

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"... I have called out to the L-rd and He answered me" (Psalm 120:1)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

This week we read two portions, *Matot* and *Maasei*. *Maasei* lists the travels of the Jewish people, from when they left Egypt until they entered Israel. There were a total of 42 places where they camped.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the 42 travels parallel the life of a Jewish person; each one of the travels represents a period in one's life, with different happenings and different challenges. Birth is the Exodus from Egypt all the way through the entry into Israel, the entry into the world of truth – the end of life.

This is difficult to understand, because some of the places where the Jews traveled are known for the terrible episodes that happened there, where the Jewish people went against G-d. Does it mean that we are condemned to an episode in our lives of sinfulness?

For example, one of the places where they camped was *Kivrot Hatava* – the Graves of Craving, where the Jewish people complained that they missed the food they had in Egypt. They even cried about it. They weren't happy with the manna, the heavenly food, they craved meat. G-d gave them a lot of meat, but many of the complainers died, and they were buried there. That is why it is called *Kivros Hatava*, which means, "the graves of those who craved."

Why would we want to go through that?

The Baal Shem Tov explains that every one of the places could have had two outcomes, positive or negative. And it was up to the Jewish people to choose between a positive or a negative outcome. It could have been "the graves of those who craved," or "the graves of the craving." They could have buried their desire, done what is good in the eyes of G-d, been grateful for being taken out of Egypt and for the holy manna that fell from heaven. And that was probably the true intended purpose of traveling there, but we failed.

The same is true for every one of us, we will have every one of these "travels," and it is our choice to make it what it ultimately will be, a positive or negative episode in our life.

I know how hard life can be, the challenges G-d throws our way are so great, they can be paralyzing and debilitating, we could feel that they are too much to handle and maybe they are. It can be a desire that you feel you can't overcome.

Right now, before the coming of Moshiach, it is especially difficult, it is the darkest time. It is so difficult to stay positive through our challenges, especially if they are prolonged.

In this situation, sometimes you will overcome and sometimes you may fail, but you should know that every time you overcome, G-d revels in your victory, it deals a great blow to the forces of evil and it brings Moshiach ever closer. And the greater the challenges you overcome, the more powerful is the effect.

It is enough of the suffering, may G-d send Moshiach, when "G-d will erase the tears from upon every face." May it happen soon.

Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, Volume 28

Coherent Light

There is an interesting phenomenon that effects us almost every single day, though most of us don't even realize it, and it's called "Coherent Light."

We benefit from the "coherent light" of lasers when we make use of supermarket check-out scanners, CD-ROMS, surgery, light shows and more.

Basically, it works like this: Light particles, known as photons, generally move in orbits. By using laser technology, individual photons can be directed into a specific orbit. These individual photons influence other nearby photons to assume similar orbits. They, in turn, influence other photons which influence others photons, until eventually, huge numbers of photons are traveling in a similar, highly organized fashion.

In layman's terms, there is a snowball effect.

This example from the sub-atomic world illustrates well the concept taught by our Sages in this week's *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers): "Rabbi Tarfun said, 'It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.'"

Far from being a call to leave work undone or incomplete, Rabbi Tarfun is giving us good advice to help us get out of a slump or reorient our thought processes.

Don't become overwhelmed by the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done before the goal is achieved. Focus, rather, on

beginning the job. Just worry about getting one "photon" in the right orbit. Influenced by the first photon of activity, the rest will fall in line.

Sometimes the hardest part of the job is simply beginning it. Don't procrastinate, Rabbi Tarfun urges us.

Instead of getting bogged down with how much needs to be changed, do one small thing to change the world (or yourself) and eventually, like all those teeny, tiny, photons, the whole world will fall in line.

The Talmud tells us that a person is never required to do more than he is able. G-d gives each person a mission which that person (and only that person) can fulfill. Together with the mission might come challenges, but they are challenges that that person is able to overcome.

