



When the second Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber (known as the "Mittler Rebbe") passed away, there were three prospective successors.

Though all three were immensely qualified for the leadership of the Chabad movement, all three unanimously declined the importuning of the Chasidim. These three were: Reb Chaim Avraham, the brother of Rabbi Dov Ber and youngest son of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism, Reb Menachem Nachum, the Mittler Rebbe's son, and the Tzemach Tzedek, the son of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's eldest daughter.

As time passed, the pressure among the Chasidim to find a successor escalated, though it seemed that no solution was in sight. Finally, despairing of a solution being found, two of the Chasidim declared, "It is impossible to be without a Rebbe!" They decided to travel to Ruzhin with the intention of accepting the Ruzhiner Rebbe as their Rebbe.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe, Reb Yisrael, was the grandson of the Mezritcher Maggid, and so highly thought of for his enormous piety that he was called the "Holy Ruzhiner."

These two Chasidim travelled to Ruzhin for Shavuot. As was the custom there, (as well as among many other Chasidim) the Ruzhiner distributed *shirayim* – food from his table – to his Chasidim. It was Yom Tov and the Ruzhiner began to distribute wine from his own cup to each of the Chasidim. The two Chabad Chasidim also wanted to participate and receive wine from the Ruzhiner and they proffered their cups for the "cup of blessing."

The Ruzhiner, however, refused them, saying, "If you want some wine, you may take it yourself, but I will not give it to you."

The two were very surprised and protested, "Why won't you give it to us, after all we have come here in order to accept you as our Rebbe?"

Upon hearing those words, the Ruzhiner sat down at the table and began to deliver a deep Chasidic discourse based on the theme, "The Giving of the Torah began, not at Mount Sinai, but at the burning bush."

He explained in great depth that when G-d gave Moses the task of taking the Children of Israel out of Egypt, G-d told Moses to "tell the Jews that I have remembered you and want to take you out of Egypt."

Moses' reaction was strange. He replied that he was afraid the Jews would ask him what is G-d's name. To this G-d replied, "Tell them My Name is, 'I will be what I will be.'"

The Ruzhiner posed the question, "Why did Moses ask this question of G-d? For Moses did know G-d's name as he had been handed down a tradition of the Name and its spelling! And why did G-d answer, 'I will be what I will be.'?"

The Ruzhiner elucidated the point through the use of numerical equivalents which are often used to explicate texts. He explained that the numerical equivalent of this particular name of G-d is 26, while that of the words "I will be what I will be" equals 441 which is "emet" – truth. G-d desired that Moses be able to reveal to the Jews the truth.

"The word 'emet,'" continued the Ruzhiner, "is also an acronym for, 'Torat Menachem Emet' ("the Torah of Menachem is truth")."

When the two Chabad Chasidim heard these words being spoken by the Holy Ruzhiner, they realized that he was intimating that they should return home to the city of Lubavitch and that the Tzemach Tzedek, whose name was Menachem Mendel, should become Rebbe.

Upon arriving in Lubavitch two weeks later, the Tzemach Tzedek had already acquiesced. The returning Chasidim repeated to their fellows the discourse they had

heard from the mouth of the Holy Ruzhiner in regard to the word "emet," intimating that the Tzemach Tzedek should be the Rebbe.

The Chasidim recalled with amazement that the Tzemach Tzedek had delivered the same discourse that very same Shavuot, but when he reached the part which identified the acronym of emet with his name, Menachem, he merely hesitated and smiled to himself. Now, they all understood why he had smiled.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Shavuot
According to the Torah, a chatat (sin) offering is required on every festival with the exception of Shavuot. The reason is that on Shavuot, the day the Torah was given, every Jew is considered a "convert," a newborn entity. In the same way that a newborn baby is free of transgression, so too are all Jews without sin on Shavuot. (Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)

They said, "All that the L-rd has said we will do and we will obey" (Ex. 24:7)
"We will do" refers to the mitzvot the soul is taught up Above, prior to its descent into a physical body; "we will obey" indicates our willingness to learn Torah in this world, and to follow its statutes. (*Yalkut Reuveini, in the name of the Magid*)

The Ten Commandments
Our Sages offered several explanations of how the Ten Commandments were perceived at Mount Sinai: G-d uttered all Ten Commandments simultaneously, then explained each one in turn. But the Jews only understood the first two, until Moses explained the rest. (*Mechilta*)

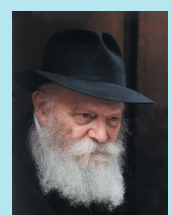
Only the first two commandments were heard directly from G-d, but even those not as individual words. Only Moses heard individual words. (*Maimonides*)

G-d uttered all Ten Commandments at the same time, but after comprehending only the first two, the Jews fainted. The other eight commandments remained "suspended" until their souls returned to their bodies, whereupon G-d's Voice spoke to each Jew individually. (*Ohr HaChayim*)

7:57 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
5 Sivan//May 25//Shavuot
6 Sivan//May 26//Shavuot/Shabbat
Light candles before 7:58 pm from a pre-existing flame
Yizkor on Shavuot/Shabbat
Shavuot/Shabbat end 9:05 PM



L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

On Shavuot we read the Ten Commandments, which begin, "And G-d spoke all these words, saying..." Usually the word "saying – *laimor*" signifies that what is being said should be repeated to the Jewish people or to later generations. However, at the Giving of the Torah all of the Jewish people were present, even the souls of all future generations. So, why the word "saying" in this verse?

