



The great Sage Reish Lakish had once lived among the wild people called Loddites. Known for his bravery and prowess, the Loddites wanted him to be the leader of one of their fierce robber bands. Reish Lakish, however, was destined for greater things.

He fled from those wicked people and changed his life completely, becoming a great baal teshuva and dedicating his tremendous intellect and power to the study of Torah.

He married the sister of Rabbi Yochanan, the greatest Sage of the time, and excelled so much at his learning that he was appointed to a high position in the yeshiva at Tiberias.

Although Reish Lakish now spent all his days and nights in the study hall, he had lost none of his fire and strength. He feared no one but G-d, and would stand up to deceit or corruption whenever he encountered it, no matter what danger he had to face.

One morning, as Rabbi Yochanan walked to the Study Hall, he was attacked by a band of robbers who stole all his money. When he finally arrived at the Study Hall he was very shaken by the incident, and, although he tried to lead the class as usual, he was unable to concentrate on the questions his students posed. It became obvious that the great Sage was troubled by something.

Noticing that his teacher was deeply troubled, Reish Lakish pressed Rabbi Yochanan for an explanation. "What is wrong? Has something happened to you?" Rabbi Yochanan answered by way of a hint, saying, "The whole body depends on the heart, but the heart depends on the pocket." Reish Lakish didn't understand his teacher's allusion, and he repeated his question.

This time Rabbi Yochanan explained clearly, "I can't gather my thoughts because as I was coming to study today, I was set upon by a band of robbers. I was carrying a great deal of money, and they stole it all. Now I will have to spend my energy trying to support myself and my family, and I'm afraid I won't be able to learn Torah as I did before."

Reish Lakish was outraged. "Where did they attack you and which way did they go?" he demanded to know. They went out to the road and Rabbi Yochanan pointed to the location of the attack. Not bothering to bring any weapons, Reish Lakish set out to find the robbers.

He found them in a nearby forest and he shouted in a booming voice, "Stop where you are!" The robbers were so surprised by his temerity they meekly waited for him to approach. When he reached them, he faced the band and bellowed, "How dare you steal from the greatest Sage of the Jewish people! The entire world is sustained by the holy words he utters, and you, low creatures that you are, have dared to rob him!" The hardened criminals were moved by his words. "We had no idea who he was. We'll return half the money to him."

But Resh Lakish had no intention of making a deal. "Absolutely not!" he cried. "You won't keep even one penny of his money!" And Reish Lakish grabbed his teacher's purse from their clutches.

In a similar display of bravery, Reish Lakish once rescued another great Jewish Sage.

Once, as a group of rabbis was walking down a deserted road, Rabbi Ammi was captured by a roving band of robbers. So ruthless and cruel were these outlaws, that once captured, no one ever escaped from them.

Everyone fled; only Reish Lakish refused to abandon Rabbi Ammi. Risking his life, Reish Lakish pursued the robbers, and, using his experience with brigands, he cleverly managed to obtain Rabbi Ammi's release. The robber chief, however, demanded to know what kind of reward he would receive for having freed the well-known rabbi.

Reish Lakish thought quickly. Certainly such a cut-throat deserved nothing better than the end of a rope, but he replied, "Come with me to our greatest Sage, Rabbi Yochanan, and he will bless you and pray for you."

This answer pleased the chief, and he and Reish Lakish proceeded to the study hall of Rabbi Yochanan. "We have been promised that the Rabbi will bless us, since we

returned your comrade to you. We never meant him any harm, and now we want you to pray for us," announced the robber chief.

