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The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Vayeitzei relates how a single and solitary Jew left his home and set out for a foreign land, arriving there with nothing, save for his faith in G-d. "For with [only] my staff I passed over this Jordan," Yaakov (Jacob) declared. Nonetheless, Yaakov's steps were sure and confident, as he had full faith in the Holy One, Blessed be He.

Once in Charan, Yaakov quickly saw that there was no one upon whom he could rely, not even his relatives. His uncle, Lavan, repeatedly tricked and deceived him, yet never once did Yaakov lose his faith.

Through outstanding service and dedication to G-d Yaakov merited to obtain great wealth. But Yaakov's main achievement in Charan was that, despite their growing up in a hostile environment, every single one of his children was a pious and religious Jew.

Avraham had one son who was good, Yitzchak, but he also had another son who was not, Ishmael. Yitzchak had one son who was righteous, Yaakov, but he was also the father of Esav. Both Avraham and Yitzchak raised their children in Israel and not in exile, yet they still had descendants who abandoned the righteous path.

Yaakov, by contrast, raised his family in exile. Required to serve G-d in the most difficult of circumstances, he made sure that his twelve sons would not be affected by the negative influence of Charan. On the contrary, he strove to instill in them the Torah he had received from his forefathers and studied with his ancestors Shem and Ever, thus proving that it was possible to live a Torah-true life even on the other side of the Jordan.

In Charan, Yaakov merited both spiritual and material success ("And the man increased exceedingly") by virtue of his faith in G-d. But the spiritual "great wealth" he acquired was the successful rearing of his children, who were all upright and devout individuals.

The lesson this contains for us at present is clear: The only one upon whom we can ever depend is G-d, to Whom we connect ourselves through the medium of Torah and mitzvot.

By educating our children in the ways of Torah, the eternal Torah we have inherited from our fathers and grandfathers, we will merit to go out of exile "with our youth and with our elders, with our sons and with our daughters." And when Moshiach comes we will be fully prepared to meet the Redemption.

May it be G-d's will that this happens very soon, and that we greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our days.

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, vol. 1

My 11-Year-Old Thinks I Need a Tutor (and She's Not Wrong!)

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler

One night this week, my daughter asked me to help her with her math homework.

"No problem," I thought. "I've got this!" After all, I was an A student in math back in the day. Algebra, trigonometry, chemistry, even the Remainder Theorem—I wasn't just good; I actually enjoyed it.

There was just one small problem: That was 32 years ago. I haven't touched any of this stuff since the early '90s. My memory has faded, and teaching methods have changed drastically.

I helped her with what I could, but it wasn't much. The rest? Let's just say, x remained unknown.

"Okay," I told myself. "Math is not your comeback tour. So be it."

But my opportunity for redemption arrived the very next day when she came home with Chumash homework. Whew! Now we're talking!

Chumash, the Five Books of Moses, is my home turf. If math is my high school diploma, Chumash is my master's degree. I go through all five books every year. I've been doing it my entire life. No 30-year break here! I know it inside out.

So, I sat down with her, relaxed and confident, and we did the homework together.

The first words out of her mouth when I came home the next day were, "Tatty, you need a tutor!"

I was shocked. Me? A tutor? Why?

Then she showed me her grade. That Chumash homework I was so confident about? It earned her 77%. Seventy-seven percent. On fifth-grade Chumash homework. With the expert on the case.

She looked at me with genuine concern and said, "Tatty, you need a tutor. Math you don't know, and now Chumash you also don't know."

Oy vey.

In my defense, the teacher's questions were extremely detailed: random quotes followed by "who said it? To whom? And why?" There were also plenty of dates to remember.

But still! Only 77%? On a subject I've studied my entire life? Can I still call myself a rabbi?

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism, taught that everything we see and hear contains a lesson in our service of G-d. So, what's the lesson here? Do I need a tutor? Do I need to study more?

My answer is a resounding YES!

More Torah study, absolutely. Perhaps I got too comfortable thinking I already knew it all, and G-d sent me a reminder to return to the basics and pay closer attention to the details.

And it's not just me. We all need to study more, and more, and more.

