

L'Chaim

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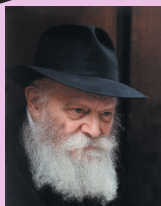
September 4, 2026

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The opening verses of Nitzavim, the first of this week's two Torah portions, begin: "You are standing this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d, your heads, your tribes, your elders... all the men of Israel...from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water."

Concerning these verses, the Midrash states that the Jewish people is likened to a bundle of straw. Each one individually is weak and can be easily broken, but once the straw is gathered into a bundle it is impossible to make it bend. So too is it with the Jewish people. When we are bound together and stand united we are powerful in the face of our enemies. Indeed, Jewish unity is the vessel for containing G-d's blessing, as we say in our prayers, "Bless us, our Father, together as one."

In truth, there is no power in the world that can dominate the Jewish people. But if such is the case, how is it possible for anything bad to befall them? This only occurs if the individual Jew causes a tiny rift in his bond with G-d that allows external factors to enter. It is this self-induced damage in the relationship between G-d and His people which brings about a lack of unity and makes the Jews vulnerable to harm. When peace and unity reign, the Jews are impervious to attack.

How does the tiny breach first emerge? When a Jew's attention to mitzvos is gradually allowed to fall by the wayside

Thus the first step in fortifying our spiritual defenses is to make sure that this initial fissure is never allowed to form. How? Through Jewish unity.

Human nature is such that a person is often unaware of his own shortcomings. "All sins are concealed by love." Indeed, our self-love prevents us from being objective. We cannot perceive even great flaws, how much more so the smaller ones. However, when Jews come together, each one can see the shortcomings of his neighbor. A good friend's gentle admonition can cause us to correct our ways, thereby strengthening our fortifications against the Evil Inclination.

This is one of the reasons the Mittlerer Rebbe (Rabbi Dov Ber, the second Chabad Rebbe) encouraged his followers to acquire a friend for this specific purpose: to encourage and inspire each other along the path of Torah and mitzvot. He explained that when two Jews unite to improve themselves and their relationship with G-d, their two G-dly souls are fighting only one Evil Inclination, and it is far easier to emerge victorious.

If this was true generations ago, how much more so does it apply in our own times, when the darkness of exile has intensified.

By maintaining our Jewish unity we will remain invincible, as it states, "You are standing this day, all of you."

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, Volume 2

Seashore Musings

By Chaya Rochel Zimmerman

The conclusion of summer and the approach of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur intensified my regret for having wasted warm summer days working indoors. So, I was glad to venture off to the Illinois Beach State Park an hour north of Chicago, with my husband in tow, for one last chance at the sun's waning warmth.

As I exited the car, I immediately locked eyes upon Lake Michigan and was under its spell. I waded into the cool, crystal-clear waters surrounded by colorful rocks in varying shades of pink, orange, brown, white, and black on the sandy lake floor. I gazed at the palette of soothing aquamarines and deep blues that stretched out to the horizon.

My heart rate slowed. The refreshing waters slapped gently against my knees and thighs, releasing the tensions my body harbored. The waves swirled around me, to and fro, drawing out the judgmental thoughts I had held onto from a difficult conversation earlier in the week. The undercurrent pulled my sentiments out to sea. The salty smell, the gentle breeze, and the expansiveness of Hashem's deep, vast creation, transported me to a place of tranquility, a comfortable place, a place from which I felt I could make amends for the New Year.

Mah rabu maasecha Hashem. How awesome are your works G-d!

The greenish-blue waves rolled in softly, in choreographed sequence. Suddenly they swelled up, curled into menacing, foamy, crashing,

breakers and lunged towards the shore. I moved backwards, but amazingly, they unfurled and flattened out within inches of approaching the land, as if submitting themselves to the will of the sand.

In the beginning of Creation, mountains and huge land masses were completely submerged under water, precluding the survival of man. Hashem gathered the waters into seas, rivers, lakes, and oceans, allowing dry land to appear, and set the sand as the boundary they should not cross.

In Tehillim 136:6 we read. "Give praise to Him who spreads the earth out over the waters making dry land, for his kindness endures forever." Without this kindness, there would be no civilization.

