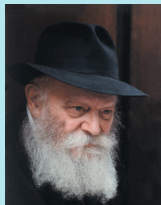


# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

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

This year, the upcoming holiday of Shavuot takes place in the week between the two Torah portions of Bamidbar and Naso. One of the subjects found in both of these portions is the Sanctuary in the desert and the distribution of the duties connected with it, when the Sanctuary was carried from place to place.

This emphasizes the fact that even when Jews find themselves in a desert, they have the ability to erect a Sanctuary for the Divine Presence to dwell among them, and in every one of them.

Just as there is a desert in a physical sense, a place of desolation and natural danger, so is there a "desert" in a spiritual sense, created by harmful ideas.

Our Torah teaches us that when Jews find themselves in such a spiritual desert, it is imperative to erect a Sanctuary, and carry it through to transform the desert to a holy land.

The portion Bamidbar is the beginning of the book of Bamidbar, which is called "Sefer HaPikudim - the Book of Numbers." In the beginning of this book as well as towards its end, the Torah tells us of the Jewish census: First at the beginning of their wandering in the desert of Sinai, after receiving the Torah, and the second time at the end of the 40 years' wandering, on the eve of their entry into the Land of Israel.

The soul descends into this world for the purpose of transforming it from good to evil. It at times may seem challenging to do something so big. But the Torah teaches us that this is how Jews began as a nation: in the midst of such a job.

This is also one of the significant teachings of the counting of the Jews detailed in Parshas Bamidbar. The Jew were counted twice in this Torah portion: First at the beginning of their wandering in the desert of Sinai, after receiving the Torah, and the second time at the end of the 40 years' wandering, on the eve of their entry into the Land of Israel.

In these counting, each Jew was counted individually, regardless of his station and standing in life. Ane each was counted as no more than one and no less than one, to underscore that everyone has his mission as a "soldier" in G-d's army. And, although in an army there are various ranks, from an ordinary soldier to the highest in command, each one individually and all together carry out the Divine mission to make for G-d an "abode" in this world, even in a desert. Indeed, precisely those who were counted in the second census - those who were brought up in the desert - merited to enter the Land of Israel.

*Adapted from letters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

## A Single Life Is Worth Everything

The Baal Shem Tov taught that everything we see or hear carries a lesson on how to serve Hashem. Some events make that lesson impossible to miss.

In early April, an American F-15E was shot down over Iran. One crew member was rescued within hours. The other one ejected miles away and disappeared into the mountains of southwestern Iran. For nearly two days, the United States carried out one of the most demanding rescue operations in its history to bring him out. Aircraft, special forces, intelligence assets, helicopters taking fire, equipment abandoned and destroyed — all of it to retrieve one man still hiding behind enemy lines.

All of it for one person.

It's tempting to be impressed by the scale. The deeper point is what made the scale justified. A single life is worth everything. Once that becomes real, every other calculation reorders itself. Equipment becomes secondary. Risk becomes justified. The individual becomes the focus.

This echoes a fundamental principle in Jewish law. The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5) states that whoever saves a single life is regarded as having saved an entire world. The Rebbe often emphasized this idea: a person isn't a fragment of something larger. Each person is, in themselves, a world.

Look at how this reality is built. The atom, invisible and almost

weightless, holds energy enough to power a city or level it. The human mind, folded into a few pounds of tissue, is the seat of every discovery and every choice. A handful of people in one laboratory can change the lives of billions. The biggest forces in our world come from the smallest places.

Tanya (chapter 2) teaches that the soul of a Jew is "literally a part of G-d above." The Alter Rebbe is not speaking metaphorically. Inside what looks like one ordinary person, having one ordinary day, sits something infinite.

This is why a mitzvah is never small. Rambam writes (Hilchot Teshuva 3:4) that a person should see the world as evenly balanced between merit and deficit, and that a single act tips the scale. One mitzvah, by one person, brings deliverance to the whole world.

