

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

In the Torah portion of Yitro, we read the Ten Commandments, which begins, "And G-d spoke (Vayedaber) all these words, to say (laimor)." What does "to say" add here? The Maggid of Mezritch explains that it teaches us to put the Ten Commandments ("Dibrot," from the same root as "vayedaber") into the "Ten Sayings" through which G-d created the world.

In other words, the Torah and the world are not separate. One should not think, "When I do Jewish things—lighting Shabbat candles, putting on tefilin, affixing a mezuzah—I will follow the Torah, but in worldly matters like eating or business, I will act as the world dictates." G-d wants Torah to guide all aspects of life; even our speech should reflect it.

This is evident in the Ten Commandments themselves. Of all 613 commandments, G-d chose to give these ten personally to every Jew. One might expect only the most spiritually sublime ideas, and indeed, the first two—"I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall not have any god before Me"—are profound. Yet G-d also commands, "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," which are basic ethical rules understood even without divine instruction.

Juxtaposing the oneness of G-d with prohibitions against murder and theft shows that G-d wants us to fuse the holy and the physical. We shouldn't keep these commandments just because they make sense or align with our nature; we keep them because they express G-d's will. This principle applies to all Torah laws—fulfilling them draws holiness into the mundane.

Even those who need commandments to tell them that murder and theft are wrong must contemplate G-d's greatness, elevating the mundane toward holiness. The fusion of above and below, holy and mundane, occurs through the commandments, because they originate in G-d's essence, which transcends creation yet unites opposites.

Our mission is to make the physical world a dwelling place for G-d. By infusing daily life with holiness through the commandments, we prepare the world for His presence.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the Rebbe's teachings, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, serve as emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, California.

On the Profound Meaning of a Name

What is contained within a name? What dignity, what essence, does it carry, especially the name given to a child by loving parents?

Consider the charming nicknames of family and friends—playful, affectionate, or descriptive. Yet the formal name, the one a person carries through life, quietly shapes character and destiny.

In our sacred tradition, a child's name—given to a boy at his brit milah or a girl during the Torah reading—is more than a label. It embodies the soul itself, the vital breath of life. To call someone by their name awakens their innermost spirit. The full name touches the soul entirely, while descriptive epithets stir specific virtues: intellect, compassion, courage, and love.

The Sages teach that a name reflects the nature of the individual. It is a window into the soul, revealing the measure of the person.

This is especially true of a soul of unparalleled sanctity—Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, whose yartzeit we observe this week, the 22nd of Shevat, February 9. Her name, radiant in meaning, illuminates her life and inspires the way we might aspire to live.

On her first yartzeit, the Rebbe explained the deeper significance of her name and her

passing:

"Chaya" means "life." The Rebbetzin's days were filled with mitzvot, charitable deeds, and acts of kindness. Her influence reached every corner of existence, even the humble and overlooked, reflected in her second name, "Mushka," foreign yet imbued with holiness. In this way, she elevated the lowliest aspects of the world.

The numerical value of her full name, 470, corresponds to the Hebrew word for "time." Fleeting moments gain eternity when devoted to Torah study, sincere prayer, and acts of goodness.

The day of her passing, the 22nd of Shevat, is itself symbolic. The number 22 recalls the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, through which God created the world. Within them lies the potential for all goodness, a sacred order of the universe.

From the Rebbetzin's name and yartzeit, we learn a profound lesson: our days should be filled with acts of kindness, charity, and goodness—not shallow gestures, but deeds that touch even the hidden and lowly corners of the world.

When each person embraces this path, the Divine presence fills our world, bringing us closer to the revelation of Moshiach and the long-awaited Redemption.

SLICE OF LIFE

Remembering the Life of Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia Schneerson



Daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, and wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Greatness comes in many forms. Often we imagine the character of a giant as someone who influences an entire world, forgetting the silent majesty of those who make such greatness possible.

Much has been said of the global achievements of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, but little is known to the public about the life and achievements of his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia (Mushka).

