



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The court of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chasidism, was located in the small, White Russian town of Liozna. His many chasidim flocked there to be near him, to pray, to celebrate the festivals, to receive his blessings and to benefit from his Torah-wisdom.

Once, a chasid came to the Rebbe with a heavy sorrow weighing on his soul. When he entered the Rebbe's chambers, he couldn't restrain himself, and tears flowed from his eyes. "Rebbe," he sobbed, "my son has turned away from everything we have taught him. He no longer follows *mitzvot* (commandments), and I'm afraid that he will be completely lost from the path of truth. Please, Rebbe, give me some advice how to get him back."

The Rebbe felt his chasid's pain, and he was silent for some moments. Then he replied, "Do you think that you might be able to persuade the boy to come to see me?"

"I don't know," the man sighed. "The way he's been acting recently, I'm afraid it might be very difficult. He has some wild friends, and he hardly listens to his parents."

"Nevertheless, I want you to think up some way in which you can get him to come here. Maybe there's some errand you can send him on that would bring him to Liozna. When he gets to the town, a way will be found to bring him here to me."

The prospect of the Rebbe taking charge of his wayward son lifted the chasid's spirits. He returned home in a far brighter mood than the one in which he had come.

The man spent the whole return trip to his village deep in thought, trying to hatch some plan which would draw his son to the Rebbe. Suddenly he had an excellent idea. His son was very fond of horse-back riding, an activity considered improper for a Jewish boy. The boy, however, cared not the least for public opinion, and to his father's consternation, he took every opportunity to ride into town. This seemed a perfect ruse to get his son to the Rebbe. He would ask the boy to go and pick something up in town.

When he asked his son to go on the errand, the boy responded, "I'll go only if I can go by horseback." This time the father quickly acquiesced.

The boy happily galloped into town, unaware that his father's friends were on the lookout for him, and that the errand was merely a signal to them to bring him to the Rebbe's house.

No sooner had he arrived in Liozna, than he was spirited to the Rebbe's house, and found himself standing face to face with The Alter Rebbe. "I'm glad to see you," said the Rebbe. "But, tell me, why did you come by horseback, instead of in a wagon?"

"To tell you the truth, it's because I love to ride. And my horse is such a fine specimen, I figure, why shouldn't I take advantage of him?"

"Really? Tell me, what exactly are the advantages of such an animal?" asked the Rebbe.

"Surely you can imagine, an animal such as mine runs very fast. You jump on his back, and speed down the road, and in no time at all you are at your destination," the young man replied with great enthusiasm.

"That is truly a great advantage, but only provided that you are on the right road. Because, if you're on the wrong road, you'll only be going in the wrong direction faster."

"Even if that's so," countered by the young man, "the horse would help you get back on the right road more quickly as soon as you realize you're on the wrong road."

"If you realize yourself that you are on the wrong road," the Rebbe slowly emphasized. "It's true, my boy, if you catch yourself, before it's too late, and you realize that you have strayed from the right path; then you can quickly return."

The words of the Rebbe, uttered so slowly and deliberately, hit the young man like a

bombshell, and the Rebbe's penetrating eyes seemed to pierce right through him. The young man fell down in a faint.

He was quickly revived, and in a subdued tone, he asked the Rebbe's permission to remain in Liozna, so that he could renew his Torah studies.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT



on the weekly Torah portion

### These are the names of the Children of Israel coming into Egypt (Ex. 1:1)

The verse says "coming," in the present tense, rather than "who came," in the past tense. For the duration of the 210-year exile in Egypt, the Jews felt as if they had just arrived in that land. They never adopted Egyptian ways and always considered their sojourn temporary. (*Ohel Yehoshua*)

### She stretched out her hand (amata) and fetched it (Ex. 2:5)

Rashi explains that a miracle occurred: When Pharaoh's daughter stretched out her hand to reach the box, it became many cubits (*amot*) long. The Torah is thus teaching us that when it comes to saving a Jewish child, one must not stop to think whether or not it is actually possible. When a Jewish child is in danger we must do everything possible to save him. Once this is done G-d will assist us, and the seemingly impossible will be accomplished very easily. (*Likutei Sichot*)

### These are the names of the Children of Israel...seventy souls (Ex. 1:1-5)

These verses lists the individual names of the Jews who went down to Egypt and then tells us how many Jews there were in all. When objects (or people) are counted, it is a reflection of their common qualities. We count objects when we want to know their number, regardless of their differences. On the other hand, when we assign an object a name, it is generally a reflection of its individuality, what sets it apart from all others. These two qualities – being part of a greater whole, and possessing individual worth – are present in every Jew. (*The Rebbe*)