In the short time span at the seashore, my thoughts had moved from regret, to release, to awe, to gratitude for G-d's kindness; a mini version of the preparation necessary for the approaching high Holy Days.

A seagull squawked overhead as we stepped back through the sand carrying our heavy gear. My steps lighter from the inspiration I'd found in Hashem's glorious works; an experience available to everyone.

What remained for me to do before Yom Tov was to make a conscious effort to prevent my wrongdoings from continuing into the New Year. It would be my contribution to mankind and would bring civilization closer to becoming what it was meant to be: A peaceful world basking in the kindness of Hashem.

SLICE OF LIFE

Stranded in Lion Country With a Flat Tire and No Phone

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler



Rabbi Uriel Vigler

I spent two nights in Pilanesberg Game Reserve this week, with my brother, my nephew, and all our kids. We traveled in three separate cars, but did everything together.

Monday was absolutely spectacular. Everything we dreamed of. We saw elephants, lions, buffalo, zebras, giraffes, hippos, and more.

The next day it rained and the rocky dirt roads started to turn to mud. Jokingly, I turned to my family and asked: "You know, these roads are really rough. What would happen if we got a flat tire out here?"

Twenty minutes later, we found out.

My nephew spotted it first from his car. "You have a flat tire." My brother double-checked. He was right.

We were in the middle of the African bush. We had no phone service, no internet, no WhatsApp, and no Google Maps. And because of the rain, we hadn't passed another car in ages.

The first rule they drill into you when you enter the reserve is: stay in your vehicle no matter what! You're surrounded by wild animals, predators who move quickly and quietly.

You're in their home, on their turf, where they live and hunt, and as soon as you're out of the vehicle, you're easy prey.

But now, we had no choice. We had to get out of the car.

The kids started getting nervous. "What if lions come?" I tried to reassure them but I was worried too. I just had the good sense not to say it out loud this time, having already learned my lesson about making predictions!

I got out and started hunting for the spare. I knew there had to be a jack and a tire somewhere. But I searched the entire car and came up empty-handed.

My brother and nephew set off in their cars to look for help. We moved my four younger children into their vehicles, two in each, and then we did the only thing left to do: wait and pray.

About ten minutes later, a Jeep appeared on the horizon. Inside was an Afrikaans couple who introduced themselves as Mecayla and Divan and pulled over to see if we needed help.

We explained what had happened, and without hesitation, Divan climbed underneath the vehicle, into the mud and pouring rain, to show me that the spare lives underneath the car on this particular model. For the next hour, two complete strangers worked to change the tire of a family they had never met, in the middle of a game reserve, while our children kept watch out the windows for lions, rhinos, and buffalo.

Then another couple stopped and introduced themselves. It turned out they were Jewish and my mother had taught the woman in school years earlier. Then a third couple pulled over. And then a man named Anthony.

All these strangers were willing to put themselves in danger to help people they had never met. I was blown away!!

When I asked, Anthony told me it had been a very long time since he last put on tefillin. Before I could say another word, my son hopped out of the car, walked over, climbed into Anthony's car, and right there, in the middle of Pilanesberg Game Reserve, surrounded by lions and rain, my son helped another Jew put on tefillin for the first time in

years.

You might think I was irritable or frustrated, stuck on the side of a muddy road for an hour and a half. But actually, I couldn't stop smiling.

Usually, when something goes wrong, we ask, "Why is this happening to me?" But the better question is, "What is this happening for?"

Why did we get a flat tire? Why twenty minutes after I said the words out loud? Why in the one spot with no phone service? Why did Mecayla and Divan drive by exactly ten minutes later? Why a Jewish couple who happened to know my mother? Why Anthony? Why did it even occur to me to ask him about tefillin?

We spend so much of our lives feeling as though we've been stranded. Things don't go to plan. A deal falls through, plans collapse, things go wrong. We feel like we've been abandoned in the middle of nowhere.

But really, we're exactly where we're supposed to be. It's not always as obvious as my encounter, when it's clear I got a flat tire because Anthony needed to put on tefillin, and Hashem needed a flat tire to arrange the meeting. But everything that happens in our lives is Divinely orchestrated and ordained. There's always a purpose. We're never stranded or abandoned. It might not be where we want to be, but it's exactly where we're meant to be.

