



The time for morning prayers had passed, and all the other congregants had filtered out of the shul, ready to begin their daily tasks. Only one Jew lingered, wrapped in talit and tefilin, buried deep in his own thoughts. In truth, he hadn't even begun the prayers, so entangled was he in the doubts that had haunted him for months. Now, the black depression – created by his own evil inclination – had so overtaken him, that he couldn't extricate himself. His mind wandered from one question to another; no foreign idea was barred entrance to his mind. And so, the morning passed imperceptibly, and the Jew slid further and further into the dark pit he had created for himself.

Suddenly he was roused from his trance by the touch of someone's hand on his shoulder. He looked up, and to his utter surprise, the Baal Shem Tov stood gazing down at him. "Do you think that by thinking and questioning G-d's ways you will find the answers? Don't you recall the words of King David who said, 'For I am ignorant and know not; in simplicity I followed You and I am with You always.'

"A Jew must totally submit himself to G-d, serve Him and follow His commandments, and for no other reason than because the orders come from his Creator, not because of his own philosophical conclusions. When you begin by accepting the 'yoke of Heaven,' then, and only then, will you achieve true spiritual enlightenment. And you, too, will conclude as did King David, 'I am with You always.' First perform the mitzvot (commandments), the Divine instructions for life. Then you may think about them and delve into them to the best of your limited human ability."

The Jew sat spellbound by the Baal Shem Tov's words, which entered his heart. "This is my advice to you," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "Put aside your intellect; forget it and just begin doing. Accept the fact that G-d is our King and then put all of your strength into doing mitzvot – do them without thinking too much. If you follow my instructions, I promise that you will surely attain true wisdom and understanding."

As suddenly as he had appeared, the Baal Shem Tov disappeared. The startled Jew was trembling from head to toe, but he lost no time in praying the morning service with a fervor that he had never before experienced. The depressing thoughts and doubts which had been his steady companions for months had vanished.

The Jew was left to puzzle the hows and whys of the Baal Shem Tov's sudden appearance and equally abrupt disappearance. "How did the Besht know exactly what I was thinking, exactly what was troubling me?" he wondered. "It must be just as he told me, not everything is according to human logic; there are many things which lie outside our ken. And certainly the ways of G-d are among those things."

That very same day the Jew packed up his belongings and made the trek to Medzibozh. There he became one of the Baal Shem Tov's most devoted students.

Every night, after reciting the last blessing of the bedtime prayers, the tzadik, Reb Yitzchok of Drohovitz, lay his head on his pillow, closed his eyes, and fell fast asleep. Why was this night different? Why did his soul refuse to ascend to the celestial realms? He couldn't figure it out, but tossed and turned in his bed; sleep refusing to come to him.

What is one to do in such a circumstance? Why, any pious Jew, and certainly a tzadik like Reb Yitzchok of Drohovitz would take stock of the day's events – an "accounting of one's soul" – for perhaps there was something in his speech, his deed or even his thought which contained a spiritual blemish. And so, Reb Yitzchok sat up in his bed and began pondering his day, minute by minute, word by word and thought by thought. And then, it came to him in a flash! Of course, that was it!

That afternoon, he had overheard a conversation in which the Baal Shem Tov had been maligned by a certain Jew. Reb Yitzchok was about to reprimand the speaker, but then, for some reason unclear to him now, he refrained and was silent.

Reb Yitzchok knew what he must do. He quickly jumped from his bed and put on his clothes. He saddled his horse and rode through the night, never stopping until he dismounted in Medzibozh in front of the Baal Shem Tov's shul.

As Reb Yitzchok entered the shul, the morning service was in progress. He stood

there for a few minutes contemplating the scene, when a strange thing happened – someone called his name. He was being honored by being called up to the Torah. "Funny," he thought, "no one knows me here, I wonder why I am being called," but he stepped forward to the bima.