Rabbi Yochanan understood Reish Lakish's object in bringing the brigand to him. He looked the robber chief in the eye and said, "Since your intentions were so noble, I bless you that whatever were your plans for this man, G-d should repay you in the same way." True to Rabbi Yochanan's words, the robber band was attacked in the forest and killed to the last man.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

**In the beginning (bereishis) G-d created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1)**  
Our Sages tell us that the entire world was created solely for the sake of the two things that are called "reishis" ("first") -- Israel and the Torah. Speaking about the Messianic Era, the Prophet Isaiah said, "The nation and the kingdom that does not serve you will be destroyed." When Moshiach comes the nations of the world will lend aid and support to the Jewish people, recognizing that their very existence depends on their service; those who refuse to accept their subservient position will disappear from the face of the earth. (*Likutei Sichot* Vol. XXIV)

Although the Torah mentions the creation of heaven, its emphasis is clearly on earth, for that is where man is destined to fulfill his G-dly role. (Rabbi Shimshon Refael Hirsch)

**The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of G-d hovered over the surface of the waters (Gen. 1:2)**  
What kind of spirit? "The spirit of King Moshiach" answers the Midrash. From this we learn an important lesson in our faith. Our longing for Moshiach must include a yearning for both the first and second stages of Redemption. During the first stage of the Messianic Era, the "yoke of the nations" will be removed from Israel's neck, although the world will continue to exist according to natural law. The second stage will be marked by open manifestations of G-dliness, such as the resurrection of the dead and other miracles that will be commonplace. G-d's objective in creating the world, mentioned in the Torah before the creation of man, is the Messianic Era. Our yearning must therefore be for the complete fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and the realization of Divine plan. (*Sichat Parshat Acharei* 5746)

**And G-d blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28)**  
The birth of a Jewish child brings joy not only to his parents and extended family but to the entire Jewish people, for it signifies a step closer to the coming of Moshiach. The Talmud states that Moshiach will not arrive until "all the souls in guf" (the storehouse in which they await their descent into the physical world) have been born. The birth of a Jewish baby therefore hastens the Redemption and brings closer the blessings of the Messianic Era. (*Sichat 25 Iyar*, 5743)



### 5:54 Candle Lighting Time

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The Weekly Publication

for Every Jewish Person

ניסד תור ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

"In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth." With these momentous words, the Torah begins the very first chapter of Bereishis, establishing G-d's Kingship over all of creation. The Torah, however, is not a history book. The Torah is the guide by which we live our lives.

The ancient Sage, Rabbi Yitzchak, raises a pertinent question. "Why does the Torah open with the story of Creation?" he asks. "Why didn't G-d begin with the words, 'This month is to you,'--the first commandment containing practical implications?"

"The might of His deeds He told to His nation; to bequeath to them the heritage of the nations," Rabbi Yitzchak himself answers.

"If the nations of the world will one day accuse the Jewish people of being thieves, having 'stolen' the land of Israel from the seven nations who formerly inhabited it, they will counter, 'The entire earth belongs to G-d! He is the One Who created it and bequeathed it to whom He saw fit. It was His will to give the land to the nations; it was His will to take it from them and give it to us.'"

However, one can ask, is the world's accusation really so important that G-d would change even one letter in His Holy Torah for its sake? Would a refutation in the Oral Tradition not have been sufficient?

In truth, the Torah's choice of language holds significance not only for the nations of the world but for Jews themselves.

"In the beginning" contains an important lesson for every Jew to apply in his daily life.

In general, the life of a Jew may be divided into two realms: the religious and the secular. The Jew willingly observes his various religious obligations because the Torah requires him to. When, however, he is asked to also sanctify those mundane aspects of life that seemingly fall outside the domain of religious observance, he balks, rejecting this demand as an invasion of privacy.

The secular realm of a person's life, pertaining to the physical and material domain, metaphorically belongs to the "seven nations." Yet it is precisely this realm that the Jew is called upon to conquer, elevating it for the sake of heaven.

"You are thieves!" the world cries out against the Jew. "How dare you conquer the domain of the seven nations and blur the distinction between religious observance and the mundane?!"

To which the Jew replies, "All of creation belongs to G-d." Every realm of existence is part of a Divine plan and can be made holy.

Indeed, such is the mission of every Jew -- to transform wherever he may be into a spiritual Land of Israel.

Adapted from *Likutei Sichot* of the Rebbe, Vol. XX

## Choose Life

By Rabbi Eli Friedman

"Choose life!" The Torah urges us "U'bacharta Ba'Chaim!"