### And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro (Ex. 3:1)

A young goat once ran away from the rest of the flock Moses was tending. Moses followed the animal into a thicket that hid a pool of fresh water. Seeing the goat drinking he exclaimed, "I didn't realize you were thirsty. You must be so tired." After the animal had quenched its thirst, Moses tenderly picked it up and carried it back to the flock. When G-d saw Moses's act of kindness toward his father-in-law's goat, He decreed that Moses was equally worthy of tending G-d's own flock – the Jewish People. (*Midrash Rabba*)



### 4:33 Candle Lighting Time

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Torah Portion Shemot  
Shabbat ends 5:36 PM

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# L'Chaim

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20 Tevet, 5783  
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The Weekly Publication  
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוד 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 the Torah portion of *Shemot* we read that Moses struck and killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jewish slave. Moses hid the body in the sand, thinking that no one had seen. The next day he saw two Jews quarreling (Datan and Aviram). One raised his hand to hit the other. Moses said to him, "Why do you strike your friend?" The man retorted, "Who appointed you as a leader and judge over us, do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was afraid and said, "So the fact is known."

The *Midrash* tells us that Moses said, "You have spoken *lashon hara* (evil speech) between you, how are you worthy of redemption?"

From this *Midrash* it seems that Moses considered *lashon hara* so terrible that it could delay the redemption from Egypt. Why is *lashon hara* so horrific?

Upon being redeemed from Egypt we became a nation of our own, as it says about the Exodus, that G-d took for Himself "a nation from within (another) nation." And while we were a nation even before the Exodus, united with the common ideal and purpose to teach the world about G-d, in Egypt many Jews were influenced and became entrenched in the Egyptian culture and lost their sense of purpose.

Maimonides, whose *yartzeit* is Friday 20 Tevet (January 13 this year) tells us that "out of G-d's love for us, and to keep the promise he made to Abraham... G-d chose Israel as His '*nachala*' (portion)..."

From these last words of Maimonides, the difference between the kind of nation we were before the Exodus and after the Exodus becomes clear. In Egypt, we were united under a common ideal, but G-d took us out of Egypt because He chose us, and we became a nation based on something greater than any human ideal, that G-d chose us to be His *nachala*. What is a "*nachala*?"

A *nachala* refers to the portion of the land of Israel that was given to a family, to stay in the family forever. In other words, when G-d chose us to be His *nachala* we became His nation forever. This uniting factor, being from G-d is not subject to change.

When G-d chose us as His nation, He included all of us, from the most righteous to the least. That is why even idolaters went out of Egypt, because they were also part of the nation that G-d chose. The only thing is that we had to be united, because if we weren't, then there would be no nation for G-d to choose. So the only thing that would hold up the redemption is disunity.

Now we can understand why *lashon hara* is so bad, and why it bothered Moses so much. The mere fact that someone speaks badly of another shows that there is disunity. And as mentioned earlier, when there is disunity, there is no nation for G-d to choose, and by extension, there is no redemption possible.

The unity of the Jewish people, is what caused the redemption from Egypt, and it is the same unity that will bring the future redemption. May it come soon.

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

## Optical Illusions

We've all seen pictures of optical illusions: which line is longer? Is it a vase or two faces? Which dots are darker? But did you realize that every instant you are encountering optical illusions?

Lying in bed just days before his passing, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chasidut, was discussing this very topic with his son, Rabbi Dov Ber. "Do you see that ceiling beam," the Rebbe asked his son. "It is pure G-dliness," he declared.

Touching the beam, Rabbi Dov Ber objected, "But father, all I feel is material wood."

"That is because you are touching it with physical hands," his father explained.

Does it seem hard to imagine that everything in this world is, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman proclaimed, pure G-dliness? Try considering the following and it might be easier.

Every part of matter is made up of atoms and even smaller particles. These atoms and all of their particles are constantly in motion. Yet, when we look at a ceiling beam for instance, what we see is a very solid, stationary object.

Now, rather than discussing particles of matter, consider pure G-dliness. According to Jewish philosophy, G-d is very much in touch with the world He created. He did not simply, as some believe, create the world and then leave it to its own devices. In fact, the world continues to exist because, and only because, G-d is constantly reinvesting His life-force into the world. This means that each and every object, from the largest building to the smallest particle, from the squimmiest jello to

the most solid ceiling beam, exists only because it is constantly being reinvested with G-dliness. It is pure G-dliness!

When Rabbi Shneur Zalman explained to his son that he was feeling physicality because he was using his physical hand, it's like the old-fashioned 3-D glasses that let you see everything three dimensionally, or rose colored glasses that make everything seem rosy. The fact that everything looks 3-D or seems rosy doesn't mean that either of those conditions are true. Similarly, because we look at or touch things with physical limbs doesn't mean that they lack G-dliness.