We changed the tire and made it back to the gate. The next morning, I saw we actually had three(!) flat tires, not just one. The others were slowly leaking air, so they didn't flatten completely, allowing us to drive out of the park. One was enough to get us to stop and meet Anthony. The others held up enough to get us home safely!

Everything worked out, thank G-d. I gave Mecayla and Divan my Instagram because I never want to lose touch with the two strangers who became angels in the rain.

We thought a flat tire had ruined our afternoon, but it turns out the flat tire was the afternoon! How blessed we are!

Rabbi Uriel Vigler and his wife, Rebbetzin Shevy Vigler, run the Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side, and can be reached at: www.chabadic.com

As Wildfires Ravage Spokane, Chabad Assists Displaced Families



Rabbi Yisrael and Chaya Sarah Hahn of Chabad-Lubavitch of Spokane are helping those displaced and affected by the wildfires.

Wildfires across eastern Washington have destroyed or damaged hundreds of structures and forced tens of thousands of residents to evacuate.

Rabbi Yisrael and Chaya Sarah Hahn, who have led Chabad-Lubavitch of Spokane for two decades, have been checking on community members affected by the fires. Chabad has also been providing firefighters with snacks, electrolyte drinks, and essential hygiene supplies.

"We shouldn't have the attitude that we are safe, we're taken care of, our house isn't burned down, let's move on," Hahn said, recalling the Rebbe's example of sending his shlichim around the world to help others. "Rather, when something happens, we see what we can do to help."

A CALL TO ACTION

Selichot Services

Special penitential prayers, 'Selichot,' are recited in the days before Rosh Hashana, beginning this Saturday night after midnight. On the remainder of the days they are said early in the day before the morning prayers. A solemn yet festive mood permeates synagogues throughout the world at the Saturday night Selichot services. Call your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center to find out exact times of the services.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

18th of Adar II, 5725 [1965]

Insofar as I have heard about your husband from visitors from London, I am surprised to read your description of his present state of discouragement. Surely he knows that it is not only a matter of world outlook for a Jew, but one of the very foundations of the Jew's faith, that G-d's Providence extends to everyone individually, and in every aspect of one's individual life. How much more so where it is not only an individual matter, but is related to the parnasa [income] of the whole family. At the same time it should be remembered that G-d's Providence is a benevolent Providence; that G-d is the Essence of Goodness and desires to do good, for, "It is in the nature of the good to do good." Therefore, it is easy to see how right King David was in the holy Tehillim [Psalms] when he said, "G-d is with me, I shall not fear," "G-d is my shepherd, I shall not want," etc. It is only necessary to reflect upon this frequently and deeply, and all anxiety and worry will be dispelled at once.

Needless to say, trust in G-d does not mean relying solely on miracles. For the Torah demands the Jew to do everything possible in the natural order of things in matters of parnasa, etc., except that he should at the same time remember success and blessing comes from G-d. And so it is written in the Torah, "G-d will bless you in all you do."

If the above is true in every case and at all times and places, it should certainly be obvious to Jews in our own times, since every one of us has seen G-d's kindness, especially Jews who had a miraculous escape from the dangers of the second World War. How can one allow himself to be so confused by the Yetzer Hara [evil inclination] as to be so overcome by anxiety or worry?

Of course there are times when things do not go as expected or as desired. But the Torah has already forewarned us to regard such times as temporary trials and tests of one's faith in G-d. As a matter of fact, the stronger one's faith in G-d remains even under adverse circumstances, the sooner it will become clear it was all a matter of a test.

But this faith should not be merely a matter of lip service, but must have the full force of conviction. And this is not hard to achieve, if one reflects on what has been said above, and frequently, calmly and objectively.

I trust that the above lines will suffice and that you, on your part, will also be a source of encouragement and confidence to your husband. May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in the spirit of Purim on which we celebrate the reversal of the Jewish position from sadness to gladness and, in the words of the Megila, "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor."

P.S. You may, of course, show this letter to your husband, if you think it will serve a useful purpose. The important thing is that the message of the letter should be effective, and that you should soon be able to report about an improvement in your husband's state of mind, to go about his business with confidence and joy, and this will be the first step to an improvement in parnasa.



10th of Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]

I have received your letter in which you described your habits which are not according to the Torah and also your conduct, etc.