The Rebbe drew on this Rambam constantly when speaking about Moshiach. We aren't waiting for some grand cosmic event to begin the redemption. We're waiting for one more good deed. A blessing said with intention. A dollar given to charity. Putting on tefillin. Lighting Shabbat candles. The act that tips the scale could be ours, today.

The rescue in Iran is over. The lesson it left behind isn't.

One person. One moment. One act.

Sometimes that is everything.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## From Captivity to Freedom



Making a blessing on the lulav and esrog after being released from captivity

Avraham (Avi) Ochana, 48, lives in Kiryat Malachi. He is the father of Yosef Chaim Ochana, who was held hostage and later freed. For two years, Avi became a quiet beacon of faith, strengthening countless people in Israel and around the world, never ceasing to pray for his son's return.

"This year, on Hoshana Rabbah, we were finally able to rejoice," he says. "For the first time, we smiled and celebrated without fear. The night after my son was released, I slept for the first time in two years. Six or seven hours straight. Until then, I would wake up every ten minutes, gripped by anxiety. Those two years were filled with pain that words cannot describe. Even now, it feels like I am dreaming, floating on a cloud. I still cry tears of joy, trying to absorb this miracle. It is joy beyond all measure."

Throughout the ordeal, the family prayed and believed, though there were moments

of breaking and disappointment. "There were times when hugging my son again felt like a distant dream," Avi admits. "But G-d accepted our prayers and opened a gate for us."

For two years, Avi imagined the moment he would finally see his son. "The first words that came out of my mouth were 'Shema Yisrael,' followed by the Shehecheyanu blessing. The video of that moment spread quickly, and people tell me they watched it again and again, crying each time. For me, it was a moment of true redemption."

Avi is convinced that only Divine protection watched over Yosef Chaim. "He told me, 'Every minute, I didn't know if I would live to the next.' I can't share all the details, but the fact that he is alive defies logic. Again and again, he was saved from being murdered by his captors. Through open miracles, he managed to convince them it was not worth killing him."

"My son is incredibly brave," Avi says quietly. "He has immense inner strength. He tells me, 'Dad, enough. It's over. We'll never be separated again. We don't need to dwell on it. Slowly, I'll tell you what happened. Let's focus on the future.' That's who he is." Yosef Chaim also managed to hide from his captors the fact that he held a senior position in the army.

During captivity, faith sustained them. Yosef Chaim told his father that the hostages used to save two pitas for emergencies. "One day," he said, "I told the others, 'No more saving. We trust G-d. We'll eat everything, believing that we'll receive what we need, just as the manna fell from Heaven.' They agreed. One of the hostages fasted for the first time in his life on Yom Kippur because of him. Even when they went to receive

a cup of water from their guards, they would sing Mizmor L'Todah together and recite chapters of Psalms."

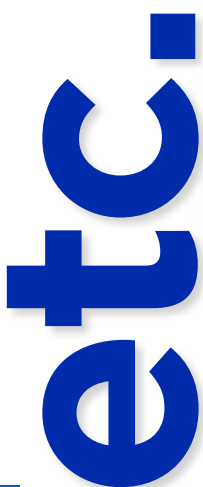
Just two days before the kidnapping, Yosef Chaim had made a blessing on the lulav with his father. "I placed my hand on him and said, simply, 'The Four Species will protect you.' I have no doubt that this mitzvah accompanied him throughout his captivity."

During the long months of waiting, Avi visited the Rebbe's resting place and 770 – the Lubavitch world headquarters, as part of a delegation of hostage families organized by Chabad. "I prayed there from the depths of my heart. Throughout this entire period, we were embraced with warmth and love by the Chabad movement, and especially by the residents of Kiryat Malachi, our city."

"We didn't keep our faith private," Avi says. "Together with my friend Rabbi Shabtai Weintraub, we released videos before every holiday, encouraging people to strengthen themselves. The response was overwhelming." One released hostage, Ohad Ben Ami from Be'eri, later remarked, "I taught Avi Ochana accounting, and he taught me faith and trust." When Ohad was freed, he put on tefillin in Yosef Chaim's merit.

