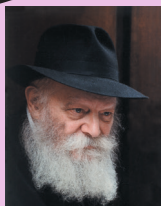


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

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

After his monumental victory over the four kings in this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, G-d promises Abraham: "Fear not, Abram...your reward shall be exceedingly great." Rashi explains that Abraham feared his victory might have exhausted the reward for his righteousness. G-d reassures him that his reward will be far greater.

This promise seems puzzling. Abraham served G-d out of pure love, without ulterior motives or expectations of reward. Maimonides explains that such a person fulfills Torah and mitzvot not for the benefits they bring, but because they are the truth. Abraham, Maimonides writes, exemplified this ideal, serving G-d solely out of love.

Why, then, was Abraham concerned about reward? Similarly, when G-d commanded him to leave his homeland, He promised, "I will make your name great." Surely Abraham had no interest in personal glory!

Abraham considered himself "dust and ashes," merely an instrument for fulfilling G-d's will. His sole purpose was to sanctify G-d's name and inspire as many people as possible to recognize the Creator. If making Abraham's name famous would lead others to recognize G-d, then his growing reputation served a higher purpose. Personal recognition meant nothing to Abraham himself; what mattered was the success of his mission.

The same principle explains Abraham's concern about reward. He valued material blessings only insofar as they demonstrated that serving G-d brings goodness into the world. Visible rewards for righteousness could encourage the people Abraham encountered to follow his example and embrace G-d's ways.

Abraham therefore worried that, without tangible reward, people might misunderstand the apparent suffering or hardship of a righteous person as evidence of weakness on the Creator's part, G-d forbid. If Abraham lacked the blessings people associated with a life of righteousness, how could he convince them that serving G-d was the right path?

This perspective also explains why a Jew is encouraged to observe the Torah's commandments even when motivated by personal benefit, rather than solely for their own sake. Although a person's physical desires may focus on material rewards, the Jewish soul rejoices when those blessings help sanctify G-d's name publicly.

Ultimately, Abraham's concern was never about what he could gain. He wanted his life, his success, and even his material blessings to inspire others to recognize G-d. His example teaches us that both spiritual devotion and material success can serve a greater purpose when directed toward sanctifying G-d's name.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Don't Run The Red

By Rabbi Eli Friedman

Sometimes, life throws you a stop sign.

You're moving, it's all "Go, go, go!" and then—STOP.

Why does Hashem do this to us?

Why must we stop working on Shabbat? Why do the holidays—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah—bring nearly a month of pauses? Why must we sleep when we can accomplish more? And why do healthy, hardworking people sometimes face challenges that slow them down for months or years?

What does Hashem gain by stopping us when we could be making progress?

Here are some clues.

Clue #1: He does it to Himself, too. The first six days of creation were the most productive in history. From nothing, Hashem created a magnificent, unfathomable universe. One might expect Him to keep going. Instead, He stopped. It was Shabbat.

Clue #2: He reminds us to stop three times daily. During the Amidah, we stand with our feet together, remaining still. Morning, afternoon, and evening, we receive the same message: Sometimes, we must simply stand in place.

There are times when we must move, move, move—and equally important times when we must stop.

There is a journey, and there are destinations. When you reach your destination, you must stop. Otherwise, you risk running past the very place the journey was meant to take you.

Hashem guides our footsteps, like mission control directing astronauts toward a vital destination. We may

strain at the reins, eager to gallop onward, but Hashem knows where our greatest achievements await us. Sometimes, He slows us down because we have arrived.

When that stop order comes, our most meaningful moments may await us right here, right now. Rather than fighting the delay, we must uncover the treasures beneath our motionless feet.

Whether it's Shabbat, the holidays, a need for rest, or a life event that brings everything to a standstill, remember: There is meaning in the interruption. Perhaps you aren't moving forward because you've reached an important destination. Even Hashem stopped at Shabbat. If He can pause and rest, surely, we can, too.

When it's time to stop, cherish those hours. Don't keep checking your watch, waiting to run again. Relax and dig for the treasure where you stand.

Think about your life, your family, and your bond with Hashem. Reflect on your past and dream about your future. Use this stillness to shape your attitude for the year ahead.