On the 22nd day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, corresponding this year to Thursday, February 20, 2025, Lubavitch women around the globe commemorate the anniversary of her passing in the year 1988.

The second daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, Chaya Moussia Schneersohn descended from the

bloodline of Lubavitcher Rebbes. Born in the late winter of 1901 in Babinovitch, a small Russian town located near Lubavitch, she inherited the name of her paternal great-great-grandmother, wife of the third Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Growing up in her father's home, the young girl was witness to her father's fearlessness against the stubborn religious intolerance of communist Russia. At a young age, she became involved in her father's communal affairs which sometimes included dangerous missions for the underground network of Jewish educational institutions. In 1924, when she was only 23, her father entrusted her with the power of attorney, to oversee personal and institutional financial and legal matters on his behalf.

Following her father's imprisonment in Leningrad, on charges of the Soviet crime of religious activism, Chaya Moussia followed him to exile in Kastrama where she tended to the needs of her ailing father who was battered from the torture he endured in prison.

In the autumn of 1927, religious persecution forced her father and family to flee Russia for Riga, Latvia. During the following winter of 1928, in Warsaw, Poland, she wed Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, who, following her father's passing in 1950, succeeded him to become the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The young couple lived in Berlin until the rise of the Nazi regime in 1933, which forced them to flee to Paris. When German forces invaded France in 1940, they again fled to Nice in the south of the country. During this time, the Rebbetzin together with her husband aided many Jews by providing financial and other

assistance, allowing them to escape almost certain death at the hands of the Nazis.

In 1941 they boarded the Serpa Pinto on which they sailed from Marseilles via Portugal to the United States of America.

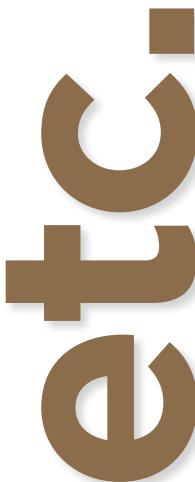
After the passing of her father, she was instrumental in convincing her husband to accept the mantle of leadership of the Lubavitch movement.

In a deeply Chasidic way, she personified dignified modesty. For the wife of a world-renowned figure, she kept a very low profile and seldom appeared in public.

But the visitors she received to her home on President Street, in Brooklyn, invariably took note of her wit and wisdom that peppered her conversations, and her maternal concern for the wellbeing of others.

Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia passed away at the age of 86, on February 10, 1988. Though she passed away childless, thousands of young girls have since been named for her. These young girls, and women of Chabad at large, look to her exemplary fortitude, her commitment to Jewish life and her overall comportment as worthy of emulation.

On the day of the Rebbetzin's passing, the Rebbe established the Keren Hachomesh Charitable Foundation (Kerenhachomesh.org) in memory of his beloved wife, a special fund to support women's social and educational matters in fields such as Torah study, the construction of mikvahs, and the needs of brides. Today, Keren Hachomesh continues to live up to its purpose, and has helped numerous individuals and families over the past 38 years.



Chabad LA Campus for Jewish Life to Be Among Largest in the World

Chabad of California announced the acquisition of a 16-story complex in Los Angeles that will become one of the world's largest Jewish centers. The \$100 million campus was gifted by real estate professional Alon Abady and his wife, Monique, in honor of his mother, Liora Abady.

The 300,000-square-foot, 1,200-car facility at 9911 W. Pico Blvd. sits in the heart of Jewish Los Angeles, near Century City and Beverly Hills, across from Hillcrest Country Club and adjacent to Fox Studios and the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

The campus will house a synagogue, youth and senior programming, mental-health and social services, support for Jewish college students, and a banquet hall for communal events.

