

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The Haftora for the Torah portion of *Yitro* is Isaiah's vision of the spiritual world known as *Beriya* – Creation. The connection to this week's Torah portion is that *Yitro* contains the giving of the Ten Commandments, when the Jewish people experienced a similar vision and perhaps even greater.

Isaiah envisions G-d sitting on a throne, and the angels, called "serafim," are praising Him.

Isaiah heard the angels call to one another to pray, and they said together, "Holy holy holy is the L-rd of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

We say this verse several times a day in our prayers. What does this verse mean to us? Why say "holy" three times? What is the meaning of "the earth is full of His glory"; shouldn't the angels say that the heavens are full of His glory?

The *Midrash* explains with a parable. Subjects gave their king three crowns. What did the king do with them? He put one on his own head, and the other two he placed on the heads of his two children.

So too, every day the Heavenly hosts give G-d three holys, saying, "Holy holy holy." What does G-d do with them? He puts one on His "Head" as a crown, and the other two He places on the heads of His children, the Jewish people.

What do each of the three "holys" represent? They are connected to the three words (in Hebrew) of the *VAhavta* prayer, "Love G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength."

The first "holy" is on G-d's "Head." It is connected to a heart that yearns to reach and connect to higher levels of G-dliness. The second and third are on our heads. It is our ability to draw G-dliness down and make the physical holy, through studying Torah and performing *mitzvot* (commandments). The study of Torah is connected to the soul, being the spiritual part of our service to G-d. The *mitzvot* are connected to our strength, i.e., might, money, etc., the physical part of our service to G-d.

The angels recognize that the Jewish people's Torah study and *mitzvot* in this world are most important, and that they draw G-d's glory into the physical world. This is why they say, "The whole earth is full of His glory."

On another level, since G-d chose us from all of existence and gave us souls (which are part of Him), then we are one with Him, His representation in this world; we are His glory. And this is why G-d took us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai.

It is because of this, that we are able to make such a big difference in the world, and accomplish the mission that we were chosen for, to fill the whole world with G-d's glory. Which we will witness 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.

The Art of Not Listening

by Rabbi Eli Friedman

Many books have been written on how to be a better listener but today let's talk about how NOT to be a better listener.

Monday will be the 35th Yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the Rebbe's wife, of blessed memory. I want to share a brief yet powerful story about the Rebbetzin.

An attendant once answered the phone in the Rebbetzin's house. It was the Rebbe's cardiologist Dr. Ira Weiss of Chicago, calling the Rebbetzin to check up on the Rebbe's health. After chatting for a few minutes, the attendant passed the phone to the Rebbetzin who was sitting nearby.

The Rebbetzin spoke to the doctor and when she hung up she said to the attendant, "Why did you chat with him? He was calling long-distance and that costs him money. If I would have known it was him I would have asked you for the phone right away."

Apologizing, the attendant asked, "Did you not hear me say 'Hello Dr. Weiss'?"

And the Rebbetzin replied, "I learned from my father not to hear what isn't being spoken to me."

For a hyper-distracted society, this story is a marvelous inspiration. It's safe to say that nowadays there are times when we hear everything except what IS being spoken to us.

The Rebbetzin trained herself not to hear what people were conversing about unless she was part of the conversation. How wonderful is that? And this is not even about eavesdropping or gossip-mongering.

To intentionally listen in on someone else's conversation was unthinkable; the Rebbetzin's brilliance was that she didn't even accidentally overhear!

So this was not a matter of ethics or morality. You can't be unintentionally immoral. This was about focus and living in the moment. If you are totally immersed in whatever you are doing, you will not hear the ambient conversation. There is a learning process in the art of not listening to what we don't need to hear.

The Rebbetzin said she learned this from her father. Her father was a Rebbe. A Rebbe, before anything else, is a genuine person. A person of genuine focus and total concentration. A Rebbe doesn't waver in his attention.

People came away from meeting the Rebbe and the one universal reaction was, "It was like I'm the only person in his world." (You can watch hours of the Rebbe standing and handing out dollars and blessings to literally thousands of people and see how his attention never falters. He never looks around the room, never rests his eyes by glancing at the clock or the window. 100% focused.)

And it's that kind of attention and intense focus that liberates a person from the constant distractions of the day and the temptation to interrupt one activity with another, one conversation with another, one person with another.