The Maggid of Mezritch explains that it means that we have to put the Ten Commandments into the Ten Sayings with which G-d created the world.

In other words, don't make the mistake of thinking that the Torah and the world are separate domains. Don't say, "When I am doing Jewish things, like praying, studying Torah, doing mitzvot (commandments), etc, I will do as the Torah dictates, but when I am doing worldly things, eating, drinking, business, etc, I will act as the world dictates."

This is clear from the Ten Commandments themselves. From all of the 613 commandments that Hashem gave us, He chose to give these ten personally, to every Jewish person. One would think that He would have chosen the most spiritually sublime ideas to tell us, and while He did say, "I Am the Lord your G-d," and "You shall not have any god before Me," which are holy and sublime ideas, it also has, "You shall not murder," and "you shall not steal..." which are the most basic physical no-nos. Even if G-d wouldn't tell us these, we would understand that they are wrong.

The fact that G-d juxtaposes the oneness of G-d together with not murdering and not stealing, shows that He wants us to fuse the physical and the spiritual.

Murder and theft are wrong, and each of us understand that, but we shouldn't only refrain from doing them because they make sense, we should keep them because of the "I am the Lord your G-d," that is hidden in these laws, meaning, that they are G-d's will. This should be the primary reason for keeping them. And the same is true for all the Torah laws that make sense, we should keep them because they are Hashem's will. This is drawing what is above down below.

On the other hand, those who need commandments to tell them that murder and stealing are wrong, that G-d should have to say it with thunder and lightning, otherwise they wouldn't get it, they too should contemplate on the greatness and oneness of G-d. This is, below going above.

How do we bring the above and below, spiritual and physical together? Through mitzvot. Because the 613 commandments that we received at Sinai, came from the essence of G-d. G-d's essence is above creation, it can fuse opposites, above and below, spiritual and physical together.

May we be successful in bringing the two together through our mitzvahs, making this world into a dwelling for Hashem. This is the work that will bring Moshiach. May he come soon.

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

The All & Nothing of Torah

Shavuot is, by comparison, a quiet holiday. Every other holiday has a lot of activity, a lot of hustle and bustle surrounding it. Passover? Clean the house, make a Seder, read the Hagada, eat matza. Rosh Hashana? Blow the shofar, listen to the cantor and the rabbi. Yom Kippur? Don't eat or drink - so do a lot of both the day before. Sukkot? Outdoors eating and the lulav and etrog. Chanuka? Light the menorah, celebrate in public, get gelt. Purim? A big Megila! *Shalach Manot* (food gifts), a big feast, etc.

But there isn't a specific ritual, a separate, concrete mitzva associated with Shavuot. Every holiday we go to the synagogue and read the Torah, but only on Passover do we eat matza, only on Sukkot do we dwell in the sukka, etc. But what's special about Shavuot?

And that's exactly what's special about Shavuot. You see, Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah, so its rituals have to reflect its historical and spiritual uniqueness. Matza on Passover, because that's what the Jews ate; it instills in us humility and submission to G-d. The sukka on Sukkot, because that's what the Jews lived in and it unites us, bringing us together as one.

And on Shavuot – nothing, because when the Torah was given we were overwhelmed. Our souls fled our bodies when G-d began speaking the Ten Commandments. And nothing, because Torah transcends specifics.

The Torah is not just a collection of laws proscribing certain activities. The Torah is the blueprint

of life, enveloping a person from his first moment to his last, directing all the details in between.

Torah is a living Torah because it is dynamic and whole.

In other words, one lesson of Torah is Divine Providence, His conception and vision of the whole of creation and His comprehension of all the details of creation. G-d's knowledge encompasses the intricacies of man, the "chosen of creation," as well as the minutest particle of matter.

On Shavuot, G-d gives us the Torah and we're confronted with the nothingness of everything else. Creation is irrelevant without Torah.

We must therefore serve G-d in all our ways and in all ways – in whatever situation or context. Learning Torah, fulfilling the 613 mitzvot (commandments), simple actions and encounters of daily life – all reveal the word of G-d, the "I am the L-rd your G-d." For when G-d says, "I am," it follows that we are not.

