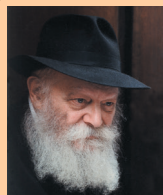


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

Our Sages stated: "Everything that happened to our Ancestors is a sign for their children." The events of our ancestors' lives were not just a foreshadowing of what would happen to the Jewish people throughout history, but a source of strength and encouragement that Jews have called upon throughout the ages.

We read in this week's Torah portion, Toldot: "There was a famine in the land." G-d appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go to Egypt. Dwell in the land which I will tell you of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you."

When G-d commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, Isaac had been willing and he was thereafter considered by G-d to be "a perfect offering." It was therefore inappropriate for him to leave the holy soil of Israel for the lesser sanctity of other countries. G-d forbade him to go elsewhere despite the famine that gripped the land.

G-d's command to Isaac contains a lesson for us, his descendants: The only rightful place for the Jewish people is not in exile but in the Holy Land. Jews can never be truly happy in exile, for they know that they are not where they belong. Our perpetual hope and plea to G-d is that He bring us back to the land of Israel, as we pray three times each day, "May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy."

Years before, in the time of Abraham, there was also a famine in Israel. But unlike Isaac, Abraham went down to Egypt, carrying the knowledge of the One true G-d even there. Abraham brought everyone with whom he came in contact under the wings of the Divine Presence, drawing them nearer to their Creator.

Isaac, however, never once left the borders of Israel. And, even within Israel, Isaac's emphasis was "inward." Isaac did not actively go out to draw people closer to G-d. His focus was more on achieving self-perfection.

Abraham and Isaac teach us two different paths in the service of G-d:

From Abraham we derive the strength to go outward, to reach out to other Jews. Abraham taught us how to spread the knowledge of G-d wherever we go, to disseminate Torah throughout the world. Even a Jew whose primary concern is Torah study and the perfection of his own path of worship must set aside time to involve himself with others.

Isaac, on the other hand, taught us the importance of turning "inward," and it is from him that we derive the strength to involve ourselves in Torah study. For even a Jew whose primary focus is on worldly affairs (by means of which he draws others closer to G-d and brings holiness into the world) must occasionally withdraw from these concerns to devote himself to learning and self-betterment.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 25

I Lost All My Credit Cards!

By Rabbi Uriel Vigler

Shabbat was over. I had just spent an incredible 25 hours surrounded by my siblings, parents, and way too much food, celebrating my nephew's wedding. We gathered in Israel for the weekend, during which we laughed, sang, bonded and relished in the nostalgia of the old days, when we all lived together.

Then Shabbat ended and it was time to check out of the hotel. The receptionist smiled and said, "That'll be 60 shekels for parking." Simple enough. I reached for my credit card, except ... it wasn't there.

No problem, I thought. Probably in my jacket. Nope. I opened and reopened every suitcase and checked every pocket and zipper compartment, but without success. My three credit cards, my Global Entry card, and my driver's license were all gone.

My siblings joined in, forming a full-blown search party. Meanwhile, my brother, with whom I'd shared a room, was having his own meltdown. "I can't find my car keys!" he wailed.

So we both went back to our room for one final desperate sweep. I got down on my knees, checking under the beds and behind the furniture, and that's when I discovered that I had his keys in my pocket!

Apparently, I had put them there thinking they were mine, while my own car keys were safely with the valet. So now we had his keys, but I still had no credit card and no license.

Then my oldest brother, in his

calm, wise, and slightly annoyed way, suggested: "Why don't you call the hotel where you stayed Thursday night in Petach Tikva?"

"No chance," I said. "I never lose things." (Time to eat my words.) But I called anyway. And guess what? "Yes, we found your credit card and license!" the receptionist said cheerfully.

Relief flooded through me, and best of all, I was headed right back to Petach Tikva, to that very hotel again, that night. So what did I learn from the experience?

