



IT HAPPENED ONCE

At the age of six, Shlomo, a Jewish boy from the town of Smilian was stricken with blindness. His parents sought out the finest doctors available. Unfortunately, after trying various treatments, the doctors concluded that there was no hope of his eyesight returning.

The little boy loved music and asked his father to arrange music lessons. He had innate talent and, as he grew into manhood, he became an accomplished musician. He did not, however, regain his sight.

When word of the miraculous powers of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, "the Alter Rebbe" reached the town of Smilian, Shlomo's father decided to take him to Liozna in the hope that the Rebbe would help his son.

When father and son were granted an audience with the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe opened the holy text, the Zohar. "Here, read from this page," the Rebbe told Shlomo.

"I cannot see a thing," answered the young man sadly. The Rebbe closed the book and opened it again. "Now read," he said.

Shlomo could not believe his eyes. Although the words were unclear, he could actually make out some letters. "It is very blurred," he said anxiously.

A third time, the Rebbe closed and reopened the holy book. "And now?" he prompted the young man.

Shlomo read the words easily, his voice quivering with excitement.

"Study to become a shochet and move to Shoshnik," the Alter Rebbe instructed him. The young man followed the Rebbe's advice and became one of the mainstays of the Chasidic community in that town.

Reb Shlomo was one of the many musicians who played at the famous wedding in Zshlobin (the marriage of the grandchildren of the Alter Rebbe and Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev). He played his violin masterfully as the Alter Rebbe, Reb Mordechai of Tchernobyl and Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev danced.

The Rebbe of Tchernobyl called Reb Shlomo to him and said, "You play very well. However, undesirable thoughts enter your mind. Look at me and they will no longer bother you."

On another occasion, Reb Shlomo played at a wedding held in the courtyard of the Alter Rebbe. The Chasidim sang and danced to the tunes of his violin. Inspired by the celebration, the Alter Rebbe came out and recited a Chasidic discourse on the verse, "And it came to pass as the musician played his music..."

When his last days approached, Reb Shlomo called the Chevra Kadisha (the burial society) to his home.

"I will pass away today," he informed them. "How do you know?" they inquired.

Reb Shlomo replied: "Twenty years ago, the Angel of Death demanded that I surrender my soul. I told him, 'How dare you make such a request of me! I was instructed by the Alter Rebbe to reside in Shoshnik for a specific amount of time. That time has not yet passed.' I took a wooden board and bashed him on the shoulder, leaving him hunchbacked. Today, the hunchback came back with his demand, and I have no reason to dismiss him."

In the days of the Alter Rebbe, the Chasidim living throughout Russia and Lithuania began to gather to pray in Chabad minyanim (quorums).

Besides joining for prayer, members of these groups would also collect contributions for the Rebbe's charity funds and send them to him together with a list of the contributors.

Once, a member of one of these minyanim failed to overcome the challenges posed to him by his evil inclination, and began to conduct himself in a manner that was not fitting for a member of the Chasidic community. His former colleagues shunned him, and the next time the Rebbe sent out an appeal, they did not seek his contribution.

When the list of contributors reached the Rebbe, he took notice of the missing name.

"What happened? He always participated previously," asked the Rebbe. The Chasid who delivered the contribution explained that the man had been ousted from the minyan.

"Rejecting him is not the proper approach," responded the Rebbe. "You have no idea how much being part of a Chasidic minyan can affect an individual. Even if you see no change in his behavior afterwards, the time he spends together with you is precious. You cannot appreciate how pleasing it is for G-d for a Jew to be prevented from having even one improper thought."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

And Yaakov sent messengers to Esav (Esau) his brother (Gen. 32:4)

At that time, Yaakov was fully ready for the ultimate Messianic Redemption. He had learned a great deal of Torah, served G-d with all his heart, and had observed the 613 mitzvot despite the many obstacles encountered in Lavan's house. For his part, he was ready and prepared. Yaakov sent messengers to check out the spiritual status of his brother Esav, 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)

"I have sojourned with Lavan... and I have an ox, a donkey, flocks, servants and maids..." (Gen. 32:4,5)

In order to frighten Esav, Yaakov told him that he had "an ox and a donkey." Why would Esav be afraid of a donkey? Yaakov was referring to the donkey upon which Moshiach will ride. Moshiach will ride on a donkey because of his humility. He will also overcome all the nations of the world in a quiet way, without war, just as Yaakov overcame Esav. (Breishit Rabah)