It is surely unnecessary to emphasize that all this depends on yourself and that you must make a determined effort to overcome your bad habits. At the same time you must never be discouraged if you find the going hard and sometimes without success, for discouragement is one of the very tricks of the Yetzer Hara in order to weaken the fighting spirit of the Yetzer Tov [good inclination]. It is one of the favorite -- and most effective -- weapons of the Yetzer Hara, especially among young people. So never become discouraged and never think the battle lost, but keep on fighting; be on guard to overcome a bad habit as soon as it seems to tempt you.

For a tikun [rectification] I suggest you learn by heart a few kapitlach Tehillim [chapters of Psalms], a few Mishnayot, and after learning it well from the Tanya learn also by heart the following:

From kapital [chapter] 41 until page 112 second line -- lifnei hamelech, from time to time reflecting on the contents of it and reciting it when you are not otherwise engaged in learning. This will help you in your battle to improve yourself and G-d will help you.

by Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation every day. Blessed are You L-rd, who causes the power of salvation to flourish

(From the Shemoneh Esrei prayer said 3 times daily)

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 coming Saturday night, in preparation for the High Holy Days, we will begin saying the special set of penitential prayers known as "Selichot."

There is a story about a Chasid who came into a small town during the days before Rosh Hashana. Over Shabbat he stayed at an inn that was managed by a simple Jew. Late Saturday night, the innkeeper and his wife readied themselves to go to the synagogue to say the Selichot prayers.

"Where are you going?" asked the chasid.

Answered the innkeeper, "Our cow gives milk, the vegetables are growing. Our orchard produces fine fruits. We are going to shul to say selichot."

"Feh," said the chasid emphatically. "Old people get up in the middle of the night to ask the Alm-ghty for food?"

In truth, we should—and are required to—ask G-d for food and all of our other necessities. However, selichot is not the time to be asking G-d for these things.

Selichot means forgiveness. More than forgiveness, it means making amends. We recharge our batteries, return to our Source, and make an accounting of what we did last year: we contemplate how we can improve in the coming year and begin to put our thoughts into action.

If we make sure that our Selichot prayers contain all of the above, the Almighty will certainly grant us not only our material needs, but a good year in all material and spiritual areas as well.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה 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.



Chairman
Director
Publishing Director
Program Director
Secretary
Administrator
Layout
Associate Editor
Chairman Editorial Comm.
Rebbe photo

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

Rabbi David Raskin ז"ל
Rabbi Shmuel Butman ז"ל
Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
Rivky Laufer
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MOSHIACH MATTERS

Speedily cause the scion of David Your servant to flourish, and increase his power



The month of Elul was ending. Everyone was getting ready for Yom Tov, and the "scent" of the High Holidays was already in the air. The marketplace was overflowing with all kinds of merchandise and produce, including the special fruits that are traditionally eaten on Rosh Hashana, like pomegranates.

The Jewish section of town was bustling with activity as homes were swept from top to bottom and new clothes were fitted and sewn. At the same time, it was a serious matter, as residents prepared themselves spiritually for the coming year. More attention was paid to praying with a minyan, refraining from gossip, and, in general, improving one's behavior.

Inside the Baal Shem Tov's study hall the final preparations before Rosh Hashana were also underway. Prayers were recited with increased devotion, and all thoughts were focused on returning to G-d in repentance.

One evening, a few days before Rosh Hashana, the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were getting ready to pray the evening service. All that was missing was the Baal Shem Tov himself, who had not arrived yet. At precisely the appointed hour the Baal Shem Tov entered the study hall, but instead of opening his prayer book he remained standing, lost in thought.

Of course, no one dared to mention that it was time to pray. The minutes ticked by and still the Baal Shem Tov seemed distracted, as if he were in another world. His holy face was suffused with intense emotion. However, the Baal Shem Tov's students were already used to such things.

When the Baal Shem Tov suddenly roused himself almost an hour later and opened his prayer book, his countenance seemed to shine with joy. That evening, the Baal Shem Tov prayed with unusual intensity and longing. It was obvious that something of great significance had occurred.