When the prayers ended, Reb Yitzchok had no chance to beg forgiveness. The Baal Shem Tov strode up to him, hand extended and said quite simply, "Yisroel forgives you from the bottom of his heart."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And it shall come to pass, when you come into the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you (Deut. 26:1)

The Jews' entrance into the land of Israel is symbolic of the soul's descent into the body and its being forced to live in the physical world. The Midrash teaches that the words "and it shall come to pass" are always used to denote something of great joy. Though the G-dly soul is saddened when it temporarily leaves its place under G-d's throne to dwell in a Jewish body for a certain number of years, it is a joyous occurrence, since the descent is to elevate the corporeal world through doing mitzvot. (*The Rebbe*)

And you shall go to the place which the L-rd your G-d will choose to place His name there (Deut. 26:2)

A Jew does not travel the face of the earth of his own volition; Divine Providence leads him from location to location for the sole purpose of "placing His name there" – to sanctify the name of G-d in that particular place. (*Hayom Yom*)

You will be crazy from the sight of your eyes which you will see (Deut. 28:34)

Coveting everything one sees is indeed a terrible curse, for it is the root cause of all the other punishments that are mentioned in this Torah portion, eventually leading to "you will be only oppressed and crushed always." (*Ohr HaTorah*)

Because you would not serve the L-rd your G-d with joy and with gladness of heart... therefore, you will serve your enemies (Deut. 29:47)

We see from this that joy is such an important part of a Jew's service of G-d that the harshest punishment of "you will serve your enemies" is not meted out for a deficiency in the service itself, but for worshipping G-d without joy and vitality. When the Jew is happy, G-d is happy, as it were, and even the harshest decrees are annulled – analogous to an earthly king granting amnesty to his prisoners when he is in a cheerful mood. (*The Rebbe*)



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20 Elul, 5782
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The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוד ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"My help comes from G-d, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Ki Tavo*, begins with the commandment of *Bikurim*, bringing the first fruits of the seven species of the Land of Israel to G-d. The first fruits were brought to the Temple, received by the *Kohen* (priest) and placed next to the altar. When giving it to the *Kohen*, the person made a declaration referencing that our ancestor Jacob was saved from Laban, and that the Jewish people were saved from the Egyptians.

There were other great salvations that G-d did for the Jewish people. Why specifically are these two events part of the *Bikurim*?

About *Bikurim*, the Torah says, "It will be, when you come to the land... and you take possession of it and settle it." Rashi explains that bringing *Bikurim* is required only after conquering and dividing the land of Israel. In other words, once they took up permanent residence and began enjoying the bounty of the land they were obligated to bring *Bikurim*.

There are two other mentions of permanent residence: The 20 years Jacob lived with Laban, and the 210 years the Jews lived in Egypt. But in those cases, we didn't get to enjoy the bounty of the land. Thus, we mention them in the *Bikurim* declaration to show how grateful we are that we can enjoy the bounty in contrast to the times when we couldn't.

On a deeper level, the fruit refers to the soul as it is Above; when brought as *Bikurim* it refers to the soul within the body. The idea of bringing *Bikurim* is to strengthen the bond between the soul and its source Above. When we bring *Bikurim* (the first and the best), like with any offering, we bring ourselves closer. And when we recite the declaration, verbalizing our gratitude to G-d, we draw down the first and the best part (the "*Bikurim*") of the soul.

This will give us a deeper understanding of the words of the declaration. The two events mentioned, Jacob with Laban and the exile in Egypt, both begin with a descent, being drawn down from the highest state of holiness into the lowest places. But the descent is followed by an ascent, being elevated to the highest level, and in the case of Egypt, to the point that G-d revealed Himself to us at Mount Sinai.

The point of drawing down from the highest and holiest into the lowest, is to affect it and make it ready for G-d to be able to dwell there openly as well. This is the idea of *Bikurim*, to make working the land a holy endeavor, by drawing down G-dliness into the mundane work we do. And of course, we will reap the fruits of our labor, turning our mundane efforts into the first and the best for G-d.

It is not enough to bring ourselves closer to Hashem through our study of Torah and the performance of mitzvahs, but we must also draw G-dliness down into the mundane, daily activities that we do, until they become holy as well.

We will reap the fruits of our labor when we merit the ultimate revelation with the coming of 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.

With Shema Yisrael

We are on the threshold of a New Year, a year that bids farewell to the Jewish Sabbatical (*Shemita*) year and welcomes in the *Hakhel* (Ingathering) year.

In Temple times, during the *Hakhel* year, the entire Jewish people would assemble in Jerusalem during the Sukot holiday to hear the king read the fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy (*Devarim*).

