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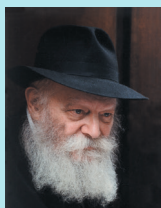
The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלשים

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)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

Seventy-four of the Torah's 613 commandments are in this week's Torah portion Ki Teitzei. These include the inheritance rights of the firstborn, burial and dignity of the dead, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, the duty to erect a safety fence around the roof of one's home, and the various forms of kilayim (forbidden plant and animal hybrids). The portion also includes the prohibition against turning in an escaped slave; the duty to pay a worker on time and to allow anyone working for you—person or animal—to 'eat on the job'; the proper treatment of a debtor, and the prohibition against charging interest on a loan.

Another commandment is: "You should not see your brother's donkey or his ox falling on the way and pretend as if you don't see them, you should pick up the load with him."

The simple meaning here is to help someone in need. On a deeper level, it is about seeing someone who has fallen spiritually.

What lessons can we take from here for helping pick up someone who has fallen spiritually?

Many view those less observant than them negatively, ignore them or even worse, tell them off and denigrate them. This is a terrible mistake and not the Torah way.

The first thing is to realize that he is your "brother," not an enemy. Treat him with love and brotherhood.

The next thing is to realize that it is his animal that has fallen not him. His soul is pristine; he is essentially holy and wants to be G-d's. It is only his 'animal,' his 'physical' situation, nature, and upbringing that have put him where he is today.

Then the Torah tells us not to pretend that you don't see him. Ignoring him is a form of hatred toward a fellow Jew, which is not only a serious violation of the Torah but will also cause him to fall even further.

Finally, help pick up his load with him. Showing him love, you will lift his spirit and strengthen him. Then he will start to pick himself up, you will only need to help.

Now in the month of Elul we must increase our love towards each other. Overcome and destroy the walls that divide us. Embrace your brother, sister, or friend with whom you are at odds. Let us enter the new year united. G-d loves it most when we are together. "Together" our prayers are powerful. "Together" G-d will grant us a good year. "Together" He will grant our greatest wish, He will send Moshiach and put an end to this painful, bitter exile.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzki Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzkihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife, Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, CA.

Two Words, One Life-Changing Perspective

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

Are we doomed to be battlers all our lives? What is the inherent nature of the universe—unity or discord? Two words in the opening verse of this week's Torah portion answer them, and change our perspective on life.

Is the world becoming more or less united? Technology and globalization seem to bring us closer, yet divisions of race, religion, class, and ideology are stronger than ever. The information revolution was supposed to be the great equalizer. Instead, it deepens the extremes.

Such divisions affirm our individuality and the uniqueness of cultures. But they also have an ugly side. Natural disasters expose the painful rifts of race and class in the wealthiest nation in the world.

Everywhere, enormous wealth exists alongside hunger and deprivation. Gandhi once said: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

Is there any hope, or will greed keep us apart? A fascinating argument between two giants illuminates the question—not the sages Shammai and Hillel, but Microsoft and Google.

Microsoft's desktop search limits itself to your own hard drive, keeping your data separate from the ocean of information elsewhere. Google searches everywhere at once—its mission is organizing all the world's information, whatever its source.

Which vision will prevail?

Isaiah declared that "the universe will be filled with Divine knowledge as the waters cover the sea." That

confirms Google's idealism, with one caveat: it must be Divine, or we stay confined by self-interest.

Both are right and both are wrong. Success is driven by individual initiative, as Microsoft claims; knowledge is all connected, as Google argues. But while personal gain remains the engine, both reinforce what separates us. Capitalism must have a soul.

The key is not more knowledge but Divine knowledge—knowledge with purpose and direction, that helps us fulfill our higher calling.

The Torah's answer is unequivocal:

"When you go out to wage war upon your enemies, G-d will deliver them in your hands."

The seemingly superfluous words "go out" and "upon" carry the message. War—physical, psychological, racial, economic—is not our natural state. We go out of our inherent nature to wage battle, and therefore remain upon—above and more powerful than—our enemies.

The innate nature of man is unity; we are all parts of one mosaic. Discord and division are part of life, but they don't define it.