There is no word in Hebrew for the singular noun, "life."

The word used is "Chaim" but that actually means "multiple lives." There is no singular version of this word.

It's almost as if you can't live just one life; you have to live a minimum of two, or more.

Because there is this life and the afterlife. There is the life of the body and the life of the soul.

But then there is another way of looking at it: you can't truly live your life if you aren't helping someone else - or multiple others - live theirs. And in that way, with your single life, you're living multiple lives - the ones you're enhancing and prolonging. Thus, a single life is actually multiple lives - Chaim.

Let's take a closer look at the Hebrew word "Chaim." It's spelled with four letters: Chet, Yud, Yud, Mem.

The Hebrew letter Yud is synonymous with the word Yid. A Yud is a Yid. Two Yuds - two Yids. So huddled there in the center of the word are two Jews, side by side, shoulder to shoulder. No airs, no discomfort, no "you're crimping my style." They're friends, giving each other a hand. Then, when you

take the two outer letters - Chet and Mem - they spell the Hebrew word for "warmth." Two people, connected by friendship and genuine warmth.

The Yiddish word for warmth is "Varemkeit." It is the secret sauce of Chassidic culture, and indeed of the Jewish People. Varemkeit is a blend of concern, empathy, love, good cheer, respect, and energetic friendship. Varemkeit is virtually irresistible in the way it brings people together and creates a community.

When someone asked the Rebbe how to best kindle some Jewish feelings in a thoroughly secularized relative, the Rebbe answered, "Varemkeit!"

With Varemkeit, you affect others' lives. Like the two Yuds in the word Chaim, you and the person you're helping are enveloped by pure human warmth, and taken together, you have created Chaim - pure life, and multiple lives.

This New Year like every year, we prayed for Chaim - for life. Zachreinu L'Chaim! B'sefer HaChaim! And now we know what we're asking for: not just a beating heart, but a caring heart. Not just another day, but a day filled with Varemkeit. Not just a long life but multiple long, happy, healthy, warm lives - the lives that we were lucky and blessed enough to be able to help out.



# SLICE OF LIFE

Behind The Brooks Brothers Suit



Mr. Yoni Nierenberg

In the early 1960s, my father – Dr. Harold (Tzvi) Nierenberg – served as the dean of Long Island University, and although he was not a chasid, he was selected by the Rebbe to head up a revolutionary new outreach initiative.

At that time, it was unusual for an academic to be an Orthodox Jew. And my father was not only Torah observant but also deeply involved in the Jewish community. He founded the first Orthodox synagogue in our town – North Belmore, Long Island – and he made it a point to reach out to Jewish students on campus. It was through one of those students that he was introduced to Rabbi Leibel Alevsky, the coordinator of programs for the Lubavitch Youth Organization, and Rabbi Alevsky, in turn, introduced him to the Rebbe.

My father immediately recognized that the Rebbe was a holy man and also that he was an incredible strategist. Although my father was an academic – he got his Ph.D. from Columbia University – he had a keen business sense, and he understood the role that visionary strategy plays in the success of any enterprise.

My father's work with Lubavitch led to the formation of the College and University

Council, which my father was appointed to chair because he best fit the Rebbe's requirements. The Rebbe wrote at the time:

"Regarding [appointing] a chairman, it depends on the kabalos ol [i.e., the commitment to Torah] of the candidate. [He must be someone for whom] it is a given that our holy Torah is above science and the like. In other words, [he must be] someone who can be a full member of the Lubavitch Youth Organization."

My father outwardly looked like a professor – he wore Brooks Brothers suits, rather than long coats and black hats. But his values ran deeper than his clothes. He never lost sight of what the Torah demanded of him. Of course, there were corporate events and academic events that he had to attend, but never on Shabbat. You would always find him sitting at the table Friday night, learning the Talmud. So even though he was immersed in academics, he always kept G-d and His Torah front and center in his life.