When life cruises—Baruch Hashem. When life crawls—Baruch Hashem. And when everything stands still—Baruch Hashem.

Every "go" comes from Hashem, and every "stop" does, too. When He says go, go with all your might. When He says stop, stop with all your heart. Trust that something special awaits you here, right now.

We may love the race and its drama, but we must also appreciate the silence, balancing our need for speed with the wisdom of slowing down.

Run, walk, or stand—it can always be a moving experience.

SLICE OF LIFE

No Shortcuts to the Soul

Josh Aronson is 39 years old. He was born in Manchester, England, diagnosed with autism, and today he is a journalist and the Diaspora correspondent for the Hebrew Maariv newspaper. His journey there was anything but simple.



Josh Aronson by the Rebbe's Ohel

"I was born into an ultra-Orthodox family in Manchester, one of fifteen children. From a young age, my parents sensed that something about my development was different. They took me from doctor to doctor. Some believed I had hearing or vision problems. Others thought the difficulties were psychological. Only after a long and exhausting journey did the diagnosis finally come. I was on the autism spectrum."

That diagnosis could have changed everything. Instead, it became the beginning of a different path, one built on faith, expectation, and determination.

"My parents were advised to consult Professor Reuven Feuerstein, a world-renowned expert in cognitive development. After waiting an entire year for an appointment, we finally went, my parents and I. He listened carefully as they described my struggles, and then he said a single sentence that would alter the course of my life: 'If you treat him like a normal child, he will be normal.'"

"That sentence strengthened my parents immeasurably," Aronson says. "They decided

that I would receive the same education, the same expectations, and the same standards as my siblings, with no discounts and no lowered bar." His mother kept a green notebook in which she wrote down everything he needed to work on, alongside the things he did well. "Reading was easier for me than speaking, so this became our bridge."

"My parents demanded no less of me than of any other child," he recalls. "I remember one family event where I misbehaved, and as punishment, I was sent to my room, just as any other child would have been. I learned in a regular yeshiva. It wasn't easy. I struggled. But those struggles built me."

Looking back today, he sees how vital it is to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. "It doesn't weaken them," he says. "It strengthens them."

"At the age of eighteen, despite my disability, I traveled to Israel on my own. I threw myself into challenges rather than avoiding them. I worked with people with special needs and began to find my place." During that time, he met Chabad emissaries in Jerusalem. "Something clicked," he says. "It was the beginning of a deep connection."

Later, as a journalist, he began covering Jewish communities across the globe, from Istanbul, Turkey, to Sydney, Australia. "Again and again, I saw the same thing," he says. "The Rebbe's mission was breathing life into Jewish communities. Wherever there were emissaries, there was vitality, tradition, and hope."

After three years of war, he traveled to Ukraine twice. "I went from one shaliach to the next, from Vinnytsia to Berdichev, from Kyiv to Haditch and Dnipro," he says. "What I witnessed there was extraordinary. Support packages, medical centers, aid hubs, and endless acts of kindness under fire. The emissaries were doing holy work, day in and day out."

In recent years, Aronson visited 770, the Rebbe's synagogue in New York. Rabbi Mendel Eisenbach gave him a tour and showed him a video in which a father asked

the Rebbe for a blessing for his autistic son. "The Rebbe said that these children have exceptionally high souls, that they are more holy," Aronson recounts. "He advised placing a charity box in the child's room, explaining that it would positively affect the entire family."

"I broke down in tears," Aronson says. "I told Rabbi Eisenbach, 'I, too, am autistic.'"

"He then showed me another video," Aronson continues, "this one of Professor Feuerstein speaking about his relationship with the Rebbe and a message he received from him." The message was clear. "When children with disabilities are treated properly, they can function normally."

"I was shaking," Aronson says. "In that moment, I understood that the Rebbe had been behind the advice my parents received decades earlier."

A few weeks later, during a visit to Israel, Mrs. Schlanger, a relative of his wife, heard his story and gave him a dollar she had received from the Rebbe.

