers.

He spent a few minutes talking to G-d, praying for his loved ones and for all the things he wanted. He appreciated the good time.

When he goes to stand before the Judge in the Next World, I think these few minutes will have a greater effect on his portion in that World than any other few minutes of his life.

The Best Prayer

An elderly visitor from America came up to the tefilin stand and picked up one of the Hebrew copies of the Shema from the counter. He asked me if it was the best prayer to say at the Kotel.

I said, "You want to know the best prayer to say at the Kotel? Go stand at the Kotel and say, 'Abba, (Father) I love You. Thank You for all the good You are doing for me, and for the Jewish people. Please continue to watch over us, and protect our soldiers, and any of us who are in danger.' Open your heart and talk to Him lovingly."

He said, "Then, I shouldn't read the Shema?"

"Of course you should read the Shema, but it's your personal prayers for your loved ones that you really want to say."

He took the advice and walked over to the Kotel to open his heart to G-d. G-d is equally everywhere, at all times, but here He listens to us with both ears. Wherever we are, the essence of prayer is that we should direct our hearts to Heaven.

To Who?

I put tefilin on a nice Israeli boy. When he finished with the Shema, I told him, "Doing a mitzva opens the Upper Gate. Talk to Him. Tell Him what you want...for the family...the soldiers...the Jews in danger...talk to Him."

He asked, "To who?"

"TO WHO? Who is the only One who can give you these things?" and I pointed to Heaven. He smiled and ran off to the Kotel to talk with G-d. When I was taking off the tefilin, I told him, "G-d is with us wherever we are, every place we go. Talk to Him."

G-d is everywhere at all times, but He listens more closely when we do a mitzva.

Gutman Locks is well-known at the Western Wall for over two decades. He is the author of several books, musical tapes and many educational videos. See more of his writings at www.thereisone.com

Hakhel-Unte

The primary unique factor of the Giving of the Torah was that everything was visual. You can't compare something you hear to something you actually see. When the Jewish people "saw the voice and the thunder" and they "saw what is usually heard," they internalized and authenticated "I am G-d Your G-d." This is why future generations can't suffice with just remembering the events of Sinai, to recall the past, for then it would be distant and unreal. There must be something special – the mitzva of Hakhel – that every Jew would assemble as they did at Sinai and "see themselves as if they were just now commanded regarding the Torah and heard it from G-d." (*Likkutei Sichos* 34)

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

10th of Kislev, 5714 [1953]

In connection with the Day of Liberation (19th of Kislev) of the Founder of Chabad, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the *Tanya*, whose release from imprisonment for the dissemination of Chabad established freedom of thought and practice for the ideology and way of life of Chabad Chasidism, in particular, and of general Chasidism as a whole,

I wish to express herewith my inner wish, that every one of us be liberated, with G-d's help and by determined personal effort, from all handicaps which arrest the good and noble in everyone's nature, so that this part of one's nature reign supreme, giving fullest expression to the three-fold love: love of our people Israel, love of our Torah, and love of G-d, which are all one.

Our Sages said that "Each and every soul was in the presence of His Divine Majesty before coming down to this earth," and that "The souls are hewn from under the Seat of Glory."

These sayings emphasize the essential nature of the soul, its holiness and purity, and its being completely divorced from anything material and physical; the soul itself, by its very nature, is not subject to any material desires or temptations, which arise only from the physical body and "animal soul."

Nevertheless, it was the Creator's Will that the soul which is "truly a 'part' of the Divine Above," should descend into the physical and coarse world and be confined within, and united with, a physical body for scores of years, in a state which is absolutely repulsive to its very nature. All this, for the purpose of a Divine mission which the soul has to fulfill: To purify and "spiritualize" the physical body and the related physical environment by permeating them with the Light of G-d, so as to make this world an abode for the *Shechinah*. This can be done only through a life of Torah and Mitzvos [commandments].

When the soul fulfills this mission, all the transient pain and suffering connected with the soul's descent and life on this earth are not only justified, but infinitely outweighed by the great reward and everlasting bliss which the soul enjoys thereafter.

From the above one can easily appreciate the extent of the tragedy of disregarding the soul's mission on earth. For in doing so one condemns

the soul to a term of useless suffering not compensated for, nor nullified by that everlasting happiness which G-d had intended for it. Even where there are brief moments of religious activity in the study of the Torah and the practice of the Mitzvos, it is sad to contemplate how often such activity is tinted by the lack of real enthusiasm and inner joy, not realizing that these are the activities which justify existence.