A Call To Action

Get Comfortable With Your Jewish Name:

One of the three customs upheld by the Jewish people during their exile in Egypt was using their Jewish names. Know what your Jewish name is (and your mother's and father's if possible). Start getting comfortable with it by using it once in a while, even if just when talking with yourself! If you don't have a Jewish name choose one yourself.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

A WOMAN'S IMPRINT

In commemoration of the yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (on the 22nd of Shevat) we present translated excerpts of two letters the Rebbe wrote to the annual Lubavitch Women's Convention.

Lag B'Omer, 5727 (1967)

Attention has been called on several previous occasions to the special significance of this year, a year of Hakhel -- the special mitzva in the post-Shemita year to gather all Jews, men, women and children, for the purpose of fostering fear of Heaven and the observance of mitzvot in daily life.

The mitzva of Hakhel was connected with a certain time and place (the Holy Temple), yet, by virtue of the eternity of the Torah, this mitzva, too, is, in its spiritual concept and content, valid at all times and in all places, and today perhaps more than ever before.

The spiritual concept and content of the mitzva of Hakhel is: to reinforce the eternal bond between the eternal Torah and the eternal core within every Jew and all Jews, to wit, the Divine soul, an "actual part of G-d above," which animates all Jews, men, women and children.

...The role of the Jewish woman and Jewish daughter in strengthening the attachment between Jews and Torah is particularly underscored in the mitzva of Hakhel, by the fact that not merely were women required to participate in this mitzva, but they were also required to bring the very small children as well.

Indeed, the raising, care and education of Jewish children, from birth until school age, falls largely upon the woman. She, the Jewish mother, leaves her imprint upon the child and molds his early inner development...



In the days of Sefira, 5728 (1968)

...The Torah tells us that when the Jewish people finally reached Mount Sinai, they

attained a state of complete unity, as indicated in the words, "and Israel encamped there" (in the singular person), all of them as one, united and unified by the singular thought of receiving the Torah and mitzvot.

The significance of that moment is pointed out by our Sages of blessed memory, declaring that the unification of the Jewish people was the condition for receiving the Torah.

It has often been emphasized that there are crucial moments in the life of our people, especially in the area of Torah and Judaism, where the Jewish woman plays a most important role. One of these areas is the unity of the family.

Here the woman holds the main keys of harmony between the parents and the children, the parents vis-a-vis each other, and the children in relation to one another.

In this area the wife and mother clearly has a decisive role, and in most cases, even a more decisive role than the husband and father. This is one of the reasons why the Jewish woman bears the title of akeret habayit (foundation of the home).

It is likewise clear that Jewish unity in a broader sense -- unity between one family and another, and unity on a national level -- is dependent upon harmony within the family unit. Where harmony is lacking within the family, G-d forbid, surely no harmony can prevail between such a family and another.

However, even where there is complete harmony within family groups, there still remains the problem of achieving unity on the national level. Let us therefore remember that the basis for true Jewish unity is the Torah and mitzvot.

If throughout the ages it has been no easy task to achieve unity, the problem has become much more complicated in this age of "freedom" in the "free" countries of the world, where people are no longer restricted in their choice of domicile, occupation, educational facilities, free expression of opinions, ideas, etc.

All these diversities and dispersions -- geographic, social, cultural, etc. -- are "by-products" of the contemporary "free" society in which we live. The newly-created conditions have created new problems and difficulties, which, however, must be viewed as challenges. With the proper approach and a determined will, they can be resolved...

"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

This week we commemorate the yahrzeit of our beloved Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of the Rebbe. It is with tremendous gratitude that I look back on the times my family had the privilege of meeting with the Rebbetzin. I would like to share with you the thoughts of one of our daughters, written soon after the Rebbetzin's passing:

My family and I were privileged to meet the Rebbetzin on four separate occasions. We cherish each moment spent with her as a priceless treasure. I remember walking into her home and thinking it resembled a palace. And there, at the head of the table, stood the queen.

We stood at attention, not daring to breathe. She must have sensed our discomfort, for she smiled a warm, beautiful smile, and with her gentle sense of humor invited us to sit down. It was as though she was being honored to have us!