Therefore, even if a person feels intimidated sometimes by the task at hand, he must know that, "He is not free to desist from it" – he must persevere. Even when he does not feel particularly motivated, or he does not derive pleasure and enjoyment from the work, he should persist. Full-hearted dedication will lead to personal fulfillment.

And, through such efforts, a person will reap tremendous benefits. For the culmination of conducting our lives in the manner described is also discussed by Rabbi Tarfun: "Know that the giving of the reward to the righteous (and the Jewish people are all righteous, according to the opening statement of *Pirkei Avot*) will be in the World to Come – in the Days of Moshiach."

SLICE OF LIFE

Eight Years in the Right Time by Rabbi Shimon Freundlich



At the end of May, my family and I travelled to Chengdu, China, to celebrate with Rabbi Dovi and Sarah Henig and their family at the “opshernish” of their son Mendel. Mendel was turning three-years-old. He would have his first haircut and be introduced to a number of *mitzvot* (commandments) he hadn’t been doing up to this point.

Like the Henigs in Chengdu, we are the Rebbe’s emissaries one thousand miles away in Beijing, China.

In the afternoon our families went together to the famous New Century Global Mall, the largest building in the world. The Mall houses an Intercontinental Hotel, an indoor beach with a water park and many different entertainment facilities for kids.

While walking in the mall, Rabbi Henig mentioned to me that there is a French cosmetic store that is using a Jewish holy book as part of their window display. It is a volume of *The Code of Jewish Law* (authored by Rabbi Joseph Karo in 1563 in Safed, Israel) and translated

into French. He further told me that he had tried a number of times to persuade the store manager to give it to him as a holy book should be studied, not serve as an artistic design of any kind. But he had not been successful. Each time, they very politely and respectfully told him that they belong to a French international chain called Kiehl’s and the store’s display is sent to them from headquarters including this book.

Hearing this I turned to Rabbi Henig and said, “Please take me to the store. I would like to try!” We came into the store and it was truly a magnificent display with multiple books on Jewish literature (not holy books) and then the lonesome book of the Code of Jewish law.

My heart sank as I saw this holy book sitting under a porcelain bowl of dried, sliced lemons. As I stared at it, the saleswoman at the counter started making her way over to me. I turned towards her and asked in Chinese if she had a business card, having decided to contact the owner to ask if I could have the book. The woman responded we don’t have a business card but if you want I can give you our store WeChat.

After scanning my code she messaged me in Chinese asking what I wanted. I explained that I am Jewish and the rabbi of the Beijing Jewish community. I explained that this book is one of our holiest books and it is very hard for me to see it as a display piece and unused. I went on to offer to pay for it.

The woman looked at me and asked, “If I give it to you, what will you do with it?”

I explained, “I will learn and teach from it.”

She asked, “Is this book for you?”

“No,” I replied, “it’s for the Jewish community of Beijing.”

With both hands she took it from under the bowl and handed it to me. I asked her how much she wanted me to pay for it. “Nothing,” she said, “it’s a gift for your community.”

I thanked her profusely and then suggested to my wife that we should buy something at

this exclusive store as a show of appreciation. It’s the most expensive single volume book I’ve ever bought, but it has now become my favorite!

After leaving the store I said to Rabbi Henig, “This is such Divine Providence!”

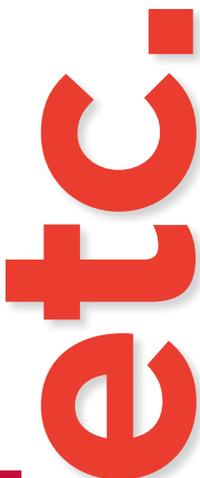
He looked puzzled and asked me what I was referring to. I had just remembered an interesting Jewish historical fact:

In 1509, Emperor Maximilian of Germany ordered that all Jewish books in the cities of Cologne and Frankfurt am Main be destroyed. This followed the request of Pfefferkorn, a baptized Jew, who claimed that Jewish literature was insulting to Christianity. The Jews appealed to the Emperor to reconsider this edict, and Maximilian agreed to investigate the matter. He appointed Johann Reuchlin, a famed German scholar, to conduct the investigation. The report issued by Reuchlin was very positive. He demonstrated that the books openly insulting to Christianity were very few and viewed as worthless by most Jews themselves. The other books were needed for Jewish worship, and contained much value in the areas of theology and science.