Aside from missing the vital point through failure of taking advantage of the opportunity to fulfill G-d's Will, thus forfeiting the everlasting benefits to be derived therefrom, it is contrary to sound reason to choose that side of life which accentuates the enslavement and degradation of the soul, while rejecting the good that is inherent in it, namely, the great ascent that is to come from the soul's descent.

It will now become eminently clear what our Sages meant when they said, "No man commits a sin unless he was stricken with temporary insanity." No profound thinking is required to realize that since "life is compulsory," and since the soul which is a "part" of the Divine Above is compelled to descend into "a frame of dust and ashes," the proper thing to do is to make the most of the soul's sojourn on earth; only a life in which every aspect is permeated by the Torah and Mitzvos makes this possible.

It is also abundantly clear that since G-d, Who is the essence of goodness, compels the soul to descend from its "sublime heights to the lowest depths," for the purpose of the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the Mitzvos – how great is the value of Torah and Mitzvos.

Furthermore, the descent of the soul for the purpose of ascent shows that there is no other way to obtain the objective except through the soul's descent to live on this earth. If there were an easier way, G-d would not compel the soul to descend from the sublime heights of the Seat of Glory down to this nether world, the lowest of all worlds.

For only here, in the lowest depths, can the soul attain its highest ascent, higher even than the angels, and as our Sages say, "The righteous precede the foremost angels."

Reflecting upon the greatness of the Torah and Mitzvos, specifically pertaining to this life, reflecting also that the Torah and Mitzvos are the only means to attain the soul's perfection and the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, one will experience a sense of real joy at his fate and destiny, despite the many difficulties and handicaps, from within and without, which are inevitable on this earth. Only in this way can one live up to the injunction: "Serve G-d with joy," which the Baal Shem Tov made one of the foundations of his teachings, and which is expounded at length in Chabad, and pointed out by its Founder, whose Liberation we commemorate on the 19th day of Kislev, in his monumental work, the *Tanya* (chapters 26 seq., 31 seq.).

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Jacob sent messengers to Esau his brother (*Gen. 32:4*) At that time, Jacob was fully ready for the ultimate Messianic Redemption. Jacob sent

messengers to check out the spiritual status of his brother Esau, to see if he was also ready for Moshiach. Unfortunately, they found that he was still wicked and had not repented of his evil ways. The Redemption was therefore delayed for thousands of years until our generation, when the nations of the world are now finally ready. (*The Rebbe, Parshat Vayishlach, 5752*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

On Tuesday, (Dec. 13) we will celebrate the auspicious day of Yud Tes Kislev [the 19th of Kislev].

This is the day on which the first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, was released from his imprisonment in the infamous Spalerno prison.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman was informed of his release from prison while he was reading Psalms, at the precise moment that he was reading the verse, "He redeemed my soul in peace..." (Psalms 55:19).

Our Sages have interpreted the word "peace" in this verse to mean one who is occupied with Torah study, in deeds of kindness, and in prayer. Thus, one's soul is "redeemed in peace" by being involved with these "three pillars" upon which the world stands.

This year we have double the energy to expand and enhance our involvement in these mitzvos:

The 19th of Kislev falls this year on the third day of the week, Tuesday, the day on which, during Creation, the expression "And G-d saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10, 1:12) was repeated. Thus, we should do it with twice as much enthusiasm and vigor.

The 19th of Kislev is known amongst Chasidim as Rosh HaShanah of Chasidut. As the purpose for the dissemination of Chasidut in the world is to bring the revelation of Moshiach, it is appropriate, especially at this time of year, to re-dedicate ourselves to assuring that all of our actions help hasten Moshiach's revelation and the long-awaited Redemption.

We will end with the traditional greeting on the 19th of Kislev: May you be inscribed and may you be sealed for a good year in the study of Chasidut and in the Chasidic ways of conduct.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה'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.



Published by
Lubavitch Youth Organization
1408 President St., Brooklyn, NY, 11213
phone 718 778 6000

Chairman
Director
Program director
Secretary
Administrator
Editor
Associate Editor
Chairman Editorial Comm.
Rebbe photo

Rabbi David Raskin
Rabbi Shmuel Butman
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
Yehudis Cohen
David Y. B. Kaufmann
Rabbi Nissen Mangel
S. Roumani

L'Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard. All contents © 2022 by L.Y.O. ISSN 1050 0480

L'Chaim Subscriptions
For a one year subscription send \$47,
payable to LYO (\$60 outside of USA) to:
L'Chaim, 1408 President St., Bklyn, NY, 11213
L'Chaim on the Internet
Current issues and archives: lchaimweekly.org
Learn about Moshiah
Visit www.moshiah.com or call (718) 953 6100