These are the generations of Esav, who is Edom...these are the names of Esav'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)



4:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
15 Kislev / December 5
Torah Portion Vayishlach
Shabbat ends **5:13 PM**

בס"ד

1901

15 Kislev, 5786
December 5, 2025

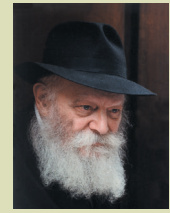
The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The Torah portion of Vayishlach recounts the dramatic episode involving Dina and her brothers' swift, decisive act of vengeance. Finding idols among the spoils his sons had taken, Yaakov (Jacob) instructed them, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and cleanse yourselves."

Maimonides cites this verse to support the ruling that the worship of idols renders a person spiritually unclean and impure.

The fact that Maimonides brings this verse as proof is unusual, for he rarely cites a textual basis in his writings.

Interesting, too, is the fact that the Talmud cites totally different verses to support the Jewish law that idolatry causes spiritual defilement. We must therefore conclude that Maimonides' intent was to teach us something else about the nature of idolatry and its consequences.

The very existence of idolatry raises certain fundamental questions.

How can an entity even exist whose sole purpose is to conceal the Oneness and Unity of G-d and His dominion over creation? One may wonder why the world was created in such a way as to leave room for people to worship false gods. Why didn't G-d make His presence and rulership over the world more obvious, so that no one would ever be led astray?

The answer lies in the above verse itself: "Put away the strange gods that are among you."

The allowance for paganism was not a flaw in creation, but a deliberate challenge designed to be rejected and refuted. God wants us to actively engage in the struggle against the concept of duality. Our mission is to constantly fight the illusion that any power exists apart from the Creator, thereby revealing and affirming His absolute Oneness.

The prohibition against idolatry is different from all other prohibitions in the Torah, for it proscribes something which does not really exist. Idol worship is only an illusion, for in reality, nothing can exert any influence over creation aside from the Creator Himself.

G-d's desire is that man, through his service, uncover this truth and come to the realization that idolatry is false.

On a deeper level, the entire world is but a part of G-d's Unity. The Divine mission of the Jew is to reveal this underlying reality through the medium of Torah and mitzvot.

This truth offers immense encouragement in our lives. No matter how many obstacles we may encounter in our service of G-d, we must always remember that they are just as illusory as the worship of idols; G-d is the only reality that truly exists. All we need do is "put away the strange gods" that are among us and the truth will be revealed.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe

Where Are You?

The question of decades ago, "It's ten p.m.. Do you know where your children are?" might bring more looks of exasperation today than in the past. Yet, if someone directed a similar question to you -- "Do you know where you are?" we would think that the questioner is a bit daft.

Aside from visits to malls, zoos or amusement parks, when we often have to refer to the map at the information center to find out "you are here," we always seem to know where we are.

But do we really know where we are?

The first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, was imprisoned on trumped up charges of anti-government activities. (We celebrate his release from prison on the 19th of Kislev, Nov. 22 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. "It says that Adam 'hid' after he sinned by eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. 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 has to 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 the 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 chosen by G-d at Mount Sinai.

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 Kislev.

Make a New Year's resolution that "you" will never regret. Join a Torah class that includes Chasidic teachings. Find out where you really are.

Dedicated in honor of dear friends
of the L'Chaim Publication
CHANIE AND AVREMI ZUNTZ

SLICE OF LIFE

Broadcasting Chassidic Wisdom



Yedidya Meir during his daily morning broadcast

In the bustling world of Israeli media, where soundbites compete for attention and programming schedules leave little room for contemplation, Yedidya Meir has carved out something unique: a space where ancient melodies meet modern airwaves, where Chassidic wisdom finds expression through contemporary communication.

The eldest of eleven children from Moshav Gimzo, Yedidya now lives in Jerusalem with his wife, acclaimed journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir, and their five children. Together, they've become influential voices in Israeli media, hosting radio programs, contributing to publications like BeSheva newspaper, and speaking to diverse audiences about Jewish life and thought.

But for Yedidya, the power of authentic communication began with something more fundamental than words—it started with music.