As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, Aronson recently participated in a special event at Auschwitz marking Kristallnacht. It was organized by the European Jewish Association, led by Rabbi Menachem Margolin, with leaders from across Europe in attendance. "During the ceremony, I spoke about more than 300,000 people with disabilities who were murdered in the Holocaust solely because of their limitations," he says.

"Those were powerful, trembling moments," Aronson reflects. "They reminded me of something essential. Disability is not weakness. It is strength."

My personal motto is simple," he concludes. "Hold yourself to high standards, even when it is difficult. It builds you. My message to people with disabilities and to those without is the same. Demand more of yourself. Push yourself. Make the effort, and you will see salvations."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine

Jewish philanthropist Robert Kraft has donated \$5 million toward a new Chabad center in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts



Rabbi Mendy and Grunie Uminer established Chabad of Chestnut Hill in 2001. It has since grown into a vibrant center of Jewish life in the area.

On Columbus Day, philanthropist Robert Kraft visited Chestnut Hill, Mass., to see the building rising at the corner of Bellingham Road and Grove Street. The following day, Oct. 14, Kraft and Chabad-Lubavitch of Chestnut Hill announced that the new center would bear his family's name.

Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots, and his family contributed \$5 million toward the three-story center. "Chestnut Hill is my home. It is where I raised my family, and having a vibrant Chabad center right here in my hometown means a great deal to me and the Kraft family," Kraft said.

CUSTOMS

What is a ketuba?

The ketuba - marriage contract, contains the mutual obligations between husband and wife prerequisite to marriage. It is written in Hebrew-Aramaic. After it is read at the wedding ceremony under the chupa it is given to the bride and she must keep it amongst her possessions.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

2nd of Marcheshvan, 5725 [1964]

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter of the 26th of Tishrei, containing a report of the activities with the girls' groups, as well as N'shei Chabad, and the Camp, all of which I read with much interest.

May G-d grant that the attainments of the past should stimulate an increased activity and even greater results in the future, exceeding by far the plans and expectations.

As we are now reading in the Torah about Avrohom Ovinu, it is well to remember the lesson which, our Sages say, we have to learn from Abraham, namely that his actions always exceeded his words, and he always did a great deal more than he promised. It befits us, who are called the children of Abraham, to follow in his footsteps.

May G-d grant you and all your coworkers the utmost success.

With blessing,



Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5732 [1971]

To the Participants in the Testimonial Banquet honoring Rabbi Dr. Moshe Yitzchok Hecht

New Haven, Conn.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am very pleased to be informed about the forthcoming Testimonial Banquet in honor of Rabbi Hecht's twenty-five years of dedicated service to the greater New Haven community.

The occasion is a fitting testimony to the personal achievements of the recipient of this honor. It also shows that he is fortunate in having Baalei-batim who appreciate his services to the community. Furthermore, and this is the most essential aspect, the occasion reflects recognition of the vital importance of Jewish education, the field in which Rabbi Hecht has particularly distinguished himself and made his greatest contribution.

All this gives me the confident expectation that the event will serve as a further stimulus

to the cause of Chinuch [Jewish education], where there is of course still much more to be done. For, as long as there is a Jewish boy or girl who does not yet receive a Torah-true education, the obligation of the community cannot be considered fully done.

On the other hand, we live in a situation which is especially conducive to Chinuch. Parents are more keenly aware of the compelling need of Chinuch in the present days of confusion and misguided values. As for Jewish children and youth, they are always receptive to the Torah and Mitzvos. This has again confirmed the truth of the Torah and of the Lubavitch approach, namely, that the Torah and Mitzvos are part of the Jewish essence, and that it is only necessary to help a Jew bring this essence to the fore and rediscover himself. And having been brought into the experience of Torah and Mitzvos, they are happy and grateful, and proceed to go from strength to strength on their own accord, and help others, in the manner of a chain reaction.

It is customary to make a reference to the Torah portion of the week, in which any event takes place. It is, therefore, significant that the weekly portion Lech-lecho begins with G-d's call to Abraham to leave his land and birthplace, etc., in order to begin a new life in the Promised Land.