1. Don't panic; remember that Hashem is in charge. He always has a plan and things will work out exactly as intended. We are told Hashem always provides the cure before the illness, and indeed, He arranged for my cards to be safe before I even noticed and started worrying.
2. Give charity. There is a rich and long-held tradition to give charity when something important is missing. In the merit of helping others, we hope to locate the lost item.
3. Be mindful where you're searching. In life, we often search for meaning, happiness, or purpose in all the wrong places. When we focus on living a G-dly life, learning Torah, doing mitzvot, and helping others, that's when we find what we're really looking for.
4. Your true identity is never lost. Sometimes we lose sight of who we are, but our real self, our soul, is always there at our core, waiting for us to tap back in and rediscover it.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Talmud Surprise in Shandong Province, China

By Rabbi Shimon Freundlich

As part of my work as a Shliach in China, I regularly visit factories that produce kosher food for export. Jews around the world rely on kosher products, and since so many ingredients are made in China, we help ensure that what reaches kosher consumers truly meets halachic standards.

These visits are part of my ongoing effort to represent several kosher certifying agencies and support factories in maintaining full kosher compliance.

Today I visited four factories. Each one had its own rhythm, its own smell, and its own story. At every site, I observed the processes carefully for kosher compliance, as usual, walking through production lines, checking ingredients, examining equipment, and reviewing records. But in the fourth factory, something remarkable happened.

There was nothing unusual about the plant itself. It was clean, organized, and efficient, typical of the well-run facilities scattered across China's industrial regions. The surprise came not from the machinery or the process, but from a person. The factory's representative responsible for kosher

certification, whom I had never met before, made a deep impression on me.

From the moment I arrived, I sensed something different about him. Factory staff are generally polite and respectful, but this man displayed an extra measure of reverence, not just professionalism, but almost a quiet awe. I later learned that he had recently been transferred to this department, which explained why our paths hadn't crossed until today.

After completing my inspection and verifying that everything was in order, I gathered my notes and prepared to leave. But before I could step out, he approached me with visible excitement and asked if he could show me something. Intrigued, I agreed. He led me to a small closet behind his desk, opened it carefully, and took out two books in Chinese.

To my astonishment, both were about the Talmud.

He held them as if they were sacred treasures. With a proud smile, he explained that these books are his constant source of wisdom and that he studies them regularly for inspiration. The titles read Talmud Bavli and The Book of Wisdom, compiled by a Chinese scholar named Qiuquan and published by the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Press.

When I opened the books, I noticed that they didn't cite the actual references for the passages they quoted, but the content was fascinating nonetheless. Each page reflected deep admiration for Jewish learning, moral reasoning, and the life lessons derived from our ancient texts.

I asked him to share one of the stories he particularly liked. He eagerly turned to a passage and began recounting a tale, one that, interestingly enough, comes not from the Talmud itself but from the Midrash. It told of a Talmudic sage often mentioned throughout our literature: Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel.

This is the story he shared:

Once, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel called his attendant Tavi and said,

"Please go to the market and bring me the best food you can find."

Tavi went and soon returned, holding beef tongue.

Rabbi Shimon thanked him and then asked him to go again, this time to bring something bad.

A short while later, Tavi returned, and again, in his hand, tongue.

"I don't understand," Rabbi Shimon said. "When I asked for the best food, you brought me tongue, and now when I ask for bad food, you bring the same thing?"

Tavi, the clever attendant, replied, "Exactly. From the tongue comes the good, and from the tongue comes the bad. When it is good, nothing is better than it; when it is bad, nothing is worse than it."

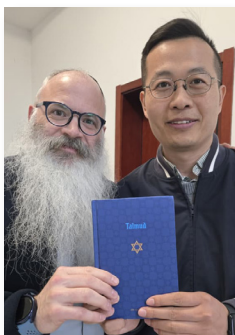
(Midrash Rabbah, Parashat Behar)

The story's simplicity hides its depth. Our words have power, to heal or to wound, to uplift or to destroy. What amazed me most, though, was not just the wisdom of the story but who was telling it: a Chinese factory manager in a remote corner of Shandong province, passionately studying lessons from our Sages.

Standing there, thousands of miles from home, I felt a sudden, unexpected connection, one that transcended language, culture, and geography. Here was a man who found personal meaning in the teachings of our ancestors, whose lives and lessons have shaped Jewish thought for over two thousand years.