In her own special way, the Rebbetzin gave me more than anyone else in the world. The moments spent with her are irreplaceable. She showed a sincere interest in each of us, asking us what grade we were in and what we were learning in school.

She spoke softly and personally, making each of us feel as though no one else in the room existed except the Rebbetzin and the person to whom she was speaking.

I remember when my father called the Rebbetzin to tell her of the passing of his father, my grandfather (of blessed memory). After expressing her deepest sympathy, she suddenly asked, "And how is your lovely daughter?" To the Rebbetzin, we were all lovely, all special, all unique. I was just one of her many lovely daughters.

Certainly the Rebbetzin continues, in an even stronger way now, to support all of the Rebbe's work, especially his life goal, to bring G-dliness into this world in a real, tangible way, through the revelation of Mashiach. We pray that very soon we will be reunited with the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin, and Mashiach will lead us to the long-awaited Redemption.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חייה י מושקה

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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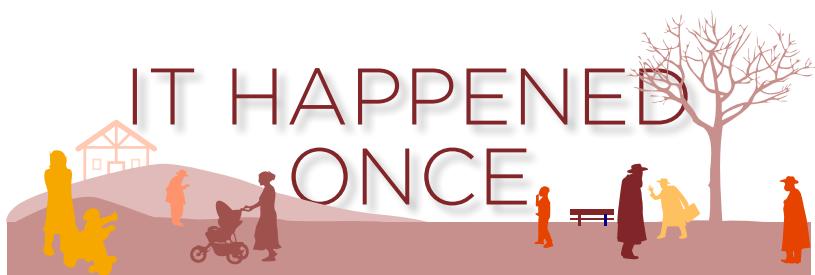
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MOSHIACH MATTERS

The time of the future (i.e. the Messianic Era) will see the fulfillment

of the verse in Proverbs, "A woman of valor is the crown of -- and hence higher than -- her husband."

(The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)



Devora Leah was the aunt of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, known as the Alter Rebbe. Her mother, Rachel, was a very unusual woman for her time. Educated secretly by her unconventional father, Rachel eventually mastered not only the Bible, but the Talmud and the writings of Maimonides, and was especially expert in the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law.

Her erudition in Jewish legal matters is illustrated by an incident in which her husband and father were walking on Shabbat. Suddenly, someone came running to tell them that the city's "eiruv" (the marker which delineates the area where carrying is permitted on the Shabbat) had broken.

The two rabbis stood still, unable to remember the law under such circumstances. Rachel's father asked her what they should do. At first she didn't want to reply, since it was frowned upon in those days for a woman to be learned and she didn't want to alienate her new husband. But when her father pressed her, she answered and everyone abided by her instructions.

Upon returning home they consulted the Shulchan Aruch and verified that Rachel's pronouncement had been correct. When Rachel had her own daughter, it was only natural that she educate her in the same manner in which she had learned from her father.

Rachel began teaching Devora Leah regularly and systematically. In the course of time, Devora Leah also became quite a scholar. She grew up with the wonderful qualities so exemplified by her mother: fond of her fellow-beings, always interested in her neighbors, ready to help everyone. Her brother, Baruch, on the other hand, was cold and reserved, preferring his own company to that of others.

Because of Baruch's cold nature, there was no bond between the two siblings. Devora Leah was grieved at her brother's attitude. Her mother saw it and realized it was wrong, but it was beyond her comprehension. She was pained by Baruch's behavior and thought it might do him good to hear something of the family history that she had already told Devora Leah. But he seemed so unapproachable that she kept putting it off. Unfortunately, Rachel waited too long. She became gravely ill and passed away.

At the time of the death of her beloved mother Devora Leah was only sixteen years old. She found some consolation for her loss by immersing herself in the care of her father, brother and household.

Not long after the passing of her mother, Devora Leah's father succumbed to his emotional travail, and after a protracted illness, he too passed away. Devora Leah, now an orphan, went to live with her aunt and uncle. Her brother Baruch disappeared without telling anyone of his destination.