Symbolically speaking, this is also the call and challenge to every Jew, at all times and in all places. It is the eternal call to the Jew not to allow himself to be swept by the outside environment, nor to be swayed by inborn temptations, or acquired habits, or common daily routine. A Jew must rise above all this and follow the Divine call to go "To the land which I (G-d) will show you" - the Jewish way of life, which G-d prescribed for Abraham, the first Jew and for our Jewish people as a whole at Mt. Sinai. Moreover, G-d promises that this way of life, far from being impossible, as some mistakenly think, is within reach of every Jew and it is the source of blessing for himself and the society in which he lives, as G-d further promised, "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

I send my prayerful wishes that the enthusiasm and dedication of all participants in this Banquet will inspire also others to a concerted and ever-growing effort on behalf of Torah-true education, both for the young as well as for the old who are still young in Jewish knowledge and experience. May G-d bless you with Hatzlocho and true Nachas from your children, and fulfill your hearts' desires for good materially and spiritually.

a deep sleep." According to the Midrash, the sun represents Moshiach and Abraham represents the Jewish people. The meaning of the verse, then, is that the Jewish people will be in a deep spiritual slumber before Moshiach comes and Moshiach will awaken us all from this sleep.

(Torah Shleima)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.

From the Archives

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, we read of G-d's promise to Abraham that he would inherit the lands of the ten nations - the seven Canaanite nations as well as three other lands, the lands of the Keini, Kenizi and Kadmoni.

Abraham and his descendants took possession of all seven Canaanite lands. However, they never took possession of the lands of the other three nations. The triumph over these nations and the possession of their lands will take place when Moshiach comes in the Era of Redemption.

Chasidic philosophy explains that a person's powers and abilities are divided into ten categories, seven of them being in the realm of emotion and three being in the realm of intellect. In spiritual terms, the ten lands described above refer to the refinement of our 10 personal powers. The seven emotive powers are the seven Canaanite nations and the three intellectual powers are the lands of the Keini, Kenizi and Kadmoni.

In the pre-Messianic Era, we have "possession" of our seven emotive powers. And, though we obviously use our intellectual powers, it is not to our fullest ability, for we have not conquered, nor do we totally possess them. This will take place only in the Messianic Era. It is then that our intellects will find their true expression and fulfillment. The Messianic Era is described by the Prophet Isaiah as a time when "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed."

Thus, when Moshiach comes our intellectual potential will reach its fulfillment. May that happen NOW!

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.



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

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

Rabbi David Raskin ז"ל
Rabbi Shmuel Butman ז"ל
Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
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MOSHIACH MATTERS

After making a covenant (known as "Brit Bein HaBetarim - Covenant between the pieces") with G-d, "the sun came down, and Abraham fell into



Yaakov was a clever young man, a genius, who lived in a small village in White Russia. He studied Torah assiduously, and indeed, amassed a huge body of knowledge. In the same village lived several Lubavitcher Chasidim, who had long been trying to convince the talented lad to come with them to the Rebbe.

But Yaakov, who was not raised in a Chasidic home, was not interested. "I don't need a Rebbe," he would answer them. "If I come across a problem in the Talmud, I just keep studying till I solve it myself."

Nonetheless, one time his curiosity got the better of him, and he accompanied the Chasidim to the Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dovber (known as the Rebbe Rashab). They arrived in Lubavitch on a Friday. That Shabbat, Yaakov found himself in an unprecedented state of spiritual elevation. The general atmosphere of the town was rubbing off on him.

After Shabbat, as they prepared to leave, Yaakov wrote a short note to give to the Rebbe, as was customary. He trembled as he waited his turn for a private audience. When Yaakov entered the Rebbe's chamber he found the Rebbe sitting and studying a book. The Rebbe did not lift his eyes to look at him. Yaakov tiptoed over to the desk and placed his note on it. The Rebbe gave no sign that Yaakov was even in the room.

Suddenly the Rebbe stood up and paced back and forth. As if talking to himself, he began to speak in Russian: "On! Nyet on!" ("It is him! It's not him!") On! Nyet on! On! Nyet on..." The Rebbe paused for a long while before uttering his final pronouncement: "Nyet on!" He then sat down and resumed his study.