Perhaps we can understand this better by an analogy. A child truly and wholly devoted to his parents does not see himself as independently significant. He is, in a sense, only an expression of his love and awe of his parents.

So, Shavuot commemorates the historical and spiritual uniqueness of the giving of the Torah. That uniqueness reveals not a specific part of our relationship with G-d, but the fact of the relationship itself.

One might say that when it comes to Torah, when it comes to G-d's giving and our receiving, it's all and nothing.

SLICE OF LIFE

Chabad on a Ranch

by Devorah Leah Heidingsfeld



Rabbi Shimy and Devorah Leah Heidingsfeld and family

We were in a park when we met Ellen, who was there with her family. We exchanged numbers so that I could update her about events and programs at Chabad of Moorpark. Although I texted her regularly for years, Ellen only came to one event.

For the first few years after we established Chabad of Moorpark in California, we hosted all of our events in our home. We later moved to a storefront, but we desperately needed a new place.

Before Shavuot, I texted Ellen as usual. I invited her family to come hear the reading of the Ten Commandments followed by an ice cream party.

"I won't be able to make it," Ellen responded. "But do you know anyone who wants to move?"

"Us!" I shouted, amazed by the Divine Providence that inspired her to reply after years of silence.

Ellen was a real estate agent. We gave her almost impossible conditions, including a very low budget and Ellen did her best. "I have an interesting idea," she told us. "I just heard about a great ranch property."

"A ranch?!" My husband and I looked at each other in amusement. "Like for horses? We want to build a synagogue!"

"Just come see it," she cajoled.

We almost laughed when we saw it. It was a real ranch! But it had a house, and plenty of room for a proper *shul* and all of our activities and programs.

Through hard work we were able to get together a quarter of the money for the down payment. We did

everything we could to secure the rest, but hit one roadblock after another.

We wrote to the Rebbe, informing him of the latest setbacks. We placed the letter randomly in a book of the Rebbe's letters and opened it. "You do your part, and leave the rest up to G-d, the second letter began. But since you're asking for help, I'll ask people to help you," the letter read.

We felt strengthened. We decided to revisit Jonathan, who had given us an \$1800 donation.

"Come in for some coffee," he invited us. Seated at the table, we broke the news that we were still \$300,000 short. "You know what? I'll give you \$200,000 as a loan, if you can raise the last \$100,000," Jonathan offered.

With Hashem's help, we raised the other \$100,000 and bought the ranch. Later, Jonathan shared, "The truth is that I don't have money. But as we were speaking, I felt an urgent sense of responsibility. I don't usually believe in this kind of stuff, but it was just such an overwhelming feeling. It was almost like the words came out on their own."

A few years ago, I got a call from a hospice care center in Moorpark. The director informed me there was a Jewish woman in their care who would benefit from a visit. "Sure. I'll clear my schedule," I told her.

Cookie got her name because she was a "tough cookie" – as I got to know for myself after I walked through her door. "Who told you about me? I don't need any rebbetzin!" was Cookie's greeting.

"I'm just here to chat and cheer you up," I told her, "we don't need to discuss religion at all."

That mollified her, and we went on to have a lovely conversation. "So what do you do in Moorpark?" she finally asked.

I told her about our programs and activities. I mentioned my weekly women's class and invited her to join. "Devorah, I am not at all interested in hearing you preach religion. But I'm desperate to get out of this "prison," so I'll try."

I said I would try and visit again the following week, and we said goodbye.

The next Tuesday morning, I was preparing for my class, when the phone rang. It was Cookie. "Devorah, are you sending someone to pick me up? I want to come to your class."

I was shocked. I asked Marsha, another woman from our community, to pick her up. Marsha arrived, pushing Cookie in a wheelchair, halfway through my class. We were talking about the ability of a Jewish soul to transcend the physical limitations of the body and reconnect with G-d.

"Devorah, be quiet. I need to say something," Cookie interrupted. She turned to the group of women. "When Devorah came to visit me last week, I wasn't interested in anything to do with Judaism. I always thought of Chabad as crazy people! I only agreed to come to this class because I was desperate to get out. As soon as I heard what the class was about, I wanted to interrupt and point out how foolish she sounded! But then – I don't know how or why – but something changed. I was enveloped by the most incredible warmth I've ever felt in my whole life. It just all made sense to me. I understand my soul for the first time in 92 years! Finally, I feel like my body and soul have found peace, and I can die tranquilly."

Marsha continued bringing Cookie, until she passed away a few weeks later. I was at Cookie's side to say with her *Shema* and the final prayer of confession. The soul that had wandered for almost a century, emphatically denying her connection all the while, reunited with her Creator in the last weeks of her life, allowing her to finally be at peace.