One never knows where inspiration will come from. Today, it came from a Chinese gentleman in Shandong province, deeply engaged with our 2,000-year-old literature, and in turn inspiring me. Encounters like these remind me that the light of wisdom travels far beyond its origin, touching hearts in ways we could never imagine.

May we all continue to be shining examples of passion and learning, wherever we travel.



Rabbi Shimon Freundlich and a Chinese factory worker, holding the Talmud.



New Shluchim to Rancho Mirage, California

As the Coachella Valley sees an influx of young Jewish families Chabad of Rancho Mirage is excited to welcome Rabbi Sholom & Sarale Posner as Youth Directors.

Under the direction of Rabbi Shimon and Chaya Posner, together with Rabbi Benny and Chani Lew, Chabad of Rancho Mirage has grown into a vibrant oasis of Jewish life. Although often seen as an older community, the Coachella Valley has seen an uptick in young Jewish families these past couple of years, and CKids attendance has grown by 40%. With many family residences being built in the area, including "Storyliving by Disney -Cotino" right across the street from Chabad, this number is sure to grow.

They both come with a shared passion for Jewish education, outreach, and warm authentic connection. Their energy and experience will guide them in leading our Hebrew School, camp, CTeen, and Kosher Food Club, expanding programming and reaching out to more Jewish families.

What's In A Name

CHAGAI means "my festival." Chagai was one of the last of the prophets (Chagai 1:1). Chagai was one of five people who hid the vessels and treasures of the first Holy Temple before it was destroyed. A later Chagai was a fourth-century Palestinian scholar. (Kidushin 3:2)

CHEDVA means "delight." The last of the seven blessings at the Wedding ceremony reads "Blessed are You...who created joy and happiness, bride and groom, gladness, jubilation, cheer and delight (chedva), love, friendship, harmony and fellowship..."



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

12 Cheshvan, 5711 [1950]

...With regard to your question concerning the shidduch [marriage prospect] for your sister-in-law with a bachelor of about 35 years, I would suggest that inquiries be made to find out why he did not marry before, and if the reasons are such that do not affect a Jewish home, it would be advisable for the two people to get better acquainted and ascertain what mutual attractions they have.

I was very pleased to read in your letter that your son desires to study for semichah [rabbinic ordination] and that the Rosh Yeshivah [dean of the yeshiva] regards him as fitting for it. I was also glad to hear that he devotes time to strengthening Yiddishkeit [Judaism] among the youth. I am sure you will encourage him to continue along this course and will help him achieve his ambition.

As to the question of a shidduch for your son, about which you write that you are afraid to do anything in this matter, not knowing if it would be suitable, the Torah teaches us not to rely on miracles where things can and ought to be approached in natural ways and means. However, while doing so it is necessary to bear in mind that these so-called "natural" ways and means are also miracles ordained by G-d, especially in the case of marriage, as it is said in Proverbs: An intelligent wife is a gift from G-d. At any rate, an attempt should be made in the usual way, and G-d will certainly lead it in such a way as to ensure a suitable and

fitting wife for your son.

As to your apology for troubling me and your question whether you can do anything in return, this matter cannot be termed "trouble." You may have heard the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov as to how the three loves - love of G-d, love of Israel, and love of the Torah - are one, and a means to "Thou shalt love G-d thy G-d" is "Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself." There is no question of trouble here at all. May G-d grant that every one of us, including you, do all you and every one of us can to help others.

However, since you have offered to do something in return, and everything is connected with Divine Providence, I am enclosing herewith a copy of the Talk of Shabbos Bereishis. I call your attention to pars. 21 and 22, where you will find some suggestions as to what you could do to strengthen Torah and Yiddishkeit. As to what this would mean to me - I refer you to the Rambam (Maimonides' Hilchoth Teshuvah, ch. 3;4) where he states that "Everyone should regard the world on the basis that the good and bad deeds are equally balanced. Thus, through a bad deed one tips the scale of the bad side, G-d forbid, and through a good deed one tips the scale on the good side." Therefore, if you follow the suggestions in the above-mentioned paragraphs, you will increase the merits of the entire world, thus benefiting me also.