Yaakov left the Rebbe's chamber confused and puzzled. Not only had the Rebbe ignored him, but his strange words kept reverberating in his head. Yaakov did not know what to make of it.

One day Yaakov was reading the newspaper when he noticed a contest being sponsored by the University of Petersburg. Whoever solved the mathematical problem printed in the paper would win a prize of 300 rubles. Yaakov saw the contest as a personal challenge. He studied the problem and sent off his answer by mail. A short time later a letter arrived from the University informing him that he had won. Enclosed with the letter was a personal invitation from the head of the mathematics department, and a train ticket.

Yaakov traveled to Petersburg. The professors were initially surprised by Yaakov's traditional Jewish attire, but quickly discovered his rare genius. After awarding him the monetary prize, they offered him a full scholarship to the University, which Yaakov accepted.

In the beginning Yaakov maintained his distinctive dress and customs, and even learned a little Torah. But the more he progressed academically and socially at the University, the further away from Judaism he wandered. The external trappings were the first to go; eventually Yaakov completely abandoned the path of Torah and mitzvot.

A few years later Yaakov was appointed as a full professor. Of course, beforehand, Yaakov had to renounce his Judaism. But he didn't blink an eye as he furthered his academic career.

As time passed, however, Yaakov's conscience began to bother him. Although he deeply regretted his actions, he found himself unable to take practical steps to rectify the situation. In those days, a gentile who converted to Judaism or a Jew who accepted Christianity but later rescinded were subject to the death penalty.

By that time Yaakov had become an accomplished hunter; the sport served to divert his attention from his frequent pangs of conscience. One day while out in the field, Yaakov's horse began to gallop uncontrollably. The reins were useless, and it was clear that barring a miracle, these were the last seconds of Yaakov's life. At that moment Yaakov resolved to repent and return to G-d. Incredibly, the horse stopped galloping

and came to a halt.

That night Yaakov packed a small bundle and snuck out of the house, leaving his non-Jewish life behind him for good. He wandered from city to city and from town to town, terrified of being discovered. His return to Judaism had endangered his very life, but his resolve to live as a Jew was unwavering.

One day, while Yaakov was dining at an inn in a remote village, the police burst in and began to check the patrons' identity papers. Yaakov, who was not carrying any identification, was taken into custody.

The investigator at the police station kept scrutinizing the photograph in his hand, then glancing up at Yaakov. From the corner of his eye Yaakov saw that it was a picture of himself as he used to look at the University: clean-shaven, nattily attired, and with a carefully coifed lock of hair on his forehead.

The investigator was clearly hesitant. Unable to decide he began to mutter under his breath. "On!" ("It is him!") A second later he changed his mind. "Nyet on!" ("It's not him!") "On!" "Nyet on!" Back and forth he went, studying the photograph and Yaakov in turn. "Nyet on!" he ultimately concluded, and ordered that Yaakov be freed.

Yaakov left the police station flabbergasted; he knew where he had last heard those very words. Immediately he set off for Lubavitch, and remained there for the rest of his life.



"And the L-rd said to Abram, 'Go out from your country, from your birthplace, and from your father's house'" (Gen. 12:1)

The command to "go out"—to rise above one's natural inclinations and attain greater spiritual heights—is directed to every individual. No one is expected to accomplish more than he is capable of, but everyone is expected to fulfill his full potential. G-d does not expect Reb Zushe to be a Baal Shem Tov; He does, however, expect him to be the best Reb Zushe he can be.
(Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli)

"To a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1)

On a spiritual level, the "land that I will show you" refers to the revelation of G-dliness that comes as a reward for serving G-d. This service of "going out" involves connecting the soul as it is invested in the physical body with its higher spiritual source, which can perceive G-dliness. When the soul within the body connects with its higher source, it, too, benefits from this spiritual vision. (Ohr HaTorah)

"My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13)

Every mitzvah connects a Jew to G-d, but this bond is not visible to the physical eye. There is, however, one exception: the mitzvah of milah. Through this mitzvah, the Jew's connection to G-d becomes manifest, even to the nations of the world. (Likkutei Sichot)



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