So while there is plenty of spiritual and religious brilliance to learn from the Rebbetzin, there is also this simple marvel of human interaction: really focus and really pay attention. Rabbi Friedman, together with his wife Shaini, directs Chabad of Calabasas, CA.

SLICE OF LIFE

Empowered Jewish Women by Yehudis Cohen



When Frumie Bekerman arrived in Moscow in 1993 from Israel at the age of 21, she was not much older than the young women who she had come to work with. Today, a reknown educator and grandmother, Mrs. Bekerman looks back on the early years and growth of Machon Chaya Mushka – named for Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of the Rebbe – as well as its revised mission statement with pride and one can imagine with the same passion that inspired her nearly three decades ago.

“After Perestroika, young Jewish women would wander into the Marina Roscha *shul*,” begins Mrs. Bekerman, “eager to learn anything, anything about Judaism that had been suppressed at the hands of Communism. The few elderly people in the old Moscow synagogues (one of the few that remained open throughout the years of Communism) taught them whatever they could and spontaneous but unstructured classes took place.”

At one point a group of Lubavitcher girls from Israel came. They taught the elementary school children in the morning and in the afternoons they themselves taught their peers. The young women lived and learned together.

Finally, in 1993 Rabbi Berel Lazar, Chief Rabbi of Russia, decided there was enough of a Jewish infrastructure in Russia in general and Moscow in particular to establish a proper school for these young adult women who wanted to learn more about their Jewish roots. “Rabbi Lazar contacted my husband Avraham and me and asked us to establish Machon Chaya Mushka.

“We were a young couple, very naïve and idealistic, with a little baby and we didn’t know the Russian language. The Russia of that time was very backwards and undeveloped. It was hard to get even basics. Rabbi Lazar had the foresight to fill an entire shipping container full of non-perishables and staples and we ‘shopped’ and lived from that container from our first year.

“There were no groups of girls anymore who came spontaneously or with minimal encouragement because as soon as they started learning more about Judaism they would go to study in more advanced schools in Israel and in the USA. When we came, we basically had to start from scratch and to determine the direction of the institution.

“We started with a Summer Seminar. We advertised the program in a big way, including on the subways, which was very inexpensive at that time.

“I remember that one young woman saw our subway advertising. She was an English teacher and very much wanted to attend our summer seminar. Her mother was very much against. Our secretary – who was not Jewish – called the mother and gave her a whole speech, ‘She’s old enough to make her own decisions!’ the secretary argued. That girl ended up attending the seminar, continuing in Machon Chaya Mushka and now lives in Jerusalem with a beautiful Jewish home and family of her own.

“Our first academic year, we started with 15 girls. They were so thirsty to reclaim their Jewish heritage that they only wanted to study Jewish topics. We rented apartments for them – two for sleeping as a dorm, and one as classrooms. As the student body of Machon Chaya Mushka

grew, so did the need for more space. At one point the girls’ accommodations were an entire floor in a hotel and the classrooms were a floor at a local college.

“But the kids in the college were anti-Semitic and the girls didn’t feel safe and weren’t comfortable using classroom space there anymore. The community decided to help with buying a property that was suitable not only for the current students but where enrollment could grow and programming could expand.

“We looked all over Moscow. Finally we found a beautiful sports complex that was for sale, just 20 minutes from the main Chabad Center in Marina Roscha. We decided to go for it, and it was the best decision we could have made,” says Mrs. Bekerman definitively.

Today Machon Chaya Mushka (also known as Machon Chamesh University) is the women’s division of the Jewish University of Russia. It is a registered university and awards government diplomas. As Machon Chaya Mushka is affiliated with Touro University the graduates are also eligible to receive a second diploma from Touro.

In addition to the morning Judaic studies classes, students study and matriculate in economics, public relations, design-computer and general. There is also an option to study Jewish topics full-time. “Many of our graduates get married and become part of the Marina Rosha Chabad community or are themselves emissaries of the Rebbe around the world,” shares Mrs. Bekerman.

The Machon Chamesh Campus, now in the Sokolniki neighborhood of Moscow, also houses the “Gold Mikva.” One of 7 mikvas in the Moscow area, the Gold Mikva is known to be one of the most beautiful mikvas in all of Russia. Original artwork adorns the walls, elegant furnishings are gold-tone and Swarovski crystals complete the classic look.

“Our students who complete their studies with us leave with more than just a profession and a degree,” says Mrs. Bekerman. “They have the knowledge to build their own Jewish homes and to education their children to be proud, committed Jew.”