The Rebbe said that Moshiach is already here; if we only open our eyes we will see him. Most people don't go through life with their eyes closed. So what does "open your eyes" mean? Perhaps the Rebbe is not talking about physical eyes but spiritual eyes.

How do we open our spiritual eyes? How about trying to see the positive points in others. Or, every time something happens "coincidentally," realizing that it is Divine Providence that orchestrated the event. Or, thanking G-d for all the good you have in your life (if this seems difficult, spend just a few moments with the less fortunate and you'll understand that there's a lot to be thankful for).

Looking at everything with spiritual eyes is unlike using rose-colored or 3-D glasses, though. For, with spiritual eyes, we see the true essence of everything; as Rabbi Shneur Zalman declared, everything is pure G-dliness. And once we have exercised our spiritual eyes in this manner, they will be healthy and fit enough to see that Moshiach is just waiting for us to open our eyes!

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Jews Ask Questions

by Nadia Gold



Throughout my childhood, my parents drilled something into my head, that I am Jewish. I am Jewish, I have always been Jewish, and I will always be Jewish.

So one time, I asked them what that meant, what makes us different from everyone else. What do Jews do, I asked them?

Jews ask questions. And they are rewarded for it. It is encouraged.

We can see this quite clearly if we look into history. Over centuries, our ancestors made questioning into an art form, and if you stacked up all the books filled with all of their questions, the pile would reach to the moon and back.

So, I took questioning in as a part of my identity, really. I took it to heart. I went off to public school, and in every class, I asked questions. And the teachers loved it. So I kept on doing it, and I was content.

At a certain point, though, the same questions as ever, the whats and whens and hows don't ring true with you anymore. Because you know them already.

When I looked at the world around me and started asking why, I hit a wall with my questions.

When the things you want to know become

unanswerable, they also become unaskable. Because if you ask the secular world questions on hard, concrete facts, scientific processes, historical events, it will answer you very gladly. It knows these things!

But the second you face society and ask them, "Why are we here?" it will turn away, and tell you to stop wasting your time.

Now, this, in my mind, is a terrible thing. When a question makes you realize that you don't know something, you should go looking, not pretend like there's something wrong with the one who asked!

Yet there was nothing I could do about this. But I was, am, and will always be a Jew. And I had questions!

I knew that we're encouraged to ask for a reason. And now, it made sense. You ask a question for one reason only. Not to check a box, but because you want an answer. And I hadn't found any answers yet.

So, I picked up my questions and went to ask elsewhere.

I asked a person who plants both feet firmly out of the secular world, yet, at the instruction of the Rebbe, still stretches out a hand to welcome in the curious. I went to my local Chabad Rabbi.

And there, one Shabbat day, which I was not observing yet, in the *shul* at the JCC, I asked about good and evil, life after death, why we're all here in this world.

And what did the rabbi do? He turned around... went to the bookshelf, and took down a *Tanya* – the basic book of Chabad Chasidut.

And for every single one of my questions – on-topic and off – which ranged from *Tanya* questions all the way to questions of simple curiosity, he gave me an answer. However long it took.

And, sitting there, getting to know G-d just a little bit better through Chasidic philosophy, I thought to myself: I am a Jew. I have asked questions. And this is my reward.

In high school, I became involved in CTEEN through my local Chabad House and decided to attend Bais Chana UnCamp. That was a life changing experience. It led me to the decision to lead an observant life and to attend seminary.

I have been attending Machon L'Yahadus Women's Yeshiva in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, for nearly a year. And every day I spend now in Chasidut class, I

thank G-d for providing me the answers to questions I have asked and the questions that hadn't even crossed my mind yet.

Because I know now that as Jews, we are full of questions about the world and its making, but that G-d provides us with answers.

It could be about the deepest components of this world's creation, and G-d will give us the deepest sort of answers, based on His deepest revealed secrets.

And the best part? The questions could seem completely ridiculous! And G-d will still give us a deep and thought-out answer. The other day in class, we studied a Chasidic Discourse that had a half-page long, Kabbalistic explanation of why grass can't talk.

G-d wants us to know Him, and so He gave us Chasidic teachings. But in order to merit receiving an answer, we have to ask first.

In the time shortly before Chasidic teachings were first revealed, the days were dark. The simple Jews, who had long been neglected and overlooked, asked the greatest scholars of their generation: "What are we doing here, and why has it become so dark?"

And they were turned away.

So who did they ask now? G-d.

And He answered them, saying, "You are here because I love you – just as you are. Because you are simple, not in spite of it. But you have said that it is dark, so I will give you some light. Now go, and learn more about Me." And He said this through the Baal Shem Tov.

So, we picked ourselves up, and became closer to G-d than ever before. Our story – whether as a people throughout history, or as individuals, involves asking questions.

Because we are Jews, and we have questions, G-d means for us to get answers.