Our hearts and pocketbooks must go out to those in need, not as a commitment for the moment, but as a lifetime activity. We are

compassionate not because there are people in need, but because we are soulful people, and the soul dictates that we are all bound together.

Pain in one part of the world does not allow any other part to be complete.

May we remember this even when there is no apparent crisis.

SLICE OF LIFE

I Chose Torah. Then I Chose It Again.

At the height of his music career, working with leading figures in Afro-American rap, Yosef-Uriah Disler was living far from the life his adoptive mother had envisioned for him. Born in Miami to parents he never knew, he was placed for adoption at just one week old. The woman who became his mother, Sarah-Chaya, converted him through a rabbinical court and enrolled him in Jewish schools. When he turned thirteen, his conversion was formally completed.



Yosef-Uriah Disler

"Thanks to my adoptive mother, who devoted herself entirely to my education, I always felt Jewish," says Disler, now 25 and living in Beit Shemesh. "Until I was about fifteen, I kept mitzvot. We studied half the day in Hebrew and half in English. That's where my broken Hebrew comes from."

When he was thirteen, his non-Jewish adoptive father left the family and moved to California. "I was left alone with my mother," he recalls. "The financial burden fell entirely on her, and she worked several jobs to support us. I also started working, to help pay debts and contribute to the

household. It was a very difficult period."

At sixteen, Disler says, he "discovered the world." He entered the music industry, working in production and forming connections with prominent artists, particularly in African American rap. "It is music that pushes against institutions," he explains. "But the industry also attracts questionable influences, and they affected me in ways that weren't good. My lifestyle changed completely."

Success came quickly, but it drew him further away from everything his mother had worked to give him. The lifestyle, the people, and the distance from Jewish observance all seemed worthwhile at the time. Then, at twenty-one, everything changed.

His mother fell ill and passed away, and Disler remained at her side throughout. "I was shattered," he says quietly. "Sad, angry, devastated. My mother was the center of my life. I have no siblings, no other family. Suddenly, she was gone."

During the shiva, the seven-day mourning period, the Jewish community filled the house. "That's when I realized how central my mother had been," he says. "People spoke about her kindness, about the Torah classes she supported, about the good she quietly did. People brought me clothes and other things I needed. I kept wondering why they were doing all this. Then it became clear. This is what it means to be Jewish, to give, to stand by someone else."

His mother had been deeply religious. "I knew how important it was to her that I live as a committed Jew," he says. "I also knew how much it pained her to see the path I had taken. I understood that if I wanted to honor her, I had to change my life completely."

After shiva, a local family, the Cohens, took him in. Slowly, he began to regain his footing. He returned to synagogue, to

prayer and Torah study, and began wearing a kippah again. That choice came at a cost. When his employer saw him wearing it, he was told that it did not fit the company's image. He was asked to choose between the job and the kippah.

"My mother's face was right in front of me," Disler says. "I didn't want to disappoint her. So I decided the kippah stays. I walked away from the job. I chose Torah and G-d for the second time."

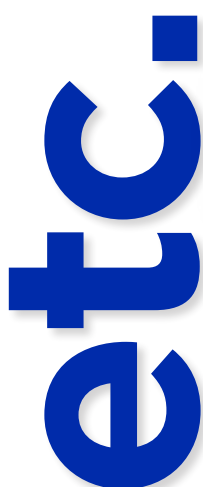
A friend suggested studying in Yeshiva in Israel. "I told myself I'd go for three weeks," he says. "That was four years ago, and I'm still here. My mother always dreamed of living in Jerusalem. Being here feels like fulfilling her dream."

His close friend, musician Nissim Black, became a source of strength and connection. "We work on music together," Disler says. "Our stories are similar, and the bond was immediate." About a year and a half ago, Disler married, and recently he and his wife welcomed a baby. "Today I divide my time between Torah study and music," he says. "I perform solo, with groups, and sometimes with my friend Omri Goren. We even recorded a song called Geula, which means redemption."

The festivals now carry new meaning for him, especially Shavuot. "It's a time to renew our connection to G-d and to family," he says. "My dream is to pass the Torah on to my children. The fact that I now have children to whom I can pass it deeply moves me."