"We are filled with gratitude from the depths of our hearts to the Creator," Avi concludes. "A miracle took place here, one that cannot be explained. We are deeply thankful to our heroic soldiers who risked their lives, and because of them we reached this moment. And to every single person who prayed, cared, and helped. This redemption belongs to all of us."

*Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine*



## Historic Visit in Kazakhstan

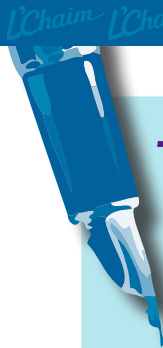
Israel's President Isaac Herzog arrived for a historic visit to Kazakhstan. He was welcomed by the Rebbe's shluchim: the Chief Rabbi of Kazakhstan, Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen, and the Chief Rabbi of Astana, Rabbi Shmuel Karnaoch.

The President shared that he merited attending Simchas Torah with the Rebbe, and that the power of the hakafos and the niggun of the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchak, continues to accompany him in his public work. He showed great interest in the life story of the Rebbe's father and the significance of his holy tziyun (resting place) in Almaty.

In the guest book the President wrote, "It is an honor for me, and I am moved to visit this magnificent shul, a symbol of the Jewish people's unbreakable spirit."

## ETHICS CHAPTER SIX

Everything that G-d created in His world, He did not create but for His glory. As is stated (Isaiah 43:7): "All that is called by My name and for My glory, I created it, formed it, also I made it." And it says (Exodus 15:1): "G-d shall reign forever and ever."



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5738 [1978]

...I take this opportunity of expressing my regret that - for reasons you are aware of - it was impossible to talk things over with you personally and at length, nor to meet your younger daughter. However, when Jews meet at a Farbrengen [Chasidic gathering] dedicated to Torah and Yiddishkeit [Judaism], in a sacred place of Tefilah [prayer] and Torah study, especially one that had been graced by the presence of my father-in-law of saintly memory for ten years - this unites Jews and brings them closer together than a personal conversation.

Apropos of the above, and in connection with the forthcoming Festival of Mattan Torah [the Giving of the Torah], the unity of our people is directly related to it, as our Sages interpret the words, "and Israel encamped there facing the Mountain" (Yisro [Exodus] 19:21), taking note of the use of the singular person - k'ish echod b'lev echod, "like one person, with one heart." (Rashi, from Mechilta). It was the first time since the departure from Egypt that the Jewish people felt truly united, and G-d said, "Now they are fit to receive the Torah."

At first glance it seems extraordinary that a whole nation could be so united as to be described "like one person with one heart," especially as it has been said that "people differ in their outlooks as they differ in their looks," and there are various walks of life and interests. But the explanation is found in the words, "facing the Mountain." For, when the Jewish people were about to receive the Torah, they were all of like mind and heart, and all so eager to receive the Torah and its Mitzvos [commandments] that in the light of it everything else paled into insignificance, and thus they all truly became like one person with one heart.

Since the Torah was given not only to our ancestors coming out of Egypt, but the souls

of all Jews of all future generations were present and joined in "na'aseh v'nishma" ["we will do and then we will understand"], the reading of the portion of Mattan Torah on Shavuos - most solemnly and with a Brocho [blessing] before and after - inspires every one of us to relive this experience, and rejuvenates the powers of every Jew to renew his, and her, commitment to Torah and Mitzvos with increased vigor and vitality and joy. May it be so with you and yours and all of us in the midst of all our people.

Wishing you and all your family a joyous and inspiring Yom Tov [holiday], and the traditional blessing to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness,

With blessing,



Erev [eve of] Shavuos, 5735 [1975]

Greeting and Blessing:

At this time before Shavuos, the Festival of Mattan Torah, I send you and yours my prayerful wishes for a happy and inspiring Yom Tov and the traditional blessing to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness, and may the joy and inspiration be with you throughout the year.

No doubt you received my previous correspondence. I trust that this letter will find you in good health and spirits - which is also relevant to Shavuos. For, as our Sages of blessed memory tell us, before G-d gave the Torah to our people at Sinai, all those who were in ill-health were cured and invigorated. This is also understandable, since a healthy Jew, physically, can better understand and follow the Torah and Mitzvos and accomplish all that he has to.