Find a teacher. Study on your own. Subscribe to Chayenu, the daily Torah study booklet, or download the Chabad.org daily study app. Start learning something, anything. Just start!

So, thank you, my dear daughter, for a line I'll be thinking about for a long time.

Yes, I need a tutor. We all do.

Mine, apparently, is 11.

SLICE OF LIFE

6,500 Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries and Guests Fill Kinus Banquet to Capacity



Jewish education and growth the focus at gala banquet of 43rd International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries

EDISON, N.J. — There are moments when the sheer number of people in a room tells only part of the story. What matters is what brought them there, what they carry within them, and what they will take back into the world.

On Sunday afternoon, some 6,500 Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries and guests filled the 150,000-square-foot New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center for the gala banquet of the 43rd International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries. The hall was at capacity, but the stories shared from its stage reached far beyond its walls.

For five days, emissaries from more than 100 countries and every U.S. state had gathered for learning, reflection, reunion and renewed purpose. As the conference drew to a close, the evening became a tribute to the enduring human capacity to build, teach, comfort and begin again.

THE LEGACY OF A SINGLE LIFE

The evening opened with emissaries' sons singing in English, Hebrew and Spanish, reflecting the cultures and communities in which their families serve.

Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, executive director of the International Conference, spoke of Abraham, whose life was devoted to creating goodness that would outlast him.

His words offered a powerful idea: a meaningful life is measured not only by what one accomplishes, but by what continues because one was here.

That idea took on particular meaning in a film about Nosson Schlanger, whose father, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, was murdered in the Bondi Chanukah attack in Australia.

Now studying in Scottsdale, Arizona, Nosson continues the traditions he shared with his father: learning together, visiting people and bringing Jewish experiences into their lives.

"The biggest thing I learned from my father is how much happiness there is in being the Rebbe's shliach," he said.

When Nosson entered the banquet hall, the audience rose in a standing ovation. His grandfather, Rabbi Yehoram Ulman, joined him onstage. It was a deeply human moment: grief and pride occupying the same space, as a young person discovered that love can become a legacy.

BUILDING WHERE OTHERS TRIED TO DESTROY

Another film reached back to 1956, recalling how the Rebbe sent Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky and a delegation of students to Kfar Chabad, Israel, following a terrorist attack that killed five students and their teacher.

Krinsky recalled that the mission was not to dwell on violence, but to speak about education, Jewish life and the future.

The message was simple: destruction is answered not merely by resistance, but by building something stronger.

That philosophy was reflected in the story of Rabbi Alex Kaller, born in Moscow in 1976, who grew up as the only Jewish child in his class. When a Jewish school opened after the Soviet Union began to change, he experienced a sense of belonging he had never known.

Today, he and his wife, Chanie, lead a thriving Russian Jewish community in South Florida, having recently celebrated the opening of a 39,000-square-foot community center in Sunny Isles Beach.

A boy who once felt alone had helped create a place where thousands could feel at home.

WHERE HISTORY MEETS HOPE

In Rome, another story connected the past to the present.

During the Nazi occupation in 1943, a Jewish boy named Gabriel Sonnino and his sister were hiding with their family in the Roman Ghetto. When a German soldier seized the girl, a local milkman rushed to intervene, revealing the cross on his chest to show that he was not Jewish. The soldier released her.

Decades later, Sonnino told Rabbi Aharon Michoel Canarutto that the milkman's shop had stood on the very site where the Chabad center now operates.

It was an extraordinary coincidence of geography and memory: a place once associated with terror now serving as a center of community and connection.

Canarutto, raised through the Jewish educational programs his parents attended, spoke of bringing light into places marked by darkness.

EDUCATION: AN INVESTMENT IN TOMORROW

Throughout the banquet, one theme returned again and again: education.

A film marking 50 years since the Rebbe launched Mivtza Chinuch, his campaign for Jewish education, reminded the audience that a community's future is shaped in classrooms, homes and everyday encounters between teachers and students.

Kotlarsky announced two major initiatives: the Chabad Education Fund, designed to make Jewish day schools more accessible to families facing financial barriers, and the Chinuch Center, a dedicated resource and training center for Jewish educators in Crown Heights.