Thus, he was exactly the person the Rebbe was looking for.

As chairman of the College and University Council, my father reached out to deans at universities far and wide, informing them of a pilot program called "The Encounter with Chabad. This program attracted Jewish students who lacked a religious education, but who were in search of their roots. And my father appealed to the deans to help these kids, as he wrote, "rekindle the innate spark of Jewish commitment that lies within the hearts of our youth."

In addition, my father sent a letter to each student who participated in "The Encounter with Chabad," in an effort to connect him or her to a regional Chabad office, where they could continue to learn more.

I was born in 1967, when these efforts were in full swing, so I did not know much about it all until my father took me to a farbrengen on the occasion of the Rebbe's 80th birthday, three days before Passover of 1982. I was fifteen at the time.

At that farbrengen, we were invited to speak with the Rebbe, and the first question he asked of my father was: "How is Binyamin doing?"

In addition to organizational issues, my father had also brought personal issues to the Rebbe. One of these was his concern as how to maintain a close link with my older brother Binyamin, who was forging his own path in life. The Rebbe remembered that from years ago and asked about it first thing.

The Rebbe recommended that my father invite Binyamin for the Passover Seder. He didn't say "one of the holidays" – he specified the Passover Seder.

This suggestion of the Rebbe proved to be very wise because the family really bonded around the Seder table – which gave off a holy aura – and my parents were so very happy to have their oldest son there.

My father always had a special affinity for Passover. The Rebbe must have sensed how important Passover was to my father when he advised him that this was the way to maintain a bond with his son, who was on his own path out in the world: "If you bring him home for Passover, you'll be nurturing his connection to Judaism."

This experience resonated so strongly with my brother that ten or fifteen years later, it was one of the core elements that brought him to re-embrace Jewish observance. To this day, Passover continues to be very important to him and to our entire family, and both my brother and I, as well as our sister Chana, maintain a close connection to Chabad. Today, this connection is continuing with our children, especially my son Noach who loves Chabad and stories of the Rebbe, and we have my father and the Rebbe to thank for that.

When our father passed away in 2005, many people reached out to us to let us know the impact that he'd had on their lives. "I got through university as a Jew because of your father," they would say, or "your father connected me with my Jewish roots." It was very gratifying to hear about my father's work and to consider the exponential growth that his efforts led to – because of the Rebbe's vision.

*Reprinted from the Jewish Educational Media My Encounter with the Rebbe oral history project. Mr. Yoni Nierenberg lives in Cedarhurst, Long Island, where he works as a corporate strategist in the tech, real estate and healthcare industries.*

## CUSTOMS

Are there any special customs associated with traveling?

A special "Prayer for Travelers" (Tefilat HaDerech) is said upon reaching the outskirts of the city from which you are traveling. If one will be away for more than one day, the prayer is said--without using G-d's name--each subsequent day after the morning prayers.

## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

LIKE ONE BODY

From a letter of the Rebbe

7 Marcheshvan, 5737

We have concluded the month of Tishrei, which is designated in our sacred texts as a "comprehensive month" for the entire year, and which is filled with a variety of festive days and experiences embracing all areas of a Jew's spiritual life throughout the whole year.

The month begins with awe and submission to the Heavenly Reign, the main point of Rosh Hashana: teshuva [repentance], the essence of the Ten Days of Return, and Yom Kippur; the performance of mitzvot with diligence and joy, culminating with the highest expression of joy with the Torah -- the essential aspects of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah.

It is time to recall the custom that was prevalent in many communities to announce at the termination of Simchat Torah: "And Jacob went on his way."

The point of this custom was to call attention to the fact that, inasmuch as the time has come to return to the routine of the daily life ("his way"), it behooves a Jew to know that he is Jacob, a Jew, and that he has his own way, a way that originates in Simchat Torah and is guided by the joy of Torah and mitzvot.

This means that whatever a Jew undertakes, even his ordinary day to day affairs, must always be conducted in the spirit of "All your actions should be for the sake of Heaven" and "Know Him (and serve Him) in all your ways."