By extension to the other end, it follows that a Jew is duty-bound to take care of his health, since the health of the Neshomo [soul] depends largely on the health of the body, and both are required to accomplish the maximum. This is particularly important in the case of a person whom Divine Providence has given a special standing in the community, to be a source of inspiration to many. I am pleased to know that Mrs.- is a true helpmate.

Wishing you again a happy and joyous Yom Tov,

With blessing,

throughout the entire world. However, this dispersion was intended to give the Jews the potential to elevate the entire world through following the directives of the Torah. After this mission is completed, in the Messianic redemption, G-d will collect and unite all the Torah actions that were performed throughout the world and bring them as one to the Holy Land.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 9 Sivan, 1989)

## 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

*A famous Midrash describes how, when G-d was about to bring an unprecedented level of G-dly revelation into the world through the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, G-d demanded of the fledging Jewish nation a guarantor for the Torah.*

*The Jewish people offered their ancestors as the guarantors but G-d refused them. He demanded that their children be the guarantors instead. When the children came before G-d, He asked them, "Do you agree to be the guarantors of the Torah for your parents, and if they do not observe the Torah, you will be responsible for them?"*

*To this Divine question, the children answered affirmatively, whereupon G-d began reciting the first of the Ten Commandments.*

*It is perhaps in this vein that the Rebbe has stressed throughout the years that all Jewish children should be present in shul on the holiday of Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments and to accept the Torah anew.*

*We bring the children so they can become familiar with the "terms" of the guarantee. The children's presence in shul actually confirms our guarantee it.*

*In Hebrew, the word guarantor is "orev." Orev can also mean pleasant or sweet. What sweeter guarantors can we have than our children, whose influence helps our own deeds to be pleasing?*

*One of the many beautiful concepts in Judaism is that the Jewish soul can comprehend long before the intellect.*

*With this in mind, we see how imperative it is to bring even infants and young children to shul; though their minds might not yet comprehend where they are and why they are there, their souls certainly do.*

*On Shavuot -- (this year {2026} Friday, May 22 and Shabbat May 23) -- make sure to be in shul and to bring your children as well. It is especially important to be in shul on the first day, when the Ten Commandments will be read.*

*As we prepare ourselves to receive the Torah once again, let us prepare ourselves as well, for the ultimate revelation of G-dliness that we will experience in the Messianic Era -- may that time begin NOW.*

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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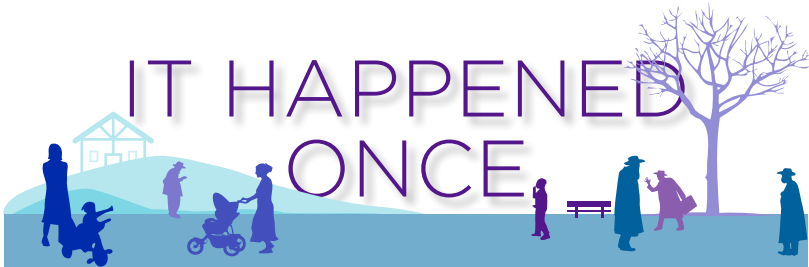
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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Since we are essentially "one nation," it would seem appropriate that this oneness be reflected in the Jews' geographic location as well. Nevertheless, this is not so and our people are dispersed

# IT HAPPENED ONCE



Immersed himself totally in a life of debauchery in the company of the Russian and Polish aristocrats who were his companions.

Once, when the chasid Rabbi Nissan went to visit the Baal Shem Tov (the "Besht"), the Besht explained to him at great length the meaning of the verse, "Those who go down to the sea in ships and do work in raging waters": The phrase "those who go down to the sea" refers to the souls that come down and enter the bodies, comparable to the seas which cover everything, as the body covers the Divine soul within it.

"But there are two kinds of descent: in one, souls descend into the sea of life -- i.e. when one finds oneself within a circle of Torah. In the other, the souls descend into the midst of a raging sea without any ship in which to take refuge.