Within this holy book are contained the sacred words that Jews throughout the ages have recited- living with them as a constant reminder of what we believe and dying with them as an affirmation of that belief: "*Shema Yisrael Ad-nai El-heinu Ad-nai Echad* – Hear Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One."

On the upcoming holiday of Rosh Hashana, Jews will assemble in synagogues throughout the world. We will listen to the sounding of the shofar and recite prayers of supplication, praise and thanksgiving. Among those prayers will be the ancient words of *Shema Yisrael*.

Ten days later, on Yom Kippur, at the close of the final prayers of the holy day in *Neila*, Jews will call out together in unison "*Shema Yisrael*."

This upcoming *Hakhel* year is a year of Jewish unity and togetherness. In ancient times, when millions of Jews gathered in the holy city of Jerusalem, it is told that they never once said, "There is not enough space." Jewish teachings explain this means that despite the fact that conditions

were crowded and the holy city was teeming with people, no one complained. Everyone felt that he had "space"; each individual of the millions of individuals congregated there was given "space" by his neighbor.

Perhaps that sense of "space" came from every Jew trying to accommodate his neighbor rather than concerning himself with his



own needs and comfort level.

This year when we gather in our synagogues, within our communities, as families, or even simply when an individual gathers together his personal emotional, spiritual and intellectual faculties, let's do it with the idea of enabling our neighbors to have their "space." And let's do it with the words of "*Shema Yisrael*," the ultimate affirmation of our faith and Jewish unity permeating our every action.

If we live with this reality, then surely Moshiach will come and usher in the time when there will be true peace and no longer will anyone have to die with these words on their lips.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a year of good health, livelihood and personal and universal Redemption.

SLICE OF LIFE

Creating Space for the Blessing
by Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman



This summer, like most previous summers, promised to be another frustrating summer of sadness, bleakness and feeling left out for one of our precious children. For reasons known only to G-d, this child struggles with sleeping away from home and for a few years there were day-camp options, but for this year the social death was guaranteed.

All his friends were going to overnight camp. They lived, breathed and discussed it in the months leading up to summer and he knew that while he desired it greatly, this was a world he just could not enter.

While his friends were running and playing at overnight camp, he'd be stuck at day camp with no one he knew well and not doing what he really wanted to be doing.

Yet, miracles and perseverance are the two wings of the bird that make the unexpected fly.

While we prepared for day camp in the Catskills where our family was to spend a few weeks, I was quietly begging the overnight camp to allow (as a very rare exception) for this child to attend overnight camp as a day-camper. With a blessing from Above and the kindness of the director and head staff and counselors it was agreed that we'd try this on a limited basis with a number of ground rules in place.

Dream one had now come true. He could be with his friends and get the experience of camp

while not having conquered the sleeping away from home fear. The next couple weeks were perhaps the best of his life. The joy of camp was beyond description. The challenge of commuting early in the morning and late at night was worth all the hassle when seeing the joy emanating from this child and in contrast the dark mood he (and we) had when entering the summer.

Then things took a turn for the better. Two weeks into camp a bed became available in his bunk. In theory, he could now become a proper overnight sleeper-camper if he could just find the courage. Again, the wise camp director guided us to allow him to finish the first month of camp, really learn the ins and outs of camp and start to mentally prepare himself for the big move. "The bed will be available in the second month as well."

Now began the process of psyching himself up to finally conquer this behemoth that had been plaguing him his whole life. We told him that we will support whichever decision he makes and we will do what we can to make the trial/transition as easy as possible.

He agonized over his decision and while we encouraged him in the direction of giving it a try, we validated his fears and the struggle and made it clear we wouldn't judge him or love him any less whatever direction he goes. Eventually, he firmly decided he was going to do it. "I am so scared but I have to do this" is a direct quote.

The day arrived and I dropped him off at camp with hugs and kisses and suitcases of clothing and food. I waved goodbye with the agreement that we are "going-dark" for three days where we are all not going to speak to each other and the counselor will only check-in in an emergency.

Miracles do happen. Within a day or two he was acclimated and settled happily into the day to day flow of camp. He was ecstatic. He was living his best life, his lifelong dream had come true. After checking in with camp in the coming days, he was happy, not asking to come home, he had climbed his mountain successfully and the joy was palpable on all ends.