Avery is a walking inspiration. At 10 years old, she had a medical emergency and had to be airlifted to a children's hospital. She was diagnosed with an inoperable mass in her brain, with over 100 active aneurysms. Her doctors gave her a 50% chance of surviving the year, and told her parents that even if she lived past that, it would be in a vegetative state.

I helped Avery, or Rivky as we now call her, compose a letter to the Rebbe, asking for a blessing for a miracle. Rivky opened a book of letters of the Rebbe in English. The letter on the page talked about kosher, and encouraged the person to be strong in their resolve even if others around them were more lax. It ended off with a blessing, that in the merit of keeping kosher, they should enjoy good health.

"That's perfect! I can totally do that!" Rivky said.

In the coming weeks, Rivky made major changes to her life. When she was well enough to go back to school, she stopped eating the lunches they provided, and inspired her family to keep kosher at home, too.

Rivky had more treatments and surgeries, and before every procedure, she made sure to put under her pillow a picture of the Rebbe and a dollar from the Rebbe we gave her. She says *Shema* every time, and, if the doctor treating her is Jewish, Rivky makes sure they say every word of *Shema* together with her. As she is wheeled into the operating room, Rivky holds Letters of the Rebbe close to her chest, gaining comfort and confidence from the words she reads.

Twelve years later, Rivky is alive and flourishing.

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The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5738 [1978]

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

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

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

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

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

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

With blessing,

Erev [eve of] Shavuot, 5735 [1975]

Greeting and Blessing:

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

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

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

Wishing you again a happy and joyous *Yom Tov*,

With blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The very fact that Shavuot is a holiday during which we celebrate the giving of the Torah reveals its relationship to the time of Moshiah. The main novelty of the era of Moshiah is the "new Torah" that will be re-

vealed by Moshiah. In *Shnei Luchot HaBrit* it is explained, "On this day (Shavuot), an offering of both leavened and unleavened bread was brought. The leavened bread corresponds to the body and the unleavened bread to the soul. The fact that both were offered on the same altar shows that the soul and body will delight together in the World to Come and bask in the glow of the Divine Presence, as we find with Moses and Elijah." (*Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 1)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Thursday night through Saturday night is the holiday of Shavuot, celebrating when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai.

Three people in Jewish history are particularly associated with Shavuot: Moshe (Moses), King David and the Baal Shem Tov. And these three great leaders were also intimately connected with Moshiah and the Redemption.

As the one through whom the Torah was given to the Jewish people, Moshe is intimately connected with Shavuot. The Torah, in some places, is even referred to as "The Torah of Moshe" - *Torat Moshe*. Moshiah will be so like Moshe in his leadership qualities, humility and Torah scholarship that our Sages even stated, "Moshe is the first redeemer and the last redeemer."

Shavuot is the birthday and anniversary of the passing of King David. One of the functions of Moshiah is that he will restore the Davidic dynasty, for Moshiah will be a descendant of King David, a human king.

Finally, we come to the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov, too, passed away on Shavuot, on the second day of the holiday. In a famous letter to his brother-in-law, the Baal Shem Tov described a spiritual "journey" when he visited the chamber of Moshiah. He asked Moshiah, "Master, when will you come?"

Moshiah replied, "When your wellsprings - your teachings - will spread forth to the outside."

The Baal Shem Tov's teachings - Chasidism - were recorded and expounded upon by his various disciples. They are a foretaste of the new and deeper revelations of Torah we are promised will be revealed and taught by Moshiah, himself.

This year on Shavuot, when all Jews, young and old, gather in our synagogues to re-experience the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, let us also reconnect with the essence of the holiday and cry out for the ultimate revelation of the Torah and G-d through Moshiah.

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.

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Uniquely Shaped Synagogue

In Moscow's suburban district of Mityushi, a celebration took place marking the near completion of a new Jewish Community Center. The new center, shaped like a huge Tehillim, includes a beautiful sanctuary, study halls, mikvas, banquet hall, and library.



New Center

Rabbi Mendel and Mushky Shmotkin have opened a new Chabad Center in Wheeling, Illinois. Wheeling has a diverse population of 38,000 residents with 4,000 of them Jewish residents. There has been an influx of young professionals. 20% of whom are Jewish.

New Emissaries

Rabbi Chanan and Chaya Rose recently moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where they are directing the adult Jewish learning at Chabad's Intown Jewish Academy.

Hakhel – Unite!

The unique mission that is incumbent upon each and every person this year is to actively seek opportunities to gather people together. Each and every person wields influence on a certain number of people - perhaps adults, perhaps children, and is able to influence them to increase in all matters of Judaism. The foremost tool of influence is to serve as a living example. Those who involve themselves in this effort will certainly see success - great and resounding success, far beyond their own estimation. (*The Rebbe*, 26 Tishrei, 5748-1987)