It would interest me to know what "fixed times" you have for the study of the Torah in general, and no doubt for the study of Chassidus also.

As already mentioned, you need not hesitate in writing to me at any time, but you must be patient if my reply is delayed because of pressure of work.

I hope to hear good news from you.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

If a Jew has no merits except that he hopes in Redemption, he is fit to be redeemed.

(Yalkut Tehillim, Remez 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

Every year at this time we read about one of the most famous sets of twins in history, Jacob and Esau. As any child can tell you, Jacob was the "good" one and Esau was the "bad" one, and the two brothers never got along with each other. But the Torah is not a history book; Torah means "teaching," it contains eternal lessons that are always relevant and have a direct impact on our daily lives.

On a deeper level, Jacob and Esau represent two ways of looking at the world, two different life styles that even modern man is forced to choose between. Esau's attitude was "carpe diem" - seize the day, with no thought for tomorrow. Jacob, by contrast, lived a more elevated existence, recognizing life's spiritual dimension.

According to Chasidic philosophy, every Jew is made up of two souls: an animal soul and a G-dly soul. Like Jacob and Esau, they too never get along, and are in constant conflict. The animal soul is interested only in the physical; like an animal that walks on four legs, its head is focused downward rather than up at the sky. The only thing that matters is the here and now. The G-dly soul, however, looks upward. Why am I here? What's the real purpose of my life?

As we learn from this week's Torah reading, the true birthright belongs to Jacob, and our function as Jews is to elevate the world by imbuing it with G-dliness. The battle will always be there, but it's a battle we can win by choosing wisely.

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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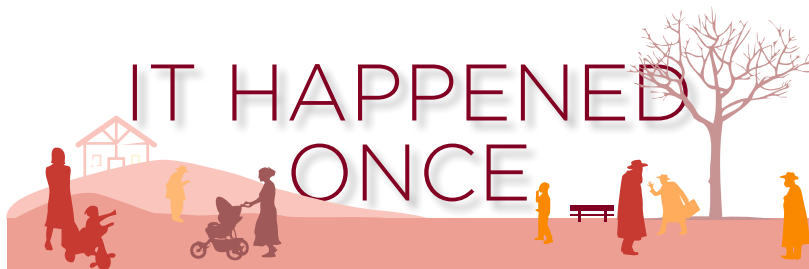
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IT HAPPENED ONCE

Yaakov was a clever young man, who lived in a small village in White Russia. He studied Torah assiduously, and indeed, amassed a huge body of knowledge. In the same village lived several Lubavitcher Chasidim, who had long been trying to convince the talented lad to come with them to the Rebbe.

But Yaakov, who was not raised in a Chasidic home, was not interested. "I don't need a Rebbe," he would answer them. "If I come across a problem in the Talmud, I just keep studying till I solve it myself."

Nonetheless, one time his curiosity got the better of him, and he accompanied the Chasidim to the Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dovber (known as the Rebbe Rashab). They arrived in Lubavitch on Friday. That Shabbat, Yaakov found himself in an unprecedented state of spiritual elevation.

After Shabbat, as they prepared to leave, Yaakov wrote a short note to give to the Rebbe, as was customary. He trembled as he waited his turn for a private audience. When Yaakov entered the Rebbe's room he found the Rebbe sitting and studying a book. The Rebbe did not lift his eyes to look at him. Yaakov walked to the desk and placed his note on it. The Rebbe gave no sign that Yaakov was even in the room.

Suddenly the Rebbe stood up and paced back and forth. As if talking to himself, he began to speak in Russian: "On! Nyet on!" ("It's him! It's not him!") On! Nyet on!..." The Rebbe paused for a long while then pronounced: "Nyet on!" He then sat down and resumed his study.

Yaakov left the Rebbe's chamber confused and puzzled. Not only had the Rebbe ignored him, but his strange words kept reverberating in his head. Yaakov did not know what to make of it.

