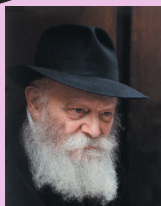


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The name of a Torah portion is indicative of its contents and theme. The name of the first of this week's two readings, Tazria (literally "when [she] shall conceive") is therefore surprising at first glance, as the entire portion deals with the affliction of leprosy rather than conception and birth. In fact, the Biblical plague of leprosy was the most severe form of spiritual uncleanness, leading our Sages to declare, "The leper is considered as if dead."

Tazria, however, is an allusion to the positive, inner purpose of all the afflictions and punishments that are prescribed in the Torah, as will be explained:

G-d is the epitome of goodness and loving-kindness. He doesn't punish anyone for the sake of being punitive. His sole intention is to refine and purify the person, to remove the "shell" that was created by his sins, and to elevate him to a higher level. All of the Torah's punishments, even the most stringent, are for the ultimate good of the recipient.

This is also the inner intention of the Biblical plague of leprosy (tzara'at), as distinguished from the modern day illness known as Hansen's Disease. As Maimonides explains, the physical manifestations of tzara'at were miraculous in nature, and were visited on an individual for the sin of lashon hara (gossip). "The first symptoms would appear on a person's house; if he repented, the house would be purified. If he persisted in his wickedness until the house was destroyed, the leather garments in his house would begin to change... If he persisted in his wickedness until they had to be burned, the clothing he wore would be afflicted." It was only if a person did not return to G-d after all these warnings that any symptoms of tzara'at would appear on his body.

Once this happened, the afflicted person had to temporarily leave the rest of society and dwell in isolation. The purpose of this period of separation and reflection was to transform the former sinner into a new entity, one that was purified and refined.

The name of the Torah portion, Tazria, thus reveals the true objective of all the Biblical plagues: the "birth" of a new being, a purer and holier Jew.

This is also the inner meaning of the Jewish people's exile. During the exile, we "sow" mitzvot and good deeds that they may "grow" and flourish when Moshiach comes. The reward we will receive in the Messianic era will not be dissociated from our present service; on the contrary, it will be the natural outgrowth of all the "seeds" we are planting now.

May we merit to see this immediately.

Adapted from Volume 22 of *Likutei Sichot*

Two Birds: The Power of Words and the Path to Healing

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Jacobson

This week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzorah (Leviticus 12–15), explores the laws of tzaraas, often translated as leprosy. This condition appeared as white patches on a person's skin, clothing, or even home, signaling a state of spiritual impurity. The afflicted individual would separate from society and undergo a period of introspection and moral healing. Once the symptoms disappeared, a unique purification ritual restored them to their previous state.

Central to this process were two birds. One was slaughtered, its blood mixed with spring water in an earthen vessel. The second bird, along with cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop, was dipped into this mixture and sprinkled upon the individual seven times before being released into the open field. This unusual ritual raises an important question: what do birds have to do with healing?

The sages explain that tzaraas was often a consequence of negative or harmful speech. Birds, known for their constant chirping, symbolize chatter. More specifically, many birds mimic human speech, yet only in fragments. This imitation reflects a deeper truth about destructive language. When people engage in gossip or disparaging talk, their words may seem clever or entertaining, but they lack authenticity. Like mimicking birds, such speech is fragmented and disconnected from genuine human expression.

True human speech is creative and life-giving. The Torah describes humanity as a "speaking spirit," emphasizing that words are central to our identity. Just as God created

the world through speech, humans possess the power to build, inspire, and uplift through their words. However, when speech stems from insecurity, fear, or a desire to distract from inner emptiness, it becomes distorted. Talking about others often reflects an avoidance of confronting one's own inner life.

The Talmud teaches that harmful speech harms three people: the speaker, the listener, and the subject. Words, once spoken, cannot be taken back. They have the power to damage relationships, reputations, and even the speaker's own sense of integrity.