Maybe, sometimes, the answers to our questions won't come easily, and like in the famous story of Hillel and Shammai, the Shammais of this world will turn us away, tell us to stop asking, and to be content with what we have. But we have to keep asking. Because we know that G-d's answer to us, when it finally comes, will be all the more beautiful. May we receive all of our answers soon in the Third and final Holy Temple!

For more info about Machon L'Yahadus visit [womensyeshiva.org](http://womensyeshiva.org)



## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated excerpts from a letter to Israeli author Kaddish Luz, from the Fall of 1964, continued from previous issue:

Such a basic appreciation of the function and goals of the *kibbutz* [communal settlement] is important not only after the *kibbutz* has been established and a full communal life is set and running, and it now must be decided how to utilize its surplus resources and how to emphasize each member's characteristics and talents to their fullest extent; rather, this appreciation is of utmost importance at the very beginning of the *kibbutz's* establishment. For often, and perhaps in most cases, the very establishing of a communally structured life will, by necessity, provoke an internal resistance on the part of its members to a regimen that attempts to suppress their individuality and turn them into parts of a mass. However, when the individual member appreciates that this is but a stage in his self-development and a path toward the expansion of his opportunities for greater achievement as an individual, by freeing him from lesser concerns (i.e., those regarding his basic material needs, which will be procured more easily and efficiently thanks to the collective communal effort) – this appreciation will not only eliminate his natural resistance, but will increase his enthusiasm and commitment in the fulfillment of his duties towards the *kibbutz*.

Furthermore, such understanding and appreciation is important not only for the success of the *kibbutz*, but also for the quality of life within it – an issue

which you also touch upon in your book. For example, the quality of the relationship between parents and their children in the *kibbutz* – an area in which the damage can far exceed the gains. For these relationships belong to the "spiritual" area of life, where a person's individuality and independence is of paramount importance.

Another point, which I think important, is the difference in feeling and regard toward the *kibbutz* on the part of its founders and on the part of those born into it. The founders of the *kibbutz*, or those who joined it in its early stages, can derive a deep satisfaction from the fact that they have come to this (as you describe in your book) from a very different way of life and from a society with very different views, and have achieved this communal life through great toil, sacrifice and suffering—all of which serve to make one's achievements that much more precious and admirable in one's eyes. On the other hand, those born into the *kibbutz* or raised in it regard it as a most natural way of life; to them, the limitations of communal life, such as discussed above, tend to be more pronounced than its positive aspects. This cannot fail to awaken in them a dissatisfaction, or even rebelliousness; it is inevitable that there will be dissent between them and those who enforce the communal regimen on them. Regarding them, it is even more important to emphasize the communal life as a stage and facilitator towards a higher goal.

Which brings me to the crux of the matter, to the burning question which, incidentally, I did not see addressed in your book: What goal or ideal is presented to the next generation as the objective to be achieved via the structure of a communal life, so that they should desire to achieve it even if this requires effort, toil and sacrifice on their part?

Translated by Yanki Tauber, [www.meaningfullife.com](http://www.meaningfullife.com), from *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. XXIV, pp. 263-266

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This coming Tuesday (January 17) is the 24th of Tevet, the *yartzeit* of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman opened a new path which allowed the teaching of the previously hidden aspects of the Torah – *Pnimitut HaTorah* – to be comprehended through the intellect and thus reveal additional G-dliness within the world.

But Rabbi Shneur Zalman was not only a master in the area of the more esoteric aspects of the Torah. Even as a child he was considered a great scholar of the revealed parts of the Torah – *nigle d'Torah*, as well.

This quality of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's is alluded to in his name, *Shneur*, which can be broken up into two Hebrew words, "Shnei" and "ohr" which mean two lights. He illuminated the world with his greatness in the two lights of the Torah.

In Rabbi Shneur Zalman's magnum opus, *Tanya*, he writes: "The Messianic Era... is the fulfillment and culmination of the creation of the world, for which purpose it was originally created. This means that our spiritual service will reach its full completion only with the arrival of *Moshiach*. Thus, the fulfillment and culmination of the entire creation will take place when *Moshiach* is revealed.

The entire purpose, in fact, of the revelation of Chasidic philosophy was to hasten and prepare the world for the Messianic Era.

Thus, when each one of us studies Chasidut, whether the more sublime aspects or the most esoteric concepts, we prepare ourselves and the world around us for *Moshiach*.

Shmuel Butman

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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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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and you will bring forth My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt (Ex. 3:10) The physical

presence of the redeemer does not necessarily signal the redemption itself, as Moses, the first redeemer of the Jews, was physically present in Egypt prior to the actual exodus. Likewise, *Moshiach*, the final redeemer of the Jewish people, will also arrive some time prior to the actual redemption and the ushering in of the Messianic Era. (*Sefat Emet*)