One day, Devora Leah's aunt and uncle announced that they had located a suitable match for her -- a young Torah scholar named Yosef Yitzchak.

The young girl immediately ran to the graves of her parents and poured out her heart, asking for their blessings only if the match was one which would be successful. Afterward, she agreed to meet the young man.

Devora Leah was very frank with him, explaining that she was inclined to follow the ways of her mother's family, who followed the teaching of Kabala and Chasidism. The young man listened attentively, and then, to Devora Leah's happy surprise, he told her that he had long ago made the acquaintance of a certain disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and was thoroughly knowledgeable with his teachings. In fact, he was entirely in sympathy with the Baal Shem Tov's path of Divine service.

Even more astonishing, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak told her that he had himself met the Baal Shem Tov. The tzadik had told him that he would meet his intended in Vitebsk -- an orphan girl from a fine family.

Devora Leah was thrilled with all he told her and saw Divine Providence in their meeting. She had no doubt that this fine young man was her Divinely-chosen mate.

The two went together to Devora Leah's parents' graves and secretly agreed to marry on the following conditions: Yosef Yitzchak was to learn Torah with her two or three

Dedicated to
Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
wife of the Rebbe, daughter of the Previous Rebbe
on her yartzeit, 22 Shevat

Sponsored by Zalman and Devorah Vishedsky

times a week; He was not to object to her continuing with her sewing and allow her to contribute monetarily to their household; They were to share equally in all they did relating to Torah and mitzvot; They were to keep the fact that she was studying Torah a secret; They were to live as followers of the Baal Shem Tov; From all their earnings they would put aside a tenth part for charity; They were to raise their children in the Chasidic way; If they had daughters they would teach them Torah.

After their marriage, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was appointed as head of the Vitebsk Yeshiva, and Devora Leah was very happy with the life she and her husband had undertaken.

Adapted and excerpted from Memoirs of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe



And Yitro heard (Exodus 18:1)

Yitro was not the only person to hear of the miracles G-d had wrought for the Jewish people, as it states, "The nations heard it and trembled." Yitro, however, was the only one who acted upon what he heard and became a Jew. (The Kotzker Rebbe)

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8)

Explains Rashi, the great Torah commentator: Take heed to remember the Sabbath at all times, so that if you happen to find something special, set it aside for Shabbat. Likewise, our Sages state that we are not to give special names to the weekdays, but to refer to them in the context of Shabbat ("first day to Shabbat, second day to Shabbat," etc.). Thus we are constantly conscious of the upcoming Shabbat and prepare for it every day.

The same applies to the Messianic Era, the "day that is entirely Shabbat and rest for life everlasting." Throughout the present "weekday" of exile we must constantly remember and remain conscious of the "Shabbat day" that is coming, preparing ourselves and everything around us for the arrival of Moshiach. (The Rebbe, 11 Sivan, 5744)

For by the very thing in which they sinned was punishment brought upon them (Exodus 18:11)

A person's punishment is determined by his own judgment of others: When a Jew sees someone transgressing and immediately "sentences" that person in his heart, he is thereby fixing his own sentence, as the sin most certainly exists in him as well. (Baal Shem Tov)

Thus you shall say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel (Exodus 19:3)

Our Sages state that the "House of Jacob" refers to the Jewish women, and the "Children of Israel" to the men; when G-d gave the Torah to Israel, He told Moses to first approach the women and the men only thereafter. Because the exodus from Egypt occurred by virtue of the pious women of that generation, when it came to the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the women were given preference. The Messianic Redemption, too, will be by virtue of the righteous women of Israel, as the Midrash states: "All generations are redeemed by virtue of the pious women of their generation." Thus the women will again be first to receive the wondrous teachings to be heard by Moshiach. (The Rebbe, Parshat Yitro, 5749)



5:02 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

19 Shevat / February 6

Torah Portion Yitro

Shabbat ends 6:03 PM