The two birds in the purification ritual represent both destruction and transformation. The slaughtered bird symbolizes the damage caused by negative speech—the draining of life and vitality. The second bird, released into the field, represents the opportunity for renewal. Healing does not come merely from silence, but from transforming how we speak. We are called not only to avoid harmful words, but to actively use speech for good—building connections, expressing truth, and spreading kindness.

A story illustrates this lesson: A man seeking to improve his speech was told by a rabbi to scatter feathers from a pillow in the wind. When asked to gather them back, he found it impossible. The rabbi explained that words are like those feathers—once released, they cannot be retrieved.

The message is clear. Speech is a powerful force. By choosing our words carefully, we can move from fragmentation to wholeness, from harm to healing, and from empty chatter to meaningful, life-affirming communication.

SLICE OF LIFE

How Chabad's Public Passover Seders Became a Global Phenomenon

By Motti Wilhelm / Chabad.org



The public seder in Koh Samui, Thailand, is among the largest in the world, attracting thousands of attendees each year.

Every March, two familiar reminders arrive almost like clockwork: your accountant reminds you that tax season is here, and your local Chabad center lets you know that a seat is waiting for you at their communal Passover seder.

Public seders organized by the Chabad-Lubavitch movement have become a global fixture. From major cities in the United States to remote locations across Asia, thousands of Chabad emissaries—supported each year by hundreds of visiting yeshivah students—set up Passover seders wherever Jews may find themselves.

The seder in Nepal, often described as “the world’s largest,” draws around 2,000 participants and requires vast quantities of matzah and wine. In Moscow, more than 150 seders are held annually. Alongside these large-scale events are countless smaller seders that rarely make headlines, yet leave a lasting impression on individuals who might otherwise have missed the experience entirely.

These public seders are a natural extension of the mitzvah campaigns initiated by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson. Beginning in the 1950s, the Rebbe encouraged Jews everywhere to help others reconnect with Jewish tradition through Torah and mitzvot. Over time, he emphasized specific initiatives such as tefillin, Shabbat candle lighting, and especially the distribution of hand-baked shmurah matzah, which became central to the Matzah Campaign launched in 1954.

NOT THE DEFAULT

The earliest Chabad emissaries in the United States arrived in the 1940s, following the arrival of the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn. When the Lubavitcher Rebbe assumed leadership in 1950, he expanded this network across America and beyond.

In the early years one significant holiday challenge was the scarcity of traditional round shmurah matzah in the United States. In response, the Rebbe launched the Matzah Campaign in 1954, ensuring broader access to hand-baked matzah for the holiday.

In 1969, Rabbi Shlomo Cunin founded the first Chabad House at UCLA, marking a shift toward university campuses. This model reflected broader cultural changes of the era, as many young Jews drifted away from formal religious life.

At these campuses, Chabad centers began organizing Passover seders for students who would otherwise have no participation in the holiday. What began as a campus initiative soon expanded widely.

The Rebbe supported public seders. One early group that highlighted this need was Soviet Jewish immigrants arriving in the 1970s. After decades of religious suppression, many had never experienced a seder. Public seders, particularly those organized by F.R.E.E. in Crown Heights and other cities, offered them their first meaningful exposure to Passover traditions. The Rebbe himself occasionally attended these gatherings.

As awareness grew, it became clear that the need extended beyond Soviet immigrants. By the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Chabad centers across the United States began hosting open seders for the broader public.

An advertisement from 1982 in LA Weekly captures the spirit of those early efforts, inviting “any Jew that moves” to a festive Passover meal featuring traditional foods and unlimited hospitality. These events combined outreach with celebration, offering both education and a welcoming atmosphere.

ALL FOUR SONS

By 1986, the Rebbe sought to expand the model further, urging that public seders be organized not only in the United States but also in Israel and elsewhere. He stressed that even those distant from Jewish life should be invited:

“All ‘four sons’ should be seated at the seder table... even those who throughout the year remain distant from Jewish life should also take part.”