New Campus

Chicago’s Lubavitch Girls High School and Congregation Bnei Ruven have broken ground on a new 30,000 square foot campus. In addition to classrooms, the building will include fully-stocked resource room, state-of-the-art laboratories for chemistry, biology and STEM, and an art/pottery room with a built-in commercial kiln, a sun-drenched student lounge, with couches and study nooks. Later phases of the wide-ranging project will include an additional 30,000 square feet and will add a gym, kitchen, and social hall.

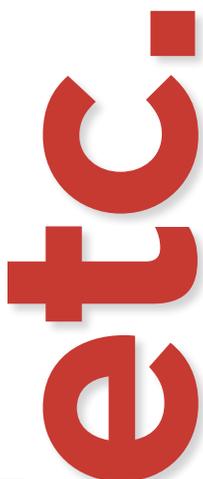
The Queen of Cleveland

In this posthumous memoir, based on extensive interviews and accompanied by hundreds of photos, Rebbetzin Shula Kazen tells of unimaginable hardship in the Soviet Union and the triumph of her life in America. Included are her over five decades in Cleveland, Ohio, where she built a strong Jewish community, prompting the Rebbe to dub her “Queen of the City.”



Hakhel – Unite!

The root of the commandment of Hakhel: Because the entire essence of the Jewish nation is the Torah... therefore, it is fitting that everyone should gather together at one point in time to hear its words, and for the “discussion” to go out amongst the whole nation – men, women and infants – saying, “What is the great gathering, that we have all been gathered together?” And the answer would be “To hear the words of the Torah, which is our entire essence and glory and splendor.” (*Sefer HaChinuch* 612)





The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

2nd of Tammuz, 5730 [1970]

After the long interval, I was pleased to receive your letter of last week...

Referring to the main topic of your letter, namely the dissemination of Yiddishkeit among the Jewish women, I can hardly overemphasize that this activity is one of the most basic and vital effort for the general strengthening and spreading of Yiddishkeit. The role of Jewish women in Jewish life goes back to the time of Mattan Torah, as is well known from the commentary of our Sages on the verse, "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob and tell the children of Israel – the 'House of Jacob' meaning the women." (Mechilta on Yisro 19:3, quoted in Rashi on this verse). In other words, before giving the Torah to the whole people of Israel, G-d told Moshe Rabbeinu to first approach the women and then the men. This emphasizes the primary role of the Jewish wife and mother in preserving the Torah. Ever since, and throughout the ages, Jewish women have had a crucial role in the destiny of our people, as is well known. Moreover, the Jewish housewife is called Akeres Habayis – "The foundation of the house." In addition to the plain meaning of the term, namely, that she is the foundation of her own home, the term may be extended to include the whole "House of Israel," which is made up of many individual homes and families, for, indeed, this has been the historic role of Jewish womanhood.

Being acutely aware of this role of Jewish women in Jewish life, especially in the most recent generations, my father-in-law of saintly memory frequently emphasized this, so much so that immediately after his liberation from Soviet Russia in 1927, when it became possible for him to publish his teachings, he published a number of discourses, talks and addresses in Yiddish, in order to make them more easily accessible to Jewish women and daughters. There is no need to further elaborate on the obvious.

In the light of the above and since this has been the consistent policy of all Chabad activities, it is hardly likely that any Chabad worker would not be interested in this area, and there can only be a misunderstanding if this is the impression in the particular case. I am confident that by discussing the matter together, it will

soon be discovered that there has been a misunderstanding and the reasons that have given rise to such a misunderstanding could be cleared up and easily removed.

Needless to say, you may show this letter to the person to whom it may concern. I may add, however, that judging by your writing, that person seems to have a heavy burden of activities on his shoulders and this may be the explanation why little has been done in the area of disseminating Yiddishkeit among the women as you write, simply for lack of manpower and time, etc. at any rate, I trust that you will get together and clear this matter up, in accordance with the verse "Az nidberu yirei Hashem."