The initiatives reflect a universal truth: education is among the most enduring gifts one generation can offer another.

A WORLD STILL WAITING TO BE REACHED

The evening also celebrated the movement's expanding reach. New emissaries were announced for Slovenia, where Rabbi Yosef and Rochele Krinsky will establish the country's first dedicated Chabad presence, and for Albania.

Israel's ambassador to the United States, Yechiel Leiter, brought another personal dimension, speaking about his son Neria's serious injuries in a September car-ramming attack.

The stories were different, but the underlying human experiences were familiar: the ache of loss, the courage to rebuild, the longing to belong, and the determination to leave something meaningful behind.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

As the banquet ended, thousands rose from their tables and filled the open spaces in song and dance.

By Monday, they would return to communities across the globe, carrying memories, commitments and renewed purpose.

For a few hours, thousands had stood together, united by a shared conviction that the world can be made better through the patient work of people who care.

Perhaps that was the deepest message of the gathering. A life can change another life. A classroom can change a generation. A community can emerge from hardship. And even after loss, something beautiful can still be built.

The hall emptied. The work continued.

Excerpts from an article by Moshe New / Chabad.org

etc.



Online School Students Celebrate Together at Annual Reunion

Students, parents, and staff of the Nigri Chabad Shluchim Online School joined together in Crown Heights for their annual reunion and Day of Celebration.

Every year, the boys eagerly await the opportunity to meet and spend time with their classmates and Rebbis in person. For these young Shluchim, who learn together online each day from communities around the world, the event has become a highlight of the year, celebrating their friendships, learning and shared mission as children of the Rebbe's Shluchim.

The Nigri Shluchim Online School is a division of the Shluchim Office, directed by Rabbi Gedalya and Bassie Shemtov.

A CALL TO ACTION

Make a bride and groom happy

It is a mitzva to rejoice with a bride and groom and make them happy. Many stories tell how our Sages used to go to weddings and juggle, dance, or do other things which would bring joy and gladness to the new couple at their wedding. Today, people even prepare elaborate "shtick" -- hats, masks, etc. to enliven the festivities.

Help enliven the next wedding you attend and you'll be doing a big mitzva!

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

1 MarCheshvan, 5722 [1961]

... in connection with your writing that your children had been attending a Hebrew Day School, but that you took them out from there and have engaged a private teacher instead. I need hardly point out to you that Jewish education is not confined to the acquisition of a certain level of knowledge and information about Jewish life, but rather that the child should be brought up within such a life and within an atmosphere which is permeated with this kind of life. This is something that a private teacher cannot replace by teaching just a number of hours a week.

Besides, when the Hebrew lesson comes after the boy has spent most of the day in public school, where he is given tests and homework, the Hebrew lesson cannot have the same importance in the mind of the boy as the public school, not to mention other factors such as the effect of classroom, discipline, community with other children, etc., etc. All this relegates the Hebrew lesson to a third or fourth place in importance, so that it often comes to be regarded altogether as an unnecessary burden.

12 MarCheshvan, 5722 [1961]

... I believe that during our conversation we touched upon the subject that, as the Torah has always been called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life, and has always been both the source of our life and existence as well as the guide in our daily life, it is infinitely more so in the present day and age. The danger to Jewish life and existence in the free countries, especially in these United States, is not the danger of physical extermination, G-d forbid, from another Hitler or Eichman, but there is, nevertheless, a danger which is no less destructive, the danger of assimilation. Precisely because there is no external antagonism and discrimination against the Jews, especially on the middle and lower class level (although in the upper classes, the tendency towards assimilation is checked by prejudice), the danger of mass assimilation is a very real one.

In addition, such factors as compulsory education and social and economic pressures of conformity, etc., coupled with the widespread ignorance of Jewish values, greatly increase the danger of assimilation from one generation to the next. If allowed to continue unchecked, who knows to what it might lead.

It is, therefore, the duty of every conscious and conscientious Jew to do everything possible to stem the tide of assimilation, and it is truly a matter of saving a life.