One day Yaakov was reading the newspaper when he noticed a contest sponsored by the University of Petersburg. Whoever solved the mathematical problem printed in the paper would win 300 rubles. Yaakov saw the contest as a personal challenge. He studied the problem and sent off his answer by mail. A short time later a letter arrived from the University informing him that he had won. Enclosed with the letter was a personal invitation from the head of the mathematics department, and a train ticket.

Yaakov traveled to Petersburg. The professors were initially surprised by Yaakov's traditional Jewish attire, but quickly discovered his rare genius. After awarding him the monetary prize, they offered him a full scholarship to the University, which Yaakov accepted.

In the beginning Yaakov maintained his Jewish way of life. But the more he progressed academically and socially at the University, the further away from Judaism he wandered. The external trappings were the first to go; eventually Yaakov completely abandoned Judaism.

A few years later Yaakov was appointed as a full professor. Of course, beforehand, Yaakov had to renounce his Judaism and convert to Christianity. But he didn't blink an eye as he furthered his academic career.

As time passed, however, Yaakov's conscience began to bother him. Although he deeply regretted his actions, he was unable to rectify the situation. In those days, a gentile who converted to Judaism or a Jew who accepted Christianity but later rescinded were subject to the death penalty.

By that time Yaakov had become an accomplished hunter; the sport served to divert his attention from his frequent pangs of conscience. One day while out in the field, Yaakov's horse began to gallop uncontrollably. The reins were useless, and it was clear that barring a miracle, these were the last seconds of Yaakov's life. At that moment Yaakov resolved to repent and return to G-d. Incredibly, the horse stopped galloping and came to a halt.

That night Yaakov packed a small bundle and left his house, leaving everything behind him for good. He wandered from city to city and from town to town, terrified of being discovered. His return to Judaism had endangered his very life, but his resolve to live as a Jew was unwavering.

One day, while Yaakov was dining at an inn in a remote village, the police burst in and began to check the patrons' identity papers. Yaakov, who was not carrying any identification, was taken into custody.

At the police station, the officer kept scrutinizing the photograph in his hand, then glancing up at Yaakov. From the corner of his eye Yaakov saw that it was a picture of himself as he used to look at the University: clean-shaven, nattily attired, and with a carefully styled lock of hair on his forehead.

The investigator was clearly hesitant. Unable to decide he began to mutter under his breath. "On!" ("It is him!") A second later he changed his mind. "Nyet on!" ("It's not him!") "On!" "Nyet on!" Back and forth he went, studying the photograph and Yaakov in turn. "Nyet on!" he ultimately concluded, and ordered that Yaakov be freed.

Yaakov left the police station flabbergasted; he knew where he had last heard those very words. Immediately he set off for Lubavitch, and remained there for the rest of his life.



THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah portion



Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you (Gen. 26:3)

The Torah uses the word "sojourn" instead of "dwell" to teach us that one must always consider oneself a temporary resident of this world. "The Shechina (G-dly presence) does not move away from one who considers himself a stranger in this world," we are taught. The second part of G-d's promise, "I will be with you," will be fulfilled when Jacob thinks of himself in this manner. (*Vayechakem Shlomo*)

And they departed from him in peace (Gen. 26:31)

Even after having partaken of a meal with the tzadik, Isaac, Avimelech still departed convinced of his own self-importance. This is something that a Jew would have been unable to do. A Jew, when in the presence of a tzadik, realizes his own shortcomings and is humbled. (*Reb Bunim*)

And it came to pass when Isaac was old, and his eyes were too dim to see (Gen. 27:1)

Rashi explains that Isaac's eyesight was ruined by the smoke of the incense offered up by Esau's wives to their idols. But why was he the only one in the household to be adversely affected by the smoke? "Isaac was too pure to behold evil," our Sages comment. He was therefore unable to withstand witnessing the idolatry of his daughters-in-law. (*Likutei Sichot*)

Dedicated in memory of a dear friend
of the Lubavitch Youth Organization
Mr. Martin Zimet, OBM



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