With regard to the second item about which you write, namely the over-centralization of activity in one place and one group, etc. – it is difficult for me to express an opinion at such a distance. However, generally the principle that applies here is – kinas sofrim tarbe chochmo". Therefore, every effort should be made to increase and spread the good work, especially efforts connected to chinuch, wherever possible. The importance of this principle has also been discussed on various occasions. One proof of it is that although the Torah considers "hasogas g'vul" as one of the most stringent matters, so much so that it is one of the eleven blessings specifically mentioned at Mt. Grizim, nevertheless the psak din is that there is one exception, namely, in the case of establishing chinuch institutions even in the same neighborhood and in close proximity, one in addition to another, because of the mentioned reason that "Competition among scholars increases knowledge."

At any rate, as already suggested above, this too calls for a mutual consultation and in the presence of the two of you, tete-a-tete, you will be able to discuss the matter candidly and decide what is the best thing to do to attain the utmost result.

I was pleased to read in your letter about the advancement in your position and may G-d grant that you continue to advance from good to better and best, since there is no limit to the good. In our days there is the additional important consideration and that is – when a Jew, a shomer Torah and mitzvos, attains prominence in his field, regardless what his field may be, this gives him additional opportunity and capacity to spread and strengthen Yiddishkeit, all the more so a person who is already active in the dissemination of traditional Yiddishkeit of the Torah and mitzvos.

May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in all above and together with your wife, to bring your children to a life of Torah, Chupah and Good Deeds, in good health and happy circumstances.

With blessing,

the women and only after the men. The Exodus from Egypt occurred by virtue of the righteous women of that generation, so when G-d gave the Torah the women were given preference. The final Redemption will also be through the righteous women, as the *Midrash* states: "All generations are redeemed by virtue of the generation's righteous women." Thus the women will be first to receive the wondrous teachings of Moshiach. (*Sichot Kodesh, Yitro, 5749*)

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"Say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel" (Ex. 19:3) Our Sages teach that the "House of Jacob" are women, and the "Children of Israel" are the men. At Sinai, G-d told Moses to first approach

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Monday will mark the thirty-fifth yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, of blessed memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. In the year after her passing, the Rebbe spoke often about the concept of "And the living shall take to heart" – that by performing practical mitzvot and good deeds in the Rebbetzin's memory, the departed's soul is elevated even higher. In the years since, numerous educational institutions, tzedaka organizations and outreach programs have been founded in the Rebbetzin's name, and hundreds if not thousands of Jewish girls are proud to be named after such a holy woman.

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, daughter of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, was a symbol of all the positive attributes Jewish women have embodied throughout the ages, incorporating a profound sense of modesty and unwavering devotion to truth with a sincere consideration for others. Deliberately shunning the spot-light, she consistently fled from any recognition of her special status, choosing instead to "work behind the scenes" with countless individual acts of kindness and self-sacrifice for her fellow Jews. The many stories about the Rebbetzin that began to surface only after her passing paint a picture of an exceptional Jewish figure whose entire life was an example of nobility, devotion and courage.

In her later years the Rebbetzin's health was less than optimal, yet she was so self-effacing that she refused to "bother" her husband with her problems. "It is very important to me to avoid causing the Rebbe sorrow," she once replied when someone pointed out that if people could come from around the world to seek the Rebbe's blessing for such matters, surely she could do the same.

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka chose to live in the "shade" of the luminaries who surrounded her. But by striving to emulate her example, we ensure that she continues to illuminate our world forever.

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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IT HAPPENED ONCE



Devora Leah was the aunt of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, known as the Alter Rebbe. Her mother, Rachel, was a very unusual woman for her time. Educated secretly by her unconventional father, Rachel eventually mastered not only the Bible, but the Talmud and the writings of Maimonides, and was especially expert in the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law.

Her erudition in Jewish legal matters is illustrated by the following incident. Rachel's husband and father were walking on Shabbat. Suddenly, someone came running to tell them that the city's "eiruv" (the marker which delineates the area where carrying is permitted on the Shabbat) had broken.

The two rabbis stood still, unable to remember the law under such circumstances. Rachel's father asked her what they should do. At first she didn't want to reply, since it was frowned upon in those days for a woman to be learned and she didn't want to alienate her new husband. But when her father pressed her, she answered and everyone abided by her instructions.

Upon returning home they consulted the *Shulchan Aruch* and verified that Rachel's pronouncement had been correct. When Rachel had her own daughter, it was only natural that she educate her in the same manner in which she had learned from her father.

Rachel began teaching Devora Leah regularly and systematically. In the course of time, Devora Leah also became quite a scholar. She grew up with the wonderful qualities so exemplified by her mother: fond of her fellow-beings, always interested in her neighbors, ready to help everyone. Her brother, Baruch, on the other hand, was cold and reserved, preferring his own company to that of others.