The Rebbe advocated for local rabbis to open their own personal seders to the public, ensuring accessibility and dignity for participants. He also addressed financial concerns, pledging his own support and encouraging philanthropists to contribute.

Following this initiative, public seders expanded rapidly. Soviet Jewish emigration in the late 1980s brought thousands of Jews through transit hubs in Italy, where Chabad organized massive seders. Reports from the time describe nearly 10,000 participants in temporary camps, many experiencing Passover for the first time.

At the same time, another dramatic development unfolded in Nepal. Israeli backpackers traveling through Asia prompted the establishment of a seder in Kathmandu, initially intended for a few dozen participants. When hundreds arrived instead, Chabad students adapted quickly, turning it into a large-scale operation. What began as a small initiative eventually grew into the world’s largest seder.

Participants often described the experience as transformative, rediscovering their Jewish identity in unexpected settings.

Throughout this period, the Rebbe remained actively involved, encouraging accessibility, rejecting participation fees, and urging early publicity so travelers could plan ahead. He also emphasized that seders should be held on both nights of Passover whenever possible.

A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Today, Chabad public seders are held in more than 100 countries, from major cities to remote destinations. The “Roving Rabbis” program sends students to places without permanent Chabad infrastructure, ensuring that even isolated Jewish travelers can participate.

Modern reports describe seders in locations as diverse as Caribbean resorts, Southeast Asian trekking routes, and high-altitude towns in the Himalayas. In some cases, supplies are transported by helicopter, motorcycle, or even horseback to reach participants.

Each year, the network continues to expand. Collectively, these gatherings reach hundreds of thousands of participants.

At their core, these seders are not just communal meals but expressions of connection—linking Jews across geography, background, and levels of observance. They reflect a broader vision that wherever a Jew may be, there is a place for them at the Passover table.

Two New Centers Open in Moscow on the Rebbe's Birthday



In a remarkable display of growth and expansion, two Chabad centers in Moscow inaugurated their new locations on the very same day. The events took place in central and southern Moscow, serving local Jewish residents and the many business professionals.

The first is located in a major business complex, near two key metro stations, making it easily accessible to any Jew seeking connection. The dedication ceremony combined a Siyum on the writing of a beautiful new Sefer Torah.

The second center which is in the “ZIL” district, along the Mark Chagall Promenade in southern Moscow was also visited by the Chief Rabbi of Russia, Rabbi Berel Lazar, who affixed a mezuzah at the new Chabad House for the “Chagall” community.

ETHICS CHAPTER TWO

Those who work for the community should do so for the sake of Heaven; for then merit of their ancestors shall aid them, and their righteousness shall endure forever. And you, [says G-d,] I shall credit you with great reward as if you have achieved it.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Continued from the previous issue
From a freely translated letter dated 13 Sivan 5716 [1956]

...Imagine that you are in a massive building with thousands of rooms; the furniture in each is perfectly arranged. However, in one tiny room with strange furnishings, the sense of order seen in the rest is not immediately apparent. Since the entire building can be seen as part of an orderly system, undoubtedly this room and its unique furnishings are also part of the plan. Although an observer may not understand it at first, with thought he will realize it is part of the larger system.

I feel it unnecessary to spell out the parable. I will add one detail: If each of us, including yourself, reflects on the events of our lives and looks objectively, we must agree there were countless times we were led in a certain direction. Nevertheless, the Holy One desires that a person act of his own free will, allowing each person to choose his path. It is therefore no wonder that, being human, there are times when one falls off the path and instead of a straight path there are zigzags.

If we think and do not fool ourselves, we can ensure the zigzags are few and infrequent. Then we reach the goal the Holy One has set for each person—that he be truly happy with his family, even in worldly matters. This can be achieved by conducting ourselves according to Torah, known as the Torah of life. We must be wary of the claim of the Evil Inclination, which points to a person considered from who follows Torah yet has deficiencies. It argues that since such a person has faults, the Torah must be lacking, G-d forbid.