The End. Is it the end? In fact it is the beginning. The beginning of many new vistas of opportunity for him. Will his life be perfect now and are other struggles resolved?

Not by a long shot, but "just for today" and just for this challenge success was achieved.

Not by force as that would have backfired. Not by lying, cheating, cajoling or bribing. Simply by creating space for him to step up into his own discomfort and making it safe for him to feel uncomfortable to try to step up and into his fear and conquer it.

That was the magic on the parenting side.

There was however another important element to the success of this endeavor on the spiritual side and that was completely our (the parents) work for this to succeed.

There is a famous line attributed to the Kotzker Rebbe. Where is G-d? Wherever He is allowed in.

We have to work on allowing G-d in. G-d will only enter where we allow Him to enter. How do we allow him? What might we do that doesn't allow Him to enter? When we are playing G-d and thinking that we control outcomes, then He says "they think they got this, Ok, I will let them do it on their own."

Letting Him in, means letting go of the notion that we control the outcome of any part of this process. This required complete acceptance of any outcome. Whatever resulted from the aforementioned efforts we worked to be completely OK with.

If it failed, and he was miserable, and would require herculean efforts to keep him happy, entertained and sane, well, that was something that we, after a lot of hard inner work, were at peace with. That would be what G-d wanted from him and from us. Even this unpleasant outcome was an acceptable outcome and we were at total peace and acceptance that this was G-d's will.

Acceptance actually opens new realities both physically and spiritually. It allows G-d in. When we make peace with the outcome in advance of the challenge, whatever the outcome, for there is never really any emergency (more on that in another upcoming article), we create space for the Divine blessing and for His agents to make miracles happen.

"Where is G-d? Wherever He is allowed in."

As we approach the High Holidays, perhaps one of the things we can work on is to allow G-d into our lives by creating space for him. The bonus reward is by doing so we allow the blessings in.

Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman and his wife Raizel run the Chabad of Peabody Jewish Center. Rabbi Schusterman is a proud father of 7 who enjoys many hobbies, including exercise, skiing and writing. He is a certified mohel and loves to write on a wide variety of topics. Read more of his writings at RabbiSchusterman.com

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

10th of Kislev, 5714 [1953]

Our Sages said that "Each and every soul was in the presence of His Divine Majesty before coming down to this earth," and that "The souls are hewn from under the Seat of Glory."

These sayings emphasize the essential nature of the soul, its holiness and purity, and its being completely divorced from anything material and physical; the soul itself, by its very nature, is not subject to any material desires or temptations, which arise only from the physical body and "animal soul."

Nevertheless, it was the Creator's Will that the soul - which is "truly a 'part' of the Divine Above," should descend into the physical and coarse world and be confined within, and united with, a physical body for scores of years, in a state which is absolutely abhorrent of its very nature. All this, for the purpose of a Divine mission which the soul has to fulfill: to purify and "spiritualize" the physical body and the related physical environment by permeating them with the Light of G-d, so as to make this world an abode for the Shechina [the Divine Presence]. This can be done only through a life of Torah and Mitsvot [commandments].

When the soul fulfills this mission, all the transient pain and suffering connected with the soul's descent and life on this earth are not only justified, but infinitely outweighed by the great reward and everlasting bliss which the soul enjoys thereafter.

From the above one can easily appreciate the extent of the tragedy of disregarding the soul's mission on earth. For in doing so one condemns the soul to a term of useless suffering not compensated for, nor nullified by that everlasting happiness which G-d had intended for it. Even when there are moments of religious activity in the study of the Torah and the practice of the Mitsvot, it is sad to contemplate how often such activity is tinted by the lack of real enthusiasm and inner joy, not realizing that these are the activities which justify existence.

Aside from missing the vital point through failure of taking advantage of the opportunity to fulfill G-d's Will, thus forfeiting the everlasting benefits to be derived therefrom, it is contrary

to sound reason to choose that side of life which accentuates the enslavement and degradation of the soul, while rejecting the good that is inherent in it, namely, the great ascent that is to come from the soul's descent.

It will now become eminently clear what our Sages meant when they said, "No man commits a sin unless he was stricken with temporary insanity." No profound thinking is required to realize that since "life is compulsory," and since the soul which is a "part" of the Divine Above is compelled to descend into "a frame of dust and ashes," the proper thing to do is to make the most of the soul's sojourn on earth; only a life, in which every aspect is permeated by the Torah and Mitsvot, makes this possible.