"From childhood, I was captivated by genuine Chassidic melodies," he explains. "These aren't just songs; they're compositions that speak directly to the soul. Each note carries meaning that transcends ordinary musical experience." His fascination deepened when he discovered that many of these melodies were composed by Chassidic masters who

embedded spiritual significance into every musical phrase.

This understanding transformed his approach to broadcasting. "When I play a Chassidic melody on radio—whether on Kol Chai or Galei Tzahal—I believe it affects listeners more profoundly than anything I might say," he reflects. The evidence arrives regularly in his inbox: messages from people describing how a single melody moved them to tears or inspired significant life decisions. "Sometimes it's just a tune they heard in the middle of an ordinary day, but it becomes a catalyst for something much deeper."

The couple's relationship with Chassidic outreach deepened during a pivotal period when Sivan was hosting a morning television program at Herzliya Studios. To be closer to her work, they relocated to nearby Ramat Hasharon, where they encountered Chabad emissaries in their natural environment.

"Meeting Rabbi and Mrs. Butman opened our eyes to what genuine dedication looks like," Yedidya recalls. "Most people see Chabad houses during travels abroad or hear about emissaries in places like Ukraine, but they don't grasp the full scope of what a life devoted to outreach actually entails. We received profound lessons about how Chassidic teachings apply practically to every situation and every person."

This exposure led them to immerse themselves in Chassidic literature and thought. They began drawing from traditional sources to create content that reaches hundreds of thousands of people—extracting ideas, interpretations, and insights that could resonate with contemporary audiences.

Their editorial philosophy stems from a principle the Lubavitcher Rebbe emphasized repeatedly: "The main thing is action." Every piece they publish or broadcast is filtered through this criterion—it must offer something practical and immediate that readers or listeners can implement in their daily lives.

This approach has found its most successful expression in Sivan's "Growing" book series, which has exceeded all expectations. "The first volume focused on stories connected to

weekly Torah portions," Yedidya explains. "Within two and a half months, it had sold 20,000 copies and achieved bestseller status across all sectors of Israeli society. The second volume explored Ethics of the Fathers, and that success led us to develop 'Growing 3'—dedicated entirely to Chassidic stories."

The latest volume represents something special to both of them. "These are stories designed for young readers and families, but they carry the illuminating approach of the Baal Shem Tov into contemporary life," Yedidya describes with evident enthusiasm. "They address universal themes—finding joy, navigating crises, building authentic friendships, fostering creativity and initiative. Honestly, I think this is Sivan's finest work yet, and that's saying something given the quality of her previous books."

Beyond their publishing success, Yedidya takes particular satisfaction in watching Chassidic observances gain recognition in mainstream Israeli culture. "The 19th of Kislev has already established itself as part of the national calendar, and increasingly, so has the 18th of Elul—the shared birthday of both the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe who founded Chabad."

He pauses, reflecting on the significance of these dates. "There's a saying that someone's birthday represents the day G-d decided the world couldn't exist without that person. When you consider these two figures—the founder of the Chassidic movement and the architect of Chabad philosophy—try to imagine our world without their contributions. What extraordinary fortune that they were born into this world."

For both Yedidya and Sivan, working on Chassidic content has provided unexpected refuge during Israel's challenging news cycles. "Initially, I worried we were escaping from reality," Yedidya admits. "But I've come to understand that these stories and teachings represent the truest reality. There's profound wisdom and genuine power in Chassidic narratives that can guide us through contemporary challenges."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

20 Kislev, 5719 (1959)

Yesterday we celebrated Yud Tes [the 19th of] Kislev, the Redemption of the Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad, and together with him the triumph of all matters connected with Chabad.

The day inspires every one of us to greater efforts in living up to the concepts of Chabad, the basis of which is the love of G-d, love of the Torah, and love of our fellow-Jews, all of which is truly one.

This is connected with the basic teachings of Chabad, requiring everyone of us to do our utmost to bring our fellow-Jews closer to G-d and to Torah and mitzvot, in their purest form, without compromise or concession, though the approach to each individual may differ in accordance with his spiritual state and background.

One cannot expect a Jew who has drifted from the Jewish way of life to transform himself suddenly, and it is necessary to bring him closer to G-d by stages, yet we have to present to him the true aspects of our Torah and mitzvot, not in any diluted form.