The Emperor rescinded his edict on 14 Sivan, 1510. And the date that this incident of sparing a Jewish book was taking place was 14 Sivan!

From Safed, Israel (where the Code of Jewish Law was written), to France (where this particular volume was printed), to Chengdu (where it was sent as a display piece), it will finally find a home in Beijing, China, and be used for Torah study. Thank you Rabbi and Rebbetzin Henig for this opportunity. May your incredible Chabad House and community thrive and continue to be an outstanding oasis for Jews and Judaism in Chengdu, China.

Rabbi Shimon and Dini Freundlich are the Rebbe’s emissaries in Beijing, China since 2001. They have built a Jewish infrastructure starting from scratch to serve the 2,000 Jews who have settled there to take advantage of the city’s surging economic development as well as traveling businesspeople.
www.chabadbeijing.com



Deepest Synagogue

The world’s deepest heavy-rail passenger station and the fourth deepest underground station in the world – the Jerusalem Yitzhak Navon Rail Station has designated a space for a synagogue. Located 260 feet below street level, the Rebbe’s emissary Rabbi Yeshayahu Weiss will run the Mesilat David Hamelech synagogue.

Healthy in Body, Mind and Spirit

A guide to good health based on the teachings of the Rebbe, *Healthy in Body, Mind and Spirit*, includes excerpts of a wide-ranging collection of letters and talks on maintaining mental well-being. Masterfully translated by Rabbi Sholom B. Wineberg, among the topics are mental health, conquering anxiety, healing through meditation and more. Published by Sichos In English, sie.org



TODAY IS...

1 Av

The unique quality of Mashiach is that he will be humble. Though he will be the ultimate in greatness, for he will teach Torah to the Patriarchs and to Moshe Rabeinu (alav hashalom),¹ still he will be the ultimate in humility and self-nullification, for he will also teach simple folk.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

2 Menachem Av, 5734 (1974)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 1st.

The reply in detail to the contents of your letter you will no doubt have received from your father, with whom I discussed it at some length. Nevertheless, I want to put down in writing some of the points and briefly at any rate.

First of all, I am grateful to note your concern, indeed profound concern, for your parents. This does not surprise me, of course, knowing your father and your upbringing. But it is nevertheless gratifying to see it expressed in a letter.

As for the subject matter of your letter, it is surely unnecessary to point out to you that when one thinks about the well-being of any person, including above all, his inner harmony and peace, one must obviously think not in terms of the immediate days and weeks, but also how it will be in the long run. This should be the consideration in regard to all affairs, but especially so when it is a question of where to settle down.

This is a very serious question even when one is at the crossroads, and much more so when one has already been settled in a place and contemplates changing it.

Now, with regard to your father, and knowing him, I have no doubt that he could feel in his element only in a place where he can fully utilize the knowledge which he has acquired and the qualities which G-d has bestowed upon him, that is, to utilize them in the fullest measure for the benefit of the many.

By comparison with this, personal amenities – and I mean this also in a spiritual sense – are not the decisive factor, and perhaps no factor at all.

All the above would be true even if it was a matter of conjecture. But in this case, after he has been so successful in his accomplishments in the past, there is no room for any doubt whatever as to the importance of this overriding consideration.

On the basis of what has been said above, supported by what you and all the other members of the family have seen of your father's *hatzlocho* [success] not only in your city, but South Africa as a whole, you will surely realize without any shadow of a doubt that your father will feel in his element and be truly happy if he continues his present situation in your country.

Moreover, it is surely unnecessary to bring special proof that the trend of assimilation, even assimilation in its coarsest form, namely intermarriage, is still very strong in all of South Africa, and that the work and fight to turn back this trend will still be required for a long time.