This is false, as it shows only part of the person, not the whole. This is illustrated by a story.

If someone meets a person leaving a specialist's office using crutches, he might think the doctor is not good. After all, the patient paid him, follows his instructions, and still needs crutches. But if it were explained that before treatment the patient was completely paralyzed, and the doctor strengthened him so he can now walk, then as time goes on he improves, even if he still needs crutches. Eventually, if he follows the doctor's advice, he may be fully healed.

The same applies to people. From birth, individuals have different qualities—some more good, some more bad. Through education and self-improvement, if done correctly, bad traits weaken over time. Since growth lasts a lifetime, it is no surprise that we may meet someone in the midst of this process and still see negative qualities. This does not mean he is not following proper guidance, but that he has already improved compared to before.

I wish to conclude by stating my intent. This is not mere philosophy, but to implant in you the idea that by applying your intellect, you will strengthen your trust in Hashem and view others positively—especially the inhabitants off - seeing their virtues, which they worked hard to develop, and viewing any faults as temporary "crutches."

Above all, you must do your part to bring light to your surroundings—not only your family, but a wider circle. This is achieved through ahavas Yisrael. This will benefit all and bring goodness to you and your family.

I hope you will read this letter with proper attention. If you have questions or do not understand something, I will be happy to respond, even if delayed due to obligations.

These delays may themselves serve as instruction: giving you time to, of your own free will, improve your view of others and your conduct. May the Almighty grant you success.

With blessing,

(Zefania 3:20): At that time, I will bring you back, and at that time I will gather you; for I will make you renowned and glorified among all the people of the earth, when I bring back your captivity before your eyes, said the L-rd. "

(From the morning prayers)

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

The Land of Israel is not like other lands.

Other countries' borders are determined by wars, treaties and political considerations. The Land of Israel's borders are determined by G-d. There are many mitzvot that apply only in Israel. Go anywhere else in the world, and you can't do them.

The Land of Israel is called the Holy Land for a reason: its very soil is hallowed, permeated with G-dliness and holiness. It is a land "upon which the eyes of G-d rest, from the beginning of the year until the end of the year." The very air itself "makes one wise," according to our Sages.

After the terrible destruction of the Holocaust, G-d gave the Jewish people a wonderful gift - the opportunity to return to their ancestral home and live according to their own dictates. For the first time in almost 2,000 years, millions of Jews were able to take refuge in the Holy Land. But not only would the Land of Israel provide physical refuge, it was a golden opportunity for real spiritual freedom. For even though the Jewish people would remain in galut (the exile will end only with Moshiach's coming, may it happen immediately), Jews would be able to practice Torah and mitzvot proudly and openly. In allowing Jews political autonomy, G-d gave them a chance for true independence, which can only be attained through the Torah.

Shleimut ha'aretz, literally "the integrity of the land," means that the whole and complete Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people. Given by G-d to every single Jew, it simply isn't in our power to reject this gift. Aside from the fact that it is against Torah law to cede portions of Israel to non-Jews (thereby putting Jewish lives in danger), the land always retains its special, holy nature.

May G-d continue to guide His people along the right path, and help us to live up to His expectations.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA

לְזִכְרוֹן חַיָּה י מוֹשְׁקָא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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

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MOSHIACH MATTERS

"Fulfill for us, L-rd our G-d, the promise which You have made to us through Zefania Your prophet, as it is written,



IT HAPPENED ONCE

By Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Freiman

Last month, I got a phone call from Dovid, who attends the Chabad House in Zichron Yaakov (located in the north of Israel slightly below Haifa). He told me that his neighbors' son, Avrohom Yeshaya ben Lillian, was taken the day before to the hospital after suffering from stomach pains for a few days. The boy had appendicitis and the toxins had spread throughout his body. He was taken immediately to the operating room. After the operation, the doctors said that had they come one hour later, it would have been too late.