"Those Jews who descend into the physical body, but live in an atmosphere devoid of the light of Torah, flounder as if in a raging sea.

"Therefore," concluded the Besht, "it is the duty of other Jewish souls who 'do their work in raging waters,' to save them, as they would a drowning man."

The Besht made it clear to Rabbi Nissan that he was referring precisely to the "Christianized" friend of Benedict, Pierre Louis, who was, in actuality, a Jew named Pesach Tzvi.

"This winter, Benedict will go hunting with his friend Pierre Louis and they will both visit Harki. At that time, I want you to read this letter that I am giving you, and then carry out all the instructions in it."

Rabbi Nissan was to inform Pierre Louis that he was a Jew, named Pesach Tzvi, and that he must return to his people.

Even if Pierre Louis didn't want to listen, Reb Nissan must go and repeat exactly what the Besht had said. The Besht assured him that he would be successful.

When Rabbi Nissan returned to Harki the town was buzzing with anticipation of the aristocracy's hunting season who habitually visited the area.

Benedict and Pierre Louis were staying, as they always did, at the home of the local priest. But this time, as Benedict entered the house, he tripped over the threshold and fell. The pistol he was carrying in his pocket discharged, and a bullet lodged in his stomach.

Pandemonium reigned as a doctor tried in vain to staunch the flow of blood. Riders were dispatched to neighboring towns to bring other doctors, but the patient's condition deteriorated steadily.

As news of the accident spread throughout the town, the Jews were distressed to hear that Benedict, who had always been friendly toward them, was in grave danger.

Rabbi Nissan now opened the letter of the Besht, and to his astonishment, it contained a prescription for treating Benedict's wound.

In addition, the letter said that if anyone inquired how Rabbi Nissan came to know this cure, he should say that he learned it from Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov.

On the second day after the accident Rabbi Nissan arrived at the house, saying he had a cure for Benedict.

The desperate doctor allowed the Jew to be admitted.

The Rabbi spread an ointment on the wound and also put some medicine down the wounded man's throat. To the amazement and relief of all, the cure took

effect within an hour.

Only then did Rabbi Nissan approach Pierre Louis and ask to speak to him in private.

He related all the words of the Baal Shem Tov, telling him that he was a Jew, and must return to his people, but Pierre Louis was too shocked to respond.

It was in the month of Nisan that Pierre Louis arrived in Harki and came to Rabbi Nissan.

He had no rest since the day they had spoken, and now he finally resolved to return to his people.

Over the next year he studied and made great progress.

Benedict was quite sympathetic to his friend's return to Judaism, and as a gift he gave him an estate outside Harki.

As an additional display of good will, Benedict presented to the local Jews the land on which their houses were built.

In this manner the existence of the Baal Shem Tov and his circle of mystics became known in Harki.



## **A man of every tribe who is the head of his family division. (Num. 1:4)**

It is easier for a person to be considered great by strangers than by his own family who know his faults well. If a person is appreciated by his "family division" - those who know him well - it is a sign that he is worthy of being at the head of his tribe.

*(Otzreinu Hayashan)*

## **They declared their pedigrees according to their families, by the house of their fathers. (1:18)**

Rashi explains: "They brought books of their genealogies and witnesses to the claims of their births." A story is told about the Rabbi of Ostrovitz, who was the son of simple parents - his father was a baker. Once he was sitting at an assembly of rabbis who were discussing Torah. Each rabbi quoted something he had learned from his father or grandfather. Said the rabbi of Ostrovitz: "My father used to say, a fresh pastry is better than a stale one."

## **As they camped, so shall they set forward. (2:17)**

The Jews were told to behave in the same manner while they were traveling as they behave in their own dwellings when they set camp. This was emphasized before starting out on their journey because some people tend to become lax in their Jewish observance when traveling.

*(Mikra Meforash)*



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NY Metro Area

**28 Iyar // May 15**

Torah Portion Bamidbar

Blessing of the new month of Sivan

Ethics: Ch 6

Shabbat ends 8:54 PM

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**of Scott Freedman**  
By his LIC Family