It is self-evident that such an effort should not be limited to the adult and older generation, but especially in regard to the younger generation, and the very young in particular. And needless to say, a person on whom Divine Providence has bestowed special capacities for influence, is especially duty-bound to use these capacities in the direction outlined.

This is not the time to engage in theoretic research as into all the aspects of the situation, and postpone action pending the results of such research. For, when a house is on fire, there is no time to study the laws of combustion and methods of fire extinguishing, but everything must be done to extinguish the fire before the house is destroyed, with possible loss of life.

... Similarly, you have the capacity to extend your influence beyond your immediate surroundings at home, to the community at large. This you can do both in a direct way and perhaps even more so in an indirect way, by raising the standards of your religious and spiritual living.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Metaphorically speaking, G-d and the Jewish people are likened to man and wife. In exile, the Jews suffer from spiritual poverty and affliction. Yet when G-d considers how faithful we remain to Him despite our troubles, His love for us is reawakened and rekindled - a love that will ultimately be consummated with the Final Redemption.

(Likutei Sichot, Vol. 22)

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

On the 14th of the month of Kislev, we celebrate the wedding anniversary of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Their wedding took place, amidst much rejoicing, in Warsaw, Poland. However, the Rebbe's parents, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson were not in attendance, as the Russian government did not permit them to travel to Poland for their eldest son's wedding. They, however, prepared a celebration and wedding feast in their town of Dniepropetrovsk, which was attended by many in the Jewish community. Their celebration lasted until the wee hours of the morning.

Before the chupa, the Previous Rebbe delivered an intricate Chasidic discourse. He began the discourse by explaining why he had woven teachings of all the previous Rebbes into his discourse. He said: "It is well-known that at the time of a wedding celebration, the souls of ancestors of the couple from three generations back come from the World of Truth to attend the simcha. There are times, however, when ancestors from generations even further back come. As a way of inviting the souls of the righteous ancestors of our holy Rebbes, so that they should come to the chupa to bless the young couple, we will say a Chasidic discourse which contains a Torah thought from the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe]; from the Mitteler Rebbe [Rabbi Dov Ber]; from my great grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek; from my grandfather -- the great-grandfather of the bride -- the Rebbe Maharash; from the great-great grandfather of the groom; from the great-grandfather of the bride; and my father [the Rebbe Rashab]..."

The Rebbe proceeded to deliver the Chasidic discourse entitled, "Come my Beloved to greet the bride."

May we very soon merit the ultimate wedding of G-d and the Jewish people, with the revelation of Moshiach. At that time, we will hear the Torah thoughts of our ancestors and great Sages of previous generations not through others, but they themselves will teach us!"

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חי"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.

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When he was a youngster, Rebbe Naftoli Katz, the head of the Rabbinical Court of Posen, was once playing outdoors with his friends. They were throwing rocks, and Naftoli accidentally hit the passenger of a fine carriage that was nearby. Unfortunately, that passenger was none other than the High Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The prince's guards arrested the boy for this act of "rebellion." He was brought to court and found guilty. His sentence: public execution.

Naftoli was to be escorted by a guard to the empire's capital, where his sentence was to be carried out. It was a difficult journey, and the stormy weather they encountered made travelling almost impossible. At one point they stopped at an inn that was owned by a Jew.

While the guard made himself comfortable in a corner by the stove, young Naftoli sat and listened to the innkeeper's sons learn Talmud with their tutor. Naftoli knew this tractate by heart, and when the boys and their tutor were stumped by a question in the tractate, Naftoli supplied them with the answer.

The innkeeper realized that this was a brilliant boy, and when he found out why Naftoli was being kept in custody, he thought of a plan to save the boy's life. The innkeeper offered the guard free food and drinks, thus convincing him to stay at the inn for a few days until the weather cleared up.

After a while the innkeeper approached the guard casually: "What would happen if a prisoner was to die in custody as he was being escorted from one city to another?" he inquired.

Replied the guard, "The escort would simply have to present a document testifying to the prisoner's death, signed by the local authorities."

Using his connections, the innkeeper obtained the required document and handed it to the guard, along with enough money to bribe him. The guard left Naftoli with the innkeeper, who took the boy in and raised him as if he was a member of his own family.