The people of the community in Zichron Yaakov were asked to pray for him, since the doctors said that his life was still in danger. I immediately wrote a letter to the Rebbe on the boy's behalf and put it randomly into volume 25 of Igrot Kodesh - the Rebbe's letters. The letter I opened to was to an Israeli soldier in which the Rebbe wrote that since he was at war and in danger, he had to be particular about the mitzva (commandment) of tefilin, because this mitzva protects a person.

When I saw this answer, I understood that it would be appropriate to check the boy's tefilin. I called Dovid and asked him to bring me the tefilin to be checked. A few minutes later, he brought me the tefilin and some of the mezuzot in the house. I gave the tefilin in to be checked by a scribe.

At eleven o'clock that night, the scribe called me and said that the mezuzot were kosher but the tefilin had a problem. There was a question about a letter in the last word, and under these circumstance, the halacha (Jewish legal ruling) is that a child has to be consulted to identify the letter.

I went to the family's home and told them what the scribe had said, and how a child who can recognize all of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet but doesn't yet know how to read had to be shown the tefilin.

A little brother of Avrohom Yeshaya happened to be awake at that late hour and he was the perfect person for the job. I took him along with one of his older brothers to the scribe's house. The scribe showed him some letters in the tefilin parchment and the child knew them all. Then the scribe showed the child the last word "ha'aretz" (the earth), where the question was whether the letter was a "reish-r" or a "vav-u" The child said it was a vav. This meant that the tefilin were not kosher to start with, and the sick boy had never fulfilled the mitzva of tefilin!

Since the problem was in the last word, the scribe was able to fix it, and that very night, the tefilin were made kosher.

When Avrohom Yeshaya's mother said that it was night time, when one doesn't put on tefilin anyway, I told her the following story. Once, people came to the Rebbe for a blessing for a man who was sick. The Rebbe said his tefilin should be checked. The sick person was abroad and he had left his tefilin in Israel but the Rebbe said that the very

fact that he possessed kosher tefilin would protect him (though naturally, he was supposed to put them on, too). I said the same was true here, that since her son's tefilin were fixed, even though it was night, it would certainly help him, as the Rebbe had written.

Indeed, the boy's condition began to improve and by Thursday, he was able to put his kosher tefilin on by himself for the very first time. The doctors said his recovery was miraculous, and the family is planning to celebrate his recovery with a seudat hodaa - a meal thanking G-d.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion



If a woman has conceived (Lev. 12:2)

These words, dealing with the subject of having children, immediately follow a lengthy enumeration of the laws of kashrut (in the previous Torah portion, Shemini). From this we learn that if the parents eat food that the Torah prohibits, they cause their offspring to suffer from "timtum halev," a spiritual insensitivity to holiness. (Igeret HaRamban - Maimonides)

And he shall shave off all his hair, his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows (Lev. 14:9)

A person was smitten with the plague of leprosy for one of three reasons: arrogance, engaging in gossip, or having been envious of others. The purification process, therefore, consisted of shaving off the hair of the head (the seat of pride), the area of the beard (for having failed to prevent the mouth from speaking slanderously), and the eyebrows, which failed to stop the eyes from narrowing in jealousy. (Kli Yakar)

If a man shall have in the skin of his flesh...the plague of leprosy (Lev. 13:2)

Oddly enough, although most people are careful to keep the laws of and inspect their food to make sure it is free of the tiniest worm, when they speak lashon hara (gossip) they have no compunctions about chewing up their fellow man and swallowing him alive... (Rabbi Yisrael of Salant)

Humility: Our Sages tell us that "The observance of mitzvot requires the proper intention." In truth, when a person performs a mitzva for the sake of heaven, its value is endless and immeasurable. Yet there is one commandment that is impossible to observe intentionally, and that is being humble. Consciously intending to be humble is nothing but pride... (The Rebbe of Kotzk)



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