When one thinks about the well-being of any person, including above all, his inner harmony and peace, one must obviously think not in terms of the immediate days and weeks, but also how it will be in the long run.

Fortunately, experience has shown that where there is a suitable and determined person with courage and determination to guide the young generation, the response is gratifying, and often highly gratifying. This has also been the experience of your father, who has succeeded, with G-d's help, to literally save many Jewish men and women from complete assimilation and to lead them in the way of G-d within the Jewish fold.

To return to you, I of course inquired from your father about your activities, as well as about those of the other children, in the spreading of *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism]

May G-d grant strength in accordance with the saying of our Sage, "He who has 100, desires 200, and having achieved 200, desires 400." If ambition grows with achievement, even in material things, how much more should this be the case in matters of the spirit, which are the essential aspect of Jewish life.

I trust that you have read about the Five Mitzvah Campaigns which I have been urging recently, also pointing out that Jewish daughters and women have their part in these activities, and a very important part. I am confident that you and your friends are taking an active part in them.

P.S. Inasmuch as I understand that your letter was written with your father's knowledge, I am sending him a copy of my reply.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av (the first day of the month of Av) is associated with the greatest descent, the destruction of the Holy Temple. Within it, however, is also the potential for

the highest ascent which will be realized in the Messianic Age, when the fast days will be transformed into days of joy and celebration. Since the descent commemorated on Tisha B'Av is greater than that of any of the other fast days, it is self-understood that, ultimately, the ascent associated with it will also surpass that of the other fasts. (*The Rebbe, Rosh Chodesh Av, 5749-1989*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh Av (the first of Av), the yearzeit of Aaron the High Priest, brother of Moses and Miriam.

What was special about Aaron? Aaron was the epitome of ahavat Yisrael, love for his fellow Jew. He was characterized by "loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the created beings and bringing them close to the Torah." Throughout his life Aaron made special efforts to spread love, peace and harmony among all Jews, especially husbands and wives.

For this reason Aaron was especially beloved, and when he passed away he was mourned by "the entire House of Israel" - both men and women. This was because the love he showed and encouraged among Jews relates to the essential point of the Jewish soul that transcends all division and differences between individuals.

Lashon HaKodesh - the holy tongue, is unlike other languages in that its letters express the "essence" of what they describe. Accordingly, this concept of all-encompassing love is reflected in Aaron's (Aharon's) Hebrew name - alef-hei-reish-nun:

The alef stands for "ahava," "love," the reish for "rabba," "great," alluding to Aaron's tremendous ahavat Yisrael. The hei and the reish spell "har," "mountain," which is frequently used as a metaphor for love. The letters of the alef itself can be rearranged to spell "peleh," "wonder," indicating that Aaron's love was wondrous and unbounded in nature.

Lastly, the final letter of Aaron's name, the long nun, protrudes below the line, expressing how he extended himself to all Jews without distinction, even those whose behavior was not up to par. Because Aaron's love was unbounded, it had the potential to extend to every single person, regardless of individual nature.

Emulating Aaron's example, let us all resolve to love our fellow Jews simply because they are Jewish, thereby hastening Moshiach's immediate arrival.

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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Many years ago, in the time when the Holy Temple stood, there lived in Jerusalem two storekeepers named Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok and Abba Shaul ben Botnit.

The two men were neighbors and friends and had known each other most of their lives. But in addition to being friends, they shared a wonderful and rare character trait -- absolute and strict honesty.

It is related in the Talmud that as a favor to their fellow Jews, these two men would prepare stores of wine and oil before every holiday so that the people of Jerusalem would have what they needed to celebrate the holidays properly.

Tens of thousands of Jews would stream into Jerusalem for the holidays and would be welcomed into homes throughout the city. With so many guests, it was no wonder that their gracious hosts would sometimes run out of oil or wine during a festival.

Whenever that happened, they could go to Rabbi Elazar or Abba Shaul and take what they needed. Of course, no money would pass hands on a festival, but there would be no lack of those two necessities to prepare for the festive meals.