It is also abundantly clear that since G-d, who is the essence of goodness, compels the soul to descend from its "sublime heights to the lowest depths," for the purpose of the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the Mitsvot [commandments] - how great is the value of Torah and Mitsvot.

Furthermore, the descent of the soul for the purpose of ascent shows that there is no other way to obtain the objective except through the soul's descent to live on this earth. If there were an easier way, G-d would not compel the soul to descend from the sublime heights of the Seat of Glory down to this nether world, the lowest of all worlds.

For only here, in the lowest depths, can the soul attain its highest ascent, higher even than the angels, and as our Sages say, "The righteous precede the foremost angels."

Reflecting upon the greatness of the Torah and Mitsvot, specifically pertaining to this life, reflecting also that the Torah and Mitsvot are the only means to attain the soul's perfection and the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, one will experience a sense of real joy at his fate and destiny, despite the many difficulties and handicaps, from within and without, which are inevitable on this earth. Only in this way can one live up to the injunction: "serve G-d with joy," which the Baal Shem Tov made one of the foundations of his teachings, and which is expounded at length in Chabad, and stressed by its founder, whose liberation we commemorate on the 19th day of Kislev, in his monumental work, the Tanya (chapters 26 seq, 31 seq).

I wish to express herewith, my inner wish that every one of us be liberated, with G-d's help and by determined personal effort, from all handicaps which arrest the good and noble in everyone's nature, so that this part of one's nature reign supreme, giving fullest expression to the threefold love: love of our people Israel, love of our Torah, and love of G-d, which are all one.

They spent seven years conquering the land and seven years dividing the land among the 12 tribes. Our generation, that will very soon enter the Land with the coming of Moshiach, will not need to wait before we are able to bring our first fruits to the Holy Temple. Not only will there be no need to conquer and distribute the land, but the fruits themselves will grow with such rapidity that their harvesting will take place simultaneously with their planting. (The Rebbe, parshat Vaetchanan, 5751)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This coming Saturday night, in preparation for the High Holy Days, we will begin saying the special set of penitential prayers known as "Selichot."

There is a story about a Chasid who came into a small town during the days before Rosh Hashana. Over Shabbat he stayed at an inn that was managed by a simple Jew. Late Saturday night, the innkeeper and his wife readied themselves to go to the synagogue to say the Selichot prayers.

"Where are you going?" asked the chasid.

Answered the innkeeper, "Our cow gives milk, the vegetables are growing. Our orchard produces fine fruits. We are going to shul to say selichot."

"Feh," said the chasid emphatically. "Old people get up in the middle of the night to ask the Alm-ghty for food?"

In truth, we should and are required to ask G-d for food and all of our other necessities. However, selichot is not the time to be asking G-d for these things.

Selichot means forgiveness. More than forgiveness, it means making amends. We recharge our batteries, return to our Source, and make an accounting of what we did last year. We contemplate on how we can improve in the coming year and begin to put our thoughts into action.

If we make sure that our Selichot prayers contain all of the above, the Alm-ghty will certainly give us not only the food and other necessities that the simple innkeeper prayed for, but a good year in all material and spiritual areas as well.

Shmuel Beilman

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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TODAY IS...

21 Elul

Our ancestor Abraham, as a result of his work - with self-sacrifice - to make the one G-d widely known among all mankind, merited to bequeath to his descendants (to the end of all generations) pure faith in G-d and His Torah. Hence, every Jewish man and woman has the power and fortitude to offer his life for the holy Torah.



New Emissaries

Rabbi Ari and Chana Liberow are moving to Westchester, California, home of LAX Airport and Loyola Marymount (LMU) University. They will be offering a wide variety of services in a warm and personalized manner.

Rabbi Yossi and Mushka Bernstein are joining the Chabad Romano Center in Richmond Hill, Toronto, Canada. They will be servicing the growing community's needs, specifically targeting young adults and families.

Rabbi Duni and Chaya Blotner are moving to establish Chabad of Etobicoke, Toronto. Etobicoke, located on the western edge of Toronto, has never had its own synagogue or other Jewish establishment.