The month of Tishrei is a "comprehensive month" also in the sense that in this month the Jew acquires "goods" for the whole year.

Immediately afterwards one must begin to "unpack" and draw from one's stock according to the needs of each day in all details.

One cannot consider himself free from

further obligation on the basis of the accomplishments of the comprehensive month.

Similarly, there are also "comprehensive mitzvot," although each and all mitzvot have to be fulfilled with the fullest measure of diligence and excellence. A comprehensive mitzva should be performed with still greater excellence and still greater diligence, for its performance is of greater concern to all Jews and the Jewish people as a whole.

One of the main comprehensive mitzvot is the mitzva of ahavat Yisrael (love of a fellow-Jew).

Of this mitzva it has been said that it is a "great principle of the Torah," and the "basis of the entire Torah."

The basis of this mitzva is the fact that all Jews constitute one entity, like one body, so much so that every Jew sees every other Jew as "his own flesh and blood."

Herein is also the explanation why the fulfillment of a mitzva by every individual Jew affects the whole Jewish people; how much more so the fulfillment of comprehensive mitzvot...

May G-d grant that all the good wishes which Jews wished one another for the new year should be fulfilled, that it be a good and sweet year in every respect, with the realization of the above-mentioned pattern of Jewish conduct:

"And Jacob" -- an appellation that includes all Jews, not only those who have already attained the higher status of "Israel" and "Jeshurun";

"Went" -- in accordance with the true concept of motion, namely, moving away from the previous state to a higher state; (for however satisfactory a state is, one should always strive to advance to an even higher state in all matters of Holiness);

"On his way" -- that "his way," even in non-obligatory matters, becomes a G-dly way, as stated immediately after:

"And G-d's angels met him" -- in keeping with every Jew's purpose in life to be an "angel" messenger -- of G-d, to make for Him an "abode" in this earthly world.

May all the above be done with joy, derived from Simchat Torah, and Jacob "will sing (and praise) the G-d of Jacob," and merit the speedy fulfillment of the continuation of the verse, "The glory and strength of the tzadik will be uplifted," the coming of our righteous Moshiach.

"G-d saw the light that it was good."

This teaches us that G-d yearned for Moshiach and Moshiach's deeds even before He created the world and hid this light for Moshiach and his generation under his Divine throne.

(Pesikta Rabbatei, ch. 36)

## 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 Friday, the 25th of Tishrei, is the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, the paradigm of ahavat Yisrael, beloved by the Jewish people for the tremendous and all-encompassing love he had for them.*

*At the very moment Reb Levi Yitzchak was born, miles away, the Baal Shem Tov served his disciples food and made a "l'chaim," saying: "A soul has just come into this world which will be a good advocate for our fellow-Jews."*

*And, in fact, stories abound about Reb Levi Yitzchak's tremendous ahavat Yisrael -- love for every Jew.*

*It was Reb Levi Yitzchak who, even when he saw a Jew openly transgressing, would find a way to judge a person meritorious and report the positive verdict to the Supreme Judge.*

*Reb Levi Yitzchak was very close to Rabbi Shneur Zalman (the "Alter Rebbe"), the first Chabad Rebbe; the two became "mechutanim" (in-laws) when their grandchildren married.*

*At that wedding, the Alter Rebbe delivered a discourse which ended, "G-d is righteous in all His ways": G-d is the Tzadik Above, and Reb Levi Yitzchak is the tzadik here below."*

*The Alter Rebbe was also known to say about Reb Levi Yitzchak that because of his abiding love of the Jewish people, whenever a Jew while reciting Psalms mentions Reb Levi Yitzchak's name, the letters of the Psalms will go up to the chamber of "merits" and will awaken mercy for that person and his entire household.*

*May we all emulate Reb Levi Yitzchak's boundless ahavat Yisrael, thereby enjoying a foretaste of the love we will exhibit toward our fellow Jews in the Messianic Era, and may it commence immediately.*

Shmuel Butman

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה'י מושקא

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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