Even during the intermediate days of the pilgrimage festivals of Sukkot and Passover, the two generous merchants would prepare in advance and make their goods available to those in need so that they could spend their time studying Torah.

Not only did they practice these deeds of great kindness, but even on regular workdays they were outstanding in their adherence to the mitzva of honesty. When they would finish pouring the contents of one of their containers into a customer's container, they would sit their container on top of that of the customer and allow the dregs of the jug to drip into the customer's receptacle. Only then were they sure that they had given the customer everything that was due him.

Despite their stringencies, the two rabbis feared that a bit of oil and wine would still cling to the edges of the jugs. So what did they do? Each man had a special container into which he would pour the last tiny drops. Over many years, they accumulated three hundred barrels of oil and three hundred barrels of wine.

One day, they decided to bring all of these barrels to the Holy Temple. After all, they did not consider it their property, yet they could not give it to the customers either. They decided to consecrate it to the Holy Temple. When the porters arrived, they were met by the treasurers of the Temple.

"What have you brought?" they asked.

"We have brought three hundred barrels of wine and three hundred barrels of oil for use in the Holy Temple. It has taken us many years to accumulate it, allowing it to drip from the sides of our jugs. We did not want to benefit from anything which does not belong to us, and we couldn't give it to our customers."

"It was certainly not necessary to collect those small leftovers," remarked the treasurers. "Your customers understand that tiny drops adhere to the sides of your jugs, and they expect there to be some waste."

"Nevertheless," the men continued, "We don't want anything that is not rightfully ours."

"Since you wish to keep such a high standard, we will accept your offering. The oil and wine will be used for the good of the community. We will sell them and from the profits we will dig wells for the pilgrims to have water on the festivals. The residents of the city will also be able to use them. So you see, even your own customers will benefit from your offering, and your own minds can be at ease."

The two merchants left the precincts of the Holy Temple with hearts full of joy, knowing that they never departed from their customs of strict honesty and kindness.

Dedicated in Honor of
Mr. Joseph Evenhar

to dedicate an issue call (718) 776 6000

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes... 'when a man utters an oath' (Num. 30:2-3)

The word used here for tribes is "matot," which is a derivative of the word for "staff," denoting strength and firmness. In order to fulfill an oath, which means separating oneself and refraining from things which the Torah otherwise permits, we need the strength of a staff. (Tzemach Tzedek)

He shall not profane his words; everything that leaves his mouth he shall do (Num. 30:3).

Whoever is careful never to profane his words, and is particular to fulfill his commitments, to him is the verse applied, "Everything which leaves his mouth he shall do." That is, "He" - G-d will fulfill his every blessing and utterance. "The righteous decree and the Alm-ghty fulfills." (Avodat Yisrael)

Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel against the Midianites, after which you will be gathered to your people. (Num. 31:2)

Moses was told by G-d to lead the children of Israel in their war of vengeance against the Midianites. Yet, when Moses told the Israelites about the war, he told them it was because of G-d's vengeance that they were fighting. Why? If the Israelites would have thought they were fighting for their own vengeance, after which Moses would be gathered to his people, i.e. die, they would have told Moses they could forgive the Midianites, thus lengthening Moses' life. But, when Moses told them they were fighting for G-d's vengeance, they had no choice but to go to war. (Siftei Tzadikim)

These are the travels of the Israelites (Num. 33:1)

All of the 42 travels of the Jewish people can be found, in each and every detail, in a person's life starting with the day he is born until the day he dies. (The Baal Shem Tov)

To execute the vengeance of G-d on Midian (Num. 31:3)

The name Midian comes from the root "madon," meaning quarrel and strife. Midian symbolizes contention and unwarranted hatred. Therefore, the war against Midian is truly "the vengeance of G-d." For, there is nothing as opposed to G-d as dissent and needless hatred. (Sefer HaMaamarim)



8:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
29 Tammuz/July 9
Torah Portions Matot-Massei
Ethics Ch 2
Shabbat ends 9:17 pm