He often thinks of the woman who gave him everything. "I had a holy mother who adopted me when I was tiny and devoted her entire life to me. She did everything so I would grow up Jewish. Today, I feel that I have fulfilled her dream. That fills me with joy. I hope these words honor her memory."

Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine



Rabbi Zevi and Mussy Kaplan lead the festivities at the opening of Innisfil's first Jewish center

Once a Summer Getaway, Ontario Lake Town Now Has a Jewish Home for All Seasons

On Sunday, July 26, Rabbi Zevi and Mussy Kaplan looked on as 500 people, many of them families with young children, moved steadily through the doors of the newly completed Chabad-Lubavitch Jewish Center on 6th Line in Innisfil, Ontario, about an hour north of Toronto.

"Seeing the number of people who came to join us and celebrate together with us was very special," says the rabbi. "Our vision is that nobody should have to leave Innisfil for anything related to Yiddishkeit. It should all be here and accessible."

The gathering marked the opening of a permanent Jewish community center, something Innisfil, which has traditionally been a seasonal community, has never had before: a Jewish address that stays open after Labour Day. It now houses a synagogue, classrooms, a full-time Jewish preschool, and a kosher café.

A CALL TO ACTION

Increase your prayers during this month

During the current month of Elul, it is traditional to enhance or increase our observance of mitzvot. Prayer, in particular, is increased by adding Psalm 27 twice daily to our prayers and saying three additional chapters of Psalms daily. If you don't pray daily, now is a perfect time to start. G-d understands all languages, but if you want to pray "in the original" call your local Chabad-Lubavitch center. Many are offering crash courses in Hebrew reading to help you prepare for the upcoming holidays.

This week's Torah portion begins (Deut. 21:10), "When you go out to wage war... G-d will deliver them into your hands, and you will take captives ("shivyo"). The literal meaning of the word "shivyo" is 'his captives,' implying that we shall regain that



In the town of Polotsk, Russia, lived a simple storekeeper by the name of Yisrael. He was a follower of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the Tzemach Tzedek), the third leader of Chabad. Once, while visiting Lubavitch, Yisrael heard a Chasidic discourse from the Rebbe explaining how our ancestor Abraham was charitable monetarily, spiritually, and bodily. The Rebbe then gave a profound mystical explanation to show how Abraham's physical acts of charity in this world were, in a sense, higher than G-d's Infinite Kindness.

Yisrael did not understand the entire dissertation, but he did grasp these few words about Abraham, which he repeated over and over until he committed them to memory. When he came home, his fellow Chasidim asked Yisrael if he could perhaps repeat the discourse that the Rebbe had said. Yisrael replied that he could not, but he had committed a few words about Abraham's charitableness to memory, which he proceeded to repeat to them.

The next day, Yisrael went back to his store as usual. Nachman and Yosef, also storekeepers in Polotsk, were friends of Yisrael. Yisrael decided that he would go into Nachman's store and ask him for a loan. He did not need the money, but having heard from the Rebbe the great quality of charitableness (which includes lending money without interest) he wanted to give Nachman the opportunity to fulfill this great mitzva (commandment). Nachman and Yosef followed his example; every day they would borrow and repay small sums of money from each other and repay them.

When Yisrael was next in Lubavitch, the Tzemach Tzedek came out of his study into the synagogue and asked one of the senior Chasidim, "Please find out a little about that Chasid over there" looking toward Yisrael. The Chasid was not at all familiar with who Yisrael was, for Yisrael was not one of the "well-known" Chasidim. Eventually he discovered who the person was and that he was a storekeeper from Polotsk. The Tzemach Tzedek asked that Yisrael be invited to his study.

When Yisrael came in, the Rebbe asked him about his work and his daily schedule. Yisrael replied that he got up every morning at five, recited the Book of Psalms, drank a cup of tea, chopped wood, and then went to the synagogue to pray. After the prayers, he studied a chapter of Torah, went home to eat breakfast and then went to the marketplace to his store. Later, in the afternoon, he went to the synagogue again, to say the afternoon prayers, studied a little more, prayed the evening service and went home.