Because of Baruch's cold nature, there was no bond between the two siblings. Devora Leah was grieved at her brother's attitude. Her mother saw it and realized it was wrong, but it was beyond her comprehension. She was pained by Baruch's behavior and thought it might do him good to hear something of the family history that she had already told Devora Leah. But he seemed so unapproachable that she kept putting it off. Unfortunately, Rachel waited too long. She became gravely ill and passed away.

At the time of the death of her beloved mother Devora Leah was only sixteen years old. She found some consolation for her loss by immersing herself in the care of her father, brother and household.

Not long after the passing of her mother, Devora Leah's father succumbed to his emotional travail, and after a protracted illness, he too passed away. Devora Leah, now an orphan, went to live with her aunt and uncle. Her brother Baruch disappeared without telling anyone of his destination.

One day, Devora Leah's aunt and uncle announced that they had located a suitable match for her – a young Torah scholar named Yosef Yitzchak.

The young girl immediately ran to the graves of her parents and poured out her heart, asking for their blessings only if the match was one which would be successful. Afterward, she agreed to meet the young man.

Devora Leah was very frank with him, explaining that she was inclined to follow the ways of her mother's family, who followed the teaching of Kabala and Chasidism. The young man listened attentively, and then, to Devora Leah's happy surprise, he told her that he had long ago made the acquaintance of a certain disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and was thoroughly knowledgeable with his teachings. In fact, he was entirely in sympathy with the Baal Shem Tov's path of Divine service.

Even more astonishing, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak told her that he had himself met the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov had told him that he would meet his intended in Vitebsk – an orphan girl from a fine family.

Devora Leah was thrilled with all he told her and saw Divine Providence in their meeting. She had no doubt that this fine young man was her Divinely-chosen mate.

The two went together to Devora Leah's parents' graves and secretly agreed to marry on the following conditions: Yosef Yitzchak was to learn Torah with her two or three times a week; He was not to object to her continuing with her sewing and allow her to contribute monetarily to their household; They were to share equally in all they did

relating to Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments); They were to keep the fact that she was studying Torah a secret; They were to live as followers of the Baal Shem Tov; From all their earnings they would put aside a tenth part for charity; They were to raise their children in the Chasidic way; If they had daughters they would teach them Torah.

After their marriage, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was appointed as head of the Vitebsk Yeshiva, and Devora Leah was very happy with the life she and her husband had undertaken.

Adapted and excerpted from Memoirs of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion



Israel encamped opposite the Mountain (Ex. 19:2)

The Torah was specifically given on a mountain so that the Children of Israel would elevate and spiritually purify the physicality of the world. This is hinted to by the mountain, which is dust of the earth but is high, symbolizing the elevation of matter and its purification. (*Sefer Hamamarim*)

The entire Mount Sinai smoked (ashan) because the Lord had descended upon it in fire... (Ex. 19:18)

The giving of the Torah at Sinai is associated with fire, to teach us that a Jew should always worship G-d with a fiery enthusiasm, eagerness and warmth – the ability for which was conferred at Mount Sinai. (*Sefer HaMaamarim*, 5701)

The three letters of the word *ashan*, *ayin-shin-nun*, stand for *olam* (world – the dimension of place); *shana* (year – the dimension of time); and *nefesh* (soul – the energy that animates the physical plane). The revelation at Sinai signified that from that point on we were given the ability to refine and elevate these two dimensions (through Torah and *mitzvot* – commandments), and infuse them with a G-dly light and vitality. (*Rabbi Shneur Zalman*)

Moses spoke (yedaber), and G-d answered him (Ex. 19:19)

The word "yedaber" is actually in the future tense, implying "Moses will speak." It is also etymologically related to the word "yadber," meaning "he will lead and guide" – a reference to the "reflection of Moses that exists in every generation." (*Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim*)

I am the L-rd your G-d (Ex. 20:2)

This first of the Ten Commandments was given in the singular ("your G-d"), as each individual's conception and understanding of G-d is different, depending on his capacity for spirituality, knowledge of Torah, and individual service. Accordingly, each person who was present at Mount Sinai understood the commandment differently. (*Siftei Kohan*)



5:07 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
19 Shevat/Feb. 10
Torah Portion Yitro
Shabbat ends 6:08 PM