Years passed. Naftoli was of marriageable age, as was the innkeeper's daughter. The innkeeper proposed a match between the two young people and they both agreed. The wedding date was set.

One night, some time later, the innkeeper passed by Naftoli's room and heard him talking. He peeked through the keyhole and saw Naftoli sprawled on the floor, begging and pleading. "What can I do?" Naftoli was saying, "these people saved my life."

The scene repeated itself the next night. The innkeeper could not contain his curiosity, as he knew no one was in Naftoli's room, and he asked Naftoli for an explanation. "My parents keep appearing to me and telling me that your daughter is not my intended mate."

The innkeeper, realizing that a Heavenly hand was guiding the young man, told him to obey his parents' wishes, and that he bore Naftoli no ill will.

Before Naftoli left, he requested that the innkeeper give him a written account of the money paid on his behalf to bribe the guard so many years ago.

"I have merited to fulfill the mitzva of redeeming a hostage, and seek no reimbursement," exclaimed the righteous innkeeper.

Naftoli insisted and the innkeeper finally gave him a paper stating the sum paid to the guard. Naftoli left and became famous for his exceptional qualities. He married and was appointed the Rabbi of the city of Posen.

The innkeeper's daughter also married, and settled in a town near Posen. One night, as she was walking home, she was kidnapped by a wealthy landowner and brought back to his estate with obvious intentions. Despite the dangerous situation, the young woman maintained her composure. "I will go along with all your wishes," she told the landowner, "but first you must go to town to purchase some fine liquor for me." The landowner readily agreed.

While he was in town, the clever woman looked for a means of escape from the mansion. The only window she found unbarred was very high up. Realizing the jump was dangerous, she looked for something to cushion her fall. She found the landowner 's heavy lambskin overcoat and, wrapping herself in it, offered a prayer and leaped out the window. Miraculously, she was not hurt. She fled home, still wrapped in the coat.

The husband was thankful for his wife's narrow escape. He related the entire incident to the Rabbi Naftoli of Posen.

Rabbi Naftoli told the husband, "Your wife is a righteous woman and her levelheadedness is admirable. G-d is truly with her. Open the seam of the landowner's coat, and you will find money that rightfully belongs to you and your wife."

Later, the landowner came into the husband's store to make a purchase. He complained about "some Jewish woman" who had not only outwitted him, but had managed to steal his overcoat that had a large sum of money sewn inside it. The husband returned to Rabbi Naftoli and told him what the landowner had said.

"This finally concludes a much longer story," Rabbi Naftoli replied, and proceeded to tell the husband the whole story of his arrest and ransom. "That landowner," he concluded, "was the guard who had escorted me. The amount of money in the coat is the exact sum that your father-in-law paid for my release. Here, I will show you a bill which confirms the figure exactly."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT
on the weekly Torah portion

And he reached a certain place (Gen. 28:11)
Our Sages relate that as soon as Yaakov decided to return, a miracle occurred and he was immediately transported on his way. We learn from this that whenever a person sincerely decides to do teshuva, to return to G-d with a humble heart, he is immediately assisted from Above. "Open up for Me a breach the size of a needle's eye, and I will open for you an opening the size of a great hall." *(Michtav Me'Eliahu)*

He dreamed, and behold there was a ladder set on the earth (Gen. 28:12)
The function of a ladder is to connect top and bottom, to raise up whatever is below and bring down whatever is above. In spiritual terms, the ladder between the upper and lower realms is Torah and prayer, for they enable us to "touch" the very heavens. Prayer raises up and elevates us, whereas Torah study draws down Divine wisdom into the world. And just as one must ascend and descend a physical ladder by climbing its rungs, so too must spiritual progress be orderly and in successive steps.
(Sefer HaMaamarim 5708, "Vayachalom Vehinei Sulam")

Behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it (Gen. 28:12)
At first glance the order seems reversed. Wouldn't the heavenly angels have to descend the ladder before they could climb back up? However, whenever a Jew does a mitzva (commandment), he acquires for himself a "good" angel that rises up to plead on his behalf; only afterward does it come back down to protect him. *(Mayim Amukim)*



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