After the service the Baal Shem Tov explained: "Not very far from here," he began, "lives a Jew who grew up in a traditional Jewish home. But as he grew older, he began to associate with the local peasants. Slowly he abandoned the Jewish path until he was virtually indistinguishable from the gentiles and completely estranged from his roots.

"Many years passed. The man left the province where he was born and went to live in a totally non-Jewish environment. As time passed, he forgot everything about the Jewish way of life, its prayers and its customs. Before he knew it, 30 years had elapsed.

"Tonight," the Baal Shem Tov revealed, "this Jew happened to be visiting a Jewish town on business. As soon as he entered the village, he could sense the commotion, and this aroused his curiosity. When he asked a passer-by what was going on, the man answered, 'Everyone is getting ready for a holiday we call Rosh Hashana. According to Jewish tradition, it is the day on which man was created and the whole world is judged.'

"For some reason this explanation struck a chord in the heart of the assimilated Jew. Maybe it was the exclusionary 'we,' that emphasized the huge chasm that separated him from his brethren, or perhaps the mere mention of the Day of Judgment. In any event, the man's soul was inexplicably awakened, and he was flooded with memories of his childhood.

"As he wandered through the marketplace he was suddenly stricken by the horrifying realization that he had exchanged a life rich in meaning for an empty existence. At that moment he looked up and was surprised to find himself standing outside the main synagogue. By then it was almost dark, and people were arriving to pray the evening service.

"The man was seized by an overwhelming desire to join them, but he was also embarrassed by his non-Jewish appearance. In the end the urge to pray won out, and

he went into the women's section and hid behind the curtain.

"As the cantor chanted the words 'And He atones for sin...' a shudder passed through the man's body. How he wished to pray, but the words were long forgotten. Tears streamed down his cheeks. When the last congregant had gone home, he couldn't bear it any longer and burst out crying. 'Master of the universe!' he wept. 'I know there is no greater sinner than I, but I also know that You are merciful and full of loving-kindness. Heavenly Father, forgive me my transgressions and I will sin no more. I wish to return to You and live as a Jew. Please accept my prayer and do not turn me away!'

"The man's heartfelt repentance caused a great commotion in the celestial realms," the Baal Shem Tov explained, "and his prayer ascended to the very Throne of Glory. In fact, it was so powerful that it carried with it many other prayers that had been waiting hundreds of years to ascend.

"When I sensed what was going on in the man's heart," the Baal Shem Tov concluded, "I decided to wait for him to pray so I could join him. Tonight's service was delayed so that we might have the merit of praying with a true penitent..." "

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

The anger of G-d burned against this land... and G-d rooted them out of the land in anger... and cast them into another land (Deut. 29:26-27)

The curses and punishments enumerated in this section of the Torah are merely warnings, not promises that G-d must fulfill. Their purpose is to arouse the heart of man to choose good over evil so that they will never come to pass. (*Peninei HaGeula*)

G-d will circumcise your heart... in order that you may live (Deut. 30:6)

When G-d will circumcise your heart, the pleasure and delight that you will take in Torah and mitzvot [commandments] will be as keenly felt as the pleasures of the physical body; you will love the Torah as much as you value your very life. (*Ohel Yaakov*)

If any of you are dispersed at the outermost parts of heaven, from there will the L-rd your G-d gather you (Deut. 30:4)

No matter how far a Jew may be from Torah and Judaism, G-d promises to gather him back into the fold of the Jewish people when Moshiach comes. When a Jew is spiritually brought back from "the outermost parts of heaven," it hastens Moshiach's coming and brings the Redemption closer. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil (Deut. 30:15)

One should not perform good deeds in order to live; one should live in order to perform good deeds. (*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk*)



7:05 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
Elul 22 / September 4
 Torah Portion Nitzavim-Vayeilech
 Ethics: Chapters 5 & 6
 Shabbat ends 8:03 PM

Dedicated in memory of our dear parents
Rabbi Velvel and Mrs. Naomi Marasov, OBM
 לע"נ הרה"ח ר' פינחס זאב וואלף ע"ה בן הרה"ח
 ר' דוד אריה לייב מרזוב ז"ל
 ולע"נ זוגתו האשה החשובה מרת נעמי ע"ה ב"ר יהודה דוד ז"ל
 והקיצו ורגנו שוכני עפר והם בתוכם תיכף ומיד ממש