It is only then that the Jew is responsive to the truth, as is expressed the well-known saying of the Alter Rebbe that "No Jew wishes, nor can he, sever himself from G-d."

The 19th of Kislev, therefore, reminds us every year of these basic principles, and inspires us towards their fulfillment.

I know your late father of blessed memory, and I also had the opportunity to meet with you and your wife when you visited here.

My personal knowledge of the members of your family gives me every confidence that every one of you will do your utmost to work for the spreading of Torah and mitzvot in your community, in the spirit of the founder of Chabad, and his teachings.

The work of Chabad in every field of Jewish endeavor has always been on a non-sectarian basis and not confined to any particular group, but embraces all our fellow Jews.

It is because of this that it has remained free from outside influences and pressures, and it is because of this that it has succeeded so well, with the help of G-d.

Translated from a telegram of the Rebbe 17 Kislev, 5752 (1991):

To all those participating in the major gatherings of Yud Tes Kislev, L'Chaim, L'Chaim Velivracha -- "To life, to life and blessing."

Beginning today, the 17th of Kislev (whose numerical equivalent in Hebrew, tov, means "good"); continuing on the 18th of Kislev (whose numerical equivalent in Hebrew, chai, means "live"); and on the 19th of the month, Yud Tes Kislev itself; may you be inscribed -- and may that inscription be sealed -- for a good year in the study of Chasidut and in the Chasidic ways of conduct.

May it be G-d's will that the verse, "He redeemed my soul in peace" [the verse of Psalms which the Alter Rebbe was reciting when he was informed of his release] come to complete fruition for each and every one of you.

May you succeed in making vessels for this blessing, as reflected in our Sages' interpretation of the above verse as referring to one who is occupied in Torah study (both the revealed dimension of Torah law and the Torah's mystic dimension), in deeds of kindness, and in prayer.

Additional emphasis on the above is granted this year, for Yud Tes Kislev falls on a Tuesday, the day on which the expression "And G-d saw that it was good" was repeated. And as our Sages explain, this refers to a twofold good, "Good for the heavens" and "Good for the created beings."

The above activities should all be brought to fruition energetically, in a manner of Ufaratzta: "And you shall spread forth westward, eastward, north-ward, and southward," beginning with each of the mitzva campaigns.

There is added emphasis on all of the above in the present year, for it is a leap year, which the Torah describes as a "perfect year"....

And from these days, we will proceed to the days of preparation for Chanuka and to Chanuka itself, whose message is, which indeed, grants the potential for it to be actualized, for each and every person to kindle "the lamp of mitzva and the light of Torah," "at the outside of the entrance to his home," and to increase the light shining at the entrance to his home from day to day, causing it to shine outward throughout the entire year...

May this be realized in the building of the Third Holy Temple -- speedily in our days, in the true and complete Redemption led by Moshiach. May this take place in the immediate future.

blessing pronounced upon seeing 600,000 or more Jews together);

- "Blessed are You... Who has apportioned of His wisdom to those who fear Him";
- "Blessed are You... Who has apportioned of His honor to those who fear Him";
4. and Shehecheyanu.

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 Tuesday, 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 mitzvot:

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'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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6,500 Chabad Rabbis Gather for Largest Jewish Conference in World



the 42nd International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries (Kinus Hashluchim) came after five days of programs and workshops, prayer and study, bringing together 6,500 Chabad emissaries and their guests from around the world.

This year's conference came as Jews around the globe face difficulties they thought to be things of the past. The emissaries, however, remain unfazed, recalling the message of the Rebbe to never cower in the face of adversity, but to respond by growing in all matters of Jewishness, and goodness and kindness.

EDISON, N.J.—The cavernous exhibit space-turned-banquet hall pulsed with energy. The gala banquet closing out

CALL TO ACTION

Gatherings should be held in honor of 19 Kislev -- the "New Year of Chasidut" and anniversary of the liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe, in every Jewish community.

Participate in as many gatherings as you can. They needn't be huge assemblies -- begin with yourself (i.e. a gathering of one's own strengths and powers for good).

At these gatherings an emphasis should be placed on inspiring each other to increase Torah, prayer and deeds of kindness.

(From a talk of the Rebbe, 16 Kislev, 5752-1991)

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Four of the blessings to be said when Moshiach comes are:

- "Blessed are You...Knower of secrets (a