The Rebbe was not satisfied. "Nu, and what about tzedaka (charity)?" he inquired.

"I am a poor man and cannot afford to give charity," Yisrael replied. After further questioning by the Rebbe, however, Yisrael's custom of taking and giving back small loans came to light.

Later, the Tzemach Tzedek's son, Rabbi Shmuel, asked his father, "What do you see in him?" The Rebbe replied, "I saw, surrounding the simple storekeeper, Reb Yisrael, a radiance, a pillar of light as great as that of the Supernal Kindness."

In 1843 the Czarist government of Russia called a rabbinical conference concerning various matters affecting the religious life of the Jews. The delegates chosen were the Tzemach Tzedek, Reb Yitzchak of Volozhin, Reb Yisrael Heilprin and Betzalel Stern, the headmaster of the Jewish school in Odessa.

When the Rebbe returned after the conference, he heard that his Chasidim were speaking about the tremendous self-sacrifice he had shown there. Upon hearing this, the Rebbe cried bitterly. "You call it self-sacrifice," he said, "when a person sacrifices himself for the Jewish people? Who knows, maybe he is even doing it for his own self-interest because he knows it increases his share in the World to Come! There is nothing worthy about this kind of self-sacrifice.

"I will tell you a story of true self-sacrifice," the Rebbe continued. "Reb Baruch of Mezhibuzh sacrificed his life and his share in the World to Come for a single Jew. Not even for the Jew's life, but only for his property!

"One of Reb Baruch's Chasidim was a wine-merchant who used to travel to distant towns delivering his merchandise. He did not have enough capital to pay for the wine outright. But, he was known to be an honest, trustworthy man, so the wholesalers gave him the wine on credit.

"One evening, during one of his business trips, he realized that he had not properly repented for something he had done. Utterly distressed over this thought, he left his wagons loaded with wine, right there at the inn, and set out immediately to Reb Baruch. When he arrived in Mezhibuzh, Reb Baruch asked him about his business affairs and the Chasid proceeded to tell him everything that had just taken place.

'Fool!' cried out Reb Baruch. 'How could you have left other people's property totally unattended!' A barrage of scolding and condemnation followed. Throughout Shabbat, Reb Baruch continued to rebuke the Chasid, even in the presence of other guests. One of the guests was Reb Baruch's relative, Reb Avraham of Chmielnik.

'Reb Baruch,' Reb Avraham protested, 'Do you not know that the Talmud has something to say about someone who shames another?'

"I know," answered Reb Baruch, 'that he who shames his fellow in public has no share in the World to Come. But it is more important to give up my share and help this man. His wagon drivers had planned to make off with all the unattended wine. But my abuse has saved it. For in the Heavenly Courts, the abuse I subjected him to is reckoned as equal to the anguish he would have felt over the monetary loss.'

"This," concluded the Rebbe, "is true self-sacrifice—when a person is prepared to give up his Eternal Rewards to help a fellow Jew be spared from a monetary loss!"



But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn (bechor), by giving him a double portion of all that he has (Deut. 21:17)

The letters of the word 'bechor' allude to the firstborn's inheritance of a double portion, as each letter's numerical value is double that of the letter immediately preceding it in the Hebrew alphabet: beit (2) is twice alef (1); chof (20) is twice yud (10); and reish (200) is twice kuf (100). (HaGra)

You shall not watch your brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide yourself from them; you shall surely bring them back to your brother (Deut. 22:1)

This is the mitzvah of 'returning a lost object.' If the Torah commands us to return a lost physical object and not pretend we are unaware of the situation, how much more so are we obligated to help a lost Jewish soul and restore it to its rightful place. (The Shaloh)

You shall let the mother go, and take the young to you (Deut. 22:7)

What is the reward for sending the mother bird away from the nest? "If you are childless, I will give you children. By fulfilling this commandment, you thereby hasten the arrival of Moshiach ... and the Prophet Elijah." (Midrash Rabba)



7:27 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

Elul 8 / August 21

Torah Portion Ki Teitzei

Ethics: Chapters 1 & 2

Shabbat ends 8:26 PM

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A sweet and good year